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THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

IN THIS SPECIAL 1984 ISSUE

BRITISH SF AS SEEN FROM ABROAD BY
K.V. Bailey, Gregory Benford, Cy Chauvin,
Vladimir Gopman, Péter Kuczka, Josef Nesvadba,
Franz Rottensteiner and Koichi Yamano

Ian Watson on SF, Politics and Horticulture

Letters from Gunn, Moorcock, Silbersack and others

Reviews by Bishop, Brigg, Clute, Dean, Feeley,
Greenland, Hassler, Jakubowski, Lake, Pratt, Pringle,
Stableford, Turner, Watson and Wilder
of books by J.G. Ballard, Anthony Burgess,
Orson Scott Card, Philip José Farmer, Frank Herbert,
Stanislaw Lem, George R.R. Martin, Julian May,
Joanna Russ, Pamela Sargent, Robert Sheckley,
D.M. Thomas and others

FOUNDATION

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

Editor: David Pringle
Features Editor: Ian Watson
Reviews Editor: John Clute

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Editorial

Welcome to our special issue on British science fiction as seen by "non-resident aliens." As Ian Watson said in *Foundation* 28, the purpose of the present issue is "to celebrate (if that's the right word) the arrival of that quintessentially dystopian year 1984." We hope to produce another special issue before the year is out, on Science Fiction and Socialism. That issue, which will probably be number 32 (November), should also contain contributions by a number of foreign critics, and in particular by residents of non-English-speaking countries. Although it is edited and published in Britain we like to think that *Foundation* is a journal with an international flavour. We have run articles on sf in France, the Soviet Union, Japan, Hungary, and the People's Republic of China—all since January 1980—and we shall remain open to similar contributions from anywhere in the world. Science fiction is not an Anglo-American preserve, even if that seemed to be the case once upon a time, and we feel that *Foundation* should reflect the genuine and growing internationalism of sf. If you are one of our overseas readers, and if you have something to contribute on any aspect of science fiction in your country (or language area), please contact our Features Editor via the address on the inside front cover.

This brings me on to the subject of "World SF", an organization set up in 1978 "to afford a means of communication among all persons and institutions with a professional interest in science fiction, throughout the world." World SF is not a readers' organization, as such, but it is open to everyone with a more-or-less "professional" affiliation to the science-fiction field—not only writers and academics, but artists and film directors, editors and publishers, booksellers and librarians, literary agents and translators, and so on. There are now some 500 members of World SF, and the organization publishes a useful directory of the names and addresses and professional interests of the membership. It also publishes a newsletter and is about to launch a World SF journal (to be edited from Singapore by Dr Kirpal Singh). Many countries have a national secretary who may be approached for details of membership rates, but if you are uncertain as to who you should contact enquiries may be addressed to: Gerald Bishop, World SF, 2 Cowper Road, Cambridge CB1 3SN, England (the British membership is presently £7 per annum). The current President of World SF is Brian Aldiss, and the immediate past-President is Frederik Pohl.

This summer, North East London Polytechnic and the Science Fiction Foundation will act as hosts to an international academic conference on sf. Entitled "1984: Now or Never?", it is one of two linked transatlantic conferences (the other, "1984: Manifested Destinies"—the 6th J. Lloyd Eaton Conference—will be held at the University of California, Riverside, on 14th-15th April). The British conference will take place on 2nd-5th July, in London, and it "will seek to examine the full range of implications of 1984, past, present and future. British and other European speculation on the future is often thought to be distinct from its American counterpart in its search for transcendence or apocalypse—the myth of vertical displacement . . . This conference will consider the many possibilities between 1984 and 2001—for example, science fiction and the scientific context; futurology and sf imagery; Orwell and the dystopian tradition; European and

American sf compared." Anyone who wishes to have further details of fees, etc., should contact Colin Mably, SEH Short Course Unit, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, RM8 2AS (tel. 01-599-3100).

This issue of *Foundation* contains an essay on the writings of J.G. Ballard, as well as a review by Michael Bishop of Ballard's most recent short-story collection, *Myths of the Near Future*. May I take this opportunity to update readers on a piece of news which I included in the Editorial of *Foundation* 24, two years ago? On that occasion I mentioned that I had compiled *J.G. Ballard:A Primary and Secondary Bibliography* for G.K. Hall and Company of Boston, and that it was forthcoming in late 1982. Of course, it was over-sanguine of me to name that date. Recently, I received confirmation that the volume will be published in July 1984 (at long last!). It will be a hardcover book of more than 200 pages. I believe that a similarly detailed bibliography of the *other* leading British sf writer, Brian Aldiss, is forthcoming from the same publisher (it has been compiled by his wife, Margaret Aldiss).

Another book pertaining to J.G. Ballard is to appear imminently: this is a special, large-format, copiously illustrated issue of *Re/Search,* an American avant-garde publication which has already done a similar "special" on William Burroughs and Brion Gysin. It will contain fiction and non-fiction by Ballard (including the piece entitled "From Shanghai to Shepperton" which appeared in *Foundation* 24) as well as lengthy interviews with the author and critical essays by other hands. For further details American readers should contact *Re/Search,* 20 Romolo, Apt. B, San Francisco, CA 94133. British and European readers who have a particularly strong interest in Ballard's work and who wish to know more about the above publications are welcome to write to me at 124 Osborne Road, Brighton, BN1 6LU, England (please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope, or international reply coupon).

David Pringle, February 1984

It is with regret that we have had to raise the subscription rate for *Foundation* with effect from this issue. As you will see from the information given on the inside front cover, the standard British subscription rate has risen from £6 to £7. For subscribers overseas it rises to £7.50. This journal is expensive to produce and to mail—if we were able to sell many more copies, the unit price would be lower—and our typesetting and printing costs rise every spring, a rise which we must pass on, from time to time, to the reader. None of the contributors to *Foundation,* and its editorial team, make any money from the journal: production costs absorb all.

A few mitigating points: because the pound sterling has fallen in value against the US dollar, we are able to hold our American subscription rates steady at $14 sea mail, $19 air mail. Also, we have decided to offer a discount to *bona fide* students: such readers may subscribe at the old rate—£1 or $2 less than the standard—if they provide proof of their student status. In addition, we make the following offer: for the remainder of this year (1984) any subscriber, new or old, may buy any three available back-issues of the journal for the price of two (£4.80). After 1st January 1985 this offer will be extended to *new* subscribers only. At the moment we still have good stocks of issue 16 (May 1979) through to issue 29 (November 1983). If you have missed any of them, buy now!

It is three years since Gregory Benford unwound his autobiographical "String of Days" in Foundation 21. *In his role as physicist Mr Benford has sojourned on British soil more than once, so he knows the landscape (and has kept his ear to the ground for British background to his sf books), while as sf author he also knows the figures in the landscape. Now, from California, pointing his X-ray telescope through the camber of the Earth, he analyses the plasma jets and other creative emissions from the British Isles. Mr Benford's own most recent novel, this January from Simon and Schuster, is* Across the Sea of Suns.

In the Wave's Wake

GREGORY BENFORD

To refurbish a cliché, British and American sf are two promontories of the genre divided by a common language.

When I think of British sf, two literary facets seem to best typify its differences from the US brand. One is landscape. As Joseph Nicholas remarked to me, the authors of, say, *Greybeard, The Twilight of Briareus, A Dream of Wessex,* and *Pavane* use physical background as a primary component. Sometimes this seems to lend the landscape an active role in determining events. Keith Roberts especially likes characters who are overwhelmed by their surroundings, relatively powerless against forces of both history and environment. Generating a real sense of time and place gives British sf a heavy novelistic "feel", a sensation we all got from Dickens' London fog, Hardy's Wessex heath and the Brontes' moors.

This parallels its frequent technophobia; technological change often transforms the land. In the US, much of the country was transformed by technological change within the lifetimes of its natives, bringing to its sf a conviction that the landscape is malleable. We here have made the land, and though we of course have our regional sf novelists (Simak, Bryant), it is a bit less holy and forceful for us. Perhaps it is appropriate that the highest density of sf authors is in southern California, the product of vast water projects.

British sf's second major literary facet is an abiding concern for character. I'm more likely to remember the figures in British sf. I particularly find Bob Shaw's people quirky and interesting. However, this sometimes robs novels of the strangeness which is central to sf, and gives UK sf a flavour of domesticated kitchen-cosiness. UK critics often assume that higher standards in sf entail greater fidelity to the bourgeois novel of character, without wondering whether such concerns might undermine what sf can achieve. Portraying figures in a radically altered future is more difficult than, say, getting into the mind of a Joycean Dubliner. Making such people "real" can lessen the *outré* effects an author may be striving for. It also avoids a deeper question—how much of what we "know" about character is simply conventional wisdom of the moment, and when should the author try to destroy such assumptions before proceeding? By bringing science as a major driving force into narrative, we inevitably create fresh tensions between content and form, character and ground. To me, British sf sometimes dodges these

problems. One of the real accomplishments of the New Wave was to raise these issues, but the lesson must be re-learned by every generation.

It was fitting that the *Hitchhiker's Guide* series came from Britain. It pokes fun at sf clichés, avoiding the unsettling strangeness which is central to sf. Better to laugh, though, than simply ignore the implicit sf message—that cosy humanism is not the only legitimate viewpoint.

Class and Critics

I've always found the class structure of Britain fascinating, as my novel *Timescape* made obvious. Its operation in the sf world is murky to outsiders, but appears powerful. Perhaps, as is true of academic politics, the competition is fierce precisely because the spoils are so meagre. UK critics often assume the US literary world is both cynical (publish or perish) and naïve (politically and socially atomistic)—a familiar we're-Athens-you're-Rome ritual—but in truth I don't see that much difference between the countries.

Among the authors themselves, there is a lot of antagonism between figures of comparable ambition. Certainly something must explain the occasional outbursts of virulence, such as the mugging masquerading as criticism performed in a recent *Foundation* by Robert Meadley on Brian Aldiss. This isn't all to the bad, of course—I find Charles Platt a delightfully venomous critic of the foibles of the field, and his delicious love of gossip appeals to my low nature.

In some British sf there is, to my ear, a preferred class voice—cool, reflective, ironic, uninvolved—which seems an echo of class rituals in the society as a whole. Its drawback is a certain self-consciousness that pervades works of serious intent. Preference for this voice helps along the impression of wan lassitude, conversation in a nasal drawl, and *fin de siècle* poses. Among the writers there appears to be an affected dislike of organizations, too—particularly the hated SFWA, which has more members in Canada than in the UK. The recent ruckus over the Nebula Awards drew the lines well—a certain easygoing American practicality about the inevitable bias in awards, contrasted with a British insistence on high moral standards, striking of dramatic postures, and purity of public appearances.

If the critical game is played in Britain with both daggers and broadswords, nonetheless the outcome is quite pleasing. We have some good academic critics (Scholes, Slusser, Rabkin, Samuelson, etc.) and one outstanding writer-commentator on the field (Budrys), but the British have the best all-round observers. John Clute's convoluted syntax alternately exposes and obscures a penetrating intellect capable of adroit turns of both logic and phrase. Roz Kaveney, operating out of a sensibility which seems the most European and ideological, shows a broad grasp of the field, and the tensions generic to sf. Brian Stableford brings an original synthesis of writerly know-how and sociological insight, though at times I sense that he wishes every book were heavy on the social extrapolation and light on everything else, so he could really dig his teeth in. There is Parrinder and Priest and Watson, coming from different angles, but all with viewpoints educated both in the academic sense and the fan sense. The evolution of British sf appears to be more heavily influenced by criticism than the American, and this may be a good thing.

Breakfast In the Ruins

It has been a decade or so since *New Worlds* died while Charles Platt tried CPR on it, but

the ruins of the New Wave assumptions still cast their long blue shadows.

You'd think, given the absence of translation costs and troubles, that British sf would have a big influence on the American scene. It doesn't, mostly because of the New Wave.

Judy-Lynn Del Rey once remarked that foreign sf doesn't sell well in the USA, and that seems to be an automatic assumption among American editors. They say British sf hasn't sold well in the past, and thus is seldom bought today. ("It's downbeat novels with good characterization," a prominent editor said to me while I was discussing this article.) Meanwhile, American sf writers loom large in Britain—indeed, American sf seems to be widely regarded as the real stuff, with a flavour other countries don't have.

Why? If I had to sum up the last fifteen years, I'd say that the New Wave won in England and lost in the USA. The common rhetoric of that time was that the New Wave represented pessimism and technophobia. This is a shallow game, deciding whether a piece of fiction is "optimistic" or not. Ultimately, writers are judged by rather more interesting standards than whether they wrote Ja oder Nein in the face of life. Instead, it seems to me in retrospect that *passivity* was the fatal hallmark of the New Wave impressed into the minds of American readers.

As a metaphor, entropy seems to please the European imagination better than the American. It often leads to (in McLuhan terms) a cool rather than hot writing style. American readers often complain of a low energy level in British writing. Similarly, hot-style writers like Ellison do less well in the UK. Those New Wave figures who took a more hot tone, stressing angry pessimism—Spinrad is the obvious leader here—seem to have fared well in the years since. Colin Greenland's book on the New Wave shows, for those of us whose memories have faded, how diverse it really was. Overall, though, there seems a general agreement with Aldiss's comment in the sixties that sf should recognize the fallen state of man and the tragic view of life which is essential to all literature. One can agree with this view while still noticing that it is a cul-de-sac, like any other prescription for what literature "must" be.

Is this tenor still present in the UK? Judging from *Interzone,* that notable attempt to revive the dash of British sf, yes. Malcolm Edwards is clearly going to be a major editor in England, and his first short story in *Interzone* No. 4 begins its second paragraph, "Norton felt gripped by a lassitude born of futility, but as on the eight other mornings of this unexpected coda to his existence, fought off the feeling and slid wearily out of bed." The story is a well-done direct descendant of J.G. Ballard's bleak landscapes with so-what figures striking postures before it; this time, CND horrifics take the place of Ballard's assorted implacable disasters.

It is easy to see this as a reaction to Europe's self-inflicted wounds in the first half of the twentieth century. Ballard clearly sings of the death of empire, a kind of reverse Kipling. I suspect this fashionable despair comes in part from the fact that literary intellectuals are a progressively less powerful class. The influence of arts graduates on UK sf is considerable, and probably explains the splitting-away of writers like Bulmer, Brunner and Sheffield, who are more interested in technology. In the fifties, British sf writers often adopted a fake-American voice to get published, but there is a genuine strain in UK sf which is not technophobic and does more nearly match American tastes.

It is best exemplified by Arthur C. Clarke, who is of course regarded as utterly unrepresentative of British sf. Yet he is only atypical of the post-60s phase. His success derives primarily from an older tradition: the dispassionate cosmological view, à la

J.D. Bernal and Olaf Stapledon, with touches of Wells. Whereas American world-figure sf authors represent a time or an attitude which is localized (Heinlein, Bradbury, Asimov, Herbert), Clarke seems to appeal to an international taste, yet has firm roots in British literature.

There is a contrary flavor in British sf, of disconnectedness from experience, as though the future is more approachable through dreaming than through extrapolation of the present. Travel by metaphors, they seem to say, not by the icons of gadgetry, or even science. Ballard preferred to imagine America rather than visit it; facts would get in the way. (Indeed, there is a pervasive inability among Europeans to see American "optimism" as anything more than a peculiar assertion or defiance, little more than naïve bravado, in the face of anxiety.) Moorcock does enormous research for some of his unusual period-piece novels, but none for his sf.

The outstanding legacy of the New Wave in the USA is two-fold: first, an increased literary sophistication used by many of our best writers, from adroit dinosaurs like Fred Pohl to newer, hard-edged people like Joe Haldeman. This is indeed a positive force, often under-rated. I felt the influence of British sf strongly in the early 1970s, when I began to think earnestly about writing.

The second legacy has been a disaster for the British writers who've come along since 1970. They seem to work in the shadow of the New Wave, unable to break through its metaphors, and bearing the weight of publishers' opinion that they are non-commercial writers. They receive less support at home than seems fair, as well. I was astonished at the recent choice of twenty sf books for maximum publicity promotion by the UK Book Marketing Board. While it seems reasonable that the British would push their own authors, to the tune of 40% of the list, three of the eight were dead (none of the Americans were), and no British author who emerged after 1965 was represented. Contrast the Americans on the list, which included Wolfe, Bishop, Cherryh, Donaldson and me. To me this betrays an appalling lack of faith among UK publishers in the "legs" of their own recent worthy authors. Surely a Watson or a Priest novel could have been used. This attitude spells hard times for the newer writers, and may well mean the UK is eating its seed corn.

Riders of the Living Wage

This would be a pity, for if this essay has seemed rather dour, I should end by expressing my great respect for British sf. Considering their numbers, British authors are enormously effective and influential among American authors such as myself.

Perhaps its most underrated figure is Bob Shaw. He has steadily considered a wide range of problems, venturing into both the galaxy and the human soul with genuine intelligence. His *Ground Zero Man* I still remember vividly.

Brian Aldiss is a remarkable man, a sort of UK Fred Pohl,—unashamed of his pulpy origins, wide-ranging in his contacts, an enthusiastic anthologist, an effective advocate in the larger world—though with an innate literary sense more experimental and broad. Some in the USA feared he had gone into decline after the New Wave, but the Helliconia series has been a stunning success here, reviving interest, and proving that Aldiss is capable of great work.

The most madcap, daring major figure to emerge in the last decade or so is Ian Watson. His first book burst upon us, and for a while he seemed bound to repeat the same

themes, but lately he has displayed innovation and developing craft.

John Sladek is American, but in his long residence there he reflects some UK characteristics with his rather dark visions and rich characterization. His delicious humour, though, is the best in the field, and his interest in technology—even to the point of computer-written stories, and the remarkable *Roderick*—mark him as unusual. Similarly, Barrington Bayley has been spinning his clever, idea-heavy tales for a long time without great notice—mostly, I suspect, because they are so simply told. An American counterpart has arisen, Rudy Rucker, who brings more education to the same territory.

Among the newer writers I like Rob Holdstock's earth imagery, Andy Stephenson's promising beginnings, and especially David Langford's *The Space Eater*. Langford has an unusual balance of wit and scientific knowledge that could lead to great things.

So there is ample talent available in England to continue the grand tradition. And the old modes die slowly. John Brunner, the most American-like of the major British authors, continues to produce solid work, while M. John Harrison carries on with technicolor celebrations of entropy. (As a physical idea, entropy is subtle; it plays an important role in cosmology, and its aspects are still being explored. Little of this has penetrated to the literary consciousness, and particularly not to these still enamoured of it in sf. There is still fertile ground there for someone, but it demands some homework.) I expect less a new literary movement in England's future than a gradual evolution away from the postures evoked to deal with the fall of empire. How long this will take is hard to say. Decades, certainly.

British sf is an arena in which European and American attitudes can find expression and meet head on. It can look in both directions, east and west, and may be most important for that central fact. Indeed, Huxley and Orwell may be most important for their work which has this aspect. British sf grows more important as the western cultures come under greater pressure.

There will always be conflict about the aims and methods of Anglo-American sf, which the continental Europeans seem to perceive as the core of the field. But we should remember that the sincerest friend of an idea is its most incisive critic.

Péter Kuczka last appeared in our pages in Foundation 23 *with an essay on science fiction in his native Hungary which he felt that Peter Nicholls'* Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction *had treated in all too abbreviated a fashion, just one part of a quick Eastern European cocktail before dinner on the big meats of other lands. Now Mr Kuczka lets us see how others see us, from the perspective of Budapest. Péter Kuczka is poet and journalist, editor, script and story writer, and a specialist in mass culture, and the theory of sf. Sam Lundwall described his magazine* Galaktika *as one of the three best sf magazines in the world.*

English Science Fiction — From A Distance

PÉTER KUCZKA

First of all I must confess what I used to think of the English in general.

In the 1920s Hungarian criminal argot called a dead body "English" since it was truly cold-blooded.

According to public opinion at that time, all the British were self-confident, cold-blooded, taciturn, and calm.

In my childhood, in a small house of a little Hungarian town I thought just the same. I got my information from *Cinq semaines en ballon* and *Aventures de trois Russes et de trois Anglais,* novels by Jules Verne. I truly believed that those faraway isles were swarming with Doctor Fergusons.

Later at school I also got to know that the history of technology, chemistry, physics and economy is full of British scientists and inventors. Our teacher of religion mentioned the ungodly name of Darwin with curses.

I had to ponder about this. It seemed to me that the British were a practical people, who knew about a lot of things in science and technology. And to work in these fields one needs logic and reason.

The blotches of the world map painted red proved for me that half of the world was part of the British Empire. Evidently they speak English and pay with the esteemed English pounds. But how can this be? How can the British dominate so very many millions of people?

It was Edgar Wallace who had given me reports about their methods. He narrated stories about Sanders, who—with some hussar soldiers and a machine gun—could always establish law and order among black people. Something of the same sort was told me by Kipling, too. And the films! In them a couple of Englishmen fought tens of thousands of Arabs, Negroes, Hindus, Afghans, Malays and who knows what other barbaric nations. It seemed to me evident that the British were brave and valiant fellows.

Then I happened to read *Robinson Crusoe.* It turned out that a single Englishman could create "home sweet home" and later a colony out of an uninhabited island. I did like that very much.

But I never believed, not for a moment, that the British had anything one could call *imagination.*

When I was 17, I decided to be a writer, so I started to read passionately. I read first of all contemporary Hungarian literature, including many translations, as our poets at that time did a lot of translating, often to provide their own foreign masters.

German culture was too near and too aggressive.

Some of the poets, the more passionate ones who demanded social revolution, regarded the French poets from Baudelaire and Rimbaud to Mallarmé, Valéry and Apollinaire as their paragons.

Another group, the "learned poets", had their inspiration from English poetry instead. They translated works by Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Tennyson and Yeats, later by Eliot, Auden, Spender, Muir, de la Mare and others.

It would take too long to tell why and how long I was torn in the attraction of the two opposing trends. In the end I chose for myself French poetry and English prose.

This had another cause as well.

In the loft of our house I had found a funny little book. Lots of generations hoarded unnecessary books, papers and magazines in this loft. For us children this loft was quite a treasurehouse, just like the library of an English country manor in crime stories by Agatha Christie.

This booklet was about an innocent doctor who in his distress invented a magical liquid which he drank and became a monster. Since that time he was either a good fellow or an evil one. I truly devoured this ungodly story.

I was informed only in the end, from the postscript, that the author of that story was an Englishman. So the English still had a vein of imagination?

Since then I have been looking for that special trait in English prose. In Dickens I found *A Christmas Carol,* a real ghost story. Then came Oscar Wilde and de Quincey and Scott and all the others. Frankenstein and Dracula. It turned out that the English constantly see ghosts and nightmares, even if they do not eat opium. But why is this? They must be guilty of many murders, many vicious crimes, if they are haunted by visions like that. Is it possible that each Englishman is similar to Macbeth? And why do they write so many criminal stories? Is criminal delinquency so widespread in that country?

The previous picture of the coldblooded, objective, heroic, brave Englishmen inclined to natural sciences became more or less distorted.

Now I knew for sure they *had* imagination.

Finally I ended up thinking that the English are schizophrenic people. In each of them there is a good Dr Jekyll and an evil Mr Hyde.

Then came World War II and it became evident that the English were brave fellows who could stand the field; they were enduring and hard.

Then, many years later, I spent a short time in England. I could see people there, just like us, perhaps a bit different in clothes, in manners and customs. They live in a kingdom, they drink tea and they eat triangular sandwiches.

And I got to know some Englishmen. Authors, men of letters. For instance Brian W. Aldiss. When talking to him somehow Piranesi's name was mentioned. It turned out that he knew him and liked him, though I believed at that time that very few people knew about this painter. It started my feeling an instant sympathy for Brian. We soon became

friends; at least I think of him as one of my very close friends. He is an Englishman who is not dry, taciturn and who does not keep three paces away. He might be a continental European, if that could count as praise in England.

I do not know whether he is cold-blooded or has met with ghosts. But he has got imagination, that is certain.

I do not wish to try to look like someone who is very well versed in English science fiction. Information gets to us slowly and scantily. Our bookshops sell specialists' books, scientific books and "mainstream" literature. I can easily buy works by James Joyce or Dylan Thomas, but I find it difficult to get hold of novels by Michael Moorcock or works like Orwell's *1984*.

And somehow it looks as if America is closer to us. I had known of Bradbury when I discovered John Wyndham. I could read a novel by Clifford Simak before one by Arthur C. Clarke. Perhaps the American publishers' agents are more dynamic than their British counterparts. They wish to get closer to countries like Poland or Hungary, more than the British seem to.

My personal experience has also proved that.

I often write to publishers and authors, out of sheer necessity. I feel ashamed to ask them for books that are necessary for my editorial work, but I can only get hold of those books here slowly or with great difficulty. I get books sooner from Americans who do not know me than from the British who do.

So my information is very defective. It is true that there are handbooks, lexicons and encyclopaedias on my shelves but those have not been compiled according to my taste and do not reflect my opinion. I can rely on them only for facts.

If I wish to characterize English science fiction, there is only one word that occurs to me.

English science fiction is *sad*.

It is not pessimism but something the French call *tristesse*. It is not an aesthetic category and it is not intended to measure the value of a work. Maybe it is just that I feel this; maybe it is only me who becomes sad when reading English science fiction. Still, there must be something in the works that makes one feel like this.

And this sadness is manifold, it is rich and shaded.

The authors and their heroes look around at the given, real world; they find it dull, unpleasant, and wrong; they wish to change it; they leave it; they escape; they travel into the depths of time and space to find just the same world they had left. At that stage they will return or give up the quest and remain there.

In one of the forerunners of English science fiction, in Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, the protagonists wander about the world, then return to the secluded valley in Abyssinia. And they are not too happy about that.

Or is there a sadder and more bitter novel than *Gulliver's Travels*?

And is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* perhaps a jolly book?

Whether we take old books or new ones, we find that feeling everywhere.

The traveller of *The Time Machine* flies over hundreds of thousands of years to return with memories of death and destruction. And the result of all his toils is just one fading flower.

Bedford and Cavor travel as far as the Moon. The result of their adventure is a terrible

vision of a society of ants, the death of one man and some gold bars.

The Martians invade Earth, devastate everything; it seems they would radically change the human world. Then some bacteria put an end to all that and the old order is regained.

Graham, the "Sleeper", wishes to change things as ruler of the world but he fails and dies in the war in the air. Dr Moreau is killed by his creatures becoming beasts again, while the invisible man is murdered by everyday people behaving like beasts.

This sadness is very curious. It is as if the authors would think always of accepting the necessity of passing away and understanding this necessity. As if they envisioned the end in every human action. As if man and society were eternally unredeemable and unchangable. It seems from these works that all efforts are in vain, there is no help in any time machine, cavorite globe, serum of invisibility, not even in the food of the gods.

These transitions from reality into the realms of fantasy are so remarkable that perhaps Dr Moody could also use them in one of his books. The time traveller makes his journey into the future as if he were dead; Graham sleeps in a coma for hundreds of years; Mr Blettsworthy is properly barely alive on the island of the cannibals; Bedford lives through the experience of death twice, first on the way to the Moon, secondly, when he is left alone in space.

It is as if all these travels suggested that reality could be left only through the gate of death, or through the gate of dreams. And dream is closely related to death.

I have only spoken about some works by H.G. Wells, mainly because I find them typical and characteristic, the almost unattainable masterpieces of English science fiction.

But I could also speak about more modern authors that I have read, followers or opposers of the Wellsian tradition. The sadness, the *tristesse* is present not only in the subjects, the stories, but it is there invisibly, hardly palpably in the words and sentences. The whole of English science fiction is saturated with it; all the novels and short stories get a tinge of "nobility", whether by a conservative author or by someone belonging to the "new wave".

The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury cannot easily be taken for a very gay book. Still, in its final episode even after the destruction of Earth there is the twinkling of some hope: the refugees from Earth start a new life on Mars. Modern English science fiction—as far as I know it—refrains from such endings.

There is that particular sadness in the novels of Ballard, in Moorcock's *Behold the Man,* in *A Clockwork Orange* by Burgess, in *Greybeard,* one of the most beautiful novels by Brian W. Aldiss.

Maybe it is conclusive that I never find English science fiction aggressive. I do not think of trash, but of works to be measured by literary standards. To give you an example, sometimes I feel Philip K. Dick's—otherwise very good—novels too aggressive.

I have been talking about my sentiments concerning English science fiction, and I have found that its basic emotional characteristic is sadness. I have some ideas where this feature comes from, what it is fed upon, but undoubtedly explaining these ideas would take me to very marshy fields when attempting to connect facts of British history and modern British society with stories of science fiction.

I am sure that there is such a connection, but I think it is not the task of a Hungarian author to reveal this. Sometimes I feel that English science fiction mourns something.

The Empire? Mankind? The future? I cannot tell.

(Translated by Péter S. Szabó)

Kenneth Bailey last featured in Foundation 27 *with an essay on "Play and Ritual in Science Fiction". Now resident in Alderney (and author of a poetry collection entitled* Other Worlds, and Alderney, *from Blanchard Books in 1982) he lives on the northernmost of the Channel Islands and the one closest to France, which he claims—convincingly and delightfully—grants him a unique viewpoint on sf affairs in mainland Britain.*

The Sundering Sea: A Mid-Distant View of British SF

K.V. BAILEY

Alien visions of British sf? I am, I suppose, an alien of sorts, in that I have no residence in the United Kingdom, nor can I vote a representative to its Parliament. I can and do vote representatives on to the States of Alderney, and am bound by its laws, some of which are of considerable antiquity and very different from those of the UK. I write, then, as an inhabitant and citizen of Alderney.

So how does British sf look from this Isle de la Manche, this physical fragment of France, so close to the Cotentin that you can see buildings on its cliffs and the lights of its moving cars at night? Different and distinctive, as I hope soon to demonstrate.

Alderney lies, in fact, as close to Cap de la Hague as the Isle of Sheppey does to Southend. Geographically the aspect of Britain from here is a watery blank; psychologically and colloquially, Britain is "the mainland", though this doesn't usually signify a dominant or parent country, but somewhere a little remote, invisible across the Channel's stretch of almost a hundred miles to Southampton Water.

An explanation of why sf in general and British sf in particular may be viewed in special ways from this continental off-shore island requires the filling-in of just a little more background. The Queen of England is here the Duke of Normandy; the "Clameur de Haro"—appeal for equity to the Duke—has still legal force, and is practised. Though the patois is now virtually a fossil language, the street names of St. Anne, the field-names and the names of valleys, springs, capes, bays and satellite islands are mostly Norman-French; e.g. Ile de Raz, La Petite Blaye, Platte Saline, Chemin du Meunier. The "islanders", an ancient Gallic-Celtic breed, are currently those returned from, or descended from those surviving, or not surviving, the 1940 exile and German occupation. To them the island is almost a self-contained planet, aloof from and even somewhat suspicious of Guernsey, from where its weekly supply vessel sets out. The "incomers" or "settlers", now a fairly well-to-do and sophisticated majority, include a strong "ex-colonial" element, some of whom appear to have stronger ties with Australasia, Africa or the Americas than with the "mainland". Oddly enough the two populations are a viable mix, cooperating in a mode

of government more democratic than most systems elsewhere, and forming a community quite different in temper, tempo and ethos from those of the larger Channel Islands, where Alderney is referred to as the "Northern Isle"—a kind of *ultima Thule!*

Living in this unique (and beautiful) environment over the past several years, I have found my perspective-view of British sf changing, not only my view of its contemporary, its *Interzone* face, if you like, but also of its more traditional and historical aspects. Reasons for this lie partly in awareness of a French ambience, and a more easily attained familiarity with French sf. Cherbourg is only 15 minutes away by plane, or a day's pleasant marketing journey by launch or hydrofoil; and back with the cheese, wines etc. comes plunder from shelves well-stocked with everything from *Vingt milles lieues sous les mers* to *Pourquoi J'ai Tué Jules Verne.*

French sf reflects two things not so strongly impinging on British sf—at least not in their characteristic French forms. The first is a history of revolution in which, in varying degrees of uneasy liaison, bourgeois, intellectual and proletarian elements have joined hands against the older orders, which in their turn have identified with a logically-ordered, power-possessed, and uniformly exercised establishment government. Hippolyte Taine, after visiting England half way through Victoria's reign wrote: "Whereas we *suffer* our government, the English *support* theirs." The second pervading influence is that of an academic excellence in the related sciences of anthropology and ethnology. Thus we find a writer such as Christine Renard reflecting both of these influences, contributing to *Planète Socialiste* (an sf collection with really no exact English counterpart), but also writing a novel like *La Nuit des Lumineux,* which is in effect a progressive exploration of the nature and purposes of "parallel universe" aliens finding entry into our world through the medium of music "pour créer des enfants de lumière et de limon" (to bring into being children born of light and of earth's grosser elements.)

The French sf writer's attitude towards aliens is often that of an objective, analytic, yet sympathetic curiosity, as one might expect of the fellow-countrymen of Levy-Bruhl. Just how the "alien" is regarded is an interesting litmus of regional or national temperament. A good way to pick a fight with a man from West Hartlepool is to ask him, as sporting rivals from Tyne or Wear have traditionally done, "Who hung the monkey, then?" (During the Napoleonic wars a live monkey from a wrecked ship is said to have been washed up near the mouth of the Tees—and promptly hanged as a Frenchman.) If the Tees-sider resents the imputation of insular naïveté and xenophobia, he could equally preen himself as being, in some measure, representative of his island race. In Richard Cowper's very English novel *The Twilight of Briareus* (which I shall be looking at in some detail later) the head of an Oxford research foundation is made to say of an alien intelligence: "With our profound subconscious distrust of *any* foreigner, let alone one as foreign as this, we go in deadly fear not only of our *lives,* but of our *souls,* our *selves.*" And it is true that, by and large, the alien in British sf, as viewed from near the coast of the unfortunate monkey's supposed *patrie,* does tend to appear as a degenerate foreigner, or a predatory enemy, or both, whether encountered on this planet or another. This is as true of Wells's Martians as of Stapledon's; of Wyndham's Triffids on Earth as of Barrington Bayley's *Dominus*—on wherever. There are exceptions, of course, such as C.S. Lewis's *Hrossa*—but even here Weston's, and indeed Ransom's, *assumptions* and *expectations* are that they will be Hartlepoolian monkeys of aggressive nature and horrible aspect. (Aliens in American sf, though there are naturally plenty of nasties, tend to be rather

different. Both nasties and friendlies are often created less out of xenophobic feelings than from the backwoods areas of folkdom, or from traditions of the frontier in which sentiments associated with pioneering achievement and with the growth of a nation mingle readily with intimations of guilt. The spectrum thus created is wide enough to contain large elements in the work of such various authors as Bradbury, Heinlein and Le Guin. The Indian, the refugee slave, the cow-rustler, the Confederate, Bigfoot, Pocahontas, the burlesque or circus freak, all have recognizable counterparts in the alien *dramatis personae* of American sf.)

