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FOUNDATION

33

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

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FOUNDATION

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

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

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Editorial

There has been some slippage, I am afraid, and this issue of *Foundation* is appearing later than it should have done. My apologies. From now on we shall date the journal by the season—Spring, Autumn and Winter—rather than by the month, and our occasional tardiness should then be less evident to readers!

Our last issue contained a special section on science fiction and socialism. Our next issue, number 34, will be an international issue, containing material by overseas contributors about foreign-language sf. (It will also contain an excellent biographical essay on the late Philip K. Dick, by Jeffrey Wagner.)

The present issue, inevitably, is something of a grab-bag, comprising in the main material which would not fit into either of those special issues—although one of the essays herein, Gavin Browning's "Scientism in SF," was originally intended for our "socialism" number. However, on looking over the contents of this issue I am struck by the fact that much of it is about the fantasy genre rather than science fiction proper.

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, who is interviewed here by the untiring Jeffrey M. Elliot, has written some fine sf stories—but it is as a fantasy novelist that she is more widely appreciated. John Dean's short essay deals with a classic theme of fantasy and horror fiction—vampirism. Leslie Hurst analyzes the Heroic Fantasy novels of John Norman—or perhaps "Heroic Fantasy" is too noble a term for such a dubious *oeuvre:* the Norman books are planetary romances-cum-sword and sorcery tales of a particularly debased sort. James Turner shifts our attention to H.P. Lovecraft, commonly perceived as a dark fantasist whose works revealed a psyche almost as murky as Mr Norman's—but the Turner essay rescues Lovecraft from that simplistic reading, and even makes a case for him as a writer of science fiction.

Elsewhere, we have reviews of some notable recent fantasy novels, including Robert Holdstock's *Mythago Wood* and Richard Adams's *Maia* (Mary Gentle's review of the latter makes a good companion-piece for Leslie Hurst's essay). Even the Heinlein novel reviewed here, *Job: A Comedy of Justice,* is a fantasy.

In the light of all this, perhaps we should declare some future number—say, *Foundation* 35—a special *science fiction* issue? That may not be a bad idea . . . Seriously,

there does seem to be a general shortage of detailed, essay-length critiques of the major modern sf writers (with obvious exceptions, such as Blish, Le Guin and Dick, all of whom have received considerable coverage in *Foundation*). Where are the big, ambitious essays on Heinlein, Clarke, Sturgeon, Asimov, Pohl, Farmer, Spinrad, Niven *et al?* If we were sent them we would publish them. For that matter, we would welcome critical appraisals of Jack Vance, Bob Shaw, Anne McCaffrey, Michael Moorcock, Thomas M. Disch, John Sladek, John Varley . . .

If anyone out there should feel the urge, please do start writing—and send the results to our Features Editor, care of the address on the inside front cover of this journal. One very interesting challenge would be for us to try to put together an issue on "Hard SF," with considerations of work by writers ranging from Hal Clement and Poul Anderson to Charles Sheffield and Paul Preuss. Is anyone inclined to tackle the theme? Science fiction remains *Foundation*'s *raison d'être,* and I have a sneaking feeling that the conundrum (if one might call it that) of hard sf lies at the heart of science fiction's being.

Ah, well. No doubt the next envelope I shall open will contain yet another long study of the romances of William Morris or E.R. Eddison . . .

David Pringle
April 1985

An Apology!

In *Foundation* 32 we published "Nuclear Rhetoric in Del Rey's *Nerves,*" by Gary K. Wolfe. Unfortunately in the introduction to this excellent piece we ineptly hijacked the identity of sf author Gary K. Wolf and presented his biography as that of Gary K. Wolfe.

Mr Wolfe (with an "e") is a critic and college dean, at the Evelyn T. Stone College of Continuing Education, of Roosevelt University in Chicago. His major work so far is *The Known and the Unknown.*

We sincerely apologize to Mr Wolfe—and also to Mr Wolf. We wear sackcloth and ashes and scourge ourselves.

We're very sorry.

Born in 1942, as of last year Chelsea Quinn Yarbro had sold her 26th book. As well as science-fiction novels and stories she has also authored mystery and occult titles (not to mention being a composer). Particularly popular is her series of books about that strange historical figure, the Count of St Germain, who may have been a genuine successful alchemist (or maybe that was only his cover story). A noteworthy success blending history and alternate Earths was her 1980 novel Ariosto: Ariosto Furioso, a Romance for an Alternate Renaissance, *in which among other things the New World was colonized by the Italians. An apocalyptic success was* Time of the Fourth Horseman, *in which medical science decides deliberately to cull the population through plauges.* Cautionary Tales *collects some of her finest sf and fantasy. Nor should we forget* Hotel Transylvania: a Novel of Forbidden Love, *on the theme of the vampire—about which John Dean enlarges elsewhere in the current issue of* Foundation.

Songs Sweet and Haunting

CHELSEA QUINN YARBRO (with Jeffrey M. Elliot)

I was born September 15, 1942 in Berkeley, California, into a curious mixed-culture marriage. My mother was three-quarters Northern Italian and one-quarter English Jew, with the Italian physically, psychologically, and culturally dominant—in fact, she rarely admitted to the English Jew, not because of anti-Semitism but because she couldn't stand the thought of having any English connections. Had her family been Venetian Jews, that would have been totally acceptable. My father is Finnish, and although a native Californian, did not speak English well until he was about seven, since he lived in the all-Finn commune back in the logged-over hills of Mendocino County. When I was young, much of our summertime was spent either at Sointula, the commune, in the steep and beautiful hills then covered over with a large stand of second-growth redwood. My grandfather lived there until his death when I was seven. I have a great many fond memories of rising terribly early, going to chop kindling for the wood stove (the brand name was The Great Majestic), then going fishing for trout in the creek that ran at the foot of the knoll where my grandfather's house stood. By the time I would get back, the stove would be hot, and there would be fresh eggs and fresh trout for breakfast. Other summers and many other holidays were spent in the horrible Sacramento Valley with my Italian grandmother who was a livestock dealer and an absolute hell on wheels. I recall a remark that one of my uncles made at her funeral in 1962: "Well, if she doesn't like it where she is, she'll change it around." That was her to a T. The rest of the time was spent growing up in Berkeley, which in the witch-hunting '50s was not the happiest place in the country to be.

I remember that, for the most part, I hated school. I had two halcyon years at an experimental grammar school where no one quite knew what they were doing, and so we all tried to figure it out together. The curriculum was extremely wide, including: music,

anatomy, California history (we built a hogan and acted out the roles of the Indians), weaving, mathematics (the teacher was a professor at Cal and an amateur magician who gave me the only instruction in math that I either understood or enjoyed), modern dance, reading and writing, and cooking, interspersed with field trips of all sorts. Later on, the administration decided they were doing something significant and the quality of education declined. By that time, however, I was back in the public school system and in something of a state of shock.

As a child, I was intense, shy, and prone to stammering. (I also wrote in mirror-language and liked to read upside down and had other symptoms of suppressed left-handedness.) The conditioning of the public schools disgusted me and I have often attributed my early-awakening feminism to an arithmetic problem which was one of those ghastly work/time things. In it, three little boys were making a raft so that they could go out on the river. At so many boards of so long nailed to the frame of the raft, how long would it take them to make the raft? Well, it turns out it would take much too long, so they *let* three litte girls help them by carrying nails. The poor creatures can't carry as many nails, being weak and incompetent, and then, while the selfish little bastards go out on the river on their raft, the girls stay home and make cookies for them. At so many cookies in so many batches, how many cookies will they turn out before the boys get home? At the time, I was quite incoherent with rage. It still bothers me. That happened a few weeks after I discovered that there was a boys' and girls' section in the library and that all the things I wanted were on the boys' side, such as books on astronomy, dinosaurs, and ships. I used to bribe a classmate to take books out for me. Anyway, that set the tone for my relationship with academia, which ended at the conclusion of my third year of college. The only thing that saved me was that, by then, I was working in local theatre groups, having decided—and quite correctly, it turns out—that having to speak on stage would be one way to get rid of most of the stammer.

Typically, I did ballet and modern dance, and in junior high I was the best quarter-mile runner in the eighth grade. No one at that time figured out the connection between ballet, singing, and being able to run well. Such days are probably over, but at the time, it seemed painfully obvious to me. Like a great many girls, I was horse mad, but unlike many, I spent a lot of time learning to ride, and it is still one of my favorite recreations. I like trout fishing, riding, sailing and swimming, but I don't think of myself as a particularly athletic person. I don't jog or go white-water rafting. I have done weight-lifting, but not recently, and I hate tennis.

In college (I went to San Francisco State University back when it was still a college), my declared major was theatre arts, with minors in music and psychology. I left before I finished, and I hooked with a children's theatre company, for whom I wrote plays and managed for two-and-one-half years. For the first six months, I only wrote for them because I was working at a camp for mentally disturbed children and could only write in the evening. I had no time for touring with them. Then one of the kids broke my rib and another tried to take a chunk out of my arm with his teeth. I left that job, and took to working in the family business as a statistical demographic cartographer, running the company on weekends and evenings while the producer began his plans for expansion. My separation from the company was acrimonious because of a number of unauthorized performances of a couple of the plays I had written for them for which they did not pay my very small royalty. Since I ran the booking, it meant that the producer was setting

things up behind my back, and at that point I left. (You're right, I'm not going to give you the name of the producer or the company.)

So there I was, about twenty-four, with a reasonable job and nothing to do when it came to writing. I didn't want to do other theatre work, and aside from belonging to a couple of madrigal groups, I wasn't very active in music, although I had had a great deal of training in it and a continuing (but much discouraged) interest in composing. I decided to try my hand at fiction, and began that same rite of passage that we all go through—sending in stories and getting rejections. The science fiction market seemed the most encouraging, and I had always read a fair amount of science fiction and fantasy, so I concentrated my efforts there. Eventually, I sold my first story and decided that I would keep at it.

About that time, I met and married Donald Simpson and we moved to Albany. Then, shortly afterward, in the spring of 1970 the major contractor for maps with the family company cancelled our current contracts and declared that they were switching over to computers. At that point, I had sold four stories which had brought me about $400, total. Still, that was the point at which I became a full-time writer. The first four years were very grim, and I still don't quite know how we got through them. But gradually things got better. Kirby McCauley became my agent, my first novel sold, and two months later, my second. That is not to say that we were then rolling in money, but things were better. During that time, aside from writing, I did vocal coaching, and I worked at the Magic Cellar, a nightclub devoted to stage music, and reading cards and hands. My marriage ended in an amicable divorce in 1981.

Let me digress for a moment about my interest in occult studies. A great many of my writing friends find my interest in things occult very disturbing. I'm sorry they're embarrassed by the subject. I've been studying the occult field quite seriously for more than twenty years, and I suspect I will continue to do so. In my view, most of what is typically referred to as the "occult" is, in fact, a branch of physics, since it is largely concerned with the use and channeling of energy. Before you leap to a large number of conclusions, I am not a witch or sorcerer or satanist. My religious convictions are atheistic, and I think that the use of occult techniques for the manipulation of others is unethical, except where occult initiation is involved, when it is done with the fully-informed consent of the initiate, and for the express purpose of freeing the subject from certain handicaps. Though the Magic Cellar closed over three years ago, I still occasionally do hand and card readings for friends and acquaintances. My private studies go on as they always have. And no, I don't think that vampires or werewolves are real—I just write about them.

From 1975 on, I have been writing quite steadily, with only a few holes in my schedule. My range of interests are broad and continue to broaden. In the last five years, I have returned to composition as a kind of counter-irritant to my writing, and though little of what I have written has been played, the response to my music is generally encouraging. Despite the recent upheavals in my life, including the marriage break-up, I enjoy my work and my life. And there is so much to do that I am almost never bored.

For the record, I have three domestic accomplishments: I am a good interior decorator, an excellent seamstress, and a superb cook. At all other domestic chores, I am appalling.

—Chelsea Quinn Yarbro
(From interview with Jeffrey M. Elliot)

JE: Can you say how you started writing? What motivated your decision?
CQY: I liked stories, even as a very young kid, and decided that I wanted to tell stories, too. Not a very sophisticated reason, but not many four-year-olds are.
JE: What were your ambitions when you started out? Have they changed significantly over the years?
CQY: Yes, they've changed. Originally, I did playwriting, but that did not go as well as I would have liked, and I switched over to stories. Of course, my areas of interest are always changing—I don't like getting into too many ruts, though I suppose there are a few of them that are more enjoyable and therefore have a more enduring attraction. I know that some of my readers are disappointed that there are only five Saint-Germain novels and five pieces of shorter fiction about him, but for me, and for him, that's enough.
JE: Did you ever imagine a career other than writing? If so, what?
CQY: I've certainly done things other than write, and supported myself by them, but I've always written. I would like to have a wider opportunity to have my music performed, and part of me would truly enjoy running an opera company, because I love opera, but that's not very likely to happen, and I know the realities of it (from managing a children's theatre company) would be maddening. And, ultimately, it comes down to the fact that I can't imagine doing anything other than writing for very long. But ten or fifteen years down the line, it may change. I doubt it will, but it may.
JE: If writing hadn't worked out, where would you be today?
CQY: I really don't know. I'm not dodging the question, by the way; I simply haven't any idea.
JE: What explains your interest in the fantasy genre? Why did you choose to specialize in this particular area?
CQY: Actually, I never decided as such to specialize in any genre. I sold my first work to science fiction markets, but I've been straddling genres for years and will probably go on doing so. For what it's worth, I think very few writers decide that they will work only in one field. Obviously, there are those who do so, but many more, I think, prefer to take a broader approach. It is the demand of the marketplace that categorizes writers, not the other way around.
JE: Which authors, both fantasy and mainstream, have most influenced your style and approach?
CQY: Insofar as consciously taking elements of another writer and applying them to my own work, I'd have to say that I've rarely done so. I do like Alexandre Dumas' trick of making you love and hate the main characters and then putting them on a collision course with one another. I love Shakespearean irony, but it's not something I tend to incorporate into my own work. *War and Peace* has a tremendous capacity to move me, but I don't think I have that kind of world view, though. Pierre Bezukhov in some ways led me to the character of Lodovico Ariosto in the "Realta" sections of *Ariosto*. On the other hand, I have used grand opera as story sources with full malice aforethought, such as in my short story "Un Bel Di," which is an extreme but direct extrapolation of *Madame Butterfly*. I read a lot, and I'm sure that there's a constant process going on below the conscious level that shows elements that work and those that don't, and eventually some trace of that will surface in my writing. But what and where and why and how, I'd be hard put to tell you.
JE: Does writing serve a cathartic value—that is, does it teach you things about yourself?
CQY: Probably, but that's not why I write. I don't find *me* very interesting, but I find the

people I write about fascinating. You can argue in some Jungian sense that they're me and I'm them (and it's possible that's right), but that's not the way I experience it, and that's the only frame of reference I can speak from. In fact, as a sidelight to this question, one of the difficult parts of coming to the end of a book is that not only is the energy level suddenly gone, but all the people who have been yammering in my mind are gone, too, which is a very odd feeling.

JE: At what point did you know you could make it as a full-time writer?

CQY: Since I'm broke at the moment, I've still got my doubts about it. A certain predictability of earnings developed about four years ago, but the base-level wasn't and still isn't very high.

JE: How did your background prepare you to become a writer? Can you discern early tendencies which suggested interest and/or talent in this area?

CQY: I liked to read and write as a kid and my parents knew better than to try to stop me. Some of my teachers did not share this attitude, but that's not unusual. And by the time I started school, the pattern was already there.

JE: What preconceptions, illusions, or misapprehensions did you have about being a writer?

CQY: Oodles of them, and all sorts. Oddly enough, I knew from the first that it was hard to sell books and that the pay would probably be low. But the general attitude of disapproval toward writers surprised me—it still surprises me. I assumed that the editors and publishers would have much more common interest with writers than they do. I've always hoped for a little more equitable system, so that writers would not be quite so totally divorced from the publishing of their material—for example, might be given some say in cover design, or more say in how a specific book is presented to booksellers.

JE: Can you say something about inspiration? How does it usually begin?

CQY: No, I can't because I don't understand it myself. Occasionally, something will trigger a notion, but how it goes from a "that's interesting" to a peopled story, I have very little idea. I do know that one of the factors that got me thinking about the elements that led to *Hyacinths,* which will be out in the summer of 1983, was discovering that one woman I know is physically addicted to television soap operas. But how that realization combined with the rest of the development of the characters and background, I really don't know.

JE: How much of your work is based on personal experience as opposed to literary invention?

CQY: Very little of my work comes directly from my own experiences, though there are a few cases of similar happenings: I've never driven a quadriga, but I have driven a sulky. That sort of thing.

JE: To what extent is Quinn Yarbro knowable through her writing?

CQY: I hate to keep saying I don't know, but I don't. I'm not really interested in telling my reader about me; I'm interested in telling them about my characters. How much of me leaks into them, I don't know, but judging from some of the mail I get, not very much, which is as it should be.

JE: Are you the same person all the way through writing a story? Do you or your world view ever change in the process?

CQY: Oh, dear. Here's another one I don't know how to answer. I suppose that some aspect of my world view does change while I work, but then it changes while I breathe or

watch a symphony rehearsal or clean the catbox.

JE: Do you write on more than one level? Are there hidden messages in your work?

CQY: Undoubtedly, I write on more than one level, simply because fiction is like that. But no, I don't go around planting little philosophical easter eggs for the perspicacious to find. They may well be there, but I don't set out to put them there. And, in the same vein, readers may find things in my work that I don't find in it.

JE: What character types most interest you? Can you give some examples from your work?

CQY: Characters who are deeply involved in their lives are more interesting to me than those who are not. Also, characters with implicit ambiguities so that their personal choices are crucial to their lives and the lives of those around them. For example, the Realta Ariosto was more interesting to me than his Fantasia self because there was more ambiguity in the man. Also, the Fantasia Ariosto was very brave but not particularly courageous, and the Realta Ariosto was just the reverse. But aspects of the character were deeply involved in their lives, though one of them had the more difficult choices to make.

JE: What degree of reality do your characters take on once you've finished a book or a story?

CQY: After I've finished writing about them, they leave my head—they're like people I used to know very well. However, while I'm actually working on the book or the story, they are distinct, real, and separate human beings. As I've pointed out before, one of the odder aspects of being a fiction writer is that these made-up people become very real and compelling for the writer, but the writer has no reality for the characters. This is not the same thing as, to express it obviously and trivially, having a crush on a rock star. In that instance, there is a very tenuous two-way relationship, in that the kid with the crush can and does contribute something to the rock star that creates a certain credibility, either through public demonstrations of enthusiasm and/or monetary support. But a writer does not have that two-way function except in the curious thrill of seeing these non-existent people come alive. The rock fan may know all about the star, but does not actually know the person who happens to be the star. A writer knows everything about his or her characters that they are willing to reveal. Some characters are more private than others, just like real people.

JE: How would you describe your writing style? What sets you apart from others in the field?

CQY: For me, style is just part of the way a story is told. I don't consider it a separate element, and so it's not easy to answer the question. As to what sets me apart from other writers, well, each of us writes our own stories, and that's not only something we have in common, it's what makes each of us distinct from one another.

JE: How have you attempted to expand the parameters of your work? Have these attempts always proven successful?

CQY: I don't like being bored. I like to tackle new situations and characters and genres and all the rest of it. The success is quite variable, since some of the new material I can't even sell, while other sorts are taken with reservations. On the other hand, the first of the Count books (*Hotel Transylvania*) was taken with reservations, and it's done pretty well for itself, as has the rest of the cycle. Again, whatever success these may achieve, I probably won't have any kind of an accurate evaluation about it for at least twenty years.

JE: To what extent does your writing mirror your own world view? Do your characters

ever express your own opinions or beliefs?
CQY: I suppose I reflect some of my own philosophy in what I choose to write about, as everyone does. Beyond that, however, I'm not writing tracts, but stories. There are characters, some of them very nice people, whose opinions are very different from mine. And some of the characters I don't like at all have beliefs similar to my own. Back when I was still doing theatre work, I developed a real loathing for George Bernard Shaw because he did not write about people but points of view. He provided me a horrible object lesson in the importance of keeping yourself out of your work, and so far nothing I've done has changed my mind.
JE: Does your work contain any recurrent themes? If so, what?
CQY: If you were to reduce it down to a simple statement, passions interest me a lot. So much of my work is about passions: positive ones, negative ones, generous ones, greedy ones, obsessive ones, fearful ones, loving ones, crazy ones, the whole lot.
JE: When you write, how do you start, get warmed up? Is it difficult to begin?
CQY: The only time it's difficult to begin is when I'm preoccupied with problems or when I'm doing it wrong. Most of the time, I make sure I've been awake long enough for my brain to be functioning pretty well, and after that, it's only a matter of keeping my concentration going and having my energy level up far enough that I can sustain the work. Interruptions can really cut into my work concentration, but there are many times when it's useful to be interrupted. Toward the end of a book, I get very tired, and, as a result, I get super-sensitive to things around me, so my concentration is more easily disrupted, but that's just part of the hazard of the work.
JE: Have you ever experienced writer's block? If so, how did you overcome it?
CQY: Not really. And I hope that I never do.
JE: Is a book completely organized in your mind before you begin writing or does it unfold, surprising you as you go along?
CQY: Mostly the former but a little bit of the latter. I can't work on a book until it's finished in my mind. There are always a few surprises, but not very many. Occasionally, I will assume that certain actions will take place off-stage, as it were, and in that event, they take place right on the page. Or sometimes I'll assume that a character will be taken care of in one way, and it will be another. The trick, of course, is to learn to trust the characters, and to respect what they require of you.
JE: Do you consciously file ideas away for stories? Do you keep a log, a journal, a diary, whatever?
CQY: I keep file cards with brief descriptions of concepts or plot descriptions. Every now and then I go through the file and toss out things that don't look appealing any more. That doesn't mean that everything comes out of the file, but I'd say about half of what I do started out as a few lines on a file card.
JE: Can you describe a typical day's work? How do you organize your time?
CQY: Well, I get up early enough to take advantage of lower phone rates, and do whatever business I have to do. Then I shower and get dressed, have a couple of cups of tea, talk to the cat, and about 10.30 sit down at the typer (yes, I have one of those word processors but unlike most of them, my Qyx lets me type on a page, which is precisely what I like about it) and go to work. Usually, I work until around 12.30 or 1.00, then I have lunch, look at the mail, run any errands I have to do, and by 2.00 or 2.30 I'm back at the typer for another go at the work. That stint usually lasts until 4.30 or 5.00, when I turn

off the machine for the day, unless a tight deadline or the work is really going well, in which case I'll be back at the typer around 8.00 or 8.30. On nights when I'm going out, say to the symphony or opera, obviously I don't go quite as long. I also try to get out two or three times a week, either for lunch or coffee or something, so that my times shift a bit. In general, I manage to do seven or eight finished pages a day, six days a week. This last book, the Spanish werewolf one, went a little faster than that, but I found the setting so oppressive that I could not get out of it fast enough. I find that I can push my production to ten pages a day for a week or two, but after that I really get worn out. At my current production rate, I can manage three to four books a year, with the reminder that I haven't done a book under 86,000 words in the last four years. And, for example, *Tempting Fate,* which took just over six months to write, is 270,000 words long.

JE: Do you have any superstitions when it comes to writing? If so, what?

CQY: Probably, but I'm not too aware of them. Except that I need to be near a window, and there has to be something green out of that window.

JE: Do you always feel in command when you're writing?

CQY: It depends on what you mean by "in command." I certainly don't feel my characters are pawns, or that I'm controlling their lives; in fact, quite the reverse. Most of the time, I do feel that I have enough of a handle on the book to write it. I don't know any other way to answer the question.

JE: How do you feel when you aren't working?

CQY: If I'm doing dull or uninteresting things, I feel annoyed. When I'm enjoying myself, I'm delighted. And, in a certain sense, I'm always working, in that something in me is always on the alert for those moments or expressions or events that feed into the reality of fiction. Presently, I'm writing a large mainstream novel on speculation, and it will take quite a while to write, but as it is about an orchestra, I attend two Oakland Symphony rehearsals per set, just to stand behind the second fiddles to watch and listen. I can't tell you exactly what it is I've learned, but I do know more about the real gestalt of an orchestra now than I would have known simply talking to my musician friends. That's a deliberate kind of research, but some part of that facility is always working. I think all writers go through that.

JE: Do you feel it's essential for a writer to have a happy home life?

CQY: It's not essential, but highly desirable, at least for this writer. Obviously, when I feel confident and there is little for me to fret about, my concentration improves and I can get closer to that perfect vision of the thing that exists in my mind. The more distractions I have, the harder it is to keep my concentration going. Now, this may mean nothing more than lessened productivity, or it can mean less clarity in writing, but either way, it doesn't do the work a whole hell of a lot of good. There's the other side of the coin, too, which is that I simply enjoy writing more when I can do it for the love of it than when it's being done in spite of difficulties. And lest there should be some doubt, I do love writing. How else could I put up with the craziness of the publishing world if I didn't love writing?

JE: Are you ever bothered by the isolation, the loneliness, which go with writing?

CQY: Yes, of course, the isolation is a problem. That's why I make a deliberate effort to get out of the house. The worst time is just when a book is finished, and the let-down sets in, and the *silence.* The characters are gone from my mind, the new ones are still tuning up, the book gets put in the mail . . . nothing. By the time there's a response, I'm already into the next project and thinking about other things. That, by the way, is one of the

greatest and most relentless frustrations a writer faces, the silence at the end. I probably make a pest of myself to my friends at that time, but at such times, the loneliness is really enormous.

JE: Do you feel the need to discuss your work with anyone? If so, whom?

CQY: Yes, I do. I have a couple of friends who endure as much of it as they can, and give fairly intelligent feedback. In general, I talk about what I am currently working on, or the next project, which I research while working on the current book. After that, my involvement falls off rapidly. I can discuss what I do, but it hasn't its sense of immediacy any longer.

JE: Does fantasy fall easily into clichés? How difficult is it to be original?

CQY: All fiction falls easily into clichés. And, because there are clichés that work, they are very seductive. It's hard to know you've fallen into one since they have such an attractive logic to them. That's not a very succinct answer, but it's the best I can do.

JE: Are there any major pitfalls when it comes to writing fantasy?

CQY: Aside from all the usual pitfalls of fiction? Well, high fantasy, as compared to low fantasy, has very real social problems, in that most of the societies don't work. There is no socio-economic system to support them. And there is another problem that plagues high fantasy, which is the "avoided-confrontation" syndrome, in which the main character who has a real argument with another character goes out and has a long conversation with some sort of mythical person or animal instead of dealing with the character and the argument. After the mythical-being dialogue, the argument is gone. Wrong! It drives me bonkers. Low fantasy is tricky, because it interfaces the fantasy elements with the familiar real world. Obviously, where this is most successful is in horror fiction, but the problem there is that often when something has to occur for no good or logical reason, it is excused as being because of the horror. Terrific. Look, kiddies, horror to sustain the necessary credibility must be logical. Not necessarily rational, but logical. The moment the reader says, "Wait a minute, that can't work," then you've lost them, as well you should.

JE: What is the most difficult story you've ever written? What made it so?

CQY: I don't know. All stories have certain areas of real difficulty.

JE: Do you have a favourite among your books? If so, which one?

CQY: To quote Picasso when asked the same thing about his paintings—The next one.

JE: When you read fantasy, what do you read it for?

CQY: I read everything for entertainment, which to me is not at all a dirty word. If I'm not entertained, my interest will wander and that, to me, means the writer isn't doing his or her job. By the way, I include non-fiction as well as fiction. I don't mean that the writing should be glib or slick, but there should be a quality in it of involvement and concern.

JE: How do you explain the phenomenal success of fantasy writers such as Stephen King and Peter Straub? What do they possess that is lacking in other writers?

CQY: For one thing, they have the faith of their publishers, and their respect. As a result, their work is taken very seriously. This is fortunate for them and could be of benefit to others.

JE: Does fantasy have lasting literary value? Will it be remembered?

CQY: Considering that fantasies have been around for 4,000 years, I'd say we have reason to hope.

JE: Do you typically do a lot of research in the course of writing a book? What is the ratio

of research to pure imagination?
CQY: Yes, I do considerable research. I don't know how to express the ratio in my work, except to assure you that I'd be happy to show you my sources and bibliographic list I've used on some of my books. In my own library, I have books on clothing, food, weapons, horses and other domestic animals, trade routes, the legal systems, the development of engineering, medicine, slavery and servants, ships and shipping, textiles, printing and publishing, education, architecture, art, travel, and the rest of it. When I'm working on a particular place and period, I get as much material as I can on it and gobble it up until I have a sense of what it was like to live at that time in that place, and then I get ready to write. That doesn't give you a hard answer, but the framework is there.
JE: For many years, you've had a deep interest in the occult. How did that interest develop? What is the source of the fascination?
CQY: Ah, yes, I knew we'd get around to it eventually. Yes, I am an occultist and have been for longer than I've been a writer. Let me say at once that I do not believe in the supernatural; I really don't think that anything that happens in nature is supernatural. I also don't believe in things like werewolves and vampires. However, I do know that such metaphors are very deep ones and the archetype is powerful. Like anyone interested in physics, I know that energy cannot be destroyed. The occult is one way to use energy. Does that mean I think occult phenomena are governed by physical laws? Yes, it does. Do I think you can get repeatable results in occult procedures? I know that I have. Do I think others can as well? Naturally. I have some very strong convictions about how such energy is used. For one thing, I will not use it on someone without their permission and never manipulatively. Also, since occult procedures take a lot of concentration and effort, I don't use them trivially. One of the real problems with occult studies is all the window-dressing that has got itself attached to it; most people mistake the windowdressing for the effect, and that is a great mistake. Learning what the real energy-focusing is and the windowdressing can be endlessly intriguing.
JE: Are there subjects that you consider taboo when it comes to fantasy? What are the parameters of good taste?
CQY: I disapprove of all censorship, including self-censorship. Good taste? I wish I knew. It has something to do with the appropriate treatment of the subject matter, but beyond that, I'm at something of a loss.
JE: Many of your stories reveal a fondness for vampires. What makes the vampire such a good story subject?
CQY: Vampires, as I've already mentioned, are very compelling metaphors. They are in some way related to our ambivalence about death, and they hook into communion-and-power mythos as well as perceptions of intimacy and predation. Needless to say, I use the intimacy side of the image predominantly. But this is after the fact. I've liked vampires since I was a kid and I've always felt a sympathetic reaction to them. Since I've done the Saint-Germain books, I've thought a great deal about the vampire archetype, but originally I simply wrote about the Count the way he wanted me to, and, in fact, that is what I continued to do. Apparently, he struck some sort of resonant chord in his readership, because he has a fairly enthusiastic following.
JE: What role does love play in your work? What about sex?
CQY: I write a lot about love. Love interests me. It interests my characters, as well. It has approximately the same role in my work as it does in life, as one of the most basic

motivating forces we know. And sex? I assume you mean erotic writing when you say that. I take a great deal of pride in the erotics I write; it is some of the most deliberate writing I do. I choose the words very carefully, both for semantic weight and sound colour, and strive for an overall sensual response.

JE: In writing horror, it's extremely important to be able to evoke fear in the reader. What makes something fearful? How do you evoke this feeling?

CQY: Fear is not easily created, and it is very tricky to sustain. Push a little too hard and it becomes ridiculous. A good over-all malaise is useful. I remember a comment of Alfred Hitchcock's on suspense: Suspense is not an armed bomb under the cardtable, it is four people talking about baseball and playing poker while there is an armed bomb under the cardtable. Fear is always in direct proportion to immediate risk. How to do it? Well, that's not easy to say. Sometimes it helps to use uncertainty so that the reader cannot anticipate it or how much hazard the character is going to face. Sometimes it's a good idea to create a double-bind hazard, so that no matter what the character does, something awful will happen. Characters have a nasty habit of doing that to themselves.

JE: What kinds of things frighten you? Does your work ever give you bad dreams?

CQY: My work rarely gives me bad dreams, but real life manages quite nicely, thanks. Being aware that, like anyone else, I'm fairly fragile, I find those situations which could be harmful are frightening. Of course, an element of risk is exciting, and one of the things about horror fiction is that it offers the thrill of fear with none of the attendant dangers.

JE: Music has played a salient role in your life. Has it also influenced your writing?

CQY: Yes, a great deal, probably more than anything else around me. For one thing, the movement and structure of it remind me constantly about pacing. I listen to music while I work, and it seems to help me think. Music says all those things words cannot, both with sound and with silence. That's one of the reasons I do composition, too, though I've done comparatively little of it in the last two years.

JE: How would you assess the state of the fantasy field? Are you pleased with what is being written?

CQY: I've read a lot of fantasy of late, and, as usual, much of it does not hold my interest. It's not as bad as it might be, and there are quite a few promising works appearing, but I'd have to say that I don't think there has been any significant general improvement in the field in the last twenty years.

JE: Are you concerned about the status of the publishing industry, especially those houses which have large science fiction and fantasy programs?

CQY: Yes. The current atmosphere of subdued panic that pervades the publishing industry is damned disheartening. Some of the related shenanigans are even more so. I am very much afraid that those few, hard-won advancements writers have made in the last dozen years are apt to be lost again because of the economic crunch and the trend toward non-independent houses. It is also discouraging to listen to the doubletalk that cloaks the panic. I'm aware that the current rate of inflation, combined with high interest rates, are putting a major burden on the purchasing programs of most houses. But to pretend that these problems are wholly unconnected with delayed royalty payments or more spread out advance payments is both demeaning and insulting to writer and publisher alike.

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

CQY: I feel that ideally the work should stand on its own, but if it takes promotion of the

writer for the publisher to be willing to sell the book, so be it. I don't like it much, I'm not comfortable with the idea, but I believe I owe it to the work to see that it finds its audience.

JE: Have you ever thought of abandoning writing altogether? If so, why?

CQY: I think we all do, but I've never done it for very long, nor do I think I could manage to live without writing. I have a standing joke with my best friend, that if it all gets to be too much, we can go raise grapes and horses. Frankly, as nice as the idea is, I don't see it happening. I think that I'll be working until I die, which is fine with me.

JE: Are you much affected by your critics? How do you deal with negative reviews?

CQY: I don't have a very high opinion of critics. Most of them don't do a very good job of justifying their existence. Still, I do think that a critic can point out something about the structure and function of fiction, at least in a limited sense. But the kind of literary necrophilia that passes for criticism sets my hackles up, as you can see. And the critic who faults the book he or she would have written had he or she written my book drives me straight up a wall. To assume that this points out the way a book could or should have been improved is arrogance of no mean order, and my only answer is, "If I had wanted it that way, I would have written it that way." By the way, it doesn't matter if the criticism is positive or negative, if it is out of line. One of the reasons I rarely write criticisms myself is that I don't like criticism any better when I do it than when anyone else does.

JE: Of the books you've published, which do you feel closest to? Why?

CQY: The one I finished last Friday, because I finished it last Friday and the echoes are still with me. It's hard to say in a larger sense which of my books I feel closest to, because it changes with time and because I don't often reread my own work except when I'm asked to comment on it.

