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FOUNDATION

36

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

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FOUNDATION

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

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Number 36, Summer 1986

Editorial

The editorial for number 34 announced the death of Theodore Sturgeon; the editorial for number 35 struck a "slightly apprehensive" tone as it recalled the growing age of many great sf writers, and, indeed, of sf itself. And this editorial can hardly be any more optimistic, being written soon after the deaths of Frank Herbert, on February 11, and L. Ron Hubbard, on January 24. These two sf writers have caught the public eye more than almost any others, the first with what is I suppose the most successful sf novel of the last twenty years, and the second with the most successful sf religion. Herbert will, I hope, have his tributes and re-evaluations published in *Foundation,* so I intend here to muse on L. Ron Hubbard's contribution to science fiction and the world.

Hubbard, has, of course, been a very secretive man, so no-one can come to any firm conclusions about that contribution. Perhaps we will find some of the answers in Hubbard's biography one day (though I don't envy his biographer). How much weight, for instance, can we give to that throw-away remark back in the '40s, in the presence of John W. Campbell, Martin Greenberg and Lloyd Eschbach? "I'd like to start a religion. That's where the money is." Was Dianetics, and is Scientology, the greatest and most influential of all fictions created by an sf writer? The exact relationship between the dogmas of Dianetics/Scientology and the scenarios of the sf of the '40s and early '50s would be an interesting place for a Hubbard scholar to start. Certainly the plotline has plenty of sf resonances. Superpowerful beings, Thetans, who play games with the universe, who then become trapped in material bodies, and gradually evolve, on earth, into the souls of human beings. Souls who, on the death of their human host, report back to various stations on Mars and elsewhere in the solar system, to be given a forgetter implant and sent back for another tour of duty on earth. Human beings who, by various therapeutic techniques, can overcome this forgetter implant to gain some of the superhuman powers of the Thetans. (All this culled from Dr Christopher Evans' marvellous if depressing book *Cults of Unreason*).

Why Scientology depresses me so much, I suppose, is that it reminds me of the company we keep. Brian Aldiss (*This world and nearer ones,* 1979, p.12) has written of the special purgatory reserved for sf authors—in addition, that is, to having to appear on television with Uri Geller and Magnus Pyke: "They have to endure conversations with people who assume automatically that they believe, as do their interrogators, in Flying Saucers and telepathy and Atlantis and the Bermuda Triangle and God as Cosmonaut and acupuncture and macrobiotic foods and pyramids that sharpen razor blades." *We* (readers of *Foundation*) all know, of course, that in reality we are bright, well-informed and scientifically literate. But *we* (readers of sf) are by no means all of us very different from Aldiss's persecutors, or, indeed, from the sort of people who fell for Dianetics and Scientology in the '50s. That cool observer Martin Gardner wrote in the 1950s about one of Campbell's editorials: "how far from accurate is the stereotype of the science-fiction fan as a bright, well-informed, scientifically literate fellow. Judging by the number of Campbell's readers who are impressed by this nonsense, the average fan may be a chap in his teens, with a smattering of science culled mostly from science fiction, enormously gullible, with a strong bent towards occultism, no understanding of scientific method,

and a basic insecurity for which he compensates by fantasies of scientific power." When Peter Nicholls quoted this (under "Pseudo-Science" in his *Encyclopedia*) he said that this may have been part of the truth in the mid-'50s, but was not the whole truth. No, of course it was not the whole truth, but nor was it confined to the 1950s, even if, thanks largely to Campbell's various obsessions, it looms largest then. It has been part of the truth throughout the history of sf, and certainly helps to explain the popularity of certain types of sf (*Stranger in a Strange Land;* even, surely, *Dune*).

It is not surprising, after all, that Aldiss's persecutors associate him with the inanities he described, when such inanities have so often been enthusiastically adopted by readers —and indeed, writers—of sf. Sf writers, of course, should attack the closed minds of traditional scientists; but not a few of them have done so while endorsing statements from the even more closed minds of pseudo-scientists. Gernsback, the anniversary of whose *Amazing Stories* we celebrate this year, believed that sf should be an educating force, a liberation from superstition and irrationality. There are some who still adhere to the Gernsbackian ideal. But for how much longer? After all, if fantasy and fantasy-related sf continue to increase in popularity, then maybe an interest in science, whether rational science or irrational science, will disappear from sf altogether.

Edward James
April 1986

Additional Note

Frank Herbert has died, and L. Ron Hubbard has died—both of them influential men. Mr Hubbard's considerable influence on the lives of many has been mainly extra-territorial to science-fiction literature, despite his late re-entry into the orbit of large-scale space opera and his generous, objective sponsorship of young writing talent. He founded a religion—and was thus perhaps more akin to a *character* in a science-fiction novel, a novel which might conceivably (in futurised circumstances) have been authorised by Frank Hebert. For Mr Herbert invented much future Messianic religion in the *Dune* cycle, and his themes constantly touched upon transcendence, mystical manipulation, Godhead, cults, the ruthless evolutionary bootstrapping of the species, and new clarities of mind, new disciplines, themes not entirely unconnected with Scientology.

Mr Hubbard's main achievement is somewhat outside the brief of *Foundation;* Mr Herbert's, within our embrace. Yet despite a whole *Dune Encyclopedia*—a volume which is essentially a fictional confabulation—we still await the substantial critical over-view of the art, social politics, and vision of this major author whose work—which is hardly without points of controversy, as daunting as anything Dianetic!—has been read by millions.

For the last several years a quite disproportionate number of submissions to *Foundation* have been respectable—and respectful—academic essays on Ursula Le Guin. Great writer that she is, this safe academic bias no longer serves either Ms Le Guin's own reputation or sf criticism itself, which is being distorted out of shape. To those critics in universities seeking future topics, we urge a spirit of adventure. Let them launch their boats into the still largely uncharted waters of Herbert's World, perhaps?

Ian Watson

William Gibson visited Britain briefly in February 1986, to attend the sf convention Mexicon 2, and to herald the publication of Count Zero, *a tangential sequel to his triply-decorated* Neuromancer. *He talked to Colin Greenland about cyberspace, collage, and the collapsing hotel.*

A Nod to the Apocalypse: An Interview with William Gibson

COLIN GREENLAND

CG: How do you like London?
WG: It seems like a single huge organic artifact, which American cities never do. American cities have been built in a relatively short period of time, which makes for more functional environments in some ways, but there's no depth to them. In London I have a real sense of city as labyrinth.
CG: Do you get lost?
WG: I get lost; but the subway's always been very clear to me. That's the nervous system of the organism. I get lost; but I usually get lost with pleasure. New York's a tiny little thing on an island, though it's stacked up very high. You can walk around it in a matter of hours, or you could do, if the neighbourhoods were all equally safe. There's an incredible richness of human symbol written everywhere here; there's so much detail to things, built up by so many generations. If you look at any tiny bit, it seems to contain more information than a whole structure would in the States. I've always wondered whether to Europeans America seems lacking in data. I can imagine it seeming empty.
CG: How long have we got before the age of *Neuromancer*?
WG: Now I've never been very clear on that. I've deliberately avoided dating it, but I think that from what sketchy internal evidence there is, it's somewhere between mid and late 21st century: twenty-seventy-something. I always wince when people give specific dates in science fiction. There's a certain kind of literalism that's always detracted from my pleasure in reading sf. I know that for a lot of sf readers it's just the opposite: that's what they like. I was talking to a man at Mexicon who was criticizing *Neuromancer* because it didn't click into real history. In *Neuromancer*, there's been a war: I've never bothered myself with when it was, or exactly who was fighting. I just wanted a sort of nod at the apocalypse, and have these people just shrug off the loss of several cities. It's been completely absorbed.
CG: The Europe we see in *Count Zero* is one of art galleries, restaurants and parks. Europe's time seems to be over; it's been switched off, it's quiet there now. And there's a big hole in the middle. Is that how you see Europe today?
WG: I hadn't thought of that, but it's probably the case. It seems quite nice in Europe in *Count Zero*, the bits of it you see. There's still some industry in some of the countries, but you don't see that, because the viewpoint character's concerns aren't really with that sort of thing. This is probably a very American view of Europe, a tourist's Europe. I've never

had the patience and desire to work out who's doing what to whom in this world. It really doesn't exist for me at that level. I'm not really extrapolating in the way that I was taught a science fiction writer should. I'm just reacting to my impressions of the world and sort of amplifying them, distorting them for effect.

CG: Part of the great appeal for me is that the complexity does go off the map. I don't know what's beyond the edges, it's not all blocked in. I feel that matches my sense of the real world: I can only see so far.