But although I am looking at British sf from a continental verge, it is not the American but the European continent; and a closer look at one or two aliens of French sf will serve my immediate purpose—to throw into relief the alien of British sf. A striking example of the "anthropological" sub-genre (with political undertones) is Bernard Villaret's Wellsian pastiche, "Un Message de la Lune" contained in his volume *Pas d'avenir pour les sapiens*. After the landings of the Apollo astronauts, who were deceived by anticipatory precautions and camouflage staged by the Selenites, into thinking the moon devoid of life, a still-surviving and well cared-for Cavor, with the gift of infection-free longevity, resumes communication with the Earth, only to have his message dismissed as a hoax. Prior to his essential message he gives a closely observed and analytical description of lunar culture; but whereas the Wellsian Cavor's report is somewhat hostile and horrified, this Cavor-redivivus explains that while Wells-Cavor was apparently liquidated, was "struggling . . . at last fighting . . . forced backward into the Unknown", Villaret-Cavor is only quarantined, and thereafter honoured and cherished. He goes on to interpret Selenite customs, scientifically but empathetically, showing how intrigued the Selenites are by their study of terrestrial psychology, as deduced from television images he enables them to receive of the Beatles, of Tarzan, of international Rugby. Finally (and here Villaret introduces his ethical/political motif, using in effect the analogy of Europe's impact on Amerindians, Polynesians and Esquimaux) Cavor paints a fearful picture of what bacterial infection might do to a unique planetary civilization, ending with his plea: "Le Cosmos n'est pas votre propriété! Gardez vous vos microbes et vos bombes atomiques, allez les disperser où vous voudrez, mais pas chez nous! . . . Terriens, go home!" (The universe doesn't belong to you! Keep your germs and your atom bombs for your own use! Go scatter them where you will, but not here on the Moon! Earthmen go home!)

In another story, "Les Orgues d'Omphalos" (The Stone-pipes of Omphalos), the same author uses the "traveller's tale" gambit to narrate how a mission of the S.P.S. (Secours aux Planètes Sous-développées) discovered a sketchily humanoid race which, to escape its predator, spent most of its time in shelly or stony tubes obtained from a marine creature. In this hermit-crab-like seclusion individuals devoted their lives to contemplating the eternal verities. Communication having been established by the mission with these "Lolos", their mentors find that "elles furent toujours confiantes et amicales et ne cesser de s'améliorer" (they were always trusting and friendly and set about continuously to better their condition). Taught how to subdue their predators and how to deploy various technologies, they leave their shells and turn their attention away from the eternal verities towards more practical and acquisitive pursuits. When the mission much later visits Omphalos again, it finds that the Lolos are back in their stony cylinders. Their liberation had produced not only a material superfluity and a gluttonous decadence, but a

loss of identity consequent upon their having turned away from the cultivation of a cosmic consciousness, and on the lack of "l'équilibre de la terreur" which the challenge of the "Kluks", their monstrous scorpion-like predators, had ensured. Traditionalist prophets had taken them back to their old way of life; their culture could not maintain stability, could not fulfil itself without those conditions enforced by the pressure of the Kluks. All of which leads to Toynbeean speculation and theorizing on the part of both the Ancient Mariner narrator and his space-bar victim at a length more common in French than in British sf, where implications philosophical or metaphysical will most usually be embedded in, integrated with, the *action*. Ian Watson's "A Time-Span to Conjure With" and Brian Aldiss's "An Appearance of Life" are two examples which come to mind.

That style of anthropological fantasizing, which may be laced with passages of ethical comment, or shot through with veins of satire, is certainly in a Gallic tradition going back as far as Lafontaine and Rabelais (cf. Rabelais' marvellous population of grotesque mutants which, following the Year of the Medlars, became ancestral to the Giants; or his account of the occupation of the constellatory realms of the Gods by the future sons of Pantagruel.) In their different ways the speculations of de Fontenelle and the wit of Anatole France (in *L'Ile des Pinguins*) are in this tradition. Sf aliens who are its progeny are differently orientated from those of British sf who, whether we are besieged by them on another planet, or they are invading us, assume a threatening mien, and are therefore likely to be regarded less dispassionately. What is to become a motif in British sf and fantasy is apparent in the suspicions, fears and passions of Lilliput. It emerges with such aliens of fantasy as the Platonic elementals breaking through earth's protective screens in Charles Williams's *The Place of the Lion;* in the harder sf of Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (to be considered in detail shortly); there is even a kind of reverse fantasy in C.S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet* in which Earth (Thulcandra) is hemmed in or quarantined by alien *eldila*. Typically "embattled" situations are quite plentiful in British sf, whether set up by the remote big brains of Andromeda (Hoyle), by the looming presence of invasive "Overlords" (Clarke), or by the continuing Martian Sword of Damocles (Wells). Think also of Milton's Satan!

A perspective obtained through the infiltrating influence of French sf is not the only factor affecting such a view of British sf and its aliens. The circumstances of history and geography here combine to reinforce it. When you take off from Alderney Airport to fly to Southampton you pass over cliffs from which beacon fires first signalled the entry of Philip II's Armada into the Channel; before the descent to Southampton you over-fly the assembly area of Operation Overlord; your first landmarks are the white cliffs of Wight, and those emblematic chalk sentinels, the Needles; crossing the Solent, the Tudor Hurst Castle, defensive against the French, lies immediately below; and, snaking away into the green of the New Forest (William of Normandy's creation) is the Beaulieu River, with Buckler's Hard, birthplace of many oaken warships, easily discernible. The splendid chauvinistic lines of John of Gaunt, too apt and melifluous ever to seem hackneyed, find their embodiment here:

> . . . this little world;
> This precious stone set in the silver sea,
> Which serves it in the office of a wall,
> Or as a moat defensive of a house,
> Against the envy of less happier lands;
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England . . .

There is that well-known canard of the London newspaper placard: "Fog in the Channel: Continent isolated." That insular geocentricity of Victorian and Edwardian Britain was reflected, and even now, though the pomp and circumstance have gone, continues to be reflected in its science fiction. It may seem ironic that I thus use the word "insular" of Britain, inhabiting as I do a four-by-two island which invariably thinks of the "mainland" as being "isolated" by fog; but paradoxically it is this very parallel of insularity which enables one to see Britain, and consequentially its sf, in unique focus, sometimes enlarged, as landscapes and histories of Britain and the continent of Europe overlap, sometimes as through a diminishing glass, when consciousness of the nature of islands great and small helps to cut the dimensions and pretensions of the larger one down to size.

Book Two of Wells's *The War of the Worlds* is titled "The Earth Under the Martians". Actually, when you come to read it, what this means is that London has been evacuated, Surrey and Hampstead Heath occupied, and the Martians have even got as far as Foulness and the Essex coast and have sunk a British battleship. Successive invading projectiles from Mars have all landed safely in Woking. This typifies the tone of a certain metropolitan cosiness apparent in British sf, even in its most apocalyptic or far-ranging excursions. C.S. Lewis exhibits it when, after a trip of fifty million miles, the *eldila* having seen him safely back to Thulcandra, Ransom spots an open lighted door: "There were voices from within and they were speaking English. There was a familiar smell. He pushed his way in, regardless of the surprise he was creating, and walked to the bar. 'A pint of bitter, please' said Ransom." When Stapledon's narrator (in *Starmaker*) returns from a very much more distant bourne (what he calls "The Ultimate Cosmos and Eternal Spirit," no less) the Epilogue's first sentence is: "I awoke on the hill. The street lights of our suburb outshone the stars." It is something which in *Life, the Universe and Everything* Douglas Adams parodies rather effectively in recording that two or three days before the demolition of the earth there was a dramatic upsurge in UFO sightings "not only above Lord's Cricket Ground in St. John's Wood, London, but also above Glastonbury in Somerset."

The crack of doom at Lord's is comically sustained, but even in this mad and satirical context the mention of Glastonbury is evocative. The name associatively leads to a strand in the folk literature, mythology, and sf of Britain, which one living in this northernmost of Les Iles Anglo-Normandes cannot but be especially conscious of. Glastonbury is emblematic of that complex of legend and history, Celtic in many of its roots, shared between Britain and Armorica, in which an island, "The Island of Glass", is the place of rest and of the sleep of those who await their time of awakening; and also is an Eden of pastoral tranquility. It is the place where, as Tennyson described it in "The Palace of Art":

> . . . mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son
> In some fair space of sloping greens
> Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
> And watched by weeping queens.

Alderney, geomorphologically a rocky outpost of plutonic Armorica, long ago a forested island, and one still holding steep tree-shrouded stream-drenched valleys, looks to the Atlantic-west in high cliffs on which its dolmen tombs were built, while to the east its sandy and gently curving bays face across turbulent tidal rips the long and hostile coast

of the Presqu'île du Cotentin. It was once that island of the west to which the dead, or their souls, were said to be ferried from ancient Normandy—a practice poignantly glimpsed in Kevin Crossley-Holland's eerie poem "The Eye of the Hurricane". In places with such names as Allées es Fées wraiths of the past still linger; raised beaches and submarine peat, legends of lost sand-buried cities, huts, hoards and derelict mills all tell of landscapes constantly changing through historic and prehistoric times. When sensitized by a constant consciousness of such small-island features and traditions, it is easy to see how feelings, not far below the surface, for the features of that larger "mainland" island may surface in fantasy and sf.

Here I am certainly referring to the Arthurian or Arthurian-like kernels of quest and sacrifice to be found in the fantasies of such writers as Tolkien, T.H. White or Alan Garner, but not only to these. The same motifs are there, variously metamorphosed, in novels of such hybrid provenance as Moorcock's *Fireclown,* Aldiss's *Hothouse,* Lindsay's *Voyage to Arcturus,* to some extent in *2001: A Space Odyssey,* and certainly in some of Clarke's other novels—*Childhood's End* and *The Fountains of Paradise* for example. These in diverse ways are concerned with heroic, transfiguring, or sacrificial action, by which some apotheosis, renewal or redemption takes place. It may involve a death, an apparent death or a sleep, and the elevation of a people, a culture or a symbolic landscape from an imperfect or "fallen" condition to a restored or regenerated condition.

Now that we have touched on truly archetypal themes, I am far from suggesting that these are explored in any exclusive way by British sf. As might be expected such themes crop up in the literatures of planetary pioneering, of social upheaval, of post-catastrophic renaissance, whether these are created in Britain, or in the USA or USSR, whence come respectively the "fallen", but to be quest-redeemed, "Wastes" of Spinrad's *Songs from the Stars,* and the hazardous but challenging "Zone" of the Strugatskys' *Roadside Picnic.* But this woven strand of related motifs is particularly strong in British sf and has much in common with what in Arthurian literature is termed "The Matter of Britain", signifying the epic of a land and a kingdom faced with the facts of transience, and with the question as to whether a decline and a dissolution are remediable. With its roots in Celtic myth and prophecy, the theme is latent in that work which gave the Arthurian cycle classic English form, the *Morte D'Arthur* of Thomas Malory. This was written during the War of the Roses in the period of the decline of the Middle Ages, and, as Elizabeth Jenkins has put it (in *The Mystery of King Arthur*): "The sense of insecurity, that an existing order of society was being destroyed, is echoed in the elegiac tones of Malory's work." Both Spenser and Ben Johnson deployed the theme explicitly in the service of various allegorical purposes. In Shakespeare the concept is implicit in these lines from the earlier cited speech in Richard II:

> This other Eden, demi-paradise,
> This fortress built by Nature for herself
> Against infection and the hand of war . . .
> . . . this dear, dear land,
> Dear for her reputation through the world,
> Is now leas'd out,—I die pronouncing it,—
> Like to a tenement or pelting farm:
> England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
> Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
> Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
> With inky blots, and rotten parchment bonds . . .

There a "Matter of Britain" theme is largely developed through metaphors of landscape and land use. The literature of Britain, and particularly in this specific context British sf, is rich in the metaphors of landscape. There is, for instance, a constant equation of the pastoral and the paradisal. Note how the John of Gaunt picture of England begins on a paradisal note, continues on a note of natural invulnerability, but then crumbles on a note of decay and dissolution. A retreat to or an evocation of an Elysian past is a constant motif in English pastoral. See how it emerges in British sf by looking, as a first example, at Wells's projection, not into the past but into the future, where the Traveller encounters his Thames Valley paradise. It is an idyll under doom of being swallowed into the dark; but when he first experienced its landscape:

> The air was free from gnats, the earth from weeds or fungi; everywhere were fruits and sweet and delightful flowers; brilliant butterflies flew hither and thither . . . I saw no evidence of any contagious diseases during my stay. And I shall have to tell you later that even the processes of putrefaction and decay had been profoundly affected by these changes.

Insula Avilona, indeed! But Wells has his pastoral landscapes more distinctly and more realistically rooted in near contemporary England in some of his later sf. In some cases the pastoral is juxtaposed with the landscape destined to succeed or submerge it.

Thus, in *The Food of the Gods*, the village of Cheasing Eyebright, while made a symbol of the repressive old régime from which the young mutant giant Caddles is about to make his escape, is at the same time painted with more than a touch of nostalgia as a kind of "Sweet Auburn". Though Wells makes trenchant fun of the "over-ripe vicar" and of the squireendom of Lady Wondershoot, the vandalistic modifications of the rural environment made by the burgeoning giant are not recounted altogether sympathetically; and in the final chapter of the book the grim aspect of the fortifications and the clamour of the weapon-shops of the young giants, with whom the future seems to lie, is made to contrast a shade unhappily with the North Downs sylvan landscape in which the iconoclasts' activities are set.

This ambivalence in Wells is present in much of British Utopian/Dystopian literature. Because there is an ambivalence of landscape in my own island I find myself strongly sensitized to it. (Cement works and shell-beaches, heathland and gun-turrets, tern-flight and supersonic booms.) In Wells there is a particularly good example of a "fallen" landscape—and of his own ambivalence—in *The Sleeper Awakes*. It occurs in the chapter "From the Crow's Nest". Here Graham (Atlas and World-owner), the Sleeper from the past, looks out over a Wealden landscape from the eyrie of a wind-vane keeper. He recalls and reconstructs in his imagination the England that he had known, with its hedges, its farm-carts, leafy lanes, rural railways, its market-towns and close-knit inter-communicating country communities. Overlying all this, as it were, is the existing landscape of the future into which the Sleeper has emerged—no hedgerows, vast areas of monoculture, a uniformity of colossal tower-blocks replacing towns, no local nuclei of community, culture or government, and a slave proletariat. Although the Sleeper is awed by the sweep of technological progress ("We were cavemen compared to this") he sees the future symbolized by that landscape as grim and, assuming the role of "hero" in "the Matter of Britain", throws in his lot against the decay of humanity and the diminution of a civilized order and ethos.

That Wellsian chapter provides a vivid example of one English landscape being replaced or submerged by another. Of pastoral giving place to bleakness—but with some

promise of renewal. There are comparable examples of the use of English landscape as metaphor in the fantasies and near-science fiction of Wells's contemporary, Rudyard Kipling, the Sussex Weald being the locale of many of his visions of transience and change. I am thinking particularly of the Wealden episodes of *Puck of Pook's Hill,* where Hob represents the persistence of a human type in the setting of a landscape which undergoes many revolutions occasioned by man's interaction with it. The "ghosts" of the past seem to grow out of those parts of the terrain in which they had played their historic roles, and to merge back into them. "Puck's Song" tells of England's buried trackways; corn fields succeeding marshland; the forests which fed the forges and were processed into ships and weapons; the elements of the land of England so mutated that he calls it Merlin's Isle of Gramarye. Kipling's story "Below the Mill Dam" *(Traffics and Discoveries)* takes this theme further. It embodies microcosmically the history and future of England, and, in rural miniature, explores similar ideas, with a similar degree of ambivalence, to those we have traced in *The Sleeper Awakes.* "They", a story in the same collection, is a strangely beautiful duet for motor-car and landscape, an idyll which is at once the essence of pastoral and the celebration of space-devouring machine.

It may be objected that what I have described is only the setting of "They", and that it is primarily a tale of the supernatural, a fantasy of hidden presences. To some extent this is true; but the story only gains its power, its dynamic, through the emotion built up by the tension, or rather perhaps what appears to be the symbiotic relationship, between landscape and machine in the course of that fabulous and mystifying journey into an Arcadia which proves to be a home of the resurrected and invisible dead—in fact an Avalon.

This manner of gaining dynamic is typical of much of more recent British fantasy and sf in which there is a certain complementarity between the English landscape, as metaphor and emotional power-house, and the story's narrative and ideational content. To illustrate: Richard Cowper's *Corlay* novels have an overt scenario of struggles between good and evil, with "saviour" archetypal characters appearing in a new-middle-ages type post-cataclysmic Britain; but their considerable affective power derives from images of the risen waters, the sunken land, the geographic parable of a fragmented Britain, with its Somersea, Severn Reach, and Quantock and Mendip Islands. (It is an affective power well-appreciated from the view-point of a Channel Island itself the consequence of isostatic play following the melting of ice during what may be only an inter-glacial pause.)

Such knowledge of what happened in the past is described in *A Dream of Kinship* as "buried deep in the consciousness" of every individual from the Sea of Goole to the Blackdown Peninsula; and, though the author depends chiefly on the poetic use of terraqueous imagery for sustaining the tension thus produced, he does at times neatly codify what is at issue, as in the following, in our present context highly relevant, passage:

> For a thousand years the Church had preached that the Drowning was God's punishment for straying from the paths of orthodoxy—a doctrine which could be accepted as fact or metaphor depending upon the degree of your intellectual sophistication. What could not be denied was that it had happened, for the physical evidence was still lying there beneath the waters.

The submergence of Britain is used with equal, even more powerful, metaphoric force in J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World.* Here, too, when a once-familiar London begins to surface as the waters fall, sponges and anemones waving in the shallows of Leicester

Square, the salt-corroded street-signs of the Haymarket and Coventry Street reappearing, that submarine landscape becomes a symbol both of the "fall" of the land and of a "fall" into a kind of atavistic nightmare. It is such a nightmare as forms itself in various guises, involving terrestrial or oceanic imagery, in works as various as those of Blake, Dickens, Dylan Thomas and T.S. Eliot (Strangman's quoting the Phlebas the Phoenician lines from *The Waste Land* is entirely apposite). In the receding waters section of *The Drowned World* the nightmare reaches its nadir in such a passage as that where, the "magic" of submarine phenomena having gone:

> Everything was covered with a fine coating of silt smothering whatever grace and character had once distinguished the streets, so that the entire city seemed to Kerans to have been resurrected from its own sewers. Were the Day of Judgement to come, the armies of the dead would probably rise clothed in the same filthy mantle.

Only in the last chapter, and the last sentence of the book is there a tentative up-beat abatement of the nightmare, as Kerans, having ministered to and revived Hardman in the ruined church, pursues his "neuronic odyssey" southwards, "a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn sun."

A dialogue between British landscape and the theme at the heart of the "matter of Britain" is similarly developed in Richard Cowper's *The Twilight of Briareus,* discussed already in the context of "alien" stereotypes. The destructive agent here is the nova, Briareus Delta; the smothering mantle, producing a British wilderness, is of ice and snow. Cowper achieves some good ironic touches in setting up his symbolism. The need to dismantle industrial plant at Cowley alone has saved Oxford from following Cambridge into the "Land of the Dead".

> By 2000 the operation would be complete and then the City of Dreaming Spires would be allowed to sleep on undisturbed beneath its blanket of snow.

The sterility—the human barrenness that accompanied the catastrophe of an ice-suffocated land—is broken by the semi-sacrificial death of the hero-father and the synchronous renewal of life, the "miraculous" birth of his child, the first to be born of a mother of the Twilight Generation. This is sf suffused with myth—myth much in the British/Celtic tradition. Read in Alderney, the remnant of a land submerged, an island where the May-fires and fertility games lingered into comparatively recent times and still have their echoes, the fiction seems to gain in credibility.

It is in microcosmic Alderney, too, that one is perpetually reminded of the vulnerability of an island to invasion, occupation or depradation: reminded by its circle of crumbling Victorian, or earlier, forts, and the still hard concrete teeth of Hitler's Atlantic Wall; but here they are found environed by wind-ribbed dunes, watery wooded valleys with such names as Fontaine David and Val Fontaine, and coloured cliffs draped with broom and saxifrage. Pastoral—idyllic: harsh—destructive—opposed landscapes here, matching strands of imagery to be found in the main flood of British imaginative literature, particularly in its poetry, and at the core of its best science fiction from Wells to Watson*. They are there in Mary Shelley, in Arthur Machen, indeed throughout the

* In Wells, for example, in the opposed characters and landscapes of *eloi* and *morlock*. In Watson in the drowning forest/advancing technology polarity of *The Embedding:* or in the harrowing cetacean self-destruction of *The Jonah Kit,* where Enozawa, confronted with the dying porpoise, composes the *haiku:*

In a whale's eye
The glaze of a T'ang bowl—
Reflected!

"Gothic" proto-sf of the nineteenth century, and they run on through the New Wave and beyond. Pastoral crystallizes into an authentic prose eclogue in Andy Soutter's "The Quiet King of the Green South-West". Polarized oppositely are Ballard's urban deserts and wastes of concrete; but they only exist as valid antitheses because the pastoral vision persists.

When I evidenced "the main flood of British imaginative literature", I had in mind not a serial development, but rather the continual emergence in many and diverse works of the kinds of symbols and polarities I have described, in e.g. those of Spenser, Milton, Blake, Keats and Coleridge. Blake among these is a unique figure. He wrote and imagined in many ways ahead of his time. His visions are in key with visions that later nourished distinctively British modes of fantasy and science fiction.

Blake wrote on many levels: psychological, metaphysical, political, historical. For all the eclecticism of his sources and the esotericism of some of his imaginings, he was an essentially English writer, well-rooted in London and its rural surrounds. On the socio-political level what his scenarios rehearse, not overtly, but implicitly in the dialectic and imagery, is this same "Matter of Britain". In *Jerusalem,* for example (and remember that in Blake "Jerusalem" is the "Emanation" or soul of "Albion", or England), while Albion lies in deathly sleep, Blake first idealizes the "pastoral" and then shifts to the "fallen" landscape, both indicative of states of England (and at another level of the soul):

> . . . from Lambeth
> We began our Foundations, lovely Lambeth. O lovely Hills
> Of Camberwell, we shall see you no more in glory & pride,
> For Jerusalem lies in ruins & the Furnaces of Los are builded there.
> You are now shrunk up to a narrow Rock in the midst of the Sea.

Then, as Albion from being cold upon his storm-bound rock is revived to take up his bow and flaming arrows, come the themes of "hero" and "redemption", with the invocation:

> Awake, Awake, Jerusalem! O lovely Emanation of Albion,
> Awake and overspread all Nations as in Ancient Time;
> For lo! the Night of Death is past and the Eternal Day
> Appears upon our Hills. Awake, Jerusalem, and come away!

From this smaller island the form of Giant Albion spread out over and identified with the larger island of Britain—"blown incessant/ And wash'd incessant by the for-ever restless sea-waves foaming abroad/ Upon the white Rock"—is an especially vivid one; and the "fall and redemption" of Britain theme is one which here strikes strongly at the imagination. The motif has a classic surfacing in the climactic eighteenth chapter of T.H. White's *The Book of Merlyn,* where the aged King and the hedgehog, having climbed the tor, look out over "the royal realm of Gramarye" which "as the late moon rose . . . spread herself away into the remotest north, leaning towards the imagined Hebrides". Arthur sees in the kingdom both horror and beauty; and to ease his suffering the hedgehog sings to him, and finally sings for him a new song:

> "When us knowed as you was acoming us larned a fresh 'un. 'Twas for thy welcome, like. Us larned it off that there Mëarn," . . . And there, upon the height of England, in a good pronunciation because he had learned it carefully from Merlyn, to Parry's music from the future, with his sword of twigs in one grey hand and a chariot of mouldy leaves, the hedgehog stood to build Jerusalem: and meant it.

The Book of Merlyn was written in County Meath. In it England and the "Matter of Britain" are viewed from another, and a Celtic island. Later T.H. White lived in

Alderney, from where the view is not entirely dissimilar. It is a perspective in which this motif seems undeniably to stand out in works as diverse as Lewis's *That Hideous Strength,* Moorcock's *Gloriana,* the novels I have already mentioned of Richard Cowper and J.G. Ballard, and certainly in some of the founding fictions of H.G. Wells.

I will, in fact, in conclusion take an example from Wells, and from a work already discussed, *The Sleeper Awakes.* The plot of this novel almost echoes the "plot" (in its sociological and political aspects) of Blake's *Jerusalem.* Both reflect similar "island" archetypes of the kind I have been discussing. Both start with an aeonian sleeper associated with rocks and the sea. Both sleepers are metaphorical giants (Atlas and Albion). Both are identified with the fate of Britain, which, while they sleep, falls from a state of "pastoral" to one of machine and political enslavement. Both are awakened to action by "anima" figures (Helen and Brittania). It is Helen who says to Wells's hero-figure, Graham:

> Do you know that you have been to myriads King Arthur, Barbarossa—the King who would come in his own good time and put the world to rights for them? . . . While you lay insensible and motionless there thousands came, thousands. Every first of the month you lay in state with a white robe upon you and the people filed by you. When I was a little girl I saw you like that, with your face white and calm . . . It seemed to me fixed and waiting, like the patience of God.

The Sleeper's reply to her exhortation is: "What you have said has awakened me. You are right. Ostrog must know his place." (Ostrog, the fascist-like opponent is master of the machines and slave-master; his equivalent opponent-figure in *Jerusalem* is given various names, among them the Triple Headed Gog-Magog Giant, and the Druid Spectre.)*

Wells's first version of his novel was written eleven years before an aeroplane appeared in the skies. His detailed description of Graham's aerial battle with the "fascist" fleet of planes as they cross the Channel is a remarkable prefiguring of the Battle of Britain. Graham's sacrificial action is full of rockets, dives and trajectories. "He aimed at the apex of the wedge; he dropped like a stone through the whistling air . . . he twisted about and struck near the edge of the starboard wing with all his accumulated weight." He was "the hawk that struck downward . . . out of the sky."

The last five sections of *Jerusalem* transact in terms of Blake's mythology much the same decisive engagement as Wells recounted in terms of what was at the time of his writing science fiction. First there is the dedication, paralleling Graham's impassioned speech to the people, which ended: "And as God wills tonight, I will live for you or I will die."

> "Do I sleep amidst danger to friends? O my Cities and Counties,
> Do you sleep? Rouze up, rouze up! Eternal Death is abroad!"
> So Albion spoke & threw himself into the Furnaces of affliction.
> All was a Vision, all a Dream; the Furnaces became
> Fountains of Living Water flowing from the Humanity Divine.
> And all the Cities of Albion rose from their slumbers . . .

Then comes Albion's culminating battle:

* Og, King of Bashan, is used symbolically as an "opponent" figure both in Blake's prophetic and in Wells's autobiographical writings. Wells may have evolved "Ostrog" from "Og". Blake's "Gog-Magog" may also have contributed to "Ostrog". Wells was much engrossed with Blake's prophetic works during his student days and there are in his fictions many examples of what are possibly subconscious surfacings of Blake's vocabulary, imagery and dialectic.

> And he clothed himself in Bow and Arrows, in awful state, Fourfold,
> In the midst of his Twenty-eight Cities, each with his Bow breathing.
>
> Then each an Arrow flaming from his Quiver fitted carefully;
> They drew fourfold the unreprovable String, bending thro' the wide Heavens
> The horned Bow Fourfold; loud sounding flew the flaming Arrow fourfold.
> Murmuring the Bowstring breathes with ardor. Clouds roll round the horns
> Of the wide Bow; loud sounding Winds sport on the Mountains' Brows.
> The Druid Spectre was Annihilate, loud thund'ring, rejoicing terrific, vanishing,
> Fourfold Annihilation . . .

If I were to seek a passage which embodies most strikingly the view of British sf, and of Britain in sf, that I have been trying to communicate, I would perhaps select the point in *The Sleeper Awakes* at which Graham ascends to combat:

> The twilight was coming on apace, the smoke from the Streatham (landing) stage that had been so dense and dark, was now a pillar of fire . . . was a furnace . . . As he swept over the Roehampton stage he saw the dark masses of the people thereon. He felt a breath of wind from the south-west, and lifted his westward wing . . . and so drove upward heeling into the rare swift upper air . . . until the country beneath him was blue and indistinct, and London spread like a little map traced in light, like the mere model of a city near the brim of the horizon. The south-west was a sky of sapphire over the shadowy rim of the world, and as ever he drove upward the multitude of the stars increased.

The passage describes a key incident in a "Matter of Britain" saga; it conveys both the element of "home-counties" containedness of which I have spoken, and the sense of "pastoral", here achieved by a kind of atmospheric distancing; and it creates in its last sentence that mode of reciprocal interplay between island environment and universe which I have remarked in commenting on the science fiction of Olaf Stapledon and others.

The country "blue and indistinct", the drive towards the stars: pastoral past, and future technology: poles that are both antithetical and complementary. As from Alderney I watch the contrails of long-distance flights from Gatwick and Heathrow trace their pivotings about the Channel Islands beacon, I sometimes think of Puck's lines in *A Midsummer Night's Dream:* "I'll put a girdle round the earth/In forty minutes . . ." His starting place? "A Wood near Athens," i.e. The Forest of Arden. His finishing place? "A bank whereon the wild thyme grows", i.e. Arcadia. In fact, Titania's speech (II ii), which lies at the source of Puck's mission, in little again sets out the metaphor of a fallen but redeemable landscape: "The fold stands empty in the drowned field,/And crows are fatted with the murrain flock," etc. It is only after sleep, confusion and nightmare that the breach is healed and balance and amity restored: "The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well."

Shakespeare is a dominating presence in English literature; hardly less so is a poet of another land and age. Virgil, a Roman, is almost English by adoption, so deeply influential has been the magic of his stories and his style. "He sang so that . . . the very oak tree branches swayed," he wrote in his Sixth Eclogue, introducing Silenus's lyrical and arcadian version of creation, of metamorphoses, of corruption and heroism, of the Gardens of the Western Islands, of miracles and misceganies, of Odyssean sea-catastrophes and magical flights. As he ends the Eclogue he says: "These Sun-god's stories told in song filled the valleys, and from their slopes were flung back to the stars", a phrase which is a neatly apposite tail-piece to what has here gone before it, chiming as it does with the upward drive of Wells's Sleeper, setting as it does a country world of fables and fictions into a cosmic context.

Koichi Yamano was born in Osaka in 1939. While a university student he produced experimental films and wrote movie reviews. His debut work in creative writing was "The Receptionist's Socks", an absurdist one-act play published at the same time he dropped out of college. His first published short story, "X Densha de Iko" ("Take the X Train," 1965), was praised by Yukio Mishima, and was printed accompanied by a letter of recommendation by Kobo Abe. He has published a number of short story collections, including Tori wa Ima Doko o Tobu ka (Where do the Birds Fly Now, *1971),* Satsujinsha no Sora (The Murderer's Sky, *1976), and* Za Kuraimu (The Crime, *1978). His first novel,* Flowers, Machine and the Gestalt, *appeared in 1981. His latest work is* Revolucion *(1983), a series of linked stories.*

Yamano is also active as a critic specializing in science fiction and avant garde literature, writing an sf column in the Yomiuri Shimbun, *the East's largest newspaper, and contributing articles on Garcia Marquez and other Latin American writers to literary magazines. For the past eight years he has written the science fiction column for the weekly* Dokushojin *newspaper, a publishing industry trade journal.*

As editorial consultant for the Sanrio SF Series, he introduced many British and French authors to Japanese sf readers. At the same time, he publishes NW-SF *magazine and the NW-SF Books series of trade paperbacks. However, by his own description, he is "remarkably poor" for a publishing company president.*

Yamano is also a well-known researcher of racing horse pedigrees, and has numerous book and article publications to his credit. He is actively involved in the "Japan Cup", an international invitational race held in Japan each year.

English Literature and British Science Fiction

KOICHI YAMANO

Japan has built its present prosperity on imports of European culture. This has been true in literary circles as well, where translation is highly respectable work. In fact, the translation of foreign classics is considered an endeavour of the highest order, on a par with creative writing.

There has been only one major exception to this rule, and that is the English-language novel. When Japanese speak of foreign literature, what they are really talking about is Russian literature, followed by French literature, and then by German.

Of course, the translations of Shakespeare by the famous Meiji Period (1868 – 1911) literary doyen Shoyo Tsubouchi are now treasured classics. But they remain firmly in the realm of theatre.

Similarly, the works of Thomas More, Adam Smith, John Mill, and, of course, H.G. Wells, have been read and studied by many Japanese since the country's imperialist period. But here again, they have been read more for what they have to say about politics or economics than as literature.

The books of Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift and Charles Dickens have for the most part been translated as juvenile fiction, and have failed to earn recognition as great literature.

In fact, English-language novels did not really receive wide exposure in Japan until the postwar occupation forces withdrew, leaving behind them mountains of paperback books. The castoffs ran the gamut from mysteries to film stories, romances and spy action. And, of course, science fiction.

But it is important to remember that these books, as they came to be translated and read by more and more Japanese, were not selected out by the literary-translation establishment, but rather were published from the start on a commercial basis, as entertainment for the masses. Ironically, as the so-called pure literature tradition waned, both as part of a cultivated person's upbringing and as a form of artistic expression, the popular novel came into its own in translation and in original work by Japanese authors. It was at this point that fiction originally written in English rather than in French or Russian claimed its current place in the mainstream of Japanese translation.

As such, it has not been able to escape entirely the influences of its origins—that is, as the castoffs of the predominately American army of occupation. English-language fiction was seen as falling under the rubric of American popular fiction, with no distinction being made between English and American writers. Even today, many Japanese readers believe authors the likes of Graham Greene, Ian Fleming or Agatha Christie to be American writers. British literature has been given the cold shoulder twice, both during the age of literature-in-translation and the age of popular fiction.

One of the main reasons English-language fiction has failed to win the respect accorded Russian or French literature is the widely held belief that it lacks philosophical depth. English-language literature is believed to be pragmatic, uninterested in delving too deeply into matters of the mind. This is one of the reasons it is so often read as juvenile fiction.

Japan's defeat in World War II went a long way towards teaching the Japanese the importance of such down-to-earth matters as abundant material supplies, direct action, and systems. They began to hunger after the physical, a hunger that led to the drive resulting in today's high technology. And interestingly enough, as Japanese civilization became more materialistic in orientation, fiction also turned more and more toward the physical sphere. It would not be overstating the case to say that the decline of the novel as literature in Japan and the rise in the popularity of American popular fiction progressed hand-in-hand with this cultural transformation.

Among the many books that have been published and read as American popular fiction since the war, there are a few that have escaped being read simply as entertainment and tossed away afterwards, and instead have begun to fill the role formerly accorded "pure" literature. The works of Norman Mailer or Tennessee Williams, for instance, first introduced into Japan in connection with movie versions, later came to be accepted as literature in their own right.

Similar pressures have been at work with modern British literature. Books that were made into well-known movies, including some of the works of John Braine and Alan Sillitoe, were quickly translated and published in Japanese. It would seem that as Japanese culture has become more materialistic, Japanese readers have become more accepting of English-language fiction, albeit with an undivided emphasis on the American side.

Science fiction was also identified early on as American popular literature, and initially the only British writers to be translated were those who were also well known in the United States, Clarke, for example. Great Britain was considered little more than a 51st state on the map of US sf.