JE: Do you ever feel a sense of competition with other writers? If so, whom?

CQY: Not really, no. There is a certain sense of competition as it relates to access to the marketplace, but that has so little to do with writing *per se* that I couldn't honestly say that it has a bearing on the question.

JE: Is there a book you would like to write, but haven't?

CQY: Several books, in fact, because it would seem that no one wants to buy them. Two of them—I've done portion and outlines on them—are straight historical novels about ordinary people in very real and interesting situations. However, the market for the straight historical, they keep telling me, is not an active one. I also have a "p-and-o" for an occult novel set in the late nineteenth century involving, among other things, the Order of the Golden Dawn and similar organizations, but the complaint there is that it isn't romantic enough. And, of course, there's the mainstream orchestra novel, which editors claim to find fascinating and then insist does not have mass market appeal. And one wonders why I get discouraged. Oh, well.

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

CQY: I believe in reincarnation, and thus I think I've already lived there. Herbert von Karajan summed it up very well, when, on his seventieth birthday, he was asked what he wanted on his tombstone. Never mind that the question was a bit on the tactless side. Anyway, Maestro von Karajan said, translated from the German, "Only that I have been here before and I will be back again." I know the feeling.

JE: When in you life were you most happy? What about most sad?

CQY: I'd be hardput to single out one particular moment for either. But let me tell you

about something that was a very happy experience. The first opera I ever heard was Verdi's *Don Carlo* in November of 1950, on a Met broadcast. In the cast was the amazing Jussi Bjoerling as Carlo. Felipe was played by Cesare Siepi, a young Italian bass making his American debut. Years went by. I stayed hooked on opera and became a great fan of those two gentlemen. Bjoerling died in 1960, which saddened me. I had been fortunate enough to hear him on his last concert tour, and my, how that man could sing! Anyway, Siepi continued on, that dark, silky voice of his losing very little of its sheen. A year and half ago, I had the pleasure of meeting him and as a gesture of thanks, gave him one of my books. When I saw him last summer after *Don Giovanni,* he commented on the book, and asked for more. You have no idea how thrilling it is to have someone I am an ardent fan of become, in turn, my fan. Not the happiest moment of my life, but a real joy nonetheless.

JE: How do you view your own career today? Is it moving in an upward direction?

CQY: God, I hope so, but sometimes I wonder. It's a distressing period economically all over, so it's difficult to get a clear picture on how things stand. And, of course, the publishing industry is as hooked into the economy as anything else, and it reflects the current problems. I know that my situation is by no means unique. I know writers who have been working twice as long as I have who are in something of a slump and are experiencing some of the same doubts. In general, I feel good about most of what I've written, and I think that's as positive as anyone can be if they're writing for a living, as I am.

JE: How do you see your image in the field? Do you have a sense of how you're viewed by readers, editors, publishers?

CQY: Actually, I don't see my image in the field. I wish I did. Some days I think I must be doing pretty well because of the reaction I get from sales representatives at some of these bookseller things I go to. And, by the way, the reaction isn't just from the representatives who sell my books, but many of the others. In general, I don't get the same enthusiasm from my editors, so I do have some doubts about where and how I stand, actually. However, I must confess that I don't spend much time worrying about it one way or the other. My business is writing, not public relations. Oh, when I do an editorial blitz in New York, I try to be as professional and credible as possible, but I wouldn't want a steady diet of such things.

JE: If you could do it all over again, would you pick your joys outside of literature?

CQY: I get a fair number of my joys outside of literature right now. But if you mean, would I still do it, knowing what I do, the answer is yes. I think I might spare a little more time for music and just playing. A big hunk of my life is spent by myself in a room with a typewriter and lots of blank paper, and I would prefer to have a little better balance with the rest of the world. And while I love writing, by which I mean the process of putting the words onto paper, I think that it would be less enervating if I had a broader social and recreational base. Then again, I might be wrong, and this may be the better way.

JE: Do you perceive any new directions in your work? If so, what?

CQY: Constantly. I like doing new things and I don't like repeating myself. Theme and variations do interest me, witness the Saint-Germain books, but once the variations are complete, then it's time to do something else. I've mentioned some of the things I want to write. Each new project opens new perceptions and leads on to the next level, whatever it is. That exploration is very exciting. I don't know where it's all heading, and I'm not even sure I'll know when I get there, wherever it is. However, that doesn't bother me now and

with any luck, it never will.

JE: What contributions would you like to make to the fantasy field? How would you like to be remembered?

CQY: That's not for me to decide. But if my work occasionally provides some insight beyond its immediate entertainment value, then I figure I've done something worthwhile. I can't dictate how anyone feels about me or my work, though, and how I am remembered will depend on others.

JE: If you could throw a party and invite any five fantasy writers, living or dead, whom would you invite?

CQY: I'm assuming you would want this to be a pleasant party and not a disaster. Well, I think I'd invite E.T.A. Hoffman and Rudyard Kipling first off. I like their work and they don't seem to be too impossible, and they would probably like each other. Next probably Bram Stoker. He and Kipling might not get on well, but they both had reasonably good manners, and since Stoker's mother was the organizer of the Dublin feminist movement, he wouldn't be too put off by a hostess in his own profession. Then I'd invite my good friend Suzy Charnas who is more than capable of holding her own in such company. One more to go, and this one is a little tricky. Mark Twain is tempting but he and Kipling would go off in the corner and talk to each other and no one else. Goethe had way too much ego to mix well in that group. I'm assuming, by the way, that there would be no language difficulties and we'd all understand one another (I don't speak German, Kipling didn't speak German, Stoker knew only a smattering of it, and Hoffman didn't know English). What's needed is someone with a sense of humour. Again, banishing the language problem, I think I'd invite Cyrano de Bergerac, and hope that that brilliant young man was in an affable frame of mind instead of very temperamental. For myself, I'd love to have Lodovico Ariosto, but according to all I've read, he was very sharp-tongued and loved getting into arguments, which is not the way to have an enjoyable evening. I'd also be tempted to invite Titus Petronius Niger, but I have no idea how he'd get on with those nineteenth century gentlemen and Hoffman, being an attorney by profession. He might find Petronius' attitudes a little hard to take. A threesome that might enjoy dinner together would be Petronius, Steve King and Ted Sturgeon, but I wouldn't want to give it, since they would have more fun alone. How about Shakespeare, Edith Nesbit, The Brothers Grimm, and Peter Straub? I'd volunteer Tanith Lee to hold that one, and she'd do a damn good job of it, too. You know, my ex-husband and I used to do a variation on this, by getting up lists of the most awful dinner party possible, history and language no object. The guests had to be not only dreadful in their own right, but disinclined to get along with each other. I think the worst we ever came up with was this ghastly dozen: Ivan the Terrible, Girolamo Savonarola, Chief Crazy Horse, Louis XII of France, Edward Teach, Lady Wu, Heinrich Himmler, Isabella of Spain, Emperor Gaius Caligula, John Knox, Elizabeth Bathory, and Akbar the Great. The whole thing was to be hosted by Frederick Barbarossa. Sounds really dreadful, doesn't it?

JE: Finally, what projects do you presently have on the drawing board? What do you have planned for the future?

CQY: Actually, at the moment, I haven't any outstanding contracts, so I'm going to work on the mainstream novel and some shorter bits of fiction while we see what turns up in New York. I have one submission I should hear about fairly soon, a contemporary occult thriller. If it goes, I would imagine it would take about three months to do. And I

have an alternate world history fantasy with Dave Hartwell, which Dave assures me should soon be in contract. I certainly hope so. I don't like this working without a net. But if something goes wrong between now and then, I'll probably do a bit more on this work and then find out where I can make some money, since things are getting a bit bleak on that front.

John Dean last appeared in Foundation *Features in issue number 23, when he surveyed science-fiction cities. In the interim he has attended a Clarion Workshop, had a story accepted by* Weirdbook, *and conducted university seminars in Hungary on modern sf and fantasy literature.*

The Immigrant of Darkness: The Vampire in American Fiction

JOHN DEAN

> "Oh, but I have a strange and fugitive self shut out and howling like a wolf or a coyote under the ideal windows. See his red eyes in the dark? This is the self who is coming into his own." D.H. Lawrence, *Studies In Classic American Literature*

The Vampire has been treated very badly by university intellectuals. Some have dismissed him as a hideous aberration personifying frustrated sexual passion and criminal blood lust. Others disdain him as a papier-mâché beasty no more serious or worthy of consideration than a tenth-rate piece of kitsch. Nor is there any satisfaction in the concern of a few scholars of popular culture who have taken some sympathetic interest in the vampire. The development of an essential cultural ideal has been overlooked. The vampire, who was previously damned, is now practically deified. The vampire has undergone a transition in the last two centuries from bestial sinner to beautiful victim, from ghoulish criminal to gifted revolutionary, from a being in a perpetual state of damnation to one whose way of life is an effulgent exaltation.

The vampire belongs to a gifted elite, potentially immortal and vigorously liberated from the biological prison of birth, decay, and death. The vampire runs free and wild. Like the leopard, the wolverine, the eagle, he is majestically, predaciously a loner. It would be improper to consider the vampire with traditional, academic restraint. The pure light of reason obscures the issue. Vampire values reject moral propriety, the boundaries of common sense. Under vampire conditions, light does not illuminate—it kills. Let us consider the vampire in his own dark light.

The vampire begins in darkness, confined to legends. In Europe he was originally located among the South Slavs and the Rumanians. His temporal origins are hazy.

Records of vampires go back as far as the twelfth century in Europe. But references to vampires are muddled and mixed amid legends of witchcraft, the revenant, examples of lycanthropy, premature burials and suicides, epidemics, cannibalism, and various, hideous instances of necrophagism, necrophilia, and necrosadism. It was not until the late eighteenth century that refined, imaginative attention in Europe and America focused on the vampire to the exclusion of his unpleasant companions.

The legend of the vampire is world-wide. He is by no means confined to the western sensibility. There is a record of a Chinese vampire who favoured spinal fluid instead of blood. In Polynesia the native vampire is called the *Tii.* In Maylay he is called the *Hantu Penyardin.* In Southern Burma he is the *Kephu.* We are dealing with a universal fear, a global phenomenon.

When I praise the vampire I am referring to a breed developed in Europe and America. For there is potentially as much variety in the personalities of vampires as there is in human beings. The common biological attributes of the vampire rest solely on two peculiarities: the vampire is originally a dead person reanimated to life, to maintain life and assure vitality the vampire must consume an essential human fluid—which is, most usually, blood. In English we name him for his eating habits. The word "vampire" stems from the Russian *Vampir,* which comes from the root *pi,* "to drink".[1]

The earliest, significant tale of vampirism in America is Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia" of 1838. A certain amount of native groundwork was laid for Poe in the brooding landscapes and the persecuted, violent main characters of the American novelist Charles Brockden Brown, especially in Brown's novels *Wieland* (1798) and *Ormond, or The Secret Witness* (1799). Poe's concerns in "Ligeia" were highly psychological and metaphysical, in much the same fashion as the great vampire films of the early twentieth century: Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and Carl Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932).

Poe's "Ligeia" is constructed on the essential premise that whether one finally dies or not is purely an act of will. A man's first wife, Ligeia, returns to life after dying by taking possession of the freshly dead corpse of his second wife. The basic human element which allows "this hideous drama of revification"[2] to take place is the inexhaustible vigor of Ligeia's own will.

This American tale of vampirism is related as an act of occult pragmatism. Ligeia's extreme passion, her "*intensity* in thought, action . . . speech"[3] was turned to the purpose of overcoming death. She was a person of immense beauty and learning who had successfully traversed "*all* the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science."[4] Here was a woman who knew how to apply herself. Will-power, choice and preference—neither drinking the blood of Christ nor sucking the blood of the living—allowed her to conquer death.

In "Ligeia" Poe set demanding precedents for the vampire in American fiction. Yet, for all its American character, Poe's "hideous drama of revification" was coyly removed from America. None of the story took place on American soil, but in an "old, decaying city near the Rhine"[5] and "in one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England."[6] Also, Ligeia herself was not altogether Anglo-Saxon. Her family was "of a remotely ancient date"[7] and, writes the narrator, when "I looked at the delicate outlines of (her) nose . . . nowhere but in the graceful medallions of the Hebrews had I beheld a similar perfection . . . There were the same . . . tendency to the aquiline, the same harmoniously curved nostrils bespeaking the free spirit."[8]

Ligeia was beautiful but alien. She was an alien type well known to Americans in 1838, when the second great wave of Jewish immigration to America from Germany and Central Europe was well under way.[9] This Jewish association is altogether fitting for a vampire character. The vampire denies Christianity, yet at the same time is a hidden part of Christian mythology. The vampire lives in an unredeemed world.

But, strictly speaking, Poe's vampire Ligeia was neither Christian nor Jewish. She was free of such mundane restrictions. And the insistence on total freedom here is precisely the point. Poe saw the vampire as a Promethean figure, an archetypal rebel who would defy God, the father, the state, society. In the words of another, similar American vampire of a later date, Ligeia responded to life and overcame the restrictions of the living by "persisting in the myth of my own will."[10] If one must put a moral value on this action, then one may pass judgement along with the French critic Francis Lacassin and remark: "The vampire renews Lucifer's revolt on a human scale. He incarnates the rejection of law—of creation itself. He is the corpse who cheats death, matter which refuses to perish to make sure that the soul will not obey the destination prepared by God."[11] But the vampire's spiritual terrorism denies the validity of human law. How is the vampire unlawful or immoral? His existence seeks to invalidate the tenets of mortal, civilized society.

Byron, and not Poe, usually gets full credit for originating this kind of vampire because of his work *Childe Harold* (1812), and the subsequent, distorted portrait of Byron as Lord Ruthven in John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819). Although Polidori's *The Vampyre* was the first formal expression of the vampire in English literature—the necessary ingredient had been gestating for a while. A highly disruptive, ethically unstable social-historical context tends to nurture this kind of character. For example, the passionate, ambivalent, revolutionary individual can be found in the tormented heroes of late Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy—a literature written and performed in a society evolving toward civil war. Cinch Hamlet and the ghost as one being, an extra-human being who defies the Christian scheme, who obsessively submits "the rational soul to the dictates of the irascible,"[12] and one would have a fair approximation of a Byronic vampire. Go further back, to a Judas, Cain, or Satan who could beautifully justify their actions, and you have a brilliant trio of predecessors.

This is the most appealing strain of vampires in modern American fiction, a being who constitutes a humanized, highly literate type of figure, who requires a high degree of intellectual and emotional commitment in the reading. They clearly present the reader with the option of hating them or loving them: as in the fine portrayals of Louis, Lestat and Claudie in Anne Rice's *Interview With The Vampire* (1976), of Le Comte de Sainte-Germain in Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's *Hôtel Transylvania* (1978), and of Count Dracula in Paul Monette's *Nosferatu* (1979).

In line with their place in contemporary American society, it is only fair to note that the pejorative implication of their attraction is narcissism. It is remarkable that these accomplished portrayals should have occurred in America's "Me Decade" when "the dread of age culminates not in a 'cult of youth' but in a cult of the self,"[13] when the "irrational terror of old age and death is closely associated with the emergence of the narcissistic personality as the dominant type of personality in contemporary society."[14] The vampire's wish and profit in *Interview With The Vampire, Hotel Transylvania, Nosferatu* is that he alone is himself forever.

The second dominant group of vampires in American fiction are those who run in large packs. This type tends to proliferate in times of general psychological morbidity brought on by mass traumas. Important distinctions for this group are the sense of mass infection and the lack of romantic individuality as a drawing card. The specific European tradition adapted to American ends here is the old coincidence of reports of vampirism when plagues and epidemics occurred, when vampirism came as a curse from the east, like the Black Plague.

America in the early Fifties was charged with anxiety and doomsday dread. Many factors contributed to this atmosphere; the cold war, America's strongman position in world affairs, the dreadfully new atomic weapons, the fear of domestic and international communism. The east was red and McCarthyism spread in direct relation to the fear of a spreading plague of communism. It was in this context that Richard Matheson published his gutsy, swiftly-paced novel *I Am Legend* in 1954, a story in which—due to a virus—the whole world goes vampire. But one man holds out, Robert Neville. He manages to refuse the contamination, to remain human while the rest of humanity assumes a "God-forsaken existence."[15] Robert Neville subsequently becomes legend as "the last of the genuinely *alive*."[16]

Twenty years later Americans were living in the depressed, insecure aftermath of the Vietnam War. There was decreased trust in public institutions, a legacy of defeat, vivid memories of the dead and wounded. As David Halberstam wrote: "Vietnam was a poison that got very deeply into the American system."[17] It was in this cultural context that Stephen King published *'Salem's Lot* in 1975, in which a typically Christian, God-fearing, neighbourly small American town is transformed into a nest of vampires. One character even goes so far as to see this turn of events as a logical retribution, an organic conclusion, for the contemporary, average American's deep-seated taste for blood and violence. America, claims the character, has had vampire bloodlust in its collective system " '. . . for twenty years or more. Whole country's goin' the same way. Me and Nolly went to a drive-in show up in Falmouth a couple of weeks ago . . . I seen more blood and killin's in that first Western than I seen both years in Korea. Kids was eatin' popcorn and cheerin' 'em on.' He gestured vaguely at the town (of 'Salem's Lot) now lying unnaturally golden in the broken rays of the westering sun, like a dream village. 'They prob'ly like bein' vampires.' "[18]

The third and final group of vampires in American fiction relates directly to the infectious, bestial qualities emphasized in the pack vampires. This type is the vampire as a freak of nature, but an *isolated* freak of nature, an abominable pest like a rabid dog or a child rapist which a community or an individual tries to do away with. This is the vampire as ghoul, admittedly evil and mindless. However, even in this group the dark exaltation of the vampire is maintained. These vampires can be occult in Lovecraft's sense of exciting "in the reader a profound sense of dread, of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim."[19] The vampire in Clark Ashton Smith's "The Beast of Averoigne" (1933) was an "abhorrently transfigured thing . . . (of) unclean blackness"[20] inspired by occult forces in outer space: "the godless deep."[21]

The vampire as a rare, isolated freak of nature has been dealt with powerfully in psychological terms by Theodore Sturgeon in *Some Of Your Blood* (1961). An act of

extravagant fancy which Sturgeon manages to pull off, the vampire character—an anonymous psychiatric case named "George Smith"—finds a resolution for his problem in the menstrual blood of his beloved. There is no resolution but death in the narrative poem "Daddy" (1965) by Sylvia Plath. The narrative traces an obsession with a hated father who is "A man in black with a Meinkampf look,"[20] and the drinker of his daughter's spirit and blood. And so the daughter decides to kill the detested father-vampire "who . . . drank my blood for a year, / Seven years . . . / Daddy . . . / There's a stake in your fat black heart / And the villagers never liked you. / They are dancing and stamping on you. / They always *knew* it was you. / Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through."[22]

The fundamental issue at stake with this third group is that of total isolation. It is not a deep question of will power. They are not historically defined. This type of vampire is either *sui generis* (Smith, Sturgeon) or the last of a wicked race (Plath's Nazi-father-vampire). This vampire is too isolated to belong to a particular historical moment. He no more than dons the costume of a particular epoch to suit his own ends. We have vampires here of the cool, odd bestiality one finds as well in the motiveless malignity of Iago, in the cackling little redhead named Richard Harvest in Chandler's *Playback*. What amazes, terrifies, and shocks one about this vampire is his awful independence from everything except hunger.

In his book on death, in conclusion to his chapter on necrophilia, the French cultural historian Phillipe Ariès maintains: "Let us not look too near for the reality that lies beneath these fanciful tales . . . What is essential here takes place place in the imagination. The most important events, those heaviest with consequences, do not belong to the world of real life but to the world of fantasies."[23] The imagined reality of the vampire in American literature cannot easily be unriddled. Nor should it be. "The removal of mystery from the arts is one of the ways in which our society tries to tame the occult and its offence."[24]The vampire glories in offence. He is a spiritual guerrilla. Seek to explain once and for all the mystery of the vampire's violent hunger and you are no longer focused on the creature itself. You deal with the explanation, not the thing explained.

Does the vampire's law breaking, his violation of taboos, mean he is only a personification of the id, driven to feed, survive, and propagate? Is he a homegrown American libertine, aspiring to a continual dissolution of mores and sexual licentiousness? Might the social-historical context which nurtures vampire literature be only fertile soil for a pre-existent seed? Is the vampire a version of the cherished outlaw in American culture? Is he the existential outsider for whom continuous vitality and the need for self-expression are the absolute necessary conditions of existence?

These questions will not be answered here. The vampire in American fiction is not a problem, he is a persistent mystery: "something which cannot be reduced to detail."[25] Only in literature will the vampire's mysteries be elaborated.

Notes

1 Two equivalent, remarkable transformations from folklore and legend into literature would be the development of Faust and, much more recently, the transformation of the English puppet play character Punch and the accompanying *Grand Guignol* in R. Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (1980), Tim Powers' *The Anubis Gates* (1983).

For additional information on vampires see: R. Hope Robbins, *The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft & Demonology* (New York: Crown, 1959); L. Shepard, ed. *Encyclopaedia of Occultism & Parapsychology* (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1978).

2 E.A. Poe, "Ligeia," in *Selected Writings* (London: Penguin, 1976), pp.110 – 126; quote p.124. Note that "Ligeia" comes some forty years after Continental "high" literature began its fascination with the vampire in Goethe's "The Bride of Corinth" (1798).
3 Poe, *ibid.*, p.114.
4 *ibid.*, p.114.
5 *ibid.*, p.110.
6 *ibid.*, p.118.
7 *ibid.*, p.110.
8 *ibid.*, p.111.
9 "From 1830 to 1880, the Jewish population in the United States grew fifty-fold. This was a result of the so-called second wave of immigration, that of the Ashkenazi German and Central European Jews." See: Morton Rosenstock, "The Jews," in *The Immigrant Experience in America*, ed. F.J. Copra, T.J. Curran (Boston: Twayne, 1976), p.148.
10 Anne Rice, *Interview With The Vampire* (New York: Ballantine, 1976), p.207.
11 Francis Lacassin, ed., *Vampires De Paris* (Paris: Union Generale D'Editions, 1981), pp.27 – 28.
12 Charles A. Hallet, *The Revenger's Madness – A Study of Revenge Tragedy Motifs* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), p.9.
13 Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (London: Sphere, 1980), p.217.
14 C. Lasch, *ibid.*, p.210.
15 Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend* (New York: Berkley, 1954), p.116.
16 R. Matheson, *ibid.*, p.1.
17 David Halbertstam, *The Best & The Brightest* (New York: Random, 1972), p.649.
18 Stephen King, *'Salem's Lot* (New York: New American Library, 1975), p.401.
19 H.P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (New York: 1973; rpt. 1945 orig.), pp.13 – 14.
20 C. Ashton Smith, "The Beast of Avirogne," in *Lost Worlds*, Vol. 1 (London: Panther, 1974), p.115.
21 C.A. Smith, *ibid.*, p.115.
22 "Daddy," in Sylvia Plath, *Ariel* (London: Faber, 1965), pp.54 – 56, quote p.56.
23 Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (London: Penguin, 1981), p.381.
24 Denis Donoghue, *The Arts Without Mystery* (London: BBC, 1983), p.12.
25 D. Donoghue, *ibid.*, p.12, quoting Gabriel Marcel.

Gavin Browning was born in 1948 and first started reading SF proper at the age of 10 when he bought the September '58 issue of Astounding *mistaking it for a picture book. He began reading Marx and other Socialist literature after a year spent teaching in the Third World, in Nepal. A graduate of the University of Kent, with a Doctorate in Chemistry, he abandoned unproductive research into industrial waste disposal, in favour of teaching, and currently teaches Chemistry at a comprehensive school in Hertfordshire. He has been involved with the Radical Science movement since the early '70s, and has been a member of the editorial collective of the journal* Radical Science *for about ten years. He lives in Uxbridge with his wife Angela and two young children.*

Scientism in Science Fiction

GAVIN BROWNING

Scientism is the uncritical acceptance of what is termed "science" as objective knowledge, and a belief in the absolute value of what is called scientific. Science is a social practice and

the knowledge produced bears the marks of its origins and should not be seen as neutral; it is a social interaction in our society and embodies the values of that society. In the West today the science that we have is one produced under capitalism to serve the interests of the present ruling class. When it is transformed into sf then these values are transformed into a fictional setting and the spurious objectivity of the "science" may be given legitimacy by fictional repetition.

The idea that human social problems can be solved by a development of "science" and not by a resolution of social forces is scientism. Science fiction gives the opportunity to go beyond scientism and to explore the limits of science as a way of knowledge, but often sf does not go beyond scientistic forms of expression. Sf can be radical and progressive, but it can also easily be a restatement of reactionary ideology.

The nature of science must be considered if we are to make sense of the relationship between science fiction and socialism: the relationship between a literature that is presented as speculative and the social project that aims to transform human relationships through the struggle to create a more harmonious and just society. We can develop a critical understanding of sf through an analysis of how science is produced in our society.[1]

I will look at some parts of our present science that are being represented and retold in sf stories. Is the present science presented as objective truth, or is there a critical speculation, and recognition that science is our social relations? Is the approach to our science scientistic or radical? I will look not just at clear examples, but also at those where the sf appears progressive, but contains within itself elements of unquestioning acceptance of values embodied in science. Sf can be a radical literary form, showing how people transform themselves through struggle and experience. We see this in the utopian *News from Nowhere* by William Morris, or in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed.* It can also be a buttress of the present ruling class when scientism shows the present human condition as inevitable and then projects this reactionary assumption into future social relations.

The first product for analysis is not well known but clearly illustrates the way scientism lies at the heart of some science fiction. We are presented with a social system that appears unchanging and surmounts the most massive assault the author can imagine:

> She was a tiny blonde, as beautiful as Alison in a mass-produced sort of way, but without a suggestion of the qualities that made Alison a White Star. She wore the Purple Cross. That was her rating for life. Being a Purple Cross, she could be absolutely free in her manner, her dress, her talk, her attitude to life. She wore a plastic dress over a lopsided slip that was all modesty on the right and immodest to the current limit on the left.
>
> As a Purple Cross she was above the Browns and Blacks and Greys and Purple Circles – above most of the population of the world, in fact – . . .
>
> The tests were trusted. They were nearly perfect—most people thought they were perfect. But perfection is incapable of improvement, and the Tests were still changing and being improved, if but slightly. Any test of human capacities can be trustworthy only to a little less than the current limit of human capacity, and it was not until many Whites had passed through the Tests, and each produced his thesis on the system, that the top limits of the Test territory began to approach the lower regions in completeness and efficiency.
>
> *(World Out of Mind,* J.T. McIntosh, 1955)

The optimistic tone is clear—here is a system that has allowed the establishment of a harmonious society; the message that sinks into the consciousness of the naïve reader is that testing is wonderful. The system justifies itself by its fictional success and the author does not allow any opposition.

> Raigmore passed rapidly through the final stages of the Tests. The second-last was a test of responsibility, a Test which in effect decided whether a man was so fundamentally stable and good that he could rule the world, selflessly, if necessary.

The real-world scientific background for the story is the battery of tests and assessments that have gone from IQ testing to the "Krypton Factor" on TV, and the covert message of the author's structure, the ideological message, is that it is possible to have a totally objective testing system that is separate from the rest of society and does not serve one group rather than another. This is in contradiction with the real-world situation where there is agreement that IQ tests are biased in one way or another; that they had to be "standardised" to stop women scoring higher than men; and that there is no useful separation of environmental from genetic factors in testing. The centre of the author's rationale in this work is scientism. He takes the political position that it is possible to operate an objective value-free science in the area of personality and intelligence testing, and that this science is the only true measure of human potential or achievement. If we agree with Marx that the ruling ideas of any epoch are the ideas of its ruling class, then we can characterize this kind of crude scientism as a reactionary ideology that leads to an acceptance of the ruling capitalist ideology as inevitable. The possibility of social transformation through struggle is denied; in *World Out of Mind* it is only the scientistic system which the author sets up that can resist the alien invader. The system presented is shown as having wonderful results; this is the result of the world-view being given, consciously or unconsciously, by McIntosh. The problem lies in the lack of critical appreciation of the real-world science that the imagined society is based on, and the reliance on science as the ultimate arbiter of social issues.

Now consider another aspect of scientism in a more familiar and recent work of fiction —Brian Aldiss's *Helliconia Spring*. In the Acknowledgements we are given a list of scientists, with their academic disciplines, who have made contributions to the work. The fact that the author has talked to them and wishes to thank them publicly is fine, but one senses that the list is in there to impress in a totally different way: to make the potential purchaser think that here, in a fictionalized, accessible form, is something that has the official stamp, the sacred kiss, the authority of SCIENCE. We are being asked to see the citation of experts as a guarantee of correctness, and are being told that their authority is scientific. This is one way of being led into an understanding and approval of the way the novel is structured and its details worked out, but the application of one's reason and sense are usually more satisfactory ways of coming to admire a book. The invitation to a reliance on experts who have the authority of science on their side, which this part of the book implies, is another aspect of the uncritical acceptance of science as objective truth rather than as an ongoing social process—it is an invitation to scientism. We may also note that if Aldiss is using the "useful preliminary discussion" with Desmond Morris to structure part of the social relations portrayed in the novel, then the authorities cited are, in the real world, themselves the subject of scientific controversy. Several aspects of Morris's work can be seen as an overt rationalization of the present ideology of sexism, the transformation of which would be part of a socialist programme of social change.[2] So here on Helliconia we have incorporated only one side of a conflict of class values in our society. This onesidedness is dressed up by the use of scientific authority to add weight to a rather rushed novel. Imagination has failed to penetrate beyond the social organization of the present; the scientistic message is that things are as they are now because that's the way they must be, so they must be the same in the future. Too often we are asked to defer to scientists and "science" when what is being given us is scientism supporting the ruling ideology of capitalism.[3] It has been happening for a long time in sf.

Another side of scientism exhibits itself when technology is seen as determining the course of people's lives, rather than being seen as the product of social choices. In our present world we have a capitalist science and technology that is often exported to the imaginative worlds of sf. At a crude level we are expected to swallow external threat to humanity as a complete explanation for a militaristic society with a substantial portion of scientific labour power involved in producing weapons rather than in creating a more harmonious world. This framework glorifies militarism, and the covert, scientistic message is that military research is inevitable and necessary: the message could be from Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* or from President Reagan. The message expressing the present ruling ideology is clear.

The fictionalization of militarism is most seductively accomplished by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle in *The Mote in God's Eye*. The succession is made clear on the cover of the American Pocket Books edition with a quote by Heinlein: "Possibly the finest science fiction novel I have ever read."

There are two strands of science in *Mote* which are worth pursuing: the technological determinism of a culture shown as dependent on the Alderson Drive and Langston Field, and the biological determinism of the Motie society. In both the authors have taken a scientistic view of knowledge to reinforce the cultural and political values that they (and Heinlein) seem to find agreeable.

As an aside, I have enjoyed reading and rereading *Mote* as an excellent example of its type, and it is important to me to clarify the scientism underlying the plot of the novel, providing its "scientific" rationale, precisely because it is a most readable sf novel, with an appreciable influence on the development of readers' world views. I trust I am not ignoring too many people who read with a critical eye open for the economic and political contradictions in their sf; I suspect that the majority of readers of *Mote* are more in the state of consciousness that I was when I first (at thirteen) read *World Out of Mind* – naïve and uncritical.

The authors indulge their scientism in allowing particular fictional technologies to produce as a necessary conclusion a feudal militaristic society whose results include a return to repressive sexual morality, a denial of the possibility of stable democratic government, and an interplanetary capitalism. They are using this scientism to justify their portrait of human nature and society as necessarily being as it is now; there is no room for development of social forms, as we are directed back to the values of present day capitalist society as unquestionable. The technical nature of the Alderson Drive as presented did not have to lead to the society portrayed, but as the prologue says: "Because of the Alderson Drive . . . we say that the Second Empire of Man rules two hundred worlds . . ." Scientism gives an ideological justification for the Second Empire and thus, by implication, for the present state of western monopoly capitalism. The social values of the Second Empire ruling class are those of Margaret Thatcher's interpretation of Victorian morality.

The interpretation of the present world in *Mote* continues with the construction of the Motie society. The overall picture reflecting our present world and values is one-sided. The biologically caste-structured Motie society has its closest parallel in our world in South Africa's racist system. The Motie society is presented as being a result of the biological nature of the aliens, divided into subspecies by function; their tasks, like those of the people in *Brave New World,* are determined by their physical nature, and there is no

possibility of an epsilon or a Brown transcending their class position in the fictional worlds. The contrast between the two societies, and the way Huxley and Niven/Pournelle treat them, is that the values of the Brave New World are decisively questioned by the Savage in a way that leads to critical thought about our present social organization, while in the Second Empire of Man we are presented with an intriguing picture of *two* rigidly class-based societies, human and motie, both based on autocratic rule and militarism, and both contributing in a scientistic way to the promulgation of the ruling ideology that things are organized as they are now because it is inevitable. The Niven/Pournelle book has an implicit view of present day science that is uncritical, and accepts the biological determinism characteristic of the increasingly discredited "Sociobiology" ideas of E.O. Wilson. To continue the contrast in the way Huxley and Niven/Pournelle treat a rigidly structured society: Huxley ends up trying to envisage a more harmonious world of social justice in *Island,* while Niven/Pournelle choose to write an sf novel, *Inferno,* where one is invited to be sympathetic to the Fascist dictator Mussolini as a guide through Hell.

I hope I have started to show that there is scientism, uncritical acceptance of our present "science," underlying much of sf. One could argue that the term science fiction, a category that has been much discussed, almost presupposes an objectivity to the science that is being fictionalized. To recognize the elements of scientism in science fiction we must see science as socially constructed. To put it another way:

> Gone are the days when we could believe that all knowledge existed "out there," in the wilderness, merely waiting for brilliant men to "discover" it and to make impartial records uncoloured by their own opinions and beliefs. Like it or not, we have to come to terms with more recent discoveries (to which feminism has made an enormous contribution) that human beings invent or construct knowledge in accordance with the values and beliefs with which they begin. What knowledge gets made, and what does not, why and how it is used, can provide much illumination about the people who have made it and the society in which they live. . . . We need to ask ourselves WHY it is that we know what we know, and whose interests are being served.
>
> (Dale Spender, *Invisible Women,* p.2)

Which brings me to a major part of the discussion of scientism in sf as a whole; the position of women in sf. Let's face it – sexism is often uncritically portrayed in sf, and the majority of sf is written by men for men. There are of course honourable exceptions, but in the main the portrayal of women in sf is unimaginative and reflects the findings of the male-oriented science described by Spender above. The culture that the writers of sf work in is one where the prevailing rationality is no longer the older one of religion, but that of science as ultimate explanation. However, both ways of explaining the world place women in an inferior position. Scientism arises out of the world-view that relies on science for explanations and believes in science as neutral objective truth:

> Scientists do not ask all possible questions . . . only those which suit their methods and arouse their curiosity or interest (or the curiosity and interest of funding bodies) and what may arouse the curiosity or interest of socially and economically privileged university-educated males may not be considered interesting by those who do not share their perspective. Conversely, what does not interest these men might well be a burning question to women. Hubbard has said that "we find what we look for," that "indeed, one can prove almost any hypothesis if one gets to set the terms of the experiment . . . the conclusion will have that quality of obviousness that scientists so enjoy at the end of meticulous research. And it really is obvious for it fits what we believe about the world: but the reason it fits so well is that it is founded on those very beliefs."
>
> (*Invisible Women,* p.3)

When we come to sf we find "scientific" justifications of the sexism of patriarchal societies being put forward in all sorts of "imaginative" ways, thousands of years ahead,

hundreds of light years away. I seem to remember a lot of this in Heinlein's *Time Enough for Love*. To many socialists, and others, a restructuring of the relations between women and men is a fundamental part of a movement towards a more harmonious and egalitarian society where the needs of each person are satisfied and the abilities of each are allowed to develop more fully. The presentation of women in more active, independent roles in sf, and as major characters, is very much the exception, as is a discussion between two female characters:

> More docks now; and they were out of the trees and onto the waterfront. As they walked through tall masts' shadows, raddled across the small stones, Norema asked: "Venn, would another example of this idea you're talking about be men and women? I mean, suppose somewhere there was a plan—like a design for a boat—of the ideal human being: and this ideal human being was the true original of everybody? Suppose men were made first, in the image of this original. But because they were only an image, they reversed all its values—I mean men are petty, greedy, and they fight with each other. So then women were made, after men; and so they were an image of an image, and took on an entirely new pattern of values; they—"
> "Who?" Venn asked.
> "They . . . the women."
> Venn leaned nearer to her. " 'We', girl. Not 'They'—we are the women."
> (from *Tales of Neveryon* by Samuel R. Delany)

The predominant tone of sf is that of men talking to men about issues that interest men.