WG: That's something I'm trying to deal with in the book I'm working on now. I have a character who's dealing with a sort of alien invasion of the human-occupied solar system; but he's just a normal individual, he's not in the position that protagonists of sf novels often are, of being able to have a total overview. He's not right at the point where whatever it is happens, and there's a lot of ambiguity in his mind about what happens. There's a lot of ambiguity in human history.

CG: Your books display a very rich future vocabulary, the slang and technical and professional jargon that this culture has generated. Where do you get that from?

WG: I've made a habit of listening and watching for buzzwords in English slang from different cultures and subcultures. Usually they're not things that are in common usage, but they have a true ring. There's a character in *Neuromancer* called the Dixie Flatline, who's come back from the dead, more than once. "Flatline" is American ambulance driver slang for brain death. It's what you see on the e.e.g. That's not in general parlance at all, it's just something I happened to overhear once, when two paramedics came into a bar. I don't think I made up many words, but some of them don't really have quite the meanings I've given them. In a way I did the same thing with the computer technology, which I knew nothing about. I de-engineered the buzzwords. They had a level of poetry to them. I thought, what does that evoke?, and worked from that. Then I checked it finally with someone who wrote advertising copy for a software company and got a clear bill of health. Subsequently, since I have learned about computers, I see things in it that don't make a great deal of sense.

CG: In the same way that the research isn't all mapped out, and you don't have a chronology in the back, you don't have a lexicon either. You deluge us with these unfamiliar words right from page one, yet somehow you convey to us exactly what you mean.

WG: There's a trick to that. I work out the interior structure of the dialogue so that the contextual information is conveyed progressively. The first time you encounter the strange word, it's a strange word; but the next time you encounter it, hopefully not too many pages along, there's a bit of context. I was careful to give all these words contexts that would make them click for the reader after just a few repetitions. It's a little like the experience of going to a foreign country. You get a lot of help from the text, but I try to keep the help well out of the way. I consciously tried to avoid things that had reduced my pleasure in books I'd otherwise enjoyed—bits where someone stops and says, Well, you know, in our society we do this.

CG: And the façade shatters. So you've only recently investigated real computers.

WG: I touched one for the first time about a month ago.

CG: Was there a purpose in deliberately staying away from the real thing while you were writing about its imaginary future?

WG: I found them a bit intimidating. I think now that if I had had more experience of

them I wouldn't have been able to write a book that made them seem quite so sexy. I thought the disc-drives would operate completely silently, and lightning-fast. I think I was expecting a cyberspace deck.

CG: Yet Greg Benford and Jerry Pournelle approve. You fooled the literalists, the scientists.

WG: Some of them, I did. It really surprises me. There's a scene in *Neuromancer* where Case asks, Maelcum, do you have a modem on this ship? I didn't really know what a modem was when I wrote that. I knew it had something to do with telecommunications. Now it seems kind of silly for these guys to have what I imagine will then seem a very primitive device; something that by then will be just one little tiny bit in every piece of hardware in the world. But no one's pointed that out. I should probably write a long critical attack on that book before somebody else decides to do it.

CG: In *Neuromancer* the artificial intelligence Wintermute says to Case: "You're always building models. Stone circles. Cathedrals. Pipe-organs. Adding machines. I got no idea why I'm here now, you know that?"

WG: It's possible to see the computer not as a sudden leap, but as something we've been building for a long time, from Stonehenge and cathedral windows, things like that: replication of information, tools for remembering. Computers in my books are simply a metaphor for human memory. Computer memory in *Neuromancer* is much more like human memory than it's ever likely to be. Neuromancer says to Case, "Memory's holographic, for you . . . I'm different . . . The holographic paradigm is the closest thing you've worked out to a representation of human memory, is all. But you've never done anything about it . . . Maybe if you had, I wouldn't be happening."

CG: So cyberspace isn't just a convenient way of dramatizing what are now slow and rather boring processes.

WG: No, I think there is something like cyberspace already happening. If you look at the physical intensity of posture of kids playing video games, there's a feedback loop of particles: the photons are coming out of the screen and going into the guy's eyes, and the neurons are moving through his body, and the electrons are moving through the computer. At the particle level, there's this enclosed system. Also, I had a hunch from talking to people about computers that everyone seemed to feel at some level, without really ever saying it, that there was space behind the screen. I just took that and ran with it as far as I could.

CG: In *Count Zero* you gave this space an unexpected pantheon.

WG: I'm a bit worried about that now. I thought I'd hidden enough clues throughout that a careful reading would deliver the surprise of what those things actually are. But the reviews I've had in the States so far say, He doesn't really *explain*. Some people will assume that's going to be the payoff. So I would like to make it a bit more overt. The thing I'm most interested in is 3Jane's story, because she's the progenitrix of the Boxmaker. When the Boxmaker voices speak to Marly, they explain what these apparent Haitian voodoo gods running around in the matrix really are. These are conscious fragmented elements of what for one brief, Yeatsian moment was Neuromancer. Then, for whatever reason, the centre couldn't hold . . . I suspect that may have to do with the very offhand remark at the end of *Neuromancer* that all it has to talk to is an alien artificial intelligence. This may actually stick me with writing a third book some day, though there's such a prejudice against doing anything that might be called a trilogy.

CG: But you have a complete fictional world here, in which you might set any number of

books. It reminds me of the sense I get with Philip K. Dick: when you pick up a book, you're visiting that Dick world again. It's not a question of spinning out one thread. He just devised his own imaginary space and let us have a look at it from time to time. I expected you to do that too.

WG: I don't know. What I'm trying to do right now—and this is all more intuitive than I would want to admit, say, to a bank manager—is one book that can never possibly be connected to anything else, set in a different future. Yet I'm already anxious to go back and see what I can work out with the material I've got already. I'm scared of being typecast if I stick with that. I'm scared of my facility with that kind of mainstream thriller structure, though I don't think I could ever again do anything that had quite the desperate quality of *Neuromancer*. I'd have to be in a pretty bad way to do that again! It's fuelled by a terrible fear of losing the reader's attention. Sheer hysteria. There's a hook on every page. I don't think you get the same kind of roller-coaster ride in *Count Zero*. I deliberately stopped and slowed it down a bit, because I wanted to learn how to do characterization. There are all sorts of things I don't know how to do yet. This is only my second novel.

CG: The Count himself is quite a character. Is this the story of his coming of age, in the American sf tradition?

WG: I suppose it is, but it wasn't conscious. All the good things aren't conscious. What I had in mind originally was to do something much more drastic to Turner—someone who's much more cast in the macho Clint Eastwood role than Case was, a guy who's big and strong and fully functioning—to take him apart. I lost interest in doing that fairly early on, and that's when I introduced the other plotlines. The weirdest thing was that I wound up giving him a brother and a mother and all of that . . . When I wrote the part where he escapes with the girl in the jet, I didn't know where they'd come down, and suddenly they were in what in some ways was *my* childhood, in the countryside—I don't think I even said which state, somewhere like Tennessee or Viginia. They're back in a sort of pastoral world: there's running water; you can't see the cities. That came as a complete surprise to me. I wrote *Neuromancer* very much under the influence of an American novelist named Robert Stone: quite a serious novelist, and master of a certain kind of paranoid, *film noir* fiction. When I was halfway into *Count Zero* a friend of mine said to me: There's nothing you can do with these Robert Stone characters except kill them. So to reverse that, I wound up giving Turner a woman and a child—

CG: He's humanized.

WG: That was impulsive. It almost has a happy ending! I was a little worried, because they all go off and live happily ever after. Or maybe they do. I don't know what'll happen next. I'm starting to get enthusiastic about it. It's probably an avoidance mechanism so I won't work on the next book.

CG: I can't see why anyone has trouble understanding what the cyberspace entities are, but tell me, why voodoo? Is it because it's a colourful contrast to the high tech, being all funky and folksy and improvised?

WG: Offhand, I can't remember where that came from. It was something I knew a little bit about, and I didn't have that much research material on hand. These two books really were constructed with a kind of collage aesthetic. The image turned up, and it just clicked for me. My assumption was that the black people in the low-rent arcologies were practising voodoo anyway, and some of them were also computer cowboys. The AI read

them and decided that it was what they wanted. The cyberspace entities have been infected by human reactions.

CG: Is the voodoo in Lucius Shepard's *Green Eyes* relevant? Is he a friend of yours?

WG: I've met him once . . . No, I don't think the book influenced anything. I'd always been vaguely interested in voodoo. I have a big cardboard box of things I've torn out of magazines, and when I get into bad plot corners, I dump these things out and start rearranging them.

