FOUNDATION

27

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

IN THIS ISSUE

Rudy Rucker in the land of the Moral Majority
Brian Stableford analyzes M.P. Shiel
K.V. Bailey on play and ritual in sf
Neil Ferguson under the influence of Dick
Gregory Feeley on Avram Davidson's apocrypha
Richard Erlich: a yea to Oath of Fealty?
R.G. Meadley on Aldiss and a dose of Tono-Bungay

Letters from Harlan Ellison, Ursula Le Guin and others

Reviews by Bishop, Clute, Feeley, Greenland, Hassler, Kaveney, Langford, Lefanu, Lewicki, Parrinder, Sladek and Wolfe
of books by Anthony Burgess, Ernest Callenbach, John Crowley, John Gardner, Frank Herbert, L. Ron Hubbard, Ursula Le Guin, Julian May, Leon Stover, Ian Watson and others

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THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

Contents
Number 27, February 1983

We decided to forgo a "Letters" column in this issue, then at the last moment the following important comments arrived from North America. So in place of our usual Editorial we hand you over, initially, to Harlan Ellison.

Letters

Dear David January 1983

I am moved by a casual error in Peter Nicholls's memoir of Phil Dick in *Foundation* 26 (October 1982) to set the record straight, though in truth it doesn't matter in the wake of Phil's death.

Peter says, on page 8: "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." Italics mine.

Reading Peter's essay, I learned for the first time that the sorry spectacle was a set-up. Peter may take pride in having gulled us into the "confrontation", but for my part, I'm sorry it ever came to pass. I don't know on what ground someone can take pride in setting former friends to wrangling in public, but while I accept full measure of shame and chagrin for being a participant, Peter had better understand that it was not, for me, the heroic and delightful encounter he paints it.

The important point I need to make, for myself, is that the reason I had not spoken to Phil for two years (1978, Metz) was not the result of something as petty as a squabble over a woman. Where Peter got that idea, I have no idea. What caused me to end a twenty-year friendship with Phil was a singularly odious attack on Ed Ferman's integrity indulged in by Phil as a result of Ed's asking for an essay on my work, intended for the July 1977 "Harlan Ellison Issue" of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*.

It serves no purpose to dredge up the circumstances of that awful exchange between Phil and Ed, save to point out that Ed was blameless in the matter. I could not absent myself from defending Ed, and I wrote to Phil saying his behaviour was the final act of nastiness I had seen growing stronger in his nature every year. And I said silence should prevail between us.

There was nothing casual about it. It was infinitely saddening to me to cut off my friendship with Phil. Apparently, Phil felt the same way. Having now learned that Peter was playing with us, I feel even worse. But at least in the same forum where Peter has carelessly trivialized my last meeting with Phil, I have corrected the bit of nonsense that Peter has dropped.

One other comment by Peter in that memoir, also rankles. Peter no doubt thinks it an amusing observation when he says, "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 . . ." Apart from the presumption on Peter's part that he had the right to muck about in our lives for his own amusement, I find the comparison of Phil's and my height gratuitously insulting, and the sort of invidious sophomorism expected from adolescent fans, not a respected editor and critic. Unless it is meant by Peter that Phil's talent was

great and mine is small, or that Phil was great in the sense of containing multitudes while I am very, very small in the sense of meanspirited and niggling. If these latter, then he's entitled to his perceptions, but they do not jibe with Peter's past friendly relations with me. If the latter—and I'm sure Peter will so advise—then it's good to know how I'm viewed by one who has always been all smiles and camaraderie. But if Peter is dealing in analysis by physical appearance, then I suggest it is no more honorable or valid a way of writing about people than were I to compare a meeting of Phil and Peter by writing, "One was sober and the other was very, very drunk."

It is necessary, I think, for those who make sport of others solely on the basis of anatomical variations over which they have no control and which are not, of themselves, relevant to the worth of the people being discussed, to learn that it is a nasty weapon of comment that knows no master.

For my part, all I have to say about Phil is the following, which appeared in the *Los Angeles Weekly* in July. It was contained in the 32nd installment of my regular column "An Edge In My Voice".

"I was asked to take note of the recent death of Philip K. Dick. That is not an easy thing for me to do. We were close friends once. We fell out. We had not talked civilly to each other in a number of years. I learned, shortly before the two strokes that took him, that he regretted the distance between us and wanted to get together. Time and circumstance and probably pigheadedness on my part prevented that. Now he is gone and, like many of you, I never got to say to someone who mattered, how much he mattered. So I am not the proper person to speak of this enormously talented, tormented man. I am not entitled to eulogize him as so many others have. Only this, as one who came out at the finish line too far behind to make his presence known, is open to me: nowhere in all the highflown testimonials to Phil and his singular writings, has anyone noted that there were greedy and amoral fuckers who used him badly, who kept him paranoid and poor and delusional with nightmares of life that served their own commercial ends. As one denied the right to praise him, I am permitted, I suppose, to suggest that each and every one of those scum who fed off his life-force be condemned to live out the rest of their days under the miasma of anguish and paranoia they visited on him."

Forgive the ramble. I'd intended merely to write the one sentence, "That which alienated Philip K. Dick and me had nothing to do with a girl, as Peter Nicholls suggests in his memoir."

That I have gone on as long as I have should be chalked up to a gutfull of longing for my old friend, and a soul full of remorse at words left unspoken. Peter's insensitive comments and the knowledge that we were pawns for his amusement do not make it any easier. But then, why should they?

Harlan Ellison *Sherman Oaks, California*

Letters continued on page 107

Kenneth Bailey has appeared in our pages twice before, in Foundation *15 and* Foundation *21. Now retired on Alderney, he has recently published a number of studies of the island—maritime, military and civil—as well as continuing to document environmental projects on the UK mainland in two small books,* Community and Environment *and* Past, Present, Future *(Civic Trust). Additionally he has been writing a quantity of mainly sf-oriented poetry; some has appeared in* The Science Fiction and Fantasy Worlds of Tim White *(NEL), and a collection was published by Blanchard Books in late 1982 under the title* Other Worlds, and Alderney. *He also watches birds and stars, and occasionally leaves his island to rendezvous with a solar eclipse.*

Play and Ritual in Science Fiction

K.V. BAILEY

Charles Lamb in "Mrs Battle's Opinions on Whist" described man as a gaming animal. Johan Huizinga entitled his classic study of the play element in culture *Homo Ludens.* Play is a mode of behaviour which involves setting up "ideal" systems and frameworks, divorced from yet microcosmically reflecting the "real" world. Within these segregated frameworks it may involve both exercises of skill and dicing with chance. It is in these senses a distinctively human activity.

When games are played, elements from the complex real world are abstracted. Games also provide small areas of experience on to which the vast confused world outside can be projected. This is the kind of projection described by Nabokov in his *Speak Memory* where he writes of the chess-board as "a magnetic field, a system of stresses and abysses, a starry firmament."

Many works of science fiction have much in common with a game. In writing, the author structures a unique universe. In participatory involvement the reader explores the rules and strategies introduced by the author. The reader enters a sphere of play, anticipates potential moves and denouements, and imaginatively collaborates with the author in achieving them.

Psychologically this partnership involves a kind of induction, an entry of the reader into a created and regulated world to which he is invited to give credence, to recognise as a given and accepted environment. This also happens in the playing of games. A cricketer, for example, leaves the everyday world when he enters the arena. The pavilion is portal to a small universe where time is bounded by innings and measured in overs. His identity may become that of opening batsman, second slip or twelfth man. The artificial, arbitrary, yet consistent rules of, for example, limited over, declaration or follow-on, determine his fate and life-span. In its ritual and in its logical illogicalities he finds satisfaction. If he questions them, then he steps out of the game. The phrase "It isn't cricket" symbolises this, though it also indicates some relationship between game and real world. Newbolt's

"Vitae Lampada" ("There's a breathless hush in the Close tonight"), lasting relic of old-school-tie chauvinism, at least makes this point succinctly.

Compare now such categorical requirements with those described in Robert Lindner's "The Jet-propelled Couch".[1] There the psychiatrist-narrator tells how his patient, Kirk Allen, was constrained to live in an imaginary universe where he was ruler. The safe passage of his spaceships depended on the up-dating of intricate charts. The analyst helps him to check these, but becomes himself absorbed in the "game", learning all its demands as set out in Kirk Allen's scholarly and self-consistent memoranda—treatises such as "The Transportation System of Seraneb" and "The Sex Habits of the Crystopeds". Eventually he is himself engulfed in and obsessed with this space-opera empire, and is only brought back to the real world by the patient-turned-doctor. Yet years after the Kirk Allen episode the narrator confesses that he often thinks of him: ". . . when the sky over Peconie Bay is bright with quivering stars . . . I smile to myself and whisper: How goes it with the Crystopeds? How are things in Seraneb?" (This is rather as one addicted to cricket nostalgia might relive what lies behind the tables and analyses of faded Wisdens.)[2]

Kirk Allen's universe was an invented one, full of mentally structured refinements; but it was superimposed on a physical one—space, galaxies, stars, planets, gravity, magnetic fields are all there. Similarly the invented rules of such a game as cricket operate within a defined terrestrial space and the circumstances of play are conditioned by such things as wind-speed, humidity, and intensity of light. The bringing together of two or more frames of reference is something common to games and science fiction.

John Clute and Peter Nicholls, discussing "The Jet-propelled Couch" in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction,* suggest that Kirk Allen (who they say has been speculatively identified as the young Paul Linebarger)[3] is retreating from adulthood by progressive immersion in fantasy, that his illusions typify science fiction's power over adolescent minds. This is doubtless so. But the mechanisms which lure not only Kirk Allen but his analyst towards Strom Olma I and Seraneb may be geared equally to creativity as to regression or escapism. Relationships between play and creativity have been explored in sociological contexts by Desmond Morris who, in *The Human Zoo,* sees the childlike adult as potentially a survivor and an evolutionary winner. Inventiveness is characteristic of the child; productivity of the adult. It is the childlike adult who is creatively productive.

In his book *The Act of Creation* Arthur Koestler has looked at this same relationship from another viewpoint. He is concerned with modes of escape from mechanical and automatic ways of living. Dreaming and daydreaming are escape paths when, as he puts it, "the codes of rational thinking are suspended". Daydreaming and problem-solving he sees as being opposite end-points of a motivational spectrum. The creative mode operates through what he terms a bisociative act, which connects previously unconnected matrices of experience. It makes us, he says, quoting T.S. Eliot aptly, though admittedly out of context, "understand what it is to be awake, to be living on several planes at once".

The daydream route considered in isolation, Koestler argues, is essentially one of regression; but he does not give to regression an entirely pejorative connotation. As he puts it in a sub-chapter entitled "Coaxing the Unconscious", "The capacity to regress, more or less at will, to the games of the underground, without losing contact with the surface, seems to be the essence of the poetic, and of any other form of creativity." The bisociative step which may take place, starting from the ground of the regressive phase, Koestler illustrates by describing the vision and its subsequent theoretical development of

von Kukele, the nineteenth century chemist, whose eidetic image of a whirling snake seizing its own tail revealed to him the closed-chain structure of organic molecules. Two matrices, or frameworks, are here involved: that of empirical work in the laboratory; and that of patterned imagery projected by unconscious motivations. Out of the regress to the latter spring new insights. It is the principle of *reculer pour mieux sauter,* the withdrawal preceding the effective leap forward. Involved are processes which appear to be opposed, but which are in fact integrally related.

The operation of this principle in the making of poetry has often been demonstrated. Of other forms of creative activity, science fiction and fantasy are among those in which it works most strongly. It is also a process which lies at the heart of our fascination with games. In sf a mythopoeic matrix frequently enters into bisociative relationship with a positivistic matrix: one based on archetypal experience with one based on scientific or futuristic intellection. Pohl's *Gateway* and its sequel[4] exemplify this; but in order to illustrate very briefly I have improvised a mini-space-opera:

They've come out of the blue
And there's nothing to warn
That alien transports
Will land in the dawn.
But where is the sentry
Who warns of such ships?
He's been on the town
And is blind to the blips!
Will you take over?
I'd better try,
For a noise like thunder
Is filling the sky.

There are here two frameworks, or matrices. One of them is the nursery rhyme "Little Boy Blue, come blow on your horn." It takes us back nostalgically into a world of pastoral, indeed regresses into the Freudian world of "good" objects, where nothing more traumatic is likely to happen than the straying of slow and well-fed kine, a young world of dozing cow-herds and shepherds, whom even to wake would seem unnecessarily harsh, and would lead only to infantile tears. The other framework embraces a standard sf scenario, that of the space-invaders. It taps the emotions of reaction to unforeseen violence, fear of unknown and superior force. It is in resonance with the stubborn experiences of history, both legendary and documented: the taking of Troy; Belshazzar's Feast; Pearl Harbour; the Falklands débacle. On the one hand Arcadia; on the other the reign of "havoc and spoil and ruin".[5] The two worlds have each their own psychological roots. When the "Martian invasion" is put together with the childish idyll, and is made to grow out of it by a bonding of rhyme, rhythm and imagery, there is a bisociative effect. The impact is then different from that made by either singly: we live imaginatively "on several planes at once."

It is perhaps useful here to emphasize the special force given to the word "matrix", as Koestler uses it in *The Act of Creation.* It denotes there a field, web, or framework. Associated with it are the words "code" and "strategy". The former indicates those factors which limit or regulate action; and "strategy" embraces those exercises of choice which can be made when operating within a total environment of which "code" and "matrix" are the determinants. I shall be applying some of these basic concepts in discussing science fiction in a "games" context. Koestler illustrates their use by reference

to parlour games and chess. They could obviously be applied to a range of play from Monopoly to polo; but as we have already used cricket, let it stay the model.

Those who enjoy playing or watching cricket get their enjoyment to some extent from a bisociative effect resultant upon the superimposition of two matrices — in many ways not unlike those of the "Boy Blue" rhyme. One is that of the village green, even though it may blow up to the size of the Oval and be fringed by industry: a rural space subject to the interplay of light, cloud, wind and rain, and populated by young men in the uniform of perpetual summer. The other matrix (and one must live in the two worlds at once) is shaped from the players' and observers' store of concepts and motivations having to do with combat—the hurling of missiles, the defence of targets, the elimination of contestants, the success of tactics, the achievement of superiority. To play the game an evolved yet arbitrary set of codes is necessary: these are the Laws of Cricket. They relate to elements of *both* matrices (e.g. to what light is available; and to how wickets may fall), and mark out the parameters of strategy open to captains and to individual players.

Rudyard Kipling in "The Islanders" wrote of "the flannelled fool at the wicket". Cricket, with its men in school caps and blazers, its traditions and anecdotal lore, viewed unsympathetically, may appear juvenile and could, as played by adults, seem a regressive activity. This might be said not only of modern games and sports, but of such historic phenomena as the Byzantine circus, the lists of chivalry, the contests of the Courts of Love, the Baroque masque and antimasque.[6] What they, and cricket, and all forms of play, have in common is this: they must be enacted seriously for their function, therapeutic or cathartic, to be effective.

In cricket, for example, the twenty-two men, for the isolated time-span of play, exist only *as* cricket. The game's rules of no-ball, leg-before-wicket, run-out etc. have, within the limits of time and space in which strategies may operate, all the weight of universal law. Through such means an "ideal" world is set up. It has subjective substance, though it may not exist for the uninvolved spectator. In the course of some dour tail-enders' stand strong men wearing MCC ties have been known to have heart attacks, when to the outsider it would appear that nothing at all was happening.

If you tried to assure a Selection Committee that a trial match—that any cricket match—was of little real consequence, it would be uncomprehending. The adult contest is serious—as children's games are serious. In his book, already referred to, the Dutch historian Huizinga examines children's play, and by extension those forms of sport in which men "regress" to exist and act within the closed arena of stadium or gaming-board. Really to play, he argues, a man must play like a child; for children, particularly in those forms of play in which they lose themselves by identifying with people or creatures of an "ideal" world, are stepping out of reality into a higher order:

> The child is quite literally "beside himself" with delight, transported beyond himself to such an extent that he almost believes he actually is such and such a thing, without, however, wholly losing consciousness of "ordinary reality".

In other words he is living on two planes or in two worlds at once. Huizinga also relates games to ritual. Formality is common to both, and both take place within an area literally "staked out", a sacred space, a temporarily real world set aside for the action.

Consider the following (apparently) disparate phenomena, all of which involve spectators in experiences which have some of the characteristics of play and of ritual: (1) a Wimbledon tournament; (2) a Punch and Judy show; (3) the duel between HAL and

humans *(2001: A Space Odyssey)*. In common they have: staked out areas of performance; an eliminative "combat" type of scenario; fundamentally "programmed" patterns of action. Punch and Judy and Wimbledon both offer successive encounters, each ending in a knock-out; but actually Punch/HAL parallel each other to an even greater degree. Each is completely programmed, but both appear as deadly, autonomous and cunningly intelligent puppets, liquidating one by one whatever impedes them; each is eventually subdued by superior moral and physical force and made to squeak its way to cancellation. *A Space Odyssey* has overall an extended ritualistic structure of which the HAL episode is only one particularly dramatic unit; that is perhaps why it became something of a cult, compelling the faithful to sit through performances as many times as children will sit through a Punch and Judy show. And who can deny ritual and cult aspects not only to such sporting events as Wimbledon and the Olympic Games, but to certain musical contests and festivals—and in particular to the Proms?

Again, let us take (1) a specifically ritualistic situation, say some royal ceremonial; and (2) a standard Starship *Enterprise* situation. Each crew-member/hierophant is at his station, fulfils his rôle; the spaceship/cathedral has its bridge/presbytery; there are located the control and communication panels/altar and side altars. The rituals follow a sure course: the exiting processional march is as certain as is the beaming-up and departure at Warp 7. Admittedly the cathedral event may be a solemn and historic one, while *Star Trek* is only an ephemeral fiction; but that does not invalidate the essential point. One could regress even further to Doctor Who and his Police Box (splendid bisociation); or find a more adult imaginative taking off point in the sophisticated automation of Arthur C. Clarke's *Rama*, or in the weird succession of aisle, gallery and crypt which in Brian Aldiss's "Big Dog" *(Non Stop)* lead to the culminating revelation: in these and in many other spaceships similar correspondences are discernible.

Doctor Who's police phone-box I have described as a splendid bisociative gimmick. It is a focal point at which two (or more) worlds meet. Its exterior is homely and everyday, but it may appear at the heart of a spiral galaxy or in the depths of an ice age. Its interior exceeds expectations, is vast and mysterious, is the scene of strange encounters and contains outlandish machinery; but this is made, through familiarity and through the Doctor's maverick treatment of it, to become as tamed and snug as the kitchen stove.

Huizinga says of both play and ritual that when it ends its effect is not lost; it continues, as he puts it, to shed its radiance on the world outside. In the remainder of this study I hope to show how science fiction also does just this, by reference to works, with emphasis on one particular work in each of three categories. These are: where the field of play is created (1) in the past or the future; (2) on a world which serves primarily as stage for the projection of fantasy, dream, nightmare; (3) on a scientifically conceived alien planet. It is, of course, obvious that these categories will often overlap or merge, as they do in all three of the selected main examples, which are: (1) Julian May's *The Saga of the Exiles;* (2) H.G. Wells's *The First Men in the Moon;* (3) Brian Aldiss's *Helliconia Spring*.

The first volume of Julian May's saga, *The Many-Coloured Land,* has as epigraph that part of Psalm 55 which contains the verses:

> And I said: O that I had wings like a dove!
> For then I would fly away and be at rest,
> Lo, I would flee far away,
> And live in the wilderness.

The human protagonists of this novel have fled far away (through a time-portal situated in southern France) into Pliocene Europe. What they are fleeing from is the Polity of the Galactic Concilium, which for a variety of quirky, individualistic or idealistic reasons they do not like to live under, any more than some of the New England or Virginian settlers liked the European régimes they forsook. Lewis Mumford in *The Condition of Man* writing of these early exiles says: ". . . penned up in a Europe they could not wholly master either through war or religion, people dared to dream of altering this drama by a quick change of scene." Later, having traced the progress of 18th Century Rousseauism, Mumford considers the seductive dead-end of the fête-champetre, a conception of life that he suggests is essentially infantile if it presupposes an avoidance of all polar tensions:

> There is no final state that betokens felicity: man knows no security that is not precarious . . . Even a game requires boundaries, rules, restrictions, penalties, losses: that is to say a game requires conditions similar to those that give the full dimensions of reality to human life itself.

Julian May's time-travellers tend to be emotionally regressed, narcissistic, fantasy-haunted. They go through the time-portal in primitive historical or tribal costume, or assuming the guise of Tarzan, Rima or Pocahontas. They are seeking to play the Eden game. The author pitches them into an Eden certainly, with its vast veldts, mossy grottoes, pristine lakes, "the unspoilt wilderness they had always dreamed of"; but it is one of unforeseen confrontations. There, already settled in Europe, are alien exiles from another planet, the warring and opposed Tanu and Firvulag. There are choices as between conditioned co-operation and rebellion; there are the hazards of hunted wanderings (kidnap by guerillas; attack by the great Caucasian boar); there are punishments and rewards (the gold and silver torcs). No wonder Nick Pratt in a review – *Foundation* 25—says that the games manufacturers will lap it up: ". . . throw a 23 and you are Madame Guderian" (leader of the guerillas and one-time guardian of the time-portal).

There are, using our earlier defined term, various "codes" applied by the author. For example, the aliens' technology is based on vitreous materials: they can only be defeated by iron. This determines the "strategies" leading to the attack on the city of Finiah, which also involves the finding and use of the Spear, and a timing dependent on the onset of the ceremonies of the Grand Combat. These codes and strategies are shaped by the author with a little help from a somewhat eclectic fund of mythology. The frames of reference in this dimension of the *Saga* multiply and fuse unrestrainedly, perhaps get a bit out of hand in *The Golden Torc;* but from them does emerge a dynamic which moves the game on from a regressive to a creative phase. The passage towards Eden through the time-portal turns out to be a part of a *reculer pour mieux sauter* process.

A factor which saves these books from becoming too bogged down in symbolism and folk-tale allusiveness is the discipline imposed by their geophysical matrices. This is an application of what we have seen to be a key element in games-structuring—the bisociative element. Julian May's Pliocene Europe is made to co-exist with "modern" or future Europe. Textual descriptions, comparative maps, and appendices help us to play the game of living in both of them, and to move imaginatively from one to the other. For example, among the appendices to *The Golden Torc* is "Apologia Pro Geologica Sua" which identifies volcanic features in the western Betic Cordillera, and in the Rif Range, that make plausible the supposed lava dam which, following a tectonic strike, breaks to

create the Atlantis-like flood with which the novel ends. This appendix also outlines speculation on the origins of the Rieskessel ringwall remnant. In *The Many Coloured Land* this is represented as the result of the crashing of the original Tanu spaceship[7]. The rebel human band, having crossed the Schwartzwald (of alpine proportions in the Pliocene) have to find the source of the Ystroll (proto-Danube) in order to follow the river to the ship's grave, where they hope to salvage superior armament. They have an old (future) road-map as only guide, and a little relayed geological expertise. The flavour of this "two worlds" technique is best given by quotation:

> . . . Claude had warned Richard that the watershed of the Pliocene Danube was going to be greatly altered during the coming Ice Age by volumes of glacial till washed down from the Alps. The tributary streams of the upper Danube that were shown on the map would likely occupy different positions during the Pliocene; and the bed of the great river would likely lie further south, twisted all out of recognition. The travellers could not hope to follow the Galactic Age landmarks to the Ries Crater. But there was one precious bit of data from the old map that would have retained its validity over six million years: the exact longitudinal components in kilometres between the meridian of High Vrazel Peak (alias Grand Ballon) and that of the Ries (symbolized on the map by the future city of Nordlingen, which lay within what would be a mere ringwall plain on Elder Earth). No matter how the Ystroll wandered, it was still bound to cross the Ries meridian.

The imposition of such fairly rigorously devised matrices not only achieves the bisociative effect but is a useful modifying influence on the entertaining but more nebulous functioning of such sub-matrices as Celtic equivalences, and on such very elastic codes as "far-sense" and shape-changing, which still eminently belong to the infantile level of play-fantasy and dream. Throughout the *Saga* the kingly courts of the Tanu and the Firvulag also remain at a kind of "Venusberg" level. The response which carries action forward is something of a revolutionary game, played by new sets of rules. In *The Golden Torc* it leads ultimately to the breaking of the Atlantic barrier and the submergence of Aven. (Compare the "destruction and new seeds" motif at the end of *The Golden Torc* with Alice's ruin of the banquet and the "reincarnation" of the Red Queen as a kitten as Alice returns from the mirror world in *Through the Looking-glass.*)

The retreat to pastoral and the response to some imposed or inbuilt challenge is basic in not a few past-future utopian/dystopian novels. Wells's *The Time Machine* is a perfect and classic example. The Time Traveller leaves what he sees to be a sordidly industrialized environment which he describes as "a grindstone of pain and necessity". Time-travel is seen, however, to be a game of chance. One of the exiles in *The Many-Coloured Land* asks himself before going through the time-gate: "What's in the dark that I'm so afraid of finding/not finding?" Wells's Time Traveller in momentary fear of oblivion pulls the lever, ending a journey the imagery of which matches vividly the spin of a roulette wheel—the dial hands racing round faster and faster, the sun-belt swaying up and down from solstice to solstice, the flash of snow across the world being followed stroboscopically by the brief green bursts of spring. He is spilled out at the foot of the White Sphinx into the world of the Eloi, the delicate, androgynous fruit-eating people who "live only to adorn themselves with flowers, to dance, to sing in the sunlight". He finds himself "garlanded with flowers, and surrounded by an eddying mass of self-coloured robes and shining white limbs, in a melodious whirl of laughter and laughing speech."

This tableau is pitched somewhere between Gaugin's Tahiti and certain of Blake's swirling female groups[8] (we shall note later Wells's familiarity with Blake's imagery.) It is unmistakably an Eden, though an Eden *maudit;* an Eden under the shadow of the

mutated subterranean Morlocks who maintain the effete Eloi simply as their food supply. Creatures of nightmare, extrapolations from Wells's appraisal of contemporary trends towards underground urban life,[9] the Morlocks provide the energizing challenge. The final battle with them, the Traveller laying about him with flame and iron bar, is not unlike the iron-and-flame attack on the alien Tanu in the last chapters of *The Many-Coloured Land.* The frameworks of the two novels have, again, points of similarity. Just as Julian May obtains her bisociative effect by an overlap of the two "fields of play"—Pliocene and (six million years in the future) "Elder" Europe, so it is obtained in *The Time Machine* by an overlap of past and future Thames Valleys: the familiar names of Wandsworth and Battersea appear in the context of sub-tropical ocean creeks; and the Palace of Green Porcelain, the reader comes to realise, is sited on what was some eight hundred thousand years ago Wimbledon Common.

In setting out the plan of this essay I said that there was a considerable merging of the categories. The fantasy element in play and the dream motif in science fiction are linked; and I am now going on to trace this dream element in novels we have so far considered, and then in Wells's interplanetary novel, *The First Men in the Moon.*

Arthur Koestler writes of the archaic, emotion-guided, underground reasoning of dreams: "If these ancient codes which govern the games of the dreamer were allowed to operate in the waking state, they would play havoc with civilized adult behaviour; they must be kept underground." At the same time, there operates in these "games of the dreamer" a "passive bisociation" allowing matrices to be juxtaposed in ways that would not otherwise happen.

Reverting for a moment to *The Many-Coloured Land,* there is a sense in which entry into Exile is entry into dream, and the various movements away from exile (both human and alien) are movements towards reality. There are certain episodes with a particularly dream-like content. One such is that which takes place at the court of King Yeochee IV, surrealistic and semi-farcical, though leading to a positive outcome. It happens (symbolically enough) in a cavern beneath a mountain where Swiss cheese and swizzle-sticks, jewellery and jokes, lamias and lechery co-exist in an ambience of glowing coloured rocks and marimba music. Out of this Disneyworld nonsense emerges the fragile alliance between technologically competent humans and the shape-changing, magic-orientated Firvulag—a psychologically significant concordat.

In Wells's *The Time Machine* both Eloi and Morlocks have dream attributes, as have the paradisal lagoons and waterfalls and the cupola-surmounted pits of hell. Wells in *Experiment in Autobiography* has described how at the period of his early fiction eidetic images of remote and mysterious landscapes, of prehistoric monsters, of sunlit oceans would swim out of the darkness into his visual consciousness and form the nucleus of his stories. (C.S. Lewis in *Of Other Worlds* says something rather similar of the origins of *Perelandra* and of the Narnian books.) Towards the end of *The Time Machine,* the Traveller, telling the story to his assembled confidants, becomes confused when questioned about the faded flowers he has returned with, and says:

> I'm damned if it isn't all going. This room and you, and the atmosphere is all too much for my memory. Did I ever make a Time Machine . . . or is it all only a dream?

The novel is then put back on to an even keel of fictional actuality, but only after such tacit admission of its dream-world roots, an admission sparked by the contrast between the

flowers of unknown species given to him by Weena, symbolic of the erotic "flower people" he had encountered, and the everydayness of his audience, scraping their chairs, looking at their watches, lighting matches, puffing at pipes and cigars—a drawing room, learned society kind of matrix, where the codes of his dream-world and the strategies of his dream-game didn't operate. The flowers here are tokens of that continuing radiance shed on the world outside, of which Huizinga wrote. One is strongly reminded of an entry in Coleridge's Notebook (29 April 1817):

> If a man could pass through Paradise in a dream, and have a flower presented to him as a pledge that he had been there, and if he found the flower in his hand when he awoke—Aye!—and what then?

In *The First Men in the Moon* Wells's protagonist, Bedford, also brings back "a pledge that he had been there"—his bar and chains of gold. In taking this novel as example of the "dream projection" category, I am not losing sight of the fact that it overlaps so far into that it could also be taken as an example of the "life on other planets" category. Nevertheless we shall find that in it dream structure and dream imagery are dominant, noting that at the very end of the main narrative Bedford says:

> So the story closes as finally and completely as a dream. It fits so little with the other things of life, so much that is utterly remote from all human experience, the leaping, the eating, the weightlessness, that indeed there are moments when, in spite of my moon gold, I do more than half believe myself that the whole thing was a dream.[10]

There is quite a resemblance here to the recapitulatory dream fantasized by the Alice-surrogate character (her sister) at the end of *Wonderland,* listing the extravagant images and actions of dream and contrasting them with the "dull reality" of waking. In another way, too, I am reminded of Alice's attempt to produce *real* tears to persuade Tweedledum and Tweedledee that everything is *not* happening in a dream. In fact if we compare *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* with *The First Men in the Moon* we find that both Lewis Carroll and Wells introduce dream images into actual, though very different, landscapes. In the Alice books Carroll, whose mental life was somewhat games-obsessed, progresses his plots by making use of the "codes" of court cards and of chess; but his landscape matrices here, as also in *Sylvie and Bruno,*[11] are shaped out of the rose gardens, croquet lawns and river-reaches of Oxford, the train journey to Paddington, the beaches of the Isle of Wight. Such familiar settings are entered into through traumatic subterranean falls, by swimming across a cavernous pool, squeezing through narrow passages or through mirror-reversals, and by walking on constantly branching paths: all dream experiences demanding a logic of their own.

In Wells the interplanetary and lunar landscapes, if speculatively envisaged, are rationally approached. Cavor's preliminary exposition of the moon's physics, geology etc. would pass muster in 1901—lava seas, extreme temperatures, thin atmosphere, frozen gases, volcanic gulfs. To some extent this empirical approach is continued through the action on the moon itself, but the dream elements interact with the scientific ones to produce many situations and images which strangely parallel those of the overtly dream-structured fantasies of Lewis Carroll: an underground world; a cylindrical shaft bottomed by an inky ocean, illusion-producing fungi; weightless flight which "had something of the effect of nightmares when one falls and falls". It is remarkable how frequently the words "nightmare", "confused", "fantastic", "dream" occur: "It's like the landscape of a dream"; "I rubbed my eyes, doubting whether we had not slept and dreamt these things by virtue of the fungus we had eaten."

Wells maintained the device of opposed matrices through the later chapters of his book where the emphases are on, first, a moon/earth dichotomy involving Bedford's adjustment to the materialistic commonplaces of earth after his dream-like moon and space experiences; and, secondly, an earth-logic/lunar-logic contrast expressed in Gavor's messages to earth. Of his "visionary" sources Wells wrote:

> I would discover that I was peering into remote and mysterious worlds, ruled by a logical order indeed, but other than our common sanity.

Wells uses conflicting logics to good bisociative effect, as for example in the interrogation of Cavor by the Grand Lunar:

> He searched me with questions. "And for all sorts of work you have the same sort of men. But who thinks? Who governs?"
>
> I gave him an outline of the democratic method.
>
> When I had done he ordered cooling sprays upon his brow, and then requested me to repeat my explanation conceiving something had miscarried

In the end what Bedford calls "the inhuman reason of the moon" condemns Cavor, and after all of his transmitted messages have ceased Bedford sees him, in a dream, struggling in the hands of the Selenites as they press upon him, forcing him step by step into darkness and silence. One thinks again of the "inhuman reason" of *Looking-Glass* and *Wonderland*, of the Queen of Hearts insisting "First the sentence, then the verdict" before shouting "Off with her head!" This leads to the nightmare ending of *Wonderland*. At the moment of Alice's waking "the whole pack rose up into the air, and came flying down upon her; she gave a little scream, half of fright and half of anger, and tried to beat them off . . ." The logic of a dream ends with waking: of a game in its ending.

Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie in their biographical study *The Time Traveller*, in considering the stimulus of Wells's eidetic imaging, wrote: "By this means Wells produced stories which were rich in symbolism and dreamlike in their structure." In the dream-structure of *Through the Looking-Glass* there is a conscious application of the strategy of the game of chess, and a use of its moves symbolically. In a prefatory note and diagram Carroll revealed that his scenario was "White pawn (Alice) to play and win in eleven moves." There appears to be no such conscious strategy or games-symbolism in *The First Men in the Moon*. What does shape the progress of the novel is a series of transformations very much akin, I suggest, to those of alchemy.

Alchemy, though not exactly a game, had, as have many ritualistic activities, the characteristics of "play". It took participants back to origins, and then committed them seriously to a strict body of rules by which action was progressed. The drama of the strife and marriage of elements took place in an arena set apart from everyday life. It was for the true adept a mental or spiritual discipline rather than a quest for precious metal. What was produced and the paths by which it was created had high symbolic value. Jung[12] equated it with the process of individuation. Jung also demonstrated that among patients seeking to resolve and heal a psychic disunity (i.e. to achieve individuation) it is possible to find in their dreams and drawings employment of archetypal patterns common to alchemical lore, even though they may have no conscious or direct knowledge of the arcane science. I am suggesting that such a process was at work in Wells, and that, as I shall show later, his scientific education could have provided the raw material, subconsciously stored, for imagery of this kind.

Wells during the late 1890s had been going through medical, sexual, social and literary

crises. With his residential move to the coast, the birth of his first son, the recapitulary autobiographical exercise of writing *Love and Mr. Lewisham,* and the reaching of what he called a *modus vivendi* with his first wife, Jane, his life and thought were by the turn of the century considerably reshaped, and had in some respects reached a more consciously integrated level.[13] The "underground" processes accompanying this have their reflection in *The First Men in the Moon* (published in 1901). Wells thought of it primarily as a not too serious money-spinning piece of work. Perhaps because he was not during most of the novel attempting close involvement with the "real" world, it acted as a "releaser" of certain subconscious conflicts, moved him back to their origins and forward towards their resolution: which is very much what happens in some forms of play, in ritualistic activities such as alchemy, and to some extent in dream.

In the light of this we may consider the imagery and symbolism of the novel, bearing in mind all along that its "alchemical" structure is carrying a great deal of "dream" content. We start with an alembic. There is a "sorcerer's apprentice" type of catastrophe. Then there is a sphere flying into space. This is the spherical Cavorite spaceship, heated over a furnace, and containing two men—two "opposites". Bedford is the materialist on the make: Cavor is the enquiring scientist and humanist. They are proper material for the *conjunctio oppositorum* out of which the body of resurrection may, according to alchemical rites, be shaped. As we shall see, this is achieved, after the required tribulations, in the transfigured *persona*[14] of Bedford on his return journey in the sphere.

The *vas* is the prime instrument of alchemy. Jung says: "It must be completely round so that the influence of the stars may contribute to the success of the operation." He also identifies it with the "Chariot of Aristotle", defined as "the tomb of the serpent", which is given a four-fold rotation, i.e. is four-fold and mandala-like in function. It is immersed in the blackest sea, and in it the weightless stone is formed. It then emerges from the sea of unconsciousness on to the dry land.

Viewed in these contexts, the experience of Bedford and Cavor in the journeying sphere are rich in symbolism. As the Cavorite segments are opened their shapes are marked by an infinity of stars, but the sky outside "was as black as the darkness within the sphere". The polarity of the composite two is at first continuously developed. Cavor is reading Shakespeare: Bedford a copy of *Lloyd's News.* Cavor's thoughts dwell on the moon's possible life forms. He imagines something worm-like: creatures hiding in deep burrows from the cold of the lunar night. Already such projection of serpent imagery to an existence *within* the moon presages a further variation on the alchemical motif, with the moon's body as the scene of transformation. Bedford's thoughts, on the other hand, when they go moonwards, are of potential mineral wealth to be exploited, of his "planetary rights of pre-emption". To some extent he prefigures C.S. Lewis's Weston *(Out of the Silent Planet)* just as in Cavor there are faint intimations of Ransom; and together they nicely represent the two natures of the alchemist.