It is, of course, reasonable to portray social relations, including sexism, as they are at present in a novel, and to use this setting to explore human character and social possibilities. When we look at Gregory Benford's *Timescape* we see relations between people depicted as they were in 1963 and might be in 1998. This is a fine description of how things were and may be for particular people (and the scientific community is known to be rather conservative), but when this type of characterization is generalized across most of sf, we can see the genre *as a whole* as permeated by sexism and by scientism in the production and dissemination of the "knowledge" that underlies sexism. Socialism could do with more positive images of women in sf, and fewer nasty sexist models for readers to have clogging up their minds.

Another aspect of scientism involves further consideration of the present structure and development of science. Does sf comment on the organization of science in the real world or does it convey a scientistic, idealized picture of objectivity in science? As always with this kind of question the answer is yes and no, depending on the work being considered. Science is produced and developed by people in particular work situations. Each situation places its own constraints on the type of work that is carried out and the type of knowledge that is produced. In the USA and UK today over half of research funding comes directly or indirectly from the military and their needs. As long as this amount of effort goes into such research and development it must inevitably produce a science with militarism and conflict goals built into it. This research effort benefits most directly those concerns that build and supply military equipment, and is necessary for the capitalist states to maintain their control over world affairs. So we have a vast number of people in science-based activities supporting the military-industrial complex. This is a major part of the practice of science in our present society, producing a science and knowledge with a militaristic bias. I have tried hard, but cannot think of any sf story with this kind of background or setting. Maybe they aren't written because the real stories in this area are so gripping anyway—the Lockheed bribes scandal, the Karen Silkwood story, and so on.

So what models of the production of science are we given in sf? Do any of them bear

much relation to the way science is produced in our present society? It is here that I find *Timescape* a most interesting example. Here we are in the world of university research where a minor proportion of total scientific research is now carried out. It is however the world that most people would immediately think of if asked where scientific research is done and where scientific "truth" is produced. Leaving aside the direction of university research dictated by industry and the military with its inevitable bias, what are the rest of those scientists doing? Gregory Benford attempts to show us what they were doing in 1963, and what they might be doing in 1998.

His reconstruction of what people might have been doing in 1963, and how they might have reacted to messages from the future appearing as nuclear magnetic resonance interference, has the feel of the work of a painstaking historical novelist. It is a most convincing picture of how scientists of that epoch thought and worked; it has the virtue of showing the close relations between the professional and personal lives of scientists, avoiding the scientistic trap of presenting the work of scientists as value-neutral and not related to society. Gordon Bernstein's production of science, the influences on his thought, and his labour process are believably presented. In 1998 the same control and detailed description hold; we see the way the scientists are working even as their world decays. They are social beings, and their science is a product of their social relations. Their science comes out of their view of society and the pressures and influences on them. I get the feeling that this is how they might react—there is the "willing suspension of disbelief" that one gets with good sf. I can check the behaviour of Bernstein or Renfrew or Markham against my own experience of working in a university research laboratory, and they are convincing; Benford does a wonderful job of depicting how some scientists work in particular environments and how they react to a cleverly imagined and sustained perturbation of their normal science.[5] This is way ahead of most other sf attempts to depict scientists at work. We are given a feeling that science is a process, rather than science being a deadweight of supposedly value-neutral objective reality that is then used as background for an adventure or detective story. Hal Clement's scientists in *Mission of Gravity* and Asimov's robotics scientists come to mind as examples where science is taken as a given that completely determines social reality rather than science being seen as constructed by the social relations of classes and of individual scientists.

The value of any literature for the socialist project of creating a more harmonious social order lies either in a depiction of conditions as they are now, giving the motivation "something must be done," or in the depiction of conditions as they might be—dystopian "we must not let this happen" and utopian "this is what we must work towards." Dickens did the first of these and William Morris the last. Maybe *Fahrenheit 451* is in the dystopian category, showing the possibility of human resistance to an oppressive social order. The movement towards socialism needs contributions that lead to a counter-hegemonic worldview, a view that allows something other than the present status quo to be possible. In that scientism involves the use of science as objective reality, and thus unchallengable, and that this rationality has been co-opted by capital, then sf that leads to any of the above motivations, and counters scientism, is a step in the right direction for socialists. Acknowledging that *Timescape* does not set out to do any of these things (as, say, Tressell's *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* does), it can lead us to the feeling that "something must be done" by showing how things are done now. We feel this with regard to the environmental/ecological issues that are discussed in *Timescape*.

Issues that are currently regarded as environmental and part of the programme of Green political groups have long been part of the visionary literature of socialism. The rural idyll of the future in *News from Nowhere* shows a society that has both transcended the environmental problems of the present and has revolutionized relations between the sexes—a more egalitarian and harmonious society is pictured. To see the connection of *Timescape* with socialism we must look at what it might suggest as a course of action for us in the present world, and one agrees with Christopher Priest in a recent *Radio Times* article: "All fiction is a form of extended metaphor, which relates directly to our own lives . . ."

The connection is what we think it is possible to do with our own lives. In socialism there is a vision or plan for a future without poverty and conflict in society, and an idea, expressed in various ways, of how to get there. In science fiction there are many visions of the future, but few that choose to address this possibility. Scientism in our society gives us a way of seeing the world that conditions us to accept the status quo by saying that the world, as it is, is as it must be because the supposedly objective sciences say so; what we largely have, of course, is a science paid for by capital, and serving the needs of capital. What sf can do is to portray real alternatives to the present in the practice and products of science. In *Timescape* there is no approach to these alternatives. As I pointed out above, Benford is not claiming to attempt this. Finally, then, he presents us with worlds, past and future, where scientists are people doing important things, where a "scientific" understanding of what is going on is seen as the objective reality that we are led towards, and where there is no alternative presented to the practice of science as it now is in the west; the book, in this emphasis, contains the scientism that runs through much of sf. We are led to no perspective that says that different social relations produced by a different economic and political organization of society might produce a different science. Maybe Benford will give us the other kind of story next time.

There are several authors who have attempted to portray the effect on science of changing our social organization. Science fiction, the literature of speculation, has been the medium in which many alternatives have been presented. It is here, in books like Marge Piercey's *Woman on the Edge of Time,* that the connection between socialism and science fiction is most clear, and it is here also that scientism is at its most problematic for socialism. Here we have authors creating the imagined futures that inspire social change and radicalism; here are the attractive images that say "this is what we must work towards", but at the same time the strand of the present ruling ideology with its scientism may easily be woven into the story. In *Woman on the Edge of Time* a most convincing scenario has been created of how people could exist in a revolutionized society, which is placed in stark contrast with the dystopian present. In many ways it acts as a true motivator to socialist action. At the same time a piece of technology, taking child birth out of women's bodies and into social control, is introduced. It allows each child in the future society to have three parents, but involves a technology that makes the social changes possible. This could be taken as a technical fix determining the possible social change, although I doubt this is the author's intention.

The permanent feeling from *Woman on the Edge of Time* is that it is possible to create a different society, and that it is worth striving for. The time travel contrast between horrific present and utopian future—Mattapoisett in 2137—allows a discussion of science and its place in society that does not often occur in sf:

L: The councils. The town meetings. That's how general questions of direction of science get decided.
C: You mean by people like me? How could I decide if they should build an atom bomb of something?
L: Of course you should decide. It affects you—how not?
C: But how could I know if you're a good scientist or not? I know nothing about genetics. By the time I figured it all out I'd be an old woman . . . I mean in our time, science was kept—pure maybe.

This is the opposite of the incorporation of scientism in sf. We are given a clear alternative and know that science is an expression of class relations.

There are other visions of the future that do weave in the strand of scientism from capitalist science, while presenting a future society that is in some ways attractive. Two of these were reviewed in *Foundation* 27. I confine my comments to *Ecotopia* as I haven't yet read *Ecotopia Emerging,* also by Ernest Callenbach. In the review Stefan Lewicki says: "It is undoubtedly easy to pick holes in the details of the novels, but this in no way diminishes their powerful message." From a socialist viewpoint I offer some holes picked in the structure rather than in the details of this future vision.[6] Callenbach's is a brave and enterprising attempt to create a utopia for us which will inform and inspire present practice: in the words of the blurb, it attempts to project "a future that could work—socially, politically and ecologically." Its critique of parts of the present-day USA life-style is excellent, through visions of car-less streets in San Francisco, the abolition of garish advertising, and so on. But there are as many aspects of this future which would not work—social relations contradictory, material organization mystified, and worst, capitalist ideology and scientism perpetuated. The book has its origins in the environmental movement, which is in the main apolitical, avoiding analysis of forms of oppression in favour of focusing on specific environmental issues. Such an approach implies that social relations are less central than relations between society and non-human nature, whereas in fact our social relations *are* our relations with nature. Environmentalism postulates that our problems can be solved by living in harmony with Nature, and avoids considering the class nature of present society. This avoidance suggests a possible reason for the book's popularity: it presents not a new revolutionized society, but the fulfilment of virtues promised but not delivered by existing society. It appeals to the consciousness of people whose aspirations for a better world reveal the extent to which capitalist ideology, assumptions, and social relations are part of those aspirations. It is a dream for reasonably affluent Americans to savour: "this is how we would live if we had the chance."

Living patterns in the Ecotopian world, and the application of ecological criteria to practice, do lead to some obvious improvements in this fictional existence. Material and ideological distortions of existence in present-day society are presented as having been overcome. Property is not personally inherited in Ecotopia. On secession, a 20-hour working week was immediately introduced, and a rapid transit train system coupled with bikes and electric buses has replaced the excesses of private car transport. A high value is placed on reducing pollution. Communal living groups of several types are shown. Decentralization and local control of local issues is a major social theme and preventative medicine is emphasized. Recycling is insisted upon. Work is said to be integrated into life as a whole. There is no advertising. Schools are adapted to children and teachers; and so on. But even as I list these, other aspects of Ecotopian life come to mind: property certainly can be owned privately, and there are difficulties too with "choice in education."

Consider ownership of property:

> The inventors and fabricators of the "bird-suits", for instance, are a small research collective, originally about 30 people. Because of the appeal of their ingeniously insulating garments, they are said to have made a great deal of money recently, even though they have now chosen to take in some new members and work even less than the usual 20 hours per week . . . The most (the national banking system) allows lucky producers, like the bird-suit people, is the chance to retire and live off the interest their profits can earn from the bank (p.92).

So it seems this collective has made private property of the bird-suit knowledge (probably developed by government funding of their small research group, p.128), has then marketed the commodity-product of its labour, turned it into money, and can now form part of a leisured class; presumably with others working for them. They even *live off the interest;* in this utopia, if you got some you get more. The example has a further evasion. If the use of bird-suits is widespread, how are they produced? Is this the new members' job?

The reader's awareness of Ecotopian contradictions is further sharpened by what we learn about education:

> National examinations which each child takes at ages 12 and 18 . . . made up yearly by a prestigious committee, comprising some educators, some political figures, and some parents (p.119).

Schools charge the parents (with a maximum limit on the amount chargeable). And another aspect:

> Children in Ecotopian schools literally spend at least two hours a day actually *working* . . . apparently most schools have small factories . . . The children also dispose of workshop profits as they please (p.117).

Among ideas of libertarian education, self discipline, and a true education into the community's life/work-style, there seems to be a group of maggots in the education apple, leading again to class formation based on the carry-over into Ecotopia of a capitalist ideology of education. What are the exams for? Because of noncompatibility of results from different areas they are ridiculous; local schools choose what is important to them, and this will only set up an unreal competition between schools. They will become exam-oriented, the antithesis of other, progressive, aspects of school which Callenbach describes. Parents with more money get better schools (= better exam results), more education for their kids; and the privileged class is on its way. The account ignores those who would have trouble producing in this fashion. There seems to be no *technical* function for the exams in Ecotopia. Maybe they are an entrance requirement for elitist universities? The whole set-up is contradictory: I feel from other parts of the description that the Ecotopian kids might refuse to do the exams! It seems that Callenbach is incorrigibly competition-oriented in education, as elsewhere. Recall that kids make "profit" from their production. Callenbach has imported a whole load of scientistic ideology about the inherent competitiveness of human nature, and the value of rigorous exam assessment into his Ecotopia, where it looms in massive contradiction with other aspects of formal education, such as the working-through of cooperative organization rather than authoritarian discipline in school. A utopia, as a work of fiction, may legitimately avoid some issues, as Callenbach does, but here many parts of the future portrayed bear no affinity to any future that socialists are struggling for.

Take some more examples: "abortion costs have fallen further" (p.63). Why should any woman have to *pay* for an abortion in a socialist utopia? In Ecotopia money, not social need, is still the arbiter both of exchange and of production. Again: "living on the

minimum-guarantee level" (p.133). There is a system of social security, but nowhere is it made clear what standard of living this provides for. The implication is that it is very low, and the moral seems to be *Get a Job*—for economic reasons, rather than through concern for others' work or social pressure to be an active member of the community. And on recycling junked cars we find: "These formerly worthless heaps of junk skyrocketed in value" (p.77)—and were presumably salvaged for private gain rather than as a cooperative process.

Taking the strands in the previous paragraph, together with a bare-faced avoidance of proper analysis of Ecotopian economics ("Other things are just mystifying, like their economic system", p.157-8), a picture of life appears that is startlingly different from that carried by the explicit ecological ideology of many Ecotopians. And finally:

> Ecotopian enterprises generally behave much like capitalist enterprises: they compete with each other, and seek to increase sales and maximize profits, although hampered by a variety of ecological regulations (p.93).

As a prime directive this works against any socialist organisation of production but, according to Callenbach, not against Ecotopian principles. There is an obvious contradiction here which will lead to the classic conflict between the needs of profit and the needs of the people. Production appears to be capitalist, unplanned, subject to the market place, and the choices of groups of producers are subject to this too. The Ecotopian money economy tends towards a free enterprise capitalist with a basic social security element tacked on. This is the major fault of the vision, and the one that many environmentalists still have to surmount. No amount of ecological consciousness and goodwill, no environmental ideology compatible with socialism, has any chance of producing a new society, new social relations, which will work in a liberating way, unless the basic economic contradiction of capitalism is resolved.

The most positive aspect of *Ecotopia* is the ideology expressed in the everyday life of its inhabitants. Consciousness of creating a new society, of the relation between action and reaction in the natural world, and most importantly of other people in a less ego-oriented way is shown. In this way the ideology of Ecotopia is more advanced than the material base described above, and this ideology makes the society function. However, if consistently carried through, the attitudes they have in some areas of social relations—the revolutionary cooperative ideals—would demolish the structures of production and education that are shown coexisting with them.

Ecotopia is part of utopian literature, that which attempts to make real our aspirations in the portrayal of a more ideal society. This and other works that separate themselves from the general run of sf, by not just saying "this is how it might be" and making a story, but saying in a more positive way this is where we may go, these can be an expression of revolutionary politics. There are reactionary visions of the future but I know of no utopias of the capitalist future, because it is in the very nature of the beast that those committed to it *cannot* envisage a truly utopian future, only one based on repression, authority, and continuing economic exploitation. So utopias are progressive in this broad sense, setting up a new hegemony in the mind and informing radical action in the present.

It is by comparing *Ecotopia* with another vision of a future that I realize the extent of its failure. Ursula Le Guin's book *The Dispossessed* is based on anarchist philosophy and gives a detailed picture of one person in a working anarchist society which is believable because of the attention to detail and *the consistency of the vision,* and because we see the

vision through the eyes of a believable character. It is not clear what philosophy or politics *Ecotopia* is based on, and the multitude of contradictions that it has within it ensure that the personal story line itself is unconvincing. Both the portrayal of personal relations and their functioning in the context of wider social relations are confused in *Ecotopia,* and we are left with a frustrating and flawed glimpse of a progressive future. *Ecotopia* may be an attempt at a socialist future, but you will get far more of a real idea of the everyday material form and consciousness of a believable utopian future from *The Dispossessed.* Any detailed assessment of *The Dispossessed* is beyond my scope in this article, but it is one of the few sf books that has taken a radically changed set of social relations and given us a picture of how the changed science and society might work.

Finally I want to mention Russell Hoban's wonderful book *Riddley Walker.* The whole book can be seen as an exploration of the scientism of our present society. He doesn't set up a utopian future, he doesn't describe the present as it is, but the culture and stories of Riddley's world show just how people create their own "science" from their social relations, and how our science could become an even more garbled belief system after a nuclear holocaust than it is before:

> Eusa says, 'Wel you see I cant jus keap this knowing in my head Ive got things to do with it Ive got to work it a roun. Ive got to work the E qwations and the low cations Ive got to comb the nations of it. Which I cant do all that oansome in my head thats why I nead this box its going to do the hevvy head work for my new projeck.'
>
> Mr Clevver says, 'What is that new projeck of yours then Eusa?'
>
> Eusa says, 'Good Time.'
>
> Mr Clevver says, 'Eusa did I hear you say Good Time with a guvner G and a guvner T?'
>
> Eusa says, 'Thats what I said and thats how I said it. Good Time which I mean every thing good and every body happy and teckernogical progers moving every thing frontways farther and farther all the time. You name it wewl do it. Pas the sarvering gallack seas and all that.'
>
> Mr Clevver says, 'Youve got all that in that box have you?'
>
> Eusa says, 'You myt say Ive got the nuts and balls of it in that box which is my No. 2 head but Ive got the master program in my regler head which is the 1 on my sholders.'
>
> Mr Clevver says, 'Wel Eusa youre a parper wunner you are. Im realy looking forit to having that Good Time seakert yes I am.'
>
> Eusa says, 'O no Mr Clevver this aint no seakert nor it aint jus for you its Good Time for every body.'
>
> Mr Clevver says, 'You mus be joaking Eusa who dyou think youre working for.' With that he takes holt of the cranking handl on Eusas iron hat which the hat is stil on Eusas head and the wires peggit in to the box. Rrrrrrrrrrr. Mr Clevvers cranking that handl 10 times fastern Eusa ever done.
>
> (p.45-46)

Poor Eusa has a lot of scientism in his thought, and socialism must go beyond it if we are to get "Good Time." Science fiction can help us get there if it can avoid scientism and give us views of liberation.

Notes:

1 I cannot attempt to go into great detail in this article, but the Radical Science movement finds expression in many places. Periodicals include *Science for People,* the magazine of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS, 9 Poland St., London W1), and *Radical Science* (Free Association Books, 26 Freegrove Rd., London N7), a periodical providing a forum for extended analyses of the ideology and practice of science, technology and medicine from a radical political perspective.

2 Reed, Evelyn, *Sexism and Science* (Pathfinder Press, 1978) contains the essay "An Answer to *The Naked Ape* and Other Books on Aggression."

3 Does it change your perception if I am I.G. Browning, BSc, PhD, rather than Gavin Browning?

4 Dale Spender, *Invisible Women: the schooling scandal,* Writers and Readers Publishing, 1982.

5 For an extended discussion of "normal" science see T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* University of Chicago Press, 1970, and subsequent discussions, for example, in Brian Easlea's *Liberation and the aims of science.*
6 Parts of this appeared in my review of *Ecotopia* in *Radical Science Journal* 10, 1980.

Leslie Hurst last appeared in Foundation *28, with a study of three studies of pseudo-science. Here he tackles the psychological and ideological underpinnings of the perverse* oeuvre *of John Norman and analyzes why it is such a rotten (if popular) egg. Leslie Hurst recently placed equal second in an sf criticism competition organized by the Book Market Council and the British Science Fiction Association.*

John Norman: The Literature of Difference

L.J. HURST

John Norman writes books about the planet Gor. The series grows: new books appear, earlier ones stay in print. As those books appear or re-appear with covers that seem to prove the truth of complaints about the series' sexist, or fetishistic, or pornographic nature, it is time to ask a more important question: covers apart, what are the books about?

Ultimately, the answer to this question may have nothing to do with "epic adventures" or "science fantasy." The answer will consist of a number of disparate strains, but it will suggest that John Norman is not a simple storyteller but a propagandist on conscious and unconscious levels for some peculiar social and personal attitudes. The study that results in this conclusion has to be psychological, and will reveal that Norman's production really has little to do with astronomy, xenobiology or literature, but a lot to do with imbalances in our society: imbalances which may both supply an author's view of the world, and maintain him or her with material for a fantastical development of it.

This study will conclude that Norman's view is imbalanced; it will attempt to locate the origins of this imbalance; explain the consequences of it; and explain their significance. An examination of this sort has to be ambivalent because the novels are themselves ambivalent. They are both a consequence of this world and an attempt to influence it, and those two things are inseparable. It is possible that one or the other is a magnification or a reflection of this world. "John Norman" lives here, and since his mind has been produced here, and it is that which produces the Gorean novels, this study has to be a study of mind, ie psychological.

It may be that, as John Norman has claimed, he is not aware of the world that he is creating. A lot can be learned, though, both about the author's unconscious mind (where the creation must have occurred if he was not conscious of it) and about the consequences

of that mental drive and desire. The Gorean world is not a thing apart: it is represented repeatedly as some place that refers to this world, and somewhere that should influence this world, part of that influence being the Gorean novels.

The proponent of the Gorean view deserves attention because the establishment of a world where humanity is asserted by the institutions of slavery and permanent warfare is still a minority aim as I write. Since consideration leads to the conclusion that such a world is not only fictional but also not possible on Earth itself, it casts doubt on the vision of the creator of such a world. That doubt causes a questioning of the creator's intent, and turns us to an examination of the creator, John Norman, himself.

The narrator and hero of the Gorean novels, which are told in the first person, is Tarl Cabot. Since John Norman has identified himself with the attitudes, ideas and beliefs of his hero, his work has to be approached in at least three ways. First, through Cabot's arguments, since not only has Norman written them, he has accepted them as well. Secondly, we should study Norman's narrative creation (ie, the forms of the fictional world he envisages, and the events he promotes there). Thirdly, we should attempt to relate Norman's work to the genre with which it is usually identified, and from which it was produced, in an attempt to discover the nature of the parturition, reception and criticism of such works. The consequence of this three-fold study is primarily an in-depth analysis of the mind of John Norman as displayed in the "Chronicles of Counter-Earth." But that cannot be done in isolation, and always one has to try to relate John Norman, the individual, to the world that he tries to influence, and in which he is one component part, and which has created and influenced him.

Who can ever know what has caused John Norman to do what he has done? A close description of his fictions can only suggest his peculiarities as they reveal themselves in the "Chronicles of Counter-Earth," it can never provide evidence of the true motive for the series. Not even the author could do that, but a close description of the features of the series can provide the beginnings of an aetiology. This study is a psychological one, or rather, since it concludes that the attitudes of Counter-Earth are not normal, it is a study of psychopathology. However, psychology not being a study of the mind alone but of the world it experiences, and which experiences it, this study has to be wider. It is drawn partly from Freud, in its use of the concepts of sexuality, ritual, taboo and symbolism, for instance; while the relation of individuals to mass psychology, especially in sexual matters, and the attractions of political reaction have been expounded by post-Freudians like Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, and feminists such as Juliet Mitchell. Why Tarl Cabot (or perhaps his creator) should be such a failure in his personal life and dealings with other people may be explained by other theories.

These are all included in a system which basically applies Freud's theory of dream-work to fiction produced during waking. That is, it:- examines the books for their latent content of repressed wishes, unacceptable or forbidden practices, and for more physical things, even economic matters; studies the novels as the product of something like a dream-work that combines these things in a format of Epic Fantasy; and then tries to read back, through the coherence that an author's efforts attempt to provide, to the disparate pre-existing elements which forced themselves through and which existed and influenced John Norman before he began writing, and which affect John Norman's admirers and contemporaries.

For example, consideration of things like these:- it may be perfectly standard for epic

heroes at times to deceive, go in disguise, and later reveal themselves (in fact, it goes back to the return of Odysseus). But when this happens in the Gorean series other elements also show themselves. First, Tarl Cabot has to take a dead man's name, and second, when he takes another name, it is a name that has great emphasis placed on its associations—associations both with practices and with events. Name stealing, with which we are dealing in the first instance, is never explained as something significant, but it occurs. In the narrative the associations of the second adopted name are relatively obvious but the necessity of those connections is never explained. These things are in the text, though Norman never mentions their importance, but he does specifically stop to discuss the importance of other details in the novels (especially the slavery of women).

It seems reasonable to suppose that the less discussed is less conscious than the more discussed. The point is, though, that they are both important to an understanding of how the books have come to be written. Both areas have to be examined.

Although the books have been called "soft pornography," that is not an accurate term. There are no descriptions of copulation, for instance, and almost no general erotic descriptions. There are some references which can be read as sexual but they may be read in other ways. Whoever gets a sex-kick out of Gor gets it because they like the idea of women serving them, or the idea of hurting women, or the idea of degrading women. The books are obsessively about this service and degradation, they are not about copulatory action. To the extent that a sex drive is obvious in the books—the dominance of men and their right to exploit women and use their bodies for pleasure is the vehicle but not the purpose: the purpose is the dominance of men and the generation of feeling in men that they are truly masters of creation—the sex drive is perverse. The books reveal that their author is in a deeply psychopathological condition. The extent to which this sickness has shaped Gor is evident in every description of it we read. They tell us little about xenobiology but they tell us a lot about an Earth where the Gorean books are written and traded.

As the series progresses Norman's mysogyny (hatred of women) becomes more and more apparent, and he includes ever more details about the enslavement of women, and the life they lead in a world where they may be captured and tortured at any time. He is intent on creating a world where this may occur, and each book is an attempt at a description of it, which elaborates on the previous fantasy and the details of female degradation.

"John Norman" is the pen-name of John Lange, a professor of philosophy at the City University of New York. He published his first Gorean novel under a pseudonym to ensure that he kept his job. He was thirty-five years old when that book, *Tarnsman of Gor,* appeared in 1966. Under the general title "Chronicles of Counter-Earth" he published another seven volumes before transferring to a different publisher in the USA. Up to 1983 he had published more than seventeen books in the series. This study is of the first eight.[1] In them all the features that are so disturbing in his work are obvious. Not all the features are present in the earliest works; from volume to volume he has gone from strange feature to more bizarre detail; he seems almost to have been encouraged or strengthened in this course, so that his work shows signs of increasing perversity.

The story of the Chronicles is this: an Englishman teaching in a New England university is taken by force to the planet Gor on the far side of the sun, exactly opposite Earth in

its orbit. Gor is a medieval society of walled towns where Norman's narrator-hero, Tarl Cabot, becomes a high-caste warrior, engages in a battle to save a city, wins, and is returned to Earth, extremely unhappily. Although he has only visited part of one continent, this is treated as typical of the world. There are many inconsistencies in the technology of Gor. Cabot is taken by spaceship to a land of medieval trading and warfare, where guns do not exist but where there is cableless electric lighting and drug-induced longevity ("stabilized serums"). Seven years later, according to the series' internal chronology, in *Outlaw of Gor,* Cabot is returned. Evidently there must be something more to Gor than medievalism, yet despite Cabot's learning of the Priest-Kings of Gor who control space travel, and therefore the planet, the book is still a sword-based epic, in which Cabot fights against the army of a female leader of another city. In the third volume Cabot meets and serves the Priest-Kings, a race of giant ants with high technology but a low sex drive. He undertakes adventures with a race of nomadic herdsmen to save the ants in volume four, and assists them as a secret agent in a slave merchant's business in another city in volume five. Upset and petulant he gives up his martial aid and becomes a sea-trader under the name Bosk of Port Kar with a huge fleet, destroying yet another city's fleet of one thousand vessels in volume six. Volume seven is out of series (the previous six are all narrated by Cabot with editorial interpolations by John Norman and "Harrison Smith") in that Bosk, as Cabot now calls himself, has instructed a female slave to write the history of her abduction from Earth and subsequent mutilation before entering Bosk's service (Cabot playing little part in it). In the eighth volume Bosk singlehandedly goes after a group of female guerrillas living in a northern forest and captures three separate gangs.

At this stage we have learned a lot about Gor. Bosk has been partially crippled, but the development of the world is obvious. The transition from teaching history in New England to a medieval merchant calling himself Bosk is the basis of the first part of this study. Why should it have come about?

The figures of an imaginary world tell us a lot about the mind that imagined them. John Norman has said that while he researches his books, because "there must be a creative contribution to the construction of the world",[2] "the Gorean books write themselves." "It is like something going on over which I have very little control. It is more like a welcome gift . . . On the hypothesis that these books are not dictated through me by some foreign intelligence, which would seem pretty screwy, I must suspect that they are extremely deeply related to subconscious creative processes. I am pretty much, perhaps unfortunately, at the mercy of such processes" (*Norman* p22). The effect of this automatism is disturbing, because the positions honoured by the Gorean world are alarming. (Despite which, Norman believes them to be "proud and magnificent"—*Norman* p21).

On Gor, women, usually described as "proud" or "beautiful," are enslaved by warriors or a professional caste of slave traders. Warriors own the women for two purposes—domestic service, and sexual use—and all women perform both duties. The novels each revolve around the humiliation, subduing and enslavement of women, and Cabot's journeys serve to introduce him to women to whom this can be done. From his landing on Gor, Cabot quickly adopts the moral standards of the planet, although he has shown none of them on Earth. *Tarnsman of Gor* introduces the themes to be elaborated in later volumes: Cabot kidnaps the daughter of a city's leader. Free women are kept permanently covered, like Iranian women now, by "Robes of Concealment" and Cabot enjoys her

stripping and general ineffectiveness. After a struggle she is enslaved but before the end of the book she becomes his wife, of a sort. His hunt for her when he returns will form a subplot in the next seven volumes, though he will not be stopped from taking mistresses, and subduing queens as he goes along.

His return to Gor in *Outlaw of Gor* takes him to a city where women reign. At the end of that book, after Cabot has led the male slaves to overthrow the gynocracy, relieved the queen of her sexual neurosis by seducing her, and seen all the free women enslaved, he goes onwards, so that in *Priest-Kings of Gor* he meets the strange animals responsible for Gor's condition. These are ants engaged in an intestinal battle over the survival of their species: Cabot discovers that the rulers of the planet are long-lived space travellers, whose queen is dying, with her one female egg hidden on the planet's surface and a test-tube male hidden and waiting in hypnopedia. Having helped the ants wanting a new generation, Cabot proceeds to the *Nomads of Gor* who safeguard the egg, is involved in more war and enslavement, and he conquers the will of a female brought from Earth by his enemies and sees her mutilated by branding without questioning it. All of these events are linked: the war having been set off by Cabot's friend chaining an important city woman (or "girl" as all females are called).

By the fourth book the obvious sadism of Norman's work has appeared. The domination over women of the earlier novels could be read simply as traditional positions exaggerated by genre, as found in popular cinema and mainstream fiction. Such traditional modes accept the inferiority of women but they are not concerned with the associated pain. However, Norman begins to pay attention to the occurrence and the potential occurrence of pain. Throughout the series there are no condemnations of painful events (including the frequent torture of Cabot himself): women are beaten and knocked about and special attention is paid to this, but when men fight, are wounded or killed on Gor, no such attention is paid. Males fighting and dying are details of plot and action, they are not a preoccupation; but as soon as the chance of a woman being hurt arises, the smallest part of the pain and wounding is mentioned: for instance, males are not described like this—"Kamchak suddenly cuffed Aphris of Turia. Her head snapped sideways and there was a streak of blood at the corner of her mouth. The girl looked at him in sudden fear" (*Nomads* p131). Norman never mentions such streaks or fear in a man, and five volumes later the position has not changed; it is still "blood at her mouth and fear in her eyes" (*Hunters* p192). It is the woman's blood, in her suffering from small wounds, that remains constant—and the fear that is occasioned by it.

The herdsmen's camp allows unlimited descriptions of slave irons and clothes designed to show off women's bodies (in contrast to "Free women"). The women are threatened with branding, and put in chains to sleep, but despite this there are no descriptions of sexual activity apart from kissing and what seems to be masturbation performed on a woman with a whip handle (*Nomads* pp168-169). Clearly restricted, these activities are repeated in other books. When Norman goes to great lengths to describe the manner of roping, branding, pain and subsequent weeping of a slave, the absence of other areas tells us something about what he regards as important. The importance of methods of branding women is no normal subject of discourse, and a man whose characters may enjoy women sexually but do not regard that part of their life as worth including in their history (do not even say that it is enjoyable) many would treat as outside the statistical Normal Distribution of three Standard Deviations.

The power of the male is the pre-eminent theme of all of the Chronicles, and with its mirror—the submission of women—it is manifest in every description, argument and narrative item of the series. Norman is torn between creating a world totally alien to Earth, and a planet that is Earth. The alien world is meant to be one that is a lesson, warning and threat to Earth, while the Gor-as-Earth fleshes out Norman's fantasies. "The Gorean world, of course, has been heavily influenced by our world; on the other hand, it is not our world," Norman has said (*Norman* p25); but he has also said "The Gorean books present an ethos which is not that of most Earthlings and for which a great deal is to be said" (*Norman* p23). Although he lectures in philosophy he is not prepared to debate this ethos—"I have not in the past, and I do not intend in the future, to publicly defend or discuss the Gorean books" (*Norman* p30). Yet as a planet lives by it, and Norman has written stories that allow Tarl Cabot to bring whole city-states into the ethos, perhaps it should be studied.