What first spotlighted British science fiction in Japan were the active efforts by translator and critic Norio Itoh and myself to introduce Japanese readers to the "New Wave", efforts that culminated in several special issues of *SF Magazine.*[1]

With this initial opening, Japan's translators were soon producing a steady flow of translations of J.G. Ballard, Brian Aldiss, Michael Moorcock, John Brunner, James White, Barrington Bayley, Christopher Priest and others. The Sanrio SF Series, for which I chose many titles, is now publishing books by Keith Roberts, Ian Watson, Langdon Jones, M.J. Harrison, Richard Cowper, D.G. Compton, Bob Shaw, Robert Holdstock, Michael Coney, and Brian Stableford.[2] Meanwhile, many short stories by British sf writers have appeared in my magazine, *NW-SF.* Great Britain's science fiction writers are finally beginning to enjoy considerable status in Japan.

Among them, Clarke and Ballard are especially popular. In fact, together with Stanislaw Lem, they are perhaps the three most highly regarded foreign sf writers.

I once took this popularity as proof that Japanese sf fans do not necessarily prefer the simplistic happy endings so loved by their American counterparts, and deliberately concentrated on British writers when compiling the Sanrio SF Series. Times have changed, however, and Japan's young readers are rapidly becoming extremely pragmatic. Their main interests have now become nuts-and-bolts spaceships and happy adventures.

This shift in reader preferences put me in a ticklish position in the publishing community for having acquired so much "unsellable" British sf for Sanrio. I personally do not regret having done so. It was a decision based on my own beliefs about the genre, and if I have another opportunity to plan a similar series, I will no more choose Larry Niven or Frederik Pohl the second time around than I did the first. I simply feel sorry for Japan's readers.

It is an ironic and truly unfortunate paradox that British fiction, once scorned for being too pragmatic, is now avoided for not being pragmatic enough.

When discussing British science fiction it is necessary to draw a distinction between those characteristics it shares with that great current of world literature known as English literature, running as it does through Wells, Huxley, Orwell and many of the "angry young men", and those characteristics it has displayed since the "New Wave" as they contrast with American science fiction.

Of course, science fiction itself can be seen as a bizarre combination of influences, the result of the English traditions of utopian literature and gothic romance, the British "pragmatic idea" and the methodology of Wells. All these influences reached across the Atlantic to be raised in the midst of American technological civilization, giving the world the genre that "sf" is most commonly assumed to mean. British science fiction since the "New Wave" can, conversely, be thought of as the result of American science fiction once again crossing the Atlantic, this time to find a new beginning in the midst of European culture.

Writers the like of John Wyndham, Clarke, and Aldiss can be seen as intermediary figures between these two currents. They have been influenced by both extremes, and

their work lacks the complexity of post-New Wave writing. They are, in effect, a parallel existence to American science fiction, whereas the New Wave generation since Ballard and Moorcock represent an accumulative existence, building upon all that has come before.

I realize it may be presumptuous, perhaps even insulting to the British sf community, for me to draw these distinctions from my vantage point in the Far East. Many, for instance, may question my propriety in drawing a line between Aldiss and Ballard. I freely admit that it is impossible to clearly demarcate British sf. But the point I make is that if forced to say to which British science fiction traditions these writers belong, I believe Aldiss would fall into the older tradition, while Ballard would belong in the New Wave generation. This is, of course, an observation made in the Far East rather than the Far West, and may be subject to some misunderstanding. Please bear with me as you read.

Nothing more succinctly symbolizes British sf as a continuation of traditional English literature than the utopian ideal. This tradition—beginning with More, reaching a peak in the work of Orwell and Huxley, and still smouldering in the writing of England's "angry erstwhile young men"—is a unique feature of English literature. I consider utopianism to be one of the most effective methods conceivable for bringing together the superb political consciousness and the pragmatism of Anglo-Saxon culture. Whereas French and Russian literature were lured astray by the relationships between mind and mind, and mind and society—in the process losing their ability to see the real world—English literature has gone on to boldly create a succession of brave new worlds.

Of course, there are no true utopias among those novels that have been labelled over the years as utopian. Yet it is undeniable that British writers have sought to create worlds different from our own—worlds of romance, if you will. And it is precisely the world of romance which is the single most important element in science fiction. Be it the future, a parallel universe, or even the past revisited by time machine, it is still an alternative to our reality, a world of romance.

Seen this way, one could almost say that English literature has had its sights set on science fiction since the time of More. Among writers who have retained this orientation in Great Britain without submerging themselves in American science fiction we could number Huxley, Orwell, Anthony Burgess in *A Clockwork Orange,* or even Sillitoe in *Travels in Nihilon.* These kinds of books are keenly interested in politics and social realities. Their unifying element is the pragmatism of their core situations.

(To digress slightly, I feel that while the writing of the "angry erstwhile-young men" is extremely sophisticated, it also has its clear limitations. Unlike the writing of the 19th century, it holds no great expectations for politics, economics or society. Perhaps this is the way the British themselves feel today? Perhaps Margaret Thatcher's recent political victories are actually only a sign of resigned acceptance of the pointlessness of politics?)

I am not well acquainted with the gothic romance, few of which have been translated into Japanese. In fact, Mervyn Peake's trilogy and Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* have yet to be translated at all. Even *Frankenstein,* read in Japan for many years as a juvenile, was not available in an unabridged translation until only two or three years ago, when it was finally published as the first book in Kokusho Kankokai Co.'s Gothic Romance Series.

This being the case, then, I may be guilty of some misperceptions about the genre. But putting aside fear of error, let me state categorically that I believe the gothic romance to be the single greatest source of the many sins of American science fiction.

Let us look at only a few elements. There is the over-wrought description calculated to create a sense of false suspense. There is the plot line, progressing without deviation, thoroughly tied to the central character, and full of opportune coincidence. There is the inevitable optimistic ending with its escape to a brighter, better world. And then there is the attitude the gothic romance has fostered among the readers themselves—the tradition of reading, allowing oneself to be deceived while reading, and then tossing the book away at the end without care or thought. These failings have become the failings of American science fiction.

I consider materialism to be a primarily Anglo-Saxon tradition, but in America it has evolved into a sort of social disease. The simplistic ideas Wells tossed off in pursuit of loftier goals have in America been idolized as fetishes for juvenile wish-fulfillment. Yet the essential elements of American science fiction were all born in Great Britain and brought to fruition, such as it is, in America. In other words, while British literature gave birth to science fiction, the elements that have given science fiction a bad name were also latent within the British literary tradition.

This is why I consider Ballard's manifesto, "Which Way to Inner Space", such a revolutionary development. Along with the many weaknesses enumerated above, the way to inner space has also been latent in the developmental process of English literature. The world of romance, once bottled in the utopian dream, must of necessity turn toward inner space. The gothic heroine likewise must discover her inner space as her character grows.

But science fiction in America did not evolve in this direction, and the New Wave was in that sense the alarmed cry of those on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean reading what had become of American science fiction. It was the cry of the people of Jerusalem, looking on the Holy Roman Empire, that "that's not how it's supposed to be!"

Literature progresses toward ever grander creation through a tortured series of twists and turns. British science fiction since the New Wave can be said to have taken for its own the complexity of American science fiction, and to have used it to finally arrive at the destination the genre was fated to reach. At the same time, American science fiction gained new complexity from the British New Wave, spawning a generation of new writers the likes of Samuel Delany, Thomas Disch, and Harlan Ellison.

I am a great fan of the works of Langdon Jones, Michael Butterworth, and Charles Platt, and cannot help but feel saddened that we can no longer read serious writing by these authors. But outstanding new writers have risen in their place. The works of Watson, Priest, Shaw, Compton and Cowper are testimony that British science fiction has not withered away since the New Wave.

I believe that through the advent of post-New Wave British science fiction, English literature has finally arrived at the destination it had marked out for itself at the start of its long history. The greatest works are still to be written.

In parting, I might just add that if English literary society is to gain even greater complexity, it should open itself more willingly to the writing of Latin America, of Russia, and no less that of Japan. In the past, English Literature has shown less interest in foreign literature than have its counterparts in France, Germany and other countries. I suspect that this has worked to impede its further development, but perhaps that, too, is just a misunderstanding from the East?

(Translated by David Lewis)

Notes

1 Published by Hayakawa Shobo Co. At the time, Japan's only professional science fiction magazine.
2 Several still unpublished writers are included here. Regretfully, Watson and Roberts are still only available in Japan in short story form. However, translations of books by all these writers are now in progress.

Franz Rottensteiner of Austria is well-known as a radical critic of sf, whether expressing himself in academic or polemic vein. Champion and agent of Stanislaw Lem, he shares with Mr Lem a strong disapproval of the shortcomings of the sf genre, so let us not expect him to perceive British sf through rose-coloured spectacles from his viewing station in Vienna . . .

Stars of Albion?

FRANZ ROTTENSTEINER

Science Fiction is a misnomer, and never more so than in recent times. Certainly, if one were to believe what the fans claim, whether the amateur ones or the professional fans, sf never was better than today. Sf reputedly even is a branch of serious fiction, having made this or that bestseller list, and getting much critical attention. I for one think that sf has become only as serious as Robert Ludlum or Judith Krantz; and that, as far as literary quality is concerned, sf has at best risen from the level of the pulps to that of the *Saturday Evening Post*—a magazine that was noted for its lousy fiction. (At best, the impeccable mediocrity of one of Terry Carr's yearly anthologies). Most of what appears under the name of sf these days, is not sf at all but some brand of neo-romanticist bastard fantasy, as demanding a kind of fiction as women's gothics, and indeed sf properly belongs alongside *Candelight, Silhouette* and *Second Chance at Love,* and I propose that Science Fiction should be renamed Science Romance, and the SFWA renamed Science Romance Writers of America, and they should join the Romance Writers of America as a subdivision. What are writers like Anne MacCaffrey, Frederik Pohl, Piers Anthony, Jerry Pournelle, Poul Anderson, Joan D. Vinge and countless others writing but romances? And is Isaac Asimov more than the Barbara Cartland of science? What for some are romances of love, are for others romances of violence. Nor is such a relationship between women's gothics and sf merely polemics. I seem to remember that the highly respected Thomas M. Disch's most successful books are some romances written under a pseudonym. And when I think of Chris Priest's favourably received *A Dream of Wessex,* I find it amusing that nobody has noticed that this novel is basically a gothic, translated into sf terms, and shares with its generic roots the same bland disregard for simple logic, its substitution by a psychology of terror, a helpless and frightened girl, and the pleasure in victimizing women. Elizabeth Holland does the same any time with at least equal skill, but without so much pretension.

What has all this to do with British sf? Frankly, I think that by and large, British sf has

always avoided the worst excesses and grossest stupidities of the more gaudy American sf. British sf is much better behaved, more intelligently written, less concerned with power politics, the dealing and wheeling of so much American sf, although when the British really try, they can easily surpass their American cousins in badness in any field. Without trying hard, Charles Platt, for instance, succeeds in making Richard Geis's *Science Fiction Review* look like *The Partisan Review,* compared to his *Patchwork Review.*

The patriotic Christopher Priest, who already knew all about professionalism when a toddler, believes in the superiority of British sf; Brian Aldiss, on the other hand, thinks—if I remember it correctly—that American sf is leading because that is where all the power and science and technology is. I myself am not a great believer in national characteristics; I think that there is only one literature, and that literature is quite international, and that the very best writers anywhere are freaks of nature who emerge quite unpredictably. Of course, any writer shows in some varying degree some national characteristics, but these are hardly what matter, and certainly they are not what makes the essence of their greatness. H.G. Wells was British; so what? That he was H.G. Wells is enough. Much the same is the case with J.G. Ballard, I think. He is such an individuality, whether one likes his writings or not, that it doesn't matter a damn from where he hails. John Wyndham, on the other hand, as opposed to both Wells and Ballard, is a Briton, and he could hardly have arisen elsewhere, and perhaps he still best exemplifies the weaknesses and virtues of British sf. Wyndham is no originator; he took the themes and ideas provided by H.G. Wells and American pulp sf, and re-wrote them as an intelligent, cultured man would re-write them, creating nothing genuinely original. Despite the inherent sensationalism of all of his stories he wrote with an aloof detachedness, an admirable coolness, stylized novels of manners, with sympathy and understanding for his conventional characters. A semblance of characterization skilful enough so that you could sympathize with them. A thoroughly enjoyable writer that offered you the most horrible things in a relaxed manner, writing sf in the same manner as the British used to write their ghost stories—updated Victorian chillers. Wyndham was a writer of fiction building on fiction; without H.G. Wells and American pulp fiction his work is unimaginable. He took what had already been created by others, and remoulded it in his image. What he took from Wells lost its depth, and edge, and became more palatable; what he took from pulp sf, gained an air of respectability and commonsense intelligence. John Wyndham is perhaps still the epitome of British sf.

Bob Shaw, Edmund Cooper and John Brunner are much of the same kind, though on a lesser level, that is to say, I find nothing in their work that would interest me in the slightest way. I think that a comment by Edmund Cooper that I read once about Stanislaw Lem's *The Invincible* is fairly characteristic and illuminating about this kind of British sf as a whole. Cooper complained about the absence of characters in *The Invincible.* Quite right; but contrary to widespread beliefs it is quite possible to write fiction, and excellent fiction, without any characters: J.L. Borges made a point of it. The "characters" in *The Invincible* are not inept, they are simply irrelevant for the purposes of the story. Edmund Cooper's own characters—or Wyndham's, or Shaw's, or Brunner's—are, as far as literature is concerned, as non-existent; their authors have only gone to greater pains to give them a semblance of character—a semblance quite sufficient for the popular fictions in which they figure. But there is nothing that would give these stories some other value as fiction. They fulfill just the expectations that the readers of this kind of fiction have,

among which is that fiction must have "believable characters".

Unlike Ballard, Brian W. Aldiss is also a quintessential British sf writer, a man who has For Britons Only, and Mostly For Sf Fans written all over him. Of course, Aldiss has a much wider range, and is much more well-read and cultured than, say, John Wyndham. But he does essentially the same that Wyndham did, only with greater skill and style. He is, despite his ventures outside of sf, a typical British sf author insofar as he is no originator; he is a writer of fiction about fiction, who takes his ideas and themes from the previous literature, and goes little beyond it. To my mind, he did his best work when he drew on materials previously in the hands of the hacks: *Non-Stop* (which may still be his most successful book, some think artistically, and I would not be surprised if it were commercially); *Greybeard;* and *Hothouse.* He falls short of his models, if not in literary polish then certainly in vigour, general impact and persuasion, where he re-creates more reputable examples: Wells's *The Island of Dr Moreau, Frankenstein* or the anti-novel. There his creations for all their intelligence and skill pale besides the prototypes and show that he is primarily a literary poseur. These books predominantly show his limits as a creator. Aldiss's work also shows, like that of the late James Blish, that he has no inner compass, no firm philosophical basis for his writings, but is an aesthete who wants to try his hand at many things, including those of dubious value that a better writer would leave alone, e.g. there are among his works such troglodytic fictions as *The 80 Minute Hour, The Male Response* and *Enemies of the System,* and others that can be called only works of the opportunistic imagination, e.g. *Helliconia.* Much of Aldiss's work is quite slight, with a tendency towards banal philosophy, and puns and jokes of doubtful taste (as in Kingsley Amis). Foremost, Aldiss is an aesthete with some decadent leanings, but all of a rather feeble kind.

The most noticeable quality of British sf is then perhaps its *secondary* literary nature, its re-working of familiar materials but with some care and respect, even when it cannot come close to its models.

Patriotic Britons often claim that British writers have more individuality, that they do not write so uniform a style as many American sf writers do. This acknowledged for the average, I do not think that on the whole British sf has quite the variety of American sf; there are hardly any British writers as apart stylistically as, say, Philip K. Dick, Cordwainer Smith, Jack Vance or Thomas M. Disch, and the usually greater restraint of British writers often gives them a uniform impression. All considered, British sf is more subtle and complex, but also stiffer, less inventive, less genuinely creative than American sf, which may be more simple, but is also more vigorous and less concerned with respectability.

What else? British writers also seem to be less able to compute their taxes than their American colleagues, and sometimes they give the impression that they think "fame & fortune" have passed them by, even when they have made the bestseller lists. That is perhaps the price of writing better, but not quite well enough. Anyway, boys' fiction sells best, as is attested by the success of Arthur C. Clarke; but then Clarke has been helped by his enormous reputation as a populariser of science.

All things said, I think that British sf has many commendable features, but it usually is not quite first-rate.

Vladimir Gopman is a citizen of the USSR and lives in Moscow. In response to our request for an article on British sf and how it is perceived in the Soviet Union he sent us the following piece which is all about one author—J.G. Ballard. We decided to publish the essay, but we also wrote back to Mr Gopman asking for more details of his personal *reaction to Ballard's works and, if possible, some details of how Ballard is received by Soviet sf readers in general. The introductory paragraphs which follow, and which precede his essay proper, are taken from the letter he wrote us in reply . . .*

The Category of Time in the Writings of J.G. Ballard

VLADIMIR GOPMAN

I consider J.G. Ballard to be not only one of the best authors in modern British sf but in all British literature. I got acquainted with Ballard in 1971 through a collection of his short stories, *Chronopolis*. I was in awe—I never thought that sf could be written so well, so brilliantly. Ballard's prose, as it seemed to me (and I am still of the same opinion), produces a kind of stereoscopic effect: one does not merely read it, but sees and hears everything that the author describes—one just lives in Ballard's fiction. Since the time I read Conrad, I cannot recall any writer whose work produced such an impression upon me.

There followed some more collections: *The Four-Dimensional Nightmare, The Day of Forever, The Disaster Area, The Voices of Time*. Then I happened to get and read Ballard's novels *The Wind from Nowhere, The Drowned World* and *Concrete Island*. Again: terrifying and at the same time alluring landscapes, strange unhappy heroes (perhaps becoming happy as the story progresses) together with landscapes recalling Dali's pictures—full of mystery, repulsion and beauty . . .

Ballard not only makes us sympathize with his heroes, pity them or envy them—he takes us with them along the roads of their dying worlds. This is true not only of the first four Ballard novels ("the nature tetralogy") but of his other four novels as well ("the city tetralogy"). "Inner space" and "outer space"—in depicting their interaction Ballard shows superb mastery. Certainly Arthur C. Clarke is beyond competition in describing outer space (in the direct sense of the word). But I think it is much more interesting to read about how our own outer space transforms our inner space—it is our life, to use Trollope's phrase, "the way we live now."

Ballard is not an easy writer to read. Moreover he is not a pleasant writer to read. He tells the truth about modern civilization, which is sick, but he does so in an attempt to cure it and save it. Does Arthur Clarke do the same? I doubt it, though I have deep respect for the creator of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Ballard makes us *think* about what we are and what we do with our world and our lives—and those things do not come to mind so quickly when we read Clarke's novels. I am not trying to say that Clarke is a bad writer—nothing of the kind. But there are authors and authors. I repeat with reverence Asimov's Three

Laws, but when I have spare time I re-read not him but Ursula Le Guin . . .

As for Ballard's popularity in our country: five of his stories have been translated and published in various sf collections and anthologies: "Minus One" (1969), "Chronopolis" (1970), "The Subliminal Man" (under the title "Will You Buy, Doctor?", 1970), "The Reptile Enclosure" (1974), and "Deep End" (1979). Four of Ballard's books have been reviewed in the magazine of literary criticism *Foreign Literature Abroad.* They are *The Four-Dimensional Nightmare* (1964, No. 9), *The Disaster Area* (1968, No. 6), *Concrete Island* (1974, No. 4) and *High Rise* (1976, No. 4). Professor Valentina Ivasheva devoted some pages to an analysis of Ballard's works in her book on modern English literature (*What Time Saves: English Literature, 1945-1979,* Moscow, 1979). In 1981 I presented a dissertation on "The Works of J.G. Ballard" and got a degree of Candidate of Science (Philology).

Although only five of Ballard's stories are translated in our country, his reputation is very high. It rests primarily on "Chronopolis", and there is no real sf fan in any part of the country (and I have talked with a considerable number) who, even if he forgets the name of its author, does not recall the story immediately.

Interest in the problem of time has become greatly enhanced of late, with the traditional understanding of time (in the pre-Einsteinian sense) yielding place to new concepts on the plane of natural science and philosophy. A new notion has arisen that the galaxies have been in existence since time physically infinite, that human life is biologically finite in time, and that the psychological and the subjective are important dimensions of man's spiritual being. Together with this, the category of time is acquiring ever greater independence in the realm of art: a rejection of the chronological sequence of events in literary works, a shift in time planes, the transposition of present-day action with the past, and inner dialogue—these are some factors that show that time has been acquiring ever greater significance in 20th century art, as a compositional principle in the creative process. James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, John dos Passos and William Faulkner are among those writers who have brought a new concept of time into their novels, making use of time, not as something of experimental value in itself but as a means of pungently expressing the dramatic conflicts of an age marked by global social cataclysms.

This is the direction pursued in the writings of J.G. Ballard, in which is reflected his striving to gain an insight into the tragic state of man's soul in present-day Western society and to reveal his torment, hopes and despair.

He embarked on his career with stories written in the traditional science-fiction vein. Though excursions into time and its paradoxes appeared in his early prose (e.g. his story "Escapement", 1956), he comparatively rarely resorted to such subject-matter. The enigmas of time and the adventures made possible in descriptions of time travel into the past or the future had little appeal for Ballard, with his awareness that the individual exists, not merely in physical but also in psychological reality, and, more important, in social reality, a complex in which space and time cannot be reduced to physical spatio-temporal relations. As a social and philosophical category time is focal to Ballard, which is why, in his science-fiction stories, traditional in subject, but linked with time in one way or another, he seeks first and foremost for his own viewpoint and plot development. An example is "The Gentle Assassin" (1961) in which he brings forward an interesting view on the variants feasible in history.

Ballard's first steps in science fiction called for a new look at its already established aims, tasks and possibilities. The aesthetic programme advocated by him contained the thesis of the need for sf's psychologization and for it to go over from depictions of "outer space" to research into and depictions of the "inner space" of man's mind. Hence Ballard's interest in problems of genetic memory, the relation between the conscious and the unconscious in the human mind. It is to time that Ballard devotes prime attention in describing the mind's "borderline state", the "zone of transit" between inner and outer reality.

At first the stories still posed the question of how "inner space" was to be cognized, studied and even mastered: "Manhole 69" (1957) described an experiment leading to an extension of human life at the expense of sleep. However, the writer's stand underwent a gradual change, with his growing doubt whether the "inner space" in man's mind is cognizable; he saw that area as being outside the laws governing physical time, marked by the absence of such things as "yesterday" and "tomorrow" and by the blending of past and present, a treatment of human consciousness which approximates to Henri Bergson's philosophical concepts.

The characters in the stories "The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon", "Now Wakes the Sea" and "The Delta at Sunset" (all 1964) see the illusions in their minds as the sole reality, in contrast with the surrounding world which they perceive as unreal and phantasmagorical. Physical reality is ousted by the illusory. At times this stems from the operation of the character's genetic memory, but most frequently it is the outcome of an awareness of his incorporation in the unbreakable interlinks of time, as in the case of the main character in "The Delta at Sunset". The new world that has opened up to him means far more than all his previous life.

It ends in tragedy for him but he brushes salvation aside, giving preference to his "inner reality". External disaster and physical destruction are symbolic to the people in the story, since they signify the liberation of their minds, their inner world. The character's existence is determined by the essence of his consciousness, which preserves its individual features only given the absence of links with others about him, through "exclusion" of self from the framework of time.

This is most fully expressed in the novel *The Drowned World* (1962), in which the author's attention is focused on the psychological catastrophe of his heroes, the disintegration of their minds. Under the impact of changing conditions of climate, which resemble those of prehistoric times, all life on Earth is involuted and returns to the Mesozoic era: ferns and horsetails flourish and giant reptiles appear. This picture—a "psychological metaphor of the past", in the author's words—also takes in man, whose genetic memory, including the memory of hundreds of preceding generations, awakens too. "We, too, are returning," says one of the characters. "This is our zone of transit; here we are reassimilating our own biological past." Time has vanished in the "zone of transit", and, together with it, all hopes, feelings and thoughts. The social nexuses between men are replaced by psychological ones, social causality yielding place to the psycho-physiological. It is thus that, under the impact of catastrophe in Nature, there comes to the fore what Ballard considers man's genuine essence, stripped of the duties and obligations imposed on the individual by the socium.

The characters appear as people with no past or future, standing outside of time, this giving them a great removedness. The heroes sense the disappearance of the conventional

estimates of time, thus immersing them in the world of "total, neuronic time". The absolute time of the "inner landscape" is indicative of the unlimited freedom of the inner world and its complete release from reality. To the characters in the novel—Kerans in the first place—the achievement of absolute inner freedom means the discovery by each of them of his genuine "I". According to Ballard, *The Drowned World* tells the story of "the discovery by the hero of his true compass bearing, both mentally and literally."

In many of Ballard's writings, the catastrophe in nature leads to the world falling apart and collapsing, such pictures corresponding to the existentialist concept of the downfall and alienation of personality. The narrative is subordinated, not to the development of a cataclysm but to the logic of processes in the hero's mentality. With Ballard, human existence is eschatologically metaphorized, an important part in revealing that metaphor belonging to the category of time.

In *The Drought* (1965), the hero's physical world and his mind are wrecked, the connection between both catastrophes being reinforced by a sense of time rent asunder and coming to a standstill. The hero himself, Ransom, realizes that it is only through "abolition in time" that the alarms, anguish and disappointment of past years can be erased. The novel is about his search of his own self through ever-mounting alienation. He flees, at the conclusion of the story, into a lifeless desert, a scorched and timeless world. It is only there, after a complete break with past and present, that he acquires psychological integrity and absolute freedom: "To his surprise he noticed that he no longer cast any shadow on the sand, as if he had at last completed his journey across the margins of the inner landscape he had carried in his mind for so many years."

The action in *The Crystal World* (1966) hinges on a time-linked science-fiction explanation: the crystallization of living things—the conversion of all organic life into non-organic—is a consequence of cosmic phenomena in the Grand Nebula in Andromeda, as the result of which the structure of various areas of the globe and the passage of time there undergo changes. In the novel, however, time does not serve only as a "transmitter" of the operation of cosmic forces but also plays an important part in resolving the main conflict in the story—the principal character's psychological drama. Time is perceived by Dr Sanders through the prism of his past, as it were, which he has lived in an absurd and muddled way which has left an oppressive sense of frustration. When he comes to Port Matarre, he has grounds to believe he has rid himself of "questions of motive and identity that were bound up with his sense of time and the past." When he finds himself in a forest that is crystallizing, Sanders feels that time has come to a halt, and the sparkling scintillation of myriads of multicoloured lights brings him a sense of peace, revealing something he thinks is introducing a sense of purpose into his life.

To Sanders, who is connected with two women—Suzanne ("the dark lady") and Louise ("the light lady")—the forest is a place where light and darkness blend, representing the make-up of man's outer and inner life. Besides, Sanders sees the forest as embodying mankind's genetic memory and "an earlier period of our lives, an archaic memory we were born with, of some ancestral paradise." That is why a return to the crystallized forest, to the past, restores the lost integrity of man's inner world. There the death of the heroes symbolizes the fateful impossibility of escaping one's destiny. The tragic flight towards destruction is the finale of *The Drowned World* and *The Drought,* but it is only in *The Crystal World* that it is absolutized—Fate is placed alongside freedom of choice.

Like so many of Ballard's other landscapes, the crystalline forest is unreal and symbolic: such symbols help register the way the characters in the story subjectively perceive a destroyed world. Brought into the foreground is man's inner world or "genuine being", as the only reality. An eschatological sense of the crack of doom retreats in the face of personal tragedy. Physical time in the outer world ("non-genuine being") grows unreal, like the outer world itself, and what remains is only the individual's inner time: time that flows backward (*The Drowned World*), is dismembered (*The Drought*), and has halted (*The Crystal World*).

In many of Ballard's writings, time is used, not only to reveal the psychological tragedy of the main character but also to show it as the outcome of the operation of the atmosphere that dominates society. In one of his most compelling stories, "The Terminal Beach", Ballard comes out against the nuclear holocaust and the end of mankind. It deals with the hydrogen bomb, that awesome weapon of annihilation, whose shadow overhangs Eniwetok atoll, as well as the soul of Traven, the central hero. The horrors of World War II, fear of a future war, and pictures of his wife's and his son's deaths in a car accident all unite in Traven's mind. "This island is a state of mind," one of the people in the story says. Liberation from time carries a telling social message and spearheads its antimilitarist character.

In Ballard's novels and stories time is used in artistic terms to convey the many aspects of the subjective perception of time sensed, not only through links of cause and effect but also through the psychological and associative nexuses of the events. In this, surrealist painting was, in many respects, Ballard's point of departure, its influence being felt both in the descriptions of a dying Earth and in the frequent references in the text to paintings by Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Delvaux, and Yves Tanguy. In general some canvases by these artists would seem specially painted to illustrate Ballard's writings. An example is Dali's *The Persistence of Memory,* which depicts an Earth where time and life have come to an end, and is perceived as a pictorial solution of the idea in "The Day of Forever" (1966).

Ballard addresses himself again to the category of time in stories which can be seen as parables. As a rule, the action here has no time framework, thereby acquiring a supra-temporal and overall character. Examples are his story "The Garden of Time", in which, as H.B. Franklin has properly pointed out, "the inner meaning of the desire to stop time is to stop history", and "The Drowned Giant" (reminiscent of Garcia Marquez's story "A Very Old Man With Huge Wings"), which, besides exposing philistinism, carries the theme of the brevity and fragility of man's life and his control of time.

Special mention should be made of Ballard's use of the theme of time in his stories about the future, which could be divided into two groups: novellas about a positive future, and those about a negative future. To the latter pertain, first and foremost, his stories about the City of the Future, which is shown as a megapolis, a vast conurbation stretching for thousands of miles with a population of hundreds of millions.

Ballard's urban stories contain few detailed descriptions of the City, yet they give rise to a vivid and tangible impression that leaves an oppressive and painful feeling in the reader, this being achieved through psychologically convincing pictures of the inner life of an inhabitant of the City. They are pictures that are horrific in their ordinariness: the downlevelling, and the ousting of everything personal and individual in man. As Ballard puts it in *High-Rise,* such cities are "not for man but for his absence."

Humanity is rigidly controlled by a system of regulations involving all aspects of life: work, leisure, and the family. There is a tight minute-by-minute schedule, any departure from which by an individual threatens to upset the entire urban organism, with its unending streams of people filling the City's streets. Human life has lost all value: it has become a hollow immediacy in the vastness, as the characters see it, of the time-extended City (the stories "The Concentration City", 1956, and "Billenium", 1961).

Ballard also has a cycle of stories about a more positive future: *Vermilion Sands* (1971), which is marked by a time-unity absent in his other collections of stories. Former film-stars and artists, poets and musicians, exist in a kind of dreamy torpor at the Vermilion Sands resort. Peacefulness, the heroes' relaxed state of mind, their sense of freedom and release—all these are in keeping with the surrounding "landscape with its imperceptible transition between the real and the superreal", the sand sea, the broad and level beaches, and the views through the shimmering sun-drenched air. Anyone who comes to live here discards all social links and duties as though he has slipped into a new dimension where time flows at a different and more leisurely pace, in greater placidity, permitting each to choose his own way of life.

The slackening of social links and the seemingly carefree life notwithstanding, we see a psychological crack-up in the people in the stories, and acute situations of conflict arise. The sunshine and the benign southern climate can neither avert nervous breakdowns nor repair broken lives. When one reads the stories one senses the frailty of this world of "beach fatigue": the characters' speech, behaviour and overall enervation create an impression of the transient nature of that world, its social and psychological instability, and fear of the future.

In the mid-sixties, Ballard gave thought to the need to update speculative fiction and find fresh artistic means of depicting the new complexities of life in Western society with its mounting social problems. In Ballard's view, there are several perceptual levels of the appraisement of events in the world: one refers to public events (from the first space-shots to the Vietnam war); another, to man's immediate physical environment; and a third to the inner world of psyche. Where these planes intersect, images are born.

The Atrocity Exhibition is based on this principle. As he has put it, the book depicts "the irrational side of modern society, the side of our culture that could be described as an atrocity exhibition." The "condensed novels" that make up *The Atrocity Exhibition* are in fact literary collages, fragments of present-day realities brought together and subordinated to a twisted and sick perception.

The mind of "T", the central figure, reels under the impact of what he sees in the street and on TV, and what he reads in the newspapers: the irrational cruelty that has become a norm of existence in society. This tears asunder, not only all nexuses of cause and effect but also spatio-temporal links, and he comes to reject the physical characteristics of a world submerged in social violence; he cannot accept "the present continuum of time and space" and withdraws "within the space of his own mind."

The travels of the characters in *The Drowned World, The Drought* and *The Crystal World* symbolize an ontological search for self, for integrity of mind, and attempts to regain the lost wholeness of the world. "T"'s road along the "inner landscape" of his psyche is indicative of his striving to understand society and thereby restore the self he has lost. But while Kerans, Ransom and Sanders are ultimately successful in this—if only in death—there is no destination for "T"; his road is split into final sections, at the end of

each of which downfall awaits him.

While in *The Drowned World; The Drought,* and *The Crystal World,* the world is a given fact, it becomes an absurdity in this novel. The hero's attempts to see some sense in chaos, end in the thinking individual losing the structure of his psyche. Time and reality disintegrate ("dissociation" is the word used), the hero himself vanishes, to reappear constantly under a new name: Talbot, Tallis, Trabert, Travers. The reshuffling of the planes of time and space, and the absence of chronological sequence are employed by the author to extract from the chaotic swirling of life in Western society the facts and events he needs to give shape to his concept. This enables him to show the brutal absurdity of life in Western society and define the cause of the disintegration of personality there.

The seventies brought a new dimension into the time problem in Ballard's books as compared to the sixties, with his focusing on a social understanding and analysis of modern society. He remains true to his concatenation of "outer" and "inner" landscapes, but the former have acquired ever greater significance, and now determine the action, becoming more self-contained and farther removed from the hero, yet not only preserving but increasing their power over his inner world. This is an artificial landscape created by man with the aid of the most up-to-date achievements of science and technology, a new habitat for man in which he disappears as an individual—individuality is superfluous in a standardized world. But what is more frightful is the dehumanization of personality, the restructuring of the system of values, with the "traditional" moral and ethical views yielding place to the "new freedom".

This problem is focal in *Crash*, in which Ballard delves into the moral condition of Western society with the aid of a sociological model of a man-car, a new socio-psychological type that has been brought forth by the "technological landscape". This is exemplified by Vaughan, prophet of a transmuted world governed by technology and sex. Social and personal restrictions on behaviour vanish, with man's existence turning into an uncontrolled spate of physiological impulses. This is a world governed by extra-human moral and ethical laws, where the concepts of Good and Evil become absurd, and what was previously held repugnant and horrifying is now a norm of life. The moral relativism that has spread throughout human life is emphasized by the new single-yardstick and narrowly-functional concept of time.

This prophet and his followers have need of neither past nor future: their sole concern is the fleeting instant, in which they can give vent to their biological instincts. The disintegration of time links in this story produces a far stronger impression than in the novels and stories of the sixties: here it is shown as taking place under the impact of a social atmosphere of cruelty and amorality.