CG: For collage, your fiction is pretty seamless. It's not like the effect of reading Ballard or Burroughs, of a quickfire stream of dissociated images. All your images are very associated.

WG: Yes, it's all been puttied in. I owe Ballard and Burroughs for all the work they did with that, but the difference is pasting it down and then airbrushing it. I do use that random method, mostly when I'm stuck. I was very proud because the French edition says something like, This truly is a Surrealist novel. I thought, In France, even, where they're so picky!

CG: Has Dick influenced you?

WG: No, I didn't read that much Dick before I started writing. I think I was getting all of what one gets from Dick, and maybe a bit more, from Pynchon. I've always imagined this alternate world where Pynchon sold his early short fiction to *F&SF* and became a sort of Dick figure . . .

CG: And then died, and they found a huge great incomplete novel in a shoebox . . .

WG: That's it. I know that Pynchon reads sf. He had a piece in the *New York Times Book Review* a couple of years ago called "Luddites" that mentioned how much we owe to sf writers, made a big nod to it.

CG: Another collagist. Surprising bits and pieces, but all worked into a surface.

WG: A tapestry. Apparently some of his early short fiction and his first novel were generated out of an old 1890's travel guide he found in a used book store. He took it home and spun this novel, writing about Cairo in the 1890's, with all the streetnames and the names of the hotels. That's really my sort of thing. It's just getting started that's difficult, finding the piece that you want to be the piece at the beginning. At the beginning of *Count Zero* that's an actual place I'm describing, in Mexico, that collapsed hotel: it's the most fantastic, ultimate Ballardian structure. I was down there one Christmas with my family. I wrote down a description of it and took lots of snapshots. Tiled floors hanging down over the water, out in the middle of nowhere. I worked on that for a long time before I had that opening segment and could just go on with it.

With some of Dick's mid-period work, some of the best, you can feel he's improvising. The story makes weird twists, and things just pop in, but that's the pleasure of it.

CG: There are the critics, striving for a coherent account of the inconsistencies in *Ubik*, and there's Dick, speeding away at his typewriter, chuckling. What is it you're working on now?

WG: It's called *The Log of the Mustang Sally*. I was hoping to get rid of that title, but it's become so well-known as an unfinished book that I'm stuck with it. I'll regard it as a challenge of some kind. I was happy with *Count Zero* because I could say *"Count Zero"* to anyone without feeling silly. I still feel a bit silly saying *"Neuromancer"*, because people say, "What?" I think I'm going to feel *really* silly saying I wrote a book called *The Log of the Mustang Sally*. I was going to call it *The Distances,* but Malcolm Edwards talked me out of it. He said it sounded too long and dry!

In the Editorial to Foundation *33 we voiced a plea for some studies of the major* science fiction *authors—and here we are: an insightful essay on Hal Clement.*

We're grateful to Professor Donald Hassler of Kent State University for directing this piece our way. Its author, Perry Trunick, wrote it as part of his M.A. course there.

Besides his academic work, Mr Trunick was on the staff of Handling & Shipping Management *magazine for 5 years, more recently worked for* Modern Materials Handling *magazine, and is currently employed by Farragher Marketing Services, a marketing and public relations firm.*

Hal Clement's Aliens: Bridging the Gaps

PERRY A. TRUNICK

Hal Clement is well known for the care he uses when constructing alien worlds and beings to inhabit them. This is a basic fact that distinguishes him as a "hard" science fiction writer. If Clement's talent extended no further than his ability to weave the science through his fiction, his books and stories would have received only passing popularity and no critical attention.

But Clement is a serious writer, even though he is fond of describing his writing as a paying hobby. Among the weighty issues that Clement examines is an intriguing notion that the limitations of communication and sense perception impair our ability to acquire full and accurate knowledge. To this he adds the observation that, for knowledge to be valuable, those who receive the knowledge must have the ability to use it.

As we examine *Needle* and *Nitrogen Fix* we will delve into Clement's concept of symbiosis between two beings and the idea that even this arrangement has its limitations. The extreme closeness of the symbiotes, in Clement's thinking, is not enough to overcome the two basic problems of communication and perception.

Two other novels we will discuss deal with more conventional communication methods. *Cycle of Fire* presents some common language and cultural barriers that limit communication. *Mission of Gravity* uses that same basic formula and adds some biological differences to complicate matters further.

The symbiotic relationship

Needle involves a jelly-like alien that must infiltrate the body of a host creature in order to live and move about. The barriers to communication are somewhat lessened by this arrangement, but they exist nonetheless. The protoplasmic life form Clement creates faces some unusual problems in finding a suitable host creature and communicating with that being. The process Clement describes demonstrates an almost uncanny understanding of the problems of communication and understanding.

The Hunter, as Clement identifies his non-human character, lives naturally in a symbiotic relationship with a host creature. Clement suggests a high level of communication can be attained through such an arrangement. He theorizes that such an ideal relationship ultimately would evolve to such a point that misunderstanding and miscommunication would nearly cease to exist.

> Both brought highly intelligent minds into the partnership, and the relationship was one of extreme friendliness and close companionship in nearly all cases. With this understood by both parties, literally anything the symbiote did to affect his host's sensory organs could be utilized as a means of speech; and as a rule, over a period of years multitudes of signals imperceptible to anyone else but perfectly clear to the two companions would develop to bring their speed of conversation to almost telepathic levels.[1]

We find that these are ideal conditions attained in the fictional setting of the Hunter's home planet. Clement's character is not on his home planet, so no such relationship exists. Crash landing on a strange planet while pursuing a fleeing criminal, the Hunter must establish a relationship with a new host and bridge the communication gap to the best of his ability in order to find and destroy the villain.

Clement's purpose in writing the novel is not to recast a simple detective fiction with unusual characters. He concedes that he develops his lifeforms (or alien worlds) first.

> I generally start by building the planet figuring out what sort of life could exist there, and then asking what can or can't a lifeform of that sort do.[2]

In view of his attention to detail in creating a character like the Hunter and in evolving the concept of a symbiotic relationship, Clement would be less than honest if he ignored the issue of communication. He carefully avoids telepathy and, thereby, creates a plot within a plot.

> There have been other stories of the possession type and I thought they were too easy if you didn't have those impediments (to communication). It seemed very unlikely to me that someone who could just climb aboard and make use of your bloodstream, oxygen, and food was automatically going to be able to make use of your nervous system.[3]

So, to remain true to the character he has created and to the plot, Clement takes us through the alien's quest for a host, his education, and his attempts to contact his human host. In the process, we gain some insight into Clement's views on the process of learning.

Learning through direct observation

Not one for simple solutions, Clement's plot requires his character to gain experience with the types of hosts available. The Hunter chooses a shark as his first host. In this first experience with an Earthly host, the Hunter makes no attempt to communicate. Indeed, he perceives that communication with the shark would be nearly impossible because of the shark's extremely limited intelligence. He observes a variety of other creatures before selecting a human being as a host, secretly entering the body of Bob Kinnaird.

Clement has cleverly constructed the plot to provide for the alien's education. The human host he has chosen is an adolescent boy who soon returns to school. The classes provide a wealth of information for the Hunter and speed his progress in adapting to this new world. One reference to the learning process provides some insight into the process of acquiring language. Of the full curriculum provided for the alien by his host's class attendance, a subject he is familiar with through his experience with space travel provides the Hunter with the best means for bridging the communication gap.

> The boy's course included, among other subjects, English, physics, Latin, and French; and of those four, oddly enough, physics proved most helpful in teaching the Hunter the English language.[4]

Throughout the novel, the Hunter is provided with opportunities to learn through direct observation and experience. He is not openly involved in the alien society he finds himself a part of, so he is permitted an uninterrupted education. Though his character is able to observe and learn full time, Clement is careful to acknowledge the limitations inherent in learning about a new language and culture. The Hunter learns quickly but not completely. After a number of weeks' learning, the alien's new skills are limited to the ability to visualize new words he hears (allowing for spelling irregularities). His vocabulary matches that of an intelligent ten-year-old (though his understanding of that vocabulary is somewhat limited), and he can make enough sense of tenth-grade English to provide ample opportunity to judge the meaning of words by their context. The Hunter's progress, when measured in human terms, seems remarkable. There are, however, serious limitations to learning through observation alone. The potential for misinterpretation is high, so the Hunter must interact with his host to progress further with his understanding and his mission.

Bridging the communication gap

From this base, the Hunter is prepared to make his assault on the communication gap. But the Hunter's physical makeup does not permit standard forms of communication. Necessity being the mother of invention, the Hunter does what other Clement characters do in similar situations—he experiments with different systems for communication until he finds one that works.