The origin of the planet Gor is uncertain. Cabot thinks it may have been brought into the galaxy from outside, or it may have always existed in its present orbit (*Tarnsman* pp29-30). Gor is a world of fulfilment for Earth—through the ages men and women (usually women) have been kidnapped and brought to Gor, mostly it seems to serve the slave-trade. The technology for this purpose is in the hands, or mandibles, of the Priest-Kings: why they should want to see male humans have female sex slaves is never clear, since the ants themselves can have no knowledge of a sex life. Why ants should have specialized in interplanetary flight for the benefit of creatures they disdain, when they could have farmed the humans, is also left unclear. Everything is explained, though, by Norman's necessity for Gor. Cabot is told "in the thinking of the Earth, there is no place for Gor, its true sister planet, the Counter-Earth" (*Tarnsman* p31). But the role of Gor in maintaining the threat to women is repeatedly asserted: one could at any time be kidnapped (doors avoided as though by magic) and be removed to Gor for mutilation and abuse; Elinor Brinton gives a detailed account of this at Cabot's command. We read "The agents of the Priest-Kings are amongst us" (*Outlaw* p17).

Norman is proud of his female readership (*Norman* p24) but the moral they find in his work serves one end:

> 'Slaves,' said Flaminius. He spoke in English . . . 'This is the Counter-Earth,' he said. 'This is the planet Gor.'
> 'There is no such place!' cried Phyllis.
> Flaminius smiled. 'You have heard of it?' he asked.
> 'It is only in books!' cried Phyllis. 'It is an invention!'
> 'This is Gor,' said Flaminius.
> Virginia gasped, drawing back.
> 'You may have heard, as may others,' he asked, 'of the Counter-Earth?'
> 'It is only in stories,' she said.
> 'I read of Gor,' said Virginia. 'It seemed to me very real.'
> Flaminius smiled. 'In the books of Tarl Cabot you have read of this world.' (*Assassin* pp129-130)

From such descriptions the role of the Gorean books is clear: it is to reinforce belief in a system of ideas expounded in them, and to create fear of it. In a footnote to *Priest-Kings* Norman reinforces this by writing "I regret that I have never had the pleasure of knowing Cabot personally. There is a real Cabot of course . . . what can be confirmed, I have confirmed" (*Priest-Kings* p9). The Gorean stories are extrapolations of Earthly conditions used to reinforce those conditions: the Gorean world presented as an

alternative is an even worse one than the real. Norman continues to insist on this comparison, and the constant arrival of Earth importees reinforces Cabot in his position and argument.

The first woman he meets from Earth, having been broken, becomes "the proud creature who stood chained before me . . . (once she was) a young pretty little secretary, one of nameless, unimportant thousands of such in the larger offices of Earth's major cities, but what I saw before me did not speak to me of the glass and rectangles and pollutions of Earth, of her pressing crowds and angry, rushing, degraded throngs, slaves running to the whips of her clocks . . . What I saw before me now spoke rather, in its way of the bellowing of bosk and the smell of trampled earth" (*Nomads* pp282-283). The argument is repeated again in this book (p337) and in others (eg *Assassins* p134): it is finally asserted by a woman—"I recalled how, . . . fleeing, frightened, helpless, I had felt, for the first time in my life vulnerably and radically female" (*Captive* p83). This repeats a point made earlier about women and fear being identified. Their world is one of vulnerability and helplessness, and their experience of life is the experience of pain: for Gorean women life and pain are synonymous.

It is men like those among whom Cabot moves on Gor who are to show Earth what life is all about (cf *Outlaw* p253):

> 'What in all femaleness do you sense of the men of this world?' asked Flaminius.
> 'They are men,' she said, in a whisper.
> 'Unlike those of Earth?' asked Flaminius.
> 'Yes.' (*Assassin* pp133-134)

This appreciation of maleness is apparently only a female quality (men are not aware of it themselves): "a woman was apparently intensely aware of certain differences between Gorean men and the men of Earth." And in turn these Gorean true "men naturally look on women much differently than they do in a consumer-oriented, women dominated culture, one informed by an ethos of substantially feminine values . . . (and being women on Gor) something in them, submerged and primitive, would tend to respond to this" (*Assassin* p134). Women may become women, but men are always men (the Chronicles' only weakling male, Harold, in *Nomads,* really being a double agent acting the part). Women are denied the right to be themselves—instead they have to be trained or broken to be genuine women. Why a society which is "dominated" by women should turn them into something else is a major indication of Norman's dubious position. Furthermore, the fifth volume, *Assassin,* set in a slaver's business, shows the training of slaves; although Cernus the slaver is an enemy of the Priest-Kings and of Cabot there is no indication that Cabot regards the slave trade maintained by Cernus as wrong in any way: Cabot's companion, a woman secret agent, actually undergoes the training. There is no distinction between the practices of Cabot, his friends the Priest-Kings, and their enemies, the Kurii.

During the enslavement of the importee Elizabeth Cardwell, Cabot engages in discussion with her after her mutilation. He says "only the woman who has utterly surrendered —and can utterly surrender—losing herself in a man's touch—can be truly a woman."

> . . . 'Women,' said Elizabeth, 'are persons—surely as much as men—and their equals.'
> . . . (Cabot) said, 'there is much talk of persons—and little of men and women—and the men are taught that they must not be men and the women are taught that they must not be women . . .'
> 'But what,' (Cabot) asked, 'if the laws of nature and of human blood were more basic, more primitive and essential than the conventions and teachings of society—what if these old

> secrets and truths, if truths they be, had been concealed or forgotten, or subverted to the requirements of a society conceived in terms of interchangable labor units, each assigned to functional, technical sexless skills?'
> . . . 'the result? . . . Our Earth'. (*Nomads* p289)

(Readers will note, despite Cabot's being English and Oxford educated, the Americanisms in grammar and spelling).

The contradictions of the arguments put forward for the subjugation of women, through the books, begin to be clear: Earth is "informed by an ethos of substantially feminine values" but the result is "technical sexless skills." Despite this the primitive "truths" of "nature and of human blood" will be heard, and true women will "surrender" and become "frightened, helpless." What he is saying in fact is Women are not Women. The logic of this assignment is not obvious. Most of us recognize the creeds of Earth which believe in such truths, put forward their arguments in such terms, and in consequence the horrors that they have produced: that Norman should put them forward is a reflection of the strength of that position nearly forty years on.

Norman has said "sex and violence occur in the Gorean novels. They are significant plot elements . . . I see no reason to be apologetic about this . . . (because) the Gorean books exploit discipline, courage, nobility, honor and love. The human being, with his heights and glories, his depths and cruelties, exceeded in complexity and reality the abstractions and idealizations of the frightened and weak. It will always be thus" (*Norman* p27).

In the eleven years between *Nomads* and the Elliot interview Norman's position has remained unchanged: the "human being" is male, with "his heights and glories." The temptation to read "the abstractions and idealizations of the frightened and weak" as being a reference to women and their "substantially feminine values" is so very strong that I will not resist it. For Norman women are not human beings, only males are human and the identification of power with masculinity is almost total. A bizarre example of this occurs in *Priest-Kings:* a queen ant is dying, and all her nest are sterile, sexless workers or drones, incapable of either part of reproduction. The plot, not only of this book but, it is explained, the first five Chronicles, revolves around Cabot's search for a female ant egg, which will be fertilized by a secret male. The sterility of the neuter, sexless Priest-Kings, some of whom become Cabot's friends, is the driving cause of the books, but these sexless creatures are always called "he", not "it." Why should a sexless insect be given a gender? Or why are they not attributed non-genders or either gender randomly? The author gives them honorary masculinity because they have power, and power and masculinity are correlatives in Norman's view.

The power of masculinity to manipulate thought, the intention to establish a fantasy world which defends that position and uses the proofs of the Gorean world to reinforce its practice on this world, is evident in the whole structure of the Chronicles. It underpins the stories and in turn is reinforced by them. Furthermore, these stories are then produced as some sort of evidence of their own truth.

"Great attention is given to scientific verisimilitude, within, of course, artistic latitude. The Gorean books, incidentally, are one of the few productions in science fiction which take seriously things like human biology and depth psychology" (*Norman* p21). Is this true? and if not, can this claim be explained? In the light of Norman's claim that in the Gorean books "familiar and predictable stereotypes do not occur" we should consider his

claims about human biology. The psychology will come later. As Mary Ellman has written—"We are accustomed now to admit only the blood of wounds—the effects of accident, crime and war. The natural bleedings of women remain an indelicacy, while deadly bleeding has become a commonplace"[3] The prominent role played by womanhood in the books, and the lack of detail given to feminine elements (feminine elements ignored on Earth, in Norman's world, as well as on Gor) is indicated by certain features; some of which are noticeable by their presence, others by their absence. Features which Gorean slaves' clothing must help make obvious.

Ellman's complaint about blood is central because blood is a detail in the epic tradition. Males fighting and killing on Gor are described bloodlessly. That is not true, though, of the descriptions of the assault on women: Norman gives us the details of the blood flow; small though the wound be, he is clearly interested in it: "with my hand I cuffed her brutally . . . blood on her face" (*Hunters* p117). But when the possibility comes of extending this, nothing is done. As previous quotations have shown, the blood is always on the face, and around the mouth. The wounds are vicious but small, arousing fear and submission, but not as the beginning of a greater wound.

One of the traditions of the epic is that of the wound that never heals; bleeding regularly or continuously. It is an important part of the Grail legend, for instance. "There is the great anomalous myth of the Holy Grail within Christian history . . . Parsifal, at last, found and entered the Grail castle, and saw the procession of dancing youths and maidens carrying the spear dripping with blood and the great chalice of the Grail brimming with blood. King Amfortas, its guardian, whose wounds bled day and night . . . waited for Parsifal to ask the simple and natural but magical question . . . 'This cup that bleeds, what is it for?' "[4]

Bleeding is a natural part of experience. Its evasion, when we are told that "scientific verisimilitude" is being aimed at, is suspicious. The shedding of blood, and its discovery at the end of a journey has been an important epic theme: that the shedding and the discovery are omitted is not so much a sign of originality as of evasion. In the fifteenth or sixteenth-century ballad "Lully Lulley" (sometimes called "The Corpus Christi Carol") an observer is finally borne to a hall, where in a bed

> ther lythe a knyght,
> His wowndis bledying day and nyght.
> By that bedis side ther kneleth a may,
> And she wepeth both nyght and day.[5]

The identification of permanent wound, male and female conjoined in the bleeding, is obvious. Why should Norman include the horror of a planet torn by permanent warfare and evade a condition of which his female protagonists and their masters must be regularly aware? Shuttle and Redgrove raise this question: "We think that the mythic question has such power in the legend precisely because it can be asked in fact. The question we can ask is: 'What does my blood shed every month mean?' Women through the ages have asked this question, and the Wasteland answer they have received from the male knights (who believed that because they do not bleed, they do not have to ask the question) when they have been answered at all, has been: 'It is a Curse.' " (*Shuttle and Redgrove* p17).

In the light of Tarl Cabot's introduction to Gor, and his warrior education, Shuttle and Redgrove's possible conclusion seems unqualifiable:

It is particularly interesting to find that 'training for aggression' is linked with a strong menstrual taboo. It is perhaps not legitimate to reason . . . that those who hate and avoid the feminine in life become the most bellicose—that if there is no acknowledgement of the women's natural shedding of blood, then blood still has to be shed, somehow, in warfare if necessary—but with all the considerations that are accumulating, it certainly begins to look that way . . . Western Protestant Capitalist culture is arguably the most womanhating that has ever existed and it is certainly the most bellicose. But it is not unique: (it is recorded that one race) for whom 'menstrual blood was polluting to a degree hardly excelled in the world' . . . were megalomaniac, self-glorifying, egotistical bullies dedicated to economic display, 'displaying only one gamut of emotion, that which swings between victory and shame.' This description resembles the women-fearing Greeks of classical times, . . . whose behaviour so closely and depressingly resembles that of American society . . . 'The systems are alike in depriving women of contact with and participation in the total culture, and in creating a domestic patterns particularly confining and unfulfilling' (*Shuttle and Redgrove* pp68-69).

Is Norman woman-hating? Consider this:

The stones of the floor are hard and the Gorean nights are cold and it is a rare girl who, when unchained in the morning, does not seek more dutifully her master.

This harsh treatment, incidentally, when she is thought to deserve it, may even be inflicted on a Free Companion, in spite of the fact that she is free . . .

Thus when she has been irritable or otherwise troublesome even a Free Companion may find herself at the foot of the couch . . . as though she were a lowly slave girl . . .

It is the Gorean way of reminding her, should she need to be reminded, that she, too, is a woman, and thus to be dominated, to be subject to men (*Priest-Kings* p67).

The uncritical imagination of such a world seems to be related to the events that may be perpetrated there.

Does Norman provide any other evidence of Shuttle and Redgrove's arguments? He provides two areas of proof, at least: women are clearly cut off, and males veer between "victory and shame." This becomes clear as the Chronicles progress; in *Raiders,* the sixth volume, Cabot is captured and enslaved by a woman and given the name Bosk (all slaves are numbered, named or left nameless as their owners wish). His sense of grievance and humiliation run through all of that and the following volumes: *Raiders* contains a description of massive sea victories; it also contains his humiliation, and this theme (enslavement by free women, or women guerillas, to whom sexual neuroses are attributed) is maintained. It is closely associated with increasing totemism. (That is, the identification of a person with an animal or sometimes an object and certain rituals). It is not pure totenism as discussed by, say, Freud in *Totem and Taboo,* and by others, because the Totem animal was always sacred and protected among those they had studied: having a dinner of one's totem as Cabot actually does turns it into a sort of sacrament rather than a protector, but it is a necessary part of Norman's vision.

Bosk is the name of a grazing animal like a buffalo or ox. The noun is both singular and plural. It first appears in *Nomads* where the nomads drive huge herds of bosk, live in tents on wheels and wage war. It is in this book that Cabot is first identified with the word, "bosk," and also with sexual activity:

I considered raping her.
It would not do, of course.
'Have you eaten?' she asked.
'Yes,' I said.
'There is some roast bosk left,' she said. 'It is cold' (*Nomads* p283).

Though this passage has already been preceded by another at the dinner where Aphris of Turia is collared: " 'Perhaps,' he suggested, 'you would like a piece of roasted bosk meat?' " (*Nomads* p86). (This is the chaining referred to earlier that leads to war).

In the intervening book, *Assassin,* Cabot is called Kuurus. He actually takes the name from a dead man:

> I winced as (Harold) felled (the guard, Kuurus) with a blow that might have broken the skull of a bosk . . .
> The other guard . . . came running across the roof. 'Where is Kuurus?' he asked . . .
> I closed my eyes and it was over in a second (*Nomads* pp228-229)).

This name, taken or stolen from a dead man who could never use it again, disappears in the early pages of the next novel. The role of names is significant—when Cabot came to Gor he kept his name, and it quickly passed into legend. Women who come to Gor lose their names to new names almost immediately, partly because they are enslaved and named as their owners wish. Also, of course, because a name of one's own is one of the vestiges of Earth that women must abandon.

In *Raiders* Cabot becomes a woman's captive:

> 'What is your name, Slave?' asked she.
> 'Tarl,' said I.
> . . . 'A slave has no name,' she said.
> 'I have no name,' I said.
> . . . She laughed. 'I shall call you Bosk' (*Raiders* pp25-26).

The consequences of Cabot's capture is:- " 'I am a pretty slave,' I said . . . Then she mounted me, and used me for her pleasure." (*Raiders* p38)

The next volume, *Captive of Gor,* begins "The following account is written at the command of my master Bosk of Port Kar, the great merchant . . . My name was Elinor Brinton . . . By the standards of Earth I was regarded as extremely beautiful . . . I was purchased for the kitchens of the house of Bosk. Traders, I have learned, ply the slave routes between this world and Earth." (*Captive* p1). The last chapter is the "Epilogue of Bosk of Port Kar."

This situation is maintained in the next volume. Clearly a totemistic interchange has taken place in which an individual has given way to a condition. In the last two volumes, we are given descriptions of hysterical, para-orgiastic dances by independent female guerrilla bands. Yet the women are presented as slaves of men and Bosk manages to capture nearly all of them. Furthermore, while Bosk, though he has once accepted enslavement, becomes independent once more, Verna the guerrilla chief (whom Bosk has in turn captured) when put in Bosk's position (she must either say she submits or be hamstrung) submits and becomes wholly a slave in spirit—"Go to him and serve his pleasure . . . as I learned, what it is to be a woman," she says at a feast (*Hunters* p340).

As suitable for his study as this case would seem to make it, Freud would have found these bosk meat meals very strange. The consumption of the Totem is a freak event: the totem animal is usually revered and preserved. Instead, the hero takes the name of an animal, and the mention or eating of that animal is associated with sexual activity. Admittedly in Church many Christians at Communion believe that they are eating their God, really or symbolically, but Gor is not Christian, and the bosk are not God.

Freud would have recognised other symbols as more familiar: Gor's three moons, for instance. Norman has created a world with three moons (their plurality is introduced early, *Tarnsman* p54), but only one book—the one whose central theme is the experience of female enslavement, *Captive of Gor*—is overly concerned with the moons. *Captive* is the only book in which chapter titles have any lunar reference, and then two out of the eighteen have it ("Three Moons", and "I Am Chained Beneath the Moons of Gor"), but it

goes on to the end of the book—"the marshes, which are in the light of the three moons of Gor, very beautiful" (*Captive* p365). Lunar, menstrual reference seems inherent here.

There is an equally telling feature in *Outlaw of Gor:* having been captured by the Tatrix of Tharna, Cabot is sent to labour in the mines of Tharna. The mine would be a major Freudian symbol itself, but then within the mine, where Cabot learns most men do not live a year and he spends only six months, Cabot describes a slave's labours: "As the slave works the tunnel, he crawls on his hands and knees, which bleed at first, but gradually develop calluses of thick, scabrous tissues" (*Outlaw* p150). Wounds would never heal at any time, given their permanent chafing at labour; certainly the period Cabot describes could not allow their healing "gradually." What it does indicate, though, is Cabot's need to deny the blood flow within the enclosure, too feminine a feature to be allowed; and it may be significant that in the following volumes he goes to the towering mountains of the Priest-Kings, the place of masculinity and power.

Norman's work cannot hide the foci of his work: subjugation of women, menstrual fear, totemism, all are obvious, and in turn they prove the point that these works are violent, anti-women and neurotic, showing all that Freud claimed was shared by primitives and neurotics. Further fetishistic details could be quoted as proof of this:-already mentioned are Norman's concern with the exterior details of slavery, the forms of chains, brands, postures. He goes into great details about the nature of clothing for female slaves. Basically, when women are not stripped naked, their clothes are variations on leotards and mini-skirts, although some involve leather. But as the series progresses a symbolic meaning of clothes is introduced. In *Tarnsman* the clothes make a display of the body. The nature of the material and its colour are then introduced in *Outlaw* ("scarlet pleasure silks"). Silk is introduced, of course, because of its associations with decadence here on Earth. The colour can be thought of as indicating passion. It has no greater significance in the novel, and the phrase "scarlet pleasure silks" is a ritual one. Yet when Cabot moves on to join a slaver's house in *Assassin* the colours of the women's clothing takes on a particular meaning, and slaves are identified as "white silk" or "red silk" girls. It is never explicitly stated but it is probable that they are virgins and non-virgins. However, there is also "Yellow Silk" (*Assassin* p150), and something more on being shown a group of girls raised in captivity:

> Ho-Tu looked at me and grinned. 'They know nothing of men,' said he.
> 'You mean they are White Silk?' I asked.
> He laughed. (*Assassin* p116)

The laughter suggesting some other taxonomy, of which we never learn anything.

Despite Cabot's familiarity with the colour codes in *Assassin,* they have not been evident before, even though he spent half of *Tarnsman* in a slaver's convoy and camp. The use of the terms is a further indication of the discovery of further possibilities in distinctions between men and women, and the further fetishistic elaborations made possible by the success, or demand for more, of the novel series.

Having recently arrived on Gor, Cabot tells his readers that "I learned later that on this alien world a strong man may feel and express emotions, and that the hypocrisy of constraint is not honoured on this planet" (*Tarnsman* p21). He uses the exclusive term "man," which refers only to males, and speaks of the ability to "feel" only as a privilege of the "strong." The weak are not allowed to show emotion, but the strength involved in not letting it show is not considered. Furthermore, hypocrisy is a major plot element in several

novels (eg in *Assassin* Cabot pretends to be a professional murderer, in *Hunters* he threatens women with rats, "urts," that no longer exist), while the actual displays of emotion are of petty and destructive feeling (a man blinding his opponent at chess when having lost, for instance, or even Cabot's decision to give up helping the Priest-Kings for no clear reason).

Most people would read Cabot's claim as meaning that tenderness is the hidden emotion, something that is shown only in the sixth volume, when Cabot has had a near nervous breakdown, after having been subjugated by a woman. The working out of this breakdown is one of the themes of *Raiders, Captive* and *Hunters of Gor,* and it also reveals the falsity of that claim.

An English psychologist—I.N. Suttie, following Adler—was "particularly interested in what he described as the modern 'taboo on tenderness.' Why is it, he asked, that the modern individual is so afraid of being thought tender or sentimental? Epithets such as 'mummy's boy,' 'milksop,' 'soppy,' or 'cry baby' reveal antifeminist tendencies when contrasted with idealization of toughness, aggressiveness, and hardness"[7]. In Cabot's case the epithet was "pretty slave" (see above), but it shows again the point that Shuttle and Redgrove also showed, the mysogynistic position found in the Gorean books. The novel sequence from *Raiders* to *Hunters* inclusive is concerned with the breaking of women living independently, in guerrilla groups. Although Cabot was not subjugated by one of the guerrillas but by a woman from the marsh tribes, it is to Telima, the marsh dweller, that tenderness is later shown (*Raiders* pp242-243). His activities, however, are dedicated to the hunt for one guerrilla leader, Verna, in the course of which another group leader, Sheera, is seduced. Verna is captured, under torture submits to slavery, becomes the sex slave of Marlenus of Ar, tells her followers to do the same. Her group having become enslaved, Verna is allowed to go free, Cabot telling his readers that she could never be happy again.

In this many elements have come together: Marlenus is the father of Cabot's wife from volume one, the wife for whom Cabot has searched since his return to Gor. At various times Marlenus has been a father-figure, warrior-blood brother, and stern opponent (exiling Cabot at the end of *Assassin*). At the end of *Hunters* Cabot has learned that Marlenus has disowned his daughter, that she has lost caste (social status), and that Cabot's search in the light of that loss is ended. Cabot accepts it all. Norman presents no alternative to this world view.

And the drive behind these events is evident in the name of their chief protagonist—Verna.

The Gorean language is influenced by Earth language (*Tarnsman* pp42-43), and Norman's choice of names or titles is obviously drawn from familiar classical languages. "Ubar," for instance, is a title related to titles like Caesar, Kaisar and Tsar; while "Tatrix" seems an obvious Latin conjugation. "Thassa," as the sea is always called, is the Greek Thalassa (ie the sea). Marlenus manages to combine references to evil and darkness and soil in his name—all parts of Norman's creation, while Cernus the slaver hides the Latin Servus, a slave. Bosk is the Latin Bos, cattle. And Verna the pivot of the later books tells us about Norman's attitude to life, Gor and the purposes of Cabot's abortive odyssey.

Verna, in Latin, means Special Slave.[8] She is, above all, a slave to the requirements of Norman's philosophy, serving him in his tortuous plot. Every incident in the book can be explained by Norman's mysogyny, and (in no ways contradictorily) every incident that

cannot be related to a central rationale, can be explained by his attitude; for an explanation can be made of Norman's philosophy, an exegesis cannot. The logic of his position requires an illogical world, which is created and expanded, taking advantage of this creation to add to new elements and reveal new facets (as the details of the slaves' clothing shows).

Cabot reflects all that his creator's position requires. Thus, while Cabot has a poor degree from Oxford, and gains a job at an American college by bluffing because his scholarship will not stand up to close examination, as soon as he lands on Gor he is able to lecture his readers on astrophysics, hydraulics, gravity, evolution and servitude. This does not stop him making obvious blunders, as when he lectures his captive with: "Spiders are, as a matter of fact, particularly clean insects" (*Tarnsman* p87), not realising that spiders are not insects but arachnids. That, though, could be a failing on Cabot's part, not indicative of John Norman's own ignorance and lapses. Later, though, in the nest of the Priest-Kings, the ants sit watching the planet surface from observation cubes, which relay "light, sound and scent" (*Priest-Kings* p135) but the first two of that list are unnecesary, since sighted humans do not use the cubes and later the story shows that Priest-Kings are oblivious to the unscented (*Priest-Kings* p238), being practically blind and deaf: they only need scent.

Cabot's description could be faulty but probably the one cause for this has been referred to already: the need to emphasize the power of the Priest-Kings—despite their supposed economy with resources (*Priest-Kings* p137), matter is introduced to overwhelm the reader. The emphasis is on power and its display.

However, the irrationality of Gor can be seen in things that can be more absolutely ascertained. Firstly, the economics of the planet are rotten—there is almost no production or agriculture. Despite references to the peasantry and the farm products of the planet, they are never detailed. The cities are densely populated but the technology to build towers and sky-walkways is undescribed.

Secondly, Norman makes no consideration of the economics of slavery, which, as David Hume pointed out two hundred years ago, and historians have repeated since, leads to a fall in population and restricts industrial production. Since Cabot says that on Gor a slave may not produce for a master (*Tarnsman* p44—the reference is to instruction, but that is a commodity like any other), and that there are almost no male slaves anyway ("there are, incidentally, far fewer male slaves than female slaves . . . a captured male is almost invariably put to the sword," *Assassin* p51), it is likely that this world of castes and a war economy living luxuriously is an impossibility. As Cabot specifically and repeatedly describes the physical and moral weakness of the female slaves, it is certain that they cannot be used for labour, the raids on Earth do not supply enough labour to make up for this, and the Priest-Kings have not mechanized to avoid the use of human labour in their own nest. The social and economic basis of Gorean life is non-existent and in the light of this Cabot's discussions of evolution and psychology (nature and nurture) are stillborn, because the world could not feed and clothe itself if it were as Norman describes.

And, thirdly, while Norman has said "Many themes occur and reoccur in the Gorean books. One of the major themes, of course, is the complex interplay between social and biological elements" (*Norman* p25), what this means is not clear, and Cabot's statements are contradictory. He says that on Earth men and women learn not to be men and women, but also that their true sexual nature is in their blood. He says that the Priest-Kings want

natural selection to the extreme of the survival of the fittest: whole castes have been created in this way (wood carriers, for example, *Outlaw* p27), and hunting parties may have been designed on similar lines (*Priest-Kings* p20). Cabot thought that "A possible hypothesis to explain this is that the Priest-Kings may have wished war to be a biologically selective process in which the weaker and slower perish and fail to reproduce themselves" (*Tarnsman* p46), but he fails to notice that half of Gor's human population (ie every woman, who is "even if free, accustomed to slavery . . . she knows she is weaker than men and what this can mean," *(Nomads* p63) would fall into this category and the whole population would disappear in one generation.

At the end of the Chronicles, Cabot sums up Gorean thought on evolution and environment as factors on people (*Hunters* pp352-355):

> man is naturally free and woman is naturally slave . . . (even though there is no) one more respected than the Gorean free woman. Even a slaver who has captured a free woman often treats her with great solicitude until she is branded . . . She is then merely an animal and treated as such.
>
> Further, in the Gorean view, female slavery is a societal institution which enables the female, as most Earth societies would not, to exhibit, in a reinforcing environment, her biological nature (*Hunters* p353).[9]

Cabot goes on to argue that the type of woman he approves of is a result of select breeding—"a woman who was particularly ugly, threatening, vicious, stupid, cruel, etc, would not be a desirable mate. No man can be blamed for not wishing to make his life miserable. Accordingly, statistically he tends to select out women who are intelligent, loving and beautiful. Accordingly, men have, in effect, bred a certain kind of women" (*Hunters* p354).

Norman adopts a scientific vocabulary (from sociology and biology—"societal institution," "reinforcing environment," "statistically"), which I parodied at one point of the introduction. This adoption to describe apparently objective truths is very dubious. Norman uses objective standards oddly, and nothing is more odd than his insistence on the objective measurement of female beauty. It is asserted by both the men and the women of his novels: Cabot says "the criteria of the Love War are exacting and, as much as possible, objectively applied" (*Nomads* p117), and Elinor Brinton says "They were incredibly beautiful. I regarded myself as a fantastically beautiful woman . . . I saw that at least eleven of these girls were unquestionably, clearly more beautiful than I" (*Captive* p51). Women are not closely described but they all seem to be Caucasian, and mostly WASP types. There are no indications that any of the people on Gor have come from any other continents than Europe and North America. The standards of beauty found in other continents, and in cultures of the past (or the of present uninfluenced by western commercialism) are not considered—extended necks, bound feet, or steatogyny, apparently valued in Africa, are not considered in measures of beauty. The tradition of objective beauty, and racial purity and apartheid go back to the nineteenth century. The tradition can be traced back to Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853), and was developed by Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Alfred Rosenberg. Gobineau wrote:

> the human groups to which the European nations and their descendants belong are the most beautiful . . .
>
> We can no longer subscribe to the doctrine . . . which regards the idea of the beautiful as purely artificial and variable . . . beauty is an absolute and necessary idea, admitting of no arbitrary application. I . . . have no hesitation in regarding the white race as superior to all

> others in beauty . . . the human groups are unequal in beauty; and this inequality is rational, logical, permanent and indestructible. [10]

Of course it is not so, and some of Norman's attempts to show it fail quickly because he has not realized their historical contingency. For instance, in an attempt to show the stupidity of women, Elinor Brinton waits with other women for decoration: they think she is brave to accept ear percing; they, in turn, are amazed at her breakdown at the nostril piercing that follows. Yet if the book were written today, only ten years later, such a punk fashion would be accepted, if not common, while if the heroine were Indian, jewellery might always have been available for her nose. And similarly with the clothes that are worn, part worn or not worn. It is false for Cabot to argue "Doubtless women are much more beautiful now than a hundred generations ago" (*Hunters* p254) as he does in his exposition of evolutionary theory. No one would expect to see Titian's or Rubens' models in a magazine today but no one would doubt that they were valued in their time, or that they could be again.

Furthermore, elements of Cabot's description contradict what he has described earlier. He says "the loving mother is a type favoured by evolution" (*Hunters* p354), but this has not been seen for readers to know that it is true of Gor. Only two families with offspring are mentioned in the Chronicles (of Dina of Turia in *Nomads,* and Ho-Hak in *Raiders*) and only one woman has given birth (and that after being covered by a Hopfrog-like dwarf for her owner's entertainment in *Assassin).* The family is a major ommission from descriptions of Gor, and we have seen too little of it to know what is favoured by evolution. Furthermore, Goreans actually intervene in it: "For example it is possible to breed a girl whose saliva will be poisonous" (*Assassin* p114). Surely not even the strongest maternal instinct would have tolerated that, even if one did not wonder why such a result did not poison herself. Furthermore, physical mutation does not occur at such a rate that this could appear. It is simply Norman again taking the control of women's bodies from them.

Cabot broke up the gynocracy of Tharna because "The family , for example, had not existed in Tharna for generations, having been replaced by the division of the sexes and the segregated public nurseries. And too it must be remembered that the men of Tharna who had tasted her women in the revolt now demanded them as their right. No man who has seen a woman in pleasure silk . . . can long live without the possession of such delicious creatures" (*Outlaw* p249). The avoidance of the family, and of the reproductive and nurturing tasks people fulfill are major ommissions of Gor: the emphasis is wholly on the beautiful women and their vulnerability. The result is a sterile society, and one that is not imagined as developing: the embellishment is elaborated, the mind and ideas are not.

However, it is when one reads other work set in the traditions of epic fantasy, and aware of it, that one becomes aware of Norman's limitations. Books like Norman Spinrad's *The Iron Dream* and Philip José Farmer's *A Feast Unknown* [11] show an ability to use the tradition while being aware both of its causes and the expression of those causes. Theodore Sturgeon in his afterword to *A Feast Unknown* points out the impossibility of these worlds, and the need to write in the light of that—Farmer "makes it clear that unlimited violence coupled with unlimited sex is an unlimited absurdity" (*Farmer* p284). Spinrad in his pseudonymic Afterword puts the position better: supposing that Hitler emigrated to the USA after the First World War and that he became an author of sf and fantasy, *The Iron Dream* is presented as a work that such a man would have written.

("Lord of the Swastika" is Hitler's novel within the novel). "Homer Whipple" then comments on the style, symbolism and content of Hitler's work. Having described the "prevalent sexual pathologies of our civilization," he goes on to say "What is open to dispute is whether or not Hitler was consciously aware of what he was doing" (*Spinrad* p247), and then answers that the book "displays abundant evidence of mental aberration on the part of its author apart from the question of phallic symbolism" (*Spinrad* p248).

In some criticisms of the genre, though, the point is made that such works are promoted as escapes from the real world—a literary sublimation that removes the physical desire for the thing itself. Spinrad supposes that if Hitler had moved to the USA he would have sublimated (diverted) his ideas and neuroses into art, thinking of art for art's sake. This is Freud's position in "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," Spinrad's fictional Afterword, though, records that anti-communist groups in his fictional USA were treating "Lord of the Swastika" as more than a fantasy. It cannot be ignored, given Spinrad's first premise—Hitler's emigration—that Hitler might still have become a leader of a US reactionary group. There would not have been an expression of neurosis.

In the discussion of John Norman, though, it is clear that Norman manages to combine both art as the expression (elaboration) of bizarre desire, and as the intent for that expression to move the world towards its achievement. As we see the books republished with more bizarre, fetishistic covers, displaying scenes that hold some furtive image of psychical fulfilment, we can recognize that Norman's work is achieving its aim. Perhaps part of it is inherent in our world-view, the view we have of everyday life today, but Norman manages to publish an imaginary world which focuses that view, and by doing so revitalizes it, so that it continues to alter the world and the way we live. So strong in our world is Norman's position that it is difficult to recognize the greatest image of power and the greatest possible abuse of it. It relies on an image or an identification, but it is incredibly strong.

Spinrad points out a general psychological reading of sf and fantasy:

> The literature of science fiction abounds with stories of all-powerful phallic supermen . . . fecal surrogates, penile totems, vaginal sucking mouths, . . . subliminally homoerotic or even pederastic relationships, and the like. While a few of the better writers in the field make sparing and judicious use of such elements on a conscious level, most of this material bubbles up from the subconscious into the work of writers writing on a purely superficial surface level.
>
> *Lord of the Swastika* varies only in intensity and to some extent in content from the considerable body of pathological literature within the science-fiction field (*Spinrad* p251).

Norman has admitted to the unconscious aspects of his work. Who can know what the expression of such will be? Perhaps all we can know is that the result represents powerful but canalized forces, and from their route, we know they are likely to have emanated from one source only. That Norman is accepted in the genre indicates how hidden, and how accepted may be the worst of these drives, and our difficulty or inability to recognize as such, such a motive. Spinrad lists the psychological phenomena encountered in the literature: there is a major one missing, and it is one necessary to the final attempt to understand the origins and motives of the Gorean novels. It is such that Norman has not acknowledged it, yet it provides a perfect reading of the "Chronicles of Counter-Earth," and answers these questions: what can account for the absence of features as noted before, the absence of descriptions of sexual activity, the absence of descriptions of women's secondary sexual characteristics (breasts, hipline etc), the lack of menstruation,

the non-pregnancies, the immature nature of the women, their pleasure in dolls, their obedience? Over whom is there power and dominance accepted by society the globe over, even more than of males over females? What would be the expression of all these elements in a world where the elements can be created to explain them all away?