The finale is alarming not in the death of the main character and the impending end of another but in Vaughan's image symbolizing the onset of the self-destruction of a social organism in which links between people have vanished. That is why the novel voices a protest against the moral condition of Western society. "I was trying to achieve complete honesty . . . Of course the book is a description of an obsession, an extreme metaphor at a time when only the extreme will do," as Ballard said during a 1975 interview.

It is easy to recognize the time-frame of this story, for the author has tried to address himself to contemporary life and to bring speculative fiction as close as possible to our own times and their conflicts and alarms. As he said in the same interview, "Arthur C. Clarke believes that the future of fiction is in space, that this is the only subject. But I'm

certain you can't have a serious fiction based on experience from which the vast body of readers and writers is excluded."

Time coordinates are defined even more distinctly and prcisely in the novel *Concrete Island* (1974), which is a kind of proving ground for the creation of a "borderline situation". The story is couched in the parable tradition, like Golding's *Lord of the Flies* or Kobo Abe's *The Woman in the Dunes.*

Forcibly extracted from time as he has known it, and placed in the "zero time" of the Concrete Island, where he is left to his own resources, Maitland begins to appraise his life and become aware that all the people about him prior to the car crash and in his past are alien to him and that all the time-links with friends and relatives have long been snapped. Having realized his utter estrangement from his past, he feels that the island has grown close to him in its coldness and soullessness, as well as its aloof timelessness, which completely release him from all obligations to others and to society. The void in Maitland's soul is related to the emptiness of the Island; Maitland clearly realizes that the island has become an exact model of his head. John Donne's dictum that "no man is an island; everybody is a part of a continent" is no longer applicable to a society in which each man is for and by himself.

Maitland's acquisition of knowledge of himself and the world ends in his finding his own essence. The conjunction of his own "inner landscape" and the concrete landscape is symbolic of bourgeois individualism as the basic life-determining factor of the soulless civilization that has been built on its foundation. For Maitland time in the surrounding world is replaced by time within his own person.

Although in *High-Rise* (1975) the individual's consciousness stands at the hub of the story, the investigation into urban civilization is conducted through a consideration of the population of a forty-story dwelling house in central London, whose architect envisages the high-rise building as an ideal refuge from the feverish pulsation of life in a present-day big city. Such an ambition is utopian, however, for social problems can be resolved only by social means, hence the tragedy that unfolds in the high-rise residence.

Cut off from all social links, its inhabitants lose all human semblance at catastrophic speed: it takes only a few days for the respectable doctors, lawyers, university teachers, and journalists to turn into gangs of thugs and pillagers, many episodes in the narrative being reminiscent of scenes in J.L. Godard's film *Weekend.* While *Concrete Island* deals with a present-day Robinson Crusoe, a lone anti-hero, *High-Rise* depicts a kind of anti-collective; the moral decay in Western society that the author comes out against is highlighted through the prism of today's problems. The inhabitants live in a "timeless zone", and have lost their sense of "yesterday" and "tomorrow". They stand in need of nothing more in life—neither knowledge nor revelation; physiological satisfaction of the current instant is sufficient. As already noted, this disjunction of time-links differs distinctly from Ballard's work of the sixties, in which the main characters are able to find themselves. In *High-Rise*, the liberation from time carries a more profound social meaning: it is a portent of what does not yet exist, but may come about.

The time problem has been focal throughout Ballard's writing career. Almost twenty years after the publication of his first story he said: "From the start what I wanted to do was to write a science-fiction book that got away from space-ships, the far future and all that stuff . . . to writing a kind of adult science fiction based upon the present." The more acute and painful problems of the life surrounding the writer have provided the material

for his novels and stories, which are designed to show the "crisis consciousness" of present-day Western society. He speaks the bitter and sometimes brutal truth about the world he lives in. As Douglas Reed has so aptly put it, "If the mighty themes powering civilization towards an uncertain tomorrow are to be understood, the essential role played by frontiersmen like J.G. Ballard must be recognized".

Cy Chauvin has edited the fanzine Seldon's Plan *for a number of years. Although an American, and despite his surname, he has long had an interest in British sf and has contributed on occasions to such UK fanzines as* Cypher *and* Vector. *This is his first appearance in* Foundation.

A Transatlantic Literature, Hurrah!

CY CHAUVIN

American and British science fiction, although written in the same language, are very different. This difference has perhaps been less noticed since 1970, when *New Worlds* magazine ceased regular publication, and the influence of the British New Wave became dissipated into the American-dominated publishing scene. The British critical journals, *Foundation* and *Vector,* while generally superior to any comparable publications in the USA, have never had wide popularity in America, and so even the secondary influence of British attitudes and opinions on sf has largely been missing here.

The differences between science fiction in the two countries can be traced back to the origin of sf. Although Brian Aldiss points out that sf was born in Britain, "and then the USA became its orphanage" [1], it was subsequently baptised in the American pulps, and its agnostic origins forgotten. It evolved there during the lifetimes of most of those who now write it. Many have stressed the in-group, "hothouse" nature of those magazines: the writers constantly read each other. Perhaps, because of the very nature of writing, each worked in private, but the input of these writers was from other writers and editors in the field, and a very select group at that. The stories about John W. Campbell and H.L. Gold and their influence on writer's careers are so widely circulated that I hardly need to repeat them here. But not only was American science fiction concerned primarily with the evolution of ideas and devices, it was fiction drawn from other fiction, not from life. It was even fiction *about* other fiction (Howard Schoenfeld's "Built Up Logically", published in 1949, was the first piece of sf-inspired metafiction).

Science fiction in Britain, on the other hand, evolved from the ongoing tradition of English literature, and even at its worst has stayed a part of it. Sf writers in Britain have rarely become as serious about the devices of sf as have their American counterparts (in

the sense that these become the focus of the story); they seem more conscious of the importance of characterization and style in their work. Perhaps this also explains why aliens, gods and superheroes are absent in British sf: they are not a proper study of character (or else a character impossible to study properly). The major exceptions to this prospectus, Arthur C. Clarke and Ian Watson, have different obsessions than most American writers. It is also typical, for instance, that Joanna Russ's novel *And Chaos Died* was criticized by an Australian reviewer (George Turner) for being too conscious of what a science fiction novel ought to do (and thus, perhaps, failing in other ways as a novel), while Samuel R. Delany's essay "To Read *The Dispossessed*" (in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*) criticizes Le Guin's novel almost entirely on its failure to achieve strict science fiction integrity in terms of its premise and extrapolation.

Mark Adlard also brought up the difference in American and British attitudes in a letter to *Vector* in 1973.[2] He compared two quotes, one by C.S. Lewis in *Of Other Worlds,* and the other by Isaac Asimov from one of the University of Kansas SF Film Lectures series. Asimov said: "The sf written in the 40s became fact in the 60s. When Armstrong stepped onto the moon, it was justification of the work done by writers in John Campbell's stable." Lewis, on the other hand, wrote: "If some fatal progress of applied science ever enables us in fact to reach the moon, the real journey will not at all satisfy the impulse which we now seek to gratify by writing such stories." Adlard developed a theory of what he called the "Other Tradition" in British science fiction, a tradition in contrast to America's pulp heritage, and he cites Stapledon, Lewis, Huxley and Orwell as composing this tradition—and emphasizes that none of these writers especially concerned themselves with technology. I am not sure if I can consider four writers constituting even the beginning of a whole other tradition in literature. The science fictions these writers produced seem like sports, freaks, and not like the present scene in Britain. The same sort of "Other Tradition" Adlard creates also occurred in the USA, and could be composed of such novels as George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides* (1949), Vonnegut's *Player Piano* and Bernard Wolfe's *Limbo* (1952). But this is not a tradition so much as a series of (fortunate) accidents. And to identify the real differences in approach one must focus on contemporary sf.

The real differences in attitudes between American and British writers became apparent beginning in 1964, during sf's New Wave period. During this time, writers began to look outside sf for the answers to the dissatisfaction they felt with the science fiction of the time, and the answers they found (and the places they looked) differed quite radically.

In the USA, many of the sources tended to be other types of genre fiction. Roger Zelazny brought some of the pared down style from mystery writers like Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett and coupled it with his own outrageous imagery. He also appropriated gods and other devices from fantasy and religious myth, as did Delany. R.A. Lafferty seemed to take the American Tall Tale and make science fiction from it. Farmer did pornography, then Joyce. James Blish wrote at this time that "What appears to be a genuine change in both auctorial approach and reader popularity has been taking place in science fiction. It is best exemplified by the careers—or anyhow, course to date—of John Brunner, Samuel R. Delany, Philip José Farmer, Frank Herbert and Roger Zelazny."[3] Blish then explained that each of these writers exhausted the resources of conventional science fiction with a single climactic work, and then went on to write a very long story or novel which emphasized character, and resembled a mainstream novel

of the conventional kind. Then each of these writers went on to the Novel of Apparatus. Blish disapproved of this last phase, even though it won for these writers their greatest recognition in terms of awards, because it involved borrowing from other writers rather than following science fiction to its own conclusions. He said that writers may have turned to the Novel of Apparatus because

> We seem all to yearn, in our various ways, to be respectable, to be told that we are as good as the mainstream, that we are the inheritors of Kafka or Daniel Defoe of James Joyce or John dos Passos or (even) J.R.R. Tolkien, or anybody else from whom we can borrow glory by an imitation of his manner.[4]

Blish pinpointed quite accurately the reason for much of the change in science fiction at this time, although (as he later admitted) borrowing from other writers is not in itself so terrible, since the whole of fiction is built up from the work of other, often unrecognized, authors.

In Britain, writers did not turn to other genres for new material, or to individual writers from the past, so much as to the avante-garde in general, and to journalism and realism. Brian Aldiss suggested in a speech given in Rio de Janiero in 1969 that "locations like the Manski Islands, Anguilla, Vietnam, Berlin, the Negev" might be "less stale" than others used in sf—such as the corridors of a giant spaceship.[5] This same attitude lead John Brunner to remark, "I have found that writing about the arbitrarily far future is too damned easy . . . The closer one comes to the present, the more one's material is conditioned by—what can one say?—honesty, perhaps: by the evidence of one's own reason."[6]

This tendency to think that contemporary realism was the solution to the problems of originality and significance in sf was particularly strong among those writers who were frequently published in *New Worlds* (including such Americans as John Sladek and Thomas M. Disch). Michael Moorcock went even so far as to say in an interview in 1969 that ". . . the new wave has to do with science fiction (while) *New Worlds* has *not* to do with science fiction. New Wave science fiction is . . . traditional science fiction written with more gusto . . . perhaps it's more colourful, perhaps it's more sophisticated in some of its characterizations—but it is *still* essentially science fiction . . . Whereas, what *New Worlds* (writers are) trying to do is . . . to write something that is essentially different."[7] Later, in an editorial written for *New Worlds Quarterly* 2, Moorcock went even further: "Sf is written within what is at best a minor artform. It would be foolish to claim more than that." And: "Reasonable sf readers accept the fact that sf, as such, can never by its very *nature* offer the richer, more profound pleasures of the best novels."[8] The general attitude of *New Worlds* writers was that the devices of sf were stale, and the fiction poorly written or juvenile, all of which was true, at least in part. But the conclusion they came to was that science fiction was juvenile and badly written because of its devices. Outer space and aliens were inherently juvenile.

This attitude never gained wide acceptance in America. Science fiction is not inherently an inferior—or superior—artform, but simply another branch of fiction, with its own peculiar characteristics, faults and virtues. In contrast to the quotes from Moorcock above, John Barth said in an interview in this same period that

> What (my favorite) writers . . . share (except for Robbe-Grillet) is a more or less fantastical, or as Borges would say, "irrealist", view of realism; and this . . . is all that I would confidently predict is likely to characterise the prose fiction of the 1970s. I welcome this (if it turns out to be . . . true), because unlike those critics who regard realism as what literature

has been aiming at all along, I tend to regard it as a kind of *abberation* in the history of literature.[9]

Barth's prediction about the growth of metafiction turned out to be accurate, and John Crowley's excellent *Little, Big* shows that science fiction writers are not unattracted by this new genre. But perhaps it should not be surprising that among those who write metafiction—Barth, Pynchon, Coover, Barthelme—not a single one is British. The British could not embrace this new genre while they believed in the overpowering significance of realism, since although the contemporary world predominates in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and other work in this genre, the same sort of details and images that sf writers use to achieve verisimilitude in their stories are used by writers of metafiction to destroy the reality of the contemporary world. Metafiction is fiction drawn from other fiction, just as was pulp fiction, although (of course) much more sophisticated.

The source of the respect that Blish said sf writers desired seems to have differed in both countries as well. In England, again, the ties to the conventional literary establishment seemed much closer, and *New Worlds* received several grants from the Arts Council to continue publication. In America, the measure of success seemed more diverse: some valued the respect of scientists, sociologists and futurists; others, the general public, in terms of slick magazine sales or bestseller status for their novels; and for still more, recognition via the Hugo and Nebula Awards was enough. Respect from the general literary establishment was in many cases not only undesired, but even feared: "Take science fiction out of the classroom and put it back in the gutter where it belongs" was a popular phrase coined at the time. James Blish wrote in that same essay on the Novel of Apparatus that "the only kind of respect that counts . . . is self-respect". And:

> I maintain that sensibilities of the high order that Brunner has shown should follow their own laws and make their own experiments, not let themselves be overwhelmed by the shadows of old monuments and the adumbrations of respectability.[10]

The need for respect and prestige may account for other differences in attitude and social action that ultimately influences prose. I think it particularly curious that British sf writers work almost solely as individuals, while American writers talk a great deal of being individualists, yet are far more prone to act in groups, and write novels and stories in response to social movements. It seems significant that all the great (and even not-so-great) collaborating teams in sf have been American—Pohl & Kornbluth; Pournelle & Niven—while British writers like Priest and Aldiss have stressed in essays how they work alone.* Americans are also much more prone to believe in the collective progress of science fiction, equating new novels and short stories (seemingly) with new developments in science. Joanna Russ's "The Extraordinary Voyages of Amelie Bertrand" could not exist without the writings of Jules Verne, just as Einstein was ultimately dependant upon the work of Newton and even Gallileo. In contrast, Brian Aldiss writes "There is no progress in the arts. Every writer worth anything is a new beginning." And: "One way you can be individual is to find your own audience and your own markets, without relying on ready-made ones."[11] The Science Fiction Writers of America, another group, is of course a creation of American sf writers, although sf writers of other nationalities belong.

This tendency for American writers of sf to work and think of themselves as a part of a

* The only British collaboration of note in recent years is *Under Heaven's Bridge*—and Ian Watson collaborated with American Michael Bishop to produce it!

group (the whole idea behind Aldiss's phrase, "science fiction as empire", which he deprecates) means that they are more often influenced by trends, or by the reactions of other writers. Feminism has had a much wider influence upon science fiction in America than in Britain, for instance. Its influence has not been restricted to women writers, either; John Varley, Samuel R. Delany and John Crowley all regularly examine feminist themes or accept feminist theories in their fiction. Norman Spinrad complained at length about the few reviews his novel *A World Between* received—he felt it received little attention because it examined feminism in unorthodox ways and so offended reviewers that they ignored it.[12] In contrast, Doris Lessing seems less and less happy that feminist readers try to claim her novels for their own.

Michael Moorcock's hypothesis that the techniques of science fiction could be used to examine the contemporary world was finally proven by J.G. Ballard in his novels *Crash* (1973), *Concrete Island* (1974) and *High-Rise* (1975). *Crash* describes the psychological impact of a technological artifact (the automobile) upon one man in very precise, scientific-sounding detail; the automobile may be a very ordinary and accepted piece of contemporary technology, but the novel deals with aberrations, rather than banal normalities (the complaint of some sf writers when asked why they don't write about the "real world"). *Concrete Island* is a contemporary Robinsonade about a man marooned on a traffic island in the middle of the London freeway system, instead of on a desert island or in outer space. *High-Rise* transforms a giant modern apartment block into a self-contained world filled with civilized people gone savage—a disaster novel in miniature or a "generation spaceship" firmly bolted to earth. Robert Silverberg's novel *Dying Inside* is an American example of this technique. In this novel, telepathy is substituted in places where other authors might use literary conventions, such as changing point of view, stream-of-consciousness, etc.—it is the devices of literature made real. But Silverberg's lead was not encouraged or followed by other writers in America, and he finally quit writing for a long period in despair. In contrast, British writers are still being told (even by their readers) to concern themselves "more directly with *our* world, *our* planet, *our* lives, utilising the imaginative leaps of science fiction technique . . . which fuse science fiction and mainstream fiction." (letter from an English lecturer, *Interzone* 4, Spring 1983).[13]

This often stated desire to fuse science fiction and mainstream literature may spring from the more serious attention given fiction in Britain and from the belief that ordinary life ("our planet, our lives") is the proper study of fiction. Every major British sf writer (again, except for those odd ducks Watson and Clarke) have written at least one disaster novel, and what makes a disaster novel so attractive but the contrast between ordinary life before the disaster and what happens after? It makes the dull and ordinary things of everyday life—food, shelter, even children (as in *Greybeard*)—especially valued; how extraordinary, one survivor might say to another, to find that fifty-year-old can of baked beans in the rubble. We'll feast tonight! The ability of its writers to depict everyday life so well is one of the strengths of British science fiction. Perhaps because American writers believe in heroes, disaster novels have never had the overwhelming popularity they have in Britain; superman and our pioneering spirit will save us from the bombs of World War III. America never felt directly the disaster of World War II, and since sf is (as I have emphasized) written by a generation still alive and writing a disaster here may not seem as realistic. The "rite of passage" story is the standard, not the disaster novel.

American sf is still much more romantic and playful. Gregory Benford says that

British sf "has what seems to be a 'preferred voice', which is cool, distant, ironic and, for the narrator, rather non-involved."[14] He says he believes that this is a symptom of class origin. This implied formalism comes as a part of an ongoing literary tradition. The feminist influence on American sf, the influence of the media and hard technology are all part of the American writers' idea to make sf into something more than literature. Feminists certainly hope to use sf as a tool to change sexist attitudes, not simply create a perfect literature that exists in a universe by itself. For instance, I'm not sure that Kafka means much to them; I'm not sure that he should. Their uses for sf may not be our own.

Despite all these differences, science fiction is still a transatlantic literature. The differences among individual writers within each country—or even between individual works by the same writer—are actually far greater than the collective differences I've outlined here. We are also gradually creating our own "ongoing tradition" in science fiction from both America and Britain, and its critical and historical apparatus (and from work in other countries, too). The differences in the work are valuable, and give sf writers some perspective on themselves and their fiction that they would not have if sf were written in only one country.

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Josef Nesvadba was born in Prague in 1926. By profession he is a psychiatrist, who is now particularly interested in the role of art and literature in therapy. In the past he worked in Haiphong, Vietnam, and Vienna, Austria—his Vietnamese experience giving rise to a political sf novel, The Invention of Dr Dong *(1964).*

Other publications range from translations of poetry (Coleridge, Spender, Auden and Day Lewis) through drama and short stories (later identified as sf, and collected as The Death of Tarzan, *1958;* Einstein's Brain *1960; and others) to an sf thriller,* How to Pretend Death *(1971), and a historical detective story,* The Case of the Golden Buddha *(1960).*

Lately Dr Nesvadba has been combining his literary and psychiatric interests in "psycho-fictions" such as Driver's License for Parents *(1979) and* Ideas of an old Psychiatrist *(1981). In 1974 he launched a polemic against the dire von Däniken, entitled* Delusions of Erik N.

Several of his stories have been filmed and televised, and many have been published all over Europe, often in book form. In the Anglo-Saxon publishing world he has alas only been represented by the collection In the Footsteps of the Abominable Snowman *(Gollancz 1970; aka* The Lost Face, *Taplinger).*

Josef Nesvadba is a Guest of Honour at Seacon 84, the joint Eurocon-Eastercon to be held at Brighton during Easter 1984; and while in England he hopes to do some research towards a book of alternate history, as explained subsequently . . .

The View from Prague

JOSEF NESVADBA

My relation to present day English sf writing is a part of my relationship to English literature and the English language as a whole. Before the war, when I was ten years old, I was a pupil of the Prague English Grammar school—a unique institution here. We were taught by a special method, developed as I suspect for the colonies. Our text books worked with pictures: father being depicted as a tall negro with a fez and mother as a lady with a jar on her head. They really didn't resemble our Czech fathers and mothers, and I often wonder today how much these pictures influenced our oedipal feelings. However we were proud to visit the school and read English literature in translation, perhaps a little too early. Wells, Huxley, Shaw have been the authors most admired by me. You must bear in mind that my nation, being what it is and where it is, developed a very strong translator tradition and in opposition to German cultural influence translated almost everything worthwhile first from French and then from English.

Karel Čapek was of course the chief promoter of Anglo-Czech relations; his plays were performed in London, he met many writers and was often accused by his enemies of copying them (*The Makropolos Secret* being written simultaneously with *Back to Methuselah,* etc). H.G. Wells came here in person for the famous antifascist PEN congress before the war, his *Outline of History* was published here and became my chief source of independent historical information ever after. We had wonderful and often

adventurous teachers, who came over in the first place from the then Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. But they had to leave after the Munich agreement and the Nazi occupation of the rest. I still remember their names: Bancalari, Richards, Weyr and the American Horrock. Our school was closed and I had to still my hunger for English mainly through reading English books. Once, reading an old Czech translation of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* I discovered a mistake committed a century ago. ("A thousand slimy things lived on and so did I . . . " says the Mariner. The Czech translator didn't realize that this means "Onwards" and made a cannibal out of the hero, who thus devoured his dead comrades.) So I decided to retranslate the poem. It was difficult, but in the end this became my first published book, immediately after the war. It was of course a correct but clumsy translation, as I realized later. During the war people listened clandestinely to the BBC here and as the Czech news services were jammed they often asked me to translate the English service. I developed a habit of listening to the world service ever after, so that even in the sixties when I visited London I had to start the day by listening to it and not the stations nearby.

After the war Edwin Muir with his wife Villa came to work with the British Council here. He helped us to publish an anthology of contemporary English poets and introduced us to a countryman of our own: Franz Kafka, whom he had translated into English and who had been published only once in Czech and was totally unknown up to that date. Theoreticians who are today looking for writers that influenced me often argue that Coleridge and Kafka have been, besides Čapek, "responsible". In the case of Coleridge there definitely is one influence. There is the famous commentary he made about his face ("Looking dull and content and not expressing his real feelings"). This remark fascinated me. I published in the translated book his portrait with the quotation and this was perhaps the first inspiration of my longer story "The Lost Face", later often translated and even filmed; it got a prize in Trieste in 1964. Muir introduced me to another famous visitor we had here immediately after the war: Dylan Thomas came over and stayed for some time. I spent whole nights translating for him. One morning he made me tell him about my future creative plans (I was already studying medicine). After hearing several ideas (which I thought I would write as plays) he said dryly: "That sounds like science fiction to me . . ." But I am afraid he wasn't very fond of it. Nevertheless this was the first time I heard the term.

In the Fifties our societies developed in different ways. I had written those planned dramas, but had little success with them. So I decided to publish their contents as stories in book form. This was my first book here, called *The Death of Tarzan* (years later I learned that Mike Moorcock also started with a similar title) and it was a success, so I started to write similar short stories, which were called "different". A firm here, in co-operation with Hamlyn, published an English collection. Only then were my stories called science fiction. Avram Davidson bought several of them for the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* an unprecedented event at that time (these were the first years of the Sixties) and John Brunner reviewed them, writing a sentence which I haven't forgotten to this day: "It is no surprise that science fiction is being produced in Czechoslovakia as it is an industrialized country . . ." Is this true? Is this a condition for every sf production? Certainly England and Bohemia became industrialized early, perhaps too early, and there is a tendency today to consider the classical industrialized belt that starts in Silesia and ends in Manchester as a relic, a museum where Japanese school children will be making excur-

sions one day, they of course being sf fans. On the other hand it is true that the genre is understandable and of interest only to people who know the problems of industry. In this I see an added faculty of science fiction: it can develop a factor of mutual understanding.

We discussed this with John Brunner, whom I met personally at the Pacificon in Oakland in the year 1964, Don Wollheim helping me with the invitation at that time. I also met many American sf authors, who are famous today, among them Clifford Simak, who still spoke several Czech words, inherited from his father. A year later I met Brian Aldiss, Mike Moorcock and Kingsley Amis among others at the World Convention in London. By that time I was already a member of a writers' union here. And I was surprised to discover that there are similar types of writer in every writers' group in this world, so it seemed to me. You meet the "homeric" narrative type, who writes as he talks just for the "joy of fabulation". There is the romantic type who reveals his secrets in a circumspect way. There is the teacher type, who treats his readers as his pupils. There is the unaccepted one, who is against everybody, a genius for himself. There are literary women, appearing long before women's lib started; and last but not least there is that excellent author, whom everyone would like to meet, but who is boring when you speak with him, because he can "only" write. Having some experience with group therapy I often think how many antagonisms would be resolved if all these writers' groups would realize their similarity all over the world.

But of course at the same time I observed differences, during my short encounters. The problems of English writers especially were sometimes esoteric to me, so that I had a feeling of envy: they can afford them. "I would like to have such troubles", is a saying at home and I thought often of it. My second impression was a sort of "insularity" that we often interpret as contempt. When I brought my first book (and the only one) published by Gollancz to a colleague of mine in London, he wasn't much impressed. "Thank you, I shall give it to my grandson . . . ," he commented when he saw that it was sf. Psychiatrists in the Anglo-Saxon countries never understood why I try to write stories and novels; literature is not in such esteem there as in my country, where it has always helped to establish national identity.

I shall be sixty in two years and ponder often about the wisdom of my Anglo-orientation. Central and Eastern Europe never interested the English much and I have often witnessed that they are better informed about the situation in Sydney or Johannesburg than about Vienna or Prague. This has of course historical reasons. And so I visualize a new novel of the "parallel history" type . . .

Our countries were close when Protestant thinking started, Hus being influenced by Wycliffe. Suppose Bohemia wasn't recatholicized after the Thirty Years War . . . Suppose an imperial Bohemian protestant kingdom developed . . . Suppose the two Kingdoms—of Bohemia and England—end up signing a treaty (when a rebellion is subdued somewhere between them, a Catholic uprising, say in Bavaria, in its capital of course), a treaty called the Munich Agreement . . .

Suppose . . .

Ian Watson is the longest-serving member of this journal's editorial board, as well as being one of the liveliest and most original of British sf writers. The following interview, conducted in 1982 by Jeffrey M. Elliot (an American citizen), was originally scheduled to appear in a new US magazine which seems to have been still-born. Mr Watson's sense of editorial propriety prevented him from offering the piece to Foundation. *However, when I heard of its existence I asked to see it, and then insisted on including it in this special issue. It's a fine interview, and affords us a glimpse—long overdue in these pages—of the life of the man who has been responsible for so many of the Features you have read in* Foundation *in the past eight years. (DP)*

Gardening Words: An Interview with Ian Watson

JEFFREY M. ELLIOT

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

IW: I suppose when I was fourteen or fifteen. That was when I wrote my first work to appear in print and be paid for: a couple of articles apiece in the gardening magazines *Amateur Gardening* and *Popular Gardening*. The articles were about cacti and succulents, a consuming passion of mine at the time (perhaps because they were exotic, alien-seeming species, from deserts far away from cool, wet England)—though the final article, on "Growing the Sacred Cactus", about the peyotl plant, reminds me that I had also been reading Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* and De Ropp's *Drugs and the Mind* and was beginning to think about altered states of consciousness. Yet I also recall being very certain that these pieces of horticultural journalism were not "real" writing; and I was also penning lush, doom-laden imagist poems about jungles and orchids and seascapes. Here's one slightly more astringent specimen which appeared in a poetry magazine when I got to Oxford, under a pretentious pseudonym:

Sea-Fret

Gulls pining in mist.
The sun a lemon
Distended by miles of air
Between us; no warmth
Comes from shell-bitten rocks
Or waves sucking at my feet,
No warmth from eroding sea.
The sailor's mother calls it
A poisoned shirt around the world.

I also wrote three short novels while I was at Oxford: two of them contemporary fantasies done in a highly overblown decadent style (shades of Corvo, Firbank, Huysmans) and one more straightforward contemporary piece about a love affair turning sour due to pregnancy. The trouble was, I wanted to write but I hadn't really got anything to write about—too much "style", too little subject—which is an easy enough fix to get into

during an education at Oxford, where Oscar Wilde once told an inquisitive aunt, "My dear, one doesn't write *about* things. One just writes."

JE: Did you always feel confident you would succeed?

IW: Oh, I liked doom-laden life-deadlines. "If I haven't had a book published by thirty," I promised myself, "then I'll . . ." What? Evaporate? Have a lobotomy? Goodness knows. The age of thirty was conveniently far away. Besides, as an insurance policy I noted that Giuseppe di Lampedusa only had his first novel published at the age of seventy-nine or so. I wouldn't say that I was looking to a writing career as such, so much as to capsulating and immortalizing my own unique individuality in a glittering, perfectly shaped (but probably not too long) masterpiece: sort of candied soul. Actually I did make it by the age of thirty, just; but by then I had changed, largely because of living abroad.

JE: What motivates your desire to write?

IW: On a BBC literary talk-show they like to ask the question of authors: Which would you rather be thought, a teacher, a storyteller or an enchanter? Invariably authors who are asked this question pitch for the "storyteller" angle, maybe with a bit of "enchanter" thrown in. Obviously no one wishes to be thought a teacher, a didact—that's earnest and boring. and the cult of amusement prevails today. So much so that Lionel Fanthorpe brought another talk-show to a total standstill (after notching up a radio "first", of arm-wrestling on the air) by saying, "Well, isn't it better to write books that are dull but instructive, rather than entertaining and useless?" Half a minute's silence ensued, followed by a gasped, "We can't follow that . . ." A lot of great literature has always been concept-oriented and "didactic"—without being boring. Chaucer, Milton, Blake . . . I regard my books as an ongoing research programme: into mind, reality and such. But a sprightly one, I hope. I write to discover—and to communicate some discoveries. Rather than just to reinforce what readers already know. Of course, a lot of readers prefer to have what they already know reinforced. And publishers often prefer to cater to this, since it's safer. Hence: sequels, trilogies.

JE: Where did your interest in science fiction begin?

IW: With a British comic called *The Eagle,* featuring Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future, which first came out in 1950. Concerning the green nasty Treens of Venus and their big-domed, skinny leader the Mekon on his floating chair. And the nice benign Therons —beyond the flame zones around the equator.

JE: What is it about science fiction that attracts you?

IW: It's been said that much mainstream literature says everything about nothing, whereas sf says nothing about everything. It's this potential scope of the genre that appeals to me. Anything, anywhere, any possibility world can be taken as real and true; though all too often only hi-jinks occur in the given environment. Still, I'm a great believer in nuggets of gold amidst the dross.

JE: Which science fiction authors influenced you most?

IW: All, none, it's hard to say. I was influenced more by the genre as a whole, than by particular exemplary heroes.

JE: When did you start writing science fiction?

IW: I did write a couple of rather poor sf short stories in 1966 or so; but my heart wasn't in them, largely because at the time I still didn't believe that sf was real writing. It was only when I got to the 21st century wonderland and poisonland of Tokyo, Japan, a year or two later that I was compelled to begin writing sf as a psychological survival strategy, to cope

with the environment. So: about 1969. I'd been teaching conventional literature in Tanzania before that; and while East Africa came as a political eye-opener, the university environment itself was very British and orthodox, the ivory towers of Oxford transplanted in concrete to the tropics. But teaching and trying to write conventional literature in Tokyo as the clouds of poison gas rolled by, as earthquakes rumbled through megalopolis, as students and police dressed like samurai fought pitched battles, as advertising balloons bobbed in the smog, as robots and space monsters capered in the department stores, as industrial pollution diseases sprang up right and left, began to seem rather irrelevant. Of course, you could always immerse yourself in Noh Drama or Kabuki and ignore the rest, but the rest rather intruded when you had to buy respirators to sleep in . . . Mind you, I'm not saying that Japan was some sort of Hell. It was also intoxicatingly invigorating. When we got back to Britain we were like 33⅓ records playing at 78 rpm. Britain seemed to be located behind a wall of glass three feet thick: the nineteenth century, but equipped with motor cars. And then I got a job teaching Futures Studies instead (including sf).

JE: Many authors, particularly at the beginning, have literary role models. Did you?

IW: Not as regards sf, no.

JE: Can you say something about direct influences on your style?

IW: Beardsley. Baron Corvo. Flaubert. Gautier. Firbank. Huysmans. And company. In encouraging me to do away with art for art's sake, style for style's sake, beauty in itself.

JE: How would you describe your style? Does it have any distinguishing characteristics?

IW: This is a hard one, because I've had such varied readings on it—ranging from "direct and vivid" through to "clumpy and awkward". I think in my case a lot depends on the prior prejudices or sympathies of the reader. Some people are excited by what I do; others it turns off. Those who are excited find the style exciting enough; those who aren't find it the opposite. I mean, on the one hand you have Roger Zelazny writing of a story of mine: "a specimen of writing which makes me wonder whether the author might not have made an equally respected name for himself as a poet." And on the other hand . . . but why should I quote the infidels? Of course, you're asking me to describe my own style rather than say how others describe it. But can an author really do this himself, unless he is as hyperconscious about style as Flaubert was; something which I regard as a fascinating disease. Perhaps I could say, at least, that it tends to be fairly metaphorical. I like colourful metaphors and similes.

JE: Do you remember the circumstances of your first sale (both your first story and first novel)?

IW: The first story sale, to *New Worlds,* came about partly through sheer annoyance at the self-indulgence of the *New Worlds* crowd—if they can publish this stuff, they can bloody well publish me too.

The first novel (*The Embedding*) I wrote in a kind of hectic fit, while commuting on the train from Oxford to Birmingham. Gollancz, to whom I sent it, patiently explained that there was a good novel lurking in there if I could be bothered to rewrite it in a more straightforward, less embedded way—which I quickly did.

JE: Do you keep an ideal reader in mind when you write?

IW: The feedback I've had, in fan letters, reviews, at sf conventions and so on, fairly well shows that there isn't any ideal reader. Different people are fired by entirely different things; so trying to construct a story for a consensus reader would be a hamstringing waste

of time. My composite reader is a kaleidoscope: some parts of which are cool, sane, rational and healthily imaginative; other parts mystical and into their own heads; still others at once mystical and practical; and a few parts are completely round the twist, dangerously so. (I've been threatened with violence for "fucking with (one reader's) head".)

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

IW: Make a coffee, light a cigarette, and plunge right in a moment later. I am itchy to start.

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

IW: I work from about seven in the morning until midday. If it's raining or Winter and we aren't going out, I'll work through the afternoon too. If it isn't I'll do gardening or build a wall or whatever else is on the manual labour agenda. Evenings, Judy and I generally play darts and drink beer and talk, and try to come up with new ideas. I never burn the midnight oil. My brain works freshest in the mornings. Sentences are clearer then. As the day wears on, I overload.

JE: Where do you work? Can you describe the setting?