The Hunter decides to try tightening the muscles in Bob's fingers while the boy is seated at his typewriter in order to produce a readable message. Clement briefly acknowledges the difficulty in this effort beyond the need for an understandable message: "The chances of success for the experiment depended largely on the boy's reaction when he found his fingers moving without orders."[5] The one variable that is impossible to control is human emotion, yet emotion can be a definite barrier to communication.

The attempt fails because it produces panic in the host. In another attempt, the Hunter tries to produce intelligible sounds using Bob's vocal cords. When this produces even more panic, the Hunter resorts to a more direct approach—he leaves Bob's body one night and writes him a note. Following his apology, the Hunter tells Bob:

> "... I can, if you relax, work your muscles as I did last night, or if you will look steadily at some evenly illuminated object I can make shadow pictures in your own eyes. I will do anything else within my power to prove my words to you, but you must make the suggestions for such proofs. This is terribly important to both of us. Please let me try again."[6]

Communication is often imperative for Clement's characters. Once the Hunter has obtained the cooperation of his host, communicating is much less of a problem. The Hunter uses the boy's eyes as the medium, spelling out his messages in shadow letters, an interesting medium from Clement's point of view. Using this method, Clement builds certain restrictions in to the communication process. A more desirable method might be to allow the Hunter to assimilate the boy's memory and communicate directly through the boy's own thoughts.

When discussing the symbiotic relationship with Clement, he remarked that he thinks

that memory is believed to be at the neuron connection level rather than the molecular level, as was once believed. Because the Hunter, as Clement has created him, is only able to share molecular properties such as food and oxygen with his host, such direct communication is impossible. "But that doesn't mean that there couldn't be a lifeform using molecular level memory code and thought code," Clement said in a characteristic aside as he considered the possibility.[7] "But," he notes, "if it did, I see no obvious way in which it would communicate with human beings. There would still have to be some sort of coding system developed."[8]

Even in reexamining the situation and allowing for a possibility he had not considered previously, Clement still sees a need for communication using a method with inherent limitations. But, beyond the need for a "coding system" used for communication, Clement allows for limitations imposed by the senses that also restrict the amount of knowledge that can be acquired.

The Hunter in *Needle* uses his host's eyes to collect visual images and his ears to collect aural information, but there is no mention of the Hunter using touch or smell. This implies a limitation beyond those of the senses themselves.

> "I haven't been able to come up with a sense that was all-perceptive, which would record on all bands and collect all imaginable data. It seems more or less axiomatic to me that any being who's going to learn through his/her/its senses is inherently limited."[9]

While this plays a role in *Needle,* it is more important in other novels where certain senses are less developed because there is less need for those senses in the being's own environment or there are "engineering" reasons why they are not present.

Beyond the limitations of the senses themselves is the limitation imposed by their incomplete use. Both the Hunter and Bob are able to observe the same scenes and events and, with certain restrictions, communicate directly in a fairly timely fashion. Occasionally, the Hunter is able to take advantage of his ability to observe through his host's senses without involving the host.

In one instance, Bob tours the island's chemical processing sites with his alien guest. Bob has a basic understanding of what takes place there since chemical processing facilities are the principal industry on the island. The Hunter's capacity and desire for knowledge takes over and he is able to learn more from observation than the boy could possibly give him by description. Still, where the boy is more knowledgeable, the Hunter gains a sufficient understanding through Bob's descriptions.

> (The Hunter) got a good idea—better than Bob had, owing to his much greater knowledge of biology—about the workings of the island's principal industry, though he was not sure how useful the knowledge would be. He learned, from Bob's eager descriptions of past excursions, to know the outer reef and its intricacies almost well enough to find his way around it himself. He learned, in short, about all anyone could without actually journeying personally over the patch of rock, earth, and coral that was Bob's home.[10]

In this one description, Clement demonstrates the power of direct observation over communicating via a coding system such as spoken or written language. Conversely, he demonstrates that there are instances where indirect information gained through communication with the person holding the knowledge can be valuable. But, just as Clement describes the limitations of communication, he demonstrates how reliance on sense perception can be misleading. The Hunter has perceived a more accurate picture of the chemical processing done on the island than Bob could convey, but he sometimes is restricted in what he is able to observe. An incomplete observation can lead to an

erroneous conclusion being drawn. Bob realizes this and puts the concept to the test.

When Bob devises a plan to destroy the criminal the Hunter is seeking, the boy avoids looking towards a window at the back of a shed so that the Hunter will not know there is more than one exit. Bob places himself in a dangerous situation and relies on the Hunter's trust to allow him to complete his plan. The situation he has created should frighten the Hunter to act if *he* is in fact the criminal. So, Clement has created a counter to his argument favoring learning through direct observation. Though it works well in most instances, he points out that, like the limitations imposed by a coding system, direct personal observation and dependence on sense perception may not provide a complete picture.

Going beyond physical symbosis

The one element that is missing in *Needle* is the ability for the two partners to link minds. Both are intelligent beings capable of individual thought, but those thoughts must be communicated in order to be shared. And even then, both characters are subject to cultural limitations that may confuse the message because of its context. All that is necessary for Bob to block the Hunter's observations is for him to close his eyes, avoid looking in a specific direction, avoid reading a particular book, or speak in a language the Hunter does not yet understand (or at a level beyond his comprehension).

By 1980, when *Nitrogen Fix* is published, Clement bridges this gap. The Observer race in this novel is capable of complete exchange of memories. By physically coupling, two members of the Observer race exchange and assimilate the new knowledge each has acquired since last coupling. Though this appears to be the ultimate in communication, there are limitations.

A race that is capable of memory exchange by direct contact has little need for other methods of communication. The Observers have no voice or breathing equipment, according to the story. There is also no need for a written language since every member is capable of knowing all that is known by any and all of the members of the race.

In his novel, Clement places the non-speaking Observers on Earth at a time when oxygen levels in the atmosphere have been seriously depleted. The human beings joined by Bones, the central Observer in the story, have worked out an elaborate language of gestures. The gestures serve as the only means of communicating between the two races. The gesture language also supplements voice communications among the members of the family Bones has attached himself to, allowing them another medium for communication and clarification. The gesture code proves useful for the humans since they must wear masks whenever they are in the atmosphere: when wearing the masks, their voices are often muffled or distorted and verbal communication can be misleading or incomplete. The gesture code developed by the nomadic family Bones joins is meaningless to the city dwellers who spend most of their time in domed cities where masks are unnecessary and verbal communication is unrestricted.

Clement has been true to the design of his alien. A creature that has no need to speak or listen to speech to communicate would hardly be likely to have those capacities in any highly developed sense, even without a breathing system. The Sarrians in *Iceworld,* after all, have an unusual breathing system but use a spoken language. Therefore, the Sarrians are able to approximate human speech when it becomes necessary.

It is also reasonable to assume that Bones' race would have some sense of hearing for

self preservation. But Clement places limits on that sense.

> An explanation, however detailed, that Bones' kind lacked both pitch and timbre discrimination would have meant nothing to (the humans). They knew only that their strange friend seemed unable to distinguish words which seemed quite different to them, and that it was necessary to supplement vocal communications with gestures.[11]

Since Clement implies that there is no other race capable of the type of mental coupling that the Observers use, Bones is flawed in his ability to collect information.

Clement admits that he did not intentionally create this communication barrier.

> The limitation generally came not from what I wanted the character to be able or unable to do, but from what seemed likely to be the case just from the engineering of the character.[12]

Likewise, the gesture code was not an intentional solution to this problem.

> That was incidental. I didn't design things so as to have the gesture code available. I realized it was likely to be there under the circumstances and used it.[13]

Once Clement creates a tool such as the gesture code in *Nitrogen Fix* he goes on to explore the implications of the tool's use. As we see in *Nitrogen Fix,* the implications are central to Clement's recurring theme of knowledge and its communication. The child in the family Bones has attached himself to is interesting in her use of language. She understands most of the gestures Bones and her parents use, yet she tends to use more spoken language than gestures when she communicates. She is, in essence, a bilingual child, reflecting the principal language used in her home. When indoors, masks are not necessary, so it is logical that the human family would use their native spoken language rather than a system of complicated gestures.

As a plot device, the family's heavy use of spoken language leaves Bones out of much of the conversation and hampers his ability to gather information. Conversely, the use of the gesture code can restrict the child's understanding of the meaning of words and concepts. Clement, as a parent and teacher, understands the problem and provides a means for the child to learn. When the parents talk to the child, they almost automatically include explanations of terms and concepts she might not understand.