The expression would be the Gorean novels. Not the division of power between genders, but between those with the advantages of age and those without, may have become manifest from the terrestrial experience of abuse in the guise of breeding, upbringing and good discipline. The features are missing because the characters are imagined without them.

Conscious or unconscious, in the light of this much falls into place. It is an indication of much of contemporary ideology that we read the books according to one premise (expecting novels about violence and "sexual" relations to be about adults) so that we do not notice that other features of the world are not sufficient for that reading. In the light of the "stabilization serums" which elongate the life of Goreans, extending all of its phases or ages, and are given before adulthood, like Polio vaccine, to natives, we can see that "girls" is a true description of those enslaved by Cabot, his confrères and enemies: they are still in prolonged adolescence at best. There is almost nothing to suggest anything else. Only one thing reads otherwise—the sexual response, as their nipples harden, of a bath attendant in *Assassin* and Sheera the Panther girl in *Hunters*. The second girl's response causes Bosk (Cabot) to be "curious" (*Hunters* p117), indicating the infrequency of this experience. Apart from this, there are no suggestions that any of the women Cabot meets are in maturity or past climacteric.

Whether Norman intended this feature at all is open to question, but on close reading it is obvious, and it is simply an extension of a criticism that is damning even in its mildest form. We live in a world that produced the author John Norman, whose work encourages his readers to introduce, maintain or extend practises that could not be justified in any form outside of a genre which allows their hiding, and (simultaneously) their elaboration and deferred or deflected fulfilment.

The continued production and circulation of the Gorean books, and, more disturbingly, their uncritical and general purchase, indicates a widespread acceptance of a genre in which such themes appear. Perhaps the themes are so general and so hidden as to never manifest themselves practically, but—as the feminists can point out—even the more blatant aspects of the Gorean novels work to the detriment of half of our population.

In a relationship between the powerful and the subdued, the Power of the Powerful, and the experience of terror in the subdued are emphasized. The Power of the Powerful in the Gorean books is emphasized to ridiculous lengths—the Priest-Kings having technology they could never use, and slaves for no pleasure in ownership; Gorean males able to rebuild a city overnight; wounding and crippling almost ignored. The submission is made to show itself in the smallest of things—all women live in fear of mutilation (a fear on which the hero comments), while even when "free" they are not free. Even when Cabot's philosophy (that women become truly women when they are enslaved) is expounded, these converted "true" women may experience the enslaving and its practices: to be a satisfied adherent of this philosophy (ie one who accepts it and lives in its spirit) is also to live in fear of what males, the Powerful, justified by the philosophy, may do. This is very different from the sexual attitude of much pornography, which may begin from an attitude of necessary submission but ends with all being freed to sexual pleasure. Even

masochism in such works is about pain being a route to joy: the Gorean books are sadistic in that sexual submission in the first place leads only to pleasure for the Powerful, who make women submit through fear, perpetually.

The route to such a philosophical exposition has to take in many attempts to make the world fit its reasoning. Rather like the cycles and epicycles that became necessary to explain the Ptolemaic system, so the Gorean books have thrown up, or have had to develop through, the byzantine architecture of clothes, name-stealing, totemism and various taboos. The taboo on blood and the symbolism whereby it is limited, refers back to an epic literature but the referral simply shows that the series does not belong to that tradition. It has far, far shallower roots, and, perhaps Freud might have thought, is less well balanced.

Someone could object that all these features are consciously written into the narrative to add texture and that they simply demonstrate Norman's authorial skill, as opposed to being evidence of the author's condition; that they are a great psychological creation, a new individual named Tarl Cabot who is nothing to do with John Norman.

The arguments against this are numerous. Firstly, Norman speaking as himself has identified with Cabot's own position on sexual dominance and gender separation. If Cabot's is an odd world, it is Norman who has imagined oddly. Secondly, the features appear inconsistently; like the significance of the colours of the clothes which are presented in later novels as always being known but which are not mentioned earlier despite the opportunity to mention them. And, thirdly, all narrators other than Cabot maintain the same position despite their differing backgrounds—university lecturer, editor, socialite and slave.

The genre of Science Fantasy, to which the Gorean novels are usually attributed, has many possible developments. The Gorean books seem to have made no use of any of them. That Norman should bother to write, thirty years after Robert E. Howard's death, of a world so similar would be incredible if his work did not refer to other attitudes to life and fiction. The Gorean novels are an attempt to build a philosophy of another world taken from this, and to make this world worse by that transmission. Where there were inferior races, there is now an inferior sex. And the mode for this inferiority comes from an area of still greater dominance and hegemony.

As a consequence, for all their supposed sexual content, their pornographic connotations, the defence they would make by appealing to major works expressing thought through sexuality, Norman's attitudes and arguments are not the expression of a thinker. For him a plot has evolved from the need to legitimize the desire for power. That this position can be so easily promoted is an indication of the state of the American New Right: John Norman owes little to literary tradition, he owes a lot to the politics of hate. In him, Philosophy in the Bedroom has become a ranting in the prison camp.

Notes

1 Bibliographic and publishing details from Neil Barron (ed.) *Anatomy of Wonder: A Critical Guide to Science Fiction* (London, 1981) Bowker, p253.

(*A Readers Guide to Science Fiction* by Searles et al (New York, 1979) Avon, p132, suggests that Norman originally intended a series of only three books.)

The eight volumes are *Tarsman of Gor* (1966), *Outlaw of Gor* (1967), *Priest-Kings of Gor* (1968), *Nomads of Gor* (1969), *Assassin of Gor* (1970), *Raiders of Gor* (1971), *Captive of Gor* (1972), and *Hunters of Gor* (1974).

First world publication seems to have moved between US paperback, British hardback and

British paperback. All references in this study are to the first British paperback editions (Tandem Books—1970, 1971, 1972, 1972, 1973, 1973, 1973, 1974 respectively); just the first word of each title is given in references in the text. "Chronicles of Counter-Earth" is used to refer to only these eight titles. The present British (Star Books) paperback edition maintains the same pagination as the Tandem. Only the covers have changed.

2 Jeffrey M. Elliot *Fantasy Voices 1:* Interviews with four fantasy authors (San Bernadino, California, 1982) Borgo Press. John Norman interviewed 1980, pages 18 – 30, p25. Hereafter referred to as *Norman* in the text.

3 Mary Ellman *Thinking About Women* (London, 1979) Virago, pp142-143.

4 Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove *The Wise Wound: Menstruation and Everywoman* (London, 1978) Gollancz, p17. Hereafter referred to as *Shuttle and Redgrove* in the text.

5 in William Tydeman (ed.) *English Poetry 1400 – 1580* (London, 1970) Heinnemann, p53.

6 "Woman is the natural love prey of man. She is natural quarry. She is complete only when caught" (*Hunters* p224). What an unnatural love prey might be is not clear from the books – there are descriptions neither of homosexuality nor of auto-eroticism.

7 J.A.C. Brown *Freud and the Post-Freudians* (rev. ed. Harmondsworth, 1964) Penguin, p66.

8 David Hume "On the Populousness of Ancient Nations" in *Essays Moral, Political, Literary* (London, 1903) World's Classics, p391.

9 cf Kate Millett *Sexual Politics* (London, 1971) Sphere Books, p46 – "The rationale which accompanies that imposition of male authority euphemistically referred to as 'the battle of the sexes' bears a certain resemblance to the formulae of nations at war, where any heinousness is justified on the grounds that the enemy is either an inferior species or really not human at all." For a feminist consideration of menstruation cf p47, and more generally pp43 – 58.

10 A. de Gobineau *Selected Political Writings* ed. M.D. Biddiss (London, 1971) Cape, pp112 – 113.

11 Philip José Farmer *A Feast Unknown* (London, 1975) Quartet; Norman Spinrad *The Iron Dream* (London, 1974) Panther; hereafter referred to in the text as *Farmer* and *Spinrad* respectively.

Perhaps we do not think of H.P. Lovecraft as a science-fiction writer, but as an author of morbid, baroque horror? However, as James Turner here shows, by the time Lovecraft came to write his best-known tales, his morbidity had undergone a sea-change into social humanism. What's more, he was essentially a scientifically-minded writer who would have frowned at the occult pastiches presented after his death as "Lovecraftian." James Turner is editor at Arkham House which is currently preparing a new three-volume critical edition of the Lovecraft fiction based upon the latest scholarly findings and a collation of extant manuscript material.

H.P. Lovecraft: A Mythos in His Own Image

JAMES TURNER

The life of Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) is a study in progressive humanization. Even though the man had lived a relatively uneventful first thirty years as a sickly recluse and then died at the early age of forty-six, the evolution of personality that occurred in his final decade was so profound that the mature Lovecraft was disposed to view his earlier

self with a commingling of astonishment and dismay. Here are his comments, a few weeks before his death, upon rereading a letter he had written in 1924 to the editor of *Weird Tales:* "Was *I* that much of a dub at thirty-three . . . only thirteen years ago? There was no getting out of it—I really *had* thrown all that haughty, complacent, snobbish, self-centred, intolerant bull, and at a mature age when anybody but a perfect damned fool would have known better! That earlier illness had kept me in seclusion, limited my knowledge of the world, and given me something of the fatuous effusiveness of a belated adolescent when I finally *was* able to get about more around 1920, is hardly much of an excuse . . ."

The central fact of Lovecraft's early years was his birth into a proud aristocratic New England family that was entering an era of financial decline and disintegration. Lovecraft's childhood was perhaps the happiest period in his life, however; after his father's breakdown in 1893, he and his mother returned to the home of grandfather Whipple Phillips on Angell Street in Providence, where the young Lovecraft was raised amidst surroundings of true baronial splendour. Here, too, he began to acquire his amazing erudition, as Lovecraft related in one of his stories: "He was the most phenomenal child scholar I have ever known, and at seven was writing verse of a sombre, fantastic, almost morbid cast which astonished the tutors surrounding him. Perhaps his private education and coddled seclusion had something to do with his premature flowering . . . He was never allowed out without his nurse, and seldom had a chance to play unconstrainedly with other children. All this doubtless fostered a strange, secretive inner life in the boy, with imagination as his one avenue of freedom."

It all came to an end in 1904 when the death of Whipple Phillips left the family in a state of genteel impoverishment. The stately ancestral mansion on Angell Street was sold, and in an excess of near-suicidal despair the adolescent Lovecraft moved with his mother into rented quarters. That same year he entered Hope Street High School but became a high-school dropout in 1908; over the following six years H.P. Lovecraft would drop out of the world as well, as the young man gradually assumed the role of an outsider in his own century. "I shunned all human society, deeming myself too much of a failure in life to be seen socially by those who had known me in youth," he recalled; during this crepuscular period of 1908-1914 Lovecraft lived in virtual isolation with his neurasthenic mother, performing no remunerative work and subsisting amidst reminiscences of the vanished glories of his ancestral tradition. In his 1921 story "The Outsider" Lovecraft portrayed his eponymous protagonist as "a stranger in this century" who inhabits a surreal subterranean edifice appointed with bones, skeletons, and "odious oblong boxes." The man abandons his sepulchral haunts, travels to his former home where he is revealed as an abhorred monster, and resignedly returns to his shadowy realm of catacombs and ghouls. As in Richard Jefferies's poem in which "we are murdered by our ancestors . . . their dead hands stretch forth from the tomb and drag us down," H.P. Lovecraft had failed to make the transition into the twentieth century and was now in thrall to his ancestral past. He had been snatched up by the dead and appropriated unto their own.

Had Lovecraft continued to languish within this bedlamite environment, he very probably would have died in complete obscurity, perhaps as mentally defective as his two parents. Two momentous occurrences instead would alter the course of his life:

In 1914 Edward F. Daas, editor of the United Amateur Press Association, noticed

Lovecraft's name in the letter column of *The Argosy* and invited him to join the organization. Amateur journalism during this era was a voluntary social movement in which hopeful bellettrists took delight in inflicting their effusions upon each other. For Lovecraft, of course, amateur journalism became a holy crusade for the nurture of "eternal truths of literary art"; in his own contributions thereto, Lovecraft emerged as a strident and psittaceous spokesman for the old aristocracy, for its political conservatism, reactionary outlook, and racial intolerance. Today such writings are of academic interest only, but amateur journalism did initiate the long and painful reemergence of H.P. Lovecraft into the world: meaning and direction had been imparted to his daily existence, as Lovecraft maintained a voluminous correspondence with his amateur colleagues, received visitors at his home in Providence, and, finally, emerged from that home to attend meetings in other cities. Certainly Lovecraft himself understood what had happened to him; when asked to deliver an address at a 1921 Boston gathering on the topic "What Amateurdom and I Have Done for Each Other," Lovecraft concluded simply, "What amateur journalism has given me is—life itself."

Later that same year, and again at an amateur journalists' meeting in Boston, Lovecraft was introduced to Sonia H. Green, a beautiful and dynamic New York business woman who had a predilection for intellectual men. "I admired his personality but, frankly, at first not his person," Mrs Greene admitted afterwards. She nonetheless courted Lovecraft with single-minded persistence until the two were married in March 1924. The marriage did not endure, but the two-year period during which Lovecraft lived in New York City was probably the most significant learning experience of his entire adult lifetime. During this sojourn within an alien milieu Lovecraft sustained almost unimaginable mental and emotional anguish, from his humiliating failure to find employment to the degrading theft of his wardrobe. "Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is," asked Keats in his letters, "to school an intelligence and make it a soul?" Perhaps it was only through such intense personal suffering that Lovecraft was able to temper his formidable intellectual gifts with a sensitivity and concern for other human beings. Not until his return to Providence in April 1926, at least, did Lovecraft finally become the man whom his friends recalled so fondly. "He came back to Providence a human being—and *what* a human being!" wrote Lovecraft's old amateur colleague W. Paul Cook. "He had been tried in the fire and came out pure gold."

During the final decade of his life, in the years following his New York "exile," Lovecraft was to emerge as a legend in his own time, both for the stories he would write and for the man he had become. The final years of his life also coincided, more or less, with the Great Depression, and Lovecraft's keen interest in the structure of contemporary American society testifies to his belated re-entry into the twentieth century. "With me," he observed in a 1936 letter, "objects (in life) are (1) the creation of something of intrinsic excellence if possible, and (2) the supplying of genuine needs. If my own survival cannot be ensured as an incidental to the pursuit of these objects, then I feel that something is wrong." This conviction that "something is wrong" had led Lovecraft to a complete reversal of his earlier conservative beliefs. Again, from a 1936 letter: "I used to be a hidebound Tory simply for traditional and antiquarian reasons—and because I had never done any real *thinking* on civics and industry and the future. The depression—and its concomitant publicisation of industrial, financial, and governmental problems—jolted

me out of my lethargy and led me to reexamine the facts of history in the light of unsentimental scientific analysis; and it was not long before I realised what an ass I had been. The liberals at whom I used to laugh were the ones who were right—for they were living in the present while I had been living in the past." Of all Lovecraft's epistolary writings toward the end of his life, his economic and social theorizing is the most significant, for this body of work represents the man's own intellectual resolution to the outsider complex that had confounded him since the turn of the century.

In his debates with various correspondents Lovecraft presented a comprehensive state socialism entailing government ownership of industry, artificially allocated employment, regulated salaries and old age pensions, and similar measures. "The only decent government," he explained in a 1936 letter, "is that which keeps economic affairs within its control; assuring a livelihood to all, and preventing the waste and duplication of competitive effort. It ought to be administered by a small board of highly trained executives with centralized power . . . and chosen by the vote of such citizens as can pass a certain reasonable set of mental, scholastic, and cultural examinations." This "small board of highly trained executives" is the key to Lovecraft's socialistic thinking, the means through which he sought to restore the aristocratic values of his old family by placing authority once again into the hands of the "better" people. The era of Whipple Phillips had passed, but now an aristocracy of intellect would replace the aristocracy of wealth and the consequent redistribution of resources would permit "the security and leisure necessary for the maximum flowering of the human spirit." Nebulous and visionary though his paternalistic utopia may seem, H.P. Lovecraft at the end of his life was filled with hope, his eyes upon the future of American society. The outsider at last had become reconciled to the twentieth century.

If indeed Lovecraft had become a more positive, socially minded man after his New York experience, evidence of this emergent humanization should be apparent in the macabre fiction. His imaginative tales had never been an idle divertissement for Lovecraft but rather arose from an inner compulsion: "Art is not what one resolves to say, but what insists on saying itself through one," he explained in a 1934 letter. "The only elements concerned are the artist and the emotions working within him . . . Real literary composition is the only thing . . . I take seriously in life."

The central element in Lovecraft's "real literary composition" is his cosmicism; this term defines the very essence of Lovecraft and is more integral to an understanding of his fiction than any other factor. Cosmicism for Lovecraft denoted a sense of wonder and awe in the presence of the unknown; the rigid and sanity-preserving laws of Nature (always with a capital *N*) are assaulted by inconceivable ultradimensional forces, and finite man crouches in fear at this glimpse of the otherworldly. Lovecraft's animating aesthetic already was clearly formulated in this 1922 letter: "My own view toward aesthetic things has always been one of awe at the mystery of the cosmos. The dominant sensation has been a kind of ecstatic wonder at the unfathomed reaches of nighted space . . . The only poignant sensation in life is that of wonder, fascination, and terror at the unknown." During this early period Lovecraft had embraced a simplistic and outmoded Haeckelian monism, or "mechanistic materialism," which he used to justify a sense of the "ridiculous insignificance and futility of all human actions" and which essentially signified his own feelings of worthlessness and failure at this stage in his life; from his

"contemptuous indifference toward mankind in the aggregate," Lovecraft employed the cosmic impulse as a means of imaginative escape into realms of Dunsanian pinnacles or Poesque crypts.

During the final decade of his life Lovecraft's cosmicism became far more complex and profound as he began to incorporate the contemporary scientific thinking of his age into his macabre fiction. The first major story after his return from New York was the 1926 nouvelle "The Call of Cthulhu," which also inaugurated the body of mature work that would become Lovecraft's crowning achievement and to which has been applied posthumously the term "Cthulhu Mythos." The opening paragraph of "The Call of Cthulhu" serves as a virtual prolegomenon for the Mythos tales that would follow:

> The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

Although Lovecraft often is designated as a founding father of the modern American horror movement, the preceding scientifically formulated statement will serve to suggest the essential apartness of Lovecraft's cosmic Cthulhu Mythos from the supernatural occultism, urban paranoia, and abattoir extravagances of present-day horror fiction. In these Mythos tales Lovecraft typically would take an element from the old Gothic tradition—perhaps an authentic New England setting or some aspect of New England lore or legendry—and reinterpret this element in terms of the scientific theories (Einstein, Heisenberg, Planck, et al.) of his day. Through a fanciful extension of contemporary scientific thinking Lovecraft ultimately would resolve his narrative upon a supernatural—or, more accurately, supramundane—level of reality, thus revivifying the trappings and appurtenances of old-time Gothicism through an expressly scientific approach. Here is Lovecraft's own explanation of the technique, from a 1930 letter: "My big kick comes from *taking reality just as it is*—accepting all the limitations of the most orthodox science—and then permitting my symbolizing faculty to *build outward* from the existing facts; rearing a structure of *infinite promise and possibility* whose topless towers are in no cosmos or dimension penetrable by the contradicting-power of the tyrannous and inexorable intellect." An example of this technique is the 1932 story "The Dreams in the Witch House," in which Lovecraft presented figures of New England legendry—the old Salem witch Keziah Mason, her evil ratlike familiar, and the infamous Black Man of the witch cult—and reinterpreted these figures as emissaries from a fourth-dimensional space-time continuum; the narrative itself is then resolved into a sequence of oneiric episodes in which this fourth dimension impinges upon the present world. If "The Dreams in the Witch House" is far from being a completely satisfying reading experience, one can only marvel at Lovecraft's audacity in attempting so formidable a synthesis of New England black magic and Einsteinian physics!

Throughout these works conceived during the last decade of his life, Lovecraft thus was according a cosmic treatment to the old Gothic horror tale; but by the 1930s—when America was deeply entrenched in the Great Depression and Lovecraft himself had become a dramatically different human being—a new element entered several of the Cthulhu Mythos stories. Early in 1931 Lovecraft had begun an extended narrative, set

within the Antarctic region, in which an exploration party discovers the ruins of a massive stone city constructed in millennia-removed prehistory by the extraterrestrial Old Ones. Initially "At the Mountains of Madness" proceeds as one might expect from previous Mythos tales, with the auctorial promise of "a hideously amplified world of lurking horrors," but when two members of the scientific party finally enter the Old Ones' abandoned city, something extraordinary happens: instead of contriving an immediate climactic confrontation with one of the creatures, Lovecraft chooses to *linger* over the Old Ones' civilization. Inferences from the murals that span the walls of this awesome metropolis provide detailed information on the history, technology, social organization, and culture of the Old Ones. After many pages of patiently reconstructed pseudohistory, the author has presented a civilization of true epic grandeur; so immersed has Lovecraft become in his imaginary milieu, elaborated from some inner compulsion, that the narrative attains a point of fundamental reorientation when the Old Ones no longer can be perceived as objects of terror: "Poor devils! After all, they were not evil things of their kind. They were men of another age and another order of being . . . Scientists to the last—what had they done that we would not have done in their place? God, what intelligence and persistence! What a facing of the incredible, just as those carven kinsmen and forbears had faced things only a little less incredible! Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star-spawn—whatever they had been, they were men!" Yes, they were men; or rather men such as Lovecraft wished his own contemporary American society might foster.

None of the three Mythos stories that followed "At the Mountains of Madness" were directly concerned with interstellar entities, but in the 1934 nouvelle "The Shadow Out of Time" Lovecraft again explored an alien civilization from the prehistory of our planet, the Great Race of Yith. During the three years that separate "At the Mountains of Madness" from "The Shadow Out of Time" Lovecraft had continued to develop his economic and social theories, and thus while in his earlier narrative we were apprised that the Old Ones' government was "evidently complex and probably socialistic," Lovecraft now presents the social and political institutions of the Great Race in carefully considered detail: "The Great Race seemed to form a single, loosely knit nation or league, with major institutions in common, though there were four definitive divisions. The political and economic system of each unit was a sort of fascistic socialism, with major resources rationally distributed, and power delegated to a small governing board elected by the votes of all able to pass certain educational and psychological tests." As I have demonstrated in the preface to *Selected Letters V,* passages such as the preceding have direct counterparts in the various reformist letters that Lovecraft was writing to correspondents during this period. The author was not merely endowing his stories with such pseudohistoric detail to impart a sense of narrative verisimilitude; he rather was reforming the Mythos creatures in terms of his developing criteria for human excellence, his own idealized conception of man at his most humane and profound. The members of the Great Race were the greatest scientists of all time, exemplars of a mighty socialized civilization of technology and art, entities that had apprehended the secret of survival in a nihilistic Lovecraftian cosmos. Throughout his life Lovecraft had professed that man's capacity to be a seeker after truth represented our species at its noblest; it is no coincidence that in "The Shadow Out of Time" the scholars among the Great Race have become the saviours of society.

After "The Shadow Out of Time" Lovecraft made one final contribution to the

Mythos in response to a story written by his young friend Robert Bloch, and then the rest is silence. Ernest A. Edkins, an old Chicago correspondent, reported that Lovecraft at the end of his life was planning an extended dynastic chronicle of an ancient New England family, to which he would bring his lifelong researches into the folklore and legendry of his native region. How he might have treated the Cthulhu Mythos in later years, one can only speculate; his more positive, humanized personality already was creating procedural difficulties in preserving the horror element in these mature stories. Certainly Lovecraft would not have perpetrated the type of Mythos pastiche that proliferated after his death, in which generations of imitators have attempted to substitute witless catalogues of mythic deities and forbidden tomes for genuine artistic inspiration. While such pasticheurs were shambling down the adjective-riven road of epigonic disaster, Howard Phillips Lovecraft during his lifetime had been restructuring the Mythos in terms of his emergent idealism and presenting to the world his own true measure of a man.

Letters

Dear *Foundation*: September 1984

Issue 31 was outstanding for its several studies of sources of imagery and concepts, not only Peter Caracciolo's eruditely documented essay on Doris Lessing, but the articles by Brian Burden and David Ketterer which are the two subjects of this communication. Both contributions extend thought and understanding, but both also occasion queries as to what is an acceptable balance between speculation-based and evidence-based conclusions.

Brian Burden's thesis in "Decoding *The Time Machine*" is that the Time Traveller is identifiable with the figure of Oedipus—and secondarily with that of Prometheus—and that whole complexes of myth-derived imagery—the Sphinx, birch tree, puteal, lemures, the swollen-foot, the fire-bringer, the trickster and forethinker—establish these identifications. His proofs and conclusions are convincingly presented; but we are left wondering how Wells, near the outset of his writing career, had come by such a store of somewhat recondite classical knowledge; and we ask, if indeed he was familiar with it, whether he consciously (as Brian Burden suggests) or unconsciously used its symbology in structuring his novel. Neither Wells's autobiography nor the works of his biographers indicate any extent of classical education or interest. His early Latin met only the simplest requirements of pharmacy. At that time, and later, he was much influenced by Winwood Reade's *The Martyrdom of Man,* a book dealing extensively with the ancient world. Within its limitations it is a brilliant and sweeping study; but on Greek, or any other mythology its content is scanty, crude and generalized: certainly no mention of Oedipus or Prometheus. That is not to say that Wells had no access to the myths: only that Brian Burden fails to mention any. I shall later offer some possibilities, but for the moment let us consider an additional, very different, but quite likely source.

We know that Wells's boyhood "indoctrination" brought to him eschatalogical images, such as may be found in the *Book of Joel* and in *Revelation,* which stayed with him. Some of the "stage machinery" and action of *The Time Machine* can without difficulty be related to visions contained in these biblical prophesies—the hail, the pit of the abyss, the sun turned into darkness, the "beast coming up out of the earth," the burning of the trees, the "men scorched with great heat," the association of the throne of the beast (= the pedestal of the Sphinx?) with sores (= leprosy) and plague. Wells's "end-of-the-world" theme may subconsciously have brought this constellation of biblically apocalyptic pictures to his aid. Brian Burden invites readers to solve the enigma of the chosen date (802701), himself suggesting it might have numerological significance. Channels of the subconscious flow strangely. The precise year is only stated twice: once as the Traveller contemplates the ruins of the Palace of Green Porcelain and the manner of life of his descendants and makes his (erroneous) diagnosis (" 'Communism,' said I to myself."); and again when he discovers the "waterless wells" leading to the underworld, shortly before his dream of the attacking sea creature, his mention of his dread of wild beasts, and his first encounter with an emerging Morlock—the "bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing, which . . . was heir to all the ages." Look again at the date and add the digits. Their sum is 18; and 18 is itself the sum of the three sixes: 666. Or as *Revelation* has it in the

passage following its description of the beast from the sea and "the beast coming up out of the earth": "He that hath understanding let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred and sixty six."

I am, of course, speculating, and perhaps in respect of the significance of numbers with some reserve; but the speculations are based on Wells's known reading and likely, or at least possible, *ocular spectra* and subconscious workings.

This millenial aspect of *The Time Machine* is taken up by David Ketterer in his "Wagnerian Spenglerian Space Opera." He sees in it a "model" source for Blish's concept of the end of the cycle of Earthmanist culture being eclipsed by the termination of a cosmic cycle—in the Wells instance actually the running down of the solar system, at least of the vital earth-sun dynamic. David Ketterer's source identifications are ordinarily valid. Blish consciously put to work eclectically gathered images and concepts, writing around a magazine cover, as in "And Some Were Savages," creatively misreading one (as the article points out) in the genesis of *Cities in Flight,* helping himself, as he puts it in the prefatory Note to *Midsummer Century,* from the work of named academics "to whatever seemed useful in advancing my own notions, and my story, without trying to be rigorous about it." Blish, in fact, was far from rigorous, even in his handling of his prime Spenglerian analogues. For instance, in *Year 2018* he makes Helmuth a mouthpiece for one of his Spengler-style assessments: "The building of gigantic projects for ritual purposes . . . is the last act of an already dead culture. Look at the pyramids of Egypt for an example." Mumfordian example perhaps, but not Spenglerian. In *The Decline of the West* the pyramid belongs essentially to the Spring Time of Egyptian Culture, and, under the tabular caption of "ornament and architecture as elementary expression of the young world-feeling," it is bracketed as being, in the Spenglerian sense, "contemporary" with Romanesque and Early Gothic cathedrals. Even David Ketterer in his skilful resumé of Spenglerian theory falls into the trap (so ingrained is our western-oriented and linear thinking) of saying that for Spengler human history is the history of three successive cultures: the Classical, the Arabian and the Western. This in fact and in emphasis is precisely what Spengler denied.

However, let me not quibble. What I want to say is that while David Ketterer is properly guarded where speculation is unsubstantiated (eg as to whether the title *The Triumph of Time* comes from a reading of Swinburne or Spengler, or whether there was any conscious paralleling of *Cities in Flight* with the plot and historical background of *The Duchess of Malfi*), he does sometimes go rather far out on the associational limb. I think he does so in supposing that such un-Wagnerian implied compositions as "a quartet" of moons circling in "a gelid minuet" could, even subliminally, call *Der Ring* to notice. (Admittedly Wagner as a schoolboy of 16 wrote one Quartet—in D Minor—but it remained unpublished; and one must of course admit to there being four operas in the cycle.)

Similarly, the associational and semantic linkages he works out (such as correlating "bad poker and worse bridge" with Zworkynian inter-galactic filaments or bridges), fascinating and to a point suggestive as they are, do arouse suspicion that a critic once sold on a particular structure of symbols can become a little like the subject of a Rorschach test, discerning chiefly configurations to which he is predisposed. The great Coleridge scholar John Livingston Lowes, a firm stickler for "the evidence," after disentangling the interlocking and, as he called them, the "sleeping" images of "Kubla Khan" (in *The Road to Xanadu*), nevertheless wrote: "About some of these teasing phantoms of association I

confess, of course, to cherishing more or less colourable conjectures." And by "colourable" I take it he meant susceptible of being tinted from his own paintbox. He adds, however that if his work has value it lies "not in its conjectures but in its evidence."

Naturally, a creative writer may not himself always be aware of what kind of edifice of symbols he has built; and then he may, rightly or wrongly, suspect his critic-analysts of Rorschach-patterning. Blish in a foreword to the appearance in *Anywhen* of his story "How Beautiful With Banners" said that Damon Knight had discerned what he himself had been ignorant of—that two of his early stories were weighted with symbols which revealed that despite quite different content both stories were exploring essentially the same theme. In writing "How Beautiful with Banners" therefore (originally for Damon Knight's publication *Orbit*) he had fully consciously tried to give it a symbol-system. The result, in my reading of it, is a story of singular emotive power and beauty but, in fact, of confused and confusing symbology. The rings of Saturn are "the banners of a high god and a father of gods." Venus is far distant; the two inhuman mating essences are likened to Psyche and Eros, and the Swedish woman astronaut sees herself both as involuntary procuress-voyeur and as "the forbidden lamp in the bedchamber." Yet she is herself doubly embraced by her courted virus bubble-suit and by the mating Titanian flying-cloak. She is solipsistically and narcissistically a prisoner, a universe within herself, "a sounding-board of erotic memories." When her living suit flies free and she dies, what is liberated? Blish says that in dying she had brought heterosexuality to Titan, "beginning that long evolution the end of which, sixty million years away, no human being would see." Was she the extinguished lamp and, as the story's ending suggests, did only the "banners of the gods" illuminate that evolution? The 'bubble' symbol, according to David Ketterer's interpretation of its occurrence in *They Shall Have Stars* sometimes functions as indicating a spatial equivalent to the temporally restrictive confines of a Spenglerian culture. Is it in this way consciously applied here? If so, what correspondence is there between it and the Eros/Psyche/Venus complex? Are we concerned there with the neo-platonic symbolism of the descent and later apotheosising of the soul? Or (as in the ninth 'Night' of Blake's *The Four Zoas*—which also has, in Tharmas and Enion, a version of Eros and Psyche at its core) are we in touch with the mythic concept of Saturn by turns leading and disregarding the world through declining ages of gold, silver, bronze and iron? There is a cyclic temporal (proto-Spenglerian?) image also in the lines Blake puts into the mouth of Tharmas/Eros:

> . . . the sweet smiling fruit
> Revives me to new deaths. I fade, even as a water lilly
> In the sun's heat, till in the night on the couch of Enion
> I drink new life & feel the breath of sleeping Enion.

And equally so, and with close analogy to Blish's culminating image, in these lines of Enion/Psyche:

> Soon, renew'd, a Golden Moth,
> I shall cast off my death clothes & Embrace Tharmas again.
> For Lo, the winter melted away upon the distant hills,
> And all the black mould sings.

In some respects in his story Blish's symbolism is as multivalent as in Blake's and at points parallels it in psychological, metaphysical and historical implications. Blish's narrative is compelling in its planetary vision and alive with resonances; but I suspect that

the complete shape of its ramifying pattern of symbols—shirt of Nessus, witch's Sabbat and all—is something that he was not fully conscious of, despite his avowal.

And that pinpoints a number of questions one has to ask in the case of all such attempted analyses. If the writer is consciously using and shuttling words, images, tropes, what underlies them; what kind of coherence is achieved; is there another surface below the one overtly revealing itself? If his use of some of these figures has unconscious springs, how important is it to an appreciation of his work that we detect them; and how do we set about doing so?

Shall we consider, too, that an inherent or genetically embedded psychic patterning may occasion the emergence of archetypal symbols? For instance, could there be a tincture of the Freudian Oedipus complex in the Time Traveller's relationship with Weena? If so, does this further Brian Burden's theory? The immature child-like Weena with whom the Time Traveller both flirts and innocently sleeps may on the face of it seem little like a mother figure. Wells's childhood and adolescent sexual fantasies were woven around giant woman-images. Perhaps, therefore, repressing the sexual element in his fictional fantasy, he disguises it by going for the miniature. Be that as it may, she specifically fulfilled certain of the Traveller's emotional requirements—"by merely seeming fond of me, and showing in her weak, futile way that she cared for me, the little doll of a creature gave my return to the neighbourhood of the White Sphinx almost the feeling of coming home; and I would watch for her tiny figure of white and gold as I came over the hill." What could better indicate a maternal/sexual figure at the end of Oedipus's journey back to Thebes? The same kind of Freudian implications may also be there (and again possibly with a significant reversal) when Weena feels under threat of being snatched away from him by the ogreish Morlocks. With mace in hand and a "thirst for murder" in his heart, he "longed very much to kill a Morlock or so. Very inhuman, you may think, to want to go killing one's own descendants!" If "ancestor" or "father" is censored, by reversal, "descendant" is the category that may take its place!