But as the journey progresses the Bedford/Cavor opposites become merged in a common unconsciousness, a curious drowsiness overtakes them:

> And so . . . in a sort of quiescence that was neither waking nor slumber, we fell through a space of time that had neither night nor day in it, silently, softly and swiftly towards the moon.

Eventually emerging from the sphere's man-hole, they are "born" on to the moon's surface, which at first confuses them, and then provides them with a paradisal interlude of

child-like fantasy, illusion, and experimentation: learning to communicate, to walk, semi-illusory experiences of flying which are "horrible, delightful and wild as a nightmare." What happens subsequently is a reprise of the alchemical theme. They enter again into a sphere; but now the sphere, the alembic, is the body of the moon itself. After becoming intoxicated by eating the lunar fungus, they are carried underground by chitinous guards of the huge worm-like mooncalves. Racked with pain, covered with scratches, Bedford wakens to total blackness, in a space full of "a dull confusion of noises, an all pervading cloudy background of sound."

In alchemy, associated with the *prima materia* and the *massa confusa,* the basic sphere-enfolded constituents, there is the "hylic water" which contains an elemental fire. The nascent being within the sphere makes its journey through these waters of blackness and chaos, out of which the new creation will come into existence. The alchemist saw in the symbolic reactions and colour changes a metamorphic drama leading to the emergence of the perfected entity. Following the blackness of the nigredo came the *putrefactio,* the *mortificatio,* and the *calcinatio.* The original *nigredo,* or chaos of night, persists through these processes of death and calcination. Beyond the calcination comes the *ablutio,* the cleansing, and then the *rubedo* and the *albedo,* the reddening and the achievement of whiteness. These last phases are equated with the breaking of dawn, the slow spread of light into the sky, and the rising of the sun.

Keeping these processes in mind, we follow Bedford/Cavor through a succession of trials inside the lunar sphere. When Bedford recovers consciousness he is in the darkness of the *nigredo,* which first reminds him of childhood punishments, and then leads him to think himself *still in Cavor's sphere.* He even supposes that he may be dead. The "velvet pall" of the darkness is at last broken by a bluish light, as the guards open their prison to carry them through an inky subterranean world lit by a kind of irradiating phosphorescence thrown from a milky liquid flowing in gutters along the tunnel paths. It streams into tanks, overflows, and falls enormous distances into "the waters of a Central Sea, glowing and eddying in strange perturbation." It would be hard to better this as an imaginative image of the "hylic water".

Shortly they escape from their captors to follow their own route of flight through the moon's interior. Their passage gives them a view into a great cave. They hear the chid-chid of knives and see an endless chain of the big-worm carcasses being cut up. (Snakes = symbols of the primal emotions.) Spotted by the Selenite butchers and guards, they are attacked. Bedford seizes a couple of crow-bars and, using them as clubs, becomes himself involved in the *putrefactio/mortifactio:*

> wading among those leathery thin things . . . hitting, first right, then left . . .
> Little drops of moisture flew about. I trod on things that crushed and piped and went slippery. They seemed to open and close and flow like water.

Later Bedford recalls:

> . . . they had smashed like wax and scattered like chaff, and fled and vanished like the creatures of a dream.

After this fragmenting carnage, Bedford and Cavor emerge on to the moon's surface. Transformation into gold becomes a dominant motif. Their chains and crow-bars which previously had a leaden hue shine as gold. In a landscape of twisted lava they are scorched by intense heat. The vegetation has shrivelled and decayed. The lichens, crackling and

dry, fall away from the rocks to reveal veins and bosses of gold. All the imagery here is of the *calcinatio*.

Then comes a change in Bedford (he having soon become the sole protagonist, Cavor only appearing again in the final "message" chapters). He begins to wonder about the nature and purpose of the individual in "the wider sweep" of human enterprise. As he looks at the shrivelled plants, which he realizes have now "scattered their spores to the four quarters of the moon" (again mandala imagery), shadows lengthen, flakes of snow fall, and he observes that "into the great lake of darkness westward, a vast wreath of mist was sinking." This *ablutio* rapidly merges into the *rubedo* and *albedo*. As he strives to regain the Cavorite sphere he sees the sun, which he describes both as "serpent-girdled" and "a blood-red crescent" lying upon the moon's rim; and when at last he enters the sphere and closes the shutters his last glimpse is of "the blazing red streamers of the sinking sun, dancing and flickering through the snow storm"; of "snow whirling thicker and thicker, black against the light."

All of Bedford's sensations during this phase of the novel are those of individual extinction:

> Over me, around me, closing in on me, embracing me ever nearer, was the Eternal . . . that enormous void in which all light and life and being is but the thin and vanishing splendour of a falling star.

Even as he enters and activates the Cavorite sphere "It was almost as though I had been killed . . . One moment a passion of agonising existence and fear; the next darkness and stillness, neither light nor life nor sun, moon nor stars, the blank infinite." These are the images of eclipse (an apocalyptic eclipse also marks the culmination of the Traveller's journey in *The Time Machine*.)

Jung describes the conjunction of sun and moon in eclipse as the union of the conscious, symbolized by the sun, with the unconscious, symbolized by the moon. The "new" moon is a destroyer and can corrupt the body of the sun; at the same time, out of the union and out of the corruption is drawn the prize, the reborn sun, the gold, the individuated man.

This psychological process can be traced in the immediately following chapter: "Mr Bedford in Infinite Space". The Cavorite sphere is again alembic and scene of the final transformation. The conjunction is resolved as Bedford opens a window on one side of the sphere. The sun is reborn in splendour; Bedford is "flattened and blinded" by the light. He opens a window on the other side and there is a huge crescent moon with, far beyond it a small crescent earth. By adjusting the shutters he flies back towards earth, travelling in a darkness lit only by earthshine and the stars, light falling on the golden chain and bar, token and product of his lunar journey, which float weightless in the middle of the sphere—a near perfect image of alchemical consummation.

With the sun's rebirth Bedford is reborn. His sense of loneliness and desolation disappears and is replaced by an experience of peace and timelessness:

> Sometimes it seemed to me as though I sat through immeasurable eternities like some god upon a lotus leaf . . . I floated, thinking with a strange breadth and freedom of all that we had undergone, and of all my life and motives, and the secret issues of my being.

In an expanded moment, which lasts the voyage, the essential Bedford seems to exist in a different continuum. He is no more Bedford than he is anyone else, but "only a mind floating in the still serenity of space". Earthbound Bedford's life passes in review. The

"lotus-seated" Bedford peers through the peephole of "puppet" Bedford's memory to observe that little figure performing the antic mechanical routines of business life. When Bedford actually returns to earth, however, he is quickly absorbed into the matrix of the materialistic everyday Edwardian world, with only glimpses, dream-like and half-believed, of the moon world and its elemental gold, supported by the blurred, fading, and eventually silenced messages of Cavor.[15]

I have suggested that the image-content and structure which parallel those of the alchemical process are, like them, archetypal in origin; but there were other possible contributory sources. Between 1884 and 1887 Wells studied, at what later became Imperial College, successively zoology under Huxley, physics under Guthrie, and geology under Judd. Huxley thrilled him and strongly and permanently influenced his thought; the teaching of the other two, conventional and dull, bored him. Nevertheless he learned to make (clumsily) and to describe scientific apparatus; and under Judd he worked on crystallography. In autobiographical writing he tells how exciting he found the changes in crystalline axes with changes in chemical composition, and the fluctuations of crystalline colour and form within mineral groups. He found delight in "the blaze of glowing colour" seen when using the polarizing prisms of a petrographical microscope:

> One saw the jumbled crystals thrust against each other, distorted by unknown pressures, clouded and stained by obscure infiltrations. In many there were . . . hollows . . . and within these hollows were drops of fluid and bubbles of gas . . . They were telling in this bright clear and glowing fashion of tensions, solutions, releases, the steady creeping of molecule past molecule, age after age. And in their interpretation lay the history and understanding of the earth as a whole.

This was not exactly alchemy, but such insights are of the same psychological order as those of alchemy—a reaching back to origins, an empathy with the processes of transformation. (As Frank Avray Wilson put it in his remarkable book *Crystal and Cosmos:* "The material which alchemy can make use of, and the imageries it can evoke to express its principles, are virtually unlimited".) Nevertheless, inspiring as he found practical crystallography, the routine work in geology did not hold Wells, and he took time off to browse in the nearby Reading Room and Art Library (sometimes reserving works for longer study.) He became engrossed in Carlyle's *The French Revolution*—a book which Carlyle said came "hot out of my own soul, born in blackness, whirlwind and sorrow"; and Blake's prophetic poems were also antidotes to boredom. More than that, they gripped him:

> There, ready to hand on the table, was a folder of Blake's strangely tinted designs; his hank-haired rugose gods, his upward whirling spirits, his strained, contorted powers of light and darkness. What exactly was Blake getting at in this stuff about "Albion"? He seemed to have everything to say and Judd seemed to have nothing to say. Almost subconsciously, the notebooks and textbooks drew themselves apart into a shocked little heap and the riddles of Blake opened of their own accord to me.

Blake's work is of course steeped in his knowledge of Fludd, Paracelsus and other alchemical writers. Blake's "Albion" is identical with his "Eternal Man". Perhaps the kind of riddle "opened" to Wells, and then lying dormant, rich in alchemical content, was akin to this image from *The Four Zoas:*

> The Eternal Man sleeps in the Earth, nor feels the vig'rous sun
> Nor silent moon, nor all the hosts of heaven move in his body,
> His fiery halls are dark and around his limbs the Serpent Orc
> Fold without fold encompasses him.

There is certainly in it a parallel to Bedford's imprisonment in the lunar labyrinth before his liberation in the individuation experience of the sphere; and the tremendous final sections of *Jerusalem*, following the line: "As the Sun and Moon lead forward the Visions of Heaven and Earth . . ." correspond at several points of imagery and of theme to the "mystic" elements in Wells's chapter "Mr Bedford in Infinite Space". In fact some of the plates for *Jerusalem* are similar to Wells's description of those he spent so much time over (at the same period as the revelations of the crystal).

Blake's prophetic books are themselves an extraordinary structuring of "codes" and "matrices" amounting to an extravagant but compelling private cosmic game. Blake scholars have even tried to make maps of territories of the mind, such as Golganooza; and have laboured long to chart the protean mergings and transformations of his protagonists. Blake also gives evidence of the poet's use of opposed and complementary "matrices"—the metamorphoses of the soul juxtaposed with revolution in society; cosmic or mythopoeic imagery juxtaposed with familiar landscapes. For example:

> The fields from Islington to Marybone
> To Primrose Hill and Saint John's Wood,
> Were builded over with pillars of gold,
> And there Jerusalem's pillars stood.
>
> Pancrass and Kentish-town repose
> Among her golden pillars high,
> Among her golden arches which
> Shine upon the starry sky.

Or as Blake put it elsewhere in this same epic poem *(Jerusalem)*: "All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright sculptures of Los's Halls."

It remains to show how this trick of opposed matrices works in our last-considered category of science fiction—that centred on realistically conceived life on an alien planet, involving alien anthropologies, religions, sun-systems, galaxies, etc. The relationship of such life to our own earth-history, solar system, etc. may exist only in that our own experience must necesarily provide the basis for comparison and contrast; or there may be a deliberately counter-plotted interaction between "us" and "them". Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* exemplifies the first type; Frederik Pohl's "Heechee" novels the second. Novels and stories of either type can be pitched mythopoeically, sociologically or psychologically, or may mix these modes, as in fact do both of the examples just given. The "Cavor's message" chapters of *The First Men in the Moon* show how the twin-matrix technique can illuminate human history and customs. In fact, A.J. Toynbee in his *A Study of History* cites the Selenites as demonstrating the nature of what he calls the "arrested civilizations" of helotism and induced over-specialization, such as the Spartan agôgê, or the slave-households of the Ottoman dynasty.

In all successful sf ventures of this category we find that a clear set of "rules" concerning e.g. geology, economics, anthropology, are set out. These provide the codes of the author's "game". As for matrix, even where there is no overt relationship between earth and alien planet, there may be a framework offering comparison and contrast with an identifiable terrestrial environment. For example, Frank Herbert's *Dune* novels have such links with the dry terrains and the ways of life and thought evolved there.

In the example looked at in some detail here—Brian Aldiss's *Helliconia Spring*—the author uses the Helliconian "arena" in a number of sophisticated ways. First, and here

we take the whole planned trilogy into account, he projects the terrestrial rhythm of the seasons on to a vaster astrophysical canvas, stretching through generations a span of planetary meteorological change which in the earthly experience of a "year" runs its course many times in a lifetime. Secondly, he conversely contracts the long, slow epochs of earthly climatic change—ice-ages waxing and waning—into comparatively short periods of alien history.

And thirdly, he creates a point which is both inside and outside the system to enable us to conceive these changes as resulting from a gravitational ballet indifferent to any influence on the planet's life. The bisociative "spark" is achieved by first holding back knowledge of, and then using quite sparingly knowledge formulated by the monitoring earth satellites. The result is very much a "games" effect. On the one hand the helpless pawns or puppets; on the other the inexorable laws and the objective approach. Compare these related paragraphs:

> The slow erosion of Freyr's disc began early in the afternoon . . . When the suns set they were still locked together. There was no guarantee that they would appear again, or appear again whole. Most of the population ran out into the open to watch the unprecendented sunset. In ashen silence the maimed sentinels slid from view. "It's the end of the world!" cried a trader, "Tomorrow the ice will be back."

> On the Earth Observation Station the eclipses were merely part of a pattern predicted by the two intersecting ecliptics of Star A and Star B, which were inclined to each other at an angle of ten degrees . . . The partial eclipse of 632, heralding the series of twenty, was viewed by the scholars of the Observation Station with correct scientific detachment. The ragged fellows bargaining through the lanes of Embruddock were treated to compassionate smiles by the gods who rode high overhead.

At yet another remove, one of a thousand light-years, the signals from the monitoring stations are received on solar planets, are watched in huge auditoria by multitudes who gather to follow crisis after crisis on the alien planet, so unlike, yet so like their own. The distant game, involving space-time and relativity, in transmission and in perception, is played out on holoscreens. It is, however, something more than an entertainment spectacle. It may "shed its radiance", may be a means to engender "understanding on a divine scale (which) might resolve the compartments between the infinite orders of being": that is to enable human life to be reviewed *sub specie aeternitatis.* One of the Helliconian protagonists is described as being received "as a contemporary, removed only to another sphere, like a platonic ideal casting its shadow on the vast cave of the auditorium."[16]

This "distancing" or objectifying manoeuvre does not detract from but rather adds to the impact of the rich and varied detail of trek, hunt, plague, war and individual triumph and tragedy which fills the main body of the narrative. All of this has, in its own right, the characteristics of a carefully devised sf "game", with its exotic fauna, customs, vocabulary, etc., while the terrestrial "voyeur" cult has the characteristics of a secondary game, inset, yet integral to the novel's main development. There are many examples in science fiction of an actual or created sport, game or art dominating or being woven into the story's structure: a technique particularly effective when the rules of an invented game also reflect the culture and/or the terrain of an imagined world. The game of "hussade", for example, embodies in its codes both the watery nature and the competitive ethos of Jack Vance's *Trullion: Alastor 2262.* In Julian May's *The Saga of the Exiles* the Wild Hunt and the Grand Combat, derived from Celtic, Teutonic and other folkloric origins,

are themselves games within the total fantasy game of the *Saga's* main action. The Grand Combat especially exhibits rules and conventions which reflect and sometimes clarify (and sometimes because of their intricacy tend to obfuscate) the weird and over-ripe hierarchism of Tanu and Firvulag society.

The playful skills equally as well as sports may be used in this way. In Arthur C. Clarke's *The Fountains of Paradise* the flying of a kite is paradigmatic. Its lift and potential freedom are visualized first in the protagonist's childhood; and the same model recurs thematically throughout the novel, paralleling prime images in each of the opposed matrix worlds—the rising and falling fountains in the ancient world of Taprobane; the falling and rising space-elevator in the future world of Ring City technology. In Robert Silverberg's *Lord Valentine's Castle* an essentially picaresque plot, involving the usurped/wanderer hero-figure, in a "mediaeval planet" setting, is suitably counter-pointed by a technically sophisticated juggling motif.

The skills of juggling (of which Silverberg tells us he has made considerable study) are exercized in a myriad different situations. As the reader comes to identify with the integrity and purposes of the juggling brotherhood in its progress from fairground to planet mastery, the actual variations in performance are felt to be either *en rapport* or out of tune with the temper of their audiences—whether patrons, allies, or antagonists.

This juggling-act thus ranges the spectrum, from horseplay through warfare to harmony and contemplation. At times it brings into focus moments of Zen; continuously it maintains not only the ingredient of "play" but that of playfulness, which, paradoxically, is essential to the seriousness of Lord Valentine's fantastic pilgrimage. A quality of "tension and release" created when the act is first described is sustained to the very end of the novel. Valentine, restored to his rulership, realizes that a new weight of responsibility must isolate him from the free-wandering life of his juggling companions. In the Castle throne-room he says to Carabella: "Perhaps privately, when the court is looking the other way, we can all get together now and then, and throw the clubs . . ?" The story has, in fact, moved progressively towards a plane on which the "play" matrix confronts that of "political" life, though in this too, aided by congruencies of metaphor and "code" in both juggling and affairs of state, we can discern the outlines of a game.

However, the modelling of sf narratives *around* themes of play and sport is not the main point of the body of ideas presented here. The main point is that science fiction itself is an imaginative art in which special rules, limits, and arenas of play are of key importance. If a regress is thereby involved this may, on the principle of *reculer pour mieux sauter,* be transformed into a springboard for forward-reaching experiences and fresh insights into the nature of the "real" world. Such functions are also typical of a spectrum of human activities ranging from children's play, through structured games and sports, to ritual and to some of science fiction's sister arts, particularly those in the related fields of mime, dance, drama, and poetic creativity.

In an earlier reference to Blake, I briefly outlined some of the dimensions of this last-mentioned topic. It is too large to pursue generally, but a word must be added on the place of specifically sf-oriented verse in our present contexts. John Fairfax, in introducing his excellent anthology of "space poetry" *Frontier of Going* (Panther Books, 1969) observed: "Poetry and philosophy make uneasy bedfellows." Poetry and play, on the other hand, readily share a bed. This is because metaphor and analogy are of the essence

of poetry; which means that poetry will often share with play that bisociative flash; and in verse bending in the direction of science fiction and fantasy all the factors we have been discussing may reinforce the playful element.

Take, for example, Robert Conquest's poem "Far Out" (included in the anthology just mentioned). It brilliantly sets up, with sardonic wit and subtle allusion, a whole universe of exotics to rival those of Kirk Allen—or even Olaf Stapledon—and within that universe imagines the war-ploys, arts and pleasures available: all this in audaciously Browningesque rhymed couplets.

Of communicated interstellar aggression he writes:

> Mood? Touch of pure
> Terror? Well, sure,
> —A psychotransducer.
> D'you feel it too, Sir?
> Rigellian Thanatics
> Go in for such tricks.

And of galactic arts in "the sphere of the possible":

> . . . One note plays
> Through thirty-five days
> For the whole of the Horsehead
> Nebula Gorsedd.

This last image, gently satirical both of the longueurs of the bardic festival and of the extravagances of science fiction, strikes the genuine "bisociative spark": robed and spectacled druids assembling in Aberystwyth/distant stars lighting dusky dust-clouds. One might almost call it a Doctor Who Effect. Moreover, the prosodic technique of *enjambement* (continuation of sentence and sense from one line to the next) produces a slight shock to clinch the impact.

The same practice, aided by cancelled punctuation, is used in the following pastiche (of my own devising) as a resolving expedient where apparently incompatible matrices are slid together to produce a succession of seeming paradoxes:

> I saw a black hole shedding silver rain
> I saw a cloudlet dying on the plain
> I saw a monster praying on his knees
> I saw a bishop swinging from the trees
> I saw an orang-outang mapping stars
> I saw an astrophysicist astride a whale
> I saw a merman blown upon a gale
> I saw an eagle orbiting the sun
> I saw a starship as my tale was done
> I saw a galaxy as small as man
> I saw the black hole where my tale began

The "strategy" of this jingle is implicit in its title: "Round Tour". The pastiche's original is a well-known verse variant on the ancient folk and children's word-game of riddle-me-re. That type of poem, and also the kinds of science fiction and fantasy we have been considering, have, like all play, their beginnings rooted in that same inventiveness which is characteristic of the child. What they grow towards, while at the same time they contain the seeds of, is, to make use of both the punning ambiguity of Arthur Clarke's title and the tenor of his theme, childhood's end.

Notes

1 "The Jet-propelled Couch" is contained in Robert Lindner's book of psychoanalytic studies, *The Fifty Minute Hour* (1955).

2 Francis Thompson's poem "At Lord's" conveys the mood. He conjures from memory the shades of phantom batsmen playing to the bowling of a ghost—the cricketing heroes of his northern youth:

> As the run-stealers flicker to and fro, to and fro,
> O my Hornby and my Barlow, long ago!

3 Paul Linebarger's pseudonym was Cordwainer Smith.

4 The sequel to *Gateway* is *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon*—the title itself involves two matrices. Archetypal figures, in action at the furthest fringes of technology and astronomy, are easily identifiable, e.g. the eternal boy, the *anima,* the Wise Old Man. It is typical of Pohl's originality to "embody" the last-named in the computer programme "Albert Einstein", his chief protagonist's holographic, pipe-smoking, guide, philosopher, servant and guru.

5 "Havoc and spoil and ruin are my gain" ends the briefing of Satan by Chaos in Book 2 of *Paradise Lost.* Books 2 and 3, in particular, embrace two worlds: that of the theomorphic archetypes, and that of solar space—Milton's great conflation of ancient, mediaeval and "modern" cosmologies.

6 In his *British Drama* (1925) Alardyce Nicoll, writing of the playful origins of the Masque, describes also the counter-rôle, producing what we have thought of as a bisociative effect, of the "anticks", from Jonson's time onwards.

7 This fiction, reminiscent of some conjectural theories of the cause of the Tunguska blast, is offset by a scientific account in the geological appendix to *The Golden Torc.*

8 cf. "The River of Life" and the title page of *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion.* The latter parallels in its contrasting imagery (light/darkness: free and innocent sexual energy/predatory destruction) the Eloi-Morlock dichotomy. There are resonances too between *The Time Machine* and the *Visions* and the rape of Persephone from the flowery fields of Enna, with all its mythic implications for life, death, and renewal; though in Wells's story there is hint of renewal only in the two white flowers brought back from the final darkness to where "the sun got golden again, and the sky blue" to be "witness that even when mind and strength had gone gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived in the heart of man."

9 Almost three-quarters of a century later Lewis Mumford wrote *The City in History* (1961), in which he detailed the growth of the underground city (together with its complement the high-rise city) of air-conditioned plazas, offices, transport systems, etc. He sees them as dehumanizing and as the "sealed-in" successors to the palaeotechnic city of which Coketown was prototype. Cordwainer Smith's "Deepdown" territory and Asimov's *The Caves of Steel* are fictional variations on this theme.

10 Peter Kemp suggests (*TLS* 13.8.82) that Wells's fascination with food finds expression in such bizarre character namings as Amontillado and Wensleydale. If Wells's mind did work in this way, may there not be some effect of his often-referred-to childhood dreams and nightmares, linked subsconsciously with the nursery saying most children then knew, about "climbing the wooden stairs to Bedfordshire", underlying his naming of Bedford, i.e. the man who ascends into a world of sleep and dream.

11 The technique of Carroll's dream/fantasy/landscape structuring is explicitly set out in the tabular analysis he includes in his Preface to *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded.*

12 The volumes in the Collected Works of C.G. Jung chiefly used as sources of reference are: *Symbols of Transformation; Aion; Psychology and Alchemy; Alchemical Studies.*

13 In the final chapter of *Love and Mr Lewisham,* Lewisham (the Wells figure) arrives at a view that dedication to the future, and to biological continuity, transcends everything, including individual ambitions and follies: "This alone is life—all these other things . . . are a sort of play." His assessment of his own past is not unlike the personal past as reviewed by Bedford in his visionary experience while returning from the moon. For Wells it was roundabouts and swings, however; for just as Bedford's vision was impermanent, so Wells in giving up "play" lost much. He even eventually gave up as "puerile fantasy" his loved war game played with miniature guns and soldiers, which, as he says, evoked the quality of youthful reveries when he had marshalled phantom troops across the fields of the home counties (cf. *Little Wars* and *The War of the Worlds*). More or less synchronously, while he was becoming a successful "realistic" novelist, polemicist and publicist, most of the unique imaginative flair found in his early scientific romances disappeared, even from such later sf as *The Shape of Things to Come.* In some measure, it revived, though with different emphasis, in the aging Wells's slight but "visionary" fantasies, *All Aboard for Ararat* and *The Happy Turning.*

14 The *persona* is (in the performance of Greek drama) an actor's mask; in its psychological sense, an individual's consciousness as it relates itself to the outer world.

15 Compare this "return" with the return to mundane affairs Coleridge described when, after the interruption of an hour's business, most of his "vision in a dream", of which only the fragmentary *Kubla Khan* survives, passed away "like the image on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast." Whether his account of the origin of the poem is precise or not, Coleridge, as the *Notebooks* show, experienced, distinct from though sometimes merging into his tortured dreams, the same kind of eidetic imaging as did Wells. In *Kubla Khan* the initial dome-creation, the blossoming gardens, followed by rivers flowing through measureless caverns to sink "in tumult" to a sunless sea, the broken rocks dancing like "chaffy grain before the thresher's flail", the voices prophesying war, and finally the re-emergence of the sunny dome, its shadow floating "midway on the waves", the enchanted seer fed on honey-dew and on the milk of Paradise, all strangely, step by step, even image by image, match the dream/alchemical events of Wells's narrative.

16 Again a parallel to Blake's: "All things acted on earth are seen in the bright sculptures of Los's Halls." This, in fact, indicates Platonic and Neoplatonic concepts helping to shape both fictions. There are two questions posed in *The Enneads* of Plotinus (tr. MacKenna) which, for their oblique relevance and implications, might well haunt any reader of *Helliconia Spring:* ". . . why then should not the All use the sphere of the fixed stars to perceive the sphere of the planets and the latter to perceive the earth and the earth's content? Things on earth are certainly affected by what passes in other regions of the All; what then need prevent the All from having, in some appropriate way, the perception of these changes?"

Since his last appearance in our pages with an account of Life in the Fourth Dimension: C.H. Hinton and his Scientific Romances *(in* Foundation 18), *Rudy Rucker has won a lot of notice for a whole clutch of zestful novels often inspired by mathematical concepts:* White Light, Spacetime Donuts, Software, *with* Sex Sphere *and* The Fifty-Seventh Franz Kafka *(a story collection) due—all from Ace Books, with* White Light *also from Virgin in the UK. Currently he is rewriting his Dover Book* Geometry, Relativity and the Fourth Dimension *under the new title* The Fourth Dimension and How to Get There, *and is working on a new novel provisionally entitled* Fall-Out *which is set after World War III in his present abode of Lynchburg, Virginia, the stronghold also of Jerry Falwell, leader of the Moral Majority. What more daunting environment could a sciencefictioner inhabit? In the following lively interview Rudy Rucker reveals all.*

On the Edge: An Interview with Rudy Rucker

WILLIAM D. VERNON

The initial version of this interview was done in February, 1982, for The Science Fiction Radio Show, syndicated in the US by the Longhorn Radio Network. It is Rucker's first interview. After going over the tapes, Rucker updated and edited his answers to produce the written interview we have here. This interview is copyrighted to The Permian Basin Science Fiction Association, 1982.

— WV, May 1982

WV: On the back of *Spacetime Donuts* the Panshins are quoted as saying, "Rucker has busted free from all the linearites and restrictions of modern science fiction." So what I want to do first is to explore your science fiction roots. When did you get interested in sf?
RR: When I was growing up I read quite a bit of science fiction. My mother used to get me Heinlein novels like *Revolt in 2100, The Rolling Stones,* and *Starman Jones.* I really enjoyed those books, and then I used to go to the library. The Louisville Free Public Library. They had one shelf of sf and I read it all. Stuff like *Best Sci-Fi of 1948.* Then I started reading Robert Sheckley a lot, reading some of his stories many times. In college I read Vonnegut, of course, *Sirens of Titan* being one of my all-time favorites. But around then . . . it was the late Sixties . . . sf didn't seem too exciting. I really went away from it for a number of years. I was more interested in being a beatnik: Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs. And after that I was reading Nabokov a lot, and Borges, and of course Thomas Pynchon. At some point I picked up a copy of Norman Spinrad's *Bug Jack Barron,* and I saw the *Dangerous Visions* anthology about the same time. Around then I wanted to start writing science fiction. I wanted to start writing anything.
WV: When you did decide to write science fiction, the end result was our first exposure to *White Light,* and you did bust through the old sf restrictions. How did you come to do that?
RR: Well, I always wanted to be an avant-garde writer, and science fiction is a place where you can write whatever you want to. It's mass-market surrealism. Actually, the first book I wrote was *Spacetime Donuts.* I think it was '75 or '76 when I wrote it. I started it the day after seeing The Rolling Stones play live in Buffalo. I just really wanted to do something. I wrote *Donuts* during the summer I was teaching in upstate New York. What I wanted to do with that book was to make a strong anarchist statement. That was basically a late Sixties book, even though it was written in the mid Seventies. I couldn't sell it anywhere and finally *Unearth* magazine agreed to serialize it. They serialized two out of three parts and then they went out of business. At that point I lost my job where I was teaching, teaching mathematics, at a branch of the New York State University in Geneseo, New York. They wouldn't give me tenure because I was different. At the last minute I got a grant to do mathematics research in Heidelberg. I got a two-year grant there from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, which is why one of my books is dedicated to von Humboldt. Anyway, I got over there, and to my delight I discovered that the person in charge of my research really didn't care what I did. First I spent about three months trying to solve a problem having to do with infinity: the Continuum Problem. I knew a lot about it, but it's a very difficult problem. And then I decided to write a novel about it. That's how I came to write *White Light, or, What Is Cantor's Continuum Problem?* which is about different levels of infinity. I do want to bust through linearities, I like to tear down the wall and break through to something that is truer.
WV: While we have you in Germany, were some of the experiences there written into your story, "Schrödinger's Cat?"
RR: Yeah, absolutely. That story is just what it was like in Heidelberg. Since then, I've written a novel called *The Sex Sphere,* and that is based totally on my experiences in Europe. I'd hoped to go mainstream on *Sex Sphere,* but it turns out to be my fifth Ace sf book: *White Light, Spacetime Donuts, Software, The Fifty-Seventh Franz Kafka,* which is an anthology of my stories, and then *Sex Sphere.* The sex sphere is a giant ass from the fourth dimension. The first year in Germany I wrote *White Light,* and the second year I

wrote *Software*. With *Software* I was trying something different. In a way, *Donuts, White Light,* and *Sex Sphere* are all autobiographical. In all three the hero is basically me. I wanted to see if I could do a book where I wasn't in it, so *Software* has two heroes, neither one of whom is me. There's a young guy, based on a head I used to hang around with, and there's an old guy more or less based on my father. If anyone likes the book I could do sequels. My overall plan for the books with me in them is, like Jack Kerouac, to do a bunch of novels that add up to my life story. A transcendental autobiography.

WV: It struck me that Felix Rayman, the protagonist in *White Light,* was basically happiest when he was teaching one of his advanced courses, or when he was playing with his little girl. Otherwise he didn't seem all that happy. Is that autobiographical?

RR: I do have three children, and I'm happy when I play with them. With children you just rap on and do anything and they're not going to say *why?*

WV: One thing that I noticed in common between Felix Rayman and the protagonist in "Schrödinger's Cat" is that they both at one time or another were stuck at isolated, second-rate colleges.

RR: Yeah, that was definitely my experience when I was teaching math in this place in upstate New York. It was really Nowheresville. Now, again, by the way, I'm stuck in Nowheresville, in Lynchburg, Virginia. It's like my fate. Mr. Nobody from Nowhere. If you can't deal with something it just keeps coming back to you. It comes back to me even if I *can* deal with it. So now I'm here in Lynchburg, where I've been teaching math at Randolph-Macon Woman's College. I'm just starting to write a post-holocaust novel about Lynchburg called *Fall-Out.*

WV: I want to come back to Lynchburg in a minute. But first let me ask another question about *White Light.* I saw it when it came out and I purposely did not buy it because the packaging led me to believe it wasn't something I would be interested in. I was going to ask you what you thought of the Ace cover, the way it presented *White Light* as a book like *Life After Life* and *Jonathan Livingston Seagull?*

RR: Well, when I saw it I was surprised. It amused me, I thought it was funny. The one thing I got them to put on the cover was, "Do You Want To See God." I got them to put that on the back. I've met people since then that are really into dream stuff and astral travel. They've read *White Light* and . . . they don't understand why the book is not so serious as it should be. That was Jim Baen's cover, he was editor of Ace at that time. I was happy that he bought *White Light,* he gave me good money. The cover was his marketing decision. He probably thought we could sell more if we packaged it as something for superstitious foolish people instead of packaging it as avant-garde literature. I imagine he is probably right. I take a long view. I just want my books to be out there, and sooner or later they will find their audience.

WV: This book had more higher mathematics in it than any science fiction book I have ever read.

RR: *White Light* did have a lot of math. I wanted them to mention that on the cover. I said to Baen, well why don't we say that this is like *Flatland.* You know, Edwin Abbott's book about higher dimensions. I wanted Baen to say *this is the new Flatland.* He just looked at me and said, "Rudy, we mention mathematics, and the book is going straight down the toilet." On my two books after that, Ace tried to do a somewhat more high-tone presentation. Of course, that was with Susan Allison instead of Jim Baen. Who knows what will happen with the next two books, now that Susan is leaving Ace, and Ace is being

sold. But I sort of like having my books presented in a low-brow way. Then you can reach the masses. A lot of people read science fiction.

WV: Do you plan to concentrate as much on the mathematics in subsequent works?

RR: Not necessarily. For a book I need an interesting idea. Something that interests me to explore. Infinity was an interesting idea to explore in *White Light*. In *Spacetime Donuts* I was interested in a certain idea about the structure of space, the notion I call "circular scale." In *Software* I was thinking about Gödel's Theorem and artificial intelligence. *Sex Sphere* deals with something called Hilbert Space, which is a type of infinite-dimensional space. I wouldn't want to be categorized as someone who just writes about math, although I do have a lot of training and a lot of interest in science. The first book I published was actually a mathematics book. That was *Geometry, Relativity and the Fourth Dimension,* which came out from Dover Publications in 1977. Originally I called it *Geometry and Reality,* and you might notice that sometimes the characters in my novels talk about it. It was basically a popular presentation of the fourth dimension. I also have another mathematics book coming out in May, '82. It's called *Infinity and the Mind,* and it explains the basic ideas underlying my first three novels.

WV: Don't these mathematics books count towards tenure on your academic publishing record?

RR: Well, I just got fired here as well. Every place I get a job they throw me out, because they see me as a dangerous person with dangerous ideas. It's annoying, but then I think, how cool could I be if these stupid straight blind people would keep me on? After this summer I will be just writing. I think I'll have enough books coming out so that I can live.

WV: Why do you think you are perceived as dangerous?

RR: Well, because I take important things seriously and I don't take unimportant things seriously. I'm interested in the Absolute. I like to freak people out.

WV: Do you think you'd have less trouble if you were in a big-league school where they are a little more tolerant?

RR: It's possible, but the thing is, I can't get in the door there. I've been to math conferences and it just bores me. I'm interested in it, but only on my own terms. I live my whole life on my own terms. At this point I think I will quit and just write. I don't think I would want to go back to teaching.

WV: Are you going to stay in Lynchburg?

RR: For the present. We've made some friends here, and we have a nice house. It's not the ideal place, I'd rather be a little closer to a big city. But with the three kids I can't go moving every two years. I'm going to be here another year at least.

WV: It did strike me as ironic when I read you lived in Lynchburg, home of Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority. Does that have quite an influence in the town itself?

RR: When I first realized I was moving here I was real freaked out about it. I thought everybody here is going to be a zombie. But actually Lynchburg is a fairly large community. It's a pretty big town, and the people that are supporters of Jerry Falwell all live on the other side of town from where I live. I've lived here for two years and I haven't met socially a single person who is a follower of Jerry's. I did go to his church once to check it out. I mean, I'm a science fiction writer, so I definitely had to go and check it out. Rich material. Pally Love and the gunjy mues. It's like a TV studio. They only said one prayer in the whole service, and you know what they prayed for? They prayed for five million dollars. It hasn't bothered me, it hasn't limited me. In a sense, Falwell is not

anywhere, he is on the airwaves.

WV: OK, back to *Spacetime Donuts.* You have a zippy vocabulary, and I think that really adds a lot to your characters. There are a couple of words I'd like to know the etymology of: "loaches" and "ZZ-74".