IW: A small upstairs room with a bay window, at the front of the house, overlooking the Scottish baronial lodge gates of the Manor House, the large ironstone-walled vegetable allotments, and the junction of the main road through the village with a smaller country lane. It's lively. There are non-stop events outside: rallies of penny-farthing bicycles coming down the hill, vintage cars heading for rallies, herds of sheep, passing tourists, tractors towing bales of hay, combine harvesters, flour lorries, scrap metal lorries, low-flying aircraft, the local millionaire's helicopter, autogyros and hot air balloons wandering from the Silverstone motor racing circuits (we can hear the engines revving up like faint thunder ten miles away), local riders astride their horses, racers from the Towcester race course being exercised, the bloodthirsty Hunt, dogs, cats, pony traps, teams of (apparently) Vietnamese bicyclists, parties of ramblers with boots, thick socks, walking sticks and knapsacks. Not all at once, of course.

I work at a small old oak table with a manual typewriter and a couple of spotlights shining on it. (I like bright light.) The small room is crammed with books and files. But tidily.

JE: Do you need a particular environment in which to write?

IW: I once worried mildly that I might, because the first novel (non-sf) that I wrote happened to be written in a particular house. But for me there's no magic about one place, any more than about writing in green ink with a quill pen. No one is going to be a genuine professional writer if they set up fussy fetichistic rules about their favourite fountain pen or cushion.

JE: Is emotional stability necessary to write well?

IW: I don't myself find emotional slop and mess very helpful. A few writers seem to thrive on it; or at least that's their excuse.

JE: How about financial security? Can the lack thereof be detrimental to good writing?

IW: I can't say that I've been at all financially secure for the last three years, since the Recession started, compounded in Britain by the mad policies of the Tory Government. 1981 was very worrying, 1982 is okay so far—but there's no security as such. Financially I'm okay for a few months ahead; by then I hope I'll be okay for another few months. If that's security, then I'm feeling relatively secure right now; but I don't think that anyone

else would regard it as security. More like hanging on to the edge of a cliff, or balancing on a tightrope.

Mind, this is all comparative. Even at the worst low points I'm better off as regards optimistic prospects and breaks than 3½ million unemployed people here, including school leavers who have no hope at all. And even *that* is comparative to the starving, bombed, tortured and hopeless elsewhere. But equally, what is financial security under the threat of nuclear war? This constantly dwarfs worries about how I'll pay my income tax (to buy new missiles). So in short there is no security at all. This doesn't put me off writing as well as I can, though.

JE: What would you consider the best intellectual training for a would-be science fiction writer?

IW: For me, living in other cultures, non-European ones. Though I suppose this isn't strictly an "intellectual" training. Well, then: omnivorousness. Plus, learning how to perceive patterns, cross-connections. So maybe the answer is gestalt game-playing. And applying this to ideas, to social relations, to psychology.

JE: How does the idea of a book or story come to you? Can you give an example?

IW: Usually by two or more disparate things suddenly connecting up, or because of a sudden inversion of the familiar. For instance my story "Returning Home" (in my collection *Sunstroke and Other Stories,* and in *Omni* for December 1982), about the neutron bomb. We'd slept in our car overnight while returning home and felt like refugees from something. We were brooding about weapons that destroy people but not property, in a transport cafe over breakfast early in the morning. What is the opposite of such a weapon? Obviously something that destroys property but not people. But how? And with what consequences?

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

IW: I used to, always. I would do reams of research, card index it etc. Now sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't. It depends on the book. *Deathhunter,* for instance, was a purely invented novel. (Or was it? I did read a few books about the psychology of dying.) *Chekhov's Journey,* my latest, I did a lot of reading for, as necessary Chekhovian Russian background. But often, once done and absorbed, it's better to junk the research—and invent. Still, at least at novel length, I generally do need some basis to invent on.

Also, it isn't always such a good idea to research and get it right. What's right this year might be wrong next year. This happened with *The Martian Inca.* I did a lot of research on the meteorology of Mars, so of course I knew that the polar caps of Mars are frozen CO_2. On the very day that the bound proofs of the book arrived, so did a copy of *New Scientist* with a lovely picture of the North Pole of Mars on the cover, and banner headlines: "Water Ice on Mars!" I had to change, in bound proof, sentences and even whole paragraphs—in exactly the same number of characters and spaces. That took some doing, I can tell you.

JE: Do you outline a book before you sit down to write?

IW: I did so with my first three novels. I had a general outline of ideas, background, characters, events (not necessarily in that order of importance) on file cards. Thereafter I've made notes, but not tried to map the books in advance. In the case of *Miracle Visitors* I had no idea at all how the book would be able to resolve itself, and the flight of the Ford Thunderbird to the Moon just happened, as did the "aliens" encountered there, both of

which seemed to me utterly absurd and crazy, till I realized that that was what was right about them. And in *God's World,* after one of the characters had been murdered, I realized in horror that my heroine just had to be the person responsible. I recall writing on the manuscript in protest, at that point: "How on Earth can *she*—my heroine!—have done this, and still be a heroine?" But she had, and she was, and there was a reason for it, as I found out.

JE: Does writing come easily to you? If not, how do you ease the process?

IW: It comes easily. Not that what I write first off is necessarily any good. I rewrite several times; but it doesn't come hard. Even when I'm rewriting the same thing over and over to try to get it right, the process is pleasant.

JE: Which do you find the easiest—generating ideas, developing characters, or creating plots?

IW: I suppose as a generalization the ideas come first, but not as naked equations. Already, or very soon, the ghosts of half-glimpsed characters and events hover close. Perhaps therefore the answer is that the ideas come hardest, even though I don't suffer from any particular idea drought, because once I have the idea characters and plot emerge quite easily. Of course, some stories bog down or have a serious flaw in them which I can't put my finger on. The first draft of *Alien Embassy* (my fourth published novel) was actually written before *The Martian Inca* (my third); and I put it on one side for a couple of years to gell.

JE: Are your characters ever taken from real life? If so, can you give an example?

IW: No, Because the characters belong with the concept of the story. But if the answer was yes, I'd be daft to tell you, so uptight are the legal departments getting about characters bearing no resemblance to anyone living or dead. Gone are the happy days of yore when you could blithely pillory, satirize, caricature and excoriate.

JE: What does it take to make a science-fiction character believable in a fictional work?

IW: I think this whole notion of believability is based on an illusion dear to us: namely the illusion that real life people are fully rounded, integrated whole beings—and that literature does its duty best when it best mimes these real-life characteristics. Actually, people aren't "one"; they're many intersecting mental sub-sets, not always interacting coherently or overlapping in a holistic way. And there's a lot of mental autopilot activity going on most of the time; with few moments of high integrated consciousness. "Believable" characters in fiction are no more realistic than dialogue in fiction is a true picture of the humming and hawing of actual conversation. But it pleases readers to think that this is so, because it suggests that they themselves, the readers, are fully rounded believable characters—as in books. Usually they aren't. Usually no one is.

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

IW: I don't think I'd like to appoint favourites from among my fictional children; they'd get jealous. Anyway, there are quite a lot of them by now. The ones with gross character flaws—the failures, bastards, and obsessives—I feel quite a lot of affection for, in fact, just as much as for the "good" ones.

JE: Do your characters stay with you once you've finished a story or book? Do they take on a life of their own?

IW: I sometimes have this nightmare of waking up in an afterlife stitched together out of the Bolivia, Africa and wherever of my stories, to find that the tales are all still going on; and being held accountable for what I have wrought.

JE: It has been said that a writer only deals with one or two key ideas throughout his work. Would you agree?

IW: Possibly this isn't the right way to put it. Referring back to what I said about mental sub-sets, I'd say that a writer is operating with one particular sub-set—the creativity programme—which lends a similar flavour to whatever he turns his creative gaze upon, so that though the ideas treated may actually be very diverse, yet they seem to converge and meld together because they are flavoured similarly. It's the same with the ideas of a painter. Or a musician (Except that one doesn't so readily talk of the "ideas" of a painter or musician.) Why does all Sibelius sound alike—different but immediately identifiable? Is it because of the orchestration? Is it because the creativity programme orchestrates diverse themes similarly? Why does all Van Gogh look alike, whether it's a chair or a storm?

Of course some writers feel obliged to try to do something different every time. "Repeating oneself" is somehow pernicious. Our culture nominally lays great stress on individuality and thus on orginality—so much so that a writer is praised for being individual even unto himself. As though someone else entirely with the same name wrote Book B, from the fellow who wrote Book A. In some other cultures this might be seen as a form of mental disease, a striving to alienate oneself from oneself. And generally if you step back two paces this turns out to be a thorough illusion. In the end the same flavour persists. The mannerisms are all there still; as with our typical accent, gestures and posture in daily life.

If a writer really wanted to produce something quite other, I would suggest that the way to go about it—as by an act of self-hypnosis—is to change one's life-style utterly first, become another persona. Become a shepherd, speak and think in Urdu or Chinese. Or a pacifist might join the army. Yet that new persona mightn't possess a powerfully motivated creativity sub-set at all . . . or rather this mightn't manifest itself in fiction, but in, say, growing bonsai trees.

Such a method of personality dislocation would, of course, be immensely stressful; and in fact a lot of psychic energy would be soaked up in the mere act of adjusting. And actually this is provided for anyway, by nature; it's called growing up, maturing. To randomize the process—as though by chucking yarrow sticks to decide the next avatar—would be an intriguing experiment; but if successful might it not be that we were talking about different writers entirely—who simply happened to share the same body successively?

I think I might write a story about this. Called "The Man Who Was Someone Else."

But isn't this what *The Dice Man* was about? Luke Rinehart's novel. No, not *exactly*...

JE: Do you feel that you belong to any particular tradition in the science-fiction field?

IW: "In the brain-blasting tradition of Kurt Vonnegut Jr, Robert Heinlein and Samuel R. Delany": so says the blurb on the US paperback of *The Embedding*. But what on earth is the connection between these three disparate writers—except insofar as they may blast different brains in different ways? And that those are three buzz-names. A lot of talk of "traditions" is drivel, considering that we're speaking about a comparatively tiny segment of time—in which the Grand Old Masters are mostly still contemporary with us, and still writing books, and responding to cultural changes. Should one speak, for instance, of a "school of anthropological sf", to which I might be said to belong? I don't think so. Writers who may be said to belong to it are simply sensitive antennae,

responding in their different ways to something in the common air; or aspects of that something.

JE: How do you know when a story is right? Does it hit you right the first time, or are you critical as you go along?

IW: No story is entirely right for me on a first draft, though I can sense whether that first spontaneous rough draft feels okay as a basis, while I'm doing it. Usually the order of events stays the same, and it's more a matter of cutting out irrelevancies and repetitions. I'm not a very sprawly story-writer, I wouldn't say; I like stories to be quite tight.

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

IW: In what setting? From the viewpoint of ten years on? A hundred? *Sub specie aeternitatis?* I was on a panel at an sf convention recently where it was suggested that sf may be of as much future relevance as medieval French court poetry is today—and just one of the reasons for this will be that the book as artefact, the printed word, will have disappeared in another hundred or two hundred years except as an eccentric minority hobby, equivalent to our present passionate concern with French court poets of the Middle Ages. Suppose technology can provide direct neural induction of adventure, romance, travel, sport; plug-in false realities . . .

On the other hand, perhaps on the day that we encounter an alien race (as I suggest merrily in a short tale "The Big Buy") sf will become very hot property indeed—rather than the export of repro Ming vases or Leonardos—because only the human race has been crazy enough to try to *invent* alien races and our interactions with them and with the wider universe of worlds as an art form and entertainment medium. But will this be a form of anthropology, or a bizarre curiosity? Or might it be like the import of African sculpture which triggered Cubism and then forced a reassessment of the worth of "primitive" art?

Evaporated into radioactive ash; totally forgotten except by a few connoisseurs of reading, a minority of a minority; lapped up avidly by the sentient spiders of Capella as the latest thing . . .

You'll note that the phrase "really worthwhile" prompts thoughts of posterity and immortality. But maybe that is quite irrelevant, so long as one gets a kick out of doing it right now, and so long as enough present-day readers do too. Actually, in the long run there can't be any immortal literature. We're still looking at things from a history-basis of a few thousand years only. Suppose that history stretches out a million years instead? Aeons of time? And suppose that work continues accumulating all this while? Even at the same rate as it has been accumulating hitherto? What price *anyone's* work, then?

Actually, questions like this don't prompt "realistic" answers from me, but rather idea-visions of unwritten stories. "Macbeth, One Million A.D.: The Last Performance." That sort of thing. Or "Judgement Day": the day once every ten thousand years when Earth's cultural storehouse is sorted out by order of the aesthetic overmind. As soon as you take a really long view of anything—which I would tend to, because A leads to B leads to C, and I'll follow the trail into the fog—then all dissolves into fiction. "Really worthwhile" is too absolute a frame of reference to be answered other than by fantastic fictions, Borgesian metaphysics.

JE: If you were going to write an essay on your own work, what would you emphasize?

IW: Remembering the example of Henry James—and the "intentional fallacy" that an author *knows* what his own books are about, and how they work—I think I would rather refrain from writing such an essay. It too would inevitably end up being a kind of fiction.

JE: Which modern science-fiction authors do you most admire?
IW: I very much admire the work of Michael Bishop. Also the uniquely mad body of work of Barrington J. Bayley. John Brunner has written some admirable books; and the ones I've read so far by Greg Bear have rather struck me. And here we are only up to the letter "B". There must be something wrong with the letter "A", though.
JE: Is it necessary for a writer to be a "loner"—not to belong to any literary movement?
IW: If you're a poet the first question they ask you in Japan is "Who do you imitate?" This sounds rather weird to Western ears; but weirder to the Japanese sounds the answer, "I imitate nobody; I write my own stuff." So I'd answer, "Yes, it's necessary to be a loner," but this is partly a culturally determined thing.
JE: Which of your books, in your opinion, comes off best? What is your least successful work?
IW: I don't know. I haven't read any of my books. How many writers have? First of all you write them, then you revise them, then you type them out; then you read through the proofs for typos—none of these activities really constitutes "reading". Then you receive the brand-new finished article and dip into it here and there; but you don't—at least I don't—sit down and read it all the way through as a reader would. It'll be years before I can sit down and read one of my books as a fresh, unbiased experience, and be able to judge them against each other objectively. I'll have to forget them first.

In a sense novels are monsters that escape from the author to make their own independent way—with the slim chance that, marooned on the proverbial desert island, you might actually at least encounter that strange beast and get to know what it's really like.

Novels are full-grown trees—or even forests—transplanted instantly into the wild. With short stories the situation is different. These stay at home in the mental garden, or hot-house. These are the orchids, the bonsai of a writer's creativity. (Or perhaps the sundews, pitcher plants and Venus fly traps.) They still need to be looked after; they need to be gathered periodically into a collection; whereupon they still do not become, collectively, a Monster. The novelist designs whole landscapes, too large for him to tread from north to south; but the door to the short story planthouse remains wide open. So I can say which of my short stories come off best, in my opinion. Whole books, no. Stories like "The Rooms of Paradise", "The Very Slow Time Machine". Which are my least successful stories? Why, the ones that never got into print. There are two or three hiding in a file.
JE: What about writers as friends? Can the relation be other than competitive?
IW: With most of the writers I've met, the underlying feeling is one of comradeship—in the fight for survival. You don't hoard market tips; you pass them on. You don't rejoice that Writer X has had his last book bounced; you grieve. Because mostly we're creators, not exploiters. As to competition in the sense of the quality of work, ultimately a writer can only be in competition with himself or herself.
JE: Some writers are painfully sensitive to criticism. Have you been much affected by your critics?
IW: Over time the critics tend to balance each other off; from my files of reviews I can prove anything at all about myself. I get irritated only when I sense active malice in a review, or self-aggrandizement and point-scoring by the critic at my expense. But most authors suffer similarly from time to time. I have a more fundamental objection, on

principle: when critics are regarded as somehow more respectworthy, superior to authors. Authors are the producers of the primary product; critics are secondary, middlemen (parasites, if one is being unkind). This was all very obvious at a conference on "Fiction High and Low" which I spoke at recently, at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts, sponsored by the Arts Council of Great Britain, which seems increasingly to be supporting with public funds not original writers but critics and hangers-on. Most of the panels that day were for critics, academics, editorial entrepreneurs; but one was devoted to real live authors who were invited along to say what they thought about the state of fiction today. So we authors duly arrived clutching a scribbled page of notes: things we really cared about and wanted to say in the ten minutes we had each been promised. And they changed the format. Instead of speaking out ourselves, we were each to be interviewed by a media person, not about our pressing concerns or interests, but just as examples of authors. Like zoo animals on display in our cages, with the lion tamer cracking his whip to put us through our paces. So I had to point out quite forcefully how pernicious were the latent assumptions about the function of authors underlying all this; and how this vitiated the whole supposed spirit of the conference, about the "health" of fiction today. The audience enjoyed the fray, even if the organisers didn't.

JE: Have you ever been envious of another writer's talent? If so, whom?

IW: I admire things that other writers pull off, but I wouldn't say that I'm ever envious, since these aren't things that I myself would necessarily want to pull off. It isn't all that often that I really feel, "Oh how I wish that I'd written that myself!" Though I did feel this about one recent book of Phil Farmer's, *The Unreasoning Mask;* I'd have been proud.

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

IW: Oh, I can hold my own in public. Indeed, I enjoy it. But this is a hypothetical commercial question; as such—the Big Time, eh?—it's out of my control. Yet I think I would rather ration this sort of thing, myself; I would feel very frustrated if it encroached—I have too much to write.

JE: If you were to have a frank discussion with the major science-fiction publishing houses—both in England and America—what would you tell them?

IW: That there is going to be a world economic boom and a new sf boom commencing in six months time, so they had better get tooled up for it right now. Since publishing is now largely economics, and since Western economics is a seemingly irrational phenomenon with confidence or gloom spreading like flu pandemics, I might as well cheer them up. Actually to discuss questions of taste, worth and their duty to support original anthologies (for example) would be pretty much a waste of time. Considering that a lot of "editorial" decisions are no longer even made by editors but by corporate accountants, what could I say to the publishing houses that would change anything? Really, what you need to do is enhance the sense of bold integrity. How do you do that, when most of the forces in commercial publishing programme those who are involved otherwise?

JE: What is the most "dangerous" or ambitious book you've written? What makes it such?

IW: *Miracle Visitors* was the most dangerous book to write. First, because I felt that if my characters couldn't work out dramatically the problems inherent in that book—or the relation between reality and imagination, the real, the unreal and the quasi-real—then I

wouldn't be able to write anything again. Secondly, because the choice of the UFO phenomenon as a means of tackling these problems was a crazy one as regards the sf readership who tend to hate UFOs and anything to do with them, particularly all the daft books about them which nudge "real" sf off the shelves and confuse the popular image of sf with that of little green men in flying saucers. And finally, because I felt that I was running actual psychic risks by writing the book—as though it might all start coming true, since my hypothesis was that UFO experiences can be generated or summoned by a sufficiently intense or besotted act of thought. It didn't help my composure much when, half way through the book, UFO reports suddenly started to crop up in the local newspaper: 30 miles away, 25 miles away, 20 miles away . . . getting closer all the time. It was a race to finish the book before something dire and destabilizing happened. I felt that the act of writing the book was actually shifting reality around me.

Probably *God's World* is the most "ambitious" book I've written—the longest, by a bit, and most complex; and again I was chancing my imagination, far out on the end of a string.

How ironic that my most ambitious book has no American edition.

JE: Is there any particular historical period, other than the present, in which you would have liked to live?

IW: This is another of these apparently simple questions, which lead deep into the swamp. I'd have to assume, wouldn't I, that I would not be in any particularly privileged social position? And life for the majority can't have been all that fulfilling or enlightening. Ignorance, poverty, disease, toil, oppression, war, hmm? All very well to dream of quinqueremes, but who would wish to have to row one? Supposing, though, that you rephrased the question, "If you were sentenced to time-exile . . .," well then, recollecting the old Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times," I would try to select somewhere passably safe, colourful, prosperous and cultured. And would it really be so, on the ground, with the stinks and plagues and slavery, and the little wars we've forgotten about? Again, it's all very well to say "Some peaceful time in medieval Japan", but what about all the social constraints? That's even if I was a poet in a tea house, not a peasant in a paddy field. Or 2nd Century A.D. Greece? Probably tutoring the kids of a Roman general would seem like slaving for rather more benign Nazis.

I refuse to answer. Banish me where you will; then it's your fault, not mine. And I wouldn't spend the rest of my life cursing the folly of my choice; but would be able to make the best of it.

JE: Besides writing, what are some of your other interests and pleasures?

IW: Drinking good ale. I tried brewing it myself, but alas generally produced weasel-pee. Or perhaps my standards are fairly high; some of it was better than some commercial beers.

Swimming, occasionally. Gardening (though this is akin to slavery, if you do it properly). Tending cats. I've been, at times, very keen on Chess and Go.

Playing darts. Eating curries. Reading. Visiting rubbish tips. Scavenging. Grubbing round second-hand bookstalls in markets. I used to take LSD, and indeed learnt a lot about perception and my mental programmes this way, but it's very time-consuming.

JE: Unlike many writers, you do not have an agent. Why? Does this ever pose problems?

IW: I've had close encounters of the temporary kind with several agents, and they've proved no use at all. Or worse. I sometimes get the impression that quite a few writers

spend a lot of time chasing their agents to check that they've done as requested. In the sf field the markets are fairly clear to me; and an agent is only at best going to make a marginal improvement for me in sales conditions; they aren't going to make the difference between a sale and no-sale. My UK publishers Victor Gollancz handle subsidiary rights to my books, and I believe they've done as well as anyone could. Particularly in the translation area. And they don't mind my putting my own oar in, if I get a hot tip on eager buyers in Outer Mongolia of whom they haven't heard. I do have a German short fiction agent, Werner Fuchs, who is a very compatible person.

By now I'm fairly experienced at fighting my way through contracts, and I don't believe that an agent spontaneously would have troubled to delete and add the clauses that I have deleted and added, in some cases.

JE: In 1981, you ran for a seat on the Northamptonshire County Council, as the Labour Party candidate. What prompted your decision to run? What issues formed the basis of your campaign? How did you fare in the election? What did you learn from the experience?

IW: Incidentally, in Britain hopeful politicians always "stand" for office, rather than "run"! Is this of significance, I wonder, reflecting from way back a more languidly autocratic attitude to the electorate? A gentleman – amateur rather than a professional approach to public service—mirrored by the rather low salaries of Members of Parliament at Westminster compared with their European counterparts? Well, whatever, most politicians in Britain have to do lots of running about nowadays. As did we, canvassing door to door in blizzards.

I stood out of anger at the wretched economic policies of the Tory government under Thatcher, which have compounded the effects of the world recession, producing an economic desert with millions of unemployed and no hope for many school-leavers, particularly the underprivileged ones in inner cities (thus laying up awful social troubles for the future), and accompanied by the pruning and sabotaging of the social services, and the selling off cheaply of national assets (housing, technology, etcetera). Hospitals, schools, public libraries, public transport, road maintenance—everything has been savaged in the mystic name of Monetarism, while at the same time exchange controls are abolished so that capital flows in a flood forth from this country and little is invested in British industry. Nor did I appreciate the Tory desire to spend billions upon new nuclear weapons to "defend" this offshore aircraft carrier, the U.K. (or Airstrip One, as Orwell called it); or the deliberate cranking up of the Cold War.

At the County level, where I was standing, the main issues used to be local rather than national ones; but not any longer, with central government putting the screws on County Councils to compel them punitively to cut back their spending on schools, roads, social amenities and services.

I fared rather better than expected, since where I live is deep in a traditional Tory rural area; I picked up exactly 33% of the vote.

What I learnt in canvassing the area in depth is how very well off some people are, and how poorly others live only a stone's throw away. And I learnt what sort of places to avoid: recent private housing developments, nothing grand, you understand, just little boxes not all that different from the (now neglected) council-house ghettos which are tucked away on the outskirts of every village—but boxes which their owners were paying through the nose for, while at the same time simmering with hatred of council housing,

"lazy" strike-prone workers, trade unions, the Labour Party, Tony Benn, and all the other knee-jerk targets of the Tory-controlled press. Traditional Tory voters are almost always amenable and civilized, but the recent petite bourgeoisie can be quite vicious and abusive in defence of the puny differences that separate them from their working-class cousins. Give me an old-style Tory any day. The new breed is uncivilized.

JE: For many years, you've had a keen interest in the growing menace of the arms race. What is your concern here? Has any progress been made in this area? What role would you like to see Britain take? What about America?

IW: Moving out of the city of Oxford into the rural countryside soon made me aware—far more so than when I'd been living in a city—of the extent to which Britain is militarized and set up to act as a pawn in a Third World War. Behind every other hill there seems to be a radar dome, a communications antenna, an air-base or some other facility, British or American. For a while you only notice the cows in the country; then you notice what is on the skyline behind the cows.

It is of course theoretically possible that a historian writing in the year 2500 will point to the "balance of terror" in the late 20th Century as the factor which paradoxically stopped the human race from destroying itself and the Earth, until such time as . . . what? But frankly I don't believe it. The arms race is an example of positive feedback; and when has positive feedback ever led to a balance, let alone to a reduction of anything?

I believe that Britain should get rid of all nuclear weapons from its soil unilaterally (*and* scrap its submarine missiles too). It should do this as an example of sanity; and because none of these *defend* the country. There's no defence of the population contemplated. Though defence of the government *against* the population is certainly built into the system. Nor do I believe that the Russians would wish to "take over" in that event. They haven't exactly taken over in Poland. Their intervention in Afghanistan has provided them with their own Vietnam. (And I get very fed up, incidentally, with all the talk of the brave freedom fighters there: those blood-feuders, veilers of women, apostles of medieval fanaticism—the same company that brought America the hostages in Iran.) Nor do I believe that Russia is anything other than scared shitless of a nuclear war, and genuinely wishes to reduce the risks—because Russia has known the effects of war on its own soil all too recently and devastatingly. America, by contrast, hasn't experienced modern war at home, and in this respect is alienated from reality. (Look at how the Vietnam veterans have been swept under the carpet.) This disconnection from reality is a very dangerous condition. And currently, in the military and political economic spheres, this is alienating America's allies, because American policy does not seem to connect with the real world. Meanwhile military technology (in which America has and has always had the lead, whatever propagandist garbage is produced about missile gaps, bomber gaps, secret Russian particle-beam weapons and so on) is zooming on out of control, obeying its own inherent logic of growth. How we all cheered when the first Space Shuttle took off. But what do we feel as the fourth flight lifts off, with secret military gear on board? The military establishment is a parasitical organism now, like Heinlein's Puppet Masters. To feed it, a new cold war is being deliberately whipped up. None of this "defends" anyone. Or benefits anyone except the arms manufacturers and career generals. (It's been said that a human being is merely a gene's method of manufacturing another gene. Perhaps we should apply this idea to weapons. Perhaps weapons are the really important thing on this planet; and the human race is simply a weapon's method of manufacturing new weapons.

Certainly the weapons are evolving a hell of a lot faster than we are.)

And to all space enthusiasts I would point out that US space technology is rapidly becoming near-space, war-oriented stuff, with genuine scientific research being axed and pruned; and it is the Soviet Union that is still also trundling ahead slowly but surely with long-term exploration. So don't be too surprised if most American sf novels turn out to have been sheer fantasy, because all the interstellar captains and stellar colonists of the future will actually be called not John and Jane, but Ivan, Boris and Natasha.

JE: Did you write many stories before turning to a full-time, professional career?

IW: A dozen or so. I was writing more novel-length wordage at first than short fiction. Lately, though, I've been writing a lot more short stories. I like the form a lot. The short story is alive and well in sf as nowhere else today.

JE: Were you involved in science-fiction fandom? If so, what was the extent of your involvement? Are you active today? What is your perception of the fan community?

IW: I only became involved in Convention-going, or aware of the existence of fanzines, after my first novel was published. But thereafter I found the whole thing quite intoxicating (the last word to be interpreted as literally as you like, British Cons being at least partly dedicated to drinking the hotel dry of beer.) Lately we've been preferring the smaller British regional one-day or two-day events to the grand slams.

Fandom itself . . . that secret society, that many-headed monster! I think I express my feeling of affection for the community in my short ironic tale "The World SF Convention of 2080" (in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*). At least that's what I intended, as well as some satire. One thing I think I can say as a generalization, about British fandom at least, is that it is pretty literate and intelligent. In general the people are well-informed, articulate and can think logically—by contrast with other "cults" I've collided with. In general.

JE: Have you published much outside the science-fiction field? If so, what?

IW: Not since I started writing sf. Before that I'd had a certain amount of literary criticism published: on Jean Genet, African Drama, Elias Canetti, E.M. Forster. That was partly because I was trying to be a good academic at the time. And I have had one—count it—one mainstream short story published, a sort of Robbe-Grilletesque African murder story called "The Flags of Africa".

JE: How long does it typically take you to write a novel? What is the longest it has taken? What about the shortest?

IW: On average, about six months in all (give or take; and with interruptions) for me to get a final submission copy. But the first draft of a novel—the essential creation—has usually taken about eight weeks; with the rest of the time taken up by rewriting and re-jigging.

JE: How do you work—on a typewriter, in longhand, on a word processor? Does it make a difference?

IW: I used to write everything in longhand; but this was partly because I wrote on a rocking, bouncing early morning train commuting from Oxford to Birmingham. Now I type. Manually. With one finger. Very fast.

JE: What role do you play in selecting the cover art which graces your books? Have you been pleased, overall, with your covers?

IW: I have hardly any role; and I'm happy enough if the cover-art does actually "grace" the cover rather than disgrace it. In fact I have had some really beautiful covers, as well as

one or two grim ones. I like a striking image in its own right (preferably with *some* relationship to the subject or spirit of the book) rather than a direct illustration. One of the ugliest recent trends is illustrated trade editions; and I can't say that I've felt my perceptions of the text enhanced by, say, even *The Illustrated Roger Zelazny*. I've no wish to confront identikit pictures of the characters in a tale. Nor do I really wish to see a direct illustration from it on the cover; this hobbles the imagination. A suggestive image is better, even if it's fairly tangential to the content. (I don't consider that model-kit starships are suggestive images; they're just brand images.) Of course, no doubt an illustrated trade edition is just about to be published combining the genius of De Chirico, Max Ernst, Magritte . . . And in fact some of the best sf covers I remember have *been* by Ernst, Magritte et cetera. Surrealist and Dadaist art stirs the imagination in the way that sf and fantasy should stir it.

JE: You've written few, if any, upbeat books. Why?

IW: Really? I thought they were full of transcendent possibilities. The fact that the possibilities don't get realized in a lot of cases is simply realistic. Should I be deliberately up-beat? Is *King Lear* down-beat because of all the dire things that happen therein? Perhaps there's a conflict here between holy Literature, which can be tragic if it wants—and entertainment, which ought to be pleasing. I wouldn't care if this was a politically utopian criticism, but generally it isn't; usually it's a criticism of the Neilson rating of a book. It's an indictment of our lazy, comfort-seeking minds. "Hey, Bill Shakespeare, this *Lear* of yours is too down-beat; let's inject some happy and hopeful into it, huh?"

JE: Do you agree with Brian Stableford's observation that you are perhaps too demanding a writer to be as popular as you deserve?

IW: Well, again this is an indictment of laziness—intellectual and emotional. As George Zebrowski has remarked, a lot of sf nowadays sedulously skirts the perimeter of actual thought. It devotes considerable narrative skill to giving the reader the impression that he has actually thought and felt deeply and rigorously—whereas he hasn't done so at all. Alas, the reader is therefore pleased and flattered; his self-esteem is heightened. But really what he has done is the equivalent of buying a PhD diploma from a phoney college for a few dollars to hang on his wall.

Personally I like some challenge in a book when I read it, something to stretch the mind and nerves a bit. Not wanton difficulties and extravagances—stylistic or structural; these are often just a way of masking a certain thinnesss of content by dressing it up gaudily.

JE: You have said that you are, in a sense, a "religious writer". Can you explain?

IW: A lot of my books and stories are about what a "God" might be, should there be such a thing/entity/phenomenon or force. And the way-stages between the human and the superhuman. And the boundary line between the normal and the numinous, between knowledge and revelation. But actually sf contains a vast amount of speculation, from the trivial to the sublime, about Gods, metaphysics, superbeings. To such an extent, really, that I'd say that sf is the popular religious literature of today—of this present secular age. Because the genre is called "science fiction" and because one tends to think of science as opposed to religion, this feature isn't perceived as strongly as it should be. But really, what is the subject matter of a lot of sf but the old subject matter of religion: first and last things, creation and apocalypse, heavens and hells, angels and demons in new guise, the snakes in paradise, death and afterlife, immortality, resurrection or reincarnation? And

of course modern physics seems to be converging upon some of the old "mystical" concerns in its interpretations of the nature of existence. I'm not a Christian believer or even a proto-believer, though; nor do I feel aligned to any other particular limited belief system.

JE: Are you more interested in ideas, as some critics have maintained, than you are in your characters? If so, why?

IW: I'm interested in *dramatized* ideas. Ideas dramatize themselves for me, almost immediately. This is how I can develop them. So the characters are there right away.

JE: Are your novels becoming less political than in earlier years?

IW: The politics in the earlier novels were very obvious because of their reference base: Third World countries, et cetera. But the interest in metaphysics—the nature of reality—was there too. And I've been exploring this a bit more, of late; though my latest novel *Chekhov's Journey* perhaps marks a return to Earth and the social milieu, with a bit of a difference. I think I could quite easily dream up another "early Watson" novel along the lines of *The Embedding* or *The Martian Inca*. Take a political crisis, plus a knowledge crisis, locate in a Third World venue such as West Africa; haul in the Bantu world-view for the anthropology . . . But I won't do this merely for the sake of doing so. I see my books as a continuous thought-experiment, and the logic of the experiment led from the contemporary into some of the wilder seas of metaphysics, largely because this is where I was forced to go. But this wasn't an abandonment of the social and political; rather it was a shift for a while from the "politics of consciousness" towards the "politics of revelation".

JE: If you could have a dinner party and invite any six science-fiction authors, living or dead, whom would you invite and why?

IW: I don't much like dinner parties as an institution. But I'll tell you the sf writer whom, having known briefly, I would be most sorry never to have met. James Blish.

JE: When one admires a writer, one looks for his secret. What is yours?

IW: I suppose, if there is a secret (not that I'm conscious of anything hidden, since it's all there publicly in the novels and stories) it must be that I get on and do the stuff instead of just dreaming of doing it. Or perhaps it's the literary equivalent of the gardener's "secret", Green Fingers . . . which isn't really a secret at all, but methodical hard work coupled with a sense of pattern and colour. And what might the literary equivalent be? Inky Fingers? Itchy Fingers? (*Irrascibilis arts scribendi . . .*)

Actually, thinking about all this, it occurs to me that there's a lot of horticultural activity in my career: from early journalism about cacti, through poems about orchids, by way of *The Gardens of Delight,* and novels that are forests, while short stories are hothouse specimens . . . to winning a silver cup for our front garden in Moreton Pinkney. Maybe I'm a gardener of words. Or of ideas: the seeds. I plant them out, and they put forth leaves and flowers.

Letters

Dear Sirs: September 1983

I was initially piqued, now somewhat amused to find I have even, in Gregory Feeley's words, an "erratic" place in "The (Avram) Davidson Apocrypha" (*Foundation* 27). No matter that I found Feeley's piece on Davidson to be arch and condescending, a disservice to a fine author, I presume Feeley was well intentioned, though I rankle at his belated and ill-conceived attack on my constancy.