Later in life in his *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934) when Wells was acquainted with Freud's writings, he chauvinistically dismisses them as derived from "observation of Austrian Jews and Levantines" and therefore inapplicable to Englishmen. He adds: "I cannot detect any mother fixation, any Oedipus complex or any of that stuff in my make-up." Such an attitude, far from invalidating this psychological speculation, can even lend support to it, and indeed to Brian Burden's contention that there is a parallel between the land of the doomed Eloi and plague-stricken Thebes, with the Time Traveller as Oedipus. Is there a deep unconscious symbolism in the Traveller's pessimistic summarising conclusion at the end of his visit to that land; "Mother Necessity, who had been staved off for a few thousand years, came back again, and she began below."? There are also in *The Time Machine* many concrete incidents which one might suppose to have an origin, if only by subconscious routes, in the actual literatures (some of which I will touch on later) of the Oedipus myth, whether sited at Thebes or Colonus. "Exhausted, as well as lame, (the Traveller) felt the intensest wretchedness" and, later, "a keen stab of pain" for the loss of Weena. He grieves that the human intellect, with which throughout he has sought identification, "had committed suicide." He ends up hounded by the invisible Morlocks (Errinyes?), "trapped in the dark" and is only saved by a (literal) *deus ex machina*—the Time Machine—which he makes to function, though lacking sight of its levers. Even when the darkness falls from his eyes there is only "grey light and tumult" as he is

transported to the world of the "great darkness," of "the Dead Sea," the beach of green weed and lichens, with its foul crawling monsters, lacking "the cries of birds, the hum of insects," illumined only "by a curved pale line like a vast new moon"—a pretty good description of the passage to Hades by way of the Avernian Lake (see below) described by Virgil

All of this may seem to be grist to Brian Burden's mill. Initially, indeed, I put forward certain questions as to any likely reservoir for Wells's supposed fountain of classical allusion and symbolism; but if his eduction was, as I maintained, in that direction limited, there is still one possible source—one I have previously touched on in different contexts in articles in *Foundation* and in *Vector*. Wells's retentive and active visual memory may have summoned subconsciously key images from the wealth of literature on which he was "working strenuously" in the Bryce and Foster Reading Room while "truanting" from the, to him, boring duties of his years of formal study of geology and physics at South Kensington. He gives a detailed reference to his continuous reading of Carlyle and to his speculations centred on the symbolism of Blake's Prophetic Books; but he also mentions Dryden and Shelley. I believe that his Dryden reading will have included the translations of Virgil, and, while I grant Mr Burden his Fourth Eclogue, especially that of the *Aeneid*.

The Sixth Book of the *Aeneid*—Aeneas in Hades—can provide images matching closely those accompanying the Traveller's projection into a far future limbo: the "innavigable" lake "O'er whose unhappy waters void of light/No bird presumes to steer his airy flight"; the "waste domains of the dead" are described as though lit by "a faint crescent" of the moon. Virgil populates his "dreary coast" of "muddy weeds upon the miry shore" with such monsters as the "horrid Hydra" and "Briareus with all his hundred hands." Wells uses the word Briareus in *The War of the Worlds* of the Martians with their bunches of tentacles that, the narrator says, have "been named rather aptly the 'hands' ". There is another oblique association in that their "handling machines" are described as "crawling,"as "crab-like creatures," words Wells had also used to describe the crustacea of the Traveller's desolate shore. Similarly the Hydra may be the palping sea anemone of the Traveller's dream and the tentacled creature of the final eclipse. (Actually the mythical Hydra was a nine-headed serpent; but Wells would know the word in its zoological meaning of medusa or jelly-fish.) The Sybil tells Aeneas that these are "empty phantoms"; and on his return the Traveller thinks he may only have dreamt them. In fact, the Lethean waters are also reflected when the Traveller, speaking "like one who was trying to keep hold of an idea that eluded him," says: "I'm damned if it isn't all going. This room and you and the atmosphere of every day is too much for my memory." This follows the sudden sad thought of Weena when the faded flowers are discussed, and half-echoes the Dryden/Virgil description of souls:

> Compelled to drink the deep Lethean flood;
> In large forgetful draughts to steep the cares
> Of their past labours and the irksome years,
> That, unremembering of its former pain,
> The soul may suffer mortal flesh again.

Straying once more from *The Time Machine,* I would suggest that some of the imagery, as well as the "story-line," of the first forty lines of Book VII of the *Aeneid* come to the surface in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*—again with intriguing "reversals" of the kind that I have noted.

And what of Prometheus? If Wells read, as he said he did, Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound* could have been a deep mine for images and ideas found in *The Time Machine.* There are the Furies "steaming up from Hell's wide gate" to attack Prometheus, pursuing as hounds might track through woods a sobbing fawn (Weena?). There is Panthea's vision (IV i 287-318) of the impermanence of all things in time, with its apocalyptic imagery: "the melancholy/Ruins of cancelled cycles" (a phrase which introduces what might almost be a description of the Palace of Green Porcelain); the cosmic annihilation of the "monarch beasts" existing "on the slimy shores/And weed-overgrown continents of earth." There is the magnificent long speech of Asia, occupying most of III iv, which tells the whole story of Prometheus, and ends pessimistically by asking, in respect both of Jupiter and of mankind: "Who is the master of the slave?" To which Demogorgon replies that the answer lies in the abysm, but is a secret kept close and "imageless" by "the revolving world" and by Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change: "To these/All things are subject but eternal Love." These few lines, particularly taken in conjunction with the mythic detail and philosophical direction of Asia's speech, could be conceptually a substratum of the "plot," and also of the Epilogue of *The Time Machine,* down to its final reflection on human tenderness surviving universal decay, as symbolized by the faded flowers. One could continue. The "giddiness," the "grey light," the numbering of the years in the Traveller's journeyings all have their counterparts in Mercury's vivid version of time travel (I i 417-424); and in the same scene there is an important Oedipean passage when Mercury apostrophizes the Sphinx (347-349):

> . . . and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends
> Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
> Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate . . .

Did Wells also know Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound?* He doesn't mention it, but I think he may in those student days have included it in his "clandestine" reading in the translation of John Stuart Blackie.

We know that he then read Carlyle intensively, and we know that Carlyle had praised the translation and had been involved in finding a publisher for it. If Wells had read Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (which is much fuller of "Wellsian" imagery than is the Aechylus drama) he may well have extended his interest by turning to Blackie. If he did so he would have encountered lines (well supportive of Brian Burden's identification) such as these, spoken by Prometheus:

> . . . but for my strong aid
> Hades had whelmed, and hopeless ruin swamped
> All men that breathe.

Wells may also have found interest in Blackie's appended Notes to *Prometheus Bound.* One, of essay length, deals with the concept of a primordial "golden age," as opposed to theories of what he calls "progressive development" and also of static and degenerative phases in mankind's history. He would have been arrested by Blackie's contention that Aeschylus's viewpoint is not incompatible with such ideas, and by his association of "progressive development" with theories of simian descent.

In an adjacent Note Blackie writes of the Greek view "that the world is governed by a system of fixed and inexorable law, from the operation of which no man can escape." This is with reference to the following passage:

Prometheus. Though Art be strong, Necessity is stronger.
Chorus. And who is lord of strong Necessity?
Prometheus. The triform Fates, and the sure-memoried Furies.

There is surely a close equivalence between this and the passage on "Mother Necessity" I quoted earlier from *The Time Machine,* and the more extended passage in which the Time-Traveller attempts "a Carlyle-like scorn" (again the Carlyle influence re-emerging) of the effete Eloi, and reflects that "Man had been content to live in ease and delight upon the labours of his fellow-man, had taken Necessity as his watch-word and excuse, and in the fullness of time Necessity had come home to him."

"Mother Necessity" I originally quoted as bearing also on the Oedipus theme, which brings us round again to consider Wells's Oedipean sources; and there is another possible source that certainly should not be overlooked. There is no record as to whether Wells's fascinated student studies of what he called "the riddles of Blake" introduced him to *Tiriel,* the first of the Prophetic Books, or whether the Art Library provided access to its accompanying drawings. Nevertheless, this, Blake's idiosyncratic version of the Oedipus myth, not only offers in its protagonist a partial analogue to the Time Traveller, but in its second section depicts something very like the Eloi's flowery, weedless garden setting. Blake's art at that time was much influenced by the Greek Revival, and the chitons and longer drapery of his illustrations are matched by the "tunics" and "soft coloured robes and shining white limbs" of the Eloi. The drawing of "Har and Heva Bathing" (now in the Fitzwilliam Museum) is quite suggestive of the Eloi bathing scene and the rescue of Weena from drowning. Har and Heva, into whose Eden-like "pleasant garden" Tiriel enters, although aged, represent their race's origins and are in a state of retrogressed infancy—"like frightened infants" (cf. the similar pattern of Blake's *The Mental Traveller*—which also has a Promethean sub-theme). When encountered they are described as "like two children." Blake writes "Playing with flowers and running after birds they spent the day."

Now the Time Traveller, in the Eloi's garden landscape, speaks of them as "like children," as being at the level of five year olds, and says that he "felt like a schoolmaster among children," although he had had "confident expectations of a profoundly grave and intellectual posterity." When he became angry the Eloi "looked sorely frightened." He observed that "they spend all their time playing gently, bathing in the river" and "running to and fro for flowers." Not only the image, but the very language is here almost identical to Blake's. Just as Tiriel says "I beg for food" and "hast thou anything to drink?" and they "gave him milk & fruits, & they sat down together./They sat and eat & Har & Heva smil'd on Tiriel," so the Time Traveller "felt thirsty and hungry," and they all "seated themselves" to a meal of "fruits (which) were very delightful," the Eloi "watching me with interest, their little eyes shining over the fruit they were eating."

Moreover, Tiriel/Oedipus has much in common with Traveller/Oedipus(?). On first entering the garden he tells Har and Heva that he is an aged wanderer, blind through grief, father of a wicked northern race, now destroyed. He says: "No more (of that race) but I remain on all this globe/And I remain an outcast." The Time Traveller is distraught at the prospect "of losing my own age, of being left helpless in this strange new world." He says: "I felt hopelessly cut off from my own kind." Towards the end of the poem (Parts 7 and 8) there are images arising from Tiriel/Oedipus's last despair preceding his death (images peculiar to Blake's poem and by no means to be found in the *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles) some of which parallel closely those of the Traveller's most traumatic experi-

ences. Tiriel wanders with "the howling maiden" through woods full of wild beasts. He says that "flowers, fruits, insects, and warbling birds" are all consumed and that his "paradise is/Fall'n in." There are in Tiriel's tirade against the oppression of the innocent young many images which could relate to incidents of terror or frustration in *The Time Machine.* The frightened Traveller traces (and later calculates in distance) "the marks of his feet" and "the narrow foot prints" leading to the panel-doors of the Sphinx's pedestal (so like Blake's here—and so often elsewhere—depicted "gates of eternal death") into which his machine, his link with life, has disappeared. In *Tiriel* 8, associated with death-in-life images, we find the lines: "Then walks the weak infant in sorrow, compell'd to number footsteps/Upon the sand." In this and in other descriptive lines from the same section of *Tiriel,* though their contextual meaning has significance, it is chiefly by their vividness of imagery that they may have affected Wells's writing by yielding what Coleridge called *ocular spectra*—a recall phenomenon of the visual imagination which we know from Wells's own testimony operated in the shaping of his stories.

To give one further possible example of this, what could more starkly suggest the Traveller's various encounters and battle with the Morlocks than the following imagery:

> . . . eyed with little sparks of Hell, and with infernal brands
> Flinging flames of discontent & plagues of dark despair.

It occurs in immediate juxtaposition to the phrase "whose mouths are graves, whose teeth are the gates of eternal death." It seems to contain the appearance of the light-reflecting pupils of the Morlocks when the Traveller descends their black "Underworld" well-shaft and strikes a match to see them "vanishing into dark gutters and tunnels from which their eyes glared at me." Later, in describing the attack in the forest he says: "out of the darkness the Morlocks' eyes shone like carbuncles": then came the blaze that sprang from his heap of sticks to make the trees "burst into flame"; he sees sparks drifting from branch to branch as the fire spreads; and then he witnesses the destruction of the "helpless abominations," viewing when daylight comes "a remnant of these damned souls still going hither and thither and moaning," while he experiences wretchedness and a sense of "overwhelming calamity" at the horrible death of Weena.

I would certainly not like to be dogmatic in attempting to establish all of these mental and imaginative cross-connections. I will, however, say that *if* an Oedipean role was consciously or subconsciously present in Wells's creation of the Time Traveller, then there is evidence that he may much earlier have read *Tiriel* and may have associated with his creation its long-dormant visual imagery—images having, as Wells puts it "an order logical indeed but other than our common sanity" and coming "out of the darkness in a manner quite inexplicable." A reinforcing factor is that at that very time of his impressionable young manhood—his late Imperial College years—when he was soaking himself in Dryden, Shelley, Blake, Carlyle, he tells us that all kinds of biological, chemical and logical concepts were being "thrown into a frightful juxtaposition" and being "fermented together." There was, thus, in a stratum of his mind this very various mélange of great creative potential.

In discussing relationships between conjecture and evidence I have already cited John Livingston Lowes's *The Road to Xanadu;* and I will now cite it again. He has some most relevant remarks when writing of Coleridge's Notebooks. He describes the "deep well" in which images consciously acquired through life or reading experiences may lie until a further conscious creative activity "drags the deeps for their submerged treasure, and

moulds the bewildering chaos into unity." He adds that "the more multifarious, even the more incongruous and chaotic the welter, the freer play it offers to those darting and prehensile filaments of association which reach out in all directions through the mass." What is thus created is unique; not derivative, but the result of a synthesizing and nucleating process in which what may unconsciously have been dredged from the deeps become components of something that is quite new. Lowes says elsewhere in that book that it is rather as though out of chaos a new tract of cosmos has been retrieved, a nebula compacted into a star.

Attempts at the tracing of what goes into the making of a new creation, far from being "academic nitpicking," can often help to open up fresh and unsuspected dimensions of that creation. *Foundation* in constantly devoting some of its pages to such studies serves sf, certainly on this side of the Atlantic, surely in a quite distinctive and distinguished way.

K. V. Bailey *Alderney, Channel Islands*

Dear Foundation: October 1984

Reading in your issue 30 how other "non-resident aliens" see British sf, I compared my alien Australian impressions. Several differences between British and American sf seem related to a point made by both Ian Watson (resident non-alien) and Cy Chauvin: that America "hasn't experienced modern war at home"—that Americans "never felt directly the disaster of World War II." (Although some contemporary British sf writers are too young to have experienced rationing or aerial bombing raids, they will not have escaped their elders' reminiscences, and might themselves remember unreconditioned bomb craters, or naked city squares whose wrought-iron railings had gone away to be armaments.)

A wartime government's interference in private lives—Britain's 1914 Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), for example—helps to induce a sceptical mood, as in Rose Macaulay's *What Not;* which is perhaps the mood that Gregory Benford translates as "an affected dislike of organizations." And the "resigned acceptance of the pointlessness of politics," which Koichi Yamano detects, is also perhaps a legacy of civilians being forced to rely on a governing class whose "military incompetence" (as George Orwell observed) "has again and again startled the world"; no wonder Franz Rottensteiner finds that disillusioned British sf writers are "less concerned with power politics" than their American counterparts are; that (according to Benford) the British see American optimism as hardly more than "naïve bravado"; or that Cy Chauvin notes how Britons fail to share the American belief "in heroes."

British sf's image of power has (generally) the same orientation as Orwell's description, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* of prisoner Bumstead's having had his face smashed because he attempted to succour a fellow prisoner: "Amid a stream of blood and saliva, the two halves of a dental plate fell out of his mouth." There is no sense, as in Spinrad's *Bug Jack Barron,* that to wield power is enormous fun and could well do good to lesser people; perhaps the nearest British equivalent of the all-but-unembarassed superhero is the blazing maniac of Ballard's *Unlimited Dream Company.*

I was also interested by Gregory Benford's remark that the voice of British sf seems to him "an echo of class rituals in the society as a whole"—which links with my reflections on the place of the British aristocracy in sf. Along with an absurdly secretive disposition,

we Australians possess a very delicate sensitivity to the nuances of class; and this sensitivity assures us that Benford's Peterson, in *Timescape,* is as off-key as any aristocrat that Henry James ever produced. We also notice that the nearest sf approach to the clubman's environment is a Fifth-Avenue restaurant (where Asimov's Black Widowers meet); British sf snobbishly prefers a pub, like Arthur C. Clarke's White Hart. British sf writers seem very conscious that their aristocracy derives from the "commercialized Bladesovery" that H.G. Wells described in *Tono-Bungay.* If "birth" is represented, some other culture is needed, or even a distinct species—like the elves in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings.* (For example, the aristocracy of M. John Harrison's *In Viriconium* seems mixed European—quite unlike the resolutely philistine British aristocracy of Victorian and Edwardian tradition).

Another aristocratic query derives from comparison of British sf with British non-sf, in the twenties and thirties: where, in sf, is the "Silly Ass" hero—the languid fop with the wrists of steel? Orwell is not alone in pointing out how astonishingly pervasive this convention was; the Golden Age of detective fiction throve on it; and such a hero is easily rich and unemployed enough to afford the money and time for private-enterprise interplanetary expeditions.

Rollo Lenox Smeaton Aubrey (Earl of Redgrave), in George Griffith's "Stories of Other Worlds" (1900), is no Silly Ass; he clearly belongs to the "strong and serious and good" variety of hero that Brian Aldiss found to be pervasive in magazine sf between 1890 and 1920. Even so sober an earl, however, seems curiously diminished by the impracticability of toddling off to his club at the close of each adventure. And there would be little real satisfaction when it was a mere extraterrestrial performing a double take at the spaceship equivalent of a Bentley or a Hispano-Suiza—however obsequious the subsequent bowing and scraping, or putting away of notebook and newly-licked pencil-stub ("Sorry, m'lord; didn't recognize you!"); this may have deterred Silly-Ass creators from sf, just as strongly as the Wellsian influence discouraged sf writers from messing around with a Silly Ass.

Overall, the non-resident alien consensus on British sf seems subtly in tune with an observation of Raymond Chandler's: "the English may not always be the best writers in the world, but they are incomparably the best dull writers" . . .

Yvonne Rousseau *North Carlton, Australia*

Letters continued on page 100

Reviews

Green Eyes
by Lucius Shepard *(Ace, 1984, $2.95, xii + 275 pp)*

reviewed by Colin Greenland

In his introduction to this exemplary Ace SF Special Terry Carr repeatedly emphasizes that *Green Eyes* is *different,* unconventional. He wags his finger: "You may think, at one point or another, that you can see where the plot is leading—but don't be too sure." In fact, it takes a while before you realize that the plot isn't leading at all. The plot Lucius Shepard is doing with his left hand: it's his right you should be watching.

Here's the left hand.

It is 1987. In an old Louisiana plantation mansion called Shadows, psychologists and microbiologists are studying a group of very special patients. Each of them has died and been revived by injection with bacteria which, breeding rapidly in the brain, restore its functions and stimulate a wild rush of mental activity. The subjects at Shadows are the "slow-burners," expected to survive months rather than minutes, but they are not told they will die again soon, to be enthusiastically dissected; nor that they are not now who they were before. Their identities, and the memories that inform them, are completely imaginary.

Because desire affirms the self, the resurrected are supposed to fall in love with their therapists. Donnell Harrison runs away with his, one Jocundra Verret. Donnell wields an incipient mutant power to interfere with electromagnetic fields. After a grim transcendental experience at a sinister evangelist tent-show, he discovers his talent can be used to heal. Jocundra and Donnell go to ground in a shack in the bayou country, until an unpleasant visitor invites them to Maravillosa, the decrepit estate where ex-actress and occultist Otille Rigaud keeps her sleazy court. The CIA are after them. Donnell's borrowed lifetime is running out. Otille may be able to help finance a desperate cure. They have no option but to accept, though at Maravillosa they find themselves in even more deadly danger.

Dot, dot, dot. Pom, pom, *pom.*

Here's a snatch of the right hand.

> The entire landscape was so overgrown that Jocundra could only see a few feet in any direction before her eye met with a plaited wall of vines, an impenetrable thicket of oleander, or the hollow shell of a once mighty oak, itself enwrapped by a strangler fig whose sinuous branchings had spread to other trees, weaving its own web around a series of gigantic victims. The world of Maravillosa was a dripping, parasitical garden.

This is the demesne of the Swamp Queen, where some hefty scenery is only to be expected; but elsewhere the landscape is no less obtrusive, no less busy.

> An oil fire gleamed red off along the coast; the faint chugging of machinery carried across the water. Wavelets slapped the shore. Sea and sky were the same unshining black, and the moonlit crests of the waves looked as distant as the burning well and the stars, sharing with them a perspective of great depth, as if the spit of land were extending into interstellar space. . . She lifted her face to be kissed, and kissing her, he pulled her atop him. Her hair swung witchily in silhouette against the sky, a glint of the oil fire bloomed on her throat, and it seemed to him that the stars winking behind her were chattering with crickets' tongues.

Descriptive interludes fill in the background to foreground action and dialogue. But the further you read in *Green Eyes,* the clearer it becomes that these *are* the action.

There's no location like a swamp for dominating a story: just look at *The Drowned World.* And many a horror story recounts a concerted rising of the natural world to overwhelm the human characters. Shepard's effect is more subtle and pervasive than that. Appearance, texture and atmosphere are everything in *Green Eyes.* In the oppressive humidity and glaring light, everything shifts, burgeoning, swelling, almost breathing: furniture, clothes, even litter. The whole world is going soft.

The very buildings are malleable. In the basement of Shadows Donnell finds a mirror that transforms to a window looking into the secret operating theatre—a crude enough plot device, but coherent with major architectural deformities to be found at Maravillosa: concealed shutters and portcullises; plants, animals and figures sculpted half-emerging from walls, floors and ceilings; even movable rooms, "more than twenty"of them, which can be shunted from undergrounsd to attic. Nothing is permanent, nothing inert.

Some of this general softness is rot, organic and moral. More importantly, it represents the liquefaction of hallucinatory percipience. As the title of the book hints, the eyes of the reborn are strange, and see strange things. At first, their vision is constricted, subject to abrupt contractions and swings of focus. Shepard conveys this narrowed, sharpened eyesight extremely vividly, as he does the later psychedelic faculties of Donnell, who eventually has four or five separate altered perceptions more or less at his command, ranging in style from the David Lindsay to the Carlos Castaneda. Shepard conveys *everything* extremely vividly, in prose that turns perfectly under his patient hand: "The road was a wild, unreckonable place crossed by devious slants of shadow." Or:

> He rested his head on her forearm and was amazed by the peace that the warmth of her skin seemed to transmit, as if he had plunged his head into the arc of a prayer.

Phrase by phrase, Shepard writes with a resilience that ensures his story won't just run away between the reader's fingers. Overall, he relies on the strength of his baseline plot, rhythmically rumbling along, to organize his audacious harmonies. The actual formations of that plot, the constituents that would determine the whole work if it were by, say, Bob Shaw, or even Lisa Tuttle, seem curiously incidental to Shepard.

The fact that Jocundra and Donnell are on the run—a medic absconding from a top secret research project with the totally unpredictable mental patient assigned to her care—does not impel the narrative forward. The various disturbances, crimes, murders they incur do not catch up with them. The CIA and FBI do not even rise to the status of a nuisance. All these things simply outlaw Jocundra and Donnell, making a space of internal exile where their larger destiny can envelop them.

It hardly figures that Donnell is a dying man. He grows stronger, not weaker, as he approaches his nemesis. It matters not at all that Donnell Harrison is a non-existent person, a "Bacterially Induced Artificial Personality" in a body that formerly answered to the name of Steven Mears. Christopher Evans made a whole novel, *The Insider,* out of the implications of that one. To Lucius Shepard it is just a releasing mechanism, indicating that Donnell's lot is not earthly. He has been possessed by, he *is* a personality of metaphysical dimensions which are gradually revealed as his trial progresses.

The mundane plot, the hunted journey through a hostile land, with attendant suffering, self-discovery and evolving love, earths a multi-tiered messianic ascent which continually threatens to disappear up its own hallucinatory vortex. The tensile strength of

the style contains the convulsions, voluptuous and visionary, that it generates.

With this his first novel Lucius Shepard at once joins the select company of sf writers whose left hands know exactly what their right hands are doing.

Mythago Wood
by Robert Holdstock (*Gollancz, 1984, 252pp, £8.95*)

reviewed by Geoff Ryman

> It was difficult to make him out clearly, for his face was painted with dark patterns and his moustache drooped to well below his chin; his hair was plastered thickly about his scalp . . . As he picked up the joint I saw the scars on his arm, running down and across the bunched muscles. I also smelled him, a raw, rancid odour, sweat and urine mixed with the fetid aroma of rotting meat . . .

If that is meant to be a corrective for the glistening banality of most fantasy fiction, then it succeeds. A moratorium should be declared on writing about the ancient Britons—the Celts, the Druids, the Saxons, King Arthur. Not only is the imagery overworked, but most of us lead lives that are far too sterile to begin to imagine these people. Except for Robert Holdstock, who sometimes seems to have a hotline back to his ancestors.

Mythago Wood is a book about that hotline. The story's premise is simple, even familiar. A magic wood can generate substantial living beings and landscapes from racial memory. Once entered, the wood becomes as gigantic as fantasy itself; a world where myth becomes bloody reality, inextricably mingled with history.

Fantasy writers have told similar stories before.

In *Solaris,* a giant alien intelligence brings forth living memories or images. In the Theodore Sturgeon episode of *Star Trek* an alien playground brings to life images from the characters' own minds. As in *Mythago Wood,* in both cases, a beloved woman is generated from the mind of a male character.

This is a very queasy subject to write about. We all make over the people we love in our own minds. But if the flesh object actually comes out of our own heads, are we in love with anything other than ourselves? How much of a love story can you tell about a man and an idealized simulacrum—even if most love stories seem to be exactly that?

Narcissism is boring. It only looks at itself. The same could be said for most fantasy.

Holdstock keeps this queasiness at bay. The myth images that come out of the wood are not merely personal to the hero or his family. They well up out of a universal, unconscious memory. They are not the product of bland modern imaginations, but the imaginations of our ancestors. At their best, Holdstock's myth images really do seem to step out of some impersonal reservoir of information. They are alive and alien, separate from the hero.

Among the best of the myth images is the beloved woman. She is not generated out of the hero's mind, but from his brother's. Narcissism is neatly short-circuited, if not male centrality. The hero desperately wants to know whose mythago she is. In this novel, women are something men fight over as part of a continuing, half-conscious rivalry between them. Not flattering to women's own self-regard, but psychologically true.

Fortunately the heroine—a myth image of the forest maiden called Guiwenneth—is delightfully independent of her creators: rough, wild, dirty, and most alleviating of all, full of humour.

Guiwenneth is at the heart of the story that grows out of the "Mythago Wood" novella. As the world knows, Part One of this book was published separately in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* and is nearly perfect. Its opening is a bit stodgy, and it suffers stylistically from Holdstock's tendency to recreate a scene by painstakingly cataloguing its physical contents. But it is all of a piece. Its many elements fall very suddenly into place at the end with a satisfying completeness. Steven's brother is lost to the wood; his father is immortalized as a mythago of surpassing ferocity; and Steven is left outside it all, pained and confused. What more story is there to tell?

Plenty. Guiwenneth arrives in a new manifestation. Part Two is a sustained love idyll between her and Steven. Holdstock shows us enough of this relationship to leave us wanting more. At the end of Part Two, Steven's brother Christian re-emerges from the wood, to steal Guiwenneth. This is a particularly powerful scene full of Christian's mingled love and hate for his brother.

Part Three takes us where we most want to go—into the heartland of the wood and its secrets as Steven pursues his brother and Guiwenneth. It is utterly unlike the first two parts. The slightly stuffy world of 1940s England is left behind. In a curious way, so is the wood as we have known it, a mysterious tangle of real trees and half-glimpsed mythagos. Instead, we are plunged into an an alternative world as large, it would seem, as our own.

The novel ends with the same, almost last-minute falling into place that the novella did. This time it is hidden love within the family, rather than hidden hostility, that is revealed. *Mythago Wood* the novel is most definitely *not* another novella expanded beyond its length. At the end, I closed the book, looked at the photo of Robert Holdstock on the back, and said "yes."

There are times when the novel falters. Early on in Part Two, before Guiwenneth takes hold, the forest suddenly sprouts gargoyle-like elementals and a shiningly-armoured Wagnerian figure in a carved boat. This is too phantasmagorical, out of keeping with the other restrained manifestations. It also happens too early in the story. Steven then hires an airplane to fly over the forest to see inside it, and is repelled by an unknown force. Photographs are taken of people in the forest, and buildings. This seems to me to be ringing a rather empty change. It tells us things we already know very bluntly, evaporating mystery.

I also had the feeling in Part Three that Holdstock was a bit uncertain what the forest should contain. A compendium of humankind's myths and fantasies? There are gestures in that direction. This risks banality, as most fantasies are banal, and this book's most banal moment comes when the hero finds a stereotyped medieval castle and is attacked by a knight on horseback. For the most part, however, the author shies away from the familiar. His myth figures are only tangentially related to stories and images we recognize. This is a Holdstockian world, full of splendidly real, smelly tribesmen, with pungent legends of their own.

These legends include the hero. He is a mythago to them, as they are to him. He is the Kinsman who will come to destroy the evil Outsider, his brother Christian. At the core of the wood is an impenetrable realm, beyond time, beyond the influence of men. Steven is as much a reflection of the wood and its hidden core as the other inhabitants of the forest. What is myth, where does it come from, what is real—Holdstock has been juggling such themes with airy ease.

It's great fun spotting the correspondences and resonances of this book. If

Guiwenneth is a product of Christian's mind, does she represent the part of his brother that Steven loves? Is that why she puts on and continues to wear Christian's old clothes? Is Mogoch, the giant who appears in the legends that are the prologue and coda to the novel, an image of the author himself, looking down at the characters who dance on his belly? There is, as they say, a lot there.

But the book's central image is of the forest of myth, with its core of timeless and influential reality. In a sense, this is a fantasy about fantasy, about the ways in which our minds create worlds. Fantasies can be a bit like farts—only your own are any fun. It is up to the authors to convince us that their fantasy is a territory worth exploring, that it will lead us to something fresher beyond itself. Holdstock's fine novel meditates on this need for—and existence of—an impersonal and truthful core to fantasy. It also finds it.

The Tithonian Factor
by Richard Cowper (*Gollancz, 1984, 150pp, £7.95*)

reviewed by Brian Stableford

Richard Cowper's third collection of short stories differs from *The Custodians* and *Web of the Magi* in having no long novelette of comparable substance to "Piper at the Gates of Dawn" in the first collection or the title story of the second. Its six stories are of roughly equal length, and the fact that they fill less than a gross of pages makes the collection seem rather meagre, but in variety and quality they give full measure. Richard Cowper has always given the impression in his shorter works (though not always in his longer ones) of being a very careful writer who pays sensitive attention to matters of detail, and the stories in *The Tithonian Factor,* though various in theme and tone, have in common a certain deftness and delicacy as distinctive as a signature.

The title story of the collection is perhaps the most distinctive of the lot. It is an ironic tragedy about the existential plight of people who make use of what seems to them a life-enhancing technology only to find themselves trapped, unable to take advantage of an "authentic" means of life-enhancement which is subsequently discovered. This is a theme often to be found in Cowper's work: the idea that much of our contemporary way of life, with its reliance on technological means of achievement, might be reckoned a kind of self-betrayal, barring us from a fulfilment which might be found by other routes. Like many other contemporary writers—not just science fiction writers—he frequently contrasts "unnatural" technological materialism with various kinds of romantic mysticism, to the invariable advantage of the latter. We find this thread running through the collection. "A Message to the King of Brobdingnag" is a more bitterly ironic work in which well-intentioned technological meddling upsets the balance of nature with fatal consequences. "The Scent of Silverdill," on the other hand, is a gentle and slightly saccharine story about the possible existence of Martian ghosts whose haunting of the winds of that distant world evokes feelings of yearning in a boy trapped in the derelict landscapes of 26th-century Earth.

The confrontation between the two attitudes is most clearly displayed in "What Did the Deazies Do?", in which an old lady who has custody of some remarkable magical artifacts comes to the attention of American military men stationed in England during World War II. Their attempt to seize control of her other-worldly resources is, however,

doomed to failure. Militarism—allied, in Cowper's *weltanschauung* with technological materialism—also comes in for scathing comment in "Brothers," another of the four stories in the collection which use juvenile protagonists in order to import a note of calculated naivety into their presentation of wonders.

Where Cowper differs from many other champions of "Nature" and mysticism against brutal technology is that his romanticism is kept on the leash of a thoroughly British gift for telling understatement. This shows to best advantage in what is perhaps the best story in the collection, "Incident at Huacaloc," in which a group of tourists in South America sign up for a rather unusual day trip to the "secret shrines of the Incas." As tourists, used to this kind of entertainment, they notice little unusual about their trip, but its exceptional authenticity seems not to be due to clever showmanship. Their guide explains to them the rituals associated with human sacrifice, and the female protagonist of the story is ushered politely through the preparatory stages of these rituals. This is, however, no *Weird Tales* shocker whose climactic revelation comes when the characters realize what the reader has been tempted to believe all along, and the actual conclusion is very much more subtle in its manner and its implications.

Despite the current popularity of Cowper's anti-technological stance he is a writer who is not as widely-appreciated as he might be. Telling understatement, unfortunately, does not tell many readers as much as it should, and this may be especially true of American readers, who live in a culture where the routine use of polite understatement is much less evident than it is in Britain. Perhaps, on occasion, he does tend to underdo things a little, and he can be as evasive as a non-directive counsellor when he is determined to avoid easy answers. He is, though, a writer of considerable ability, and in his best work there is much to be appreciated. I still wish this collection had a little more meat in it, but it is better to be thin and wiry than fat and flabby.

Clay's Ark
by Octavia E. Butler (*St Martin's Press, 1984, 201 pp, $12.95*)

reviewed by Mary Gentle

Clay's Ark is close—maybe too close—to the standard Plague Disaster Novel. A starship returning from the second planet of Proxima Centauri deliberately crashes in North America, so that the infected crew shouldn't survive to spread an alien disease. One man escapes. He is the carrier of microscopic alien life, which has an urge to reproduce itself, an urge that can take over the perhaps-no-longer-human mind. Got the story so far?

OK, this is where you expect it to kick off into the standard disaster narrative: quarantine, search for an antidote, escape of plague-carriers, ravaged cities, collapse of what we laughingly call civilization, with stops along the way for gruesome death and gratuitous sex. A tried and true recipe: Wyndham red in tooth and claw, you might call it.

Except that as Disaster Novels go, *Clay's Ark* is well—a disaster.

"Why, Sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself"—thus Dr Johnson (who else) on one of the novel's 18th-century Great Progenitors. The quote is applicable. *Clay's Ark* is told in tandem-narrative, "present" and "past" sections, following the survival on Earth of the originally-infected Eli, and the later infection of the Blake family. Within each parallel

narrative, the author uses a montage-structure, mentioning an event in one place and then going back to narrate it fully elsewhere. What rapidly becomes apparent is that the "past" sections are largely redundant. All we need to know is that Eli is living on an isolated hill farmstead with people he has infected—a somewhat Lovecraftian situation—any other details can be picked up in passing from the "present" sections.