RR: OK, I will tell you what a loach is. We used to have a fish tank with a kind of fish called a *loach.* It's a real weird fish, because it doesn't have any fins and it's long and just wriggles. It's really sickening. Also there's *the roach.* In high-school my wife lived in DC, and they used to call the police the roach. A police-car was a roach-coach. So then I thought loach, you know. I didn't want to say *the pig,* so I just said *the loach. ZZ-74* comes from a kid I used to know, one of my students. I used to hang around with him a lot, Diamond Joe they called him, and he was telling me about this drug. I couldn't tell whether he was putting me on or not, but it was a drug called ZZ-74, that you could take and it was just like being dead. The name of the drug seemed so neat, especially since when he told me this it was 1974. I just kind of hung onto that name. I don't know whether there was ever really such a drug or not.

WV: As you remarked, *Spacetime Donuts* is very Sixties. The adjective that came to my mind when I read it was Phil Dickian. Did Philip K. Dick have any influence on you?

RR: Not initially. I really only found out about Dick after I started writing. Though now I would say I am beginning to be influenced by him. He was really a master of characterization. When I get hold of one of his books, I read it. Dick's one weakness was in not always wrapping things up too well. In *Ubik* and *Flow My Tears,* for instance, the final explanation for the whole book is just that somebody dreamed it. I like a tight plot. I'd like to be able to have a dense, wrenching local structure like Dick's plus the global context of a good plot-line. Another recent writer I like a lot is Ian Watson. When I read *Miracle Visitors,* I was really happy to see someone in sf dealing with the Absolute. That's why I thought of sending *White Light* to Ace, actually. I was in Germany and I got their address off the title page of *Miracle Visitors.* I sent it to Ace first and Baen bought it. Coming back to Dick for a second, I'd have to say my favorite of his that I've read is *A Scanner Darkly.* I don't think any book has ever made me laugh so hard. I got it when I was at Seacon in Brighton. I really had a good time there, lying around in a cheap rooming house reading *Scanner.* Met a lot of nice people too. I met Ian, and I met Maxim Jakubowski who was working at Virgin Books then. I gave him a typescript of *White Light* and they ended up publishing it a bit earlier than Ace did.

WV: I would think your books would go over well in England. They seem to be a little more receptive to avant-garde science fiction.

RR: Well, not really. The first printer that Virgin engaged to do *White Light* turned the contract down because the book was "blasphemous". When it finally came out, Virgin went to the other extreme from Ace. They made it look like an art-book, in real small type and with a blurb saying, "the cult novel of the Eighties". The reviews were good, but the book bombed. I just heard from Virgin that they're pulping their stocks of it. And I can't sell any of my other books in England. I'm doing OK in Germany, though. Sphinx Verlag of Basel did a nice edition of *White Light* and now they're doing *Donuts* as well.

WV: *Software* seems to me to be the most "linear" of your science fiction novels. And you were exploring robot sentience. I've never seen robot sentience explored before. It's generally robots' civil rights, something like that, but again this was a first.

RR: I just wonder what it would be like to be a robot.

WV: Yeah, do they have souls and that sort of thing.

RR: I think it's really neat to think about robots. The good thing in *Software* is when they change the guy's mind over to a robot body and he doesn't notice. They take his software out and program it over to a machine and initially he doesn't notice the difference. In all fairness, I should say that John Varley used a similar idea in *The Ophiuchi Hotline,* though there the new body is a tank-grown clone instead of a robot copy. There's a big anthology by Douglas Hofstadter and Daniel Dennett called *The Mind's Eye.* It has a lot of stuff about minds and souls and robots. I got Hofstadter to put a section of *Software* in there.

WV: Which section do they have?

RR: They had the first two chapters, introducing Cobb Anderson, and then they jumped up to where Ralph Numbers is on the moon and where he gets zapped and, in a sense dies. That name "Ralph Numbers" is a take-off on Hugo Gernsback's "Ralph 124C 41 + ".

WV: I would think a lot of what Hofstadter does would be interesting to you.

RR: Oh, yeah. I've talked to him a couple of times. I really respect what he thinks. He has a column in *Scientific American* now, and he continues to surprise me. I just hope my book *Infinity and the Mind* can do as well as his *Gödel, Escher, Bach.*

WV: A mere Pulitzer prize.

RR: Well, I'd settle for the quarter million dollars for softcover rights.

WV: All of your writing seems to imply to me that the world has the character of the Everett-Wheeler-Graham universe, where time is continually branching to produce more and more parallel worlds.

RR: That's something I've been really into. I read that stuff a long time ago in a book called *The Many Universes Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics.* Still, I don't know, this one universe does seem to exist in a very definite, stubborn way. To me that is one of the confusing problems, that's one of the things I can't understand. Why if there are many universes, why does it feel so much like we are just in one? That's an aspect of a more general problem, an ancient problem called the One/Many problem. In a way, any problem I've ever been interested in boils down to the One/Many problem. How can the world be both one thing and many things?

WV: With your training in math and physics and the reading that you do, you've got to have a gut feeling about what is reality. Do you think that the Everett-Wheeler-Graham model is what describes reality?

RR: Well, really, everyone is living in a different universe. There is no universe. But there is. One/Many. I don't know what it is at all.

WV: At present you're gainfully employed at a university and you're writing. How do you juggle your schedule?

RR: There's a lot of time in the summer. You get a lot of vacation in the summer. And of course when I was in Heidelberg for those two years I basically had no obligations at all. There were no strings attached. I just wrote from 9 to 4 every day or 10 to 3, whatever. So that was pretty easy. Now here, in Lynchburg, I've been teaching math at Randolph-Macon Woman's College. It's all girls, I teach all girls. In the summer I write, and I write in the afternoons. Of course now I've been fired, so I'll have all the time I need. I really like to write. I would rather write than anything else, within reason. Basically, if I have some free time I'll write. I find time for it. If you want to write more than anything, you can always find time for it. You really don't need a whole lot of time to do it, you don't

even have to feel like writing, you just have to sit down and do it. If you write a page, well, that's a page that you have got written.

WV: Do you have girls in your classes that ask, what do higher dimensions and infinity have to do with teaching grade school kids how to learn? I remember that scene from *White Light*.

RR: That scene was based on the other place I taught, at SUCAS Geneseo. It was sort of a teachers' college. That's not so much a factor at Randolph-Macon, which is a little more like a finishing school. But, yeah, I used to be asked that. They'd say, well why should I learn this weird stuff? But why should you learn anything? If you get so materialistic, then the only reason to learn anything is to produce machines that make consumer goods. But what about art, what about literature, what about mathematics, what about pure science, what about everything? It's just stupid. Why do we do anything? We're going to die anyway. It's just, you know, have some fun.

WV: Your books are liberally peppered with references to rock music. Zappa and the Stones are the obvious ones, and I noticed some oblique references to Country Joe and the Grateful Dead and the Fugs. Obviously rock music means a great deal to you.

RR: Yeah, absolutely. It's always meant so much to me. Like when I see the Stones. I've been to see them three or four times, though I didn't get to see them on the last tour. It's like the only time I've ever been in a crowd and there is somebody standing in the front of the crowd with a microphone that I didn't basically want to shoot. Someone that I really felt like following. The Stones are just saying what's true and what's good and nobody could ever stop them, it's just so great. Like all the establishment are trying to keep everybody down and trying to deny that anybody has an individual consciousness or is really aware and having thoughts. Like just play it as loud as you want to, and everybody digs it and they can't stop it. Rock music is the greatest thing.

WV: You said that you saw the Stones in Buffalo and that inspired you to write what became *Spacetime Donuts* because you wanted to write an anarchist novel. What is it about the music that gets to you and makes you want to write like that?

RR: Sometimes when I'm writing well, I think it's like good guitar playing. You have little surprises in each sentence, a choice of words that's surprising. Tasty riffs. Recently I've been singing rock and roll. Some of us here started a punk-rock band, the Dead Pigs. We have drums and saxes and guitars and I sing lead. Just real loud and vicious. Lou Reed, "Louie, Louie". It's the first thing I've ever done in a group. I never even played sports.

WV: Do you feel any pressure being the great-great-great-grandson of Hegel?

RR: Well, I think I've done my part for the Absolute. I'd like to read Hegel's stuff, but it's pretty hard. I've read books about him, but the actual books are very hard to read. It's my impression that I have somewhat the same ideas about the Absolute, the Absolute being the ultimate thing, the "white light". I'd like to think that later, people will say, gee you know that's pretty much what Hegel would have wanted to write, if he was a science fiction writer.

WV: Was the term "white light" inspired by the life after life thing?

RR: No, no. "White light" is a Sixties drug expression. If you take a *whole lot* of LSD, then everything gets white and God talks to you. That's an experience you usually only get once because you sort of look out for it the other times.

WV: One other influence I wanted to ask you about is that you talked to the famous

logician Kurt Gödel several times. Was that quite an experience for you to talk to somebody of that stature?

RR: Yeah, to me he was a guru. I was fortunate I got to see the master at that formative stage of my life. Again, that tends to be a one-time thing. I mean at this point Gödel is dead. Maybe when I'm an old man somebody will come and see me. I don't expect to meet anybody like Gödel again. I wrote a chapter about him for *Infinity and the Mind.* The thing about Gödel . . . when I would talk to him I would have made up a list of questions I wanted to ask him about all this stuff, about math, philosophy, physics and so on. Like he'd been sitting alone in Princeton for thirty years. Thirty years ago he proved the heaviest thing that anybody has ever done in mathematics. And when I saw him he was thirty years past that. He was thinking all that time. Anything I would ask him, like he had already been all the way down the road, and he would just laugh. When I would talk to him, he would say a few words and then he would start laughing. I would start laughing with him, and as we would laugh I would feel like we were communicating. It was like telepathy. He was unquestionably the greatest person I will ever meet. The character G. Kurtowski in *Donuts* is based on Gödel.

WV: What are your plans now? Any concrete ideas on what you are going to do next?

RR: Well, as I said, I have *Infinity and the Mind* coming out, and Ace is doing my anthology *Fifty-Seventh Franz Kafka* and then *The Sex Sphere.* I just got a good contract from Houghton-Mifflin to do a pop math book called *The Fourth Dimension And How To Get There.* They're interested in getting my next novel, too, so I'll probably try to make it longer than usual. That'll be *Fall-Out,* a post WWIII book with mutants and telepathy. In *Fall-Out,* I'm not putting myself in directly. Instead I'll shatter into three characters. I'd like it to have scope. I'm doing science articles for *Science 82,* and may start a column for them. I'm doing some stories, too, though stories are really a waste of time in terms of money. And my stories almost always get rejected. Thank God for Ace. I guess I'll do a sequel to *Software.* Call it *Hardware,* I imagine.

WV: Your first book really hit with a bang. Would it bother you if *White Light* was what you were known for and anything else you wrote after that, people would always compare it to that or say, well gee he was not as original after that? Do you worry about things like that?

RR: Yeah, sure I worry about that. But I always like my current book the best. Sometimes I'm trying to be heavy and sometimes I'm going for speed. I sort of alternate. *Sex Sphere* is heavy. But which one I'll be known for, I don't know. Each person picks their own favorite. If people like one book enough, they'll look at the others.

. . . and after the events described below Neil Ferguson came home and put his life in order and wrote an unpublished novel entitled Rats Live on No Evil Star *(aka* Fear of Chance*) of which John Clute has said, "It is a Philip K. Dick novel . . . It is not one of his best but it is by no means one of his worst . . ." Neil Ferguson was born in 1947 and is currently resident in London.*

A Man from the Future

NEIL FERGUSON

From his chair behind the Reception desk in the Emergency wing of the Royal United Hospital, Bath, Neil Ferguson looked up from the paperback book he was reading, every time the automatic glass doors slid open. He was a porter; it was his job to do this. The weather was warm. The year was 1976—the year of the Great Drought, and like everyone else he was bored with it. So when the doors slid open for a very old, very noisy gent in a wheelchair propelled by an attractive young lady, Ferguson, looking up, welcomed the action.

"I want the Oxygen! You hear?" the old man was hollering at the Sister. "I *always* have the oxygen!" Clearly, from his accent and the manner in which he was demanding a product he would expect to have to pay for, he was from the other side of the planet.

"You have to wait, Mr Gold, until after the doctor has seen you. Over here they do things differently."

"Different than what?" Mr Gold snarled. "I always get the oxygen!"

"Porter. Take Mr Gold to wait in cubicle 6," Sister said, cool as you like.

Ferguson placed the book he had been reading face down on his chair and took control of the wheelchair. While the old man cursed and panted, he said: "Where are you from sir?"

"Where I'm from, son, I never have to wait for the oxygen!"

"Really? Where's that?"

"Judging from where I *am*," the patient, looking round scornfully, said, "I'd say it was the Future."

"You don't say! Which part?"

Suddenly the old feller grinned. "La Jolla. California."

"They got a lot of oxygen there?"

Mr Gold chuckled. By the time Ferguson returned to his place in Reception he had made a friend; his boredom had disappeared. And so too, he found, had the paperback book he had left on his chair.

Next night Ferguson was working out his shift in a deserted hospital, one of the invisible army clearing up while the public sleeps. He was carrying a leg to the incinerator when he got the call: "Body for Ivy Cottage please." Ivy Cottage was the nice name they gave to the cold room with stained-glass windows and rows of horizontal fridges. Stashing the leg, he rounded up his colleague. Ed, giggling, jockeyed the trolley into position—he

had been at the ether again—while Neil opened the fridge doors to find an empty slot. In the very first one lay the body of a shrivelled up little old man. Christ, I never lost a friend as quick as this before! he thought, closing the door with a prayer. It was the last he saw of Mr G, the Man from the Future.

Back at the incinerator, the leg disposed of, Ferguson noticed a pile of mutilated paperbacks waiting to be destroyed. They were probably contaminated. Warily he picked up the remains of one and read:

THIS IS AN ILLUSION. YOU ARE A COLONIST ON MARS MAKE USE OF YOUR TIME-TRANSLATION, BUDDY BOY. CALL UP PAT PRONTO!

Hadn't he seen that somewhere before? It must have been from the book he had lost yesterday. He tossed the pages into the fire, after the leg. I'll finish this later, he decided.

How much later was to be something of a surprise to him. Come Saturday, he payed a visit to the Unicorn Bookshop.

"Got anything by Philip K Dick?" he asked the assistant.

"Who?"

"He's a science fiction writer."

"Oh. The Sci-Fi section is downstairs. Next to the kid's section," the assistant said without a trace of irony in his voice.

Neil found a dozen titles by the author although not the one he had decided to read: He began to get the feeling the book was avoiding him. Evidently Dick was prolific: this was cheap pulp stuff. He picked out the book with the least exciting artwork on the cover: according to the blurb it was about a loser called Raegun Glumm who experienced some difficulty leaving town. The story sounded familiar. But was it any good? By the time Ferguson found out, it made no difference. It had already begun to interfere with his life.

About this time his relationship with his girlfriend started to go awry. He loved Liz—because she was lovely—but, lately, they seemed to be living in separate realities. It wasn't just the drugs, or the strain of holding down a lousy job. "What's getting into you?" she wanted to know. "Everything you do is so unpredictable! It isn't like you!"

She said this after they had gone to a party together and arrived home separately. It turned out they had spent the night at completely different parties.

"I must have gone through the wrong door and gone up a parallel staircase. I didn't realize we were in different places!"

"You were stoned!"

"I wasn't. Well, maybe just a little. Anyway, by the time I worked out something was wrong, I had got talking with some very strange people. By then I *was* stoned."

He had upset Liz but, after that experience, he realized there were parallel staircases everywhere and he began to explore some of them. Clearly things were happening in his life which he could only make sense of through the metaphors of a pulp science fiction writer whom nobody had heard of. Or maybe, he surmised, these kinds of events have always been happening to me only I've never—until now—had a frame of reference within which to perceive them.

Ferguson could see he was making a mess of his life but, suddenly, he felt elated. At least now he knew there was someone out there, if only on Frolix 8, who saw things the same way he did. For maybe the first time in his life he had verification of the validity of

his own perception. And this, he realized, was what he wanted more than anything.

Of course there always existed the possibility that the answer lay within the parallel staircase itself: that he was becoming a character in a novel that Philip K Dick was writing.

Eventually Ferguson succeeded in leaving town. Liz, too, was making contingency plans of her own. Having begun to fuck with Chance, Chance began to fuck with him. In no time at all he found himself in another world, lost and alone in the Hindu Kush, and it was winter-time too. There was snow on the ground. Wandering the streets of Kabul in search of the parallel reality, a second-hand bookshop materialized in Chicken Street where he bartered a book about electric sheep for one called *Ubik*. He didn't really have any choice: all the books in the shop were called that.

Neil Ferguson was getting near to the edge of the map. The hashish in Afghanistan hardly resembled the kind of quid deal he was used to. Of an evening his only fixed point between either reality was a German girl, Azi Muth, who shared his room and talked every night on the telephone to her boyfriend in Los Angeles. Neil lay on his own bed reading his new book in the long pauses when Azi listened and her boyfriend did the talking: ". . . Sure . . . Sure . . . Darling I miss you hard . . . Do you? D'you mean that . . .?"

Only there was no telephone.

Yeah, he thought after the lamp-bulb went out on Azi's conversation, it isn't just me. It's me and Azi and the whole fucking generation we grew up with that Philip Dick writes for. We're no longer interested in love stories, psychological drama (we have the Pill!) or the kind of socio-political fiction our Big Brothers were into (we have the Bomb!). We have lived our lives between the debris of the last war and the time-bomb ticking away towards the next. What fucks *us* up is something to do with *Now*. Existence versus Consciousness: Paranoia. Too many drugs. Too much LSD. Not enough telephones. These are the protagonists of our drama: Chance versus Causality.

As soon as he could make it down to the bus-station Ferguson bought a ticket to the next town. Then, after that, the next, leaving a trail of paperbacks down the length of India—in case getting back should prove perilous. By now he had learnt how to sit still, how to think about one thing at a time. Aboard the Madras Express the plots of Dick novels passed across his mind's eye like video-cassettes, printing themselves upon it like a Mantra. Sitting with a straight back on the wooden bench in a cannabis dream, he focused his will on all the skill required to dazzle as Dick could. Only when he reached the safe Buddhist climate of Sri Lanka did he allow himself to remember that, at the bottom of his bag, he had concealed (even from himself) another copy of the book which had eluded him for so long, which had started it all. He read the book through the night as the winding up-country train—the "Podemeneke"—climbed to the remote hill-station called Nuwara Eliya, a journey as tortuous as his own reasons for being there. Outside an electrical storm flashed over the jungle. When he had finished the book he looked up and noticed the dawn and that each of his friendly Tamil and Sinhalese travelling companions was watching him with shiny mirror eyes. They had each acquired a steel arm, a set of smiling aluminium teeth.

"Tell me sir," the Palmer Eldritch sitting opposite him said, "Where is it you are from?"

Ferguson told him. "I'm from the Future."

Palmer Eldritch smiled. "And how do you like the Present? Now that you are here?"

"I like it fine. The Present and the Future are like two spiral staircases running parallel to each other."

"Like the double helix in the DNA of the human chromosome?"

"Or like a railway track climbing a mountain," Ferguson said. "Only they run in opposite directions."

"Although their destination is the same."

Neil Ferguson nodded.

"Like yours and mine."

"In that case," Ferguson said to Palmer Eldritch, to himself reflected in the mirrors in Palmer Eldritch's eyes. "We can only meet in infinity."

The clear dawn light shimmered against the silvery teeth grinning pleasantly at him. Palmer Eldritch said nothing, but in the mirrors of his eyes Neil Ferguson saw reflected the reflection of two mirrors reflecting mirrors reflecting mirrors reflecting mirrors reflecting mirrors reflecting . . .

By contrast with the "realistic romances" of Edgar Fawcett, which Brian Stableford surveyed in Foundation 24, *most readers are no doubt well aware of the name of M.P. Shiel and in particular of his novel* The Purple Cloud *which was even filmed in the late Fifties (with a different catastrophe, setting, characters et cetera) as* The World, The Flesh and the Devil. *But how many readers are actually aware of the ins and outs of Shiel's rather complex and at times deliberately perverse mind—as mirrored in the totality of his work—which has caused this rational optimist to be regarded as a proto-fascist, anti-semite, and other deplorable things, not to mention a novelist who seems to delight in ham-stringing his heroes?*
Below Brian Stableford explains all, and corrects these misapprehensions.

The Politics of Evolution: Philosophical Themes in the Speculative Fiction of M.P. Shiel

BRIAN STABLEFORD

There is a certain hazard in examining the work of any novelist in search of "philosophical themes". Students of an author's work are frequently warned that it may

be a terrible mistake to infer the beliefs and opinions of an author from the ideas possessed and expressed by his characters. The hazard is real enough, in that a man might write about perverse theologians, moral derelicts and political fanatics without being any of these things himself.

It is with especial caution that one must approach the work of a writer like M.P. Shiel, in that he was a writer who deliberately dealt with bizarre characters and peculiar situations, and who took a delight in startling his readers with unusual moral judgments and evaluations. It is, in a way, rather remarkable that in addition to all this he clearly did use his fiction—especially his speculative fiction—as a means of preaching his own idiosyncratic creeds. Many of the arguments deployed by characters in his stories can be found in much the same form in the posthumous collection of Shiel's essays edited by John Gawsworth, *Science, Life and Literature.*

Science, Life and Literature provides a good guide to the business of sorting out which of the ideas expressed by Shiel's characters are really his own. The question then arises, however, as to why, if Shiel's ideas are available in "pure" non-fictional form, one needs to analyze his fiction in order to rediscover them. An examination of the fiction allows us to see something of the growth and development of Shiel's theories as well as their conclusive form, but a much more important reason is the manner in which Shiel's fiction displays and exemplifies his philosophy in a way that essays never could. The fiction shows the implications of his patterns of thought for the way that men ought to behave and evaluate the actions of others. The behaviour of Shiel's characters very often seems peculiar, and an understanding of the underlying context of thought can provide a necessary illumination of the logic of their behaviour. Conversely, the ideas themselves are dramatized and clarified by an examination of their expressions in this way.

Shiel was a writer rather prone to lecturing his readers, or letting his characters do it for him. Often this material seems to be entirely extraneous to the plot, as when Caxton Hazlitt summarizes Shiel's firmest convictions in his conversations with Mahndorla in *How the Old Woman Got Home* (1927). Even here the intrusion is less arbitrary than it seems, but in general his dramas of contemporary life are less revealing of the Shielian philosophy than his speculative fiction. When he writes of the future, or of fantastic experiments in the present, his philosophy becomes the very foundation-stone of his imaginary endeavour. This essay, in consequence, will concentrate mainly on analysis of Shiel's seven major scientific romances.

If the foregoing argument needs re-emphasis it can be obtained from an inspection of one of Shiel's most substantial essays, "Of Writing", which is derived—along with its companion-piece "On Reading"—from an open letter used as a preface to *This Knot of Life* (1909). Here, Shiel's view on the nature of art not only encourages us to read his work with an eye to its underlying philosophy, but virtually demands that we should do so. He begins by likening the writer to a messenger-boy, and suggests that excellence in writing is no more than excellence in delivering a message. The message, he concedes, should be decently clothed, but it is the requirements of the *matter* to be conveyed by the message that are most important.

> And as to his matter, we can at once say what it must be: it must be a true message; and then it must be a new message—fresh news; and then it must somehow be a message about yourself, of some interest to *you*; or, bracketing all this into an abstract form—he must *enlarge your consciousness of the truth of things,* and that intimately.
>
> This, then, as to matter, is your task.

> And if you ask, "But is the object of Art precisely the object of science and of philosophy—to enlarge the consciousness?" the reply is, "Yes—what else than to enlarge the consciousness," i.e., to augment the quantity of Life, i.e., to cause Progress in Life—"that we may have Life, and have it more abundantly?" Nevertheless, the method of Art, though more after the method of philosophy, is as divided from it as the method of philosophy from that of science. Art, for instance, is more intimate and about ourselves somehow, enlarging our consciousness of the truth of our own hearts, and bosoms' biology principally, and affecting us in an intimate way by a particular kind of tickling of one or other of the five senses. Besides, though the object of Art, like that of philosophy, is the demonstration of some abstract fact, Art does not, as philosophy does, formally state this, but conveys it intimately, as by innuendo and parable, in a glance, a sob, ineffably, in the tone of gossips pottering over a dead body; and it is divided from science, and from philosophy also, in this, that even the facts that it formally states are not concrete, but are themselves, like its abstract facts, abstractions: for, if it tells of a man, an axe, it is not any actual man or axe that exists exactly as it tells of it, as in Dickens, but it is an abstraction from a mass of actual men or axes of that class, like Hamlet, or Hector's axe, or Gainsborough's *Grace*. And so we get clearly the difference between science, philosophy and art. (SLL pp. 58-60)

This quotation provides us with adequate grounds not only for the view that the messages embedded in Shiel's fiction are to be taken seriously, but also for the view that consideration of the ideas in their fictional form will reveal a special dimension within them.

It should, perhaps, be added that there are several reasons why this project may be of interest to students of speculative fiction. For one thing, much critical writing about Shiel has neglected analysis of his themes in favour of comment upon his unorthodox and sometimes colourful literary style. More importantly, Shiel's underlying philosophy has been widely misrepresented by commentators. Even his most ardent champion, A. Reynolds Morse, sometimes gives a misleading impression of Shiel's work and its purpose, while comments on Shiel by Sam Moskowitz are decidedly unwarranted. Then too, the themes themselves are of some interest—not (as Shiel would have hoped) because they constitute a significant contribution to modern thought, but because they represent an intriguing and idiosyncratic product of their particular period and intellectual climate.

M.P. Shiel was born in the West Indies in 1865. He was the son of a Methodist preacher, but records in an autobiographical sketch that between the ages of 11 and 14 he turned against the faith of his father. (Conversion to freethinking by the sons of clergymen is curiously common among the early writers of scientific romance; George Griffith, William Hope Hodgson and John Beresford did likewise. The zeal which converts of any kind characteristically devote to self-justification may have been an element in leading these writers to dabble in scientifically-based speculative fantasy.)

In his later teens Shiel was sent to King's College, London. He then taught for a while before attending Bart's Hospital for some months with the intention of becoming a doctor. He drifted instead into the literary world, though little is known of how he occupied his time until he began to write for the popular magazines that were proliferating in the 1890s. His first book, *Prince Zaleski,* was published in 1895. This collection and *Shapes in the Fire* (1896) were issued by John Lane, and were contemporary with Lane's *Yellow Book*. Both volumes share with the work most typical of the *Yellow Book* a self-conscious decadence and an interest in unconventional philosophies of art and life. These affectations are superimposed on stories which are apparently inspired by Poe: Dupinesque detective stories in the first volume, horror stories in the second.

Shiel remained a prolific writer almost until the outbreak of World War I. As well as

sixteen novels and three collections for which he was solely responsible he wrote numerous works in collaboration with Louis Tracy (usually in the way of helping Tracy out with his hack-writing commitments when time was pressing) and one short novel in collaboration with the famous journalist W.T. Stead (this collaboration consisted of Shiel's writing down a story told to him verbally by Stead). Between 1914 and 1922, however, Shiel published nothing. In his sketch "About Myself" he does not account for this nine-year gap but simply passes over it in silence. He published one novel in 1923, but did not begin to produce work on a regular basis again until 1927. Six more novels and two collections appeared between then and 1937, plus a series of reprints from the early part of his career in which the texts were sometimes heavily revised. In the last decade of his life he published nothing more, though he left one unpublished novel, *The Splendid Devil,* and had been working for some years on a novelization of the career of Jesus. He died in 1947.

Shiel was an idiosyncratic author who was happy in his defiance of any kind of categorization. His prose is fluent, and displays an unusual vocabulary in characteristically flamboyant fashion. Although colourful, his style is not highly adjectival (in "Of Writing" he comments that "Writers, and . . . minds of any strength in general, cherish a natural dislike for adjectives") and even his most exotic passages are unlike commonly-encountered purple prose. His syntax is often eccentric and his punctuation luxuriant, but he had a careful regard for the actual rules of grammar, if not its customs, and he always paid attention to the rhythmic qualities of his prose. He occasionally pressed his idiosyncrasies to wild excess, especially in his earliest work—they are at their most amazing in *Shapes in the Fire*—but for the most part he remains an eminently readable writer, though perhaps something of an acquired taste. When his subject-matter is mundane the floridity of his writing—especially where it extends to the dialogue—frequently seems bizarre, but when his themes are fantastic enough the style can seem perfectly adapted, as in *The Purple Cloud* (1901), the brilliant short story "Dark Lot of One Saul" (in *Here Comes the Lady,* 1928) and the alien encounter sequence of *The Young Men Are Coming* (1937).

One thing that must always be remembered in analyzing Shiel's work, especially in respect of the early stories, is that he clearly took a delight in startling his readers. His plots and commentaries are very often shaped in order to shock, and to defy the expectations of the reader. He loved to strike a pose at once casual and provocative, to give offense in a carefree, but never unsubtle, fashion. This is obvious enough in his long "philosophical essays", including "Premier and Maker" in *Shapes in the Fire* and Cummings King Monk's definition of Greatness of Mind in *The Pale Ape* (1911).

This is not to say that Shiel's opinions were not sincerely held, but simply that the outré and the unpopular had a natural attraction for him. He was one of those thinking men who would avoid orthodoxy at any price, and was sufficiently adept in the art of rhetoric to convince himself fairly easily that the orthodox opinion in any matter was not only obviously wrong but contemptible. He carved out his own intellectual and artistic niche, and cared far more about being a writer *sui generis* than courting popularity or making money. In his comments on other writers he was determinedly iconoclastic, and particularly so when dealing with writers who might be perceived as having something in common with himself. H.G. Wells, who was also interested in the evolutionary progress of man, the advancement of science and the cause of socialism, is several times slighted in *Science, Life and Literature,* particularly in the essay "Of Writing and Science", which casts aside the entire *genre* of scientific romance as unworthy of serious consideration.

There was, however, no personal hostility between the two men, who exchanged letters on friendly terms.

Shiel is accused by his critics of many sins: of anticlericalism, of overt racism, of anti-semitism, of incipient Nazism, of social Darwinism, and of commitment to the morality of negative eugenics. Some of these accusations he might have welcomed, most he would have dismissed as crass errors. His actual intellectual position was much more complicated than any of these labels can imply, and none of his opinions was held unthinkingly. One can see how unsympathetic readers might easily become infuriated by him, but he cannot be casually dismissed by association with exploded dogmas: he had his own reasons for saying what he had to say.

Shiel's early novels were mostly written as serials for the popular magazines, and tend to be colourful adventure stories packed with action. The first of them was serialised in *Short Stories* as "The Empress of the Earth" and reprinted in book form as *The Yellow Danger* in 1898. The story was apparently written at the suggestion of Louis Tracy, who was one of several writers of the period to make his name writing future war stories. Tracy's own reputation was largely based on *The Final War* (1896), which had been serialised in another magazine run by C. Arthur Pearson, the publisher of *Short Stories*. Both Tracy's novel and Shiel's were steeped in the mythology of a "war to end war" though the two writers characterized this climax in human affairs in very different ways.

The Yellow Danger is the story of a crucial confrontation between East and West—between the yellow race and the white—to settle the permanent dominion of the world. A personal element is introduced into the plot on the one hand by virtue of the fact that the evil genius directing the Oriental forces, Dr Yen How, is romantically obsessed with an English girl named Ada Seward, and on the other hand by the heroic efforts of an English midshipman, John Hardy, whose enterprise thwarts Yen How's master plan.

The plot is as unsubtle as it is unlikely. The invasion of the Western World is effected by the simple but implausible ploy of having the entire population of China walk steadily westwards, while military support is given mainly (and ineptly) by the Japanese navy. In the end, the fleet which set forth for England, following the sinking of the warships, is towed northwards and fed to the Maëlstrom. A handful of prisoners is then infected with a deadly plague and released in mainland Europe in order to wipe out the massed hordes of the East encamped there. It is a rather nasty-minded novel, and has the dubious distinction of having introduced the mythology of the "yellow peril" to English popular fiction. Shiel went on to write other novels of a not-dissimilar kind, though *The Yellow Wave* (1905) is not really a yellow peril story and features a very different resolution to the war to end war, and *The Dragon* (1913; reprinted in 1929 as *The Yellow Peril*) is very much more subtle in conception and execution than *The Yellow Danger*. The man who really milked the idea for all it was worth was, of course, Sax Rohmer (Arthur S. Ward), who invented the insidious Dr Fu Manchu.

Most of the future-war novels which were produced so prolifically between 1871 and 1914 involved conflicts restricted to Europe. Nation-states were the contending parties. Tracy's *Final War,* though it is mainly concerned with a secret alliance of France, Germany and Russia intended to smash the British Empire, actually broke with tradition in introducing a fierce note of racial chauvinism. The last chapter of that novel is given over to an essay in frenzied rhetoric where England's victory against her enemies is held to

be the culmination of the destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race. The destiny of the other races is to submit to the enlightened rule of this chosen people.

Shiel, in *The Yellow Danger,* seems to be taking up this theme. The ideative framework of the novel is established very early in the text as a quasi-Darwinistic struggle for existence between the two leading contenders for dominion. Yen How, discussing the future with a Japanese statesman, paints the following picture:

> "Look forward five hundred, a thousand years, Marquis, and what do you see?" answered Yen How. "Is it not this?—the white man and the yellow man in their death-grip, contending for the earth. The white and the yellow—there are no others. The black is the slave of both; the brown does not count. But there are those two; and when the day comes that they stand face to face in dreadful hate, saying, 'One or other must quit this earth,' shall I tell you which side will win?"
>
> "Which do you think?"
>
> "The white will win, Marquis." (YD p.12)

Yen How goes on to argue that the white race has already advanced further along the path of progress, and that because progress is exponential, will draw further ahead with every generation that passes. His attempt to overwhelm the West is by way of being a pre-emptive strike against the odds. Given the social-Darwinist framework, the fact that the war ends with a virtual genocide is not entirely surprising.

In terms of Shiel's development *The Yellow Danger* is most important as a reservoir of ideas which he later abandoned or modified considerably. It is in every sense a naive book. (Shiel did prepare a revised edition for possible publication in the thirties under the title *China in Arms,* but it was universally rejected as too dated.) Shiel did not entirely abandon social Darwinism, and he maintained the notion that the men of the West were in general more "highly evolved" than coloured men, but he ceased thinking in the crude terms which dominate *The Yellow Danger,* largely because his notion of evolution became much more sophisticated—he adopted, in fact, a distinctly un-Darwinian philosophy of evolution which derived mainly from Herbert Spencer. He became more interested in the cultural aspects of the differences between nations and ceased to regard them as quasi-Darwinian subspecies necessarily locked in a winner-take-all struggle for existence.

Attention should, however, be drawn to one aspect of *The Yellow Danger* which seems rather arbitrary, but which is characteristic of Shiel: before all issues are finally settled he kills off his hero in an utterly pointless duel. Within the sole context of the novel, this seems to be no more than a callous flourish—perhaps a simple refusal to bow to convention—but in the context of the whole canon it assumes a greater, if enigmatic, significance. There can be few writers who have ever treated their heroes with such a marked lack of generosity as Shiel. It is not simply that they often die, or that their cherished projects frequently fail—they are often made to be victims of their own stupidity, moving uncertainly from one awkward situation to another. They *are* heroes, but always flawed, and they receive no concessions from fate (as managed by the author) on account of their heroic status. In any individual book this tends to seem merely whimsical, but the pattern is not without its rationale, and in fact testifies to a fundamental aspect of Shiel's world-view.

After three mundane adventure novels Shiel returned to futuristic romance with a plan for an ambitious three-volume project, the various parts of which were subsequently

detached from one another and presented as unlinked works. Indeed, they never at any time constituted a trilogy in the usual sense of the word, the connection between them being peculiar and rather tenuous.

The introduction to the first of these three works, *The Lord of the Sea* (dropped from the revised version published in 1929) represents the main narrative as having been transcribed from statements made by a medium in trance. The medium, Mary Wilson, is said in this introduction to have had many more-or-less coherent visions of the future, but only four notebooks are forwarded by her doctor to the hypothetical author for publication. *The Lord of the Sea* is said to be notebook II in the series, and the hypothetical author expresses his intention of publishing books I and III as *The Last Miracle* and *The Purple Cloud.* The book versions of *The Lord of the Sea* and *The Purple Cloud* were, in fact, published in the same year (1901), but *The Last Miracle* did not follow until 1906. Although the introduction does not say so the visions are apparently of alternative futures; despite one or two trivial background links the three stories cannot be fitted into a single future-historical framework.

It is *The Lord of the Sea* which has occasioned the fiercest attack mounted on Shiel, by Sam Moskowitz in his collection of essays *Explorers of the Infinite.* Moskowitz alleges that:

> *The Lord of the Sea* reaches an intensity of anti-Semitism that provokes comparison with Hitler's *Mein Kampf,* for which it could have served as an inspiration. (EI p. 146)

After his summary of the novel, which does little justice to the complexity of the plot or the scope of its ideas, Moskowitz adds:

> Only in his prediction that Palestine would flourish under the Jews does Shiel's novel show any merit, either in prophecy, prose or decency. It need scarcely be emphasized that the only difference between his method and the Nazis' rests in the fact that he would have permitted the Jews to emigrate with their lives. (EI p. 148)

Other readers have wondered how Moskowitz came to this conclusion, and have commented on its strangeness (James Blish and Dale Mullen have both taken the trouble to criticize the view in print.) There *is* a certain amount of anti-semitic comment in the book, and its villain, Frankl, is characterized rather after the fashion of Shylock and Fagin as a stereotyped grasping Jew of the kind that one finds in very many British works of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Considered in the context of the literature of the time this would be unpleasant but by no means unusual, but what is more important is that the rest of the material in *The Lord of the Sea,* insofar as it relates to Jews individually or collectively, is far from anti-semitic. The hero of the book is also a Jew (indeed, he is the Messiah who returns the Jews to the promised land—he issues an edict banishing all the Jews to Palestine, but does so in order that a prophecy shall be fulfilled, not because he hates them.)