The offending passage: "Berkley's copyeditors . . . allow the text (of *Peregrine Secundus*) 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 among others such as 'The Sources of The Nile' and 'Sacheverell' that had each twice appeared among Davidson's last three collections, as though to deter all but the author's most devoted fans from buying the book."

I did buy for publication *Peregrine: Secundus,* in 1979 to the best of my recollection. Most of the book had appeared, periodically, over the course of seven years in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *Isaac Asimov's Magazine.* The book was edited and passed to press by me sometime prior to my departure from Berkley. I never saw page-proofs, though in fact had I remained with the company it still would not have been my responsibility to vet transmitted copy. That mechanical chore lies with the copyediting department. Reading and editing of manuscripts before transmittal, the minimum of the three times required of a responsible editor, is chore quite enough.

Collected Fantasies is indeed doubly mistitled, but not in the sense Mr Feeley suggests. The original working title as submitted to Berkley (long after I was Senior Editor there) was *The Book of Avram Davidson,* not brilliant perhaps but at the very least with an authoritative ring. This was changed, without Avram's or my consent to *The Collected Fancies of AD.* We countered in this baptismal sparring match with the descriptive, *AD: Stories, Whims, and Fancies.* When we finally saw the finished book it bore the present title, a neat piece of publisher's whimsy in and of itself.

As to my selection of stories, I've been twice indicted for this. In defence, when I assembled the table of contents, duly approved by Avram, none of the three earlier collections was in print. One has appeared subsequently, and two have never found their way into paperback. Anyhow my purpose was not to collect the uncollected as the apocrophiliac Mr Feeley seems to wish, but to put together a strong and balanced volume. Avram and I went to some trouble over this, even to the point of debating the order of the stories. I'm satisfied in any event, and question Mr Feeley's judgement regarding the buying habits of the reading public.

Before signing off I'd like to take advantage of this space to remind your readers of still another long neglected Davidson work I bought while at Berkley which appears this month. Indeed *Clash of Star Kings* is so unknown as to take its place alongside the apocrypha which have been written of so feelingly.

So touché, Feeley. Would that the apocrypha were your own.

John Silbersack *New York*

Gregory Feeley replies: November 1983

My essay was not belated, having been written and sent to *Foundation* shortly after the appearance of Mr Davidson's *Collected Fantasies*. I assume Mr Silbersack saw it only recently, perhaps in a photocopy that did not indicate date of appearance. That is regrettable if so, and I can note only that Berkley was sent a copy as courtesy, and should have passed it along to the author's editor.

I don't think Mr Silbersack and I disagree on many points. He does not defend the infelicitous redundancy in *Peregrine: Secundus,* showing only by his account of his work on the MS that other, copyediting editors could also have noticed it but did not. Noting that he did not see page proofs is beside the point; the slip should have been caught when the book was edited.

Mr Silbersack does not show (or even, I think, mean) that *Collected Fantasies* was mistitled only in some other sense than the one I suggest; he asserts merely that the bad title was not his or Mr Davidson's idea. Bravo; but separating himself from the unfortunate title constitutes no rebuke to me. The table of contents is indeed balanced and strong, but my point about content duplication (which the *Locus* reviewer also made) remains, especially as the hardcover collection with which the overlap occurred, *Strange Seas and Shores,* was published by Ace—not then owned by Berkley—the year before *Collected Fantasies.* If Mr Silbersack was by then no longer at Berkley, someone else should have noticed and adjusted the volume. Mr Silbersack claims to "question Mr Feeley's judgement regarding the buying habits of the reading public," but, I suspect, harbors misgivings about the proximate appearance of two paperback collections by an author each opening with the same story that he is not admitting to.

I hope nobody else found my mock-scholarly study "arch and condescending" to Avram Davidson, and trust that no one not personally criticized in it would think to. It did not attain a truly Davidsonian command of the arcane, but a homage should not even aspire to the mastery of its subject.

Dear *Foundation:* October 1983

Lucy Sussex's article in *Foundation* 28 about "Long Versus Short SF: The Examination of a Fix-Up" stirs up an old annoyance. I have no quarrel with the article itself, which addresses a critical question that I find of some interest (and I find myself wanting to read the thesis from which it was derived), but it embodies assumptions that imply critical or esthetic judgments for which the term "fix-up" represents a kind of shorthand.

Van Vogt, I know, used the term himself to describe the way in which he combined stories into books, and *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia* adopted it as a handy term to describe what it called "a book made up of stories originally published separately, but altered to fit together, often with the addition of new cementing material." But it is one thing for van Vogt to use "fix-up" in a self-deprecatory way, and another for critics to adopt it to cover some of the many ways in which a novel can be written and find its way into print.

The term, it seems to me, implies presumptions about the nature of the sf novel that should be defended rather than implied: 1) a novel that has been published previously in shorter segments is inherently inferior to one that has been published originally as a novel; and 2) a tightly organized novel is inherently better than one that is episodic. Neither

position is inarguable; we can cite Cervantes, Dickens, and hundred others to demonstrate that.

I am vigorously in favor of criticism that takes into account the circumstances of creation and the circumstances of publication, but all critics should be cautious of terminology in which value judgment are imbedded. Users of the term "fix-up" may claim it implies no such judgments, but I call attention to a couple of sentences among many in Sussex's article: "George Turner has described the fix-up process as procrustean" and "It would be easy to dismiss *Voyage* as episodic."

The use of the term in *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia* is either curiously inconsistent or embodies value judgments. James Blish's *Earthman, Come Home* is labeled a "fix-up" but not *A Case of Conscience;* Ted Sturgeon's *More Than Human* but not Arthur Clarke's *Childhood's End.* The use of personal examples may seem like special pleading, but they make a point: several of my novels are labeled "fix-ups" because the parts appeared as stories in magazines, although they were intended as novels from the beginning, were not rewritten or altered for book publication, and had no material added (with the exception of *The Listeners,* where the interchapter materials were planned early). So they don't really fit the *Encyclopedia's* definition, but that is one of its problems. Each case demands a comparison of the novel with its previously published parts and even a bit of mind-reading to determine the author's plan. I've had my say about the ideal length for science fiction in the introduction to my collection titled *Some Dreams Are Nightmares,* and there's no point in extending this argument except to point out that many science-fiction themes demand and profit from episodic treatment.

We have enough problems in this field with inadequate criticism without compounding it with misleading terminology. Let's rethink "fix-up".

James Gunn — *University of Kansas*

Dear Mr Pringle — November 1983

The "special issue" idea for *Foundation* strikes me as a good one, but ("socialism" coming up, I note) I personally would hope that it would not be overdone in such a way as to spoil the wide and stimulating range of topics and approaches that is a feature of *Foundation* and has made it so excellent a journal. To have the kind of mixture that one number, e.g. 29, can serve up of biography, reappraisal, controversy and criticism is something I imagine most readers find stimulating and look forward to. Do you know whether Brian Stableford's tremendously valuable explorations of some of the by-ways of past sf are likely to appear, as I hope may be the case, in book form?

Kenneth Bailey — *Alderney, C.I.*

Editorial note. We passed Mr Bailey's query on to Brian Stableford and he replied: "Borgo Press are still planning to publish my D Phil thesis, *The Sociology of Science Fiction,* 'as soon as possible.' Borgo also have two essay collections in hand for publication in their ordinary series. Both contain some essays from *Foundation* as well as material from elsewhere. When these will appear I have no idea. I am working on a book for (the British) Junction Books on *Scientific Romance in Britain, 1890-1950,* which will cover several of the authors dealt with in my *Foundation* essays plus others. I am hoping

to persuade an American publisher to issue my Fowler Wright essay in a book along with *Inquisitive Angel,* Fowler Wright's unpublished novel, but have made no progress with this yet."

Dear John Clute December 1983

Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear. *Kuk nor ver s'ret!* Poor Chris Priest (*Foundation* 29) is plainly incurable. Pontificating (perhaps I should say mouthing) against Spinrad's usage and syntax, Chris gives us a dozen wonderful examples of his own notorious English. A Priest classic: "It's just that Spinrad has a tin-ear for language and his usage of them is consistently sharp or flat of their best meanings." Chris appears unaware that Yiddish can be spelled in a variety of ways (as can Russian or Arabic) because it's not normally written in the Latin alphabet; neither does he seem to know that many Yiddish words and phrases are as often as not used ironically. It's wonderful to see Priest, with his half-educated command of language, taking an American to task for using Yiddish and Creole words which are part of the American's familiar vocabulary. (Priest: "If a word has two or three subsidiary meanings, he goes for the lowest every time.") On he drones, this Priest. Such a linguist. Such a maven. Such a nudnik. Spinrad frequently over-writes and is given to strong enthusiasms and hatreds; his relish for modern American English can frequently carry him away. These characteristics, compared to Priest's plodding pilpul, are, if not exactly virtues, at least the vices of a generous and engaged individual for whom staying alive means more than negotiating a decent contract with a publisher or acquiring for himself the worst attributes of a provincial Edwardian schoolmaster. I'm constantly surprised at how closely Chris's career and his pronouncements mirror Hall Caine's. Maybe there's something to reincarnation, or at least the idea of reproduced roles? Ah, well, we all have our parts to play, I suppose. And this is mine.
Maz'l tov!

Mike Moorcock *London*

Reviews

Myths of the Near Future
by J.G. Ballard *(Jonathan Cape, 1982, 205pp, £6.95)*

reviewed by Michael Bishop

Consistently high in quality, the short fiction of J.G. Ballard does not so much require review as a low-key proclamation that here are some more good stories. The vivid, intensely ironic, and obsessively detailed style that has always typified the man's best work graces this collection too. Only readers who have been living with the foolish and unrequitable hope that Ballard might one day embrace technology as the only panacea for every social and spiritual malaise afflicting our world, and willy-nilly adopt a transparent newspaperese to convey in his fiction this radical change of heart, are likely to find the

stories in *Myths of the Near Future* either a surprise or a disappointment. If any such readers actually exist, this book is an eloquent reminder of their folly.

The title piece and its thematic companion "News from the Sun" represent the most ambitious and the most successful of the ten collected here. The fact that Ballard accomplishes almost precisely the same narrative and quasi-didactic goals in each novelette—the fact that in the long view the writing of the one pretty much obviated the need to write the other—does not detract terribly from the power of each story in isolation. But read in tandem or within a few hours of each other, "Myths of the Near Future" and "News from the Sun" do not so much reinforce the impressiveness of Ballard's disquieting vision as attenuate it. To make a flip but not altogether inappropriate analogy, a truly funny joke may still be funny the second time you hear it, but its initial hilarity is forever unrecapturable.

Ballard has used the same template to make these pressings. Sheppard in "Myths" and Franklin in "News" mirror each other. So do the wives of the protagonists in each novelette, and the neurologist Martinsen in "Myths" and the former astronaut Slade in "News". Each work features—prominently—abandoned car parks, empty swimming pools, deserted motels, rusting gantries or towers, mirror-lined bathrooms, white-tiled shower stalls, disintegrating highways, unpeopled beaches or deserts, and low-flying aircraft piloted by madmen. Further, in each story a mysterious new disease has beset humanity: in "Myths" a hatred of sunlight accompanied by the thoroughgoing delusion that the victim is a former astronaut, in "News" a susceptibility to blackouts that increase in length as the disease progresses, tending toward a total loss of consciousness and death.

Although the operative disease in each grim fantasy—"space sickness" in "Myths", lengthening "fugues" in "News"—has fallen upon our species as a kind of punishment for our hubristic attempt to leave the planet, each disease also paradoxically offers—in an ill-defined, mystic, and probably narrowly psychological way—the possibility of temporal transcendence, fusing past and future in an infinite, mythic Now. Say *what?* Well, read the stories. In the context of his fictions, at least, Ballard has the ability to make you believe what you might otherwise dismiss as self-indulgent, guru-ish argle-bargle.

(If, by the way, there suddenly came down an Authoritative Decree to purge from the Ballard canon one or the other of these novelettes, I would opt to preserve "Myths of the Near Future". Its image patterns—at once beautiful, bizarre, and arresting—strike me as the more original and self-consistent. Of course, other readers might make a different choice, while still others would declare the "need" to do so a fatuous red herring. At which point, to keep the argument going, I would mention "Low-Flying Aircraft" from Ballard's previous collection . . .)

The remainder of the pieces in *Myths of the Near Future* are relatively minor Ballard, an assessment that in this artist's case I do not view as even marginally disparaging. Indeed, if I am going to be fair, possible exceptions to the epithet "minor" must include "Theatre of War", a scathing near-future documentary that makes unsettling use of direct quotations from the Vietnam era to deplore both British factionalism and the interventionist foreign policies of the United States; and "The Dead Time", a fable in which Ballard recapitulates metaphorically the psychological dimensions of his internment in a Japanese camp near Shanghai during World War II. Caught altogether literally between war and imminent peace, between the living and the dead, Ballard's

young narrator struggles against heavy odds to affirm his humanity.

"Having a Wonderful Time" poses a wholly original, keenly Kafkaesque solution to the problem of world unemployment. "The Smile" updates Tomasso Landolfi's "Gogol's Wife" in an oblique, macabre way. "Zodiac 2000"—by evicting from their celestial houses the twins, the archer, the ram, and the bull in favor of such latter-day equivalents as the clones, the hypodermic syringe, the Polaroid camera, and the computer —updates the twelve astrological signs of antiquity in a "condensed novel" reminiscent of those gathered in Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition.* These three stories, along with "A Host of Furious Fancies", the author's wry variation on the children's tale *Cinderella,* compose a level of accomplishment just below that obtained in "Theatre of War" and "The Dead Time".

"Motel Architecture" and "The Intensive Care Unit" conclude the collection. In the former a film critic endlessly analyzes the shower-stall knifing of Janet Leigh in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho.* In the latter a successful surgeon living in a society where even family members communicate with one another via electronic hookups of one sort or another essays a gathering of the clan, not by phosphor-dot projections but in the very flesh. Both the film critic and the doctor come to bad ends. The bad ends to which they come would seem aesthetically good to me, I think, if Ballard had not chosen to lay on the irony, if not the message, with a trowel. Such heavy-handedness is unlike him, and destroys in the final paragraphs of each story—"All along, the intruder in the solarium had been himself", Ballard baldly informs us in "Motel Architecture"—works that might otherwise have had the impact of "The Dead Time" and the title piece. Even so, they remain both horrifying and memorable.

All right. Here are some more good stories by J.G. Ballard. With one or two deliberate exceptions they are myths of the near future that are in reality worrisome glosses on our behaviour today.

The Zanzibar Cat
by Joanna Russ *(Arkham House, 1983, $13.95)*

The Adventures of Alyx
by Joanna Russ *(Timescape Books, 1983, $2.50)*

reviewed by Gregory Feeley

The short fiction of Joanna Russ has long demanded collection, a situation that was hardly rectified by the 1976 publication of the Gregg Press's eccentric *Alyx,* comprising the novel *Picnic on Paradise* and four novelettes, which neither all dealt with Alyx nor constituted all those stories that did. Equipped with a generous but haphazard appreciation by Samuel R. Delany and a Table of Contents which restored the stories' intended titles (though the actual text didn't) the volume was apparently conceived as an obvious way to supplement the slender *Picnic on Paradise* (Gregg Press had been reprinting all of Russ's novels) and give the libraries good weight. So long as we discount any notion of those stories constituting a series ("The hell with it," Russ told James Blish when he diffidently noted some inconsistencies between stories and novel), the gesture is more innocuous than harmful, though the inclusion of "The Second Inquisition" may

suggest that the book—so long as we are playing this game—were better titled *Annals of the Trans-Temporal Military Authority* or some such. But no matter, nor any matter that Timescape has now reprinted the book under changed title (perhaps because of another paperback called *Alyx* currently in print; perhaps because they wish to woo the audience for whom Russ's stories would most clearly seem a rebuke), sans Delany intro and with the titles straight. If one regrets seeing *Picnic* burdened with the company of stories that (though good) are only superficially kindred, one still welcomes its return to print.

The real news is *The Zanzibar Cat,* Arkham House's handsomely produced volume of seventeen stories (two here conflated under an umbrella title), none of them from *Alyx.* Prior to 1967-68, when Russ published her first novel and began appearing prominently in the renascent original sf anthologies, her fiction had appeared almost exclusively in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* which published her first story in 1959 and remained her only sf market. Save for the appearance of the 1962 "My Dear Emily" in *F&SF*'s annual anthology, none of these stories has been reprinted till now. *The Zanzibar Cat* includes three of them, as well as two others from a university quarterly; but most of its contents first appeared in sf anthologies or *F&SF.* If the selection here seems slightly conservative (omitting most of Russ's more difficult and enigmatic stories, such as "Existence" and "This Night, By My Fire,") it has resulted in a volume of astonishingly high overall quality, better than any other sf collection (save perhaps Gene Wolfe's) in many years.

Russ's early stories are formally literary and almost ingenuously narrative, often turning upon single incidents ("The New Men" and "There Is Another Shore, You Know, Upon the Other Side" are built upon O. Henry-like plot twists: vampire bites leukemiac, and wraith-who-must-vanish-before-dawn fails to notice that lover had drawn curtains). "My Dear Emily", the best of the early stories, elaborates a fresh and fuller treatment of its vampire by gaslight milieu, but shares with the others a surprising fidelity to already established themes. ("I Had Absently Crumpled It Into My Pocket . . .", not included here, takes its impetus from Lovecraft.) Since the first Alyx story and the early "The Man Who Could Not See Devils" both take Leiber's exotic fantasy settings as acknowledged inspiration, one may suggest that Russ's early artistic impulse was largely revisionist, a desire to play variations on venerable themes. This relative uninterest in dramatic progression probably explains why Russ took so many years before venturing beyond short story length.

Though Russ went on to write novels and (very infrequently) novelettes, her best short fiction still tends to weigh in at under 4,000 words, and give form to single events. "When It Changed" and "Nobody's Home", for my money Russ's finest stories, effect with Chekhovian brevity their protagonists' unhappy realizations, respectively tragic and pathetic. "The Soul of A Servant", less known and especially welcome here, resembles these stories in that all three could have become the first chapters of novels (and would have, in the hands of most sf authors), though it alone takes the reader up and down a few narrative slopes. "The Zanzibar Cat" again imitates an established form (the recounted Tale), but more slyly and assuredly than the earlier stories, and immensely to better effect.

The collection has an introduction by Marge Piercy, who understands what Russ is about but uses the term "empowerment" too much, and advances the dubious assertion that "If I seem to find Russ's more feminist stories more successful than her less feminist stories, it is not only, or I believe even chiefly, because I agree with her politics . . . (but

because) her imagination is more liberated to follow through on the narrative premises." What precisely this means Piercy does not elaborate, but grave doubts are left as to whether distinctions between Russ's more and less feminist stories can easily be drawn, especially as Piercy taxes Russ for her attitude toward the rape in "The Soul of A Servant", upon which Russ did not in fact voice an opinion, and criticizes "A Game of Vlet" (another Alyx story), because the protagonist first appears as a doctrinaire revolutionary and then qualifies her fervour, and Piercy evidently would have had it otherwise.

Arkham House published its first trade sf collection with Michael Bishop's *Blooded On Arachne* in 1982; that volume's success has evidently emboldened them to announce a second Bishop collection. As Russ has enough superior stories to fill another collection, I hope *The Zanzibar Cat* enjoys a similarly encouraging sale. The book, cloth-covered with sewn signatures, attractive typography, and a beautiful dust jacket on heavy paper, is a lovely piece of work, and puts the more expensive Timescape line to shame. Few hardcovers this year are so well worth owning.

The Lazarus Effect
by Frank Herbert and Bill Ransom *(Putnam's, 1983, 381 pp, $15.95)*

reviewed by Peter Brigg

In a shorter notice *(Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review)* I said I liked this book, and I still do, but its flaws as well as its good points get more complex and more interesting on reconsideration. Let me explain.

The Lazarus Effect is a sequel to *The Jesus Incident* (1979), and Frank Herbert and Bill Ransom have collaborated on another fast-paced, highly inventive novel set on Pandora, the prime horror-planet of the 1970's. One good feature of the novel is its employment of the "Herbert Leap", a proven antidote for the boring re-use of place and situation in serial science fiction novels, of which there are just too many hundred around at the moment. Herbert simply leaps so far through time from one novel to another that the very ecology of his worlds changes from novel to novel, not to mention vast shifts in history and politics. The results are new novels which make historical reference to previous ones, and so series readers are rewarded with a non-boring familiarity while first-comers get a full-depth extrapolation. In *The Lazarus Effect* Pandora has become a total ocean planet with the wildly mutated human stock left over from Jesus Lewis's experiments floating about on gigantic organic islands (they paint the walls to feed them) while beneath the waves "pure" human mermen have built an advanced machine technology and are replanting and controlling a semi-sentient version of the Avata-kelp which once controlled, indeed was, all of the life-forms on the planet and kept the oceans in check. The tensions between merman and surface dweller are compounded by a Herbert "Badie" merman who seeks world control, by the re-emergence of some kind of sentience in the kelp, and by the impending recovery of orbiting hybernation tanks which may contain humans and other earth animals left behind by Ship.

A number of conventional although always interesting Herbert themes run through *The Lazarus Effect*. Political and military power groups fight, dirty, and their intentions and methods are all rooted in their backgrounds and worldviews. The theme of group

consciousness and, in this case, of planetary life consciousness of which humans are only *an* element, once more plays a major role in a Herbert text. There are also fugues on the nature of humanity (what is a useful mutation?) and the implicit conflict between organic and mechanical technologies. Stirred in with a Herbert-Ransom adventure plot and the vividly imagined Pandora these are the elements of an exciting novel.

The flaw in the Herbert-Ransom mix is one often familiar to Herbert's readers—a plotting style and character development technique which does not fully measure up to the task of modulating the complex worlds and their issues to the reader. With some noticeable exceptions—*The Santaroga Barrier* and *The White Plague*—Herbert has followed old fashioned adventure plot models in his novels and it is the wedding of these plots to complex patterns of ideas which is uncomfortable. Herbert is a "web thinker" who immediately perceives the interconnections between, say, ecology and politics and technology and psychology. Yet with this intricate vision to present he goes back to roaring plots with heroes, villains, beautiful girls, and people having punch-ups or performing heroic acts.

There are clear marketing strategy questions behind this because he is aiming at the large central sf-reading audience. Here he is held by the perceived American sf readership but the price is surely a final flaw in the integrity of vision. When one thinks of the truncated driven tales of Ballard, the conscientious satirical-philosophical plots and styles of Lem, or Le Guin's balanced graceful stories whose plots are usually ideal analogues of their ideas, it cannot fail to point to Herbert's approach as oversimplified. At the core of that oversimplification lies one idea which is rarely examined openly (it is in *The White Plague)*, that despite all we know of social and political interaction it is individual initiatives that will make and change the world. Herbert's adventurous old-fashioned stories are about *heroes* and in the face of the assertions of heroism the webs of ideas and world-imagining finally have to yield place. In critical terms there is as failure to match subject and method and it is, I think, the cause of that sensation that Herbert's novels are, in some way, valiant, interesting, and incompletely satisfying.

Gods of Riverworld and **The Unreasoning Mask**
by Philip José Farmer *(Putnam, 1983, 331 pp, $14.95; and: 1981, 293 pp, $12.95)*

reviewed by Ian Watson

Biologically, the route to real intelligence requires that a creature should be able to make mistakes and learn from them. At the same time, a young creature's learning experience will occur in a constrained environment—with the mother constraining the behaviour, for the most part. Thus wisdom comes about through a dialectic of freedom (to err, and discover), and imposed constraints.

Something similar occurs in books, with the author playing the role of mother, imposing constraints; and the fiction discovering creatively through trial and error a final *modus vivendi,* which is the gestalt of the book, the metaphorical picture which it reveals to us of what life is all about.

Gods of Riverworld and *The Unreasoning Mask* are as chalk and cheese in this respect; together they form a highly illuminating (because contrastive) illustration of a problem central to much sf. Namely, how to provide a satisfying and believable resolution

to adventure stories which address themselves to the cosmos, the nature of life and death, immortality, Godhead—the Big Enigmas, which are perhaps *unresolvable by definition.* Or which are so, at present.

Gods of Riverworld is, of course, the fifth volume of the long-running saga of the planet where the whole human race has been resurrected along the banks of an enormous river in a benevolent experiment by advanced Ethicals who want to give the wayward human race a second chance to evolve morally. By now Richard Burton and Company (or what remains) have reached the giant control tower—where the entire action of this volume takes place—and all (as so often) is not as it seems. For a rogue Ethical has put all of his comrades out of action. But then he gets killed (or does he?), leaving Burton & Co as the demigodly lords of the manor, subject only to constraints programmed into the puissant super-computer. A further mysterious agent puts in an appearance; and a final threat is posed by one of Burton's entourage who is carrying out a secret deadly scheme. Along the way Burton and crew mostly amuse themselves with the demigodly powers available, neglecting to keep an eye on the situation. (As Farmer points out: "Where they should have been examining what limited them, they were considering what gratifications it offered.") Thus the situation slides into lethal chaos, including the tragic destruction of all the artificial souls of the human race—until the rogue Ethical reappears like a rabbit out of a hat, revealing that everyone's soul hasn't been destroyed after all; but *he* happens to be crazy, to boot; so he has to be put on ice. And at the end the master plan of the absent Ethicals is back on course, with modifications; while Burton, having inherited a hangar full of starships, opts for the anarchic freedom of the wider cosmos.

Philip Farmer, when in a tight corner, and/or when the central enigmas prove more unresolvable than usual, has often opted for action-writing; notably in *The Lavalite World,* fifth volume of the "World of Tiers" series, where the characters spend most of the time running around frantically chasing everyone else, to little effect. And a lot of the action in *Gods of Riverworld* is of this order, expanding from the initial kernel of people into a real caucus race, then dwindling rapidly as almost everyone is wiped out. (Were it not this way, however, the main characters would have little to do but puzzle or swap anecdotes in their tower abode.)

Another Farmer trait is to reveal that things are not as they seemed. A manipulator lurks in the wings. Barefaced lies have been taken as gospel. Wild cards are sprung as if from nowhere.

This trait crescendoes during the Riverworld saga, as successive explanations all fall apart; so that one begins to sense a kind of desperate improvisation about the latest revelations. (The artificial souls of the morally improved "go on" to beatific union, we learn. Later, we learn that they don't. There isn't any Beatitude to unify with—unless it is one which we ourselves will subsequently create; unless God is to be manufactured, just as our souls were manufactured by the obliging Ethicals. But maybe this won't be true, either, around the next corner.)

Farmer's characters put themselves through innumerable hoops in this book in an attempt to define the limits of their freedom—as to what can or can't be done, given secret constraints programmed into the tower computer by the mystery person or persons who they fear will constantly out-fox them. And what is so fascinating—and often comic—about all this, is that the problems the characters are struggling with are essentially the problems of fictional organization (style and form) on the one hand, and on the other

hand the resolution of enigmas which can't really be resolved in any fully satisfying way by their very nature (content and context). The author's own daunting problems here become the activities of the characters themselves—leading to such burlesque situations, in a quasi-omnipotent environment, of the characters erecting tents inside rooms to make hand signals to each other unobserved, or building burglar alarms then realizing (this is known as negative improvisation) that their rooms are soundproofed consequently they can't hear the alarms. Or else they decide rigorously that the water supply in the bathroom may well be deadly, but they have a shower anyway because they're dirty. A certain amount of over-precision enters into descriptions, too, as if to make up for this swirl of infinitely variable possibilities in the area of definable verifiable constraints. Thus water will be exactly 68° Fahrenheit; or a room will be precisely 458 metres long, or whatever. Whilst always, if in doubt, the action card can be played. "No more ifs; we act."

I might sound as though I am knocking *Gods of Riverworld*. But no. In many respects Philip Farmer is meeting the challenge which he set up for himself, and meeting it acrobatically, with verve and with honesty—at heart this is a moral and humane book. What intrigues me is the way in which it explicates in so much of its action—like some return of the repressed, psychologically—the central problem of creative freedom and necessary constraints. It explicates this nakedly, as the central matter of much of the novel (verging at times, admittedly, on a parody of the problem). And this is a problem often central to the kind of sf which in action entertainment mode takes on the Ultimate Questions—and is most invigorating and worthwhile, as well as finally disappointing, when it does so.

The Unreasoning Mask is also a novel about the creation of God—or more precisely, about how to nurture God the Baby, and thus prevent Its premature demise (along with the whole meta-universe, which is Its body). But whereas this notion pops up latterly from the Riverworld pack in a way which makes it seem to be but another joker amongst many, in *The Unreasoning Mask* it arises logically, necessarily and movingly out of the environment of constraints imposed on the hero, Ramstan. In my opinion this novel is a masterpiece, Farmer's finest; yet it has received little (or only ordinary) attention compared with the gaudier tapestry of Riverworld.

Briefly, Ramstan captains an ingeniously conceived organic starship capable of instantaneous travel (within certain constraints). Throughout the novel the highly scrupulous Ramstan is being manoeuvred, on the one hand by the *glyfa,* a living artefact possessed of remarkable powers which has persuaded him to steal it, and by the distant Vwoordha, a near-immortal trio of alien seers who originally constructed the *glyfa.* Meanwhile Ramstan is constrained by his conscience, by his responsibilities as captain and by his crew's reluctance to obey apparently irrational whims; and out of each action which Ramstan initiates to maintain his freedom of manoeuvre fresh constraints inevitably are born, which nevertheless force him towards a final true freedom of choice. A fine dialectic of constraints and erring freedom is at work here. And meanwhile, too, Ramstan is dogged by the *bolg,* a planet-sized destroyer which seems bent on eradicating intelligent life from the universes.

The upshot is that *glyfa* and Vwoordha are each trying to influence the future of God, alias the meta-universe; for God is a many-celled being, each cell being a different universe, and this being has to grow to maturity—currently it is only at the stage of infantile babbling. The only way this can happen is if the creatures that arise within it can

communicate with it. But It knows nothing of them. What's more, instantaneous flight disrupts its cell-walls (hence the *bolg,* which is a roving antibody); this will make It collapse prematurely and die. As It has died once before; and twice before . . .

Ramstan occupies a "lucky" position, though his luck seems to him the very opposite, a tormenting and constraining burden. Moreover, his luck is only contingent—real choices have to be made, choices which he tries to put off making in order to preserve his freedom, whereas in fact this limits his freedom. It is through co-operating with his limits and constraints (after first discovering them, and deciding amongst them) that he succeeds—ambiguously, since the *glyfa* and the Vwoordha are by no means as black versus white; and they too have their constraints and limits.

The Unreasoning Mask is a moving, carefully written, realistically motivated and impeccably designed novel, which still engages in grand cosmic bravura, but which does not improvise its way out of any scrapes, dramatic or metaphysical. When trumps are played, they don't subsequently change suit (though they may reveal more of their features); they don't need to change suit because they fit into place. Nor is any large hint dropped, that after all things may be entirely different from everything we have been led to expect. There is no need of this, *in extremis,* because the dialectic of limits and constraints versus liberty of action leads to an outcome which is, in retrospect, both freely chosen yet also necessary.

In *Gods of Riverworld* Farmer's characters debate a while about free will versus determinism—whilst exemplifying in their deeds the author's dilemma of how the devil to resolve his initial premises; *The Unreasoning Mask* enacts a convincing solution to the problems of form and content tackled (sometimes bravely, sometimes sloppily) upon the Riverworld.

Fevre Dream
by George R.R. Martin *(Gollancz, 1983, 350 pp, £7.95)*

reviewed by Nick Pratt

Here's another long-awaited new novel by a highly respected sf writer trying to break through ghetto barriers with a story about racing steamboats on the Mississippi. The odd thing about *Fevre Dream* (as against John Brunner's *The Great Steamboat Race)* is that it seems to be trying to break from one poor but proud ghetto into a neighbouring ghetto that's if anything less respectable but a lot better-heeled. The jacket puff gives fair warning: "George R.R. Martin emerges as a writer to rival Stephen King and Peter Straub among contemporary masters of terror and the macabre." Given the awesome statistic that, in August 1983, one in every two books being read on Greyhound buses was by Stephen King, George R.R. Martin is no dummy. But it's scarcely credible that a writer of Martin's reputation would go gothic for no better reason than this, and if *Fevre Dream* is really trying to crash the shock market it's a surprisingly sedate, even sentimental, attempt. One can only assume Martin just likes the story.

But really, what a story. Abner Marsh is a steamboat man through, through, and through. As he cruises down to New Orleans in his marvellous new boat the *Fevre Dream,* he doesn't worry too much that his mysterious new partner with the sensitive hands and the oddly *pale* complexion only comes out at night, fills up the staterooms with his sinister

friends with funny accents, and slinks back from unexplained nocturnal excursions with human bloodstains on his clothing. Naturally, he'd be a lot more worried if he knew that in the Louisiana chapters there's a plantation run by vampires who are jolly interested in the *Fevre Dream's* strange co-owner, as he in them. Little does Abner suspect, in fact, that theirs is an ancient race &c. &c. who when "the red thirst" comes on them will not be slaked with a mere double tomato juice. But what is the connection between his enigmatic partner and the wicked immortals? How can the evil arch-haemopote Damon Julian be put down? How can this ridiculous scenario be strung out to 350 pages?

In truth, though, *Fevre Dream* is not as bad a novel as all that. Martin, as ever, enjoys himself with his settings, and though the riverscape's possibilities for brooding menace aren't milked as much as they might be, the background is well researched and period detail handled deftly (although Brunner, I think, scores higher on both counts). There are good touches in the portrait of the vampire society and soul, albeit not as good as Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire;* and the suspense does build its wobbly way towards a tolerably exciting, if overdue, climax.

There are, I feel, three main problems. The first, of course, is that the whole notion of vampires on the Mississippi is just amazingly silly, and numerous unfortunate coincidences of concept and rhetoric with the dreadful movie *The Hunger* do nothing to haul one's disbelief off the ground. Second, and more serious, is the figure of Abner Marsh himself: a protagonist sufficiently ordinary and uncomplicated to be subtly but persistently presented in patronising tones that first irritate and eventually repel. When Abner's viewpoint is followed closely, the narrative drops into a hollow folksy style; when his thought-processes are described at length, their simple-mindedness is a painful embarrassment. Here Abner gets a lesson in poetry appreciation from a member of crew:

> "Well, Cap'n," Jeffers said, with a wry smile, "the main thing is that poetry is pretty. The way the words fit together, the rhythms, the pictures they paint. Poems are pleasant when said aloud. The rhymes, the inner music, just the way they *sound.*" He sipped some coffee. "It's hard to explain if you don't feel it. But it's sort of like a steamer, Cap'n."
>
> "Ain't never seen no poem pretty as a steamer," said Marsh gruffly.

But Jeffers insists on giving him "Sennacherib" and "Darkness", until:

> Abner Marsh stood in the library for three or four minutes, feeling mighty odd; the poem had had a very unsettling effect on him. Maybe there was something in this poetry business after all, he thought. He resolved to look into the book at his leisure and figure it out for himself.

(Shouldn't that be "figger"?)