And the corollary of having half the book redundant is that it stops just when it's about to get interesting. Given a disease with an irresistible urge to propagate itself, producing both physical and mental changes in the host-body, it doesn't take much acumen to spot the inevitable end—however much Eli and his colony try to retard the process by living in isolation, and kidnapping an occasional passer-by to placate the disease, sooner or later that disease is going to spread world-wide. Someone is going to carry it to a city. And at this point, which would be around Chapter 2 in any blockbuster Catastrophe-novel, *Clay's Ark* stops.

But then, *Clay's Ark* isn't really about disease. The jacket copy gives the theme as "what it means to be human," and so it is, but with a specific and particular application: what you might call, according to your own particular bias, interbreeding or miscegenation.

A pointer to that is the nature of the "disease" itself:

> "Unidentifiable microbes," the small screen said. It was able to show him tiny, spiderlike organisms in her flesh, some of them caught in the act of reproducing along with her cells—*as part of her cells*. They were not viruses. According to the computer, they were more complete, independant organisms. Yet they had made themselves at home in human flesh . . . altered it subtly, cell by cell. In the most basic possible way, they had tampered with Meda's genetic blueprint. They had left her no longer human.
>
> "The ones that live in the brain don't have little legs—cilia, I mean," Meda said.

That is in itself an interbreeding between human and alien life. The "disease" alters the senses, to an animal-keenness. It has some qualities less akin to sf than to Horror: it operates very like fictional vampirism, and produces a human being that's close cousin to the werewolf. Or does it? What it produces is, according to how you look at it, a person who has become an animal, or someone closer to the natural world and human origins—something like aborigines, or the bushmen of the Kalahari; which is the race-theme again. Ambiguously, the book doesn't entirely approve of this, but nor is it entirely disgusted. Their diet of raw meat may repel; their love and loyalty be attractive: they have become the Other.

The alien "disease" itself has an irresistible drive for reproduction, over-riding mere human considerations. Surely this is humanity as carrier of the chromosome, the "selfish gene." It turns women into baby-factories (a thing that, once changed, they don't at all question), and to get a suitable male they will let no morality stand in their way. Men, also, turn to incest and murder: human ethics fight a losing battle. Quite clearly the "disease" is a Southern Gothic metaphor for sexual reproduction.

Since it overcomes all barriers to sexual intercourse and the conception of children, it isn't difficult to see the "disease" as overcoming racial barriers too. But this theme is, while implicitly central to the book, never explicitly mentioned. Blake Maslin's dead wife was black, he is white; his twin daughters Rane and Keira not only look unlikely as his offspring, they look unlike each other. Categories blur: "black" and "white" are hypothetical points on a spectrum from brown to pink. Eli is black, his infected partner Meda is white; their child Jacob—

If the children have a function in the novel, it's to prove that "miscegenation" isn't a topic easily susceptible to reason. *Clay's Ark* echoes Butler's earlier novel, *Kinship,* in which a modern black woman time-travelled back to the slave-owning plantations. Questions of slavery, racial "inferiority," and prejudice reappear here, transmuted into science-fictional terms. And the central question is, what will happen to Us if we breed with Them? ("Us" and "Them" shifting, of course, according to which side of the "colour bar" one is put.) Essentially: what will the children be like? Human or inhuman? If our offspring are different, will we lose our identity? And what *is* humanity?

Jacob is born of parents changed at the cellular level by an alien life-form—something much closer to rabies than to E.T.—and it is debatable whether the "disease" is parasitic on him, or whether he is a parasite on the life-forms he happens to carry within him. And yet, for all his animal/superhuman characteristics, he retains the one function that would make most people consider him human: speech.

Clay's Ark ends (and I give away nothing that wasn't implicit from page one) with the children about to inherit the Earth, descending from this latter-day ark—well, more human, or less? The interbreeding/miscegenation subtext can be seen in a variety of ways—that biology cannot be avoided; that there is no sharp division between races or species; that rationality is subject to instinct—which are all good debatable points.

Except that I don't think they will be debated. *Clay's Ark* sets itself up as one kind of book, deflates those expectations, and never really comes to grips with the task of setting up other standards by which to judge it. It wants to use some of the devices of science fiction without being genre-sf, which is a legitimate aim; but the novel falls between two stools. The subtext is lost, suppressed under a flat style and sf-nal rationalism. And this is not because it's trivial, but because it's powerful; a non-rational metaphor for an attitude that all of us have, in one form or another. Powerful? Well, yes; because another interpretation of *Clay's Ark*'s interbreeding-theme is simply that such miscegenation, if it occurs, will destroy human morality, lay waste the cities of the industrialized West, and change the face of the world irreversibly.

Job: A Comedy of Justice
by Robert A. Heinlein (*New English Library, 1984, 368 pp, £8.95*)

reviewed by Geoff Ryman

Just to set the scene:

A friend of mine went to a Baptist wedding in California. He got talking to a girl, and was about to ask her out, so he thought it would be polite to tell her he was Jewish.

"Why are you here?" she asked, alarmed. He was, he explained, a friend of the bride's. "Where are your horns and tail?" the girl asked. "You can't fool me, I've seen the photographs."

She believed that Jews were the spawn of Satan. She was studying at a local college.

In Robert Heinlein's latest book, a Christian fundamentalist is booted from parallel world to parallel world, each one only subtly different from our own. He is a very nice Christian fundamentalist, and it is not until page 131 that we learn that he runs an organization that not only lobbies against abortion, gambling and tobacco, but is considering surgery as an answer to homosexuality, and is discussing a solution to the

Jewish problem.

This is a comedy. Each time the hero begins to make money, or make a way of life for himself, there is a world-switch, and he finds himself mother-naked in Mexico, burdened with a currency that is suddenly worthless, or saddled with a new identity. He is forced, step-by-step, to lose his prejudices. Mexicans turn out to be generous, a nice polite couple turn out to be fire-worshippers, or decent people walk around semi-nude, in a different culture.

He also, married man that he is, falls in love with a beautiful ship's stewardess. She is called Margrethe, and she worships Odin. She sticks by the hero, from world to world, a perfect angel of wish-fulfilment. He discovers that she is more intelligent and resourceful than he. So his sexism goes too, if not quite the author's. Why don't male authors, dreaming of love, ever ask what the heroine sees in the hero?

Until page 274, this is a quietly amusing book written by a professional running more or less on automatic pilot. The world-switches are good for some exasperating fun. The hero, for example, is just about to tuck into a longed-for hot fudge sundae when he notices that suddenly there are no more traffic lights outside the window, and he is back, again, to square one. There is also a certain amount of mild fun comparing the technologies and histories of the different worlds—William Jennings Bryan as a past President, or aeroplanes instead of dirigibles—the sort of thing we've seen a hundred times before.

What is most entertaining about the book is not its fantasy, but its realism—for want of a better word. For much of its length, this is a fantasia about ordinary life: the truck stops, the bouncy waitresses, eccentric elderly couples who give lifts, or Salvation Army charity workers. There is a hearty generosity at work in this book that most British writers would be too embarrassed or too sour to produce. When a hostess sees that her new guests have arrived naked, she takes her own clothes off so they won't feel uncomfortable. "That's politeness," the hero instructs us, warmly.

Until page 274 then, this is a rather quaint book, full of old-fashioned American populism. If the hero talks a lot about the Bible, it is at least in character (and nobody seems to mind Bible chat from, say, Philip K. Dick).

Then, on page 274, the Day of Judgement comes, and the book goes haywire. The hero goes to heaven, and the book resorts to makeshift satire. Heaven is full of solid buildings and celestial bureaucracy. There are buses in heaven. Angels make human beings ride in the back of them, like negroes. The angels talk like this:

> This is the first time we've had to install plumbing for the use of fleshly creatures—do you even suspect how inconvenient that is? . . . I say that, when you install plumbing, you are bound to get creatures who *need* plumbing, and there goes the neighbourhood. But did they listen to me? Hunh!
> Pick up your paper, go through that door, draw a robe and halo—harps are optional. Follow that green line to Gideon Barracks.

That is not only quite barmy; it's cheap, like a bad vaudeville routine. Margrethe hasn't gone to heaven with the hero, so he goes to hell to find if she's there. Hell turns out to be, surprise, surprise, much more interesting than heaven. It has sex, and luxury hotels that—oh dear—accept all major credit cards. Turns out that Margrethe has earned a cycle in Valhalla, being an Odinist. Satan, being none other than a nice guy called Jerry we met earlier on, intervenes. There is a confab of gods, Odin, Loki and Yahweh. It's so confusingly written that I had to go over it three times, just to sort out who was who. The

confab is presided over by a powerful figure who is more or less the real God. Yahweh turns out to be a peevish Shylock figure who talks in inverted syntax to establish his ethnicity. "Oy! Every prophecy I fulfilled! And now he tells me consistent I am not! This is justice?"

What is aimed for here is Shavian detachment, or, to use an American model, something like Mark Twain's *Letters to Earth*. Heinlein is not quite up to it; the wit often seems strained, geriatric, an authorial pose. Mark Twain's book also had a personable and reasonable Satan, a petty and irascible God, and a heaven that was a picture of boredom. There is very little in *Job* that is original: not the parallel worlds, not the road-movie style tour of different Americas; not the crackerbarrel philosophy or even the tone of voice. And to be fair, I think Heinlein would be prepared to admit that. He goes out of his way, for example, to credit H.G. Wells as the first author of a parallel world story.

This is still a slightly surprising book for Heinlein to write. For all its faults, it is a readable book that is well outside his usual sf turf. Also surprising, given the stultifying swing to the right in America, where Christian fundamentalism is so fashionable that it's almost a brand of ice cream. Heinlein is against it because it's anti-science, anti-reason, and anti-fun. As someone who has had a crucifix raised against me, to ward me off like a vampire, I am grateful to have Mr Heinlein on my side.

The Armageddon Rag
by George R.R. Martin (*Poseidon/Simon & Schuster, 1983, 333 pp, $15.95*)

reviewed by John Dean

This is a daring book. That much can easily be said in its favour. *The Armageddon Rag* takes a devil of a narrative risk. In essence its subject matter is Satanic terrorism.

But does this risk work? Does *The Armageddon Rag* pan out and produce a sense of the real, horrific thing or just fool's gold? Thereby lies this reviewer's rub.

The Armageddon Rag is a mix of certain moods, ideas, and sociological facts indigenous to contemporary America, heightened by Mr R.R. Martin's own background.

One is the general confusion and nostalgia which all good Baby Boomers feel for the lost decade of the Sixties. Martin was born in 1948. He *belongs*. Glorious blurbs by Stephen King and Timothy Leary decorate the dust jacket of *The Armageddon Rag*. Leary exclaims: "Beautifully written. I couldn't put it down. I was sorry when it ended." The Sixties or *The Armageddon Rag?* A low blow, I know. But one, I think, which is deserved. Mr Martin and Mr Leary both seem to uncritically cherish the Psychedelic Era. A writer is unfair to himself and his subject when he is unable to be hard on himself and his subject.

Another ingredient of interest which enters into *The Armageddon Rag* is heavy-metal rock. The novel relates the events concerning the comeback of an imaginary Sixties super-group, the Nazgûl, which return in a very heavy-metal way. The facility and grace with which Martin creates a sense of their music helps to give the book a fast, sensuous, scary, and darkly appropriate pace. What could be more Satanic then good, heavy-metal rock, that sub-genre of the rocking sublime which Lester Bangs once rightly identified as "most closely identified with violence and aggression, rapine and carnage . . . technological nihilism . . . a fast train to nowhere".

Then we have Mr Martin the journalist: BS, 1970, MS, 1971, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University. The man is, no doubt, professionally aware not only of the neopaganism movement in America but also of the charming inrush of Satanism as well. *The Armageddon Rag* is a topical novel. For example, do you remember what happened only last summer in the idyllic suburb of Northport, Long Island?

> Mr Kasso and James Troiano, 18, were arraigned last week on charges of murdering Hary Lauwers, 17, in what police are calling a satanic ritual. Police said Mr Kasso confessed to stabbing the victim repeatedly, forcing him to say "I love Satan," and later gouging out his eyes.
>
> Early Saturday morning, Mr Kasso was found hanged with a bed sheet in the county jail. His death was ruled a suicide.
>
> The murder and its aftermath has shocked this affluent community of 7,200 . . .
>
> Police and local teenagers say the idea for the satanic rituals came from albums and video presentations by the rock groups . . . "Black Sabbath" and "AC-DC."
>
> (*International Herald Tribune,* July 10, 1984)

If one definition of science fiction is extrapolation on things that can be, that some day may be, then Martin has written in *The Armageddon Rag* an sf-horror hybrid with current sociological facts as its extrapolative base.

Last, and by no means least, an ideology fuels the engines of *The Armageddon Rag*. This ideology harkens back to Marshall Berman's brilliant analysis of the Sixties, "Sympathy For The Devil," first published back in 1974 in *American Review*. Berman argued with his mind and heart that the Sixties were a collective journey to a social and psychological underworld, a call to heroism, "a culture of romantic expressiveness, of extravagant rebellion, of radical will." And, like Faust, people of the Sixties had to seriously consider following through on violent, diabolical options. Revolution. Burn Baby Burn. Candy Is Dandy, But Acid's Faster.

But, Berman argued, all most people were capable of was a little "sympathy for the devil, not intimacy." A few freak groups went all the way, like the Weathermen. Otherwise the outcome of the Sixties was a tragedy of underdevelopment. Most people backed off, gave in, walked away from the scene of the action just when they should have been stepping forward with fire in their eyes and their fingers on a trigger.

Centered firmly at the narrative core of *The Armageddon Rag* is a hard-core cell of Sixties radicals who have made a pact with Satan to turn back the clock and let the liberating Revolution finally happen. Hence the weird witch's brew of *The Armageddon Rag*. It's a great idea for a story, no? As one of the novel's characters says: "We're beaten, we're lost, and we're damned. We have got to change things. We have got to get back what we lost, and this is the only way to do it."

The radical cell manage the comeback of the Sixties supergroup and, as a result:

> he watched the crowds swell and seethe and change. They came in middle-aged and just a bit frayed around the edges, came in wearing designer jeans and jewelry, drawn by their memories, by the echoes of the songs they had marched to, fucked to, dropped acid to, sung along with, and believed in during the Sixties. They went out younger somehow, full of an energy that was almost tangible, a power that crackled; they went out smiling and whistling, holding hands like kids again, and often as not the jeans seemed faded afterward, cheap and worn and stained, with flower patches and peace symbols ironed on to cover up the holes.

Fool's gold.

A neat idea, but the literary result is naïve humanism and competent, conventional writing. Martin really can't pull it off. His sympathetic characters are emotionally slushy; people from "Peanuts." The main characters designed to evoke pure evil, Ananda and

Morse, are one-dimensional. The quality of writing is uneven and, at times, embarassingly lazy: "I guess no one here gets out alive"; "Her face was as smooth as a pool of clear water, with hidden depths below"; "Children don't need violent power-fantasies. Not when they have love and music and nature. We've built a healthy, harmonious, nonviolent, noncompetitive environment for them."

The only big exception with Martin's writing in *The Armageddon Rag* is the way he successfully conveys at times the phosphorescent energy of rock. With this ability he approaches a small, select group of modern writers such as Michael Herr, Tim Page, and some of John Shirley.

In short, *The Armageddon Rag* left me deeply dissatisfied. I came to the work *wanting* to like it. And then I found the man couldn't carry his own promises to the end, that as a writer and thinker Martin couldn't fully take the risks which he had proposed. Was the problem Martin's or does it have something to do with the Sixties? Perhaps that period is a wine which has not, and cannot, age well. To evoke the Sixties on their own terms, as Martin does in *The Armageddon Rag,* creates an essentially flat, whining, self-indulgent, emotionally shallow and ideationally cheap little world.

Well, at least he took the risk.

Maia
by Richard Adams (*Viking/Penguin, 1984, 1,056 pp, £9.95*)

reviewed by Mary Gentle

The pace of novels has changed. Prose now is something one speed-reads: the automobile theory of literature, you might call it. Fast is good. A century or so ago (or in your childhood, for personal experience) a book was something to be read over a space of time; steam-engine narrative, if you like the analogy. Judged that way, *Maia* is walking-pace prose. *Maia* is the kind of novel that came out in multiple volumes in the 18th century, to be read slowly, maybe to be read aloud.

And what that means, in practical terms, is that *Maia* takes one hell of a time to get started. When it does move, it moves never *quite* fast enough for a reader accustomed to 20th-century prose. But if you stick with it, and are prepared to make that mental adjustment, then *Maia* builds up a kind of monumental momentum that will carry you through all 1,056 pages—the first time—but then, in the 20th century, who reads books twice?

Maia has more than a prose style and the odd Classical allusion to connect it with the 18th century. There at the birth of the novel are *Pamela* and *Clarrisa* and John Cleland's "Woman of Pleasure." For some reason the form lent itself to the romantic and sexual adventures of heroines—portrayed, it may be said, by male authors. Why? Well, the short answer is *why not?,* and the long answer we'll come back to later.

John Cleland's heroine comes irresistably to mind here, Maia having a lot in common with Fanny Hill. *Maia* is a prequel to Adams' earlier *Shardik,* and whereas that fantasy-history was concerned with religion and the role of priests, *Maia's* theme is prostitution.

Some years ago, Jane Gaskell's *Atlan* series of novels proposed themselves as the soft underbelly of Heroic Fantasy: that is, when the armies were fighting and the kingdoms falling and all historical hell breaking loose, and the mighty-thew'd heroes doing their

stuff, what were the *women* doing? Cija was more than a little brainless, but as a character she was credible and consistent. I wish that I could have read *Maia* without knowledge either of *Shardik* or the author's sex, and then I could be certain it's not just prejudice—there is something very unconvincing about Maia herself. A fifteen-year-old peasant girl in a fantasy-historical world, she has much of Fanny Hill's sunny attitude to sex and prostitution. Some readers will see Maia, a woman created by a man's world, and find her credible; and as a portrait of a woman in a patriarchal society Maia is, one supposes, accurate enough. The problem is that it goes no further. There is something missing—some tone that can be overheard in the voices of women talking to other women, that never quite occurs when Maia talks to her female friends. Given that the novel is written in the 20th century, you would expect a difference between the author's view of Maia and the view that her contemporaries would have: here they seem to be identical.

True, the book has the perfect counter-argument built into it. Maia is fifteen, and so her immature reactions are those of a child, and not of an immature woman. It's a water-tight case—or would be, if Maia wasn't a middle-class urban fifteen, rather than a peasant-girl fifteen; and if her ignorance of life didn't seem to shift purely as the narrative demands. But we'll pass on . . .

Maia, then, is young, extremely beautiful, uninitiated in sex, and charmingly naïve. (You can feel the charm. It's been laid on with a trowel.) Her world is one that exists just at the transition from a barter to a money economy. It has features in common with ancient Sumer, Babylon, Egypt—this is the archaeologically-sound version of Conan of Cimmeria. And it has a slave-trade. All the politicking, factions, and wars that were foregrounded in *Shardik* are backgrounded here; the narrative follows Maia, sold into slavery by her mother (after Maia has slept with her step-father), and her "behind the scenes" career in the provinces, and in that great city, Bekla.

It would be easy to be unfair about Bekla, which the reader of fantasy will instantly recognize by its puppet-governor, grossly obese and sadistic chief of secret police, and beautiful-but-evil preistess. The characters *are* larger than their clichés. But once again, we see them largely through Maia's eyes; there are all the problems of the unreliable narrator.

Maia somehow manages to combine a prurient interest in prostitution with a disinclination to actually describe what is going on:

> ". . . Doan' try to take it all at once like that. Take a little at a time, and get used to that before you try to take any more."
> "It keeps choking me. I'll never do it!"
> ". . . Come on, now, try again."
> "M'm—m'm—m'm!"
> "Fine! Now just rock your head. That's right. You'll find you can take the whole lot just for a moment before you come up again. Once more! Right, that'll do for now. There, that wasn't so bad, was it?"

It wasn't? I have to admit that certain passages in *Maia* inevitably bring to mind another best-selling fantasy author: John Norman. It's literary sex, without the psychological or physical practicalities—Maia doesn't develop a violent hatred for men, or a dependency on them, or any of the alternative emotional reactions one might expect. Nothing impinges on her mind-boggling innocence. She is allowed various sexual relationships (one lesbian), but not, as it were, allowed to enjoy them. (That still, small voice that whispers "she's only fifteen" in the critic's ear had by this time packed its bags

and left.) Maia does menstruate. Once. And there is one mention of the necessity for contraception (and not one word about venereal disease). In a novel that describes all else in exhaustive detail . . . well, it makes you wonder. To anticipate the end of the novel—so feel free to skip—Maia can, by the end of this 1,056-page year, fall in love with a handsome young lad, an army officer who seems more pleased than otherwise about her past, and settle down on the farm to bring up babies. True, there are plenty of women with domestic ambitions; but not all of them have previously experienced being the Heroine of the Beklan Empire.

Most of these objections are held in abeyance while reading; it is the end of the narrative that crystallizes them, and then one begins to reassess the whole experience. While reading, there is a factor operating against that judgement, and for that it's necessary to retrace our steps to the beginning of Maia's career, and her first night with the slave-traders. Maia is about to be raped, when—

> "Now, my pretty little pet," he said, and pulled his leather jerkin over his head.
>
> At this moment, just as his head came clear of the garment, a dark presence, like an apparition, appeared in the doorway, took a step forward and dealt him a swinging blow on the side of the neck. He stumbled against the wall, and as he did so the figure kicked him in the stomach, so that he fell to the floor.
>
> . . . Standing at the foot of the bed was a girl a few years older and a little taller than (Maia), with a broad nose and short, curling black hair. Completely naked, her lithe, slim body was dark brown—almost black. She was wearing a necklace of curved teeth; and thrown back from its fastening round her neck, so that it hung behind her from shoulders to knees, was a scarlet cloak. As she blinked, Maia saw in the candlelight that her eyelids were painted silver.
>
> Meeting Maia's eyes, the girl smiled briefly. Then she picked up Genshed's knife and tried it in her hand with the air of one not unused to such things.

That is Occula, a fantasy of a different provenance; and despite her Bitch-Lady characteristics and Yassuh-Massa accent, it's true that every time Occula walks in, the story comes alive. There is a reasonably simple explanation for this: as Milton found in a different context with Satan, that character is where the focus of dramatic action lies. She is, literally and metaphorically, Maia's Dark Twin: active where Maia is passive, streetwise, politically aware, planning a vengeance, willing to wait with patience and attack with ferocity. Maia and Occula should balance, I think. I *think* that is the idea.

The bulk of the narration follows Maia, however. Dramatic necessity might seem to require Occula holding stage-centre more often, she is the mover of many events; but much of this is reported at second-hand, while the reader is regaled with extensive details of Maia's personal life. Occula is the more exotic character: her origin in a kind of "black" fantasy China, and her desire to avenge her murdered father in Bekla (to her, a foreign land) might seem to open more opportunities for in-depth character exploration. There is the seed of a valid scheme here, however: Occula and the values of the political world vs. Maia and the values of the personal world. It doesn't come off: what's on the page are two versions of the Fantasy Female, the docile sufferer, and the castrating dominator. Judgement that was suspended while Occula seemed a possible candidate for Fantasy Ur-Feminist (which she might be taken for, as they say, in the dusk with the light behind her), crystallizes with the dawning realization that the author has got his thumb in the scales. Maia is morally OK and Occula is an immature man-eating lesbian and—but let the author tell it:

> (Maia) realized now, that motherhood was one of the gods' great tidings to which Occula was simply deaf, and likely to remain so . . . There was no earthly point in letting things like

this annoy you: you might as well expect a cat to eat hay. Yet she could remember when for her Occula had possessed the wisdom and infallibility of a demi-goddess.

This is one of those novels wherein the author looks down from a great height on his characters, including both heroines. But that's a characteristic of the 18th century novel, and has a lot to do with class: the auctorial tone is that of the educated middle-class male, recounting the adventures of two "working girls." It's a tone that can set the reader's teeth on edge.

All that stops *Maia* being an 18th century novel, I suppose, is that the historical background portrayed here never existed in quite this form. The cultural borrowings gell reasonably well. The one really identifiable steal—Occula's hymn to Kantza-Merada—only jars if the reader is already familiar with the ancient Sumerian hymn of Inanna's descent into the Underworld; and even then one could make a case for this being the real (literary) hymn, as Bekla is the real (literary) Babylon, of which only hints and legends have descended to us.

(Delany did it better with Neveryona: I must go away and write out 100 times "I will not be prejudiced in favour of feminist novels." Fat chance.)

What *Maia* owes to 20th-century fantasy is very little, perhaps only that feature—common also to sf—of coining "foreign" or "alien" words. This can, as an ancient Japanese Lord put it, be corroborative detail, intended to give artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative. It can work. And then, on the other hand:

> "Stay there, you blasted pig," said the black girl quietly. "Doan' try to get up, or I'll cut your zard off and stuff it up your venda . . . You mother-bastin' little tairth of a slave-trader . . . I suppose you'll tell me you doan' know it's a strict rule that stock-in-trade's not to be raped or interfered with by the likes of you? You zard-suckin' little swine, this is goin' to cost you your job before I've done."

This book has a map and a List of Characters—but no Glossary. I can't think why not.

The technique is one of taking sex as the novel's subject, but never quite naming things—and that's where we began. *Maia* is that certain kind of 18th-century novel, in all important respects, with the same faults and virtues. The reader will get a considerable length of narrative for his or her money, many and varied characters, adventures by land and water, sexual and romantic thrills. There is little that is taxing in the form of the novel. And the reader will also get the omniscient author, the 18th century being a time congenial to hierarchies and absolutes. Plainly, the Author is superior to the characters the reader is given to identify with; by extension, the author is superior to the reader.

To return to an earlier point: the long answer to the question of why certain 18th-century novelists featured heroines so centrally is, I think, something to do with the patriarchy. No-one is going to deny that the 18th-century was patriarchal? And women, in such a time, are the sex "allowed" romantic emotions; with a female hero it's possible to wallow in sensibility, and not worry about the practical real world of men. The form allows speculation about female sexual responses, in a semi-respectable guise; providing the author conceals literary sexuality under a mask of moral responsibility. These days, an author may find himself constrained by feminist awareness. I suspect that some 20th-century authors pay as little attention to the latter as 18th-century novels did to the former. (It's enough to make anyone take up *Tom Jones* again: Fielding's outright patriarchy is at least honest enough not to pretend to be progressive.)

This review is not unbiased. I have left out Anda-Nokomis, that wonderful picture of a

tedious but human man; and Ellerton-Ban, who is quite as inimitably Ellerothian here as he is in *Shardik;* and any number of campaigns, and acres of scenery, and several appearances by Rent-A-Mob. But they are not the centre of the novel, that space is occupied by Maia and Occula; and the depiction of female characters that was only a nagging doubt in *Shardik* is here plain in the foreground. If I have made *Maia* sound like a cross between John Norman and Barbara Cartland, it may be a slightly uncharitable judgement, but not an unjust one.

Apertures: A Study of the Writings of Brian W. Aldiss
by Brian Griffin and David Wingrove (*Greenwood Press, 1984, 261 pp, £27.95*)

reviewed by Brian Stableford

This book is no. 8 in Greenwood Press's series of "Contributions to the study of science fiction and fantasy," and the second to be devoted to the work of a single author (the other being Donald Burleson's book on Lovecraft). Griffin and Wingrove have divided the responsibility for covering various phases in Aldiss's career between themselves, Griffin covering much of the earlier work in chapters 1, 2 and 4 while Wingrove mostly concentrates on later and more cryptic works in chapters 3, 5 and 6. The introduction admits, and hesitantly tries to make a virtue out of the fact, that the perspectives of the two critics differ somewhat, and there is a marked discrepancy of critical method between them. Griffin is much more given to analysis of the philosophical questions which he discovers embedded deep in Aldiss's texts; Wingrove is always keen to draw literary analogies. Both, though, are such devotees of tactical name-dropping that Aldiss seems to become, in the kindly light of their binocular vision, the centre of gravity of all modern thought and letters.

There are both advantages and disadvantages in critical studies written by fervent admirers. The main advantage is that fervent admirers *care*. They care enough to familiarize themselves thoroughly with the material which they are studying, and their explanatory rhetoric has the fervour of St. Paul in search of converts. The main disadvantage is that fervent admirers tend to lose their cool. It is not that they are incapable of retaining objectivity in their analyses of what the stories under investigation actually contain and imply, but rather that they are all too ready to be carried away on a tide of profligate comparisons and reckless generalizations. *Apertures,* inevitably, has both these advantages and disadvantages.

Aldiss is undeniably one of the most important modern science-fiction writers, and it is good to see a book devoted to his work. Had he been an American writer there might well have been half a dozen books and as many doctoral theses written about him by now. He is also one of the most complicated writers for critics to tackle, having produced a *canon* more varied than any other writer I can think of. There are other writers as deep and as difficult, even within the science-fiction field, but there is no other who presents such contrasts and inconsistencies in his work. Given this, Griffin and Wingrove have clearly taken on a Herculean task in trying to explain what Aldiss is all about. Because he is such an intelligent and subtle writer, and one who has read so widely, there is certainly some justification in Griffin's fishing for attitudes to the great philosophical questions, and Wingrove's attempts to assimilate Aldiss to the counter-tradition of Modernism

exemplified by (his examples) Joyce, Mann, Kafka, Musil, Proust, etc. On the other hand, the fact that a headlong rush takes one in the right direction does not alleviate the possibility of losing one's balance, and Griffin and Wingrove seem to do that occasionally.

Griffin's over-extravagance can be seen quite early on, when he comes to sum up his account of the metaphors in Aldiss's first sf novel, *Non-Stop,* where analogies are drawn between the social microcosm of the starship and the structure of the brain. Griffin comments:

> The various areas of the brain are, obviously, at odds with each other. Is this state of cerebral civil war endemic to the Industrial/Technological Age? And is it simply a catastrophe, or the beginning of some new and higher balance within our nature? Aldiss brings these problems home to us by means of a symbolic/allegorical high drama . . . And one message is quite unequivocally rammed home: we are made to see that the human brain (especially the neocortex) and human society as we know it are virtually identical. (p.14)

The claim that this is Aldiss's "message" must surely be extremely dubious, if only for the reason that as messages go it is ridiculous. Could anyone be "made to see" any such absurdity? Later works, of course, offer Griffin more to get his philosophical teeth into, but the level of his metaphysical commentary never rises much above this. Characteristically, he follows up his gnomic conclusions with eccentric comparisons. The passage above is followed by another which links *Non-Stop*'s implications to the experience of listening to a piece of music by Purcell. Later, discussing *Barefoot in the Head,* we find the following argument:

> Are all collective images false? Can there be a reality without its corresponding image? If the reader wants an answer he should go to an existentialist philosopher like Martin Buber; Aldiss, novelist of the narcissistic sixties in which the life of monologue (as opposed to dialogue) reigned supreme, can only pose his one unanswered question. Then he waits, with the reader, for some kind of answer. Ironically, Charles Dickens could suggest the answer in the title of his novel, *Our Mutual Friend.* But Dickens was not writing in the nineteen sixties. (p.134)

It is difficult to believe that a commentary of this kind is helpful. The invocation of Dickens casts no more light on the issue than that of Buber, and the relevance of both is questionable. Wingrove can be just as puzzling at times, as when he starts the first of *his* chapters with an argument discovering parallel's between *The Dark Light-Years* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* The comparisons make sense, but why are these particular parallels being extracted? What is the point? Is it to dignify *The Dark Light-Years* by association, or part of an argument to locate Aldiss with respect to the evolving concerns of modern fiction? It seems to achieve neither purpose, leading to nothing else and thus appearing, in retrospect, to have been an arbitrary matter of little consequence.

Wingrove is also much given to vague hyperbole, and sometimes fails to convince us that he is really discovering significance in the works rather than expressing an *a priori* conviction that if Aldiss has done it, it must be significant. There is a certain danger in being too certain of the fact that one is confronting genius, because cleverness becomes easier to find the harder one is prepared to look for it. Thus, we find Wingrove quoting the first line of Aldiss's early story "Outside" ("They never went out of the house") and adding his own comment: "In that brilliant opening line . . . he presaged all that he was to explore in his fiction in the next twenty-five years." (p.229). Really?

There is no doubt that Aldiss *is* a brilliant writer, but I remain to be convinced that his brilliance is manifested quite as universally and consistently in his work as Griffin and

Wingrove believe. There is much in their analyses which is interesting and informative, but it is confused by all-but-random name-dropping, haphazard comparisons and occasional bizarre remarks which cannot help but arouse suspicion about their overall competence. Aldiss is, on occasion, a very showy writer, but it does not follow that criticism of his work should be equally showy. In *Apertures,* there are perhaps two showmen too many.

Le Rayon SF
by Henri Delmas and Alain Julian *(Toulouse: Éditions Milan, 1983, 330 pp, 120 FF)*

reviewed by Arthur B. Evans

This important addition to French sf scholarship is a bibliography which purports to list "All the works of Science-Fiction, from its origins to the present" ever published in the French language (from 1532 to 1982). The listing of some 3000 authors and 15,000 titles, ranging from Lucien de Samosate to Ballard and Brussolo, makes it by far the most comprehensive sf bibliography published to date in France (pending, that is, the projected publication of Alain Villemur's 800+ page *Lire la SF: bibliographie de la SF publiée en France,* announced by Jacques Goimard a few years back but as yet unpublished).

Astonishing as it might seem to Anglo-American sf fans and scholars, accustomed to the easy availability of numerous English-language sf bibliographies of generally excellent quality (Reginald, Tuck, Currey, et al.), comparable French reference materials are almost non-existent. The only publications which even come close are Stan Barets' largely biographical *Catalogue des âmes et cycles de la sf* (Paris: Denoel, 1979 and updated in 1981), the continuing and quite authoritative series *L'Année 1982-83 de la Science-Fiction et du Fantastique* (Paris: Julliard, 1977-78 to 1981-82, ed. Jacques Goimard; Temps futurs, 1982-83, ed. Daniel Riche), Alain Villemur's now out-dated *63 Auteurs: Bibliographie de Science-Fiction* (Paris: Temps futurs, 1976) and the necessarily limited overviews offered by some of the more comprehensive English language critical guides, for example Maxim Jakubowski's broad but sometimes unreliable account of French sf in Neil Barron's *Anatomy of Wonder: A Critical Guide to Science Fiction* (New York: R.R. Bowker Co., second ed. 1981).

The following two publications are also of note, principally because they have served the bibliographic needs of collectors and book-vendors in France who specialize in sf, fantastic, detective novels, and hardcover comics for the past few years: Jacques Bisceglia and Roland Buret's *Trésor du roman policier, de la science-fiction et du fantastique* (Paris: Editions de l'Amateur, 1981) and the semi-professionally published but annual *Catalogue Castera: bandes dessinées romans policiers, anticipation* (Bordeaux: Librairie Populaire Castera, 1978-1982—"anticipation" not included in the 1978 and 1979 issues) compiled by Christian Castera and Francis Valery. These two paperbound texts provide a large number of listings of titles, authors, dates of original publication, and (above all) "cotes"—i.e., the current estimated market value for each work listed. All entries are grouped by publishing house collection, and these are arranged alphabetically.