At the beginning of *The Lord of the Sea* the nations of continental Europe pass edicts expelling Jews from their territory. England becomes their haven, and the influx of Jewish refugees brings "a tide of prosperity . . . as has hardly been known in a country." The Jews become a powerful political and economic force, but their influence seems almost entirely benign. An exception to this rule, however, is Baruch Frankl, who acquires a country estate and (for reasons not altogether clear) orders his tenants to adopt the fez as a symbol of their servitude. This imposition causes great resentment and precipitates a feud between the landlord and a young farmer named Richard Hogarth. The

feud is complicated by the fact that Frankl's daughter Rebekah is in love with Hogarth, while Frankl harbours lustful desires in respect of Hogarth's sister Margaret. Though Hogarth likes Rebekah, Margaret loathes Frankl.

Frankl eventually succeeds in having Hogarth framed for murder and has Margaret abducted into a lunatic asylum. Hogarth escapes from prison, taking along two other prisoners, and recovers from Frankl's estate a cache of meteoric diamonds with which he sets out to change the world. While in prison he has found what he believes to be an original plan for banishing social injustice from the world, and he intends to force the nations to adopt it. He claims territorial rights over the world's oceans, building gigantic floating fortresses to control the shipping lanes and enforce his title.

Hogarth's economic theory—which Shiel later claimed for his own—was actually not original, though the determined insistence on his independent discovery of it may imply that Shiel reached the conclusion on his own and only later discovered that he had been anticipated.

Hogarth's inspiration originates in the curious observation that a fisherman needs only to labour one day in six in order to catch enough to feed his family, whereas people working the land must make much more effort. As it is obvious to him that the land is more productive than the sea it seems to him that the system of land-tenure must have something radically wrong with it. He decides that all land should be in common ownership and that rents on land should be paid to the nation, thus providing the revenues which sustain the governmental and legal apparatus. Although not identical to it, this idea is very similar to the land tax system sketched out by the American socialist Henry George in his best-selling *Progress and Poverty* (1879). Like George, Hogarth has great faith in his single tax and considers that the social consequences of its use would be good on humanitarian grounds, leading to a more egalitarian and less strife-ridden society.

Hogarth quickly establishes a stranglehold on world trade with the aid of his floating fortresses, and forces the nations to subscribe to a new manifesto embodying his theory of political economy.

The original version of the manifesto (i.e. that given in the first edition of *The Lord of the Sea*) begins with a philosophical argument calculated to prove that a planet is "given" to its inhabitants, and that all people living on it should have an equal stake in it. Individuals who use various parcels of land for various purposes therefore should pay rent to mankind as a whole. The fact that groups of men claim dominion over particular areas of land (nations) is here seen as an iniquity, but Hogarth does not demand that the English quit England or the Chinese China—he merely demands that they should pay the rent on these countries to a World State. He applies the same argument to individuals within nations.

The present state of the world is represented by Hogarth as a literal sin—an affront to divine law, but what he means by "divine law" is not quite what the Churchmen mean by it:

> "But by far the greatest of the penalties which Nature has sent upon Man for this great violation is the arrest of Man's development. Man is a mind in an animal; the wing of mind is Pride, Assurance, or Self-esteem: and the home of an animal is a Planet. An animal without a home is (like curs and stray creatures) a thing without Assurance or Pride: so Man without the Earth is a mind without wing. So swift is he by nature, that, even so, he makes what we call 'Progress': which is but crawling—now forward—now backward. This Progress, or Crawling, would assuredly become Flight, had his mind but its natural wing of Pride. But he lacks Assurance and foot-hold, firm home, and domain: though neither fish nor fowl, his

sole heritage is sea, and air: the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of Man hath not where to lay his head: he is born into the home which God gave to his father, and finds it seized and sold." (LOS1 p.338)

Here we see the beginning of a kind of deification of evolutionary progress. Despite his anti-Christianity Shiel refused to proclaim himself an atheist or an agnostic (indeed, he denied the very possibility of atheism) but followed Thomas Henry Huxley in being prepared to be a deist only on the condition of a radical change in our concept of "God".

The second version of the manifesto differs from the first in detail but not in principle. The primacy of the World State is de-emphasized, the pattern of the argument running from individuals to nations to the world, rather than *vice versa*. The passage quoted above is modified very slightly, but in one respect significantly, so that under present conditions it is a favoured few who, "having Assurance, make what we call 'Progress', i.e., the discovering of truth—a crawling which might become flight, had all minds but the wing of Pride to co-operate in discovering truth." (LOS2 p.209)

This is significant because of the emphasis on Progress as the result of a collective endeavour. Shiel believed firmly by 1929 that knowledge did *not* grow through the genius of the few, but through the seeking of the many. Individual discoveries he regarded as serendipitous rather than emblems of the mental superiority of their makers, and the number of discoveries made was, in his view, a mere statistical reflection of the number of people constructively active in the business of science.

In the novel, Hogarth's grand plan misfires. His empire collapses, but not because of any fault in his theory. The world, it is implied, *could* have been saved if the people had only listened—but the landlords and rich men would not. His attempt to impose reform by force could only succeed as long as he had the unswerving loyalty of the men aboard his fortresses, but Hogarth nestles a viper in his bosom in Patrick O'Hara, one of those who escaped prison with him. O'Hara betrays him, after a long sequence of petty betrayals which should have warned Hogarth not to trust him, but somehow does not.

The affair of transplanting the Jews to Palestine is one of the sub-plots of the story. In the early part of the story, Hogarth is enraged by Frankl into declaring that if he had the power he would send all the Jews back to Palestine. When he actually becomes Lord of the Sea, Hogarth is a very different man, and even Frankl as an individual becomes too small to hate. His angry outburst is quite forgotten, until Rebekah, inspired by prophecies uttered by a seeress, asks him to carry out his "threat" so that her people can fulfil their destiny. Hogarth agrees. At this point in time Hogarth does not know that he is a Jew himself, though his father once tried to tell him. Not until after his downfall does this fact become generally known, and Hogarth goes into exile too, where he is hailed by the Jews as the agent of their deliverance. He becomes their ruler, and in Palestine alone of all places on Earth his ideas are put into practice. Here, eventually, he sees the proof of his theory as the Promised Land does indeed flow with milk and honey and the most enthusiastic of Biblical prophecies are fulfilled:

> Here was not merely progress, but progress at increasing speed—acceleration—finally resembling flight, as of eagle or phoenix, eye fixed on the sun: Tyre by the fiftieth year having grown into the biggest of ports, her quays unloading 6,700,000 tons a year, mart of tangled masts, felucca, galiot, junk, cargoes of Tarshish and the Isles, Levantine stuffs, spice from the Southern Sea; while Jerusalem had grown into the recognized school of the wealthier youth of Europe, Asia and America.
>
> For it says: "The Kings of the earth shall bring their honour and glory unto her"; and again "She shall reign gloriously".

> And not Israel alone reaped the fruits of his own fine weather, but his dews fell wide. For it says: "They shall be as dew from the Lord"; and again: "They shall fill the face of the earth with fruit"; and again: "All nations shall call them blessed".
>
> And so it was: for the example of Israel, his suasive charm, proved compelling as sunshine to shoots, so that that heart of Spinoza lived to see the spectacle of a whole world deserting the gory path of Rome to go up into those uplands of mildness and gleefulness whither invites the smile of that lily Galilean.
>
> The mission of "unbelieving" Israel was to convert Christendom to Christianity; and this he did. (LOS2 p. 316)

It hardly needs emphasizing that this is a most curious form of "anti-Semitism". This conclusion is, in part, a monumental literary flourish—a climax exotic enough to cap the many minor climaxes which fill the plot. Shiel did not believe that it was the Jews who would bring about a renewal of the real world, but he did believe, passionately, that such a renewal was possible and highly desirable.

Hogarth is perhaps the archetype of the Shielian flawed hero. He is brave and good and noble, and there is no doubting his intelligence or cleverness. And yet, still, he is something of a fool. The reader can only find it amazing that he fails to realize that O'Hara is a treacherous liar. While his mind is on great matters he is neglectful of his personal safety to a perilous degree, and is destroyed by his neglect. This pattern was to recur throughout Shiel's canon. Langler, in *The Last Miracle,* is incredibly stupid when he calmly tells the villain everything he knows about the latter's activities—an indiscretion which results in his sister's being mutilated. Llewellyn, in *This Knot of Life,* receives into his household a man who is his bitterest enemy, and permits that man to destroy his life. Cobby, in *Children of the Wind* (1923), fails to recognize his deadly enemy because of a shaven beard and false teeth—*despite the fact that the villain offers his own name.* Caxton Hazlitt, in *How the Old Woman Got Home,* is a very paradigm of stupidity, despite the fact that he is the mouthpiece for the fullest account of Shiel's opinions; *his* sins of mission and comission result in the death of his mother (whose welfare throughout is his main concern) and the ruination of an innocent girl. In part, the characters suffer from a kind of "negative paranoia" whereby they are incapable of suspecting that anyone is plotting against them even in the most obvious circumstances. They often show a related inability to bear grudges. It seems superficially ridiculous that these should be Shiel's "overmen"—his example to us all of what kind of men *should* live on earth but cannot because of the iniquities of our political institutions, but Shiel is both consistent and serious about this, and there is reason in it.

The Purple Cloud, which directly followed *The Lord of the Sea,* is rightly considered to be Shiel's most outstanding work. It is, in its way, a masterpiece. It is also a rather atypical book in Shiel's canon, insofar as one can speak of a "type" in respect of such a heterogenous *oeuvre.* Like *The Lord of the Sea* it is as much a theological fantasy as a scientific romance: it is an apocalyptic fantasy and the tale of a new Adam and Eve. It differs radically, as might be expected of Shiel, from other Adam and Eve stories, though it has noticeable affinities with the rash of "last man" fantasies which flourished briefly in the early part of the nineteenth century, including a novel by Mary Shelley and a long poem by Thomas Campbell.

Unlike *The Lord of the Sea* the story of *The Purple Cloud* appears to have been transmitted back to Mary Wilson by its hero (or perhaps, in this case, anti-hero might be a better description), for it is told as a first-person narrative. Its ostensible author begins by

recalling the ranting of a Scottish preacher, who predicted that disaster would follow if any man reached the North Pole, because the pole is in some mysterious symbolic sense the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil forbidden to man since the days of Adam.

In spite of this warning, the narrator—Adam Jeffson—is tempted by his fiancée to become part of an expedition to the pole. His place is won by murder, and a second murder is committed when Jeffson becomes incorporated into the small group making the final dash for the pole. He thrusts on ahead of his companions and wins through to his goal, which he perceives as a pillar engraved with unreadable characters, surrounded by a lake of living fluid. This is an illusion, and he is plagued by hallucinations as he makes his way south again: the whole novel is a nightmare of guilt and encroaching madness and a transcendental voyage through an inner hell; this surreal experience in the Arctic is only the beginning.

Jeffson finds himself alone in a world from which all animal life has been exterminated by a poisonous purple gas released from a volcano. After searching for survivors and destroying London by fire he begins to loot Europe for treasures which he intends to pile up in the richest palace the world has ever known, but he is periodically affected by bouts of despair that alternate with his waves of obsessive activity. (Many of Shiel's heroes are subject to bouts of deep gloom, and their activities frequently seem manic.)

The manuscript becomes fragmentary, breaking off at one point for a period of seventeen years, and seems quite surreal. Jeffson is tormented by opposing forces which seem to have used him throughout his life as their battleground. He characterizes them as "the white" and "the black" and considers himself the instrument of the latter, though the former will not let him go. At one point he finds in himself a symbol of the world, his moods and struggles reflecting the plight of the planet in its slow and fitful evolution.

Jeffson abandons himself to death on more than one occasion, but is preserved as if for some special purpose, but when he eventually finds the second survivor of the disaster—a girl, younger than the world's emptiness, born in an airtight chamber where her mother was imprisoned—he rebels against the plan by which "the white" seems intent on making him father to a new human race. He will not let the girl name herself Eve once she learns to speak, but instead names her after his murderous fiancée. She rejects that, and in the end they settle it that she shall be named Leda.

Aware of the sufferings to which people were subject before the cloud, Jeffson is convinced that it is better that the race should not be re-created, but he knows that in this he is allying himself with the black. Leda's influence brings him only slowly back to sanity, and he resents the awful responsibility of it. He tries to abandon her and resolves to kill himself, but when she tells him over the telephone that she has again seen the purple cloud staining the horizon he gives way, and accepts that the human story must begin again. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil at last takes root inside him, and he accepts the law of God:

> "For I, Adam Jeffson, parent of a race, hereby lay down, ordain, and decree for all time, perceiving it now: That the one motto and watchword proper to the riot and odyssey of Life in general, and in especial to the race of men, ever was, and remains, even this: 'Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him.'" (PC p. 202)

Shiel was a great admirer of the Book of Job, naming its author as first among all writers for "Expression" and third (behind "the Jehovist" and Goethe) for "Matter". There is a good deal of Job in *The Purple Cloud,* which can be regarded, likewise, as an

exploratory hypothesis explicating the relationship between human suffering (at the individual and total level) and the moral order of the universe. It is worth noting that Wells, too, wrote a new Book of Job in *The Undying Fire* (1919).

As in *The Lord of the Sea,* the theology of *The Purple Cloud* is odd, but orthodox in the sense that it takes its warrant from the Bible. If one reads the book in isolation it is not obvious that "the white" is a very different God from the God of the Churchmen. The dissolution of the idea of deity into the basic *force* animating the universe—the motor of evolutionary progress—is certainly not clear here, and presumably awaited clear formulation on the part of the author. There is quite a sharp ideative gap separating *The Lord of the Sea* and *The Purple Cloud* from *The Last Miracle* as well as a gap in time. Shiel may not have been ready in 1901 to carry through the philosophical thrust of *The Last Miracle.* (One must, however, be cautious on this point. The fact that *The Last Miracle* was not published until 1906 does not necessarily mean that it was not written until then—it is a highly controversial book which might have taken its time finding a willing publisher. Then again, there is internal textual evidence that the beginning and end of the book may have been separately written.)

In between *The Purple Cloud* and *The Last Miracle* Shiel published five novels, mostly riotous adventure stories with melodramatic plots. Only one is futuristic—the future war novel, *The Yellow Wave.* This features a war between Russia and Japan which threatens to disturb the sensible peace which most nations have accepted. The myth of the war to end war is no longer apparent here, as it was in *The Yellow Danger,* and the crude social Darwinism of the earlier book has quite disappeared. The war is ended not by genocide, nor even by victory, but by pacification in consequence of the tragedy of two young lovers, Yoshhio (son of the Japanese warlord) and Nadine (daughter of a Russian prince), who are killed when caught between the contending forces. One can see here an echo of the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet,* a story which Shiel quoted more than once as the archetype of the *genuinely* happy ending—happy, that is, for the future of the world rather than for the fortunes of individuals. The purposes of this essay are, however, best served by passing quickly over *The Yellow Wave* to a detailed consideration of *The Last Miracle.*

As *The Purple Cloud* is Shiel's best book, largely for reasons unconnected with his philosophical development, so *The Last Miracle* might be reckoned just about his worst. It hangs together badly, has a plot which moves (when it moves at all) by virtue of the stupidities of its leading characters, and suffers such a wrenching change of perspective as it approaches its climax that most readers cannot help but feel cheated.

This time, the narrator of the story is not its hero, but simply a man who tags along—a Watsonian figure who really (from an aesthetic point of view) ought not to be in the plot at all. He tells of how his friend Aubrey Langler finds a wren with a message attached to its leg—an appeal for help issued by a priest imprisoned in the Austrian province of Styria. Although the message has not survived in its entirety Langler is able to work out that the man responsible for the outrage must be Baron Kolar, who is currently in England taking a keen interest in the career of a charismatic preacher.

Langler foolishly tells Kolar what he knows, and Kolar warns him to keep out of the affair. One of the warnings which he issues consists of driving knives through the hands of Langler's sister.

While Langler hesitates, a vision of the crucified Christ appears in a local Church—part of a series of miracles which touch off a revival of faith throughout Europe. The preacher, Barton, becomes a powerful force in British politics as a result of the new religious movement, and leads the opposition against a eugenics bill which will provide for the sterilization of "diseased persons".

Langler, being one of the few people in his parish who did not witness the miracle, is one of the few prepared to doubt it, and suspects that Kolar (who considers the eugenics bill far too moderate) somehow, and for some unknown reason, may have had a hand in it. Despite the violent warning, he sets off for Styria to secure the freedom of the imprisoned clergyman, but finds the task beyond him. Once the matter is brought to a conclusion (unsatisfactory, from his point of view) he returns to England for a final confrontation with Kolar, whose plans are reaching their climax.

Kolar has staged all the miracles on which the revived faith is founded, and plans to destroy the credibility of the Christian Churches once and for all with this revelation. (This scheme is parallel to the one featured in Guy Thorne's best-selling *When it was Dark* (1904), where faked evidence that Christ's resurrection never took place precipitates such a crisis of faith that civilization totters and almost collapses.) Langler, in threatening this plan, is simply a minor nuisance, but instead of having him murdered the Baron volunteers to face him in a game of Russian Roulette employing two pills, one of which is poison. Thus, fate is to decide the path of the future—whether the world should go the way of credulity or scepticism.

So far, the reader has been encouraged to believe that Langler is the hero of the book and Kolar its villain. It has been revealed that Kolar had good reason for wanting to be revenged on the priest he imprisoned, but he has taken that revenge in such a monstrous fashion as to alienate any sympathy which might have accrued to his credit. Now, though, the author shows his true hand and reveals that he has been bluffing: Kolar, after all, is on the right side, and Langler is an unfortunate meddler who has made of himself an obstruction to progress. Langler dies, and his injured sister soon follows him, but the consequences of Kolar's victory are displayed in an enthusiastic appendix which leaps forward into the future to describe the new religious order which arises out of the ashes of Christianity: the Church-of-the-Overman.

Here—in a section not without its ironies and with a rather uncharacteristic element of satire—we learn that men have not lost their religion because of Kolar, but rather have found it:

> It is just beginning to be religious. Religion is a modern thing like electrometers. Not that Plato, Jesus, the caveman, were not religious a little in their villager-way, but our religion is a river to their trickle: they hadn't our data, our *means,* to be religious. Isn't religion an attitude of adoration and donation? the donation depending upon the adoration? the adoration depending upon knowledge of the Being adored, upon science? Adoration is a compound of (1) awe, and (2) love; and to have it we must *know* that God is (1) great, and (2) greatly good. But no ancient could suspect these: Jesus believed that the stars would some day "fall from heaven", and that God is littley good, "loving" village Tom and Dick; *we* know The Gospel, The Tidings of Great Joy, that (1) the stars are suns, (2) that we come from monkeys. Our stars can't "fall" upon Jerusalem "like figs": a thousand million earths can fall into Betelgeuse and be lost, and there are doubtless billions of billions of Betelgeuses in a billion island-universes, of which a few are visible to our eye-pieces. God's great: we have awe. And we are related to snakes: there is a principle of progress in Being leading on to lives that will one day be finer, wiser, more wildly delighted, than ever entered into our little hearts to fancy. Now, how greatly good—Ah, the glad tidings!—we can't help loving: we have adoration. And from adoration springs donation, which is religion in the stricter sense—that

which "binds us back" from living to please our roughest upper-self: so the village-religions said "live to please the neighbours, Tom, Dick". But the evolution of this? Is it not "live to please the distant, invisible: Man, Society"? And the evolution of this? Is it not "live to please even the non-existent, the still unborn"? (LM pp. 274-5)

The narrator hears this argument from a friend, and visits a church at his exhortation to watch a ritual and film show, in which one key element is a new version of the parable of the good Samaritan. This serves to exemplify the important last part of the above argument, forming the basis for Shiel's particular view of morality: his own particular theory of "the good", which underlies and explains many of the peculiarities in his novels.

The parable runs as follows:

In a grim gorge we saw a man named Adamson robbed by brigands, left bleeding; after which a broker passed along in haste, casting glances of alarm, saw Adamson, but did not stop. Then came a scientist—young, strong-looking, inclined to baldness—frowning over a phial, till he caught sight of Adamson: upon which he stopped his carriage, and with a look of annoyance was getting out, when a rattle of brigands galloping somewhere reached his ears: whereupon, muttering "No, thank you", he was again on in haste. And now comes the good Samaritan trotting on an ass, a squat Sancho Panza: he, seeing the wounded, muttered "My goodness, that poor man . . . how should *I* feel—?", while tears filled his eyes. He was soon putting oil and wine on Adamson's wounds, heaving Adamson upon the ass, leading him to an inn within the pass . . . At that inn, too, the scientist put up: and there we witnessed both his death and Adamson's, who died after five days: for oil and wine are not the right things to put on wounds, and the good Samaritan's oil and wine teemed with bacteria, which were exhibited magnified on the screen: so that Adamson died in agony. So did the scientist: for, experimenting on toxins, serums, antiseptics, he injected himself, conscious that it might end him, and writhing he died, writing down the result of the experiment. We marked the holy martyr's immolation of himself with hearts that smarted, yet with an exultance which soared on wings of joy—I say "we", for throughout all the enormousness of that hall a storm of acclamation reigned. Then another scene: a battlefield: Adamsons wounded in tens of thousands: and most of them the scientist's antiseptic rescued. And now the last scene: a village graveyard: the good Samaritan's tombstone: marked on it "He was a good neighbour"; then the scientist's statue atop of a column: and the column moved up, and up, and up, across the screen, so that its top seemed to reach the very heavens; and it was suggested that roaring round its base was a noising as of many waters, voices of ten thousand times ten thousand raised in adoration; and on its base was marked "Servant of God, Neighbour of Man". (LM pp. 280-1)

This makes the point abundantly clear. The religiosity of the Christian churches is out of date, according to Shiel. In learning more about the universe we have learned more about God, and must take this into account in our worship. The new knowledge must be the foundation-stone of a new morality in which our responsibilities are very much wider. The fact that a man like Kolar treats his neighbours very badly—even injuring and killing them—will not win our acclaim, but does not in itself warrant our condemnation. He must be judged, also if not instead, by the consequences of his actions as they affect millions of people, including millions not yet born. It is what he does for *progress,* for the evolution of mankind, that is what *really* counts.

According to Shiel we have the wrong heroes and the wrong saints. We revere the wrong kind of martyr. In the moral theory sanctified by Shiel's idea of God and His goodness what happens to individuals really does not matter much, and what individuals do to one another does not matter either, if it is done in the service of a much greater good: the furtherance of science and the cause of progress.

This is reflected in Shiel's work in several ways: directly, in the elevation to heroic status of men like Kolar and Dr Krasinski in *Dr Krasinski's Secret* (1929); and indirectly,

in the author's attitude to his heroes. It now becomes clear why his heroes can behave like idiots in personal matters, and how they can be treated cruelly by fate as regards the failure of their projects and the manner of their deaths. What they do, and what happens to them, must properly be evaluated in terms of a much larger scheme of things: the scheme of progress. As individuals, they and their personal affairs are of no importance; as pieces in a greater game they may have a contribution to make. Langler, the good Samaritan, turns out to be a black pawn, while Kolar is a white piece; in the game it matters not what they think of themselves or what their neighbours think of them.

Superficially, it may seem that there is a return in *The Last Miracle* to the crude social Darwinism of *The Yellow Danger,* especially in respect of the bill for the sterilization of the unfit. Shiel's attitude to this is ambiguous—though Kolar approves and Langler thinks it a bestial and sinful thing, it is not necessarily so that Kolar's is the view which receives the final endorsement. The point to be made, however, is that according to Shiel, the justification such actions would require has nothing to do with Darwinism at all, even in a crude analogical sense. To call Shiel a social Darwinist at this stage of his career would be to mistake the whole context of his thinking. His view of evolution is very different from Darwin's: it is an aspect of Being, and God is *within* it. Far from being a process in which order arises from the operation of natural selection on spontaneous mutation, Shiel's evolution is an ascent of mind, as vital in the life of the universe as the arrow of time itself.

The epilogue of *The Last Miracle* features Shiel's first literary use of the concept of the "Overman". He uses the word frequently, mainly because of a strong dislike (on etymological grounds) for the word "superman". This is explained in a footnote to the original version of "On Reading" omitted in the version in *Science, Life and Literature.* The same footnote (TKL pp. 38-9) makes reasonably clear the sense in which he was at that point using it. He refers to several "men of educated consciousness", including H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw and—perhaps most significantly—the poet John Davidson. He constructs an imaginary dialogue in which Davidson is entitled to answer criticism of his recent work (presumably the five *Testaments,* though no title is given) by claiming to possess such an educated consciousness and thus to qualify as an overman. The etymological note acknowledges that the word is a translation of Nietzsche's *übermensch,* but the probability is that Shiel got it from Nietzsche *via* Davidson rather than direct.

Shiel's reasons for borrowing the term "overman" were sound enough, but his use of the term can be misleading to the unwary reader, especially if one overestimates the importance of the concept in his thinking. The blurb attached to the recent Mycroft & Moran collection *Prince Zaleski and Cummings King Monk* claims that "Throughout his life M.P. Shiel was obsessed by the notion of the 'Overman', the precursor to a new and superior race that he believed would gradually evolve under the benison of modern science. Zaleski and Monk embody in essence the fictional adaptation of this superhuman sensibility." In fact, though, there is little evidence that Shiel was "obsessed" with the notion of the overman and the talk of a "new and superior race" is surely misleading when one recalls that the sole qualification for being an overman is an educated consciousness.

The main reason why Shiel's use of the term gives the wrong impression (through no fault of his!) is that nobody else has ever adopted the word. Because it is clearly taken

from Nietzsche, it can easily seem that Shiel is using it in the same way that Nietzsche used *übermensch*. This is certainly not so: the moral philosophies of Shiel and Nietzsche are actually polar opposites.

Whether Shiel ever actually read Nietzsche it is difficult to be sure. He casually lets fall the names of many philosophers in *Science, Life and Literature,* but Nietzsche's is not among them. It appears in the footnote to the original "On Reading", but is mis-spelled. John Davidson, whose work shows very strong Nietzschean influences, may well have provided Shiel with all the contact he had with Nietzschean ideas.

The point is that Nietzsche's moral philosophy is very highly individualist. For Nietzsche, the only people who really *matter,* in the human world, are those rare individuals possessed of the power of creativity—men of genius. Unfortunately (in Nietzsche's view) civilization and the prevailing morality are the creations of gregarious weaklings, who have created a world dominated by "the ethics of the herd". The morally transformed world of the *übermensch* is yet to appear.

Shiel also looks forward to a moral transformation of society—*The Last Miracle* makes this abundantly clear—but Shiel is the ultimate moral collectivist. For him, individuals hardly matter at all *as individuals.* Men of genius are celebrated only for their contribution to the commonweal. Shiel's overmen are already among us, and they can be created relatively easily; Nietzsche's overmen are so rare and ultimately precious that it is not clear from his writings whether any one of them has yet walked the earth.

There are, of course, similarities between Shiel and Nietzsche, but the similarities conceal vital points of difference. Both were opposed to the Christian Churches, and mounted virulent attacks upon them, but Nietzsche actually despised the moral teachings of Christ, whereas Shiel merely thought that it was time for a higher moral consciousness to be imposed upon them, as an extension rather than a reversal. Then again, both Nietzsche and Shiel exhibit a seeming moral callousness, considering murder a relatively trivial affair which might easily be justified—but the arguments they would have given in justification are crucially different. Nietzsche's *übermensch* is entitled to do as he likes simply because of what he is; Shiel's overman may use others cynically only if he is working in the great cause of science and progress, working for the future of mankind.

Shiel's notion of the overman is made clearer in the novel in which he describes the deliberate creation of an overman by a process of unusual education, *The Isle of Lies,* which was published in 1909—the same year as *This Knot of Life.*

The Isle of Lies is the story of Hannibal Lepsius, the son of an archaeologist who has him conceived and then shapes his upbringing for the sole purpose of deciphering fifteen mysterious ideographs at the end of an inscription engraved on a stele, which he has stolen from an Abyssinian monastery. (The archaeologist is presumably named in honour of Karl Richard Lepsius, the German Egyptologist who helped to found modern scientific archaeology.)

Hannibal Lepsius is reared on an island by his father and a single assistant, Shan Healy (his mother having conveniently died after giving birth). There he is made to believe that the world at large is inhabited by men of great intellect and perfect physique. Healy, a man of no mean intelligence, is represented as a person of contemptible stupidity, while Lepsius senior works hard to maintain the illusion that he is a much greater genius than in fact he is. Hannibal, in the full flower of youth, is expected to be stronger and quicker than his teachers, who lay down "normal" standards which they, regretfully, cannot

attain. The fraud is successful—belief is all that is required for Hannibal Lepsius to make himself into an overman such as the world has not yet seen.

The project comes to fruition when the scientist finally gives the stele to his son and demands a translation. The boy gets as far as the man was able to, but then falters. He takes the stele away in order to consider the problem, but he never returns. Visitors have come, by chance, to the island, and Hannibal is carried away by a sudden passion on first seeing a woman. The woman in question is a lady's maid named Jeanne Auvache, who is attractive to him solely because he has seen no other woman to compare her to. She smuggles him aboard the yacht which brought her, after he recklessly proposes marriage.

Hannibal soon finds out that there are more beautiful women in the world than Jeanne Auvache—and he soon finds, too, that his expectations of civilization are wildly inaccurate. He falls in love all over again, with Jeanne's mistress Eve Vickery, but is soon parted from her when he is forced to flee England after a brush with the law.

After a gap of some years we meet Lepsius again, now more-or-less adapted to the world as it is. He has settled in France, and is trying to raise capital in the Bourse to finance a bold project in high technology—the launching of an artificial satellite which will (apparently) illuminate the Earth as a new moon. His plans apparently go well beyond this—a letter which he is presumed to have written hints at the intention to rule the world—but we learn no details. He is distracted from his scheming by the arrival in France of Eve Vickery. Although she is now affianced he renews his suit with vigour. He is a lonely man because the entire race "suppurates in dullness", and he longs for a partner to educate to something near his own level.

Hannibal's enemies seize the opportunity of his infatuation with Eve to set traps for him. He abducts her, lodging her in his house at Serapis, and seems to have confounded the plans laid against him. The legacy of his past errors, though, brings him down. The deserted Jeanne Auvanche has vowed to vitriolize him, and has once failed to do so. Now, at last, she succeeds in taking her revenge, and blinds him. He is destroyed and his plans for world-improvement collapse, but by an ironic twist of fate it is this destruction, which teaches him humility, that at last makes him acceptable to Eve Vickery, who takes him to her bosom.

The naive reader will take the ending of *The Isle of Lies* to be a happy one, with its triumph of sentiment and affection over vaulting ambition. By Shiel's standards, it should rather be reckoned a tragedy, for the world remains unimproved. Actually, as with Kolar, one suspects a certain ambivalence in Shiel's attitude, as if he was reluctant at this stage to take his ideas to their logical conclusion. It is too easy, reading *The Last Miracle,* to see Kolar as an out-and-out villain even at the end; similarly, it is too difficult to accept Hannibal Lepsius wholeheartedly as a hero. When he mentions casually to Eve that his motives for creating a world-state are not entirely selfless, but reflect in part a desire to play in godlike fashion with the lives of men, and that he does not much care if millions die in the pursuit of his ends, one is rather inclined to sympathize with her horror; nor does Shiel work hard to prevent our doing so.

Lepsius is the only character in Shiel's scientific romances who is enough of an overman to despise contemporary science in the same way that his ordinarily educated men despise the limitations of ancient knowledge. Because of this, though, he seems to have lost the sympathy of the author in some degree, and Shiel seems to concur in the opinion that he really does *need* to learn a measure of humility. It is significant that

though his father eliminates any mention of religion from his education, the younger Lepsius later finds a certain fascination in the life of Jesus. Shortly before his blinding, when the first act of betrayal is about to begin his downfall, he is to be found reading the gospel according to St. Matthew. The news that actually sends Eve Vickery scurrying back to his side is that he has forgiven Jeanne Auvache. (It should be noted, though, that there are two ways to interpret this—Eve thinks that it means he has become a kind of Christian, but Shiel's overmen in general do not bear grudges because they recognize their own insignificance in the evolutionary schema.)

One probably should conclude that the ambivalence of *The Isle of Lies* represents a partial retreat from the philosophical standpoint taken up in the appendix to *The Last Miracle* (which seems itself to be slightly uneasy).

The Isle of Lies stands almost at the end of Shiel's first prolific period. After 1909 there was a three year gap before his next novel, during which he published the short story collection *The Pale Ape.* The next novel, *The Dragon,* was followed by an even longer gap.

The Dragon, later retitled *The Yellow Peril,* seems to be a deliberate return to Shiel's beginnings as a novelist. It is a revisitation of the theme of *The Yellow Danger,* adapted to the changes which had overtaken the author's philosophy in the meantime. The ringing rhetoric of its last chapter presents a synthesis of the political philosophy of *The Lord of the Sea* and the "evolutionary theology" of *The Last Miracle.* There is no mention in it of overmen.

As in *The Yellow Danger,* we find in *The Dragon* an Oriental genius bent on world-destruction and locked by circumstance into a personal duel with a particular Englishman. Here the whole war is essentially an extension of the personal feud, the Chinaman Li Ku Yu having been bested by the English Prince Teddy in a schoolboy scrap and having sworn to get even at *any* cost. The two combatants are each aided—or at least abetted—by their female partners, Li Ku Yu by the ingenious Oyone and Teddy by the commoner whom he has secretly married (and who remains blissfully unaware that she is wed to the heir to the throne!)

Although *The Dragon* cannot be said to be one whit more plausible than its preposterous predecessor it makes much more interesting reading. It is a perfect melodrama: a remarkable blend of Cinderella and Fu Manchu, full of plots and fights, captures and escapes, mistaken identities and perilous misapprehensions. The weapons employed in the eventual international conflict are, as might be expected, more enterprising than those deployed in the earlier novel: a flying boat and a deadly ray play crucial roles.

Whereas the confrontation between yellow and white in *The Yellow Danger* was essentially a conflict between racial groups, the confrontation in *The Dragon* is represented as a clash between mind-sets. Even in the earlier novel the Chinese mind was castigated for its devotion to the tyranny of method and custom, and here again it is made mock of on much the same grounds. Overall, though, the contest of argument is much more even-handed. Towards the end of the book, when Prince Teddy and Li Ku Yu have their climactic contest of wills, they spend a surprising amount of time agreeing about philosophical fundamentals. Li Ku Yu shoots out Shielian theses with which Teddy cannot disagree, and it is only at the very last that his train of argument is derailed:

> "What one thing is it that concerns living beings—that living beings care about?

Happiness? Agreed?"

"Yes".

"Good! And happiness consists in worshipping God? say in 'religion'. Agreed?"

"Yes".

"Good! Now, the scientist denies that apes, negroes, bishops, bouzis, dervishes, are religious; denies that anyone can possibly be religious—but him; since no one else can have any knowledge of God—but him; denies that anyone knows what religion *is* but him. And he is right—necessarily! Agreed?"

"Yes".

"Good! Now, at my birth I observe two masses of men, equal in number—one white, one yellow; both having what they call 'a religion'; but the brain of the yellow much more disengaged from his 'religion', equally superstitious, but less deformed and diseased with superstition, less incapable of being led to look in a centric sane mood at the universe, and be truly religious. So said I to myself: 'The European brain will take two hundred years to evolve out of the notion that Christianity has some connection with religion, resemblance to'; and if one answer, 'but already France, Germany, England, have rejected Christianity,' *I* answer back: 'they *think* so!' but for many days their mentation will be infected by the fact that for ages their fathers entertained the conceit that a mammal of their species, with 300 rudimentary organs, was the Infinite Itself. Imagine the astonishment of a zoologist of Mars to know that on some planet in space there paces an animal into whose head the disease of a conceit so *ec*-centric could creep and fester. Man? Comic! the laughing-stock of the cosmos! So said I: 'Save mankind two hundred years! abolish Europe.' (YP pp. 324-5)

To which the Prince's response is "Well said"—and then comes the objection that Li Ku Yu has no proof whatever that the Chinese are more nearly capable of discovering God's truth than the men of the West, and that this is an unjustified assumption. Li Ku Yu has no *proof* to offer, and hence the matter must remain subject to test. This is what the war is really about. The Oriental forces are, of course, defeated—though some readers might think that the miraculous ray-gun which turns the trick is a trifle arbitrary as a method—and the hero's triumph is for once unmarred by any personal tragedy. (Given that he is the future king of England, for Shiel to mistreat him as he usually mistreats his heroes would seem almost to be a species of treason.)

Like *The Last Miracle, The Dragon* has an epilogue, in which a kind of judgment is passed. It is set against the background of a universal anxiety precipitated by the knowledge that the Earth is to pass through the tail of a comet, but instead of disaster following the groundwork is laid for a moral renewal of human civilization—not in any miraculous fashion, as in Wells' *In the Days of the Comet,* but by virtue of Teddy taking advantage of the receptiveness of his people to deliver a stirring speech whose message strikes home.