> It may be dangerous, but we have to go close enough to save the jail—*the air place on shore*—in case the fire gets close to it . . . You'll have to take care of the raft and the tent, in case any sparks—*little pieces of fire*—fall on them."(italics added)[14]

This technique of explaining terms in context is valuable when teaching a child or when teaching someone a new language. It reflects some lessons Clement has undoubtedly learned both as a teacher and as a novelist dealing with the problem of communication.

Throughout this process, the humans exchange vital information and the child continues to broaden her knowledge of the spoken language. We can assume that spoken language is used in conjunction with the gesture code in establishing meaning for the gestures. But, Bones, the uncomprehending observer, receives very little information from these verbal exchanges. We, as readers, can observe this fact and see the results in later episodes. Without the type of clarification and contextual examples the child receives, Bones is left to sort out meanings from whatever knowledge he or the other observers have been able to obtain previously. This means that there is a level of ignorance that the Observers perpetuate throughout their exchanges of knowledge.

Establishing levels of knowledge

The obvious lowest level of knowledge is a total lack of knowledge. Clement does not deal

with this subject often except by way of contrasting a desire for knowledge with the relative ignorance that preceded it. Another level of knowledge that approximates ignorance is stupidity. Stupidity, according to Clement's examples, is the failure to apply the knowledge an individual already possesses or should possess.

Clement points to the distinction between ignorance and stupidity in *Nitrogen Fix*. He says of Kahvi, "When she was annoyed, she sometimes didn't distinguish carefully between stupidity and the ignorance which could, after all, be equally deadly."[15] The distinction Clement is making is not between ignorance and stupidity; he tells us that the result can be the same. An ignorant person is incapable of applying knowledge he does not have. Without making a judgement whether the ignorant person has an obligation to seek knowledge, Clement uses Kahvi to throw his harshest admonition at a character who has acted out of stupidity, "Were you trying to think?"[16]

The answer to Clement's rhetorical question, of course, is "No." The consequences in this fictional incident are no less serious than survival itself. But, by making his point in this setting, Clement has added significantly to his argument that knowledge in and of itself is not enough, we must exercise our minds and put that knowledge to good use. Clement explored this idea in more depth in an earlier novel, *Mission of Gravity*. We will see the argument carried to its conclusion when we discuss that novel.

The further limitations of communication

Complete knowledge requires precise communication, and Clement is deeply aware of this. Clement often deals with ambiguity in his novels through his careful discussions of the complexities of exchanging information between different species of beings. He places an added emphasis on communication in *Nitrogen Fix* by presenting us with a race of human beings who value honesty as highly as life. If asked a direct question, the nomads of *Nitrogen Fix* feel compelled to give a correct answer, even if a lie or incomplete information would have benefited or protected them. The concept is credible in this context because so much of the nomad's survival depends on complete and accurate information.

Ironically, in the same novel Clement has created a being who is capable of complete and accurate communication with one of his own race but severely limited in his ability to communicate with the members of another race. Bones, the Observer, maintains a level of ignorance throughout the novel as a result of this limitation.

Through Bones, the reader begins to appreciate this problem. While observing the male member of the nomad family talking to another human, Bones questions the human capacity for communication.

> The human Earrin had gone into the jail where there seemed to be another of his species. Could they really transfer memories only by this crude sound-and-gesture code?[17]

Bones, with his ability for total memory exchange, is contrasted with the limitations of speech and gesture. Yet Bones is not without his flaws. As we just saw, Bones is limited in his ability to communicate with and understand the human characters.

To add to the restrictions imposed on Bones' observations, the earthlings are the first intelligent race Bones' people have encountered. Prior to this, they have had to rely entirely on observation for their information. It is possible, in the context of Clement's plot, that only Bones has established direct communication with any natives. This further complicates the collection of data since it implies that the Observers operate under the

severe limitation of using only information that is collected thorugh direct communication by one of their species. What they are sharing is a collective memory made up entirely of partial knowledge.

If two factors limiting knowledge are stupidity (the failure to use knowledge) and ignorance (the lack of knowledge), Clement demonstrates that partial knowledge is also partial ignorance. Donald Hassler has observed that Clement concerns himself with the issue of the accumulation of partial knowledge.

> Since knowledge and the communication of knowledge are at best only partially efficient, the means of acquiring knowledge and testing its accuracy are of the utmost importance if the epistemological problem is to be taken seriously. One of Clement's main themes, then, has to do with all the conditions, opportunities, and limitations that govern accurate knowledge.[18]

Bones and the other Observers, besides their limited means for collecting data, have no true means for checking its accuracy. If the communication barrier could be overcome the humans do not have the information the Observers need. Because of a social stigma that forbids any discussion of science, even the earthlings are unclear about the real cause for the atmospheric shift the Observers are investigating.

Clement makes one more telling observation through Bones. It is part of another recurring theme for him.

> How did the human mind face the fact that nearly all the knowledge it acquired could not be transmitted and must be destroyed when the unit which had acquired it terminated its action?[19]

Unlike the Observers of *Nitrogen Fix,* we are unable to convey the entirety of our accumulated knowledge to others. Much of what we know—be it complete or incomplete knowledge—dies with us.

Asked about this loss of knowledge, Clement admits, "I'm very aware of that, of course, in my profession (as a school teacher)."[20] When asked whether he felt this led to a gradual erosion of knowledge, Clement replied in the negative.

> If anything, I think we're improving. I've done a lot of wishful thinking on better ways to communicate. I've enjoyed the devices that other authors have come up with, mechanical educators of one type or another. I've never been very convinced by the proposed mechanism for them. I've steered clear of them in my own stories. It's just part of hard science fiction.[21]

Accumulation of knowledge will continue to depend on individual effort, according to Clement's view. And collective knowledge will be subject to the limitations imposed by communication and the willingness to communicate.

The cycle of knowledge

Knowledge becomes a part of the life cycle in Clement's novels. We see this very clearly in an earlier novel, *Cycle of Fire.* The principal native character in the story, Dar Lang Ahn, appears when he is near the end of his life. He is carrying books representing a portion of his city's knowledge. He must deliver them to a repository known as the Ice Ramparts so that the knowledge will survive him. According to Clement's plot, all of the members of Dar's race will die soon as their planet enters the "hot" phase of its existence. The books the natives are attempting to deliver to the Ice Ramparts are the collected observations made during their lifetimes—the entire store of their current knowledge. This will provide the basis for the reemergence of their civilization once the hot cycle has run its course and Dar's lifeform is reborn.[22] The knowledge, therefore, is essential to the continuation of Dar's race.

We are told that Dar's sense of duty keeps him moving in the direction of this goal even though his glider has crashed. His thoughts are not for his own comfort or survival, only the safety of his books. Dar's sense of duty is so great that he cannot conceive of being separated from the books. When he comes to a crevasse, he is perplexed.

> The gap was too wide to jump—in most places too wide even for one without a burden, and Dar Lang Ahn never thought of abandoning his load. . . . The thing that delayed him longest in finding a solution was, of course, his determination not to be separated from the books. It took him an unbelievably long time to get the idea that the separation need not be permanent; he could throw the books across the gap and then jump himself.[23]

It is not stupidity that keeps Dar from this conclusion for so long, but the importance of the knowledge he carries. Even if he does not survive to deliver the books, they must be protected so that they can be retrieved by someone else if possible. If anything, this supports Clement's own concern for the importance of perpetuating knowledge.

This cycle of providing the future generation with the accumulated knowledge of the present generation places a great deal of importance on the knowledge that has been collected. And yet, Clement shows us that this knowledge is incomplete. As with the Observers of *Nitrogen Fix,* Dar's race values first-hand knowledge. Indeed, the books he is delivering are really collections of the first-hand observations he and others of his race have made during their lifetimes. Clement demonstrates that mere data are not sufficient for understanding, thus shifting to another of his theories of epistemology.

Dar collapses from thirst in a volcanic region of his planet while attempting to complete his journey on foot following the crash of his glider. He is revived by a human being who has been marooned on the planet. Nils Kruger takes a cactus-like plant and squeezes its juice into the mouth of the native. From this, Dar draws an incorrect conclusion that will provide confusion through most of the novel.

> Dar Lang Ahn concluded instantly that Kruger must be a native of the volcano region, since he had such surprising knowledge of its plant life.[24]

Clement purposely lets this misunderstanding stand through much of the novel. It is testimony to the limitations of knowledge gained through observation alone.

Kruger, who we know is not a native of any region of the planet, appears to be as confused as Dar. He sees the native in trouble but does not realize immediately that his problem is thirst. After all, any of the cactus-like plants within easy reach would have satisfied this need. Clement allows this observation to compound the confusion. Kruger assumes from Dar's distress that Dar is not a native of the planet.