Although more substantial and much improved in terms of its overall format, *Le Rayon SF* is basically an outgrowth of these two collectors' guides and is largely intended to serve the same needs. Accordingly, its strengths and weaknesses as a reference work for

French-language sf should be evaluated in this context.

As to its structure, *Le Rayon SF* is the first bibliography to operate according to a dual classification system: works are listed under either the name of the publisher collection in which they appeared (post-1950 titles) or the author's name (pre-1950 titles or titles not part of sf collections). These two major divisions of the book (88 pages and 171 pages respectively) are arranged alphabetically and are separated by a special section which surveys the many extant and defunct sf journals in France. Cross-referencing is done by simply listing under the author's name publisher abbreviations and collection numbers for those (post-1950) works which are listed in the first section—a simple system which could have been greatly improved by listing the actual titles of those works before indicating where they might be found in the publisher collection listings.

Under the *Collections* rubric, works are listed numerically according to their identifying number within the collection (usually chronological according to date of publication) and the entry includes the author's name, title, illustrator if any, date of publication, and "cote" or estimated market value. Immediately preceding the listings, however, a brief but informative commentary is provided on the publishing house, the history of the collection in question, and the exact format of the books, with anecdotal info on the collection directors, etc. Heading this entire section is a chronological overview of the sf "Collections of our Ancestors or Ancestors of our Collections" which offers an interesting historical look at pre-1950 sf collections (Hetzel, Mericant, Tallandier, et al.).

Under the *Authors* rubric (the real originality of this book) works are listed chronologically by date of the first edition. Textual format, illustrators, and all reprint info—publishers, dates, title changes, etc.—follow each entry. Titles of modern works already appearing in the *Collections* section are not listed. Of greater importance in this section (devoted as it is to sf texts from the 17th to the early 20th centuries) are the "cotes," which range from 6FF to 12,000FF—the latter for a 1616 edition of an anonymous utopia called *Histoire du grand et admirable royaume d'Antangil.* As might be imagined, the entries for Jules Verne—every French sf book-vendor's favorite author—occupy some 17 pages, and minute descriptions are provided for the many varied editions, reprints, special collections, cover designs, etc. dating from 1863 to 1982. Nationality and pseudonyms are indicated after each author's name; pseudonyms are sometimes (but not always) listed separately as well. Authors' birth or birth/death dates are thrown in seemingly at random. And a great number of writers are included who are normally classified as authors of "le fantastique," "le merveilleux," or even (the most recent French appellation) "l'heroic fantasy"—i.e., Kafka, Lovecraft, Tolkien, Moorcock, Burroughs, et al.

The book begins with a brief introduction, an index of the publisher and collection abbreviations used, and the results of a questionnaire concerning sf publishing in France which was submitted in mid-1982 to the collection-directors of the largest French sf publishing houses. It concludes with an explanation of the various sf awards (Hugo, Nebula, Apollo, etc.); an alphabetical listing of authors having won them; another listing of authors and titles which, although not award-winners, are judged to be the "major," "fundamental," and the "most important" sf texts ever published; and, finally, a useful but very general and incomplete bibliography of French-language critical works on sf. The term "sf" has been defined a bit loosely once again, for one finds in this bibliography not only entries like Versins' *Encyclopédie* and Van Herp's *Panorama de la science-fiction,* but also Todorov's *Introduction à la littérature fantastique,* Paul Kocher's *Les*

Clés de l'oeuvre de J.R.R. Tolkien, and Francis Lacassin's *Tarzan!*

The overall presentation of this glossy paperbound edition is pleasant and quite "user-friendly." While the print is tiny and tightly-spaced throughout, the intelligent use of boldface type helps a great deal in quick referencing. A wide variety of black and white reproductions of "vintage" sf jacket-covers adorn almost every page, serving not only to illustrate what selected entries looked like at the time of their publication, but also to counterbalance the inevitably stark appearance of column upon column of catalogued data. Finally, the attention given to small details (like "edging" the pages of the sections differently or providing upper-page headings in dictionary fashion) greatly facilitate the reader's access to the considerable amount of material in this text.

Any bottom-line evaluation of *Le Rayon SF* must necessarily take into account its primary "implied reader"—unquestionably those French collectors and bookshop owners who deal in sf on a regular basis. The prevailing sentiment among most seems to be that the book is very useful for older sf, but that it offers nothing new for post-1950 sf (the vast bulk of their business) and suffers some serious lacunae in its "fantastique" listings, particularly as compared with the Bisceglia and Buret text. But for sf fans and scholars, *Le Rayon SF* is the first guide of its kind to offer a wide range of bibliographic references to pre-1950 French-language sf, the first to offer listings by author as well as by publisher and collection, and the first to offer extensive commentaries on the various sf publishers and collections ("ancestral" as well as modern). As such, it is a valuable reference work not before available. Among its obvious weaknesses as a critical guide one must cite the lack of a title index, biographical info, synopses of any of the works listed, thematic indications of any sort, and evaluative comments, except for a general list of sf novels which are "important."

Finally, the subtitle of *Le Rayon SF* is quite revealing and illustrates somewhat more than just the ongoing French malaise concerning sf and questions of literary genre: "Catalogue bibliographique de Science-Fiction, Utopies, Voyages Extraordinaires." The inclusion of the latter two terms in the subtitle—printed, incidentally, in slightly smaller caps than those preceding them (why?)—is obviously a passing reference to Pierre Versin's mammoth *Encyclopédie de l'Utopie, des Voyages Extraordinaires et de la Science-Fiction,* which still remains the largest and richest (albeit rather frustrating) French compendium of information on sf to date.

In the Drift
by Michael Swanwick (*Ace Books, 1985, 195 pp, $2.95*)

reviewed by John Clute

Promises, promises. The new series of Ace Specials is promising. Terry Carr, who edited the first series of Specials too, back in the 1960s when so few books were being published you could read them, is promising. He is promising us a good read. "If you're getting a little tired of reading science fiction novels that are just like the ones you read last month or last year," he promises, "this book is for you." But I give you my word: if you're getting a little tired of reading introductions that are just like the ones you read last month or last year, don't read most of Mr Carr's introduction to *In the Drift,* because most of Mr Carr's introduction to *In the Drift* is the very same introduction that prefaces with the

very same promises the first five books in the series—*The Wild Shore* by Kim Stanley Robinson, *Green Eyes* by Lucius Shepard, *Neuromancer* by William Gibson, *Palimpsests* by Carter Sholz and Glenn Harcourt, and *Them Bones* by Howard Waldrop—mostly. And Michael Swanwick is promising.

He has also fixed us up. *In the Drift* is far too well written, and far too cagey in its avoidance of any excess expenditure of creative energy, to mislead the wary reviewer into a charge of incompetence on his managing to finish the thing, dizzy and dejected and done. The retreat of *In the Drift* from the novelistic coulisses of its opening section is nothing but professional, nor in any way does Mr Swanwick show himself to be outstretched or flummoxed by the challenges of that opening section, whose protagonist undergoes a shattering *rite de passage* into an adulthood poisoned (in a chancy but successful zeugma) by guilt and radiation, for the America he inhabits has disintegrated after a nuclear accident at (odd choice: does Mr Swanwick intend an alternate universe here) Three Mile Island. Originally published as "Mummer's Kiss" in 1981, these first 57 pages of *In the Drift* seem to promise, along with the de rigueur rhodomontade of genre action, something of a dialectical expansion of the terms of that zeugma.

But nothing of the sort happens. It may be because *In the Drift* is a fixup, which we can (once again) define as (usually) a series of previously written stories patched together by newly composed interstitial material, or maybe not. These stories will have originally been written with a fixup in view, or maybe not. Sometimes the stories—*In the Drift* also includes a couple of previously unpublished segments plus "Marrow Death" from 1984—will be asked to mate into something like a narrative sequence, as happens here, though usually over an extended time span, as happens here, and without any continuity of point of view: we soon lose sight of Piotrowicz, except through the eyes of others, intermittently, a template on horseback, weathering badly. And the further we are taken from Piotrowicz, the dumber this book gets. Mr Swanwick's retreat, as the novel declines, into that termitarium of American sf kitsch where paranormal powers and a decayed populism miscegenate dimly to beget a new religion that will transform the lives of the oppressed (they do these things so well and often in America) is no more than a labour-saving device, the kind of dodge or abdication for which the fixup form might almost have been invented specifically to accommodate, so readily does its question-begging structure camouflage failures of cohesion and follow-through. Given these temptations, given the fact that it is very difficult to write a good fixup and terribly easy to write a lousy one, Mr Swanwick should have written a novel instead.

There is nothing intrinsically *wrong* with the disjointedness of narrative flow, or with the slacknesses in the chain/web of narrative causality, that seem inherent in any text constructed as a fixup; indeed, sagaciously transfigured, the fixup might be seen as a modernist recapture of the episodic chronicles that comprise one of the strands leading to the modern novel, and hence as a subversion of conventional narrative. Fat chance, generally. Most fixups exhibit a narrative structure one might call *bugger's epic*. The reader of the usual fixup is like a gumshoe bugging a conference, or taping the private life of the hero. The vision he gets of the world of the text whose peepholes he's glued to will be fragmented, highlit, stroboscopic, rather dizzying (Van Vogt Yaw), and oddly demeaning. The wrong people will be standing too close to the mike, gossiping of Michelangelo. The gumshoe's telephoto closeup of the moment directly preceding the assassination will give him an empty feeling inside. Somewhere out of sight and hearing of

this poor bugger, anonymous adults (like Keith Piotrowicz) will be determining the shape of the next hundred years, while the foreground is choked up with the peregrinations of extras (*In the Drift* boasts *two* healer/precog Joans of Arc, only one of whom actually gets burned alive). But, all the same, insecurely, humbly, tenaciously, the reader (poor bugger) will begin to perceive through his peepholes the lineaments of an epic, for he will have been constructing, out of the salad of orts he's been given to digest, that larger story which the author has not bothered to write. Because that is the way human perception works. Because the reader will populate that succession of absences at the heart of the fixup with signs and portents of epic narrativity which the text has precisely not earned, merely warranted. Because a hectic semiosis webs all absences with vistas and denizens. After all, if a fixup text does *not* represent selections from a larger story, then why has it been constructed as a fixup in the first place? If there is a pliant seamless tale to be told, a narrative couchable as one sustained slur of continuity, even though that sleight-of-hand last the length of a novel, then there can be no aesthetic sanction for opening yaws of uncouched absence between disjunct sections. To do so is to claim that individual sections mean not only what they say, but also something Otherwise in time and space. In a bad fixup (like *In the Drift*), that Other need comprise little more than the patchwork quilt of clichés of outward regard that any sf reader can (and must) create out of the generic protocols he/she's memorized over the years. In the "true" fixup, that interrogates our fixed vision, a succession of estranging absences can serve to subvert us, to clear our minds of that slur of continuity by which mimetic romance spiels stabilize the world, and anaesthetize our reading of the world, so that, in the fixity of the perceived world, we founder. Indeed, at the end of this century of Enlightenment, it may well be the case that no epic can be spoken, incanted, tolled: for that which can be spoken is Coca Cola.

So it is of our condition to make some sense of *In the Drift,* in the absence of Mr Swanwick. As his ravaged Philadelphia suffers no enriching sea-change after Piotrowicz reaches adulthood, because the author has left both Philadelphia and Piotrowicz in the lurch, us poor buggers are forced to construct, out of our readings of dozens of post-catastrophe American sf writers and M. John Harrison too, a theatre of ghost protocols that serves somehow to keep alive the mummers and mutants of the gaudy urban heartwood, to enact (out of absence) the self-destructive contortions of the Philadelphia godfathers as they try to keep the city "safe" from any awareness that it, too, lies within the drift-zone where radiation counts preclude normal lifespans, normal breeding. The releasing protocols for this bugger's epic haunt the pages of "Mummer's Kiss," and it seems that the interactions between Keith Piotrowicz and his city might well grow into a mature tragedy, well earned. But no.

No. Off we go to the post-catastrophe Greenwood, all Ernst-and-water, there to meet a vampire precog named Sam, who is the first of the Joans, and a gruff but kindhearted dwarf physician who keeps her supplied with animal blood. We meet other mutants. They are depressed and ignorant. Piotrowicz extends his penis sufficiently far into the text to beget Joan of Arc Two on Joan of Arc One, and disappears again, like a diorama humour. Joan Two is even more "talented" than her mother, who is now dead, but whose ghost does encores for a while. Joan Two realizes that the benighted locals, caught between the real and complex concerns of warring city states, need a new religion, or a revolutionary consciousness, or something of the sort. Dying of radiation in any case, she blackmails Piotrowicz (now an old man) to burn her at the stake. This will catalyze the

masses, she reckons. (Whether or not the masses are catalyzed we do not discover, as the book ends at this point, where it might have gotten difficult to write.) And that's the ball game. Mr Swanwick, a grown man, a clever writer, a knowing craftsman, must know damn well what he hasn't accomplished in this dereliction of a book. What he hasn't accomplished could have been a great deal.

Midas World
by Frederik Pohl (*Gollancz, 1983, 276 pp, £7.95*)

reviewed by Dave Langford

There is something charming and enticing about a truly daft sf premise . . . provided the author treats it with that care normally reserved for some ghastly china dog presented by a rich relative. It's fatal to point crudely and jeeringly at the central daftness; equally fatal to stow it away in some lumber-room of plot. The trick is a straight-faced following of *reductio ad absurdum* logic (as, to strain our metaphor probably too far, the living-room's decor might be wittily arranged to highlight the naffness of that blasted ornament): Aldiss and Emotional Registers, Vonnegut and universal handicapping, Vance and the Temple of Finuka . . . Pohl with his inverted energy crisis in "The Midas Plague" (1954).

That story, revised a little for the 80s, is the springboard of this linked collection. It stands up quite well; the reversals stemming from a ludicrous economy of overabundance are still funny. Poor folks live unhappily glutted, in sprawling mansions with quarter-acre ballrooms, while the rich enjoy a simple cottage life and the heady wine of austerity. The hero's marriage is on the rocks since he can't afford to keep his wife in the style to which she's accustomed (the Ration Board compels him to shower her with jewellery, stuff her with unwanted food). Driven to alcohol, he goes on a binge so dissolute that he madly lets half the world batten on him by paying for his drinks . . . Pohl's distorting mirror offers a crude but amusing caricature of capitalist mores, and for younger readers can still do what sf writers claim science fiction does: Make You Think. The more jaded of us may gripe at the brash lack of sophistication, and the implausible—even in the story's own terms—resolution. Though avoiding the complete disaster of a lapse into actual common sense, Pohl's happy ending (the robots responsible for overproduction now help with consumption) provokes too many familiar responses like "Why now and not before?" or "So what?"

But robot emancipation is a theme with which Pohl is to have fun in his 1980s pendants to the original. The book comprises seven stories and an opening vignette called "The Fire-Bringer," concerning Amalfi Amadeus, responsible for the fusion-power vector of the midas plague. Then comes the 1954 piece; then "The Servant of the People" (1982), "The Man Who Ate the World" (1956), "The Farmer on the Dole" (1982), "The Lord of the Skies" (1983) and "The New Neighbors" (1983). The 1956 tale is rather off the main line of development, an uneasy story of a man still trapped in compulsive patterns of overconsumption long after 1954. His torment and the Original Daft Premise do not sit well together, and the story—adequate in itself—seems to be gently pleading for release from this book's context. Even a semi-serious psychological study deserves not to be placed on the mantelpiece next to that gargoyle of a china dog.

The eighties are here, Pohl is older and wiser, and the four new stories are worlds away from their origins. "Servant," almost too underplayed for its own good, shows the logical development of robots' "satisfaction circuits" (required by the Ration Board in "Plague," to prevent robot consumption being mere anathematical waste). Becoming more human, robots rise from helot status to that of second-class citizen, even gaining the vote: in the story, a robot Congressional candidate is running against a human robot-rights campaigner ("Some of my best friends . . ."). Several barbs are planted, none very deeply; the Asimovian twist in the tale depends on the fact that Pohl's robots are both logical and (unlike Asimov's) reasonable.

"Farmer" lets a good deal more hang out, with incidental fun and invention as good as anything Pohl's written. Zeb is a down-to-earth farming robot (" 'Dem near eighty-five percent relative humidity,' he muttered to himself, 'an' yet it doan rain. Lord sakes ifn I know . . .' " etc.) Made redundant, he ventures into the big city, where the equivalent of a job centre does its very best for him by reprogramming him as a mugger. With a new turn of phrase:

> "Well, you wouldn't want to talk like a farmhand when you live in the big city, would you?"
>
> "Oh, granted!" Zeb cried earnestly. "But one must pose the next question: The formalisms of textual grammar, the imagery of poetics, can one deem them appropriate to my putative new career?"
>
> The RRR frowned. "It's a literary-critic vocabulary store," she said defensively. "Look, somebody has to use them up . . ."

And somebody has to fill up the cities: most people have buggered off on the free-energy gravy train, to enjoy life in orbit, while the pampered few at home demand crowds of role-playing robots to make cities still feel like cities. Caught in the system, Zeb is increasingly and hilariously alienated until his own rebellion helps reveal his true niche. At first glance this looks like a standard too-pat ending, resembling in shape that of the original story: but it's entirely logical in terms of the story, and conceals a second and blacker twist.

Meanwhile, above a poverty-line now coterminous with Earth's atmosphere, the freeloading space habitats of "Lord of the Skies" depend on a new and still less plausible turn in Pohl's demented energy economy. Brace yourself: solar power is not enough, and the idle rich are supported by a robot population working flat-out to beam energy *from* Earth into space. The despicable hero, product of his crumbling space environment, passes the time huntin', shootin' and fishin'—targets of all three activities being von Neumann machines straggling in from the asteroids with cargoes of raw materials—and generally jetsetting, just as everyone can in a time of "free" resources. But what is this ominous voice from Earth, announcing doom "if this goes on" and proposing to call a halt? After several adventures our hero has no hesitation in ignoring still small voices no matter what their source or message. Black, black.

More gently, "New Neighbors" completes a process begun in "Servant." An all-robot apartment block is shaken by social tremors when a couple of . . . *organic* folks move in. They may consider that they're slumming, but the robots are seriously worried about the quality of local life:

> ". . . I really don't see why we're all getting so upset. There are only two of them, and there are a couple of hundred of us."
>
> "Now there are!" Gregory cried. "Did you forget they're *organic?* What are we going to do if they start to *reproduce*?"

A gently unscrupulous campaign to save the neighbourhood is successful. Robots duly inherit the Earth. Amalfi Amadeus (deprived by lawyers of full kudos for the fusion process) sniggers in his grave. All ends perplexedly.

This tenuous connection of Amadeus at front and back doesn't really veil the disparity of the contents. The gigantic shadow of the Daft Idea falls heavily across the quieter new stories; the gulf between these—the low-key "Servant" and "Neighbors"—and the exuberantly inventive "Farmer" and "Lord" is almost as great as that between 1950s and 1980s Pohl. Better than the curate's egg, it's good and enjoyable in most of its parts: they merely fail to make a coherent whole.

Re/Search 8/9: J.G. Ballard
edited by Vale and Andrea Juno, guest contributing editor David Pringle
(Re/Search Publishing, 20 Romolo B, San Francisco, CA 94133; 1984, 176 pp, $8.95)

reviewed by Ian Watson

This is a splendid publication, the size of *Ideal Home* magazine, a great scrapbook or collage of fascinating illustrated items by and about Ballard. There are three interviews (in one of which Martin Bax is the interviewee), eight pieces of extremist fiction, nine non-fictional pieces by Ballard, an autobiography, four critical essays plus review excerpts, five of the collage "advertisements" of his own ideas which Ballard paid to insert in magazines, a fair bibliography, and two wit-and-wisdom sections, one of sayings by Ballard, the other being his "What I Believe" litany of apothegms written for the French magazine *Science-Fiction*. Plus many counterpointing photographs.

It's a living book, rich in paradoxes; and the Californian Re/Search team—who are into alternative music/TV/art, all the alternatives to banality—develop a beautiful sense of rapport in their own interview.

Occasionally Ballard sounds a shade complacently guru-esque ("I know all about the San Francisco rapid transit system and I'll tell you why") and occasionally deliriously irresponsible ("I want *more* nuclear weapons! . . . I want my own cruise missile at the bottom of my garden") and there are notes of élitism ("We've all seen what the novels of the poor look like")—though he does draw the line, morally, at snuff movies and child molestation, having brought up a family.

But Ballard is a surrealist at heart, and if he loathes anything—in an otherwise morally neutral or gladly embraced techno-landscape—it is boredom, and banality; and there is much to be said for exposing the knee-jerk reactions of so-called normality.

Thus there are some great insights: the idea that people are only programmed for a limited number of experiences or relationships, so that when these slots are filled up, there's no way that individuals can experience more of the same; or the idea that bondage fetishism, far from being perverse unrealistic lunacy, in fact represents a desperate attempt to anchor one's consciousness to reality, by tying one's body to every available object in sight. Or the perfectly correct notion that pornography is a highly *political* form of fiction, dealing as it does quintessentially with exploitation.

Reading this, and many other items herein, I felt a vast sad sense of nostalgia for years gone by, when *Oz* and Jerry Rubin were around, a time when pornography *was* radical. As Ballard truly says, increasing liberation can produce a new banal radical conformism

with which it is far harder to argue, because it's right, but grindingly so. What has been lost is wildness. Madness.

No doubt Ballard may soon be accosted by earnest theses on his cool surreal technolibidinous visions, as a process of incorporating him into normality. Meanwhile, there is nothing banal about *Re/Search 8/9*. It's just right as a conceptual homage (and the story-which-isn't, "The Index", is brilliant). There should be more books like this about authors; though there aren't many authors you could design such a book around, in quite the same way.

J.G. Ballard: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography
by David Pringle *(G.K. Hall, 1984, xxxvi plus 156 pp, $45)*

reviewed by John Clute

There is very little wrong with this bibilography not foreordained by the criteria that govern the series of which it is a part, and if the dollar falls it may be possible for a human being to purchase it in England. Mr Pringle has been marginally less than perfectly meticulous in his primary researches, having missed a hyphen or two (and even the title of a broadsheet) in his citations of Ballard's actual publications; but there may never have been a perfect bibliography yet, and this one covers all the ground that G.K. Hall, and series editor L.W. Currey, have deemed relevant. Of course they're Americans, where money grows on frost-resistant trees.

For the rest of the world, it may seem odd to produce, very handsomely bound on acid-free paper, an intensely-focused one-volume bibliography of one writer that makes no pretense of being a court of last resort for the student of the texts of that author. That student may have in his possession a book by J.G. Ballard (this is likely). Text in hand, he may wish to consult the book on review for a variety of reasons. To locate his book chronologically within the Ballad corpus (no problem). To check on its critical reception by consulting the secondary bibliographical section (a few problems perhaps, but he'll/she'll do all right). To confirm that the copy in his possession is the edition described (cursorily) in the bibliography (here he will get short shrift). The G.K. Hall series of bibliographies, despite their cost to the purchaser and the labour that has gone into preparing them, consistently fail to offer any bibliographical descriptions of the books listed. Which is bloody deplorable, for a human being, who may actually own actual physical books, and who may conceive of their description as part of the task of a series of this pretension (and cost, and cost). We are not deploring the failure of this series to provide bibliographical hagiographies like those of the Bloomsbury Group in the Soho series, please note; descriptions as cursory as those Mr Currey himself provides in his own *Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors,* also published by G.K. Hall, would suffice perfectly.

So it is a bibliography for researchers, not for lovers. Mr Pringle, being a fully apparent lover of the works of J.G. Ballard, may be conceived as having suffered some misprision. This may well be the case; it is also the case that it is his name on the title page. But we should not scant the value of the work actually done. Individual stories can be traced through the transAtlantic shuttlecocking whereby individual items, like "The Terminal Beach," may appear in as many as five different Ballard collections. It will be

possible to confirm one's prior sensation that almost nothing published in magazines has failed to reach book form, often several times; there is something darkly comical about this, but also a sense of reassurance. Pringle's bio-critical introduction to the book is neatly focused, calmly savvy. The Interview with Ballard is fine, though perhaps overlong in a book of this nature, at a time when Ballard interviews—he is very good copy—are thick on the ground. There are a few problems with the Secondary Bibliography, perhaps inevitably. It is constructed as a chronological series of excerpts from critical responses to Ballard, and so provides a short history—i.e. a kind of narrative—of those responses; and of their significance. Because of the narrative significance of this section, it is perhaps unfortunate that the key historical events in the story—Kingsley Amis's reviews in 1963 of *The Drowned World* and *The Four-Dimensional Nightmare*—are merely quoted, very briefly, from Gollancz dust-jackets; Pringle has clearly not gone back to the original reviews, which appeared in the *Observer,* and is even unable to date precisely their first publication. This can be seen as marginally less than thorough.

Not counting the occasional blemish, though, the flaws in this book derive from imposed methodology. Mr Pringle has compiled and organized an immense amount of material, and the light of his industry does shine, to our advantage, through the bars of the cell.

Women of the Future: The Female Main Character in Science Fiction
by Betty King *(Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1984, 259 pp, $18.50)*

Urania's Daughters: A Checklist of Women Science Fiction Writers, 1692-1982
by Roger C. Schlobin *(Mercer Island, WA: Starmont House, 1983, 80 pp, $6.95)*

Daring to Dream: Utopian Stories by U.S. Women, 1837-1919
edited by Carol Kessler *(Boston and London: Pandora Press, 1984, 266 pp, £4.95)*

reviewed by Stef Lewicki

The first two books serve the same function, differing only in depth of detail. In her introduction, King summarizes what critics have said about female main characters in science fiction, noting that sf is the ideal genre for women to explore new self-concepts because of its potential freedom from gender-role myths. She is very clear about what she sets out to do in her book; she acknowledges that she adopts a very broad definition of science fiction, though she delineates her parameters carefully. She covers the period from 1818 (publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*) onwards, taking the years from 1930 on by decades. Each title is summarized in some detail, with the themes relevant to women picked out under various sub-headings. There are useful appendices on the erotic in science fiction, sword and sorcery, and a detailed bibliography of criticism. She excludes stories and novels that have only been published in magazine form, which researchers may see as a serious omission, but after all, she does state that she sees her work as a reader's guide to selecting books rather than a researcher's handbook. It's an incredibly useful and thorough book—writing as someone who has done research in this field, I would have found it an indispensable aid—though the detail of some of the summaries might take away some of the enjoyment for anyone who did use it as a help to

personal reading choice!

Schlobin's book is merely a checklist—and a very good one—which goes back further into the past than King's book: it lists more than 375 writers and over 800 titles; it has separate alphabetical lists of authors and titles. He sees it as an ongoing project, and is also very clear in delineating his criteria for inclusion, and refers to other lists and encyclopedic works.

Digging into the past for long-lost works of science fiction is a problematic activity, as I discovered while I waded through Kessler's anthology, as there is a fine line between works which disappear or are forgotten because they have outlived their relevance and therefore deserve to fade into obscurity, and works by women authors which sink without trace in a male-defined and dominated culture. In themselves many of the extracts seem trivial and unimportant but for the fact that they do remind us that feminist yearnings and future visions are not only the product of our present age. And far too many of the selections are too short.

Though at some level their social position undoubtedly restricted their outlook, many of the women writers in this anthology often seem preoccupied with striving to appear logical and *reasonable* in their appeals for male society to change, and although the reader can take this into account, nevertheless many writers also seem to be obsessed with religion and the urge to rewrite the words of the marriage ceremony so that it comprehends total equality between man and woman, going down the path which suggests that it's possible to legislate for a change in attitudes.

Fourierist communism often figures in their future societies, and we often see what now seems to us the naïve hope that automation and industrialization will improve everyone's lot, including that of women. There is an interesting counterblast by Mary H. Ford to what she felt was Bellamy's patronising attitude to women's demands in his novel *Looking Backward*. Some writers echo Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*—Waisbrooker, for example, in *A Sexual Revolution* (1894), also idealizes motherhood, and interestingly also foreshadows the theme of women-led passive resistance to masculine violence that we meet in Ursula Le Guin's *The Eye Of The Heron*. M. Bradley Lane in *Mizora* (1880-1) like Gilman, describes a world without men, where women come to power because the men are disorganized and continually fighting among themselves, and eventually die out, though for Bradley it is the teacher rather than the mother who holds the highest place in society.

The most interesting story—*Unveiling a Parallel*—by Jones and Marchant (1893) is, as the title suggests, an allegory, and the excerpts show us an Earth male flirting with a Martian woman—theirs is a sexually egalitarian society—and having his passes parried and his supremacist arguments demolished.

Kessler's introduction is detailed though irritatingly rambling and over-analytical at times. She traces the history of utopian writings, and is particularly good on recent works, and also unravels the links and influences this century between science fiction and the utopian form. There is an excellent annotated bibliography. Ultimately though, as a collection of fiction, I feel it is only worthy of academic interest.

Letters *Continued*

Dear *Foundation*: February 1985

Philip Nichols (letter, *Foundation* 32) asks for information about James Blish's television and film scripts.

The television scripts consist of "Captain Video and the Sub-Space Corsair," fifteen half-hour scripts written for Dumont TV and broadcast between 31 August and 18 September 1953; five scripts for "C.I.D.: Universe" (a television series Blish worked on with Alfred Bester), only one of which was used (three of the other four became the stories "One-Shot" (1955), "King of the Hill" (1955), and "Sponge Dive" (1956)—the fourth worked its way into the background of "Beep" (1954) and *The Quincunx of Time* (1973)); and a teleplay of Blish's story "The Box" (1949) with the same title. Blish also wrote (in 1975) a 6,000 word TV treatment for Krantz Films for a series (which never materialized) tentatively entitled "Man Without a Planet."

The film scripts consist of *The Night Shapes* (based on Blish's book of the same title), two Okie scripts for Space Films—*A Life for the Stars* (based on Blish's book of the same title) and *The Space Witch* (an original Okie script), and *Welcome to Mars* (based on Blish's book of the same title) also for Space Films. None of these films has been made.

To the best of my knowledge, Blish did not write any television or film scripts pseudonymously.

A mediocre film based on Blish's "There Shall Be No Darkness" (1950) entitled *The Beast Must Die* was first shown as the Midnight Movie on BBC2 in 1974. But Blish did not write the script for this adaptation.

Both Philip Nichols and Robert A.W. Lowndes point to my failure to note in "Wagnerian Spenglerian Space Opera: *Cities in Flight* by James Blish" (*Foundation* 31) that Blish picked the end-of-the-universe year AD 4004 to balance Archbishop Ussher's creation date of 4004 BC. This detail was included among a number of late inserts and corrections—too late, alas, the article had already been typeset. For the full and corrected version readers must await the publication (in Spring 1986?) of my now completed *Imprisoned in a Tesseract: The Life and Work of James Blish.*

David Ketterer *London*

Dear *Foundation*: February 1985

I did not like David Lake's review of Lem's Pirx stories (*Foundation* 30). Indeed these stories, the later ones of the Pirx cycle, are inferior to some other works by Lem, and I'd not call "Pirx's Tale" a strong piece, but still it contains more than the reviewer saw, or wanted to see, in it—as a story about a first contact, it would be very unoriginal indeed, but it is, before all, a story about Pirx, about his feelings and his state of mind during his flight in space (e.g. having read the story several years ago, I have completely forgotten the details of the "contact", but I still remember that episode when Pirx sees his own face in the mirror and suddenly realizes he is losing psychic self-control). It is the character of Pirx that makes the whole cycle unique, while in most "hard sf" stories the characters are rather schematic.

Now I really don't know if the Pirx stories are really that kind of hard sf. But surely they are not what David Lake seems to expect them to be. What in fact he says is, that Asimov has written better stories of the Asimov type, than Lem. No doubt he has. Anybody has the right to see in a literary piece the aspects he is interested in, but saying that "The Inquest" and "Ananke" are bad whodunnit stories because "the reader lacks the data to solve the problem" is as unfair as it is true; for, say, *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* are rather bad detective stories, too.

I have not enough information to be sure, but I guess that the grotesque as well as the rather abstract, almost non-fictional works by Lem are valued and appreciated by the English, and especially the American, readers more than his more traditional works like *Solaris, The Invicible,* or the Pirx stories, all of which are very famous in Europe. If this is true, I have an idea of the reason, too: Lem's grotesques and his non-fictional works are clearly distinct from anything common in English & American sf, while the rest is automatically seen in the context with, and judged by the measures of, the sf developed in the American magazines. But the criteria of this sf are traditionally plot-oriented, the texts are treated as a vehicle for an original, new idea or as a mind game with codified rules. Literature, usually, is something else, even if these forms are used. On the surface of "The Inquest" there is the problem (with which Pirx finds himself confronted): Who is robot, who is man? But that's not what the story is about. It is rather the story of a victory won by the imperfect human mind above the more perfect robot intelligence not by accident—in spite of the robot's superiority—but really *thanks* to this imperfection. And this theme, too, is not so far from the surface, so why is it invisible for the reviewer? I think because either he was looking for something else or found it simply unimportant.

Erik Simon *Dresden, DDR*

Dear *Foundation*: February 1985

Can anyone tell me what was wrong with Manly Wade Wellman's hand?

After her encounter with him in 1936, all poor Jean Rhys could remember was, "I didn't notice Manly's hand. I hardly ever notice things like that."

All the way from "Our Miss Gibbs" to New York City (the dead baby, the drinks, the long voyage in the dark, all the little barbarisms she couldn't just stick for as the simple social lingo of the day) Manly Wade Wellman's *hand* lay in wait for her, perhaps more characteristic even than his prose.

Someone must know.

M. John Harrison *Holmfirth, W. Yorks*

Dear *Foundation*: March 1985

A couple of brief comments on Brian Stableford's interesting article on Marx, sf, and prophecy (*Foundation* 32). Contrary to Brian's claim, Marx's adherence to the labour theory of market value (true or false) certainly did not prevent him from appreciating the enormous productive potential of machinery, and the growing role of science in production; indeed, he foresaw an extensive automation of industry, with workers reduced to mere appendages of technical systems. For Marx it is the growth of human

knowledge with respect to the transformation of nature that gives history such direction as it possesses.

When we dicuss the notion of laws of societal development, it is important to distinguish between Marx's analysis of capitalism and his theory of history. The two are separable: the former could be essentially correct and the latter essentially wrong, or vice versa. The "laws" operating in these two realms are of fundamentally different orders. At one level, according to Marx, each type of social formation (e.g. feudalism, capitalism) has its own unique laws of functioning, and the nature of the capitalist economy allows fairly specific predictions to be made about its development. At another level, Marx's theory of how *societies in general* are structured and why one type is replaced by another should not be seen as predictive in the usual sense. Like Darwin's theory of evolution, which cannot predict particular species changes, it helps make sense of historical changes by providing a causal framework within which they can be interpreted. Anyone interested in this subject is referred in particular to the final section of Richard W. Miller's *Analyzing Marx* (Princeton University Press, 1984).

Angus Taylor *Victoria, B.C.*

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