The Byron brings us to the third trouble: Martin still comes over as a rather soft-hearted, romantic writer, inclined to dissolve in mush at moments of emotional stress. Reading *Fevre Dream,* one almost feels he hasn't it in him to do something really nasty to his characters, and that's why, as spine-chillers go, *Fevre Dream* is actually rather weedy and mild-mannered. Okay, babies get their heads squashed, and beautiful creole maidens get their throats ripped out, but they're throwaway characters in the power of evil incarnate, so there's none of the classic sudden cold shock that's made Stephen King and John Carpenter rich. Real terror, real pain are vaguely missing; as a novel of fear, *Fevre Dream* is scarcely a starter. So far as it succeeds, it's as a modest, oddball historical thriller, but those who still expect great things of Martin might be better leaving this one out.

The Worthing Chronicle
by Orson Scott Card *(Ace, 1983, 264 pp, $2.75)*

reviewed by John Dean

In an afterword to his first collection of short stories, *Unaccompanied Sonata,* Card remarked how certain themes recur in his work: "pain to the point of cruelty, ugliness to the point of grotesquerie . . . love of death, an unpayable high price for joy, an unrealistic belief in poetic justice."

He is much given to extremes.

In his latest work, *The Worthing Chronicle* (which uses material from *Capitol* and *Hot Sleep*) he brings into focus the acute interdependence of pain and learning. His people find what is most valuable in their lives only when they are pushed to an emotional, moral edge. In this way they discover their gods, the integrity of their own personalities, what is true and what is false in their social structures. Sf and fantasy analogies come to mind in the writings of C.S. Lewis, Frank Herbert's *Destination: Void. The Worthing Chronicle* also recalls the lean, demanding ethical narratives of Aeschylus, especially his idea that "wisdom comes alone through suffering . . . From the gods who sit in grandeur grace comes somehow violent."

No doubt about it, Card is in excellent company.

The plot of *The Worthing Chronicle* is justifiably complex. Vignette by anecdote by tale it is the story of how one civilization develops over a period of fifteen thousand years. Each smaller tale within the greater story comes as a dream to a young boy, Lared. The different personalities and events are placed inside Lared's mind by two telepaths. One is Jason Worthing, the most gifted of the original star-ship ark captains who first seeded humanity on Lared's planet. The other is a woman named Justice, Jason Worthing's direct descendant.

In the space of the novel's 264 paperback pages one experiences a richness of detail and pertinent actions one would normally expect of a trilogy. Card's narrative style is the cause here: there is no padding, anything that wasn't essential to the story was honed away. *The Worthing Chronicle* possesses poetic economy, uniformity, and force.

To be thematically specific, consider the theme of divinity—how people conceive of their gods, how men are deified. By means of the "thieveries of fate" and the technological blessings of cryonics, Jason plays the part of god for Lared's planet. For ages men worshipped Jason, respected him because he removed all pain from their lives—but knew neither Jason's true history nor the experience of pain. *The Worthing Chronicle* begins as Jason allows death and suffering to exist once more on this world. Then Jason returns in person to enlist Lared as the visionary amanuensis who will write the true story of Jason's life and those of his descendants.

As a man and as a god Jason insists upon self-knowledge and courage. These are the qualities proper to the meaning of his name: Jason, "a healer". The chronicle which Lared writes is the important tool which can help people to achieve these qualities. Numerous evolutions of consciousness are subtly created: that of Jason, his progeny, the planet's first settlers, that of Lared the boy who becomes Lared the man while writing the chronicle, the evolving collective unconsciousness of the race, and, most ingeniously of all, the way Jason's hard ideals are tempered with those of his merciful daughter, Justice.

Finally, in terms of what *The Worthing Chronicle* contributes to the genres of sf and fantasy, I couldn't help but wonder as I read the book about where this author is taking us. For this way lies allegory. This way certainly lies romance. It is neither strictly sf nor fantasy. It is a brilliantly successful interweaving of waking and dreaming, writing a tale and being in a tale. This book enforces an exhilarating moral and intellectual self-consciousness on the reader. But, at the end of the day, how accessible and commercial will *The Worthing Chronicle* be with regard to the general sf and fantasy audience? I wonder. I worry. I wish *The Worthing Chronicle* the very best of luck.

More Tales of Pirx the Pilot
by Stanislaw Lem *(Secker & Warburg, 1983, 220 pp, £7.95)*

reviewed by David Lake

We English-speakers receive the works of Lem in a strange fashion: totally out of the order in which they were written (but usually decades after they have appeared in Poland), and largely at the mercy of Lem's translators. Also, because of the author's enormous prestige, with bated breath. Sometimes the volumes which thus emerge, from time to time, from Eastern Europe leave us wondering—as to what all the fuss was about.

So it is, I think, with *More Tales of Pirx the Pilot*. The title itself should be a warning, that here we have the scrapings of a barrel of uncertain age. Reference to Darko Suvin's article on Lem in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* suggests that some of the Pirx stories may date from as early as the 1950s, while others are clearly much later. In this volume of five stories, there is no external evidence for the dates of first publication of the individual stories—beyond the acknowledgment that the best of them, "The Hunt", has already been seen in English in that finer collection *Mortal Engines*, 1976—where indeed I had already read and enjoyed it. "The Hunt" turns up again now as the middle item of the five. It is the only story in this volume translated by that ace of Lem translators, Michael Kandel. The rest are done into English by Louis Iribarne (with a little help from one of his friends). But we cannot, in all fairness, blame Iribarne for the mediocrity of the stories. If Iribarne's English style is a trifle frantic at times, I suspect that he has good reason: he is straining himself to clothe the nakedness of his author.

The first story, rather weakly entitled "Pirx's Tale", is the kind of thing which would have been turned down by any first-rank American sf magazine of the 50s—the story of a sighting of an alien spaceship by Pirx alone, without corroboration. And that is all! He realizes he will not be believed, and so doesn't report it. The second story, "The Accident", is slightly better, for here (and in the rest of the book) we get onto Lem's great area of interest, robots/computers, i.e. artificial intelligence. But even in "The Accident" we are left at the end with a feeling of something missing. The robot has acted in a surprisingly human way, yes; he has thereby destroyed himself, yes; and then? And then, nothing. End of story.

"The Hunt" shows what Lem can really do in hard-sf space fiction with a touch of humanistic interest at the core of the story. It also proves that, pace Asimov, robots *can* sometimes turn dangerous. Here we have a mining robot on the Moon which has suffered a blow on the head, and has therefore been re-programmed, in a confused way, to attack organized matter—such as human artifacts. The Setaur robot is a deadly menace on the

prowl, and has to be hunted down and destroyed. Pirx at last destroys it—and yet the final laser shoot-out has some of the values of the roof confrontation in the film *Bladerunner*. Pirx feels like a traitor—to a defective machine. This is the best moment in the whole book. But then of course we had this before, in *Mortal Engines*.

"The Inquest" is a long, and to me rather tiresome, story concerning an experimental space crew, some of whom are robots and some of whom are humans—and we don't know who are which, and we (and Pirx) have to find out. Here I suppose Lem is challenging Asimov on his own ground—but without those famous Three Laws. "I can forgive Asimov anything," said Lem once, "but not his three laws of robotics." I agree with Lem: a robot which is really a person, equivalent to a human, cannot possibly be so much the prisoner of its programming, it must have the equivalent of free will, and therefore it must be capable of killing humans, just as humans are capable of killing humans. However, I must admit that without the Three Laws, in this story of Lem's the reader lacks the data to solve the problem.

The final story, "Ananke", is probably a late one, since it assumes something like our present knowledge of Mars. It is about a malfunctioning computer on a new breed of spaceships, and how Pirx spots what the malfunction must be. But once again, as a whodunnit it is unfair: the reader hasn't enough data, and so cannot possibly guess the solution before Pirx does. The rest of this 58-page story is manner and setting (and, frankly, irrelevance).

This rather unsatisfactory volume will, of course, be a must for libraries which collect the works of Lem. General readers are advised to wait for the paperback—and then, perhaps, to bypass that also. The fact is that Pirx, Lem's hard-sf space-pilot persona, is nothing like so amusing as Ijon Tichy. Lem's real gift is for sf on the borderland of philosophical parable, not for the hard stuff. If you want this kind of thing, then Asimov and Larry Niven do it better.

The Golden Space
by Pamela Sargent *(Timescape Books, 1982, $15.50)*

reviewed by Gregory Feeley

The Golden Space, Pamela Sargent's fourth novel, marks a return to that form she used in her first two, *Cloned Lives* and *The Sudden Star,* but with a greater assurance and economy than she has previously achieved. Like her first novels, *The Golden Space* is structured as a series of independent novelettes, connected by overlapping characters, that explores Sargent's theme as it unfolds over a sizeable expanse of time (or in the case of *The Sudden Star,* area). Sargent's careful, thorough-going prose delineates then fills the volume of her theme—with her early books, too fully. In *The Golden Space,* Sargent has finally begun to develop a feeling for dramatic lacunae.

Some decades fron now, techniques are developed that eventually permit the halting and reversal of the aging process, giving humanity the prospect of an indefinitely prolonged life-span. Over two hundred years later, as the novel begins, science has freed humanity from material worry but has created the conditions for a deep malaise besetting most people still living on Earth. The protagonist of the first story, in a detail characteristic of Sargent, had reached middle age of a fairly unsuccessful life before learning she may

live for centuries, and proves representative of most of humanity's failure to make much of their long lives and leisure. Part One, "The Renewal", describes a biological experiment, with the protagonist serving as unenthusiastic participant, to develop a variant breed of humanity, a group of genetically "redesigned" individuals whose tailored attributes, including hermaphroditism and a wholly rational psyche, may prove a sort of tonic to humanity. "The Renewal", which first appeared in a theme anthology on immortality, subsumes the theme of longevity within the more manifest concerns of the story line with sufficient thoroughness that readers may wonder why it did not appear in an anthology on genetic engineering. Such indirection in approaching her primary theme is one of Sargent's peculiar virtues, and can result in a close knit between the science-fictional speculations Sargent raises upon extrapolating specific conditions and those meditations upon human constants toward which her work invariably inclines. If the subordination of the speculative texture of her work to humanistic concerns—relegating the works' imaginative centers to serving as means to a more reputably literary end—is sometimes too sharp, one nevertheless feels the tug between contending authorial imperatives is worth closely attending, and bespeaks a complexity of intent absent in most smoother performances.

The stories that follow, "Unguided Days" and "The Summer's Dust", are built upon questions that arise from what is posited in Part One—Would biologically altered humans have souls and such access to an afterlife as others enjoy? and, What would be the conditions for children in a world where they alone undergo growth and change?—but are similarly woven tightly from a number of strands. Sargent is careful to give each character plausible motivation (sometimes too fully delineated) and has no interest in the tradition of exploring a single fictional premise to the exclusion of such impinging developments as would accompany it. The three stories, in fact, are rich works, assured and permitting of prolonged consideration; they make up Sargent's best fiction to date, and together give evidence of a surer sense for giving shape to her material than she has previously shown. If this cannot be said for the entire novel, it nevertheless marks a real advance.

Structure remains Sargent's major problem, and except for her juvenile *Watchstar,* which adopts a simple linear narrative, Sargent has tried to give shape to her ambitious material with somewhat more complex schema, so far unsuccessfully. *Cloned Lives* dramatizes a series of crucial episodes in an early cloning program over several decades; *The Sudden Star* maintains an unbroken chronology but follows its characters over a devastated landscape. The problem with both novels however is not a sense of fragmentation but—paradoxically—of oppressive closeness. What distinguishes *The Sudden Star* is its depiction of a civilization in ruins—not shattered in the mode of post-holocaust stories, but steadily forced beyond its limits of resiliency. Like *Cloned Lives,* the novel is marred by an overdetermined detailing clearly born of conscientiousness: the author seems unwilling to let her larger design stand implicit in a highlighted detail that suggests context; and what hovers offstage is too often brought on for full treatment in the next chapter. The cross-country movement of her story line recalls a Bellamy-like tour of a future society, and when all parts of the canvas are equally sketched in, it's crowded.

The Golden Space, containing interstitial leaps in both time and space, does not possess the redundancy of the other books, but shows a persistent impulse toward *return* that seems innate with Sargent. In a book set over many centuries and a wide area, it is irritating to find characters from earlier in the story persistently turn up and meet or re-encounter one another. Like *Bleak House,* whose second half steadily reduces the number

of characters one thought existed by successive revelations of unsuspected kinships, etc., one sees the scope of *The Golden Space* expand while the cast remains largely steady, which appears to maintain an internal unity for Sargent but comprises a kind of lie against the ineluctability of time and forestalled mortality Sargent otherwise evokes. If ordinary mortals lose track of or concern for each other in short decades, near-immortals with the solar system to move through must experience a greater dissolution of relationships than Sargent seems willing to recognize.

In the final, brief section of the novel (readers yet to encounter the book should skip now to the next paragraph), a character comes out of suspended animation after the longest interval in the book, perhaps millennia. He is found by inhabitants of this new era, who stand afterward around his bedside and discuss what they know of past history, professing ignorance of major stretches *we* know their guest is able to elucidate. In the last line of the novel, one of them says (in the man's language?) "He'll live, and maybe he'll tell us his story." A final, and most implausible closing of gaps, by an author whose over-neatness in design appears to reflect an inability to abide lost connections even in the *action* of her story.

After the impressive three opening stories, the rest of *The Golden Space* (except for the brief coda) is occupied by a sequence of some 100 pages that takes up all the remaining threads and resolves them in due course. This last section (which ultimately reunites the biological engineer with his "children" and shows their ultimate destiny) takes on more, in terms of sheer task, than did any of the previous, lovely novelettes, and does not tempt one to reread it on its own. Though part of this is attributable to Sargent's scrupulousness in doing things fully, it is interesting to note that Thomas M. Disch created the same problem for himself in *334*, and it may be implicit in the design of the suite novel, which seems tremendously difficult to bring to an aesthetically successful conclusion.

The Golden Space is a book of special strengths, and does readers the uncommon service of repaying their close attention. A longer review could dwell on Sargent's strength of characterization, quiet way with metaphor (usually the imbuement of an object in the story with symbolic significance) and taut prose. A slender thread running through the stories, that of decent characters' recognitions of a perverse streak in their sexuality, is deftly handled without being brought round to any pointed conclusion. If Sargent continues to develop as a novelist (her commitment seems indisputable: at least three more have been announced in *Locus*) she may deliver up an unqualified success.

The Adversary: Volume IV in The Saga of Pliocene Exile
by Julian May *(Houghton Mifflin, 1984, 508 pp, $15.95)*

reviewed by Donald M. Hassler

Julian May has just completed a long journey, and I mean not only this fourth and final volume in her Saga with its time travel between earth's Pliocene past and a future galactic utopia, and its jumps through hyperspace to a precursor galaxy 270 million light-years away. She has journeyed in her writing from a kind of John Campbell pulp positivism, in which aliens are dangerous and weird and scientists clearly represent the "right stuff" we humans may have at our best, to a kind of catholic and poetic medievalism. The two seem light-years apart, and since Julian May is unflagging in her productivity and must be

taken into account in the universe of recent science-fiction and fantasy letters we might try to gauge the distance now that we have the completed *Saga of Pliocene Exile.* (She promises a related trilogy set in the Galactic Milieu of these volumes.)

One measure is style, characterization, and the management of dialogue. Her early work, "Dune Roller" (1952), is nicely peopled with folk we all knew and were, at a time (somewhere after World War II and before Vietnam) when straightforward cleverness and inventiveness enlightened our days and the mysteries of sex haunted our nights. The manner of telling is what we would call "realism" although the acknowledgement of science and a broad universe opens the horizons of the story beyond the stock market and Saturday night dances. Her recent novels, however, reach for characterization and even for modes of dialogue that can exist only in our imaginations. The key is parapsychology, a kind of mental shorthand and projection that, I believe, poets use more often than fiction writers. After reading all four volumes of *The Saga,* one is transported linguistically to a playful world of colourful costume, creative anachronism testiness (convention goers will use her material), and emotional somersaults that only the "willing suspension of disbelief" can make real. I am fascinated by Julian May's daring in these stylistic matters. She is trying to be the Coleridge of modern fantasy—with religious belief to go with it as I will discuss below. Although the close perspective of the reviewer cannot judge the artistic success of this dazzlement, I know for sure she has taken me a long way from Chicago or the shores of Lake Michigan.

The other measure of the extent of her development in the art of fiction is her treatment of ideas and, in particular, the idea of the alien. John Campbell scientists and Freudians earnestly show us too small a world. Somehow Julian May over the years has broken out of that small world. Her personal liberation would be unimportant if it were not for the fact that these Pliocene novels (one large fiction) gleefully evangelize this freedom of thought. Even the humans in these stories are alien, and the key science is the evolution of life. What is fascinating is that it is a "catastrophe theory" evolution rather than a "uniformitarian" evolution. In other words, nothing for Julian May is quite predictable in development; and great leaps of cross speciation are as possible as the sublime sense of complex and massive development over time. Finally, this is not very scientific (the scientists have only the more narrow "right stuff") but rather philosophical and religious speculation about origins and about futures. I have always thought that the best science fiction (as well as the best science) questions science. Julian May now writes such future science fantasy (Gene Wolfe's term), and *The Adversary* answers many of the questions about development raised in the earlier volumes.

I think it is no accident that the trappings of these volumes are medieval, catholic, poetic, and Eliotesque even—remember the lines from *The Four Quartets:* ". . . the beginning is often the end/And to make an end is to make a beginning." Julian May has to tell us about a living universe teeming with the lives and adventures of gods, goddesses, heroes, heroines, and monsters. She has journeyed far beyond the careful, dry positivism of a John Campbell or a Hal Clement or even a Frederik Pohl because clearly there is her underlying faith in these fictions that all the teeming variety of life in the universe (and it seems to be a plenitude) is finally overseen by some benevolent Oversoul. Whether the time has come in the genre for the dry agnostic or for the flowing catholic is a question that must be voted on by the readers now. With the completed *Saga,* Julian May has cast her fine, four-cornered hat into the ring.

Ararat
by D.M. Thomas *(Gollancz, 1983, 191 pp, £6.95)*

reviewed by Cherry Wilder

Following the international success of *The White Hotel* by D.M. Thomas we have been assured in the sf & f press that it couldn't happen to a nicer guy or on the fringes of a nicer genre. *The White Hotel* would seem to be a hard act to follow: a world-wide bestseller that has wrung from a German critic the word *Brillanz* in connection with the Freud pastiche. But suddenly the whole notion of Thomas as a writer, struggling like every one of us, subject to the advances and retreats of the novelist's life, seems absurd. He writes, indeed, with brilliance, but he thinks of himself as a poet.

Poets, poor bastards, have more and less to expect than other writers. Who was the last poet you (a) read and (b) loved? D.M. Thomas seems to be bashful about his great success as a novelist as if he were travelling with false credentials. *Ararat* is a fantasy on the lives of poets, which draws together strands of myth and symbol that engage the author: genocide, the intrusion of world events into private life, sexuality, the ambiguity and ambivalence of nearly everything. It is a difficult book, not easily accessible, yet Thomas has earned the right to publish whatever he pleases. An editor must have sighed over the manuscript, the same sigh—and this is praise indeed—that another editor gave vent to over the ms of *Pale Fire* by Nabokov.

Ararat is a puzzle book, like *Pale Fire,* one to tease us out of thought. It is a Chinese puzzle box, or, less revisionist, a Russian doll, not shaped like a peasant girl in a red babushka but like a poet in a black coat and floppy bow-tie. We are introduced coolly to the poet Rozanov who travels from Moscow to Gorky to indulge himself by sleeping with a blind woman, a literary correspondent, a fan. He is turned off by his blind fan's thin legs, among other things. She begs him to improvise a tale, this being a traditional skill of Russian and other people. Remembering his Armenian grandfather who cured a stammer by becoming a wandering story-teller, Rozanov is happy to oblige. It relieves him of his chronic boredom. The theme given by the blind woman is "Improvisations".

So Rozanov frames *his* improvisation with three writers: an Armenian/American woman, a Russian poet, and an Armenian, who improvise while sitting up all night in a hotel: their chosen theme is "Ararat", the holy mountain of the Armenians. It is not made clear which of Rozanov's invented personae perform the following improvisations. After following up all the clues I could do no more than hazard a guess that the long virtuoso piece that now follows might have been delivered by the Armenian. It tells the story of the Soviet poet Victor Surkov, a feverish hypochondriac, plagued by the ups and downs of Don Juanism, including an on-going complication of wives and mistresses, who is travelling to the United States on a ship. There are athletes from the Eastbloc aboard going to prepare in American training establishments for the Los Angeles Olympics. Victor Surkov is afflicted with guilt, galloping egotism, cynicism and insomnia. He becomes involved with a slender Polish gymnast, Anna, and finds to his horror that he has proposed marriage to her and given her his mother's diamond ring. Her name awakens echoes of other Annas, including Donna Anna, Don Juan's bad news, and Anna Akhmatova, a poet done into English by D.M. Thomas. A poem by Blok, concerning Don Juan's predicament, is slipped in.

Surkov meets an Ancient Passenger, Finn, the Wandering Nordic Genocide, who is impelled to confess the part he played in the massacres of the Armenians from 1915, with many graphic details. And yes, Finn was at the Babi Yar massacre of the Jews and helped out in Germany too, first with gypsies, then with Jews. Finn's tone, matter of fact, tinged with self-pity and with a manly acceptance of the soldier's lot, is horribly authentic. One might be hearing those grey-haired heavily built old fellows who haunt the West German media, confessing still and showing their photographs and film clips, or phoning in after episodes of "Holocaust" to say, yes, yes, they were in the very commando that burnt the synagogue, razed the village, shot the children, and they would like to set the record straight.

Surkov's adventures become wilder. His answer to the problem of Anna is to marry aboard ship a Turkish girl athlete who lacks a visa for the United States. Surkov has dual Soviet/U.S. citizenship, due to an accident of birth and immigration. His bride turns out to be Armenian but alas she is also a Marxist and a feminist. In spite of these hateful attributes Surkov is fascinated by conjugal rights and consumates the marriage brutally.

Poets and references to poets proliferate in the text. Surkov shows a tendency to think himself into the character of the poet Pushkin and here follows his tour de force. The Russian poet, deeply impressed by the improvisation of a Polish poet, Mickiewicz, left a fragment in prose and verse entitled "Egyptian Nights". It tells the story of the poet Garsky—are you following?—who meets a poor Italian *Improvisatore* and arranges a performance for him in the St Petersburg of 1835. The Italian performs brilliantly on the subject of "Cleopatra and Her Lovers"—the Egyptian Queen, more of a grand courtesan in the Russian imagination, takes three lovers who must be slain after having enjoyed her favours for one night. Pushkin broke off after the second lover and so does Surkov, who is setting down the fragment from memory. He is interrupted by Anna, a person from Poland. But of course the fragment is set down in the novel in translation and the thought rises unbidden that here we might have the reason for this whole tarradiddle. One is tempted to improvise:

Editor: Now, Thomas, old man—er—Don—We don't feel, the Board and I don't feel that a seventeen-page fragment of Pushkin however excellently translated, would stand alone . . .

Poet: Of course not, John. I would *complete* the fragment. In prose, you know, and verse . . .

So that is what Surkov proceeds to do. He completes the "Egyptian Nights" fragment in a cruel and masterly fashion with two different endings. There is a glance at Pushkin's own death in a duel of epic stupidity, plus a reference to the Decembrist revolution and the revelation that Cleopatra's last lover, who escapes death, is her son and nephew by Ptolemy, her brother.

So on to the next improvisation, possibly by the Russian poet invented by Rozanov, and again it deals with Victor Surkov. In part one he was a neurotic and romantic cad, in part two he is a political time-server, a heel who plays both systems and lusts after Soviet privileges and western goodies. His circus of wives, mistresses and children goes on as before; he has a fear of flying; he muses upon the universe and rejects Darwinism. At Kennedy Airport he meets his literary correspondent Donna, an Armenian/American sculptress, and takes part in an hilarious airport interview. It appears that the boat trip with all its ridiculous entanglements may have been Surkov's dream. The American

setting is nicely judged; Surkov and Krikor, Donna's Armenian friend, namesake of a famous Armenian poet, spend a boozy evening with the pleasant little woman waiting on them.

The third part of the book returns us to the frame. The poet, the woman, the Armenian story-teller, are now in their hotel in the soviet republic of Armenia, just over the border from the holy mountain which now lies in Turkey. Ararat is a complex symbol of cataclysm, of freedom, of endurance, of psychic sensitivity . . . "the sixth or Ararat sense". The differences between Armenian and Turk, between east and west, between man and woman, between love and hate, are blurred. The two Armenians talk of their lost heritage and their divided land and make love with due ambivalence. Then, as they are about to behold Ararat they discover that the maudlin Russian poet was not so paralytic as he seemed: he has slipped over the border and at last defected to the west.

So we return to Rozanov, the creator of all these stories, and his admiring blind woman. We must allow him a large measure of irony. We know, as poor Olga does not, that in some respects he measures up rather closely to Victor Surkov himself. The everyday problems of a writer in the eastbloc begin to close in. Surely a hotel in Gorky would not be bugged? Perhaps he should look in on the Sakharovs . . .

D.M. Thomas is a marvellous writer and if he is also a poet, a literary joker and, forsooth, a Russian expert, then we will just have to go along with it. Read this crazy book. This is the best and certainly the most readily available translation of Pushkin's "Egyptian Nights" that we are ever going to see . . . and completed at that. Poets in east and west experience most acutely the division between their secret art and the public performances they feel are expected of them. We should give them more timely reassurance than, for example, a visit to Laugharne Holiday Park. The mountain waits. Is the ark being built? This is no time for us to go doubting Thomases.

Charles Williams: Poet of Theology
by Glen Cavaliero *(Macmillan, 1983, x + 199 pp)*

reviewed by David Lake

This is a volume for a few people only: essentially, for students of the complete works, or at least the complete novels, of Charles Williams; or for people who wish to become such students; and for university libraries. It is, indeed, an excellent critical survey of all Williams's varied works, with a brief life of the author, and a select bibliography of works by and about Williams. Dr Cavaliero has obviously lived with his subject for a long time: for his bibliography contains an article by himself published as far back as 1956.

But for people who know just a little about Williams—say, one or two of his novels—and would like to know more, this is not the book I would recommend. A much more vivid account of Williams, especially of Williams the man, will be found in Humphrey Carpenter's group biography, *The Inklings* (Allen & Unwin, 1978). Williams the man is important because he was a charismatic religious leader, and (frankly) was more successful in that line than as a creative writer. But at least if Dr Cavaliero's survey is used in conjunction with Carpenter's biography, then the curious reader will get a very adequate picture of Williams's life, personality, and total works. Dr Cavaliero deserves praise for producing a clearly-written overview and a reasonably fair critique of Williams;

and this book will be useful to those people who, for one reason or another, find Williams worth studying.

But *is* Charles Williams worth studying? Is he, indeed, even worth reading?

Not, I think, merely as a creative writer. Dr Cavaliero's sub-title, "Poet of Theology", is a diplomatic device to point to a true critical judgment: "Williams's theological writings are in many ways his most remarkable achievement" (p.126). I would put it more brutally: Williams was an interesting theologian, a rather poor fantasy novelist, and a dreadfully bad poet. Dr Cavaliero almost admits the truth about the poems: "But, if the poems give the effect of a colourful and elaborate tapestry, their texture has the glowing hardness of mosaic. They declare their meaning rather than embody it" (p.100). What sort of poems are these, that don't embody their own meaning? Disembodied poems: ghosts or skeletons or diagrams of poems. In fact, Williams's Arthurian poems manifest all the worst faults of Ezra Pound or Blake's Prophetic Books, with none of their virtues: they are a private mythology unrealized. (The same fault, as I shall show, appears in the novels.) Whatever Williams had to say in his Arthurian poems, he said far better in his theological prose.

As for the seven fantasy novels, Dr Cavaliero, I am glad to say, does not conceal the weaknesses. "The attitude . . . is ambivalent, not to say uncertain; and this ambivalence is reflected in the tone. The dialogue oscillates between the pretentious and the larky . . ." (p.66). So much for Williams's first-written novel, *Shadows of Ecstasy*. Dr Cavaliero is quite right about the "ambivalence": in this novel, Williams's sympathies are much more on the side of the "black" magician Considine than on that of Christianity; because Considine is tapping the energy of sexual repression, as Williams did in his own life. This might not make for a bad book, if properly managed, but in fact Williams seems thoroughly confused, and the book, which has never for a moment been convincing, ends inconclusively. Williams made fewer mistakes in his later novels, and at least two, *War in Heaven* and *Many Dimensions,* are fairly enjoyable if light-weight supernatural thrillers, struggles between clearly-distinguished goodies and baddies for control of the Holy Grail and Solomon's Stone. But even the best of Williams's fantasy novels are marred by the author's sheer inability to create solid, believable characters or solid, believable backgrounds. The best "Charles-Williams-type" novel is not by Williams himself, but by C.S. Lewis: it is called *That Hideous Strength,* and it has all the "Williams" qualities of black and white magic, spiritual struggle, and exciting action, plus the virtues that Williams never manages: solid characters, solid background, and beautifully even writing addressed to the average reader. Let me quote Dr Cavaliero again now, on what he considers the greatest of Williams's novels, *Descent into Hell:*

> The weakness of the novel remains the same as in its predecessors: the cursory nature of the character portrayal. One has only to think of the major novels of George Eliot, Conrad or Lawrence to know the difference in mature imaginative insight between them and Williams's diagramatic presentations. (p.90)

The comparison to major mundane novelists is perhaps unfair; but I have already made the comparison with Lewis. Judged by that standard, Williams fails. He gives the impression of thinness and heaviness at once: thin characters and heavy prose. Williams's real trouble was that essentially he was not a creative writer at all: he was a theologian, a maker of spiritual diagrams. And in his novels he tried to be impressive by parading his obscurity and the arcana of his own sub-sect. Essentially he was not writing for the general

reader (as Lewis was) but for an in-group. And I think it is still that in-group which enjoys Williams's novels and keeps them in print.

For that in-group, Dr Cavaliero has performed an excellent service. He has given them a comprehensive survey of Williams's work, which does not much disguise Williams's faults. I would recommend this book to all those whom it really concerns.

Winter's Tale
by Mark Helprin *(Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983, xii + 673 pp, £8.95)*

reviewed by Colin Greenland

Beautifully conceived, beautifully produced, *Winter's Tale* is a fairytale of old New York: not quite the New York we know, nor yet a science fictional New York, different but existing in tension with actuality. This is (to adopt the terms of the book itself) a *higher* New York, an ideal New York, identified in the Prologue: "For the whole world has poured its heart into the city by the Palisades, and made it far better than it ever had any right to be." It is easy, especially in Britain, to reject this out of hand, because our common myth of New York is so much the infernal city of violent decay, with an entirely appropriate top-dressing of razzamatazz. If you think about it, and if you read on, you will realise that working against this inertia towards dystopia makes Helprin's imaginative venture that much more bold, decisive and delicious. He walks a tightrope over a double chasm: this side bathos, that side schmaltz. He dances, sings comic songs and recites epic poetry, five hundred feet up in the air. Not only will he make New York into fairyland, he will then transform it into New Jerusalem, all before your very eyes. Frankly, he is a joy to watch.

As fairyland, Helprin's New York is wondrous but wounded. The elves are gangsters, the dwarves wear truncated tail-coats and carry blackjacks. It is 1910, or thereabouts. Beverly the beautiful princess, daughter of the enlightened press tyrant Isaac Penn, lies dying on her father's castle roof, romantically consumptive, feverish and burning under the cold, clean sky. She learns the high tongue of the stars while waiting for the hero to arrive. He comes from obscure origins, a foundling adrift in the Bay, rescued and brought up by the savage tribe that lives there behind a mysterious and voracious wall of cloud. He enters the city dispossessed, an urchin, but grows up master of burglary and mechanics. He lives above the ceiling of Grand Central Station. He has a white horse that can fly. His name is Peter Lake.

Somehow, absent-mindedly, a century goes by, one hundred years of multitude; but nothing changes much. *The New York Evening Sun* and *The New York Morning Whale* are run by Beverly's younger brother Harry from offices of mahogany and brass. New York still abounds in gutta-percha, tallow and nitroglycerine. When Helprin suddenly remembers, he adds "and computers", but without conviction. Peter Lake wakes up in hospital, unaged but amnesiac. He goes on through madness and dereliction to become the messiah of the machines. His miracles, in 1999, are miracles of cogwheels and pistons, not microprocessors. Fairyland is under a spell. For all its busy, twinkling devices, the city is in a peculiar trance of stasis as it hurtles towards the third millennium. Unchanging elementals stalk its folding stages, preoccupied with their eternal conflict. Ganglord Pearly Soames is still gunning for Peter Lake, while the mysterious engineer Jackson

Mead is still plotting the mightiest bridge ever, assisted by two men Peter Lake knows to be long dead, because he killed one of them. Destiny freezes history, as winter does the patient Hudson River; then you can drive sleighs up and down it, build ox-roasting fires on it, and even, if your heart is pure and your wish is strong, skate right across to the other side.

To Helprin's mind, there is no contradiction between his anti-entropic romance and the fact that it all takes place in winter after cold and savage winter. He is not really very interested in any other season. Winter for him holds no terrors, no immobility, no hypothermia, no death of the sun. Winter brings clarity. The ice is frictionless. "Winter, it was said, was the season in which time was superconductive." We may suspect that Helprin enjoys snow because it is associated with festivity, because it makes any street beautiful, because it simplifies appearances. On the other hand, the complexity of the city, "too vast and mercurial to be comprehended", is its glory. As a citizen of its underworld, always changing his hideout, his terrain and his branch of felony, Peter Lake "was able to see the city from many angles, as if he were stepping around a prism and peering in at the light". What one newcomer finds is a city of chaos, "far too rich in the ugly, the absurd, the monstrous, the hideous, and the unbearable". Another soon learns that "there were all kinds of hell—some were black and dirty, and some were silvery and high". The book is haunted by Peter Lake's early encounter with a deformed child left to die in the rubble of a tenement hallway, an image of despair that Helprin can finally evade only by an appeal to a mystery of cosmic balance. But like all celebrants of New York, he relishes the chaos and accepts it. "New York had always been a city destined for the rule of dandies, thieves, and men who resembled hardboiled eggs. Those who made its politics were the people who poured gasoline on fires, rubbed salt into wounds, and carried coals to Newcastle. And its government was an absurdity, a concoction of lunacies, a dying man obliged to race up stairs." Helprin goes on: "The reason for this condition was complex rather than accidental, for miracles are not smoothly calculated." New York has to be appraised as a whole, and that can be done only by distance and faith. "It looks like an animal perched upon the shore of the river. Then, it seems like a single work of art shrouded in changing galleries of climate, a sculpture of unfathomable detail standing on the floor of an orrery that is filled with bright lights and golden suns." It is not so much the product as the symbol of civilization. "The heart of the city was set to beating when the first axe rang out against the first tree to be felled. And it has never ceased, for the city is a living thing far greater than just its smoke and light and stone." The city is the ultimate organism, and also the perfect mechanism."As steadily as a machine, the city signalled its existence in a spectrum of low thunder, with arms outstretched to the future, and memories of what lay ahead pulling it in omnipotent traction."