As in *Needle,* where the Hunter's abilities to collect information through direct observation can be limited, both Dar and Kruger allow their observations to remain incomplete. Dar learns almost exclusively through direct experience. His own book is a record of those experiences. Kruger is able to learn by experience and by association. He is not a native of the volcano region as Dar assumes, therefore he is not familiar with its plant life. He may never have seen a cactus, but when he is placed in a desert without water, he integrates information that he may have received vicariously with his present experiences and deduces a relationship that provides new knowledge. That is, he uses descriptions of cacti he may have heard or read, integrates that with some knowledge that plants on Earth must retain water to live, couples that with his present observations, and infers that the plants in this planet's desert must also retain fluids.

Dar's failure is not one of intelligence, but a matter of looking at information in

isolation and being unable to view it in a new context. As Clement has observed through Kahvi in *Nitrogen Fix,* there is a difference between stupidity and ignorance. Dar does not fail to use the cactus to save his life out of ignorance. The same mistake by Kruger would have been stupidity.

There are other factors besides communication that can limit knowledge. One of these is availability. As *Nitrogen Fix* begins to demonstrate, the knowledge needed to understand the change in Earth's atmosphere is not available because scientific knowledge is shunned. Dar Lang Ahn and his people have photographic memories, therefore, it is safe to assume that he does not know about the cactus-like plants because that information is not available. Though the reason that information is not available to Dar may be because the hostile environment has not promoted observation, Clement is leading up to the issue of censorship as another limitation on knowledge.

Clement poses an interesting problem in *Cycle of Fire.* He has consistently presented the search for knowledge as a noble cause. He supports this effort among his fictional characters as he must among his students. Yet, the hot life in this novel restrain Dar's people through censorship. Kruger becomes a threat because he represents a level of knowledge that could permit Dar's people to leave the planet. This would be fatal to both races because of their biological dependence on each other for reproduction. The principal hot life teacher speaks words that are unexpected from a character of Clement's creation:

> "Would you be willing to promise not to reveal any knowledge to Dar Lang Ahn's people, except what we approve?"[25]

But Clement reasserts his own position in a later chapter.

> At the moment I must confess that your attitude reminds us of certain historical groups on our own world, and every time in the past that such a group has managed to curtail or control the spread of knowledge the result has been extremely unfortunate.[26]

Realizing that some teachers must survive in order to restart the learning process with a new generation, Kruger hopes to prolong his friend's life by teaching him so much that he cannot record it all in the time he has left. Ironically, this plan creates some problems with Kruger's people. Computing the speed with which the Abyormenites have developed intelligence, the Earth scientists fear that the race could surpass man in the galaxy if given too much information.

> "I don't like to do it any better than you do, or than young Kruger will, but I'm afraid the only thing we can reasonably do is prevent Dar Lang Ahn from taking the knowledge he has acquired back to his people. Unless we do that we've given them the galaxy."[27]

In the end, Dar learns as much as he can. He understands Kruger's purpose and says he actually went along with the idea for a while out of a sense of duty. He felt that it was important to bring back as much of the knowledge as he could, but it is all too much for Dar and his race. He ends up censoring the information himself by exercising judgment.

> "There was something else they needed more (than the knowledge itself), and gradually I came to understand what it was. It's *method,* Nils. It's the very way you people go about solving problems—imagination and experiment together. That was the thing my people had to learn and the thing I had to show them. Their problems are different from yours, after all; they'll have to solve them for themselves. Of course, the facts are important, too, but I didn't give too many of those. Just scattered pieces of information here and there, so that they could check their answers once in a while."[28]

Dar has learned a crucial lesson. It is one that Kruger unwittingly explained to the hot life

teachers himself when he told them, "Knowledge and ability are two different things."[29]

Clement adds a qualifier to the old adage "Knowledge is power." Clement might say, "Knowledge is powerful for those who can apply it." His themes run deeper than the ability to communicate that store of full and partial knowledge we hold. We must go back to an earlier novel to see the practical implications of what Clement is telling us and to realize that the issue of applying knowledge has been on his mind from the beginning of his career as a teacher and a novelist.

The same lesson, that it takes knowledge and ability together before the knowledge is effective, is presented in *Mission of Gravity*. Barlennan, the clever sea trader, realizes the potential value of the earth science he sees demonstrated by Charles Lackland. He devises a plan to try to force Lackland to teach him more of that science. He is under the misconception that Lackland has been withholding information.

> "Believe me, we were not trying to fool you. (The machines) are complicated; so complicated that the men who design and build them spend nearly half their lives first learning the laws that make them operate and the arts of their actual manufacture. . . . Please, Barl, take my word as the sincerest truth when I tell you first that I for one could not (teach you), since I do not understand a single one of them; and second, that not one would do you the least good if you did comprehend it.[30]

Barlennan is no fool and, over the long association he has had with Lackland and the earth science, he realizes the truth of the human's statement.

> "It was actually when you were teaching us about the gliders that I began to have a slight understanding of what was meant by your term 'science'. I realized, before the end of that episode, that a device so simple you people had long since ceased to use it actually called for an understanding of more of the universe's laws than any of my people realized existed."[31]

The important fact for Clement and his readers is not that there is more knowledge than either can assimilate, or that there are complications that limit the ability to communicate that knowledge. The point that stands out in Clement's novels and remarks is the need to pursue knowledge and understanding together. One of the parting statements of Barlennan, his Mesklinite sea captain, sums up Clement's role and the attitude he admires, "I want to know much—more than I can learn, no doubt; but if I can start my people learning for themselves—well, I'd be willing to stop selling at a profit."[32] Perhaps this is why Clement prefers to call his writing a paying hobby—if he can start a learning process in his readers, he may gladly stop selling at a profit.

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In Foundation *35 Edward James of the University of York's History Department considered the relationship between History and sf. Here he looks through proto-sf eyes at a historical problem which remains an ongoing, contemporary anguish.*
Ed James has lately joined the editorial team of Foundation as Deputy Editor.

1886: Past Views of Ireland's Future

EDWARD JAMES

The agreement in Autumn 1985 between Dublin and Westminster over the future of Northern Ireland seems to have done more to unite Protestant feeling in Northern Ireland than any other political move for a very long time. It does not take much of a prophet to anticipate that 1986 will be a politically stormy year in Northern Ireland. As such, perhaps, a thoroughly Irish way to celebrate the centenary of 1886, the first unsuccessful attempt to solve the Irish problem in a radical way. 1886 was a crucial year in the long and unhappy history of relations between Ireland and Britain, and one which (like 1986, perhaps) concentrated the minds of those in both countries on what the future might bring. And inspired, perhaps, by such fictional warnings as Sir George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871), a number of writers decided to express their worries in the form of fictions set in the future. As Dr I.F. Clarke showed in his important study *Voices Prophesying War, 1763-1984* (1966), this form of reaction to political events was not uncommon in the late nineteenth century. No doubt the writers I shall discuss below would have been nonplussed to see themselves categorised with a genre that Brian Aldiss so convincingly argued began with *Frankenstein.* But the use of fiction to depict future worlds as a warning to the present (or, very occasionally, as a goal for which to aim) is an

inherent part of the whole movement of speculative fiction that we label sf. And I am encouraged that Darko Suvin, who has theorised much about what constitutes and does not constitute sf, is happy to include these examples within the fold: indeed he refers to them as "that curious and interesting subgenre, so far much too little if at all noticed, the 'future civil war in Ireland,' which flourished during the Home Rule debates" (Suvin 1983 p.5). (Most of what I have written below I wrote before I found a copy of Suvin's book, but, like any researcher into the history of early sf, I have benefited greatly from it.) What the sf works I discuss here lack in literary or political imagination, I hope they may gain in curiosity value and perhaps even in contemporary political relevance. I offer some discussion of six of the thirteen sf novels about Home Rule listed in the bibliography, which I think are very illuminating about Irish Protestant attitudes now as well as one hundred years ago.