Teddy's edict begins by declaring Britain to be his own private property, "by right of conquest", so that social reforms can be imposed immediately. The nation is henceforth to devote itself to education and research, its citizens each having the duty to maintain a *mens sana in corpore sano* (somewhat after the fashion of the Samurai in Wells' *A Modern Utopia*). Teddy exhorts his fellow men to rigorous scepticism and keen curiosity. "Wake Up, England!" is his message, though he means something very different by it than the august ancestor he is quoting. He goes on in a more metaphysical vein, explaining his notion of God as the motivating force of the universe, immanent in everything.

By means of this inspiration, Teddy hopes to prove Li Ku Yu wrong, and to demonstrate that it is on the men of the West—specifically, the English—on whom the mantle of evolutionary proficiency will fall. It is tempting to regard this note of cheerful optimism as an indicator of the fact that Shiel had for the time being summarized his position fully, and had nothing more to add.

Children of the Wind, which appeared ten years after *The Dragon,* is a Haggardesque adventure story in which a remote African tribe is ruled by a white woman who is also an heiress. Her cousin comes to take her home in order to claim her inheritance, but brings in tow her deadly enemy, who must kill her in order to become the beneficiary himself. Although there is a little philosophical discussion about progress, civilization and happiness at the beginning of the book it is quickly curtailed when the action starts. In respect of the development of Shiel's ideas the one really interesting inclusion in the story is an argument concerning the justification of war, which Shiel later made the basis of his essay "Of the Necessity of War" in *Science, Life and Literature* (though the notes there locate its true origin as early as 1915).

The argument in the essay is complicated, but is basically muddled social Darwinism. The impulse to make war, it is argued, arises out of a subconscious awareness that numbers are outstripping resources (in a particular ecological context). War is thus inevitable, but is also sometimes good given appropriate social institutions. The fact that the best males are wasted in combat is eugenically bad, but can be compensated, in Shiel's view, by the fact that *provided there is monogamy* the shortage of men will result in the worst of the women being eliminated from the breeding stock. Shiel appears to have believed that this is more than simply a restoration of the eugenic balance, because he was of the opinion (derived, it appears, from Schopenhauer) that it is from their mothers that men receive their intellectual powers. As evolution, for the Spencerian Shiel, is primarily a matter of the evolution of intelligence, it therefore follows that eliminating the poorer women from the breeding population is much more important than preserving the best men. Why it was that Shiel, the passionate advocate of scepticism, should have accepted this astonishing argument remains unclear. It does, however, crop up elsewhere in his work and there seems little doubt that he did take it quite seriously.

The reluctance to interrupt a fast-moving plot with philosophical discussion does not show up at all in the second novel Shiel wrote after his comeback, *How the Old Woman Got Home,* which is copiously equipped with situations which delay and distract the hero so that he can discourse at some length about abstract matters, summarizing Shiel's intellectual position. Shiel seems to have been pleased with this accomplishment, and though confessing that he had a kinder memory of *Children of the Wind* draws attention to the later novel in the final version of his oft-rewritten essay "Of Myself":

> But the *Old Woman* one has this distinction, that in it is given, so to say, my political system. I first demonstrate what *"good"* means—and anyone who makes quite sure of this little thing will be astonished at the flood of light which it will throw into his thoughts on all sorts of other subjects. I demonstrate, then, that the noun *"Good"* means pleasure, that the adjective "good" means pleasant—and nothing else. Then I demonstrate that *all* pleasure, *all* good, is the result of truth, of science—the science of the amoeba or of Newton. Then I demonstrate that the growth of truth, of science, of pleasure, of Good, depends (1) upon brains (a little), and (2) upon luck (much). Then I demonstrate that, though the luck of a million is exactly a millionfold more than the luck on one, the million must be *in the way* of truth, seeking truth, or no luck can accrue—must be scientists, men of leisure; but this they can't be, if they are slaves, i.e., "landless men", men without a country: so that any great growth of Good depends upon countries being owned by nations. (SLL p.26)

Caxton Hazlitt's expanded version of all this is much more detailed and slightly more sophisticated than the version contained in Prince Teddy's speech at the end of *The Dragon,* but in essence the message has not changed at all. The socialist argument, plugging Hogarth's Georgian ideas, is put much more completely and in stronger terms,

and for the first time we have a full elaboration of the role of sheer luck in the advancement of science, but there is nothing new about the fundamentals of the case. Some of the details represent new "discoveries" on Shiel's part—for instance, he dismisses Einstein's theory of relativity in rather cavalier fashion as a folly unworthy of serious intellectual consideration—but it is arguable that the most interesting feature of the novel is Shiel's choice of Caxton Hazlitt as his mouthpiece.

Hazlitt is an impoverished man, unable to find work or to make use of his talents, but he is by training an engineer—a man of practical scientific knowledge. (Shiel valued practical expertise highly, rather more than abstract theoretical understanding.) He lays claim, at one point, to the title of overman. And yet, insofar as his projects within the plot are concerned, he is a hopeless incompetent. He allows himself to be deluded, distracted and all-but-destroyed by his adversaries. Such successes as his cause does enjoy are due to the enterprise and energy of his devoted friends (who are far from being overmen, being almost completely ignorant). When, in the end, he fails to achieve his ends, he gives way to a deathly depression, will not allow himself to be redeemed by the girl who loves him and is carrying his unborn child, and commits suicide.

This seems perverse, and in a sense it is, but there is calculation within the perversity. We usually expect that the characters who embrace an author's doctrines—and thus become his heroes, his surrogate selves—will be rewarded for their servitude. It is, after all, an author's prerogative to determine how things fall out within his plots, and to distribute rewards and punishments as he pleases. When an author chooses to subject those who hold to his doctrines to every humiliation at his command, this seems almost to constitute a treason against his own ideas. We must not lose sight, though, of the kind of doctrine that Shiel and his heroes embrace. Within the context of thought sketched out above it makes perfect sense that an overman need not be a successful man: he is not a Nietzschean *übermensch* or a Carlylean hero; he is merely a participant in a general progress which is largely a *haphazard* process in which there are many casualties. The personal tragedy of Caxton Hazlitt is quite irrelevant to the ideative issues which are really at stake in *How the Old Woman Got Home.* It is completely detached from the question of whether the conclusion of the story is "good" or "happy" in Shiel's eccentric uses of those terms; it is a separate matter.

It is perhaps in this novel rather than any other where one has to bear in mind Shiel's notion of a happy ending. There is an argument in the connecting material of the short story collection *Here Comes the Lady* (published one year after *How the Old Woman Got Home* in 1928) which forms the basis for one of the briefest essays in *Science, Life and Literature.* Here it is argued that all tales should end happily, but that an ending which leaves the characters contented and rich is happy only in a very trivial sense. *Real* happy endings are those which—like *Romeo and Juliet*—end happily for the greater society. The ending of *How the Old Woman Got Home* does promise to be happy in this way: in giving up the fortune to which he is entitled Caxton Hazlitt asks that it be used in the cause of progress and enlightenment.

This lesson has also to be borne in mind while reading *Dr Krasinski's Secret*, which followed *How the Old Woman Got Home* in 1929. Here, too, a fortune is at stake, and the eponymous scientist is determined to acquire it by marriage, clearing out of the way the contenders who stand in line ahead of his intended bride. His instrument in committing these murders is a young boy whom he imprisons and forces to become addicted to

alcohol; the boy is a carrier of a deadly disease. The story is cool and clinical, reflecting the personality of its anti-hero, who appears for most of the plot to be the perfect Gothic villain in modern guise, but whose cause is eventually endorsed. Krasinski is not allowed to carry through his scheme to its conclusion, but after his death it is another scientist who marries the heiress, and the fortune is put to proper use. Here again we discover the only real happy ending that was possible within the framework of the plot, in Shiel's terms.

In his second productive phase Shiel produced only one long scientific romance. This was his last published novel, *The Young Men Are Coming* (1937). Although not the best-written of his books this is the most ambitious of his speculative fictions and one of his most important works.

The Young Men Are Coming is the story of Dr Oscar Warwick, an ageing scientist who makes accidental contact with alien beings landed temporarily on Earth. He is taken for a ride in their spacecraft, and sees many marvellous things. The high point of his visit is a long discussion with an unborn alien, which is sentient, intelligent and communicative despite the fact that it is not yet hatched from its egg. When the aliens bring him home he has two souvenirs of the contact: a vague promise of future help if he should call and if his call should be heard; and the elixir of life.

Rejuvenation completely changes his character, filling him with a new verve and a desperate enthusiasm for changing the world. On a mad whim he "elopes" with his son's girl-friend, taking advantage of the fact that she mistakes his identity. This petty indulgence sows the seeds of disaster: he makes a bitter enemy of the girl's father, shatters the girl's life when he quickly deserts her (leaving her pregnant), and annoys his deserted wife Felicia. All three consequences extend through the plot, entangling its motions.

In London, Warwick adopts the name of Wallace, and founds a social movement called the Young Men. This has such an influence with young disaffected idealists that it quickly begins to pose a political threat to the Establishment. The government, in response, prepares for repressive action and totalitarian rule. Wallace becomes involved in a feud with an evangelist, which he boldly offers to settle by a contest of miracle-working, where each man will try to whip up a storm. The evangelist is let down by his paternalistic God, but Wallace succeeds only too well with the aid of his alien apostles of science: *their* storm all but wrecks the world. In the meantime, the Young Men have risen in arms against the government and Wallace discovers a personal obsession as fierce as his renewed youth will permit—his love for the beautiful Caroleth Lavarock (who is, unknown to him, his wife Felicia, who has discovered his store of the elixir).

Warwick/Wallace is basically a new version of Hannibal Lepsius, combining all the accumulated knowledge and understanding of a long lifetime's dedication to science with preternaturally vigorous youth and health. Like the young Lepsius, he is threatened with defeat as a result of an unthinking slight against a woman, but he is *not* brought down in the end. In this story a perverse ending is not required to emphasize Shiel's conviction about the relative importance of individuals and the common good, because it contains an inserted parable more effective even than the rewritten tale of the good Samaritan. Wallace hears at one point about a valuable experiment in brain surgery that is deemed too dangerous to be carried out. He immediately volunteers himself as a subject for this vivisection, and is allowed to deliver himself fearfully to his presumed destruction before the surgeon, thinking to teach the young man a lesson, turns contemptuously away.

Wallace, though, is angered rather than relieved by his let-off, and determines to carry out the operation himself. He has no difficulty in finding a volunteer from the ranks of the Young Men, but has not the skill for the delicate work, and concedes that his botched attempt has been sheer murder. The fact that the experiment fails only serves to hammer home the moral that the true overman is ever-ready to disregard his own personal safety when the good of the commonweal is at stake. This might be reckoned the ultimate example of the "negative paranoia" so characteristic of Shielian heroes.

More than any other of Shiel's scientific romances *The Young Men Are Coming* discusses actual scientific theory and possibility. In his essay in *This Knot of Life* he spoke of the necessity of being well-read in science, but never in the first phase of his career did he ever demonstrate any familiarity with contemporary scientific knowledge and theory. Here, though, the dialogue with the egg and the hero's occasional soliloquies provide Shiel with the means to display his opinions of the science of the day.

Shiel is adamant here, and in *Science, Life and Literature,* that the concept of absolute motion is neither metaphysical (as Maxwell believed) nor wrong (as Einstein maintained). Thus he defends the classical theory of Newton against its modern detractors. He is equally cavalier in his dimissal of several other contemporary theories, notably the nebular theory of the origin of the solar system (his arguments here seems much more sound.) Newton gets less support in the matter of gravitational theory, when the egg contemptuously rejects the idea that every particle in the universe attracts every other, and goes on to "explain" gravity as an electromagnetic phenomenon. This becomes elaborated into an astonishing metaphysical system in which the interplay of positive and negative charges is considered to be a manifestation of a kind of universal sexuality. The egg is just as expert in metaphysics as in physics, and it is no surprise to find it holding to the Shielian theology in which God is Force—the inherent motion of the universe. As a moral philosopher, the egg is also an orthodox follower of Shiel, the good being deemed synonymous with pleasure and with cleverness according to the customary reconstruction of these terms. All this rests on the usual bedrock of evolutionary theory:

> "A *low* society, then, is one in which some of the folk are not engaged on science, on doubting and discovering, on truth: for science is *the good* of Life, the *only* good; but some of the folk are engaged in working to earn a livelihood, or to earn riches, working, not for Society, but for themselves, like cows: so that all that *luck* in science, that *luck* in discovering and doubting, which is special to each of these workers for self, as to no other life, is lost to Society: lost all the eventfulness and elation of their inventing! And in such environments the climb of Life could not be balked, since such environments exalt the slowest lives; but Life wriggles free by that trick of God through which, in spite of all, Life is at all times climbing, this trick consisting in quickening Life at its spring, continuously: for in conception it is the quickest spermion which spurts into the ovum, the multitude of other spermia which run the race perishing; and the individual who originates from the quickest spermion has spermia whose average of quickness is as high, the quickest of these being quicker still, inheriting a stress as well as a strength: and so on. In this way the *physical* quickness of Life is continuously heightened; and since the ovum's quickness increases step for step with the spermion's, so, too, does the psychic quickness of Life increase continuously: for since Life is female, and Mind is the trait of Life, our *mind* is from the ovum, from our mothers."
> (YMAC p. 88-9)

Much of this is later repeated, for emphasis, by Wallace in convincing others of the worthiness of his cause. The difference between "young" and "old" as they are employed in the story is, of course, subsumed within this system of ideas. The old are slow and "low"; youth is not a matter of chronology but of *vitality* in every sense of the word. The old know more, but it is the young who are *seeking* to know, responsible therefore for

the activity and discovery that adds to the sum of human knowledge and the level of social evolution.

We should remember, in reading this, that Shiel was 72 when *The Young Men Are Coming* was published, and that he had not health and strength enough to prepare another book for publication. The novel is, in part, a dream fantasy whose personal significance should not be underestimated. It is also the story which, by offering the fullest account of Shiel's opinions about physics and metaphysics, most fully exposes his vulnerability as a man of ideas. Where he makes empirical claims these are almost invariably unfounded, and his arguments are often fatally flawed (it does not take much ingenuity to see the error in his pseudo-Darwinian case for a perennial increase in the sprinting speed of sperms). One is inclined to reflect, with a full appreciation of the irony thereof, that Shiel was wise to place so much stress on the role of luck in scientific inquiry. His bad luck can thus be discounted as an inevitability: he becomes merely another casualty of the randomness with which chance distributes its rewards. In the end, Shiel was a Shielian hero himself, his personal mission frustrated.

To a considerable extent, the concerns of M.P. Shiel were the common concerns of the more serious writers of early British scientific romance. He wrote several future war stories and one disaster story. He was interested in evolutionary philosophy and socialism. He was deeply suspicious of the hold which religious ideas had over the minds of his contemporaries. One could say the same of Wells and of Beresford, modifying hardly a word. To all these matters, however, he brought a determined idiosyncrasy of viewpoint which isolated him as a writer.

Although his particular complex of ideas was his alone, the individual parts of it were firmly rooted in nineteenth century thought. More often than not, they were rooted in aspects of nineteenth century thought that were themselves eccentric and which have since lost fashion and credibility. Shiel's economics is the economics of Henry George rather than of Marx; his evolutionism is the evolutionism of Spencer rather than of Darwin. Even his dogged insistence on being reckoned a deist rather than an agnostic or an atheist cannot conceal the fact that his anticlericalism is allied to the ideas of Thomas Henry Huxley, August Comte and Ludwig Feuerbach. Thirty-seven years of living in the twentieth century had not shaken Shiel's commitment to these ideas when he summarized his position in *The Young Men Are Coming*. No doubt he would have wanted to be reckoned a Young Man in spirit, but in fact he had not escaped from the trap of age.

The genuinely original aspect of Shiel's philosophical system is to be found in his social and moral philosophy. The character of his commitment to socialism is very different from Wells' commitment to Fabianism, and though he borrowed his economic theory from Henry George (or, perhaps, came to the same conclusion on his own) his political rhetoric is very different from George's.

For Shiel, the exploitation of the working classes by capitalists and landlords was not bad simply because it *was* exploitation. He was not at all interested in lifting the yoke of misery from the workers simply to make them *comfortable*. Exploitation was bad, for Shiel, in precisely the way that nineteenth century religiosity was bad: *because it stifled scientific inquiry*. It was bad for the mind, rather than for the body. The injustice of the system was a minor matter, for Shiel; the suffering of individuals was of no consequence. What mattered was that evolution was being held back.

Shiel was a moral collectivist, but not in the usual sense. His collectivism did not follow from his socialism, nor was it the kind of colectivism frequently associated with Fascism. It arose independently, of itself: a pure conviction that the nation, the human race, the life of the universe, are what really matter, and individuals hardly at all. When Shiel tells us that *good* is synonymous with *pleasant* he is not preaching hedonism or some variant of the creed of self-fulfilment: for him we can only speak of "good" and "right" in terms of whole societies—in terms of *the* whole Society.

Some readers have seen in Shiel's work a disturbing lack of moral order, but in fact they are simply failing to see what kind of moral order is there. For Shiel, there is never the slightest doubt that certain ends justify virtually any means, the ends in question being those specified by Spencerian evolutionary theory. (Though he occasionally voiced ideas which attract the label of "social Darwinism" this is probably to mistake the provenance of those ideas. In fact he was a Spencerian—to speak of a "social Spencerian" would be a pleonasm—of a slightly unorthodox stripe. One notes with ironic approval that A. Reynolds Morse's bibliography lists among Shiel's manuscripts an unpublished and unperformed play: "Herbert Spencer: A Comdey in One Act".)

We are, of course, perfectly free to decide that Shiel's brand of moral collectivism is itself an evil, and given that it is embedded in a highly suspect metaphysical system we might even be tempted to dismiss it as absurd, but we cannot say that it is incoherent or that Shiel was inconsistent in his advocacy of it. It is the presence of this underlying pattern of thought that enlivens so many of Shiel's plots, and makes them both fascinating and disturbing. More than any other leading figure in the history of British scientific romance he presents an imaginative challenge to the reader. His work does not have the imaginative fertility of Wells' speculative fictions, but it is not so easy to take up an intellectual position relative to his: he is harder to engage in intellectual dialogue.

Most contemporary readers will not find Shiel a particularly attractive proposition. His prose, alien in its own day, is even more alien today with its convolutions and its labyrinthine wildness. His ideas, similarly alien in his own day, are similarly even more alien today. Perverse as it may seem to assert it, though, it is precisely for these reasons that he is a writer worth getting to know. He is an original, in thought and in method, and no one reading Shiel could possibly have his or her ideative horizons narrowed as a result. If everything he believed was either wrong or silly—well, one could say the same of Plato. Intellectual progress is a matter of trial and error (no matter what role one attributes to luck) and we can often learn as much by contemplating the errors and getting to know their inadequacies as we can by imbibing the truths which we do not need to interrogate so closely. If Shiel's philosophical endeavours were, in the end, not very fruitful, one can come to the conclusion that he was a man who made mistakes; it is also the case, though, that people reading him have made mistakes in judging him, and this in itself might serve to make him interesting.

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Gregory Feeley's last appearance in our pages was in Foundation *25, with an essay on the work of Jack Dann. Mr Feeley confesses himself fascinated with works in progress, and has written elsewhere on stalled novels by major American writers and on the long-going saga of* The Final Dangerous Visions. *He hopes likewise to write on Disch's* The Pressure of Time—*if Tom Disch doesn't beat him to it, and finish the novel soon. However, this fascination has not prevented Mr Feeley from completing a contemporary novel of his own,* Biting into Truth.

The Davidson Apocrypha

GREGORY FEELEY

Publication in 1981 of *Peregrine: Secundus,* the first book of the Avram Davidson Apocrypha to see print, raised hopes that the major eclectic fantasist now writing in English had at last begun to pull in his nets, having cast them, many had feared, perhaps too widely ever to wholly regather. At the turn of the last decade Davidson published the opening novels to three trilogies in as many years, gaining some notoriety as the inaugurator of unfinished series, and has more lately fallen into near-silence while associates have edited volumes of his already-collected short stories. The announcement in a recent *Locus* that *Averno: A Vergil Magus Novel* has been completed seemed to confirm that Davidson was seeing his ships come in. Scheduling of *Averno* by a publisher has not yet been announced, nor have the Jack Limekiller stories, Davidson's major project in recent years, been gathered into a volume, so a review of the Davidson Apocrypha seems appropriate.

Being apocryphal, news concerning these oddments or promised volumes is rarely certain, so I have given the sources of what has appeared in print concerning them. Rumor, though copious and sometimes plausible, I have excluded from this compendium.

Bumberboom. The Penguin edition of Davidson's *Rork!* (1969) lists *Bumberboom* among Davidson's publications, though no such volume exists. A novelette by that title appeared in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1966 and was reprinted by Wollheim and Carr

and elsewhere. In 1967 Terry Carr edited *New Worlds of Fantasy* for Ace, which contains a sequel, "Basilisk". No other mention of these stories seems available, but one may speculate: The two pieces total some 22,000 words, enough certainly to get a book contract; it would seem more likely that a novel was planned (notwithstanding the protagonists' evident undoing by the second story's end) than a story collection, for Davidson has always had more than enough uncollected superior fiction on hand at any time to fill a volume. The rather offputting cynicism of the stories may have proved uncongenial to sustain; or Davidson may have found himself drawn away in the late 1960s by the ambitious series he had already begun. No lament has been heard by any of Davidson's readership for the nonappearance of this volume.

The Cap of Grace. See *The Six-Limbed Folk.*

"Caravan to Illiel." A 1976 novella published in Lin Carter's Dell anthology *Flashing Swords! $3.* It bears the heading "An Exploit from the Saga of Corydon" on the contents page, but this was apparently added by Carter to achieve format conformity (he cannot conceive of any fantasy not being part of some amorphus series). In his introduction, Carter says only that Davidson's "new story seems to be the beginning of a new cycle of tales". The story does not prefigure a sequel except that its ending leaves the young protagonist footloose and available for more adventure.

Don't Speak of Rope. A mystery novel, undertaken in collaboration with Harlan Ellison and sold to Gold Medal Books "circa 1961" but never completed. Davidson recounts the acceptance of the book in "Scherzo for Schizoids", his contribution to Ellison's *Partners in Wonder,* where "after almost eight years of almost selling a book" he finally does so. The only other reference to the apparently ill-starred project can be found in the Introduction to Ellison's collection *Paingod,* where Ellison refers briefly to the book as ten thousand words reposing in some file cabinet, whose existence all principals would rather forget.

The year following Davidson's period of wandering in the wilderness of American book publishing—those eight years since the publication of "My Boyfriend's Name is Jello" in 1954, when he sold stories to non-genre markets as diverse as *Collier's* and *Harlequin* in addition to winning the Hugo and Edgar Awards for short fiction, and established a mastery in the short story that neither John Collier nor Roald Dahl were ever to exceed—Davidson did publish two books: his first collection *Or All the Seas With Oysters* and the winsome collaboration *Joyleg,* with Ward Moore. His real period of prolificity in the novel came two years later, when between 1964 and 1966 he published *Mutiny in Space, The Masters of the Maze, Rogue Dragon, The Enemy of My Enemy, Rork!, The Kar-Chee Reign,* and *Clash of Star Kings,* in addition to a second collection, two Ellery Queen mysteries, and an early magazine version of *The Phoenix and the Mirror.* If one could wish that most of these books (saving the last) were a little shorter, one is nevertheless glad to have them. The two years of silence which followed preceded the inauguration of Davidson's "trilogy" period.

Peregrine: Tertius. The presumed title for the third volume of the Peregrine trilogy. *Peregrine: Primus* was published by Walker in 1971, and is the first of Davidson's works

to show that tendency toward broadness in humor, and slackening of verbal concision, that has been increasingly evident since then (except for the best of the Limekiller stories; those published in *F&SF*). "Peregrine: Alflandia" was published in *F&SF* in August 1973 as the first part of *Peregrine: Secundus,* but seven years passed before the balance of that novel was published in *Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine.* Thus Part I of the latter novel is closer in time (and in tone) to the earlier novel than to Part II; a slightly disfiguring schism that Berkley did nothing to allay. (One can understand how Davidson, writing for a rather different audience in *Isaac Asimov's* than that which saw the novelette years earlier, should provide a brief recap of the preceding action; but not why Berkley's copyeditors would allow the text to reiterate on page 34 what occurred on page 30. One may impute the hand of the erratic John Silbersack here, who recently edited the doubly mistitled *Collected Fantasies* of Davidson, which places some unreprinted and virtually unavailable Davidsoniana along others such as "The Source of the Nile" and "Sacheverell" that had each twice appeared among Davidson's last three collection, as though to deter all but the author's most devoted fans from buying the book.)

The Sixlimbed Folk. Davidson's 1969 novel *The Island Under the Earth* has been largely overshadowed by the appearance that same year of *The Phoenix and the Mirror,* and the beautifully produced edition of that book, an Ace Special, has never been reprinted; one of the few Ace Specials not to be. The novel was described as the first of a trilogy, of which *The Sixlimbed Folk* and *The Cap of Grace* were to compose the remainder. The 1971 *Locus* listing the Ace publishing schedule for the next several months includes *The Sixlimbed Folk,* but no portion of that volume has ever appeared.

"The Stone Which the Builders Rejected". An oddity among the Davidson Apocrypha: a story that possesses a conclusion but no publisher, rather than the other way round. "The Stone Which the Builder Rejected" was purchased by Harlan Ellison over ten years ago for *The Last Dangerous Visions,* is 2000 words long (according to Ellison), and ought to have filled the place taken by, say, the third appearance of "The Golem" in *Collected* (or rather, Selected) *Fantasies* (and Non-Fantasies). No opprobrium, however, upon Davidson.

Vergil Magus. The Phoenix and the Mirror, published by Doubleday in 1969, has been described as part of "a trinity of trilogies", some of which may draw upon actual medieval legends concerning Vergil the necromancer; others, like *Phoenix,* shall not. Davidson reportedly worked ten years before completing *The Phoenix and the Mirror* (see James Blish's review in *F&SF,* August 1970). The financial failure of the Doubleday edition (the publishers resolved with indecent haste to pulp all unsold copies, which Davidson instead bought up and hawked) remains a well-known horror story, and has apparently embittered Davidson a great deal (see his 1973 interview in *The Alien Critic* 11). In an interesting aside in *The Best of Avram Davidson,* the author notes that he had not as of 1977 begun the actual composition of these novels, but had been researching the background of the medieval Vergil legend, having garnered some 25,000 data with which he planned to devote the following year "to reworking it all, going backward over it *at an angle,* and so producing, both systematically and by inspiration, *The Encyclopedia of the World of Vergil Magus . . .*"

Whether Davidson conceives his *Encyclopedia* as a work actually to be published or merely the topsoil for *Vergil Magus,* he confirmed in the November 1981 *Locus* that *Averno: A Vergil Magus novel* "is part of the same (Vergil Magus) cycle, but comes before *Phoenix*... as, however, it does not come immediately before, it is not a prequel." "The Other Magus", a short story published in the 1980 *Interfaces,* edited by Ursula Le Guin and Virginia Kidd, concerns Vergil, but does not appear to be part of the larger work.

Whether Davidson, who is now fifty-nine, shall be able to complete the remaining seven novels is a matter of rather anxious concern for most serious readers of fantasy. Sympathy for the disappointing reception of *The Phoenix and the Mirror* has resulted in the popular but uncritical belief that the book is a masterpiece (Joanna Russ, on the other hand, has discussed the limitations of the novel in an appreciative *F&SF* review that comes closer to limning its real achievement than have most of Davidson's partisans). In addition to Davidson's increasingly prolix and sprung prose style, a disturbingly querulous tone has crept into his work, a strident edge to his always implicit misogyny and a tendency to conceive autobiographical figures in the rôle of the stag pulled down by wolves. Stories such as "Basileikon: Summer", "The Ape", or parts of "The Redward Edward Papers" possess a rancorousness that threatens to poison the wellsprings of his art.

More importantly, Davidson has always worked most congenially in the short story form, finding his real assurance in the well-turned, self-contained piece, or at most, in the loosely linked series of stories such as those eventually collected in *The Enquiries of Doctors Eszterhazy* or those featuring Jack Limekiller. It is no criticism to observe that Davidson's strengths are not really consistent with what John Fowles calls "the athleticism of imagination and long wind the (novel) form must need". Most of Davidson's novels from the mid-1960s (e.g. *Rogue Dragon, Masters of the Maze*) begin more strongly than they finish, as though the central notions that inspire them were better suited to novelette length and suffered when extended (per contractual requirement) much beyond that. In view of this, *The Phoenix and the Mirror* and *The Island Under the Earth* seem something of a miracle, like the odd novels that John Collier and Saki managed to produce. *Peregrine: Primus* is picaresque; *Ursus of Ultima Thule* (1973) has pacing problems; and Davidson's only novel since then, *Peregrine: Secundus,* is essentially two novelettes, one overlong.

"Zon". A novelette appearing in *If,* May-June 1970, and identified as the beginning of a new series by the editor in a later issue. Science-fictional but bearing much of the trappings of fantasy, "Zon" shares some of the sere, arctic background of a novella published in *If* the following year, "Arnten of Ultima Thule". "Arnten" eventually acquired a sequel and became a book; "Zon" didn't.

Though the length range of 9,000 to 15,000 words is an essentially different form than that of the short story (and sf's glory, one may argue elsewhere), Davidson has proved himself almost equally adept at this longer form, in such infrequent exercises as "The Sources of the Nile" and "Take Wooden Indians". *Rogue Dragon* would be a small classic at a third its length (slightly shorter than the condensed version *F&SF* did publish). Beyond this Davidson's control grows progressively weaker, and even the series of linked stories fail *as series:* the Eszterhazy novelettes, save for the envoi, suggest no greater form, and could have been spun off indefinitely like Laumer's Retief stories; and the more

recent Limekiller tales, each of which concerns an encounter by its picaresque hero with some element of the supernatural in a highly detailed, mundane (if imagined) setting, prove cumulatively self-vitiating as the succession of wonders eat away, by mere dint of their number, at the aura of verisimilitude Davidson has so masterfully built up.

Perhaps an eventual volume (not, one hopes, posthumous, though quite likely edited by another) will collect these bits and starts, setting "Zon" and "Bumberboom" alongside their dissimilar brethren to be read and enjoyed for their present merits and as occasions to wonder at the books they might have been. Regarding *Vergil Magus* one is tempted, not entirely out of wishfulness, to discount the structural weaknesses Davidson has revealed in less-beloved projects; the energy spent, and frequent mention of "the matrix" of *Vergil Magus,* imply some finer design, a projected curve that *Averno,* when published, may at least suggest. Bringing forth any part of the Davidson Apocrypha from the seeds of time is an endeavour worthy to encourage (or commission, though evidently not in many publishers' opinions); but it is the *Vergil* novels that would redeem the false starts and apparent balked years, and for which one hopes, despite incidental beauties—particularly *The Island Under the Earth*—that Davidson forgoes further labors on his other analecta.

Richard Erlich's most recent contribution to Foundation *was in number 23 on the subject of Pohl and Kornbluth. Stirred by Douglas Barbour's review of a novel by another collaborative team, in* Foundation *25, Mr Erlich has sent us the following—which was recently given as a paper at the 7th Annual Conference of the Society for Utopian Studies, held at Saint John, New Brunswick in September 1982.*

Niven and Pournelle's 'Oath of Fealty': A Case of Improvement?

RICHARD D. ERLICH

(In a sense this paper turned out to be, in large part, a response to Douglas Barbour's review of *Oath of Fealty* in *Foundation* 25, the issue for June 1982. I'm used to agreeing with Barbour and greatly respect his seminal—perhaps even "ovular"—work on Taoism in the fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin. However, Barbour concludes his review of *Oath* with the assertion that ". . . it's impossible to take the puerile wish-fulfilment of fandom seriously; and *Oath of Fealty* proves to be just another sub-Heinlein story with

philosophical pretensions" (p. 75). I share many of Barbour's qualms about *Oath of Fealty;* yet I *do* take this novel seriously, and my major thesis may be the one implicit in my presenting a paper on *Oath of Fealty* at a conference of the Society for Utopian Studies: my assumption that *Oath of Fealty* errs in many ways but still deserves the serious attention of serious students of utopias.)

I do not love thee, Jerry Pournelle;
The reasons why are long to tell,
But on this I'll briefly dwell:
I do not love thee, Jerry Pournelle.

I'm also not all that big on Larry Niven, at least on the Larry Niven of *The Mote in God's Eye* and *Lucifer's Hammer,* his two collaborations with Pournelle that I have read. I do not like to be asked to sympathize quite so much with aristocratic imperialists as I think we're asked to in *Mote,* and I do not like at all the "Survivalist", "technophilic" biases in *Lucifer's Hammer.* Pournelle and Niven have not much changed their philosophy or politics in *Oath of Fealty,* their 1981 collaboration, but they have managed to express their ideology in much better art; and art, it seems, has moved them to a more serious consideration of politics. Briefly put, in *Oath of Fealty* Niven and Pournelle have entered the great twentieth-century debate on possible solutions to the industrial world's central problem of alienation and "atomization" and on possible alternatives to our ruling method of ruling: bureaucracy. They have opposed to bureaucracy (and the alienation it produces), what the Moties in the earlier novel and a perceptive reporter in *Oath* call "industrial feudalism" (*Mote,* Ch. 37, p. 316; *Oath,* Ch. XI, p. 142).

Putting the matter a little less briefly, I shall state my central assertion and summarize my argument; then I'll summarize the story of the novel—and then move on to prove my points as best I can.

Niven's and Pournelle's *Oath of Fealty* is set in the rather dystopian near-future city of Los Angeles and the highly ambiguous eutopia of the Arcology of Todos Santos. The dystopian elements of Los Angeles are of relatively little interest, since they are a fairly straightforward extrapolation of the pernicious effects of liberal bureaucracy in encouraging the current violence in and spreading decrepitude of many US cities. However, the *relationship* between Los Angeles and the "industrial feudalism" of the arcology is of great interest. Todos Santos works (in the novel), and the arcology system may soon be tried in an experiment in Canada. But the social costs of an urban arcology are high: questionable use of resources, continual electronic surveillance within the arcology, antagonism between Todos Santos and their host city of Los Angeles, a "siege mentality", a security system that includes lethal gas to protect the arcology from invaders, life confined to a huge, maze-like "Box"—a box perceived by some outsiders, with some justification, as "the termite hill," "Nest", or "beehive".

Oath of Fealty ends with questions: Is Todos Santos a "Free society or a termite hill? Or both?" ". . . can you live in that and stay human . . .?" It concludes with the idea that "There are a lot of ways to be human"—answered with the last word of the novel's dialog: "Maybe" (Ch. XXII, pp. 276-7). The fact of enclosure within the "Box" of Todos Santos, the constant surveillance, the references to hives—all these features and more are straight out of the dystopian tradition. The possibility of security, the non-bureaucratic possibilities of "industrial feudalism", the possibilities for true community within an arcology—these balance the dystopian elements of Todos Santos.

Todos Santos, the urban arcology, is undoubtedly a possible future for a significant portion of North American humankind. Is it a eutopian future? Niven's and Pournelle's answer is a definite *Maybe*. Given the problems with Niven's and Pournelle's biases and at least one of their assumptions, the book's answer is an even more problematic *Maybe*.

The story of *Oath of Fealty* is simple but rather well developed, as the plots of utopias go. Once upon a time, a few years from now, terrorists start a fire that burns down several miles of Los Angeles slums. The Romulus Corporation, a Zurich-based consortium for investing OPEC money, offers to fill the burned-out area with a huge building, Todos Santos. On some conditions: primarily tax breaks and a great deal of independence for Todos Santos, enough independence to make it a city within a city. The initial phases of the arcology are completed within about four years, and people start moving in, always, or at least ideally, becoming shareholders in the arcology. The building of Todos Santos provides many jobs for LA, and the arcology itself eventually provides safe and comfortable living for nearly a quarter of a million rather well-to-do people. Todos Santos also provides an excellent shopping area, restaurants, and a subway for Los Angeles —and the Romulus Corporation sweetens the deal for LA by providing fresh water for the city by hauling in icebergs from the Antarctic.

The arcology is powered by hydrogen gas, produced by nuclear energy in Mexico, so it produces almost no local pollution; and it is a fairly attractive building, if you like fortress-style and don't mind "a black wall across the world" with "Thousands of balconies and windows in neat array . . . a sharp-edged black rectangle blotting out the sky," as it is first described (Prologue, p. 1).

Todos Santos, however, has its enemies. The "Saints", as its residents are known, tend to stay within their walls and away from Angelinos; hence, the Saints have developed a culture of their own—a development sufficient in itself to lead to some friction when Saints and Angelinos (with an inevitable pun on "angels") must deal with each other. More important, Todos Santos drains money and skilled labor from Los Angeles. And, most important, Todos Santos is opposed by people Niven and Pournelle see as "eco-freaks" and "eco-simps", which includes everyone from the Sierra Club to a militant underground ecology Movement, to terrorists. A Canadian official investigates Todos Santos for his government, and a journalist does a story and TV documentary on the arcology (carrying on a standard utopist ploy for exposition and commentary); still, most of the exposition arises naturally from the plot, which itself arises legitimately from the conflict between Todos Santos and the terrorist wing of the ecology Movement.