The mention of a giant orrery, a perpetual motion machine that redeems the city from decay, instantly recalls *Little, Big* by John Crowley. While Helprin loves winter in its own right, and not because it heralds spring, there are astonishing similarities between the two books. Each has a plot that lasts a hundred years and ends up transcending time; each contains a family saga that turns into a fairy story; each opposes a self-destroying city with a privileged rural enclave of preserved Americana; each evokes a specifically national nostalgia as the source of imagery for a justifying apocalypse. Helprin, however, has none of the subtle precision of Crowley. His special effects work by audacious assertion rather than suggestive resonance. His imagination is autonomous, like Mervyn Peake's. Clothed

in purple (but with equally immaculate grammar) he sweeps from epiphany to epiphany, making the transitions up as he goes along, careless whether they be absurd or sublime, but careful that they fit the spirit and maintain their own integrity. Like Peake too, Helprin is given to fantastic similes. "Exhausted and sore, he felt like a pair of eyes carried by bones." Being forced, iron bars on a window "began to sing like old Irishwomen who tend sheep in the fog". In a pool hall, the professionals "tiptoed around the table like mushrooms on wheels". Helprin assembles similarly extravagant proper names: Gunwillow, Mootfowl, Daythril Moobcot, Reverend Overweary. Yet for all of the fanfares and flummery, there is no exhibitionism here, nothing arch or cynical; even his Shakespearean title is not really arrogant. It is not himself that Helprin is trumpeting but the object of his love and enthusiasm, the city, New York, "God's crucible". One of the writers on *The New York Sun* observes, "The man who sees angels returns most times with a tale of harlequins." There is an angel in *Winter's Tale,* but for a long while he seems to be only a harlequin, a trickster, not least because he consorts with a couple of clowns, a fat one and a thin one. Mark Helprin has dared to write a messianic allegory of death-defying love and set it in a carnival.

The Steps of the Sun
by Walter Tevis *(Gollancz, 1984, 251 pp, £7.95)*

reviewed by Brian Stableford

All of Walter Tevis's novels are basically character-studies, and all the characters are versions of a single one: a melancholic, angst-ridden outsider. He started out in life as a temperamentally-unsound pool hustler, continued as a stranded alien with a weakness for booze, had a shot at being an existentialist robot and is now a periodically-impotent, occasionally morphine-addicted, perennially self-pitying billionaire. His name is Ben Belson, and he would dearly love to save the world, but the world is terribly reluctant to be saved, and ingenious in discovering new ways to torment him with slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

Late in the next century, the world is deep in economic recession. America, having abandoned nuclear power because it is held to be unsafe, shivers every winter because there is not enough wood to burn (the military have most of the coal and what little oil there is left). China, by contrast, has accepted nuclear reactors no matter what the risk, and has made progress in levelling the economic gap between Far West and Far East (but not without cost in radiation poisoning). Space travel has long been possible at faster-than-light speeds, but has been banned in accordance with the new, miserly stay-at-home American mentality. Thus, when billionaire Belson decides to stake his all in a risky venture, flying to the stars in search of "safe uranium" which (by virtue of some unspecified miracle) will run nuclear reactors without being radioactive, he is promptly stripped of his citizenship.

Out there in the great universe Belson finds his safe uranium. He also finds a perfect analgesic. He also (so we are told) finds himself—as much of himself as can be found, anyhow—after a planet tells him it loves him and he learns self-sufficiency in temporary voluntary exile. When he returns to Earth he has to go on the run, and manages one crucial session with his psychiatrist's computer surrogate before being betrayed. China

gives him citizenship because he gives them his perfect analgesic, but cuts up rough when he proves coy about handing over his safe uranium.

Belson eventually does work his way through these problems, though his own contribution to solving them is minimal. The most positive action he takes in the course of the plot is to beg an aging Chinese lady to be his adoptive mother; everything else he does goes wrong, and most of what happens to him does so quite arbitrarily. Even the "solutions" which fate (in the form of W. Tevis) finds for him—and for the human race as a whole—are blatantly unauthentic. Both the safe uranium and the perfect analgesic are backed up with apologetic jargon which is appallingly thin, and which seems to suggest a total lack of any scientific knowledge on the part of the author. Then again, most of the other characters in the plot behave like utter idiots. Belson's nemesis, who rejoices in the unlikely name of L'Ouverture Baynes, behaves in a fashion which is both crazy and stupid. It is alleged that he (and the Chinese too) want to know where Belson's safe uranium came from, but it does not seem to occur to him (or them) that Belson's entire crew must be able to tell him. Again, when Belson goes on the run, the first thing he does is to go to his daughter for help—a move of such devastating brilliance that the police forces of America obviously never considered it a possibility.

In its own way, *The Steps of the Sun* is a readable book, but one can only appreciate it if—like the author—one is prepared to take an obsessive interest in the shifting psychological states of the protagonist, accepting that everything outside the hero's psyche is merely a changing pattern of arbitrary pressures. This is a claustrophobic way to have to read, but I dare say it can be done. If the story is to be taken as a whole, though, it is as genuine and convincing as the proverbial nine bob note.

Dramocles: An Intergalactic Soap Opera
by Robert Sheckley *(Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983, $15.95)*

reviewed by John Clute

As there seems to be some comic intention behind the writing of *Dramocles: An Intergalactic Soap Opera,* it is probably the case that a reviewer desirous of a buzz impression on his audience could come up with lots of really quite amusing ways to fill his first paragraph. For instance, he could list some of the funny names and coinings Robert Sheckley (born 1928) has invented to amuse his fans, and has quilted his text with; names like King Dramocles himself, and Glorm, which is the planet he rules, and (still on the first page) his palace of Ultragnolle, which is possibly the largest man-made structure in the galaxy (it's not exactly a sense-of-wonder galaxy, but nor is Mr Sheckley much interested in the only thing that remains interesting about the dead subgenre of space opera, which is of course scale), and finally the Hirsute Rooms, "so called because of the large clumps of black hair growing in the corners." From the *second* page the intrigued reviewer could go on to list the . . .

But we won't do anything of the sort, of course. We won't go on to list the funny names for food, for instance, because to do so might evoke comparisons with *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,* and Mr Sheckley is a big-name old-timer in the field, after all, and evoking comparisons with Mr Adams' jape might seem gratuitously harsh. (In the event, to Mr Adams.) What we will do, before stopping entirely, is ask Mr Sheckley

—it is a rhetorical question, so it is not nearly as rude as it sounds maybe—is why he should try so doggedly to be hilarious when the last thing one could believe of Mr Sheckley is the supposition that he was to the slightest degree amused by getting himself into the position of having to write *Dramocles?*

Making the best of a bad job isn't much of an excuse either. That just shifts demurrage for bad work (can the word karma be used here?) onto the reader. Because it has been so patently forced and cobbled into its exiguous published shape by an author who at a guess despised the job he was doing, *Dramocles* is worse than the worst of Ron Goulart. But we don't expect a rare novel from Robert Sheckley to resemble a weekend spasm from Mr Goulart, a man who has written below his level for so long that most of us have given up hoping. From Robert Sheckley we expect a kind of melancholic surrealist *turn,* an adult's sad (and very funny) deconstruction of the pretence that words in rows model anything real, except knitting.

In *Dramocles,* with weird tiresomeness, Sheckley mocks the conventions of space opera with a story far less "zany" than the best space operas used to boast, intermixing with this stale spoofery some jokes about and scenes evocative of Elizabethan and Greek dramaturgy, perhaps to underline the arbitrary nature—the uselessness—of literary forms like space opera, or perhaps just because he thought he'd do it. The book is too tired to answer back. But hold.

The one project of interest in the book, if I've identified it correctly, may lie in its conflation of the Oedipus story with the immemorial striving of the space-opera hero to recollect his true function in the universe. There could be an essay on anamnesis, or true memory, here, and on its vulgarization in the positivist world of echt sf, where it operates so as to give the rememberer not only the key to his guiltless soul but to the universe as well, which he soon becomes king of, hero, bully, autodidact, stalled adolescent—because anamnesis in sf tends to the fraudulent, as it does not in *Oedipus Rex.* The route through nostalgia to anamnesis should not be an easy one for a human being (as opposed to the space-opera heroes we turn back to when the world is hard), and for a moment or two it looks as though Mr Sheckley is going to expose something of the terror of true memory when he begins to undermine Dramocles' hold on himself and on Glorm. But the moment passes.

The plot has ins and outs, but adds up to this: At the age of 50, Dramocles is set off to find his destiny by a staggered sequence of memory releasers, which tell him to do this or do that in the silly little solar system Sheckley has created for this drama. Wars ensue, the terrible Papa of one's dreams turns out (harmlessly) not to be dead after all, and the whole elaborate jiggerpokery, as anyone depressed enough to bother would have worked out instantly, has been under the control of a sassy mobile computer, built in ancient times to specifications no one any longer understands. Things sort themselves out, and after a few speculations about freedom, Dramocles passes on into limited hegemony over his unexamined self. This is from the author of *Untouched by Human Hands.*

Codex Seraphinianus
by Luigi Serafini *(Abbeville Press, 1983, 392 pp, $75)*

reviewed by Maxim Jakubowski

Many years ago when I was still living in Paris, I met Philippe Druillet, then a young struggling photographer and not the major illustrator he is these days. He lived in a minuscule two-room garret under the roof of an imposing bourgeois building very close to the Eiffel Tower. One room was crammed full of books and comic strip collections and had been hermetically sealed to Philippe and visitors alike since the day some weeks previously that he had spotted a spider in there. He was now retrenched in the other room, barely two feet across and twelve feet long, with bookshelf-lined walls closing in fast on his solitary bed and drawing board.

Druillet was then some twenty pages into the first Lone Sloane story, an unbridled comic strip hommage to westerns and Japanese movies, with a character openly inspired by C.L. Moore's Northwest Smith. Unsurprisingly, Lone Sloane never faltered through his ongoing battles against spider-like creatures, unlike his creator who lived in perpetual terror of anything even remotely arachnid. Although its accomplishments now appear somewhat amateurish, the first Lone Sloane book, *Le Mystère des Abimes,* which finally appeared from Eric Losfeld, the courageous and now sadly-missed gadfly publisher of *Barbarella, Emmanuelle* and countless surrealist and film books, in 1966 (with an introduction by a desperately young Jakubowski), proved a stepping stone for Druillet's career as an illustrator. Another project he was then working on, did not however materialize fully. I was shown half a dozen pages from his projected *Necronomicon.* Inspired by the concept of Lovecraft's classic apocryphal book, Philippe had begun a mad quest to make the book a reality. Weirder than weird illustrations already containing all the madness of his future work adorned large artificially-aged vellum pages adorned by an imaginary language straight from Druillet's nightmare life, spidery improvisations in geometrical patterns, with the odd monstrous excrescence. It was a fascinating project, but each page took him months to devise and he never completed what would have been a unique book (some of the plates still in existence were used years later as illustrations for a de-luxe edition of Lovecraft stories by a French art book publisher). My own passion for apocrypha remained unsated.

All these years later, Druillet has possibly forgotten all about these early endeavours and now toils in the Lucasfilms gardens while designing elaborate opera sets and jewellery. But a young Italian architect, Luigi Serafini, has taken over the mantle of madness and after two years work has come up with an amazing book, the *Codex,* which follows in the tradition of the legendary *Necronomicon* and other fantastic books of the imagination.

And seldom has a book belonged more to the realm of fantasy and science fiction than this one, taking the grand old tradition of world building one step beyond Tolkien's or, say, Aldiss's Helliconia, even if not one word can actually be found in the whole book that might mean anything to the reader!

What Serafini has done is to compile a veritable encyclopedia of a different world. A world not unlike our own, which takes on a truly alien character in its multifarious minutiae, but always retains an unnerving resemblance to our own world. Over 1,100

colour illustrations map a calm but methodical descent into imaginative excess as Serafini, in a falsely naive pictorial style that comes across as a blend 'twixt the Douanier Rousseau and the precision of the futuristic Leonardo da Vinci notebooks, presents the necessary syntax of his imaginary world: physics, numerology, chemistry, mineralogy, botany, engineering, anatomy, technology, ethnography, history, clothes, sports, linguistics, gastronomy, architecture, etc. . .

But the language employed throughout is, naturally, an invented one. A curious calligraphy that evokes Urdu, Oriental scriptures as well as our own traditional Roman alphabet. It is no carefree graphic improvisation with the pen given a free rein to dazzle and unsettle the observer's rational mind; letters, words, numbers of this imaginary language recur throughout the volume indicating the sheer logic of the enterprise. The flowery script penned with much precision makes one feel one could in fact come very close to understanding it but always eludes comprehension. I am given to understand from others' analysis of the book that, unlike Egyptian hieroglyphs, Serafini's elaborate new language hasn't so far yielded to attempts of literal translation, though . . .

The desire to explain the universe, any universe, is as old as thought itself. From Pythagoras to Asimov or Harlan Ellison's elusive Medea, the challenge of inventing a system that would bring order to a complex and sometimes threatening world has fired the imaginations of men. The plethora of fiction about imaginary lands or cities is a convincing argument. This has not only been in fiction, but in science, religion, philosophy and the arts. But the splitting of the atom and the rationalities of current advanced sciences have sundered what was once a cohesive view of life and altered forever many's ability to think in terms of a single world system. The *Codex Seraphinianus* takes up that challenge. It dares to imagine a universe in its entirety, from its most elemental particles to the macrosystems of its great urban complexes. It will be interesting to compare Serafini's monomaniac stab at the real thing with the forthcoming *Dune Encyclopedia,* edited by Willis McNelly, with many hands attempting a massive survey of the world so creatively engineered by Frank Herbert's imagination and craft.

Serafini's madly ambitious book was first published in Italy in 1981 (by art book publisher Franco Maria Ricci) and it does have several near-relations in the history of Italian art: the prescient Da Vinci notebooks mentioned earlier, the visionary drawings of Renaissance architect Leon Battista Alberti, and the rare and magnificent 16th-century *Florentine Codex* sponsored by the Medici family. In its weird and baroque imagery, the *Codex* also suggests a shared lineage with the nightmares of Bosch and the mutant geometry of Escher. The bizarre but consistent logic also reveals a kinship with the nonsense of Lear and the whimsy of Lewis Carroll's exploration through the looking glass.

The *Codex,* while encyclopedic in its scope, is primarily concerned with the systems that man creates, whether mechanical, philosophical, aesthetic or linguistic. As Italo Calvino suggests in his lengthy essay "Orbis Pictus" on Serafini's book, language is the first among these systems. Decipher that and the world of *Codex Seraphinianus* opens before you. But language here doesn't only refer to the curious script that teasingly continues to withhold its secrets; the *Codex* contains as well a parallel language of images whose recurrence throughout the volume reveals a disturbing pattern of meaning and logical association.

Consider, for example, that here in this seemingly alien universe, just as in our own,

life begins with the egg, be it hatched from zebra-striped, two-headed birds, dropped by hairless, tree-dwelling humanoids, or served up from underground faucets. Eggs are not only the source but also the sustenance of life. Chickens, one source of the life-giving egg, are kept under elaborate guard, perhaps in preparation for some formal ritual. The egg's ovoid form is echoed in ceremonial uniforms, and egglike shapes lie, sunny side up, atop the mountains and deep within the craters of the terrain. Thus through this one image the *Codex* speaks to us of its bizarre world.

Other striking images abound: a city of skeletons, with television antennae made of bones and a skeleton waiter serving a plate of bone soup; rainbow bridges supporting entire cities; trees uprooting themselves, using their roots like a boat's propellor; viper shoelaces on shoes; normal feet and legs whose torso is in the form of an umbrella, a ball of yarn or a bright star; kitchen faucets delivering fresh fish . . .

The *Codex* allows you to discover such wonders as the purple-caged citrus, the spider-web flower, the parfait protea, and the ladder weed. Its world is inhabited by weird half-sentient flora such as the tadpole tree and the meteor-fruit, by the lacy flying-saucer fish, the wheeled caterpillar-rumped horse, and the metamorphic bicranial rhino. The planet's sentient species are here as well—races like the Garbage-Dwellers, the Road-Traffic and the Yarn People, and the exotic Rodent-Skin Wearers who live in symbiosis with cats. These are but a few of the humanoid inhabitants whose history and customs are thoroughly analyzed in scientific detail. Nor can one forget to mention the Homo-Saurians whose unusual sexual life-cycle is graphically described as intercourse precipitates a metamorphosis from humanoid to lizard form. Merely to name all these creatures is to confront the limits of language.

The word "encoded" here can be cracked through diligence but more fittingly through the free play of the imagination. For *Codex Seraphinianus* is a celebration of the infinite powers of the mind. It suggests that the last frontier is neither space nor the seas, but the mind itself.

An expensive book, conceived as an elaborate objet d'art, but a mine for the toilers of the imagination fields, the sort of book you can write whole other books about. I can pay it no greater compliment.

Space Invaders
A play by David Rudkin ("Thought Crimes" Fortnight, the Pit, the Barbican, 1984)

reviewed by Elaine Turner

Unlike other media, the theatre has never really taken science fiction to its bosom. What toe-dipping there has been seems strung between two extremes: aluminium-covered freak-outs or gloomy depictions of life after the bomb. Essentially, as far as the theatre is concerned, sf holds no promise. I'm not sure why. One suspects it's all related to the limitations of space (and money?); in other words, the theatre might understandably feel in no position to stage intergalactic confrontations. If this is the case, then perhaps the theatre is no different from the general public in its misconceptions and limited view of what sf as a genre can offer.

Like any other genre, sf is itself a language with which one might articulate more clearly visions, observations and concepts which in other languages might appear

mundane, become more easily distorted, or be unspeakable. Like any other genre, it offers specific manners of focusing, of arranging and highlighting experiences. It also comes with the usual preconceptions and assumptions which, themselves, can be manipulated to achieve a new focus on an old or previously discarded theme. Surely, then, it is as much use to the playwright as to the novelist? But where are the playwrights using it? Can it be true that sf is a singularly narrative mode?

Fortunately, David Rudkin, one of Britain's major playwrights, has taken the plunge. His one act play *Space Invaders* was presented in February as part of the RSC "Thought Crimes" (Orwell again) fortnight in a workshop production. In this case "workshop" meant informally at lunch time in the Pit with a minimum of costumes, no scenery and less than the ideal amount of rehearsal time. Indeed, dress rehearsal finished minutes before the audience entered. The production, however, was far better than these circumstances might lead one to expect. The play was exciting, and it was disturbing in its unrelenting focus, through a dialectical view of the future, on the values and organization of our present.

Teamatassa, Queen of the highly organized and technological "civilized" planet Mortgoth, in clinical and scientific language elaborates for us the insuperable problem posed to Mortgoth by the existence of the nearby planet Astyges. Mortgoth is not accustomed to insuperable problems. The proximity of Astyges makes it desirable that Mortgoth "take it under its wing". However, Astyges appears to be protected by an impenetrable barrier. Even the last resort—the combined thought waves of the entire population of Mortgoth—has failed to penetrate it. Moreover, although the Astyges show no awareness of the existence of Mortgoth, the very existence of Astyges, where the inhabitants appear to have no organization, no work ethic, revel in human contact and leisure and, thus, appear to have no morals, is beginning to infect Mortgoth, eating away at its pristine organization and work-based morality, nibbling away at the very fabric of its society. The situation is desperate.

Ulciges, Archimandri of Undeath, suggests one last possibility. Ages past, the Astyges, becoming aware of Mortgoth, built a stone circle which works as a direct transmitter on one day of the year. However, an intermediary is necessary.

Two teenager earthlings who have wandered from the highly populated, protected city-reservations are transported to the space ship where Teamatassa tells them they are to appear as Gods to the Astyges. To their delight, she dresses them in royal robes and transports them to Astyges.

The effect of this visitation is the complete self-destruction of Astyges. At first, the Astyges, unaware of the answer to their prayers, fall asleep. But negative, destructive images creep into their dreams and on awaking they destroy each other. Mortgoth has solved the problem. They return the earthlings, who have little understanding of what they have taken part in but regret its briefness.

One need not elaborate on the concept of corruption, destruction and coercion through image. After all, the fortnight's season was called "Thought Crimes". Nor point out the direct connections between images and life-style and values. The title itself weaves an intricate web of references (as Rudkin suggested in a talk after the play) ranging from Atari to *Star Wars,* including invasion both of physical and inner space. Although Astyges is not an aggressive threat, its very existence is a threat both to Mortgoth's self-image and to the value system on which it is organized. Mortgoth not only wishes to

invade and destroy—either directly or indirectly—Astyges, but is also invades the earth couple both physically, by abducting them, and psychologically, by using them and their own images to coerce them. The earth couple themselves are not only the instruments of the invading Mortgoths but have also been invaded by their own culture. They accept as "natural" what is man-made and thus are dependent on the men that make their world. Being captured by aliens flatters them, and their need for recognition makes them willing tools in the destruction of an innocent race.

One need hardly mention that the androids—two man the ship—and the ancient Ulciges are, despite their insistence on individuality, merely the tools of Teamatassa. In fact, the most moving moment in the play is when Ulciges, his plan successful, asks the queen for one boon: to be recycled. She refuses.

The one weakness in the play is a confusion as to whether the earth people serve as a link for the thoughts of the Mortgoths to reach Astyges or whether Astyges was corrupted by the "innocent" thoughts of the earthlings (I hope the latter). Though either is possible, the ambiguity weakens the play. We need to know which corrupting thought the innocent planet received: the intentional or the unintentional.

Innocence itself is held to the light. Astyges is, to all intent and purpose, truly innocent. They do not know of Mortgoth or of Earth. They live in a Garden of Eden, and, tellingly, we never see them. We must each create our own Paradise. Teamatassa, on the other hand, has the knowledge of control: she limits the knowledge and experience of others so it falls within her grasp. She is not an unusual figure to us. We cynically accept that people in high places will intentionally twist and distort, using everything and everybody available to promote themselves and augment their power. The earthlings, however, fall between these two absolutes. In a way, they are innocent of intent and thus innocent of designing the results of their actions. In another way, they are culpable, not only in the drama of the demise of Astyges but also in the development and condition of their own society, a guilt born in both cases of thoughtless acquiescence. Like us?

Sf offers a world of possibility to the playwright. It is established enough to offer preconceptions which can be manipulated to his own ends. It offers an untapped area of imaginative reference that allows the audience and the playwright to consider their world and themselves in an active dialectic. Offering a distancing from the present, it allows the isolation of elements which are taken for granted and yet can—indeed, must—be seen as the platform and result of individual responsibility and choice. And it allows the scope for the projection of those choices to a point where their evolution and consequences can be charted. David Rudkin's venture into this rich and dangerous territory is stimulating, disconcerting and rewarding. The images remain and life doesn't look quite the same any more. His work has long been concerned with the underlying assumptions behind our choices and the relationship between language and values. His application of these concerns to sf heralds a wealth of possibility. But will we find other playwrights daring enough to brave these waters?

Ninety-Nine Novels: The Best in English Since 1939
by Anthony Burgess *(Allison and Busby, 1984, 160 pp, £2.95)*

reviewed by David Pringle

Anthony Burgess's "instant" book was occasioned by the announcement of the British Book Marketing Council's "Best Novels of Our Time" campaign. Apparently Burgess disapproved strongly of the very conservative list of 13 novels chosen for that promotion (none of them science fiction, incidentally, unless one counts Golding's *Lord of the Flies* as such) and he compiled his own "99" in swift retaliation. The resulting book consists of an 11-page introduction followed by a page or so of comment on each of the selected novels. The list is arranged chronologically, and covers some 45 years of predominantly British and American fiction—with the odd Australian, Caribbean or African title thrown in for good measure. It is a generous, wide-ranging selection befitting Burgess's own expansive personality, and it has certainly put the stodgy "official" list of the BMC in the shade. And from our point of view it is of particular interest because Burgess has chosen to include a number of sf and fantasy titles.

Only one author appears three times in Burgess's list—Aldous Huxley—and on all three occasions he is represented by a quasi-sf title: *After Many a Summer, Ape and Essence* and *Island*. Admittedly Huxley wrote few other novels after 1939, but all the same it comes as a pleasant surprise that he should be remembered, in this dread year 1984, for his sf works other than *Brave New World*. Burgess says: "No novels more stimulating, exciting or genuinely enlightening came out of the post-Wellsian time. Huxley more than anyone helped to equip the contemporary novel with a brain." That is an overstatement, but a curiously welcome one. George Orwell is represented here too, of course, with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, of which Burgess says in his introduction: "For 35 years a mere novel, an artifact meant primarily for diversion, has been scaring the pants off us all."

It is clear that Burgess has a leaning towards the "post-Wellsian" in fiction: this is borne out by his inclusion here of such sf-ish items as *The Aerodrome* by Rex Warner, *Facial Justice* by L.P. Hartley, *The Old Men at the Zoo* by Angus Wilson, *Giles Goat-Boy* by John Barth, and *Riddley Walker* by Russell Hoban. Of course, none of these are works by "genre" writers. One is pleased to note, though, that three accredited British sf writers are also represented: Brian Aldiss *(Life in the West)*, J.G. Ballard *(The Unlimited Dream Company)* and Keith Roberts *(Pavane)*. The last-named is the most surprising inclusion—but, again, welcome. Burgess calls Roberts's book "a striking work of the imagination", even if he does show an ignorance of the genre by claiming it was "probably the first full-length exercise in the fiction of hypothesis, or alternative history, and, with Kingsley Amis's *The Alteration*, still the best." He is wrong on both counts there: Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee* was probably the first, and Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* is surely the best . . .

Novels of fantasy also appeal to Burgess, and he includes in his list Mervyn Peake's *Titus Groan*, T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*, Michael Frayn's *Sweet Dreams*, Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* and Norman Mailer's *Ancient Evenings*—though *not*, please note, Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Nor is he afraid to pluck worthy samples from the most popular genres: Raymond Chandler is listed here, along with Ian Fleming (!), Len

Deighton and Nevil Shute. I was particularly pleased to see that Gore Vidal's ambitious historical novel *Creation* is given credit, although sorry that there is no mention of Vidal's peer in that field—Mary Renault. As for other omissions, I was disappointed that Burgess has not found room for William Burroughs's *The Naked Lunch,* of which he said, back in 1964, "I can think of only one other writer with whom he can be compared: Jonathan Swift. It demands to be read" (according to the back cover of my paperback edition).

But it's all a game, isn't it? An item in the *Guardian* newspaper (23rd February 1984), describing the Book Marketing Council's launch of its "Best Novels" campaign, carries a brief interview with Graham Greene: "Not only did the idea seem a touch absurd, he was not sure that the very expression 'best novels' was good English . . . And as for Anthony Burgess's recently-published book, with its best 99 novels, that was 'equally absurd.' Mr Burgess was, he said in tones which would not have disgraced Lady Bracknell, 'an avid if rather undiscriminating reader', who could have provided a list of 1,000 best. The whole idea was a 'bit of a joke' which harmed no-one and might bring benefit." Precisely. Greene then went on to give the press his own off-the-cuff list of ten books published since the War which "he read and re-read"—a list which includes Brian Moore's *The Great Victorian Collection* and J.G. Ballard's *The Disaster Area!* The purpose of such lists is not to arrive at irreproachable final judgments, but to stimulate people into buying—and reading—more good books. In the spirit of Burgess and Greene, then, I conclude this review with my own list of 99 worthy sf novels published since 1949, the year in which Orwell gave us his masterpiece. It's straight off the top of my head and no doubt full of holes: please don't take it too seriously (but if any publisher wants to pay me to write a page of notes on each of these titles, and to publish the results as an instant book, I'd be happy to oblige!).

Ninety-nine SF Novels: The Best in English since 1949

1949

Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell
Earth Abides by George R. Stewart

1950

The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury
Shadow on the Hearth by Judith Merril
The Dying Earth by Jack Vance

1951

The Puppet Masters by Robert A. Heinlein
The Day of the Triffids by John Wyndham

1952

Limbo by Bernard Wolfe

1953

The Demolished Man by Alfred Bester
Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Childhood's End by Arthur C. Clarke
The Paradox Men by Charles Harness
Bring the Jubilee by Ward Moore
The Space Merchants by Frederik Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth
Ring Around the Sun by Clifford D. Simak
More Than Human by Theodore Sturgeon

1954

Brain Wave by Poul Anderson
A Mirror for Observers by Edgar Pangborn

1955

The Long Tomorrow by Leigh Brackett
The City and the Stars by Arthur C. Clarke
The Inheritors by William Golding

1956

The Stars My Destination by Alfred Bester
The Death of Grass by John Christopher
The Shrinking Man by Richard Matheson
Three to Conquer by Eric Frank Russell

1957

The Door Into Summer by Robert A. Heinlein
The Midwich Cuckoos by John Wyndham

1958

A Case of Conscience by James Blish

1959

Time Out of Joint by Philip K. Dick
Alas Babylon by Pat Frank
A Canticle for Leibowitz by Walter M. Miller
The Sirens of Titan by Kurt Vonnegut

1960

Rogue Moon by Algis Budrys

1962

Hothouse by Brian Aldiss
The Drowned World by J.G. Ballard
A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess
The Man in the High Castle by Philip K. Dick
Journey Beyond Tomorrow by Robert Sheckley

1963

Way Station by Clifford D. Simak
Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut

1964

Greybeard by Brian Aldiss
Nova Express by William Burroughs
Martian Time-Slip by Philip K. Dick
The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch by Philip K. Dick
The Wanderer by Fritz Leiber

1964-68

Norstrilia by Cordwainer Smith

1965

Dr Bloodmoney by Philip K. Dick

1966

The Crystal World by J.G. Ballard
Make Room! Make Room! by Harry Harrison
Destination: Void by Frank Herbert
Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes
This Immortal by Roger Zelazny

1967

Quicksand by John Brunner
The Einstein Intersection by Samuel R. Delany
Ice by Anna Kavan

1968

Stand on Zanzibar by John Brunner
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick
Camp Concentration by Thomas M. Disch
The Final Programme by Michael Moorcock
Pavane by Keith Roberts

1969

Heroes and Villains by Angela Carter
The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula Le Guin
The Palace of Eternity by Bob Shaw
Bug Jack Barron by Norman Spinrad

1970

Tau Zero by Poul Anderson
Downward to the Earth by Robert Silverberg
The Year of the Quiet Sun by Wilson Tucker

1972

334 by Thomas M. Disch
The Fifth Head of Cerberus by Gene Wolfe

1972-76
The Dancers at the End of Time by Michael Moorcock

1973
Crash by J.G. Ballard
Looking Backward by Mack Reynolds
The Embedding by Ian Watson

1974
The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe by D.G. Compton
The Centauri Device by M. John Harrison
Inverted World by Christopher Priest

1975
Galaxies by Barry Malzberg
Orbitsville by Bob Shaw

1976
The Alteration by Kingsley Amis
Man Plus by Frederik Pohl
Woman on the Edge of Time by Marge Piercy

1977
Michaelmas by Algis Budrys
The Martian Inca by Ian Watson

1978
Dreamsnake by Vonda McIntyre
Up the Walls of the World by James Tiptree, Jr

1979
Engine Summer by John Crowley
On Wings of Song by Thomas M. Disch
The Walking Shadow by Brian Stableford
Juniper Time by Kate Wilhelm

1980
Timescape by Gregory Benford
The Dreaming Dragons by Damien Broderick
Wild Seed by Octavia E. Butler

1980-83
Roderick and *Roderick at Random* by John Sladek
The Book of the New Sun by Gene Wolfe

1981

The Unreasoning Mask by Philip José Farmer
Riddley Walker by Russell Hoban
Oath of Fealty by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle

1982

No Enemy But Time by Michael Bishop

1982-83

Helliconia Spring and *Helliconia Summer* by Brian Aldiss

—David Pringle, February 1984

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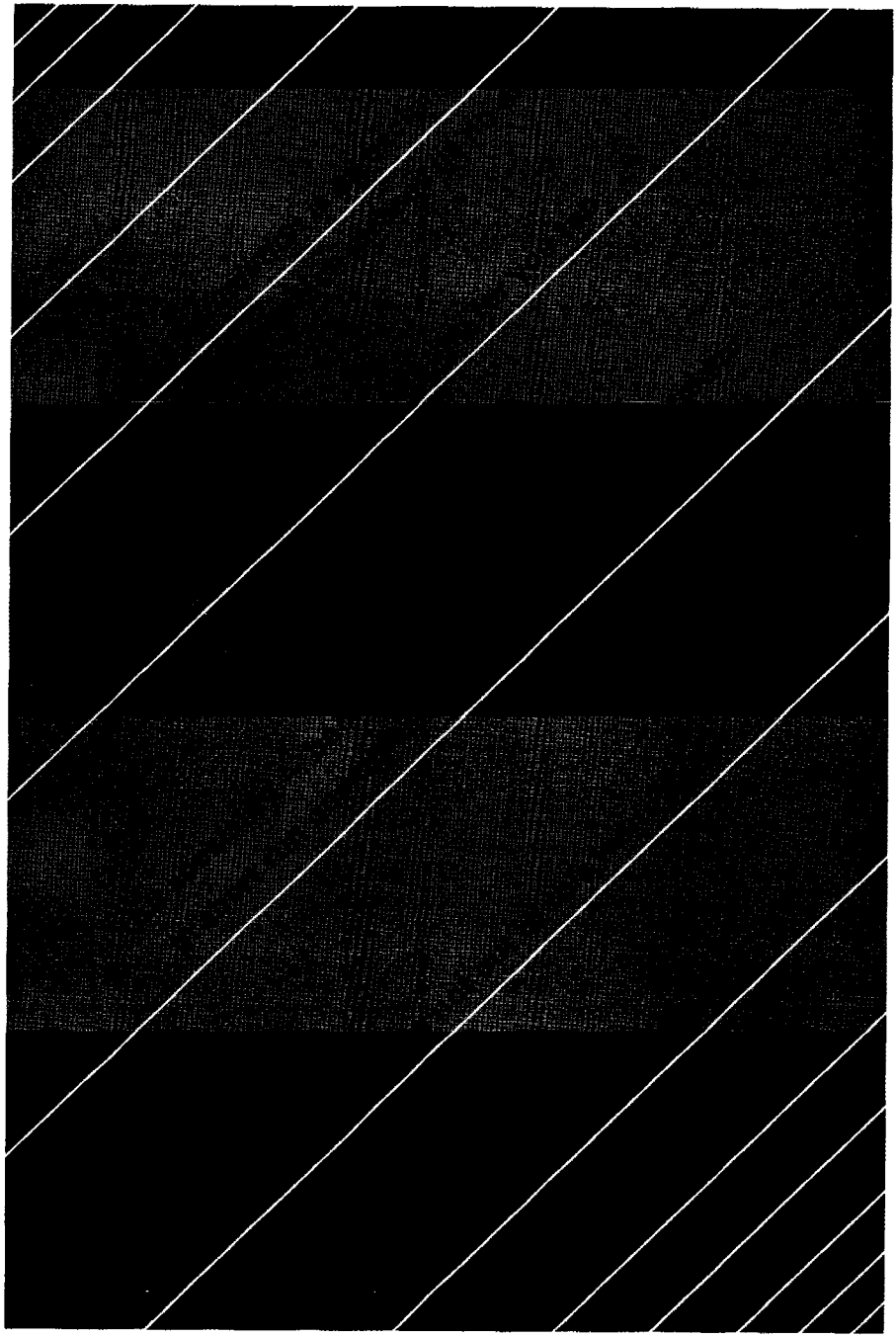

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