Firstly, a few words about the political background. Ireland had been invaded by the English in 1169, in the time of Henry II, and from then on some or all of Ireland was more or less loosely under English control. In the seventeenth century, symbolised in nationalist mythology by Oliver Cromwell's invasion, came new and fatal developments: the settlement of Protestants in Northern Ireland and the repression of Catholicism. After the failure of the Irish Rebellion of 1798 (led by Protestants as well as Catholics), the parliament at Westminster decided to unite Ireland more closely than ever before to Britain: on January 1 1801 "the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland" came into being. It was a union which greatly benefited the landowning and industrial classes, the latter particularly in Belfast and other northern towns—above all, therefore, Protestants. But there was nationalist opposition to it, both constitutional and illegal. Catholics won political emancipation in the United Kingdom in 1829, and Catholic Irish MPs sat in Westminster for the first time; they spearheaded the various campaigns for political and economic reform for Ireland during the rest of the century. In 1886 there was for the first time a House of Commons which was (in current parlance) a "hung parliament," in which the Catholic nationalist MPs, led by Parnell, held the balance. Even before that, however, in late 1885, the Liberal prime minister, William Ewart Gladstone, had decided that Home Rule was the only just solution to Ireland's problems. His Home Rule Bill in 1886 offered very limited home rule; Westminster would still be in charge of defence, foreign affairs, customs and excise, the coinage, and so on. But opposition to it was intense and bitter, even from within Gladstone's Liberal Party. And Northern Irish Protestants felt (as they do today) betrayed by the government of the country with which they wanted union. The Orange Order, the fiercely anti-Catholic organisation that had been outlawed earlier in the century, achieved a new lease of life, and began organising resistance to Gladstone's proposals. Northern Unionists received plenty of support from the English Conservative opposition, whose determinedly pro-Unionist approach began then and hardly faltered until the 1980s. The Unionist cause led the Conservatives, now thought of as the party of "law and order," into some strange declarations. In 1912 the Conservative leader Bonar Law (born in Canada, of Ulster Protestant stock) said, as Ulster Protestants were busy arming themselves to fight Home Rule, "I can imagine no lengths of resistance to which Ulster will go which I shall not be ready to support." In 1886 Lord Randolph Churchill was a little more circumspect, but his catch-phrase "Ulster will fight; and Ulster will be right" must have encouraged many to plan for armed resistance, including the writers of our sf novels. ("Ulster" always means "Protestant Ulster" in the mouths of

Protestants and Conservatives, although in the 1886 parliament its nine counties were represented by 18 Catholic "Nationalists" and only 17 Protestant "Unionists".) Churchill's support was perhaps largely cynical; he wrote in February 1886 about "playing the Orange card . . . Please God it may turn out to be the ace of trumps and not the two." But those for whom he spoke were far from cynical: they were fierce in their belief that they could not allow themselves to be ruled by Papists in Dublin. "Home Rule is Rome Rule."

The Orange card was indeed the ace of trumps. The 1886 Home Rule Bill was a disastrous failure, and one that had profound consequences for Britain as well as Ireland. The Liberals were split; the Conservatives were forced into a new alliance with the Unionists; Ulster Protestants began to realise their strength; and Irish nationalists began to despair of peaceful parliamentary reform. Even so, a new election in 1892 gave Gladstone a chance to try again. The Home Rule Bill of 1893 was forced through the House of Commons, despite bitter opposition, but was thrown out by the House of Lords. Gladstone gave up. It was not until 1914 that a much stronger House of Commons, with a Liberal majority, passed a Home Rule Bill. It was due to come into effect in August 1914. Ulster Protestants were actively arming and training, and it emerged in 1914 that there was a real danger of British soldiers in Ireland refusing to obey Westminster's orders to fight the "Ulster Volunteers." There is little doubt that civil war would have broken out in Ireland in August 1914, had not Europe fortunately decided to stage the Great War. It was only after that war that the British government finally admitted the strength of Protestant feeling and conceded what neither Protestants nor Catholics had wanted: the partition of Ireland. The strength of Protestant feeling—underestimated by Irish nationalists and English liberals alike, in 1886, in 1914, and even in 1986—is dramatically revealed in these works of fiction.

1886 was not the first time that hopes and fears about the future of Ireland had been couched in fictional terms. But the only earlier example which I have read is very different in tone. *The Next Generation,* published in 1871, was written by John Francis Maguire: a Catholic from Cork, a lawyer and journalist, who founded the O'Connellite newspaper the *Cork Examiner,* was elected Mayor of Cork four times, and served as an MP at Westminster from 1857 until his death in 1872, the last eight years of that as Cork's own representative. He travelled in the United States, and wrote a book on the Irish in America, which was much quoted by Gladstone. He was apparently well respected; both English parties offered him office, and after his death Queen Victoria was among the subscribers to a collection for the benefit of his wife and children.

Some of his radical political views emerge in *The Next Generation,* which looked forward twenty years to '1891'. (In what follows dates in inverted commas refer to fictional dates in an author's future.) It is astonishing how many reforms had come to pass in those twenty years; an astonishing tribute to his optimism, perhaps. The Church of England had ceased to be the established church, and a cardinal and a papal nuncio sat in the House of Lords. A Charter of Women's Independence had been passed; women had become MPs; a women's university had been set up, and there were women's clubs in London, the Minerva and the Mermaid. Maguire is certainly attempting to raise male smiles in portraying the ludicrous aspects of female emancipation, but there is surely a real reforming impulse there. Women in '1891' had even become surgeons, and Maguire obviously realises the potential obscenity of that suggestion, for he devotes three pages to

defending the idea of teaching anatomy to women.

Volume 3 of this three-volume work is mostly concerned with Ireland, written from the point of view of a future enlightened Protestant. The narrator bemoans the evils which had befallen the country since the Act of Union with the United Kingdom in 1801: "When terrible crimes startled the public mind of England, too many in that country thought more of the crime than of the cause of the crime, and while attempting to deal with the symptoms, they altogether ignored the cause of the disease . . ."—something which Maguire regarded as "shocking bad doctoring!" During this time the Protestants "stood aloof from our Catholic brethren, but when we found how thoroughly consistent they were in their policy, which we now feel to have been honestly National, and when we began to appreciate the fact that no real cause of division any longer existed between ourselves and them, Heaven gave us grace enough to induce us to meet them fully half-way." The result of this agreement between Protestants and Catholics was Home Rule for Ireland. A viceroy was appointed—the Prince of Wales—who married an Irish girl, and presided over a prosperous country. "The prosperity is real. That you can see on the face of the country, in the dress of the people, in their houses, in their circumstances, ay, in their very manner." And Ireland and England themselves lived in peace together, which only happened, added Maguire the journalist, because the great output of anti-Irish literature had dried up: if this had not happened "not all the legislation, not all the wise and good measures that could be passed, could have reconciled this country to England . . . the evil done by the Newspaper Press was enormous." And Maguire argued that all that separated Irish from English was misinformation and lack of education: there was no racial difference between the English and the Irish. (This last was just as radical for Maguire's times as his women's lib views, for scientists had "proved" the physical differences between the various European races to most people's satisfaction. Around this time the great medieval historian E.A. Freeman went on a lecture tour of the States, and noted at one point that America's racial problems would all be solved when the last Irishman had been hanged for the murder of the last negro.)

The optimism of this Catholic politician and his belief in the possibility of the peaceful resolution of England's Irish question was shared by at least one subsequent novelist: the anonymous author of *The Battle of the Moy* (1883), in which a Home Rule Ireland declares itself a republic during a war between Britain and Germany, and wins prosperity for itself. (I do not know the message of the 1882 novel published in New York: *Ireland's War! Parnell Victorious,* although the title suggests that it was not dissimilar.) But the six novelists who reacted to Gladstone's proposals for Home Rule, whose works I describe below, were very different in tone: they are all fictionalised threats as much as warnings, from the pens of Unionists. Most are anonymous, and whether these Unionists are from Ireland, north or south, or from Britain I cannot tell, although the place of publication may sometimes be some clue.

The first I would mention is *The Great Irish Rebellion of 1886,* "retold by a Landlord" and "dedicated to all who hate treason, and who love God, their Queen and their country." Like all the others the main object of the hatred and distrust of the author is Gladstone himself: "a statesman whose insatiate love of the popularity and loud applause of the Great Unwashed mainly contributed to the disasters of the past year." Home Rule came about in '1886', but "The North! the glorious patriotic North! True Orange, loyal Ulster!" held out. "Had they forgotten their glorious old traditions? Had they forgotten

Aughrim? Did the mention of the memory of the Boyne strike on unenthusiastic ears? (etc etc)." (The answer, in '1886' as in 1986, is, of course, no.) The landlord narrator observes the disasters of '1886' from his home in "beautiful Donegal," the westernmost of the nine counties of Ulster; interestingly he comments that he had never joined any political body himself, "as I was so anxious to give no cause for dissatisfaction to any of my tenants or my neighbours"—all of the former at least were, presumably, Catholic. But his tolerance is rewarded by a Catholic plot to exterminate all landlords. The narrator's son joined the Orange Army. Protestants were slaughtered in the south, and even Belfast fell into rebel hands, the gas-works being blown up and many people slaughtered in a night-time uprising. The leader of the Nationalists was a "Yankee": even then the possibilities of transatlantic support for the nationalist cause were appreciated (unless this is a jibe at the nationalist leader Parnell, and his American mother). The Orange Army gathers, and we see them sitting in their camp at Carrickfergus: "the ruddy firelight played on those enthusiastic and loyal Ulstermen's honest faces as they and their friends the soldiers joined lustily in the inspiriting Orange songs and in 'God Save the Queen', whilst some indulged in 'Rule Britannia'." They also indulged in a song about hanging the Pope, which is quoted in full. The inspiriting songs had their effect; the Orangemen took Belfast by storm, and then Dublin. "The peasantry are utterly vanquished. There is to be, of course, no more 'Home Rule'."