The main ecological enemies are the FROMATES—the Friends of Man and The Earth Society—and the American Ecological Army. They have planted a spy in the upper echelons of the Todos Santos hierarchy, and she provides the Movement with enough information that a major villain can get three young Angelinos of good family to sneak into the arcology to attempt to leave near the hydrogen gas tunnels sand-filled boxes that look like bombs. (This initial invasion is where the plot picks up.) Two of the three Angelino kids are killed with nerve gas, including the son of the President of the LA City Council—leading to a murder charge against Preston Sanders, Deputy General Manager of the Todos Santos Independency. Later, a larger and more professional group invades Todos Santos with real bombs, going for the arcology's turbines, and at least two of these people are killed, in a shoot-out this time, after the arcology's fancy gadgets fail to stop all the alien invaders. This second invasion would make it easier to defend Preston Sanders

against the murder charge, but it does no good for Todos Santos' relations with Los Angeles. Acting mostly out of loyalty to one of their own, the rulers of Todos Santos risk a conspiracy charge by breaking Sanders out of the LA jail, which they do quite elegantly in the high-tech climax of the novel. In good James Bondian fashion, however, there is yet another crisis: the kidnapping of the Director of Economic Development of Todos Santos and the ex-wife of the Chief Engineer. In an even higher-tech finale—but with a medium-tech SWAT team and a very low-tech testicle squeeze—this crisis is also met, and the women are rescued. At the very end of the novel, the economic war between Todos Santos and LA occasioned by the jailbreak is brought to an end, or at least to an uneasy truce, and life goes on more or less humanly, if not happily.

The main ecological argument against Todos Santos is made, significantly, not by a member of the Movement but by Mac Stevens, Executive Assistant to the Mayor of Los Angeles and a positive character: "I've got no use for terrorists," Stevens says, "but the FROMATES have a point. They claim that if Todos Santos succeeds, there'll be no barrier to population growth. Not even famine and overcrowding can stop the population bomb, until it's too late for everyone and everything." Perhaps most in favor of this accusation against Todos Santos is that the FROMATES' ". . . best arguments are fiction. They're backing a movie made from an old science fiction novel, (T.J. Bass's) *The Godwhale,* about how the human race crowds itself until no humans are left" ((London: Methuen, 1975)—"Authoritarian dystopia—degeneration", according to Lyman Tower Sargent's annotation in *British and American Utopian Fiction, 1516-1975; Oath,* Ch. IV, p. 45). Or, the FROMATES made the film ten years before the start of the plot: a feature-length cartoon apparently called *The Nest* (Ch. VIII, p. 95)— a title probably taken from the Nest founded by Valentine Michael Smith in *Stranger in a Strange Land,* a novel by Robert A. Heinlein, who is alluded to in *Oath* and to whom *Oath* is dedicated.

Since we're told explicitly that Todos Santos has "about the highest population density ever achieved on Earth *anywhere,*" we can be fairly sure that even the nasty eco-freaks may indeed have a point about arcologies' encouraging overpopulation (Ch. III, p. 35). That that point can be made using canonical sf is also in its favor. But—and there will be a "but" with most things about *Oath of Fealty*—but "the Nest" becomes a slang term for Todos Santos, and the Nest in Heinlein's *Stranger* is a very positive place and the promise of things to come.

The ambiguity of Todos Santos is reinforced by a brief speech by Alice Strahler, the ecology Movement spy in Todos Santos: a woman who has betrayed not only the arcology but her own personal loyalties and personal morality. When captured, Strahler argues that the Saints "don't live like humans . . . And if you call this human life, it's not for very many people. Todos Santos is beautiful . . . but it uses too many resources to support too few people. The more successful Todos Santos is, the worse it will be for everyone else . . . technology is not the answer . . . Progress just leads to more technology and more waste and more doom—" Strahler is a relatively sympathetic character, for a traitor, and her brief argument against progress is fairly reasonable, even if she seems a mite hypocritical denouncing progress while wearing glasses (Ch. XVIII, p. 221). Niven and Pournelle won't buy the argument that "technology is not the answer"—it certainly *is* the answer to some military problems in *Lucifer's Hammer;* still, they allow this argument an almost-fair hearing here, even as they undercut it by putting it into the mouth of a traitor. In *Oath* in general, moreover, Niven and Pournelle do allow that technology has its limits: a point

stressed when Todos Santos' SWAT team must stop the last invaders, who manage to get by Tony Rand's wondrous gadgets.

Oath of Fealty finally never really resolves just how much of an ecological threat Todos Santos might be. But it is not really important that the ecological question is never resolved. We learn in a pivotal interview between Alice Strahler, the spy, and Ronald Wolfe, the General of the American Ecology Army, that he is primarily worried about "keeping mankind human" and about Todos Santos' being a refuge for a happy, but less than human, aristocracy. And Ron Wolfe is downright obsessed with the thought of the spread of arcologies—of the life of the hive: ". . . there'll be more hives, hives everywhere . . . Hives in Canada, hives in Mexico, hives all over the United States . . . they've got to be stopped, now, before they spread" (Ch. X, p. 138).

Perceived *in malo,* stressing the bad, Todos Santos has the key features of what Thomas P. Dunn and I have called The Mechanical Hive, a very familiar dystopian environment. Todos Santos is a giant building, densely populated, like the Ultra-High Density Research Establishment in Brian Aldiss' story "Total Environment" or the urban monads of Robert Silverberg's *The World Inside* or the countless rooms of *Megan Terry's Home.* It is a high-technology, relatively closed world, where the inhabitants are under nearly constant surveillance—where even the arcology's designer and Chief Engineer complains of a lack of privacy: a world only different in degree from the dystopian worlds of Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano,* George Lucas' *THX-1138,* Kendell Crossen's *Year of Consent,* or D.F. Jones's *Colossus.* It has a caste system, as we find in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World,* and is specifically compared by reasonable people to a "termite hill": "When you're inside," Mac Stevens advises the Canadian official, "notice the similarities. Caste system remarkably well developed. Warriors, Kings, Queens, Workers, Drones, all represented. And a strong tendency"—affirmed for the reader elsewhere—"toward identical units within each caste" (Ch. II, p. 20). *In malo,* a hive world, moving toward the horror of Frank Herbert's *Hellstrom's Hive.* Or toward George Orwell's *1984.* The Narrator tells us that "Todos Santos was said to be very Big Brother"; the drunken luncheon we see in the middle of the novel is for members of the service group called Big Brothers; and Tony Rand, we learn, originally wanted the entire arcology built in a shape much stressed in the current building—a pyramid, the shape of the Ministries in Oceania in *1984,* and the "objective correlative" for the structure of society in both Oceania and Todos Santos (Ch. I, p. 8; Ch. XII, pp. 157-8; Ch. XIII).

Or, if such comparisons seem exaggerated, we can note that the residents of Todos Santos have as a primary reason for living in the arcology the simple desire for safety and security: a totally reasonable desire in violent Los Angeles, but a dangerous one in the dystopian tradition. Alternate to hive worlds are womb worlds, fortress-sanctuaries that turn out to be prisons: as we see in the bottle imagery in *Brave New World,* in the gentle imprisonment of humankind in Jack Williamson's humanoids stories, or in the Diaspar of Arthur C. Clarke's *The City and the Stars*—and as we know from the "downunder" of Topeka in Harlan Ellison's "A Boy and His Dog", and, preeminently, as we know from the imagery of swaddled infants in E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops".

But Ron Wolfe, a terrorist and worse, is hardly going to have the last word on Todos Santos. On the page following Wolfe's five-fold repetition of "hives", we see the start of Thomas Lunan's TV documentary on the arcology, a view of Todos Santos *in bono.* Stressing the good, we can see that Todos Santos' high technology allows many of its

inhabitants to pursue interesting careers at home (Ch. XI, pp. 140-2). Todos Santos' high density and tight security allow people to get to know and trust each other, to become a community. And Todos Santos' system of castes can allow its people to *function* as a community. Viewed *in bono,* Todos Santos is not a mechanical hive but an organic community, a *polis* based on what Lunan calls "industrial feudalism":

> Feudal societies are always complex: everyone in such a society enjoys rights, but few have the same rights. There is not even a pretense of equality . . .
> There is, however, loyalty, and it runs both ways. The Todos Santos resident is expected and required to be loyal, but in return Todos Santos gives protection.
>
> Loyalties in Todos Santos tend to be personal.
> Loyalty and protection . . . The ties of the Oath of Fealty run in both directions. The trend in the United States has been to cut all ties, so that individuals are alone. The citizen against the bureaucracy, against "them", only nobody is really in control and you can't say who "they" are. In Todos Santos, "they" is Art Bonner (the General Manager), and if you don't like what he's doing you have the chance to tell him so. (Ch. XI, p. 145)

And, presumably, Art Bonner will listen and at least try to reconcile the complainer to his lot. Even so blatant a totalitarian as B.F. Skinner's Frazier recognizes—with significant analogies—that "We don't need laws . . . (in Walden Two) to compel our Dairy Manager to pay attention to an epidemic among his cows. Similarly, our Behavioural and Cultural Managers need not be compelled to consider grievances. A grievance is a wheel to be oiled, or a broken pipe to be repaired" (*Walden Two,* Ch. 29, p. 269 in the 1962 Macmillan p.b. edn.). Replacing wheels and shooting cows, apparently, never occur to Frazier and the others in Walden Two, and we never see Art Bonner in *Oath of Fealty* play real feudal lord and have an uppity peasant quietly executed or even noisily whipped. Nor would Bonner ever have to take such extreme actions, not as long as nasty Los Angeles is outside the castle walls as the obvious alternative to getting along in Todos Santos.

In *Oath of Fealty,* then, Niven and Pournelle do more than push the more obvious contentions of Libertarianism or vent their contempt for eco-simps or bemoan the savagery of cities without law'n'order—although they do all of these things. In *Oath of Fealty,* Niven and Pournelle also take seriously the two major, interrelated problems of life in the industrialized world: our lack of *communitas,* of true community, and bureaucracy as our major form of governance. Niven and Pournelle have at least recognized the danger of the evolution of bureaucracy to its logical end, where "there is nobody left with whom one can argue, to whom one can present grievances . . . ," where there is the ultimate tyranny of what Hannah Arendt has called "rule by Nobody" (*On Violence,* p. 81).

In opposition to "rule by Nobody", in opposition to bureaucracy and atomization, Niven and Pournelle place industrial feudalism as a possible future and possibly eutopian future for humankind. If the birth of this new way of life is a little bloody, well, look at the baby and not the blood—or, as the slogan in *Oath* says, "Think of it as evolution in action".

Now, having said this much to encourage you to take seriously *Oath of Fealty,* I'll end by warning against taking it *too* seriously.

If cultural "evolution in action" finally has Todos Santos winning out over Los Angeles, it will be because industrial feudalism is a more appropriate and efficient form of

government than bureaucracy—not because Todos Santos is redder in tooth and claw than LA.

Further, as Douglas Barbour points out in his review of *Oath*, there is a serious problem with the initial funding of Todos Santos. Barbour rejects as implausible that Romulus Corporation would put up the money to build Todos Santos. I will accept that initial premise, but I find it hard to accept that "the big bosses, the money people who owned Todos Santos", would make the General Manager of the arcology responsible to them but retain "no right to interfere with how he ran it", merely retaining the right to fire him (Ch. II, pp. 17 and 23). No, under the "big bosses" of Romulus Corporation would be a bunch of little bosses: multinational, free-enterprise bureaucrats, but still bureaucrats. And Todos Santos would be what it nominally is: just another subsidiary of Romulus Corporation, with corporate bureaucrats all aflutter to justify their salaries by regulating the hell out of Bonner's operation.

Indeed, even if Art Bonner and his successors are not co-opted by corporate bureaucracy, there is a strong possibility that they themselves will delegate more and more responsibility, so that Todos Santos' internal feudal court becomes a bureaucracy. In fact, the only strong indication that such bureaucratization will not be necessary is the one element in the novel that is much more science fiction than utopian: the brain implant that allows a kind of telepathic communication between Bonner (and two others) and the Todos Santos central computer—allowing Bonner to keep the operations of the arcology, at least metaphorically, all in his head. *Given* such implants, or something similar, industrial feudalism may stand a chance; without such a technological breakthrough, the feudal hierarchy of Todos Santos stands a good chance of becoming just another bureaucratic chain of command.

Bibliographical Note:

Niven, Larry and Jerry Pournelle. *Oath of Fealty*. New York: Pocket Books, 1981. (S.F.) Book Club Edition of "A Timescape Book/Published by Pocket Books,/A Simon & Schuster Division of Gulf & Western Corporation."

Foundation Forum

The following piece was written as a review of Helliconia Spring *by Brian Aldiss (Cape, 1982, £6.95). Because of its length and its polemical nature we have decided to run it under the Foundation Forum heading. (The Forum section is reserved for provocative statements of opinion on any aspect of sf—in the recent past we have run such statements by Christopher Priest, George Hay and Thomas M. Disch—and our readers are invited to participate either by letter of comment or by submitting their own articles for possible publication.)*

Robert Meadley was a contributor to New Worlds *in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This is his first appearance in* Foundation.

Half an Eye and Tono-Bungay

R.G. MEADLEY

> "You see," said my uncle in a slow confidential whisper, with eyes very wide and a creased forehead, "it's nice because of the" (here he mentioned a flavouring matter and an aromatic spirit), "it's stimulating because of" (here he mentioned two very vivid tonics, one with a marked action on the kidneys), "and the" (here he mentioned two other ingredients) "makes it pretty intoxicating. Cocks their tails. Then there's" (but I touch on the essential secret). "And there you are. I got it out of an old book of recipes—all except the" (here he mentioned the more virulent substance, the one that assails the kidneys), "which is my idea. Modern touch! There you are! . . ."
>
> The stuff was, I perceived, a mischievous trash, slightly stimulating, aromatic and attractive, likely to become a bad habit . . . and insidiously dangerous to people with defective kidneys.
>
> — H.G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay*

Right, now the bar is open and we're all comfortable, let us consider the author as prize-fighter. The analogy is not so far-fetched as it may seem. Both are dependent on success with the public for their livelihoods, and on the favour of a small coterie of promoters for sufficient access to the public. Both have behind them a somewhat shadowy trinity: the publisher or promoter, the publisher's editor or trainer, and the author's agent or bottle-holder, comforter and man of mixed loyalties. When their man is in the ring, these three pretend that nothing matters beyond the outcome of the contest, they flatter and encourage their man to keep up his morale, but everyone knows really that he is just one of a stable, and if he's facing the right way in Round Three he may glimpse his backers hedging a bet or slipping away to the phone. There is the same atmosphere of conspiracy against the public, in order to sell them something and to protect the mystery by omitting all mention of meagre sums of money—the thing is done either for vast fortunes or for the love of it—the same shifting of alliances within the conspiracy. There is the same subtle confusion of social and business life; the tone may be more literary than athletic and the idealized setting may be West End wine bars instead of East End clubs, but the atmosphere of vanity, ambition and agoraphobia is more similar than some may care to

imagine. And gathered like ambiguous vultures at bar and ringside are the commentators and reviewers, who are of the conspiracy and yet outside it, who represent the public but belong to the game.

This analogy occurred to me when asked to review Brian Aldiss' *Helliconia Spring*, the first volume of three, which struck me as like being asked to commentate on the first five rounds of fifteen, then wait till next year and the year after for the remaining ten. It was just a simile that popped into my head, but the more I thought about it—I admit to sketching with bold strokes—the richer the similarities became, until the only remaining question seemed to be, against what or whom is the author matched when in the ring? The answer, which should have been obvious from the start, is his material. And in battling with this, even in the choice of it, he can be as much betrayed by bad advice from his corner as by his own failures of judgement. The author must listen to his publishers, or to the editor who represents him. The author's access to the public is indirect; he sells the book to the publisher, who then persuades booksellers to present it to the public. The author's mortgage and holidays and new washing machine all depend on the publisher for the size of his advances and the promptness of his royalty payments. While the author is struggling with his material, with the pictures in his head which he believes (we hope) are worth describing, his publisher will have at least one eye on his schedules and the successes of his rivals. A good editor may not be allowed to buy good books because the accountants lack faith in the rep.'s ability to get booksellers to carry them, or he may be encouraged to buy any rubbish he can get because a particular genre is seen to be making money for someone else. It may be that everyone knows these things, and it is tedious of me to repeat them, but there is a convention in reviewing that what we are dealing with is the pristine vision of the author and perhaps we should be reminded from time to time that this is not entirely the case. As with boxing, publisher and promoter like to be seen by those outside the conspiracy as gentlemen backers, but by those within as knowing businessmen.

If I seem to be labouring this point, it is because I want to discuss the "total package" that is *Helliconia Spring*. Mr Aldiss, for instance, cannot be held responsible for the notes on the otherwise handsome dustjacket. "This is the first volume of the Helliconia Trilogy —a monumental saga which goes beyond anything yet created by this master among today's imaginative writers . . ." You recognize the tone? Is it *Dallas* being sold, or *War and Peace?* Does anyone care, except those faint hearts that feed on the feeblest of stimulants? ". . . Aoz Roon enters the picture—a leader with a dark past; Shay Tal, a sorceress who is his loving adversary; young Laintal Ay, who alters the course of history, and many other memorable characters . . ." Memorable, one supposes, because one has met them so many times before; the timid reader, it appears, needs reassuring that Mr Aldiss' imagination will not be allowed such wild licence as to exclude all the old stereotypes. ". . . Events and characters and animals stream across the pages of this gigantic novel. Cosmic in scale, it keeps an eye lovingly on the humans involved . . . one of the most consuming and magnificent novels of scientific romance." Burble, burble, ambligam, burble. (Did you know animal books sell remarkably well?) This is the language of the fast food trade—Guaranteed 100% pure beef without losing that familiar soya protein texture!—which never changes whether horse liniment is being sold to Red Indians or Brummagem guns traded for ivory in Zululand. It is the voice of the hungry hustler addressing the punter, and as usual it devalues even what is good in the product: Aoz

Roon develops a dark secret in the course of the novel and is ensnared by the elusive threads of its real and imagined consequences; Shay Tal achieves what appears to be a miracle, her struggle to establish the reality of her reputation for sorcery colours her attempt to achieve a wider understanding . . . The book doesn't have to be profound to be better than the blurb suggests.

THE SECRET OF VIGOUR—TONO-BUNGAY!

I believe it was Michael Moorcock who resurrected the Wellsian term "scientific romance". Maybe it was inevitable that blurb-writers would suck at its ankles with the same slobbering passion as at the much-abused "parameter". We have already seen it in the notes on the front cover; now at the back, after being told again (Put your hand over your mouth when you yawn, Arbuthnot!) that Mr Aldiss is a Titan among contemporary writers, we find "Brian Aldiss has gone beyond the normal parameters of science fiction. *Helliconia Spring* is the first volume of a gigantic new odyssey . . . to use the term coined by H.G. Wells, a magnificent 'scientific romance'."

This use of the authoritative name reminds me of a novel by Wells called *Tono-Bungay*. It is about the business of selling, by humbug and hustle, a patent medicine or "mitigated water", a description of which is at the head of this piece. I recommend this novel to the author of these notes, and his employer. They might find a moral in it, or at least be diverted from flogging an honest term until it falls exhausted; like the word "traditional", which monopolizing brewers seem unable to let go of since they were forced, by the rebellion of punters, to reduce their efforts to sell carbonic acid and provide proper beer again.

A brief prayer—Wotan and Thor, preserve us from the gulls and lackeys of second-rate accountants!

Still, having bullied our way through the touts, let us take our seats at the ringside. We have been told repeatedly that this is a heavyweight contest and the smart money says it will go the distance. Mr Aldiss has an established reputation, and if some of us are uncertain how he will perform at this weight, we are prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt. He is backed by a very reputable publisher—even if we have carped at the tone of the publicity—and apart from this he comes to the ring team-handed: the acknowledgements at the back of the book thank Prof. Tom Shippey (philology), Dr J.M. Roberts (history), and Desmond Morris (anthropology) for useful preliminary discussions; Dr B.E. Juel-Jensen (pathology) and Prof. Jack Cohen (biology) for indispensable suggestions; but mostly Prof. Iain Nicolson (cosmology and astronomy) and Dr Peter Cattermole (geology and climatics). Few readers will be able to judge the academic standing of these contributors or the extent of their contribution, but the list looks impressive. There is also his son Clive, addressed in an open letter by way of dedication. Whether you like this sort of family display, more usually associated with American political candidates, is a matter of taste; but the letter contains one sentence I found particularly depressing. "No-one," says Mr Aldiss, "wants a passport to a nation of talking slugs." Even so soon, both as surrealist manqué and dilletante naturalist, I realized I might have very little in common with this man.

In the opposite corner is the material. Mr Aldiss (or possibly Messrs Nicolson and Cattermole, for in his acknowledgements Aldiss says modestly, "the great globe, yea, all which it inherit, is largely their work") has, or have, imagined a planet similar to Earth but

orbiting a binary star system, so that it has a small year in which it orbits Star B, called *Batalix,* and a great year in which the pair of them orbit Star A, or *Freyr.* ". . . on that elliptical journey across thousands of years, it became almost two planets—a frozen one at apastron, when farthest from Freyr, an overheated one at periastron, when nearest Freyr." There are 1825 small years in a great year—one small year = 1.42 Earth years—and life expectancy is about 20 small years; let us say 100+ generations in a great year, which has its seasons as surely as the small years, but each season covering 20 or 30 generations. The spring, summer and winter of the trilogy's titles are the seasons of the great year. It is a majestic concept—and that is not salesman's hyperbole—not one I should like to have to tackle without a generous allowance of time, a sizeable computer and a private income. Its very majesty is reassuring; only a strong man, we think, will tackle such an intellectual and imaginative *massif.*

The first round—the first fifth of the book, in fact—is announced as a prelude. The bell rings and Mr Aldiss advances. His opening display is not just casual, it is downright slack. On page three, the boy Yuli is seven years old; two *days* later, on page 15, he's nine years old. Perhaps this is a digression into surrealism, suggesting that whether seven or nine his existential dilemma is the same, but one suspects that Mr Aldiss has simply forgotten in 12 pages how old his hero is, and has never bothered to re-read his first draft. However, he is not alone: his editor, proof-reader and several reviewers seem equally blind or brain-damaged, and they're not even in there punching.

Another trivial instance: on page 32, at the games, the boy Yuli falls in love with the girl-archer Iskador, while she is shooting bats which are subsequently "claimed for the pot"; on page 71, starving and fugitive in an underground labyrinth, they shoot some bats but cannot—we are not told why not—bring themselves to eat them, though not, presumably, squeamish, since two paragraphs later, "they heard movements, and found two red-furred creatures, which they killed. Close by was a cub, mewling and poking up its blunt nose at them. Tearing the cub apart, they devoured it while the flesh was still warm and then, in a sort of raging paroxysm of awakened hunger, devoured the two parents as well." There is a feebly pornographic atmosphere about this, but it has no logic. Why tear the cub apart when the two parents are already dead? There are four adults tearing at this single cub! Why, again, couldn't they eat the bats? And what is a "sort of raging paroxysm"? It reminds me of a crippled dwarf I once knew, who described himself as getting into an "almost physical fight" in a pub. Perhaps Mr Aldiss and his four fugitives are all temporarily deranged by their recent encounter with two Walt Disney giant worms which gush "a thick jamlike substance" when stabbed.

At the end of round one you're wondering what you've paid £6.95 for, and the publisher should be glad this is a book and not a boxing match, where the punters would be rioting and demanding their money back. Aldiss has been in there punching vaguely and flabbily at something, but rarely, it seems, facing his target. The epic material wanders, aimless and discouraged, in the ring, sometimes stepping courteously in front of him, but more often gazing at the audience with large sad eyes. Still, look on the bright side, you're only stuck with a third of the whole thing. All three volumes would have had you piling loose change on a £20 note for your ticket, and by now you would have been really angry.

The haste and inattention and general lack of policy make it difficult to distinguish between the author's laziness and the limits of his imagination. For example, the action

begins in a frozen landscape with a vast migration of beasts called *yelks*. Is this a cross between a yak and an elk, or just an elk with a *y* in front of it? Perhaps Prof. Tom Shippey (philology) could help us. Then there is a big version, capable of carrying two men, called a *bi*yelk. Odd that on a planet so distant that it takes 1000 years for a radio signal to reach Earth, they should use Latin prefixes. There is also a freshwater fish called a *gout,* not unrelated to a trout, one supposes. And a root called a *brassimip,* which tastes, we are told, like a cross between a turnip and a parsnip; it could as easily be a cross between a simpleton, a parsnip, and a brass doorknob. And among these splutters of alleged imagination there are ordinary geese and goats, and a man wanders through dressed in reindeer skins. Vertical distances are in metres, horizontal distances in miles, but weights are in *staynes,* "the local measure"; we are not told, but I wouldn't be surprised to get 7 *staynes* (8 would be too obvious) in a *hunderdwayte*. If my objections seem petty, it's because I'm trying to take the book seriously. I have read good books. I know they can exist.

Things do get better when we move to the main action—where the descendants of Yuli and Iskador rule in the ruined towers of Embruddock, a city left over from the previous summer—but there is the same pervasive atmosphere of a first draft cobbled together over an even more hasty synopsis. We know how long it takes to send a signal to Earth because there is an Earth Observation Station orbiting Helliconia which observes everything and beams it to vast auditoria on Earth where "Helliconia is Earth's last art form. Nobody on Earth, from its rulers to its sweepers, was unfamiliar with aspects of Helliconia life." The accountant's dream: Now EVERYONE is watching *Dallas!* The inhabitants of this observation station have been watching life on Helliconia for 2500 Earth years, but cannot descend to the planet because of a virus carried by the parasites of *phagors*. In two and a half millennia, with the technology to get there, stay there, and beam a continual signal to Earth, they can't cope with one lousy virus, which is dormant throughout the winter, i.e. for 4-500 Earth years at a time? Some virus! But it is a helical virus, and if it's helical it must be cunningly scientific and beyond the understanding of the idiot reader.

Here is a little puzzle unravelled. The observation station is called Avernus. Avernus is a lake in Italy, once imagined to be an entrance to Hell, and whose vapours were deemed fatal to birds. Helliconia is a cross between Hell—its hot/cold syndrome has analogy in Dante—and Helicon, a mountain range in Boeotia, supposed to be the seat of Apollo and the Muses (Ah, *hubris,* Mr Aldiss). Helliconia's virus is also "helical", a mathematical term made fashionable by DNA and popularly slightly better understood than "parameter". Mr Aldiss is happier with this sort of minor poetry than with actual science.

Another little puzzle. The helical virus has two lethal phases: the bone fever, which appears in the spring and which "not many" people survive; and the Fat Death, which should appear in the autumn and which it is suggested is equally terrible. The meagre winter population is X. In one generation the bone fever runs epidemic, reducing this population to "not many", let us say $20\%X = Y$. This increases over the summer to Z, before the Fat Death strikes, again leaving "not many", so let us say $20\%Z = X$ again, the winter population. What degree of population explosion is required for Z, allowing for the fact that much of the planet's surface will be hostile, either desert or rain forest, at the periastron of orbit, i.e. in the middle of summer, and assuming X to be more or less constant? Well, work it out for yourself, I seem to be making all the effort.

TONO-BUNGAY DIET VIRUS
SLIMS OR FATTENS ACCORDING TO FASHION
IN PILL OR LINCTUS

This virus is a shade too convenient. The bone fever slims off its survivors for the summer; the Fat Death, we may assume, fattens them up for the winter. (No, Arbuthnot, you may not mention brown adipose tissue, or anything else you've read in *New Scientist*. Ghastly boy!) The answer to my little puzzle—which is well below the standard of brainteasers in popular newspapers—is that population must be 25 *Y* after periastron and before the onset of the Fat Death. Hmmm. This raises some interesting problems, but one suspects that Mr Aldiss and his gang will just back away with "It's a metaphor" dribbling from lips that have just given us:

> Star A was a brilliant white spectral A-type supergiant, with a radius sixty-five times that of Sol's, and a luminosity sixty thousand times as great. Its mass was 14.8 times Sol's, and its surface temperature 11,000K, as opposed to Sol's 5780K.

There are things that Aldiss can do well, particularly the dullness, miscalculation and happenstance of human affairs. When Aoz Roon murders the two ruling brothers, the inexorable logic of the event expressed in the muddled, drunken accident of its execution, we believe it was like that. Shay Tal's efforts to understand her miracle, her perception, from her stance of intellectual revolt, distorted by her ingrained superstition, a superstition which is given a reality of its own; excellent. But then he spoils it by using the old Boy's Own routine of taming wild horses (or *hoxneys*—a breed of lovable, polychrome zebra with paws. Mr Aldiss is not very happy with animals; this, at least, he has in common with H.G. Wells.) The landscapes observed as the season changes are often fine, but then the Walt Disney giant worms reappear—one of them burrows up through a hollow *rajabaral* tree and metamorphoses into two giant dragonflies, male and female, which fly away in opposite directions. An image of Spring? (I've told you about yawning, Arbuthnot. And stop reading that book on entymology under cover of your programme!) And why is *all* intellectual activity carried on by women? A clumsy grope at the American market? Mr Aldiss, like the caricature middle-class Englishman, is very good on weather but awkward with sex. His women are either complacent child-bearing cows or bluestockings with sexual difficulties—some small variety of difficulty, admittedly, but I spy you, Mr Aldiss, behind your uneasy smile. Sex makes your glasses steam up. You like women with big tits, or "majestic breasts" to be fair, and your sexual encounters smack too much of 'Oh, my God, Garry, it's so BIG . . . Oh, Christ, put it in! Now! . . . Oh!'.

Mr Aldiss, says the blurb, "keeps an eye lovingly on the humans involved". Well, half an eye perhaps, since only one eye is on the book at all. This is heavyweight material and Aldiss is not up to the weight, but has he even tried? I remember seeing a video of an East End heavyweight derby—fought under old prize ring rules, but with 2oz gloves to comply with the law—in which the pretender to the title blamed a previous defeat on supplementing his training diet with ginseng. This time, without ginseng, he was beaten senseless and the fight stopped after two minutes of the first round, but that is by the way. I suspect Mr Aldiss of training on cream buns and Tono-Bungay—THE SECRET OF VIGOUR—instead of red meat and discipline. Like Uncle Ponderevo in Wells' novel, he has come to believe that publicity can supplant substance.

What irks me about this—and I wouldn't mind if he could do well on the diet—is that he treats neither his material nor his reader with respect, and to return to my earlier

argument, I think his publisher—despite Cape's excellent reputation—is just as guilty. They are selling crap to punters. Which is foolish. The trilogy will probably run its course, but unless the subsequent volumes are a great deal better, I can't see it going through many editions. Here we have material worthy of "a classic" which could run for years, and it's thrown away. I'm not being pious; I think it's bad business. Sloppy publishing makes bad books—bad books discourage readers—discouraged readers buy fewer books. Brian Aldiss is no more Harold Robbins than he's Tolstoy—a bit of sex and a painted zebra are not enough—and I'll bet odds on that sooner or later, on present form, he gets a pain in his wallet that he can afford a lot less than Jonathan Cape, and I don't imagine they'll be too happy.

So let's talk about *phagors*. I loved the phagors; so much so that I cannot tell whether I just took to them naturally as an archetype or whether Aldiss describes them effortlessly well. They are called phagors because they eat things, I presume; from the Greek root, as in *phagocyte* and *coprophage*. I eat things too, so immediately we had something in common. They are like horned yetis, creatures of snow and ice, with the stance of a man imitating a bull. They stick their tongues up their noses, and there is something peculiar about the action of their knees. Communing with their ancestors, who tell them only what they already know, they talk in a gutteral language epitomized by their names—Hrr-Brahl Yprt, Yhamm-Whrrmar, etc.—and travel only along intuitively divined air-octaves, accompanied by individual familiars in the form of huge *cowbirds* which circle above them, betraying the phagors' position with the confidence of banners, when not picking from their shabby pelts the parasites that carry the helical virus.

We first meet them accompanying a vast migration of yelks. Whether they are guiding or following is not clear. A party of them surprise the boy Yuli and his father, carrying off the old man to slavery, but ignoring the adolescent boy with a lifetime of work in him. Of such mysterious poetry are the phagors made. At the onset of summer, instead of retreating to their ice-desert, the Nktryk, they declare a crusade to avenge an ancestor and march off to extinction in the sunshine, complete with livestock, families and chattels. The mature female phagor, too, sword in hand and astride horned *kaidaw,* rears in blood from the great tradition of Celt and Teuton that so appalled *Caesar* and his clerkish Latins. Splendid. *Morituri te salutant,* Red Sonja! By Wutra, all is not lost!

> How can one die better,
> Than facing fearful odds,
> For the ashes of one's ancestors
> And the temples of one's gods?

Pace, Macauley!

So at least at the end—although I'm not sure I'm meant to like the phagors so much—I can applaud something in this book without cavil. Mr Aldiss may think me a would-be murderer for treating his book in this way, but I feel more like the small boy and the emperor's new clothes. Why didn't someone tell him, before it got this far? But the fault is not peculiar to Aldiss, which is why fiction forms such a small proportion of my reading these days.

A last word from H.G. Wells:

> A thing that I will confess deterred me at the outset far more than the sense of dishonesty in the affair, was the supreme silliness of the whole concern. I still clung to the idea that the world of men was or should be a sane and just organisation, and the idea that I should set myself gravely, just at the fine springtime of my life, to develop a monstrous bottling and

> packaging warehouse, bottling rubbish for the consumption of foolish, credulous and depressed people had in it a touch of insanity . . . I felt assured that somewhere there must be a hitch in the fine prospect of ease and wealth under such conditions; that somewhere, a little overgrown perhaps, but still traceable, lay a neglected path of use and honour for me.

And now my "sort of raging paroxysm" of splenetic irritation is spent. If anyone wants me, I'll be down at the *Hacksaw and Phagocyte,* introducing some phagors—I have a feeling they have relations in Barnsley or Castleford—to strong ale and good books. And opening negotiations for a cowbird of my own.

Reviews

Little, Big
by John Crowley *(Gollancz, 1982, 538pp, £8.95 hardcover, £5.95 paperback)*

reviewed by Michael Bishop

In his still relatively young career John Crowley has not wanted for either champions or praise, nor has he failed to warrant them. *The Deep* was a striking debut. *Beasts*, his second novel, seemed a more traditional piece of work, a story in a fairly straightforward sf mode, but it contained emotional resonances and passages of chillingly adroit prose that alerted an even wider readership to the extraordinary extent of Crowley's promise. *Engine Summer* followed. Of it, in these pages, Thomas M. Disch wrote, "Within its carefully determined bounds *Engine Summer* succeeds at the first, and still the most difficult, task of art: it achieves formal beauty." Crowley had made something new and special—albeit, for readers single-mindedly intent on purchasing headlong adventure for their book money, something bewilderingly intricate and precious—out of the hoary After-The-Bomb tale. A poet and seer was mysteriously in our midst, and, even more than before, Crowley was a Writer to Watch.

Still, I fear, none of these earlier books, either singly or together, adequately prepared any of us for the scope, sublimity, or triumphant different-drummer *freshness* of *Little, Big*. (They prepared Crowley, however, and that is considerably more important.) What, after all, is one to make of a novel that manages to conflate without hiccup or smirk the requisite surface trappings of the contemporary multigenerational saga *à la*, say, Irwin Shaw and an allegorical subtext as far-reaching and rigorous as the one undergirding *The Fairie Queene?* Further, *Little, Big* features episodes as whimsical and portentous as those in medieval folk tales cheek by jowl with scenes as nittily-grittily bleak as some of those in Balzac. It combines the playful nonsensical shrewdness of Lewis Carroll (whose brief career as a photographer of unclad children Crowley purposely recapitulates in the activities of an important secondary character) and the pervasive sunlit melancholy of the pastoral tragicomedies of Shakespeare. Closer to the Here and Now, its use of an orrery as a symbol for the unending circularity of a successful creative enterprise, whether a novel or a cosmos, may have been inspired by the dilapidated treadmill-operated solar system in a pivotal chapter of Thomas Pynchon's *V.* Who Knows? Crowley is a writer of easy erudition, come into his own by internalizing rather than flaunting his influences.

Little, Big begins in June, 19-- (a time fairly close to our own, as a reference to computers in the novel's opening pages tells us), flashes back to the beginning of the century, and ultimately makes a quasi-science-fictional leap into The Dark Days Ahead for the United States of America, when Russell Eigenblick, *a.k.a.* Frederick Barbarossa, once the Holy Roman Emperor, has replaced Ronald Reagan and Reagan's equally unimaginable successors in the White House. Events themselves alternate between a New England country house with several different architectural façades, home of the large and unquestionably pixilated Drinkwater clan, and the perilous "wild wood" of a City that we recognize as New York even though its proper name counts for less than does its

usefulness as a mythic mirror for the urban condition, the urban frame of mind. Along the way we see, among other things, an aged trout who is regularly consulted by the Drinkwaters as an oracle, Santa Claus Himself in a fetching cameo appearance, a baby girl stolen by fairies who leave in her stead a malefically moribund changeling, and a black man named Fred Savage drolly Kilmerized into a tree with "great rooting toes". Oddly, almost unbelievably, this potential hodgepodge of rural fancies and mean-street fever-dreams *works*. The invisible mucilage making it all cohere is Crowley's talent; in Disch's words, "an unshakable conviction in his own genius".

Our entry into the recursive and astonishingly elastic world of *Little, Big* is through the person of Smoky Barnable, whose nickname "so suited his evanescence that he kept it". A kind of characterless Everyman (at least at the outset), Smoky gets caught up in a Tale in which he believes himself to figure, if at all, only as a skeptical spectator. That he eventually proves to be the *primum mobile* on which the entire Tale depends for its impetus, its action, and its meaning—well, this is a narrative development of such haunting irony and auctorial compassion that we understand it to have enormous relevance to the art of storytelling as an immemorial human activity. Before this eloquent conclusion, however, we encounter Smoky earning his living at the endless task of proofreading the New York City telephone book; we share with him the transports of falling in love, we journey with him to Edgewood to marry Daily Alice Drinkwater, and with him we slowly settle into the deeply strange, only *superficially* idyllic lives of the Drinkwaters and their innumerable near relations. In the house built by Daily Alice's great-grandfather, a place of fabulous isolation, the turn of a Tarot card either presages or symbolically duplicates each step of Smoky's pilgrim's progress into the overall mystery that he himself focuses.

It is impossible to summarize *Little, Big* in a few paragraphs and therefore foolish to try. "The further in you go, the bigger it gets". And I have not even mentioned George Mouse (the Drinkwaters' City cousin), Ariel Hawksquill (an enchantress with tenuous family ties), the Noisy Bridge Rod and Gun Club, the soap opera entitled "A World Elsewhere", or Theodore Burne Bramble's stirring discourse on "The Smaller Worlds Within the Large." For now, let me say that as pure story I most enjoyed the sections of *Little, Big* given over to the love affair at Old Law Farm between Smoky's son Auberon and the young Puerto Rican woman Sylvie, she of the grand and maybe a little frightening Destiny. (Sylvie has a brother named Bruno: another nod to Carroll.) Here, in the semisqualid context of a Folding Bedroom and a decaying city, Crowley convincingly details the peculiar joys and despairs of passionate romantic love. His ability to evoke the warm, the funny, and the spooky aspects of this disorienting state, as well as its purely libidinous dimensions, also beggars telling. I leave you to experience these passages—indeed, the entire book—for yourself.

Faults? Lapses? Excesses? Miscalculations? Maybe Crowley could pinpoint a few; I don't see any. Stylistically, structurally, thematically, this is as nearly a perfect novel as I believe I have ever read. Some readers may find the blatant self-reflexiveness of the book offensive (the Drinkwaters *know* that they are characters in a Tale of great import), while others may squint askance at the talking animals, or the coal-crunching changeling from Hell, or possibly the miraculously resurrected Holy Roman Emperor (for me, the novel's least persuasive trope: a criticism I log primarily to escape censure as a flack in the author's secret employ). But Crowley has his reasons, and the novel justifies his start-

lingly vivid narrative choices by making them do overtime on behalf of its powerful unifying theme. Slaves to the immutable statistic of Sturgeon's Law, readers and reviewers alike habitually rail at the dismaying preponderance of "trash" or "schlock" in our bookstores, but the truth is that good books are heartening commonplaces. You can find them if you look for them. Great books are *genuinely* rare. John Crowley, I think, has given us one, by dint of meticulous labor and inspired design.

A nit of some small aesthetic consequence. This flat-footed sentence appears on the back of the dustjacket beneath a photograph of the author: "As (John Crowley) doesn't live anywhere at the moment, he has been travelling in Europe researching sixteenth-century magic for a new novel". The blurb-writer has subordinated the wrong clause. Is this Commerce's niggling revenge on a writer who has painstakingly upheld the highest possible standards of modern English prose through all 538 of the preceding pages? But never mind. We need only hope that Crowley becomes sedentary long enough to transform the substance of his research into the promised fiction.

Little, Big is a big little act to follow.

The White Plague
by Frank Herbert *(Putnam, 1982, 445 pp, $14.95; Gollancz, 1983, £8.95)*

reviewed by Colin Greenland

John Roe O'Neill is a brilliant molecular biologist, an American newly-arrived in Dublin with his wife and children. Watching as they cross the street, he sees them blown up by a terrorist car-bomb. He disappears, and soon politicians, scientists and journalists all over the world start to receive alarming letters. Signed "The Madman", these describe the incident and promise an act of global terrorism in retaliation: the dissemination of a new plague, a synthetic fatal disease. While the authorities discuss whether this one might actually not be a hoax, women begin to die.

O'Neill is selective in his targets, but the conditions of modern air transport and travel ensure that his creation spreads far and wide before it is even recognized; then of course a savage quarantine clamps down. The atmosphere of a new Dark Age, with people and nations cut off from one another, working with extremely limited communications, broods oppressively over the book (though there are just not as many *bodies* lying about as there ought to be). Part of the hunt for O'Neill is a theoretical reconstruction from the evidence, of how he thinks and what he can possibly have done, for they can't produce a cure without first establishing what the disease is. (One elegantly malicious detail: it feeds on antibiotics.)

This much of the novel is a mundane contemporary disaster thriller, all tension on the telephone and tempests in the think-tank as the experts realise the sheer enormity of the microscopic menace now galumphing all over their protocol. Herbert, however, is writing science fiction too, which involves more than the disaster thriller, though he keeps that simmering as well. Briefly, the mundane disaster concerns an existing order struggling to survive a chaotic irruption; the sf disaster envisages the end of that order, and the beginning of a new one. As Ballard taught us, in sf disasters don't only destroy things, they expose things and create things, and this is what Herbert goes on to examine.

John Roe O'Neill, now calling himself John Garrech O'Donnell, is returning to

Ireland to gloat. He falls foul of a coastal patrol, part navy, part IRA; has his boat scuttled, is stripped of all his belongings and sent stumbling naked up from the beach. Pretending he wants to aid the research effort at Killaloe, not sabotage it, he falls in with three mysterious and mismatched travellers who promise to take him there: Joseph Herity, a crude and cunning ex-Provo, Father Michael Flannery, a priest whose faith the plague has shaken, and the priest's ward, an anonymous boy who has not spoken since his mother died, and will not until the end of the road. For what Herbert comes to make of his plot is a *post*-disaster novel, an obscure quest through a derelict landscape now returning to nature, by an ill-assorted band of pilgrims whose characters will be changed by their experiences, by the ruins they traverse and by the isolated survivors they encounter. It's a *paysage moralisé,* not an inner landscape, so the analogue is not Ballard but rather Aldiss's *Greybeard,* or M. John Harrison's *The Committed Men,* two other visions of humanity tramping through luxuriant vegetation to the verge of extinction. As O'Donnell's journey progresses he starts to realize that the two men have been detailed to watch him. Herity is slowly and subtly probing to find out if he is O'Neill; yet O'Neill, the outraged schizoid self that did the deed, is shrinking inside O'Donnell, growing less and less a part of the new man. O'Donnell is the catalyst for a retrospective battle between Church and State, with Herity continually tormenting Father Michael, while the Jesuit constructs an ever more trenchant discourse on the old national passion for civil strife.

Where a lesser writer would have used Ireland merely because it's where people get blown up unexpectedly, and paced the search for the cure with the hunt for an O'Neill who would be mad but also evil, Herbert has turned the whole story in on itself, using O'Donnell as a remarkably sympathetic and vulnerable viewpoint on a quest deep into the green "fanatic heart" of Ireland itself. The greatest mass murderer in history wanders the leafy lanes like an innocent, haunted by the uncertain flicker of atrocious conscience, and by the nameless boy, ghost of a mute and uncommitted future. Nor is Herbert's version any less suspenseful than the mundane one would have been.

What it is missing, unfortunately, is a clear sense of the world without women. It's so easy to fall back on the traditional preponderance of male characters that he forgets the absence of women is a vital factor which he needs to demonstrate, a negative presence that has to be signalled in the text. Depressingly, the only times when he does remember are in a few scenes that involve saucepans and washing-lines—as if he had automatically written in the stereotype female subservient, then realized and gone back to change the pronouns. The Mary O'Neill in O'Donnell's memory is very faint, of course, but she grows clear only in her housewifely aspect. Nor does it help that the only female survivor we see at length is a consistently shallow and silly character, and ultimately simply inconsistent. In the brief final sketches of the new order for a world of a thousand men to every woman, there is no consideration that the women, or even some of them, might seize upon their scarcity as a powerful position for political bargaining. Whether it would work or not is immaterial; it's obvious the possibility never occurred to Herbert at all. By his logic, somehow, women are even more economically and politically helpless as a tiny but essential minority than they ever were when they made up fifty per cent of the race. The response of the sex that has just nearly been exterminated is effectively overruled, not only by the men but also by Herbert on their behalf. It's an infuriating omission from an otherwise powerful and persuasive work.

The Eye of the Heron
by Ursula Le Guin *(Gollancz, 1982, 122 pp, £6.95)*

reviewed by John Sladek

This might be classed as a "juvenile", being an inoffensive little book explaining politics in the nicest way. On an unnamed planet are two neighbouring colonies, one of pacific communards, the other of caricature fascists with whips and jackboots. Their differences date from before their arrival.

The pacifists come from all over the world. They joined in a long march for Peace across Europe, became unwanted boat people, and were finally sent off in space ships, to a former Brazilian penal colony. (The Brazilian felons already there are the fascists.) They are strictly non-violent, settle everything by mutual agreement and discussion, and (since they are all basically good folk with the same goals) disagreements seldom run deep nor last long. They are 4000 strong, but able to provide enough food for both themselves and the 8000 fascists. All they want is for everybody to be nice to one another, and maybe explore some new territory in the North and start some new harmonious communes. They now live in the Town, or Shantih (= Peace) or Shanty Town.

The fascists live in the City. They want the rule of law, whips, jackboots; the subjugation of women; and the establishment of slave farms in the South.

Luz, the daughter of a fascist chief, learns all about peace and freedom and understanding from a wise old woman named Vera (all names seem meaningful). She goes to warn the pacifists of a sneak attack, and ends up staying with them and falling in love with Lev, a kind and nice man. Lev is nothing at all like the handsome, arrogant SS leader Herman Macmilan whom she keeps despising from time to time. But any ambivalent feelings are dispatched when both Lev and Herman die in a military incident. Luz is free to take up her rucksack and lead an expedition North, to found a new colony.

While sympathetic to the political sentiments of the novel, I found its characters drab and unconvincing. In Shantih, people can only be distinguished one from another by their stated age or sex; all speak with one voice. Okay, maybe personifications of political ideas don't need to be real people with thoughts and feelings of their own, but they need to be interesting in some way or other. In the City, Luz and her father are given a few very broad brushstrokes of personality, but everyone else is sneering and strutting, and male (even the sex distinction is gone).

The two tribes aren't too convincing either. The Shantih folk haven't been off Earth long (older folks remember it) but have evidently forgotten music, painting, books, movies, totem poles, TV, recipes, animal husbandry, science, technology, mathematics, poetry, prayer, even the names of their former gods. They have one song (a peace march song) and oral stories about the peace march. The City folk are even worse off: they've forgotten all the above, and also how to eat dinner or take a bath. They have one book, a first-aid manual. Yet both have highly-developed political systems, one with a finely-tuned sense of social justice evidently ruling every thought of every member, the other with all the complex apparatus of councils and courts and prisons and police. It is almost as if these peoples constructed their two societies not to live in, but solely for the purpose of appearing in a didactic novel by Ursula Le Guin.

Battlefield Earth: A Saga of the Year 3000
by L. Ron Hubbard *(St. Martin's Press, 1982, 819 pp, $24)*

reviewed by Roz Kaveney

There is a degree of badness that is not even funny; there is a dullness not even Pope could make epic. Sf is full of superannuated and superseded talents that persist in bounding about being embarassing in front of the neighbours. But in their day Asimov, Heinlein and that inadvertent pornographer E.E. "Doc" Smith, did the state some service, moved the genre along an inch; even now the careful palate can tease pleasure and instruction from their work. Science fiction has moved on leaving them in its wake; if they make more money from it than they now deserve, well that is just one of History's little jokes. There is no need to pay them much attention, even of a negative kind; once the Elizabethan theatre had moved on as far as *The Spanish Tragedy*, there was little to be gained from slagging off *Gorboduc*.

But Lafayette Ron Hubbard was only a hack before he turned himself into the founder of a fake religion; he was an unimportant writer before he became a bad man. When a publisher as comparatively respectable as St. Martin's chooses to make itself the channel by which he can inflict *Battlefield Earth* on an unsuspecting world, their dereliction of duty needs comment. When a publisher chooses to promote so bad and unimportant a book by allowing the author to represent himself as a major figure of the sf field, the lie has to be scotched. Luckily *Battlefield Earth* is so unremittingly dreadful that there is no chance of anybody's being fooled—but St. Martin's should be ashamed of themselves for thinking that sf is a field in which they can make a killing on wares this mould-sodden.

Those of Hubbard's contemporaries still producing show some signs of having noticed that sf has changed since their day, even when—in their own work—they have most sternly rejected the siren song of Art. Hubbard shows no such signs. His book is illiterate and incoherent in expression, prolix in structure, nonsensical in plot, offensive in its ideology past human decency, wooden in its characterization, ludicrous in its science and economics; it is bad, lifeless, null. It has not even the sickly glamour of phosphorescent rot. People can at least onanize to John Norman (though not people one would wish to meet socially); the only way anyone is going to sprain a wrist with *Battlefield Earth* is by lifting the damn thing.

Hubbard claims, people like that always claim, to be a humble teller of tales producing a rattling yarn; when a yarn like this rattles it is because the storyteller forgot to screw it together properly. And here is the story we are supposed to sit and thrill to: the Psychlos are an evil race who rule the galaxies. Long ago the psychiatric profession fixed their brains and *made* them evil. They conquered Earth and killed most of humanity to clear the way for mining operations. Once a year, their teleporter beam intersects with Earth and picks up cargo and transferring personnel. Terl, even more evil than most Psychlos, decides to train humans to mine for his personal profit and smuggle back the gold disguised as coffins. His first slave, Jonnie Goodboy Tyler, builds a secret resistance group and learns interesting facts—such as that the Psychlo atmosphere explodes when brought into contact with uranium. So he swaps the gold coffins for some uranium ones and off they go in the teleport beam. Jonnie overthrows the Psychlo miners; Terl corrupts some human politicians to the point when they let him jump into the beam when it next

comes round. And he jumps into the inferno that was once his home planet—boy, was his face red! But Jonnie has lots more to do-lesser breeds to be convinced that he should rule the human race, his son to be taught to ride and shoot and his daughter taught to cook and dust, alien races to be dissuaded from taking over the Psychlo empire—which Jonnie by legal trickery now owns, the Galaxies' economy to be put on a sound footing (which appears to be Social Credit, Ezra Pound eat your heart out.) And eventually off goes Jonnie to be Hidden King for all the oppressed of the Universe . . .

Does anyone need to have proved to them that this is witless beyond endurance? Or that the casual advocacy of genocide is obscene? Yes, of course the character has his reasons and his failures of the imagination—but the author who constructed him and his situation knows what he is saying, which is that a race which listens to psychiatry rather than scientology has forfeited the mandate of heaven and must die. In the old days of sf, this was standard; Jack London once solved the Yellow Peril with a racially-specific virus; E.E. Smith blew the Eddorians out of the sky, and the Fenachrone, and the Ploorians, and the Llurdi. There was a time when racial extermination was on the political agenda of imperial powers—Tasmania, Patagonia, Namibia—but when that ideology reached its logical conclusion at Auschwitz, civilized middleclass people were instructed by self-interest in better courses. Were Hubbard seriously questioning the belief that genocide is the greatest sin he would be loathsome but not contemptible. As it is, press the point and he would say that this is only a story, or accuse you of advocating censorship. He kills millions of imaginary beings as a way of keeping his weak plot tidy; luckily even messiahs rarely get their chance to tidy up the real world.

Hubbard has spent several decades writing Holy Books, a genre even less noted for elegant prose in our century than sf is. At no point in this interminable book does he visualize any scene clearly, does he impart by language or image any sort of emotional truth. In fiction, as opposed to the professional mendacity of the charlatan, something of the kind is required to get people through 800 pages; he may have forgotten. For example:

> The little boy lay on the blood-stained ground, his head back and in the direction of the lower slope. Jonnie had been certain he was dead. No one could take that many submachine slugs in the middle of his body—and a small body—and live.
> He felt awful.

In those sentences Hubbard makes several bids for our sympathy and imaginative engagement; all fail. "Head back and in the direction of the lower slope" is clumsily redundant enough to be actually confusing. The sentimental anacoluthon "and a small body—" is ludicrous and revealing; churned flesh becomes a target whose size is the relevant issue. "Awful"— how best to convey the inadequacy of that? . . . "I shot my dog last night?—Was he mad?—Well, he wasn't very pleased" . . ?

Battlefield Earth is full of "scientific explanations":

> But to move an object cleanly, without destruction of it or harm to the transhipment rig, one had to have two spaces to coincide with eath other and space would not do that so long as it "considered itself" "samespace". You would just get a mangled mess.

It is always difficult, whether in sf or in the higher physics, to describe such processes without drifting in the direction of religious gibberish. The higher physics is attempting to represent reality and is likely to be stuck with the best words that fit. In fiction, though it is hard to prescribe ways of avoiding producing gibberish, it is possible and necessary to notice that that is what you have got, scrap it and start again. Hubbard does not bother.

There is no point in further multiplying examples of how badly this book is written—or, rather, of the extent to which it seems likely that it was not *written* at all. Those clumsinesses, those tautologies—they all sound more like speech than prose. Hubbard did once make his living by writing, must have learned to avoid the beginner's errors he makes here. There are few spelling mistakes—editorial intervention has been taken that far—but otherwise it seems likely that the book was dictated, transcribed and left to lie where it fell.

Battlefield Earth suffers above all from deadening silliness. Old tricks which might just work can in sf have a certain mythic force, can stand for human ingenuity. But the silliness of things like exploding uranium coffins, and the snail's pace at which this book moves, makes it impossible that it ever not be absurd. Final revelations, plot twists, can have a loony elegance; here Jonnie spends much of the book struggling to discover the secret of Psychlo math. It turns out they use base 11 to confuse everybody. This is thin after 800 pages, particularly when spotting it seems to have been an option open to all the subject races from the beginning . . . And then there are the interstellar bankers (descended—o! stunning originality—from sharks) . . . And the Scots and Chinese to provide comic relief, and storm troopers . . . And the women, of whom the less said the better.

Hubbard's self-knowledge is of a piece with his literary skill. He describes his relationship with John W. Campbell:

> Love of the ancient tales now called *The Arabian Nights* led me to write quite a bit of fantasy. To handle this fantasy material, Campbell introduced another magazine, *Unknown*. As long as I was writing novels for it, it continued.

This is a dreadful book; but somewhere in an alternative universe where he can rot no brains, Hubbard is the protagonist of a great comic novel. In the end, what can one say here further to ridicule a man who dedicates *Battlefield Earth* to the writers of the Golden Age listed alphabetically (. . . "Robert E. Howard, E. Mayne Hull, Aldous Huxley . . .") and ends it with the smug lines: "Dr McDermott wrote a book. It was not as good as this book, for it was intended for semi-literate people" . . .?

The Golden Torc and **The Nonborn King**
by Julian May *(Houghton-Mifflin, 1982, 381 pp, $13.95; and 1983, 397 pp, $16.95)*

reviewed by Donald M. Hassler

When the first volume of Julian May's Saga of the Exiles was reviewed in *Foundation* 25, the reviewer in the lordly manner of the literary establishment seemed to want to impose mind control (as strong as the control of any golden torc imagined in the fictions themselves) over May's uses of narrative. She introduces too many characters. Her pacing falters. The allusions are a mere "costume parade", and the overall effect is a "second-order escapism". Since I have been asked to review the second and third volumes in May's Saga, of which she is completing now a fourth, and since I am as much in favour of mind control as any aspiring Lord, I cannot promise total indifference to Julian May's few detractors. But I think the issues at hand are significant enough for science fiction and fantasy in general that I'll take the opportunity of this mini-tournament over her Saga, which incidentally is a fine set of books that will be prized in the collections of its many buyers, to suggest a few broad points about what she is attempting in her fiction.

The first question is, indeed, the nature of narrative itself and the role that science fiction and fantasy has come to play in this development. How can a large canvas of fantasy be handled? Why should it even be attempted since there are still as many *bildungsroman* to be written as there are new novelists? What is the best form for dialogue, action, and description when reportorial naturalism is not the goal? Julian May raises these questions about narrative and offers her contribution to the evolving answers. She may not finally prove to be a Stapledon, a Dick, or even a Sturgeon; but I think she is cutting a niche for herself in the long and wonderful tradition in sf and fantasy of playing with the conditions of narrative in order to push narrative itself toward the future. In fact one wonders, three quarters through this panorama that stretches from the Pliocene Epoch on earth to a future Galactic Milieu and then even farther backward in time to a dimorphic, heroic species that is probably a precursor of the very humans encountered out of their time on the prehistoric European battlefields, whether or not the parameters of the novel itself are being challenged. A plot summary would look like a time line of the Old Testament without its linear progression. Much of the real action is effected by mind control. Telepathic conversations between characters are common, and May attempts to twist the language accordingly. Other metapsychic phenomena such as what she calls "farsensing" play important roles in the story both in the future Galactic Milieu when a technology has been developed to probe distant star systems without leaving one's dentist chair, so to speak, and in the mysterious prehistoric torc technology of the dimorphic aliens—who are probably not so alien. In other words, especially in narrative technique the Saga is a great web that questions what we call reality and thus, also, what we call the novel.

But innovative writing attempts can always be labeled bad writing, as reviewers are quick to do in poorly written reviews; and no one cares about that anyway outside of the writing workshops and the academy. The real question, since it might affect the behaviour of the reader, is ontology—what May's earlier reviewer in these pages called her escapism. Julian May insists that she harbors no didactic intentions and simply wants to tell a good story, but the lady does protest too much. Like so many science fiction and fantasy writers, she is a flaming modern day Romantic who, rather than escape, labors hard to help her readers reaffirm their "buried lives". Furthermore, the beautiful thing about writing that is Romantic in this way (and about Wordsworth who was probably the first) is the effort to undergird with plausible explanations (science) and with suggestive images and allusions our deepest hopes and fears about the unity of being. Julian May's characters, and ultimately the good news they convey, never leave us alienated and alone in a barren universe. Hers is a peopled cosmos; and the reality she writes about offers as its scientific investigators and literary precursors figures such as Freud and Jung, Campbell, Blake, Yeats, and Wordsworth—not an escapist in the lot.

The Saga is not finished, of course; but two key segments in *The Nonborn King* that are placed nearly side by side suggest the importance and ultimate seriousness of what May wants to say. When the stepdaughter of the King is born, we read the classic explanation (found best, perhaps, in Wordsworth and in Freud) for why, in our high and dry state of questioning rationalism, we can still imagine metapsychic and oceanic functions that would unify us with the world:

> (The fetus) beat with her weak psychokinesis against the uterine prison; plucked at Mercy's consciousness with feeble redaction; strove to create an unbreakable bond between

> the two of them, even as she tried to gain freedom; coerced most strongly of all. And thereby was forged that commonplace miracle, the metapsychic link between every normal mother and child. (p. 148)

The troubled king himself, conceived and apparently brought to term in vitro with no motherly womb, serves to emphasize and twist this theme. But then woven around this segment in the third volume, again in a manner that we also find so frequently in Wordsworth and in Freud, are images for the death wish and for the end of things. It seems that the traditions and ancient legends of the dimorphic species, which had their origins in the Duat planetary system far from our galaxy and long before the Pliocene, include references to a Nightfall War or final conflict. The titanic characters are drawn to this just as we are said to be fascinated by the impending event of our own deaths. Julian May leaves the choice between birth and death open, of course, at the end of the third volume.

Her final volume in the Saga has the projected title *The Adversary;* and we will wait to see if Nightfall is imaged convincingly or if the archetypal trickster, orphan, and "nonborn" upstart can patch things back together with a semblance of the unity of love. But basically, I suggest, we want more of her insights (inspired by the tradition and all her precursors) on the time gates and mind loops of our origins. If such speculations are escapist, we deserve to escape from our materialistic and undervalued prisons. But, again, Wordsworth said that too. Her detractors may tell us that Julian May is simply too Romantic for our sad and empty time. But as these volumes tell us in the radical mobility of their characters, one can never be certain when one's time is.

The Fantastic Stories of Cornell Woolrich
edited by Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg *(Southern Illinois University Press, 1981, 334 pp, $19.95)*

reviewed by Dave Langford

The late Cornell Woolrich was best known as a writer of suspense, meaning for the most part pulp detective stories: so says the blurb writer, without considering that this might be because all Woolrich's better work is in the specified area, or that it could be a disservice to prepare this weighty collection from the dribs and drabs which can be called "fantastic". If nothing else there's a risk of the Vampire Effect, where a not normally fantastic author inserts an unexpected vampire into some story and achieves a mild coup because no one expects such stuff in such a "straight mainstream" story . . . after which the genre editor, eager to add respectability to an anthology, duly reprints the piece and wonders why it seems to lack punch in the context of *Fifty Great Tales In Which The Heroine Turns Out To Be A Vampire.*

The first four stories here are police procedural horror, as it were, in which tough cops meet a bit of the dark world. They are violent and fast, and do not make a great deal of sense. Thus "Kiss of the Cobra" is "rather absurd . . . as the narrator's widowered father-in-law brings home as his second wife a Hindu snake priestess complete with reptiles": thus the introductory essay by Francis M. Nevins, who apparently had no say in choosing the contents and took his revenge by being lukewarm or more often silent about the stories here while showering praise on others not featured. "Kiss of the Cobra" is not merely silly

but—the snake-priestess being sinisterly slinky all over the place while actually doing her dirty work with envenomed cigarettes—patently not fantastic: its inclusion is apparently justified by lack of previous book publication.

Next come better examples of this mode, "Dark Melody of Madness" (bandleader steals secret voodoo chant and retribution starts breathing down his neck) and "Speak to Me of Death" (the fate-which-cannot-be-avoided theme, fresher for its citified setting and sceptical police). These suffer from the Vampire Effect, the author having attempted a certain ambiguity in the supernatural elements while the present context and title plonk the scales hard down on the "fantastic" side. "Speak to Me of Death", incidentally, is one of four stories to get no mention at all in the scholarly introduction, though later it apparently swelled into Woolrich's notable novel *Night Has a Thousand Eyes* (1945). There is no bibliography either. Is this really a university press publication?

"I'm Dangerous Tonight" spoils a good yarn—about a dress which turns nice ladies into killers (no, literally)—with a string of nonsensical coincidences and an early appearance of Satan commissioning the wicked garment. "Jane Brown's Body" is pulp horror, or sf in that the corpse awakens on the operating table rather than the black altar: much initial tension which goes flat later on, and one can't help smiling when in accordance with the very best traditions the revivified lady duly begins to fall apart. There are two rather good little ghost stories, strong on atmosphere: "Guns, Gentlemen" (old romance plays itself out again in modern lives) and "The Moon of Montezuma" (murdered lady takes ambiguous revenge from the grave). Finally, "Somebody's Clothes—Somebody's Life" is an interestingly elusive piece about role exchange (see title) told in the unlovable playscript format which every author seems impelled to try once. These three work better for their lack of "tough" genre elements.

An overloaded Barry Malzberg afterword on Woolrich's tragic life argues that in its darkness and obsession the man's work was *all* fantastic. Nevins also goes on about the unity of Woolrich country, played with by dark and malign gods manifesting themselves via coincidence or ill luck. All this tends to be overstated (I think we can dismiss Nevins's phrase "the Poe of the twentieth century", for example): the core of truth is that Woolrich had a gift for evoking darkness, tension, paranoia, obsession, all the shadows which can be painted into realistic tales. But he wasn't much of a craftsman and seemed very uneasy when deploying the hokum of snake-priestesses, satanic haute-couture, zombies and voodoo—stuff not only unnecessary but tending to obscure his real talent. Which is no doubt why Woolrich wrote so litte that can be labelled fantastic, and why this impressively produced collection seems largely a load of old barrel-scrapings.

Sunstroke and Other Stories
by Ian Watson *(Gollancz, 1982, £7.95)*

reviewed by Sarah Lefanu

In "Nightmares", the second story in this collection, four men are sent out into space to destroy the "cosmic leeches" that are blanketing the night side of the earth and blotting out the stars. One of them jokingly suggests that they may find that the rest of the universe no longer exists, and the narrator, unamused and genuinely fearful of what they will discover, comments that "strange religious and exotic metaphysics flourish at such times".

Such a comment could equally apply to the times, and worlds, presented by Ian Watson in this collection, where the metaphysics range from theories of probability to speculations on the nature of god and the immortal soul. Watson's vision is essentially a moral one: he sets out to investigate the different ways in which such philosophical concepts as infinity and eternity can be made manifest and counterpoints these speculations to the materiality of the life of the body and the shortsightedness that that produces. The "cosmic leeches" of "Nightmares" are in fact an alien life form that has settled around earth to protect its inhabitants from a massive sun flare that will destroy all life. They are, rather then nightmares, the "most wonderful dreams", but unrecognised as such by the narrow-minded, provincial inhabitants of earth. There is a similarly caustic view of humans in "Bud", when Watson compares the ludicrously complicated sexual reproduction of earth animals to the asexual growing, splitting and growing of the budders. The latter are in tune with the flow of cosmic life, while the antics of the humans get wilder, crazier and more disjointed as they deliberately refuse to recognize the impending destruction of earth.

In the opening story, "The Rooms of Paradise", the narrator is caught in a confusion of space and time. He has gone through death and rebirth, and finds himself in a seemingly endless succession of rooms through which he must pass with a regularity that he cannot control. He has glimpses of another life, the one that he will enjoy later on, a life of sun, sea and sex with others who have been reborn. But what he learns of the infinite, and of eternity, while trapped alone in the rooms, will be dismissed as a dream, a conventional "rebirth trauma", in the light of the hedonistic ever-present that all the reborns enjoy.

The discomfort of mind in body is a potent image for Watson. It appears in "The Rooms of Paradise", and again in "The Milk of Knowledge", where the forty-one year old narrator suddenly finds himself pulled back in time and inhabiting his fourteen year old body, a sensation uncomfortable and disturbing, to say the least. The twistings and turnings of time in this story are revealed as opportunities for a decision to be taken on the future of the human race. Beings that inhabit the multiverse, the world where all possibilities are and none actually is, wish to experience existence in the "pocket of fierce deterministic causality" which is our world. The creation and the end of the universe come into existence as the pact is sealed with a kiss. The possibilities of the multiverse are lost and the human race gains an assured existence and an assured end.

Watson's skill lies in his playful handling of speculations on the nature of the universe. In "The Artistic Touch" he counterposes the power of chaos, captured here in an eggshell and nauseous to behold, against artistic perfection. Perfection becomes more perfect in order to compensate for the force of chaos, and finally perfects itself out of existence. There is a wryness to this tale that appears too in "A Letter From God", where poor old god, previously the many-in-one, is victim of a horrid "miscueing" on the billiard board of the multiverse, that gives him singleness of being in the absurd world that has earth as its centre and its sole point of life.

Sometimes, however, the moral philosophy that accompanies the metaphysics is uncertain in tone and shaky in concept. In "Flame and the Healer" we are given a parable of the after-life: the hell of solitariness and the heaven of shared dreams. The former is a theme that works in "The Rooms of Paradise", where it is embedded in more general speculations on the nature of the soul, but it is too simplistic a proposition for a single,

central theme. There is an illogicality in "Peace", a story that illustrates the results of human arrogance in the face of alien life forms, that undermines its moral point. Would a peace treaty necessarily be interpreted as a declaration of war by a race who are instinctively and primarily peaceful? Interestingly, Watson tackles sexual oppression too, in this story, but his analysis, alas, rests on the hoary old dichotomy between male rationality and female intuition. The latter is of course proved correct, and its dismissal by the woman's lover leads to the tragedy.

Watson has a sharp moral wit, that works well in such stories as "Returning Home", where the Soviet Union has been blasted by a capitalist bomb from the US that destroys life but doesn't touch property, and the US has been blasted by a socialist bomb that does the reverse. In "Bud" the hedonistic sex-obsessed humans are mocked for their "religious images" plastered on the walls of their space ship, and fail to get the joke. In the title story a fine and witty picture is drawn of a group of people developing paranoid schizophrenia, with the only one who escapes, a blind doctor, having to exploit that most exploitable of all human frailties, sex, in order to save herself and them.

Yet, like some of his characters who slip from one world into another, Watson slips too easily from wit into facetiousness. From the premises of playing around with space and time he takes on a philosophical responsibility, and he is at his best when he addresses with seriousness and elegance the questions that those premises throw up. There are certainly rich and exotic pickings to be had in this collection.

The Shaving of Karl Marx
by Leon Stover *(Chiron Press, 1982, $10.00)*

reviewed by Patrick Parrinder

It was H.G. Wells's ambition to write a book called *The Shaving of Karl Marx*. He found Marx a woolly thinker and resented his authority as the Sage and Patriarch of socialism. When he visited the Soviet Union in 1920, he found that the logic of events was forcing Lenin and his followers to abandon their Marxist tenets. Indeed, he doubted whether the Soviet leader was a genuine Marxist at all.

Add to this a knowledge of Wells's scientific romances and you have the essential background for the reader of Leon Stover's stimulating if eccentric novel of ideas, which is available in a limited edition published in Lake Forest, Illinois. As a novel, it is the testament of one Egon Tersoff, a fugitive from the CIA and KGB who has mysterious knowledge of a series of conversations between Wells and Lenin which took place just after the turn of the century. Tersoff, possibly a madman, writes his testament on the run and in a disconcertingly staccato style. The year is 1985 and at the end he has disappeared, apparently, into the clutches of a Russian rebel workers' movement. With him has gone the sole copy of a long-suppressed letter whose publication could change the course of history: a letter written by Lenin on his deathbed, disavowing Marxism and addressed to "My dear Wells".

Leon Stover must have felt the temptation to make a political thriller out of this material; but he has resisted it. Instead he brings Lenin to Wells's house at Sandgate, in search of English conversation lessons, at the crucial moment in April 1902 when he is trying to wrest control of the Russian Social Democrats from the ageing Plekhanov. A

series of philosophical dialogues reveals Wells as a more single-minded political theorist, and Lenin as much more of a literary critic and sf fan, than we might otherwise have suspected. The outcome of their meeting is a world-shaking political doctrine subsequently known as Leninism, though in Stover's (or is it Tersoff's?) view it might just as well be called Wellsianism. How this comes about it is not for the reviewer to say—but there are some entertaining and amusing twists to the conversation. Wells's enthusiasm for dressing-up and floor games is put to good use, and his wife Jane appears memorably in a debunking role that was probably suggested by Aunt Susan in *Tono-Bungay*. It may be added that there *are* points of correspondence between Wells's world-saving schemes and Leninism—Wells himself remarked on them in the *Autobiography*—and in any case there are family resemblances linking all the varieties of socialism, including that of the Fabians which is unjustly slighted here. This book is not recommended for orthodox followers of Lenin or of Wells, for whom the shaving of Karl Marx will seem like the bearding of their particular hero. But for readers of speculative fiction and especially for admirers of Wells's scientific romances it should prove a sparkling piece of intellectual fun.

Ecotopia and **Ecotopia Emerging**
by Ernest Callenbach *(Pluto Press, 1978, 168 pp, no recent price available; and Bantam Books, 1982, 337 pp, $3.50)*

reviewed by Stefan Lewicki

Ecotopia is a novel in the traditional utopian vein, set in 1999; the West coast area of the United States—Washington, Oregon and Northern California—seceded from the Union to become an independent state run along ecological lines, some twenty years previously. The first visitor from the US is a sceptical journalist sent to report for a magazine on how life has changed there: he is finally convinced by what he sees and the life he experiences there, and decides to remain at the end of his visit. The major theme of the novel is the development of an ecologically integrated society where waste, pollution and other dehumanizing aspects of the twentieth-century lifestyle we know, have been eradicated; this has helped create a new, more alive nation, as we see in the vitality of the people and the intensity and depth of their communication and their relationships with each other. To us it is a highly appealing vision: no waste, no competition, no unnecessary work, a people at peace with itself, concerned more with inner development and the quality of their interaction with each other, as revealed through the journalist Weston, and the people he meets. He cannot just be a journalist doing his job; the Ecotopians expect him to become involved with them, to live as one of them, and experience their life to the full. The citizens of Ecotopia have also absorbed the feminist concept of personal politics in relationships between women and men, and Weston finds the sexist behaviours and assumptions he has brought with him questioned: his transformation into an Ecotopian is a result of the strength with which the positive aspects of Ecotopian life reveal themselves to him, and make his former life seem shallow and empty, both through his journalistic research and the development of an emotional and sexual relationship with Marissa, an Ecotopian forestry worker.

The recently published *Ecotopia Emerging* is a further development of these themes,

both a prequel and a sequel, as it were, to the original novel; though the vision of *Ecotopia* is a serious and plausible utopia, and attractive to sections of society today, *Ecotopia Emerging* is more serious in its conception, in that it shows very persuasively how the state described in the original novel might be brought about, developing out of contemporary social trends and political movements. Perhaps therefore it is capable of convincing even more people of the possibility and desirability of such a lifestyle. The premise of *Ecotopia Emerging* is that our present Western civilization's lifestyle is a direct threat to future human security and existence. The scenario at the start of the novel is similar to that portrayed in John Brunner's novel *The Sheep Look Up* (1972)—a growing ecological and social nightmare—but the end result is dramatically opposed to it: the prevailing feeling throughout *Ecotopia Emerging* is of strength and confidence rather than despair and hopelessness.

The central themes of this novel are the importance of individual autonomy and freedom of action, and the taking back of the power of people to decide how they will live, from big corporations, experts and remote central government: we see this on both an individual and collective level. The other major undercurrent is feminism: the Survivalist Party is one in which women really do operate equally, and promotes a political programme to which women are fully committed, as it reflects their own concerns and needs more than any other: women want to be active in the construction of the sort of world they yearn for, in which all people can live free from poverty, pollution and oppression. There are strong women characters in the novel, including Vera Allwen, an energetic and committed Survivalist and one of the driving forces in the party: we met her in the first novel as the president of Ecotopia. Lou, the central character, is a young woman scientist who discovers a cheap solar-energy catalyst which means that the power of meeting one's energy needs autonomously can be put in everyone's hands: of course she meets with concerted opposition from the vested economic interests of the United States, the oil and power companies. Lou's concern is to make good quality, cheap technology easily available to everyone, and she succeeds in placing her discovery in the public domain where it cannot be appropriated and made to serve the profit motives of the multinationals. We watch her work developing, and at the same time see her growing towards her own personal maturity as a woman; her growing strength parallels the evolution of Ecotopia: a young person optimistic in the belief that she can and will have the kind of future she deserves.

It is significant, and a limitation to the novel, I feel, that the origins of the ecologically oriented Survivalist Party and its greatest real successes, happen in the extremely affluent and privileged area which is the West coast of the US: the people have everything they need to begin with, to build a utopia, and the question of how less fortunate regions could manage to achieve a similar life, was constantly at the back of my mind: this matter remains unresolved, and the rest of the United States doesn't follow the Ecotopian example—why not, we may well ask, and does a relatively privileged section of the world have the right to cut itself off, build a utopia and leave the rest of the world to stew in its own mess? The Ecotopians nevertheless make the relevant points that the Pacific area is a geographically autonomous region, and a self-contained biological and ecological system; on this basis, the Survivalist Party becomes a regional rather than a national organization, justifying the final secession with the notion that they are in fact a different kind of people to those in the rest of the United States.

We feel the justifiable anger of the people, that even the simple and basic necessities of life are at risk, with the increasing pollution of the water and air, and the toxic chemicals in the food-chain; there is a disaster involving a nuclear power plant. This anger is coupled with a growing sense of despair in the ability of the old system to improve life, and a feeling that there is actually nothing left to lose by trying something radically different. The importance and effectiveness of direct action is underlined: the directors of a chemical plant making the dangerous herbicide 2,4,5T (Agent Orange) are sprayed with their own chemical; a rural farmer gets together a small group of friends to produce gasohol from organic waste, in order to reduce their ever-increasing energy costs, which leave them totally at the mercy of the oil companies; a group of people condemned to die of cancer which they are convinced is a result of the growing pollution of the environment, blow up a chemical plant, and then surrender to the authorities and speak out publicly of their reasons for their action: public opinion is in their favour.

The Survivalist Party makes the point that the technology and ability already exists to put its programme into action; indeed parts of the book can be read as a political manifesto, as Callenbach explains at length the inefficiencies of the tax system, big business, centralization, and private transport (one of the Survivalists' proposals is for a ban on private cars), detailing the wastefulness in both personal and social costs. This last problem, the private car, is treated rather simplistically, I feel, given the American devotion to the automobile; I cannot envisage it being so easily renounced as Callenbach seems to imagine: nor does he have anything to say about the symbolic psychological and sexual value of the private car to the average male. Many of the arguments for small-scale industry controlled by its workers, will be familiar to those who have read Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful.* In the end, the Survivalist Party gradually usurps power in the Ecotopian region, filling the vacuum central government has left by default; the Survivalists have answers where others have none, so their policies are adopted, and seem to work.

The two novels offer a very seductive vision to those who feel alienated from the present society of industry and consumerism, and who imagine that there must be more to life than they are experiencing at present; the emphasis on personal contact, democratic organization and real participation in the processes that determine the nature of society are relatively new to utopian visions, and counter the traditional rigidity, and mechanistic feeling of older utopias. It is undoubtedly easy to pick holes in the details of the novels, but this in no way diminishes their powerful message. While *Ecotopia* presented us with the details of the organisation of a country along ecological lines, *Ecotopia Emerging* goes further in showing us real people voicing their concerns and learning how to take action through which they can transform their world—we follow their development into a new kind of people and realize the greater fulfilment which we might achieve in our own lives if we attempted to build such a society.

A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic by Christine Brooke-Rose *(Cambridge University Press, 1981, 446 pp, £25)*

reviewed by Colin Greenland

"We are witnessing a return of serious attention to romance," by which Brooke-Rose

means all fictions that turn away from mimetic realism; she studies here the fictions, and also the serious attention, so the book is dense with co-ordinated grids of formalism and structuralism and post-structuralism, laid over writers from Poe to Pynchon. Dense, and thorough in method, "eclectic" she says and even arbitrary in choice of texts. Three chapters on "The Turn of the Screw", one on Tolkien, two on science fiction. The first considers it as an interesting problem on the quaint 2-D diagrams of fictional genres much loved by theoretical critics. (Is sf marvellous, the opposite of realism? or logical, and so next to realism?) The other chapter follows Brooke-Rose's observation that sf is "weighed down by clichés and only here and there renewed," which is what I say, we all say, in review after review, but what does she know? She mentions twenty-one authors of sf (including Shelley, Capek, London), and analyzes two books, of the few where she sees "formal regeneration" has occurred: *The Sirens of Titan* by Kurt Vonnegut and *Plus* by Joseph McElroy. (No, nor had I.) She often (but not always) calls Malachi Constant "Constant Malachi". She refers once to the "so-called 'New Wave' SF (Aldiss, Ballard, Disch, Delany, Heinlein and on)" *(sic)*. Though she has obviously read or skimmed some of Delany's fiction she asserts that Darko Suvin is "the only 'theorist' of the genre". In one magnificent footnote she contrives to misspell both Delany and *Dhalgren*. That reference, the only one, to Aldiss, Ballard and Disch only betrays the fact that she can't have read them, or she'd have found plenty of "formal regeneration". Brooke-Rose pronounces expertly upon "post-modernism", "metafiction" and "surfiction" by Coover, Barth, Gass, Brautigan, Sukenick, but when it's by Moorcock, Sladek, Russ, Silverberg, Wolfe, she doesn't notice it, much less read it. Whatever else she knows, Brooke-Rose is a victim of the marginalization of sf. Her book reinforces it.

The End of the World News
by Anthony Burgess *(Hutchinson, 1982, 389 pp, £8.95)*

reviewed by John Clute

Late last year, in the Kozy Kaffeeklatch Kolumns of the *Guardian* Book Page, famed sci-fi spokesperson J.G. Ballard (whom the Force defend) of Shepperton reviewed Anthony Burgess's new novel, praising it in the highest terms ("a feast for the reader" and so forth), and as a consequence one is inclined to approach *The End of the World News* ("this remarkable novel") with hopes raised to a pretty keen pitch. Though these hopes are by no means fulfilled, neither are they comprehensively dashed, either, quite.

In three interwoven narrative strands, *The End of the World News* presents us with a broadway musical about Leon Trotsky, a flashbacked televisual resumé of the life of Sigmund Freud, and a hyped-up "sci-fi" rendering of the collision of another planet with Earth. The book is a vaudeville, a paean, and an epitaph. And a jape. To the point of collapse it resounds with slapdash terminal pazzazz, like the *Titanic* fatally embracing its ice. A quick dash through the tripartite cacophany of parts helps one sort it out, to some extent, though it doesn't really seem that Mr Burgess was seriously aiming at any cadential ordonnance in shaping and dovetailing his texts—for after all *The End of the World News* is about running down, the running down of the world, and its jangling harlequin structure surely apes the hectic disintegration it prophesies for us, here at this end of history.

But a quick dash is part of the reviewer's job. Mr Burgess's harlequinade starts with the dustwrapper blurb to his book, which, in the British edition at least, he has written himself, and which closely resembles the closing pages of Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada* (1969), also couched as a blurb, also composed with a knives-out virtuoso intensity about a text which confabulates its relation to the world, also a pre-emptive strike against us toadying emcees (Mr Ballard; oneself) who usher it into literary history with our lying spiels. So we are told what to think and say, and that we are fools if we follow instructions. But mainly what we are told is that what we are about to enter is a kind of theatre.

We step inside. We are ushered to our seats by a disgruntled Foreword signed John B. Wilson, which is Anthony Burgess's real name. Mr Wilson tells us what may be deliberate untruths about the random way in which the three main parts of the text have come to be presented as one book, and in doing so does rather remind one of various similar figures in the oeuvre of Vladimir Nabokov, as they introduce or Afterword *Lolita* (1955) or *Pale Fire* (1962) or the Penguin version of *Ada* (1970). If Mr Wilson's joke pedantries seem less telling than Nabokov's, then likewise perhaps the show he's fronting.

Least extensive and least effective of the three narrations is the musical comedy rendering of Trotsky's sojourn in New York during World War One; Trotsky as George M. Cohan may strut back and forth across the stage with exuberance, and he and his fellow performers may be provided with some neat facile trumpery Broadway lyrics, but the novelty of the skew on revolutionary socialism as it confronts the New World soon exhausts itself, and there is altogether far too much of it. As a prevision of Weimar estrangement tactics it is toothless and *sudsy;* as the text of an actual musical it is underplotted; as an actual critique of Leon Trotsky, his behaviour and his thought, it is otiose.

Much longer, and far more effective, the "televisualized" flashbacks of Sigmund Freud as he flees Vienna before World War Two are intensely vivid, extremely sympathetic, fair-minded, moving, illuminating. Not a word is wasted. Those familiar with Freud's life will recognize most—perhaps all—of the episodes and dreams and insights deployed, the gradual shaping of the dream theory, the arrival at Oedipus in the phosphorescent caverns of the night, the long family romance pitting master against disciple-sons and centering on a devastating portrait of the prurient and loathsome mystagogue Carl Jung, and finally the long intimate engagement to and terminal marriage with cancer of the mouth. Superbly elided and compressed, the narrative throbs with a peculiarly subcutaneous energy—it gets below the skin, one finds oneself *dreaming* it, as though it were limned on that inner diorama Freud did—afer all—savagely explicate.

But that's the best of it. The longest and most slovenly composed section of *The End of the World News* recasts—but in no telling way manages to re-examine—the ancient sf convention regarding the end of the world in which another planet collides with Earth while a few prescient scientists take off in a spaceship at the eleventh hour to re-establish humanity elsewhere. Though there are earlier partial versions of it, the paradigm source for this convention is probably *When Worlds Collide* (1933) by Philip Wylie and Edwin Balmer. As a convention it is of course dead, unless transfigured. Mr Burgess is not only dismayingly contemptuous of this dead doornail, but seems (at least momentarily) incapable of any redemptive bringing to light of the apocalyptic resonances we all know it fails to cope with, so that he ends up uttering his narrative as a sequence of flaccid sarcasms. So we are given the eccentric scientist and his beautiful daughter; we are given

the failure of boondock fundamentalism to cope with the real Revelations; we are given riots in the streets of New York and sybaritic Weltschmerz above them; we are given the psychopathic martinet who, once in charge of the spaceship, immediately makes plans to become God; we are given the identikit crew of hangers-on to the plot, some of whom get aboard the Narrenschiff, some of whom don't, and the noblest and most Falstaffian of whom returns to ground to die with his planet. And sarcasms aside, the tale is told in a shambling parody of the style Mr Burgess uses when, as in *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), he attempts to signalize a new and/or deranged world/word system through neologisms, borrowings from other tongues, syntactic reformations, cannonings of borborygmatous onomatopoeia, and so forth. The Doornail is dead. Long live the Doornail.

Finally, wagging the whole patchwork cur as it turns out, we come to a short Epilogue, set on the starship some generations after take-off. For those born in space, the tale of our planet and its ramshackle end makes no more sense that do two telefilms donated long ago to the starship's archives by the Falstaff figure, presumably because he had played minor roles in both of them. These films are of course a musical about Trotsky and a life of Freud. No longer do they mean a thing. The book closes on vacuum.

So *The End of the World News* is truly a jape. Structure and meaning alike snap their teeth shut on nothing. Harlequin Trotsky and Pierrot Freud dissolve, the embarassed con-man Wilson dissolves, and Mr Burgess himself dissolves, with a rude gesture. It was fun, some of it, while it lasted, partly. But there is something sour here, as though the main joke were on *us,* for having read the book at all. I wonder. What do *you* think, JG? I mean, doesn't the book seem to grin at us like a Cheshire Cat out of that interstellar void it ends in? I mean, isn't it something of a booby-trap, this self-destructing charade so carelessly baited for us by Mr Burgess? Do you possibly think we could have been bamboozled, JG?

Mickelsson's Ghosts
by John Gardner *(Alfred A. Knopf, 1982, 590 pp, $16.95)*

reviewed by Donald M. Hassler

The American academic writer and novelist, John Gardner, as opposed to the British writer of spy thrillers, died in a motorcycle accident near his beloved upstate New York Appalachian Mountains within half a year of the death of Philip K. Dick. Angel Archer would surely comment on the death of such good men. Furthermore, each writer in an uncanny way published in the year of his premature death a new novel; and both novels seem to embody the essence of their makers. *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer,* Angel's book, is a fascinating mix of the crap artist and the philosopher that Dick mastered so well and that made him loved around the world. *Mickelsson's Ghosts* is a heavier, yet wonderful, book just as Gardner was a very heavy writer.

One may wonder why Gardner should be reviewed in *Foundation* since he never actually embraced the genre of fantasy and science fiction but tried, always, as so many American writers do, to work in the uncomfortable position of having one foot in the University and the other planted firmly in the best New York publishing houses. In his introduction to the annual collection published by Houghton Mifflin entitled *The Best American Short Stories 1982,* he even says that he tried to find a science fiction story to

include but could find none good enough. Stephen King catches the tone of the man when he writes in the Afterword to *Different Seasons,* "John Gardner (writes) obscure books for bright academics who eat macrobiotic foods and drive old Saabs" (p. 521). Gardner always was a bit heavy. He published epic verse narratives and much scholarly work (he was a medievalist and so his well-known *Grendel* was well researched) in addition to his contemporary fiction. And yet Gardner fought for the good and the meaningful in literature, not only in his controversial *On Moral Fiction* but also in the stories he told; and the meaningful for him was often tied to the fantastic. His fictions are firmly in the tradition of healing the rift between spirit and experience that western civilization endured with the brilliance of the Enlightenment. As philosophers for our time who use fantasy, Dick and Gardner were not unalike.

Peter Mickelsson, the highly gifted middle-aged American academic philosopher whose agonized intellectual and emotional life Gardner lays out for us in this long narrative, endures as he says "the cynical, long-suffering age Nietzsche had foretold" (p. 339). Yet he insists that "all the sophistication in the world could not rid the soul of its primal faith in magic" (p. 475). Gardner bridges those vast distances, and thus his novel is both academic novel and fabulation, both mundane and fantasy. The polarity is nicely represented by Nietzsche at one end and Martin Luther at the other. Mickelsson knows both thinkers by virtue of his profession and, more importantly, by virtue of a rich and ghostly personal history going back to Lutheran middle America. The common grounds where the poles interact and where the novel comes alive are madness and ghosts. Pete Mickelsson, Nietzsche, Luther were all haunted men; and Gardner makes it clear that the haunting is not just the sense of one's intellectual precursors. Luther was visited often by the devil at night, and Mickelsson who spends much of his time alone as he tries to put his crumbling personal and professional life back together comes finally to accept fully something we might call parapsychological phenomena. Gardner tells a mundane story and sticks it right to our sophisticated sensibilities.

A friend and colleague, an O'Casey scholar (would it were Yeats), tells me that Gardner loses control at the end of this book and that neither the reader nor the writer can be sure who is mad. That may be, and the book does develop in a strange way from text to context as Gardner labours nobly to address major epistemological dilemmas of our time. Mickelsson himself is out of phase as a modern philosopher as he does not do language analysis nor rest easy with the limited goals of a pragmatic scientism. He is a big man who wants it all, and he ends up seeing ghosts. But we may just need at this time more incursions of madness and of ghosts into fiction of all types. Phil Dick made his contribution, and even Arthur C. Clarke's latest extrapolation contains a plausible ghost. Gardner's earliest fiction, *Nickel Mountain,* written while he was an undergraduate but not published in novel form till 1973, also presents magical apparitions. "The room was suddenly filled with ghosts, not only Simon, but Henry's father, huge as a mountain . . ." (p. 256). This final Gardner novel closes with a similar magical scene. He should have lived to people this barren world more.

The Feminine Eye: Science Fiction and the Women Who Write It
edited by Tom Staicar *(Frederick Ungar, 1982, 168 pp, $11.95 cloth, $6.95 paper)*

reviewed by Sarah Lefanu

The critics in this anthology are united in their desire to prove that feminism can only limit one's perception of the world. The women, perhaps more chary of appearing anti-feminist than the men, are anxious not to exlude feminism altogether from their chosen writers' work, but praise their subjects for a wider and deeper understanding than mere feminism allows. Mary T. Brizzi informs us that C.J. Cherryh offers a "more profound, but still feminist, statement about the creative androgyny of the human spirit", while Marleen Barr states that Suzy McKee Charnas' *The Vampire Tapestry* "moves beyond, but does not exclude, feminism". Edgar L. Chapman has no such qualms. In his essay on Suzette Hadin Elgin he informs us that "Elgin's work would be different if it were the fiction of a more overtly engaged feminist . . . less rewarding". He is keen on Elgin because in her anti-hero Coyote Jones she has created a "credible male character with whom men can identify". O lucky men!

The woolly humanism that these critics hold so dear is then forcibly laid upon their subjects' work, whether the writers actually share it with their critics or not. Thus Rosemarie Arbur encourages us to read Leigh Brackett for the "sense of wonder" she creates and Andre Norton is praised by Roger C. Schlobin for her "reverence for the self". Schlobin is positively impenetrable; he goes on to tell us that Norton is "more than just an author", but won't let on what she is. It is as if these critics are deeply insecure about the value of what they're writing about. In their determination to prove that science fiction is worthy of their critical efforts they light upon a suitably serious theme then set about expounding it in a suitably serious style.

The earnestness with which they do this serves only to highlight the intellectual bankruptcy of their approach. One need read no further than the title of Susan M. Shwartz's essay, "Marion Zimmer Bradley's Ethic of Freedom" to predict what will be said on the theme of choice and the prices to be paid in exercising it. The meaning of Bradley's none too complex aphorism, "You cannot take hawks without climbing cliffs" is spelt out for the dim-witted reader word by word. Carl Yoke is more ambitious . In his essay on Joan D. Vinge, "From Alienation to Personal Triumph", he traces alienation as "a literary form" all the way back to Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground.*

With their writers sanitized against the taint of political dogmatism and set up as moralists concerned with the preoccupations of the 20th-century psyche, freedom, selfhood and alienation (a run through the contents list tells you all you need to know), our critics now feel free to bring the full weight of their PhDs in EngLit, MedLit and Psychology to bear upon these suitable cases for treatment. The speculative tradition of lit crit affords many opportunities for the display of erudition. Carl Yoke is the most accomplished in this field, and is helped in his task by the concept of alienation having exercised so many minds before his. Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Camus and Sartre are paraded before the reader, but he reserves his favour for Erich Fromm. Lack of evidence in Vinge's works does not constrain him. "Though there is no evidence that Vinge has consciously based her characters on Fromm's psychology, the fact is that they closely parallel his thinking". Yoke is obviously a well-read man, and his interests are not

confined to the 19th and 20th centuries. With society divided into Summers and Winters, and a plot that pivots round death, rebirth and sacrifice, one could not hope to escape a lecture on Grail Symbolism in *The Snow Queen*.

Grail Symbolism crops up too in Mary T. Brizzi on C.J. Cherryh. Her speculations are less pretentious, but nonetheless annoying. She offers a gloss on the names of Cherryh's characters, saying that one name might imply such and such and another might imply something else. Again, it tells us more about the critic's preoccupations than the author's. At least Brizzi offers a fairly detailed account of the works of C.J. Cherryh. Her essay and Adam J. Frisch's on James Tiptree Jr are the most interesting in this anthology in that they attempt to offer an appraisal of the writers' work, although Frisch's textual analysis is hampered by his lumbering academic prose.

The result of this anthology is that none of the writers under scrutiny is done real justice. So anxious are their critics to make them into both serious moralists and fine literary writers that the qualities they do have are lost in the banality of the critics' own moral codes. The political vigour which informs the writing of Charnas, Tiptree and, to a certain extent, Vinge is denied; one gets the impression there is very little to choose between these different women writers. The determination to show that they are all concerned with the human predicament precludes any refreshing breath of real criticism. Instead we are fed a stream of mystifying waffle, well exemplified by Yoke's summing up of Joan D. Vinge: "We transcend our alienation by communicating fully with one another". Vinge deserves better than that.

Terminal Visions: The Literature of Last Things
by W. Warren Wagar *(Indiana University Press, 1982, xiii + 241 pp, $24.50; £14.70 in UK)*

reviewed by Gary K. Wolfe

Apocalypse has always been the last ditch of liberalism, and I suspect that a healthy dose of millenial thinking is one of the great guilty pleasures of many of us who have not quite given up on the reparability of the world, a way of saying to ourselves, "You'll miss me when I'm gone." Nuclear war teach-ins are once again a common sight on American college campuses, and they inevitably feature clinically detailed slide lectures on the pathology of holocausts; Jonathan Schell's recent bestseller, *The Fate of the Earth,* is equally detailed; and still more recently Otto Friedrich's *The End of the World: A History* satisfies an apparent need for a good popular history of massive world-ending catastrophes, from the sack of Rome to the potential implied by the missile silos in North Dakota. Later this year will bring Eric S. Rabkin and Martin H. Greenberg's *World's End: The Imagination of Catastrophe,* in which a whole gaggle of science fiction critics get a crack at anatomizing prophecies of doom (that book, by the way, will include some material from *Terminal Visions).*

Warren Wagar, too, thinks our culture is on the ropes – "we do indeed live in an endtime", he makes clear in his "Personal Preface" to *Terminal Visions*—and his contribution to the documentation of its decline is an unusual mixture of intellectual history and science fiction scholarship: a kind of fictional historiography. Like Norman Cohn in his classic study *The Pursuit of the Millenium,* Wagar seeks to trace the cultural meanings of apocalyptic thought; like David Ketterer in *New Worlds for Old,* he uses speculative

literature as his primary evidence. Wagar is only marginally interested in being a science fiction critic. "Every fiction is a work of thought, as well as art," he writes, "and the first aspect is just as legitimate a target for scholarly investigation as the second". The faint tone of defensiveness in this assertion may arise from Wagar's being an historian in a field largely dominated by fans and literary scholars, but his point is well taken; surely there is more to speculative literature than just literature.

Terminal Visions is arranged in five sections, the first two of which provide a general historical and archetypal background for the visions discussed in parts three and four, which are the core of the work. In an early chapter entitled "A Short History of Doomsday", Wagar seeks to establish a principle on which much of his argument for the remainder of the book rests: that the Romantic era brought with it a secularization of eschatological thought, leading eventually (in 1914, to be precise) to a shift in eschatological thinking from predominantly natural catastrophes to predominantly man-made ones. His discussion of the role of Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe in signaling this shift is persuasive and impressive, as is the manner in which he traces a path through the Romantic appropriation of Christian hope without once mentioning Blake. Indeed, if anything Wagar understates the pre-eminence of last things in Romantic thought, and though he pays some homage to Byron and Thomas Hood, much of the more lugubrious doomsaying of this era is overlooked or glossed over—Schlegel, Chateaubriand, Campbell, Beddoes, Mangan, and many others might serve to support and strengthen Wagar's argument. (One scholar even suggested that Iceland be converted to a giant museum to preserve European culture after the fall.)

But in fairness, Wagar's primary concern is not the history of Romantic apocalypse so much as the etiology of present fears and hopes (which begin more and more to look like the same thing). After briefly outlining some archetypal models of cyclical and linear history, and arguing that the linear model has become dominant in Western thought, Wagar hits full stride with two sections that outline the kinds of apocalyptic fear and the world views represented by various terminal visions. Occupying more than half the book, these two sections are invaluable to anyone interested in the intellectual history represented by speculative fiction. In "The Etiology of Doomsaying", Wagar identifies three levels of fear that inform apocalyptic visions: the personal fear that has its origins in the child's separation anxiety, the dread of nature and what it can do, and the more modern fear of what humanity can do to itself and its environment. The first of these might characterize any of the "radically immanentized" eschatologies of the sort Kermode discusses in his *The Sense of an Ending;* Wagar's prime example from speculative literature is J.G. Ballard. The second level of fear, fear of nature, expresses itself in three kinds of natural disaster narratives: the "entropic romance" such as William Hope Hodgson's *The Night Land* (which Wagar seems to like better than anyone else I know), the tale of near-future cataclysm such as almost any novel by John Christopher, and the tale of threatening non-human life-forms such as Wells's *The War of the Worlds.* The third kind of fear—of ourselves and what we might do—gives rise to various fictions of bad conscience, from tales of terrorism and revolution to mad scientist stories, ecological cautionary tales, and future war scenarios.

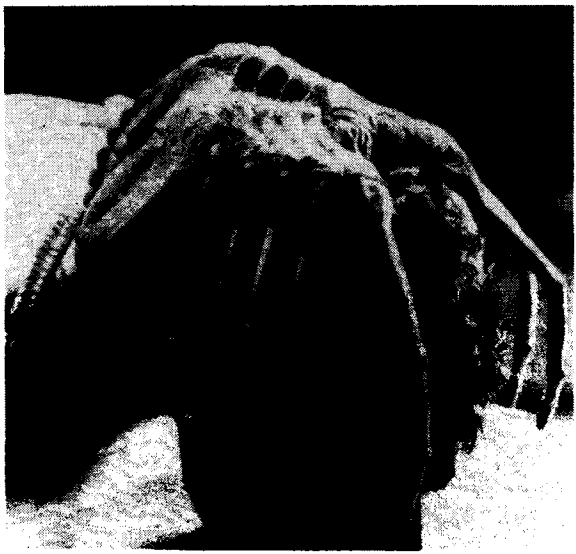
Wagar's own earlier volume, *World Views: A Study in Comparative History,* provides the basis for his next major argument: that each terminal vision is a coded argument for a particular *weltanschauung.* He identifies three such world views in the fiction he

discusses: the Romantic, which sees the world as a reflection of mind; the positivist, which sees mind as a product of the world; and the "irrationalist", which just isn't very interested. Wagar is aware that this latter category covers a variety of sins, and he doesn't seem quite as comfortable discussing these fictions as he does those of other world views. Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* is easy enough, but Delany's *Dhalgren,* which is surely a more thoughtful exploration of this world view, gets dismissed as "interminable", Wagar also seems to confuse mysticism and spiritualism in this chapter, conflating Flammarion, Doyle, Stapledon, and Huxley under the former heading.

Wagar's final chapters restate his earlier thesis that all this terminal fictionalizing indicates "a growing consciousness within modern Western culture that its end is in view and that a new, higher, or radically different civilization and public order will replace it during the next century". I am not sure that this is news, since it seems that nearly all fiction of the future, apocalyptic or not, is based on such assumptions. I suspect there is more to the peculiar appeal of terminal visions than Wagar suggests or is willing to admit, although he does address in passing what might be called the pornography of apocalypse, and even invokes de Sade as evidence of the secularization of nature and its implications as to how we might behave.

At the back of *Terminal Visions* is a bibliography of more than three hundred primary sources consulted by Wagar, constituting a valuable if incomplete bibliography for anyone wishing to wallow. A valuable aspect of this bibliography, as of the book in general, is that it calls attention to some intriguing neglected texts by F.W. Moxley, Stephen Southwold, C.-F. Ramuz, and many others. Wagar also pays attention to some writers who are better known, but seldom discussed, such as John Wyndham, John Christopher, and Edmund Cooper. But some of his omissions and dismissals are equally surprising: probably the bestselling apocalyptic novel of recent years, Stephen King's *The Stand,* gets dismissed as a "frankly commercial novel of the Antichrist", which it is not; while Philip Wylie's manic apocalypse-to-end-all-apocalypses *The End of the Dream* does not even make the bibliography. Nor do such works as John Cowper Powys's *Up and Out* or Robert Lewis Taylor's *Adrift in a Boneyard,* both of which might support Wagar's discussion of the irrationalist eschatology; or several nuclear war tales, including Judith Merril's *Shadow on the Hearth,* Theodore Sturgeon's "Thunder and Roses", or Walter van Tilburg Clark's "The Portable Phonograph". Listing omissions is an easy game, of course, and the literature of apocalypse is vast, but these works specifically seem to relate to points Wagar is making.

Science fiction study needs the perspectives of historians as well as of literary scholars, and *Terminal Visions* illustrates that point perhaps better than any recent study. It is in some ways a personal book as Wagar's preface and his passion for *The Night Land* make clear. Its style is unpretentious and clear, its structure governed by a broad perspective of social history that is too often missing from discussions of speculative literature. Concerns of generic "turf", which often get in the way of more purely literary histories, never interfere with Wagar's exploration of a line of thought. *Terminal Visions* does not by any means exhaust the territory it sets out to cover, but it will be an essential work for those who toil in these eschatological vineyards in the future.



Did you know the horrific life-cycle of this creature was based on that of an African parasite?

(from ALIEN)

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The Venetian Court
by Charles L. Harness *(Del Rey Books, 1982, $2.25)*

reviewed by Gregory Feeley

On reading that Ballantine would publish Charles L. Harness' *The Venetian Court* in October 1982, one felt the excitement of an enthusiast: for Charles Harness is the science fiction writer for whom collection of his short work is most egregiously overdue, more so than for Gregory Benford, H.H. Hollis, John Crowley, even Joanna Russ. (For various reasons, *Alyx* does not constitute a story collection.) Word that the weak 1981 *Analog* novella "The Venetian Court" would be the title story did little to abate anticipation that the brilliant "An Ornament to His Profession", "Time Trap", "The Alchemist", and "Child by Chronos" would at last be returned to print. Wishfulness outruns prudence: *The Venetian Court* is in fact a novelization of that unfortunate recent story, expanded to twice its length by every dirty trick in the book, and is as inferior to *Firebird* (1981) as that bad novel was to the flawed *The Catalyst* (1980). The recent end to Harness' famous spareness of output has proved no blessing.

Like all his best fiction, *The Venetian Court* is centered around the practice of patent law, and moves swiftly from a quiet beginning to untenable flamboyance, dealing briskly but with evident assurance with a number of stunning concepts that could no more be taken seriously than can the plots of high opera. Unfortunately most resemblance ends there, for plot exigencies require Harness to posit a series of fantastic conditions as background to his story, and one finds little aesthetic pleasure in a flight into the wild blue that begins in the wild blue. A single example: between 1985 and 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court breaks every patent law that comes before it (a crabbed instance of evidently intended satire, rather like a former canned-goods salesman writing how in the late twentieth century it was the U.S. government's adherence to insanely high standards in commercial canning that brought the fall of civilization). In belated overcompensation, Congress makes all cases of patent infringement subject to the death penalty, without appeal. Questions of constitutionality are raised, but as the story takes place, they are tied up conveniently off-stage.

Thus a case of patent infringement is made a matter of life and death. Did I mention that execution is carried out *immediately* upon conviction, and administered by the judge? All this is necessitated by the last-chapter dramatics Harness plans, and should be accepted as part of an early 21st century America not otherwise greatly different from today's. That's one basic assumption for the story. There are several others just as vivid, all of them necessary to support the shaky platform from which Harness means to launch his flying machine. For an author who used to get away with simply *telling* us his invention was flying, it seems an inexplicable action.

A full bill of indictment would serve no purpose. The novel is poorly written, its occasional humor forced, and the padded chapters all ballast. Also shameful (but not Harness' fault): the novel has not been copy-edited, as readers of page 2 can see for themselves.

All this said, *The Venetian Court* remains a work by Charles L. Harness, and I at least was not seriously tempted to leave it unfinished (at least not the shorter version). Radically deficient by most standards of writing, Harness' work possesses a genuine

artistry, which resides somehow in his ability to manipulate concepts (not just ideas) as a poet would metaphors. A more satisfactory explanation has not yet come from any quarter, and the single value of these last poor chapters may be their amenability to dissection for analysis of Harness' singular procedure.

In the meantime, one may hope that if any publisher brings out another Harness novel in 1983, he will seriously consider following it with a short story collection, or with reprinting *The Rose* or *Flight Into Yesterday*. He would have the market in good Harness fiction to himself.

Letters continued from page 4

Dear David January 1983

Peter Nicholls puts his finger on it when he talks of the bravery in Philip Dick's writing. In this connection your readers may be interested in the following extract from a letter Dick wrote to me on February 24, 1973:

"For years I've been reading and hearing about the 'morbid nightmare hallucinogenic intricate' novels I write, and that's fine, I guess. But I never meant them to be that . . . I have I suppose a strange sense of humor, but I enjoyed writing my novels; I have deeply loved my characters and fought for them as they faced all the weird and heavy stuff that perpetually comes down on their heads, as it does on ours. I admire them. A month ago I was quite ill with double pneumonia, and as I sat propped up in bed week after week trying to breathe, I searched about in my mind for a source of comfort and strength to fall back on. It came to me that my own characters . . . would stand up to this situation with grace and humor and courage, and if they could then so could I. Actually, I did a little fantasy trip in my head and pretended to myself that I was Leo Bulero and other admirable persons like that. And, really, it did get me through. How could I not rise to what I had to confront, and still go on writing? I sort of owed it to them, my characters, if you see what I mean. Otherwise it would be like a big fat guy writing books on how to diet. I'm sure you understand."

Angus Taylor *Victoria, British Columbia*

Dear David January 1983

Brian Stableford's comments on *The Men From Ariel,* by Donald A. Wollheim strike me as being both perceptive and fair, and I cannot blame him for overlooking an error in one of the introductions, because I wouldn't expect him to be aware of it. However, it is an error which I feel should be corrected because I am involved in it.

On page 50, the author writes, in re "The Horror Out of Lovecraft": "I do not recall that this was ever published anywhere." Not so: the story's appearance in this volume constitutes its third publication.

It was first seen by members of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association in the Summer 1944 issue of *Agenbite of Inwit*. Strictly speaking, that might not have amounted to

publication under the old copyright laws, because the contents of the FAPA mailings (I have been told by those who claim authority on the subject) were essentially private communications to the membership. They were not available to the public at large and there was no price on them. However, I'll admit that the point is moot and that that might have actually amounted to first publication.

The second appearance, however, is beyond controversy. The story ran in the May 1969 issue of *Magazine of Horror* (Volume 5, Number 2, whole number 27) and was copyright 1969 by Health Knowledge, Inc. A check in payment for it went to the author shortly after publication.

I know about those appearances because I was the editor of both publications.

Robert A. W. Lowndes *Hoboken, New Jersey*

Dear David January 1983

David Wingrove's piece on Philip K. Dick in *Foundation* 26 is most admirable. I only wish he had used the phrase "the Yin world" with more caution or qualification. He seems to accept as standard Phil's peculiar usage of the phrase in certain books, where it means what "the tomb world" meant in Phil's earlier vocabulary. But I think Phil knew that the equation of yin with evil is a profound perversion.

In taoist thought, of course, the negative is not inferior to the positive, and yin is not "bad" while yang is "good". Yin is, however, dark, wet, low, passive, soft, etc.—all qualities that Western/technological civilisation neglects or contemns in favor of the yang qualities bright, dry, high, aggressive, hard, etc; yin is also, and this may be the important point, female.

There was a while, after *Ubik* and through *The Divine Invasion,* that—under St Paul's influence?—Phil seemed to deny and fight against the feminine in his spirit and in his work. During this period he wrote an anti-abortion short story so grossly and uncharacteristically unjust and hateful as to cause a good deal of pain to some of his admirers. In the same period he wrote that he had discovered the *I Ching*—which is at the very heart of *The Man in the High Castle* and other books—to be totally evil and destructive. This was the period when he was, pretty literally, wrestling with his angel. Small wonder if he was off balance. But I think he *was* off balance. I would disagree that he held to the cosmogonic myth of *Valis* (quoted at the top of page 34 of the article) throughout his life. I don't think this breaking of the taoist whole into a christian dualism of light/god/superior against dark/evil/inferior was a major element in his thought until late in his life; and then not at the end.

The reappearance of yin, and with it of the taoist wholeness, in his last book and his first woman narrator—the dark Angel of *Timothy Archer*—is to my mind a rebirth in the spirit on a new turn of the spiral/helix/caduceus, a revalidation of his pre-visionary works, and a coming back together of the yin and yang of Phil's own way, on the threshold of death, and across it.

Ursula Le Guin *Portland, Oregon*

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This journal was typeset and printed by Allanwood Press Ltd., Stanningley, Pudsey. It is published three times a year – in February, June and October – by North East London Polytechnic on behalf of the Science Fiction Foundation.

Subsidized by the Arts Council of Great Britain

ISSN 0306-4964

The Science Fiction Foundation and North East London Polytechnic

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