The anonymous *Newry Bridge, or Ireland in 1887* (Edinburgh and London, 1886) is rather less emotional and more politically aware, but has the same message. It is, of course, Gladstone's fault. "One reason, indeed, which the Prime Minister put forward, was that Ireland had been so badly treated in the past, she ought now to be given her own way, and allowed to set the country on fire if she fancied it; which is just as if I were to say to the little one here, "Now, my darling, I have been a very careless father to you; so now pick up that poker out of the fire, if you like, and burn a hole in our best carpet" . . . And so the Bill was passed; but when the time came, it was the Irish members themselves who did not seem altogether happy at the idea of saying goodbye to the British Parliament. You see, there would be no one left to badger or shout at, for they didn't mean to fight among themselves at first, and after all, though they had got what they wanted, it would be a come down for all but the leaders."

The Irish party gradually realised the way in which the Home Rule Act restricted their ability to act; all military and financial matters were still controlled by Westminster. But Home Rule was the thin end of the wedge (as "Loyalists" in 1986 maintain about the Hillsborough agreement of 1985). Gladstone would let more and more slip into the hands of the Dublin politicians. "True he had used some grand words about maintaining the unity of the Empire and the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, but such a master in the art of explaining his words away would find it easy to swallow trifles like these." At first the Irish parliament was "such a happy family . . . because the Ulster men weren't there at all." Belfast and Dublin studiously ignored each other. But then Dublin persuaded Westminster to withdraw British troops from Ireland, and it set up its own bench of judges, whose jurisdiction Ulstermen refused to recognise. Westminster gave Ireland control over Customs and Excise, after "regrettable incidents" in Cork involving the drowning of British customs officers. And so Ulstermen began arming themselves. They called their volunteer contingents "shooting clubs," to make them legal, and they went out practising with rifle and bayonet, uniformed, marching in step. Guns came in

from the United States, and hundreds of Englishmen came over to join the cause; the Ulster Defence Fund attracted thousands of pounds. The anonymous author recognised that the political situation was complex; it was not a question of Protestant versus Catholic or of North versus South. There were many Catholics in Belfast, many Protestants in the South, many Protestants who were nationalists, and many Catholics who were loyal to the Union. The police force in particular was very much divided between nationalists and loyalists. ("Loyalty", of course, then as now, did not mean loyalty to Westminster—Gladstone's government kept on telling Ulstermen to keep quiet under Irish government—it meant loyalty to the concept of Protestant supremacy.) Finally the Ulster loyalists assembled, and took Newry by force. Martial law was declared by the Dublin government, and all expressions of sympathy with the North were forbidden. The rival forces met at Newry (in our world just north of the border between the Republic and the Six Counties), and the Loyalists won the battle. Not on their own, however: thousands of English and Scottish volunteers had come over "to succour a people rightly struggling to be free, and who would not submit to the hated tyranny which had been aimed against their liberties at the imperious bidding of a reckless old man and his servile following. What had the other side to put against such forces? Do you suppose that the ring of place-hunting demagogues to whose mercies the English Minister wanted to hand over all power in Ireland were the sort of men to keep working together for long?" Of course not. Once the Loyalists had defeated the Nationalist troops in the battle of Newry they swept into the south and found little resistance. They showed, however, great clemency and thoughtfulness to the conquered Irish. The Prime Minister in England was driven from power, and the Home Rule Act repealed.

Neither of these Unionist comments on Home Rule seem particularly concerned with the religious differences, summed up in the slogan "Home Rule is Rome Rule." But Edward Lester, whose *The Siege of Bodike: a Prophecy of Ireland's Future* was published in Manchester and London in 1886, was clearly worried more by the Papist menace than the threat to the unity of the Empire. Lester (1831-1905) was himself a clergyman, educated in Cambridge and living entirely in England, latterly in Lancashire (Suvin 1983 p.187). When Home Rule is declared in his novel the new Lord Lieutenant from England is welcomed by the Lord Mayor of Dublin (a baker) and the Archbishop of Dublin, a Maynooth man (that is, trained in the Catholic seminary to the west of Dublin), "of the usual Irish priestly type . . . assurance masking ignorance, and pomposity taking the place of dignity." Initially Orangemen tried to make the best of it, joining in deliberations in the new parliament in Dublin. But there was a plot to drive them out and to establish a Republic, free of all constitutional ties with England. Public disorder grew. Troops fired on a mob in Sackville Street, Dublin (where, in our world, thirty years later, British troops besieged Irish nationalists in the Easter Rising); Cork and other towns were on the point of rebellion; and Ulstermen were arming and preparing to march on the South. The Irish began strengthening Bodike as a fortress, and almost all towns outside Ulster were preparing to declare for the Republic. "Nothing but blood in rivers would wash away the insane desire of the people for a Utopian liberty such as no republic ever had or has. The people had been happy enough before the absurd Home Rule craze; they had lower rentals than in England, far better schools, dispensing doctors in every village free to all the poor; they had less taxes, less duties, and yet for all that they must cry after a liberty unobtainable by mortal men."

The Ulstermen came south: "onward, ever closing their deadly grip, pressed the stern

sturdy Ulster men; and not without cruelty was their progress, for one article of their creed was "Shoot every Roman priest you meet; they are the real causes of this row," and so many an innocent victim was given short shrift. Of course the result of this was that the few remaining Protestant clergy in the South and West—and they were very few—were not only shot but mutilated and butchered, and in some cases their wives and children with them." Trinity College Dublin (then a staunchly Protestant university) was dynamited by the republicans, so the Orangemen of Dublin sacked Maynooth, and "treated with savage brutality the unfortunate students." In response republicans began dynamiting banks, churches and town halls in the North. The Ulster army came to Bodike, and slaughtered thousands of rebels; the rebellion was over. Any Fenians found thereafter were severely dealt with, above all Irish-Americans: "it was generally felt that this nest of vipers had done more to foment discord and work destruction than any other agency except perhaps the hierarchy of the Roman Church." Two bishops and scores of priests were among those punished. An Irish University was set up, the country flooded with cheap wholesome literature, the two royal palaces in Ireland were frequently visited by the monarch, trade prospered, and all said what a lovely country Ireland was and what courteous, friendly, delightful people the Irish were.

There were other novelistic reactions to the first Home Rule Bill. *In the Year One (A.D. 1888) of Home Rule "de jure"* presents a "scary picture of mob rule, violence and rampant atheism in self-governing Ireland" (Suvin 1983 p.29); *Opening and Proceedings of the Irish Parliament: Two Visions* by G.H. Moore (an otherwise unknown G.H. Moore) presents two possibilities, riots and rebellion in '1887' with English troops restoring order, and peaceful amity between England and Ireland in '1894'.

Fears understandably remained in Protestant circles after the defeat of the Home Rule Bill of 1886, and some are expressed in an anonymous book published in London in 1888: *The Great Irish "Wake": by One Who Was There.* This is an historical narrative rather than a novelistic account, dated Dublin 1950, and telling of the fate of the short-lived constitutional experiment of the '1890s'. Queen Victoria set her signature to the Home Rule Bill in January '1890', and the new administration was set up in Dublin. It consisted of three figures well-known in our own time-line: Tim Healy, MP for an Irish seat and leading Home Ruler, who became President in '1890', J.G. Biggar, founder of the Home Rule League, who became Foreign Minister, and a certain William Ewart Gladstone, who changed his constituency from Chester to Clonakilty and became Minister of the Interior. Independence under the terms of the Home Rule Act was, of course, the thin end of the wedge. Irish nationalism ran rampant. "Streets with a suspicion of a Saxon twang in their designation were ruthlessly converted into unmistakable Hibernian names . . . everyone held a species of roving commission to remove the semblance of a crown—no matter where found—from armorial bearings to a bottle of blacking; in short every childish act worthy of a French executioner after a revolution was not only emulated but surpassed." Complete independence was soon sought for, and the crown was offered to William, or Ewart, who suddenly and conveniently announced that his real name was not Gladstone but Gallagher. "A man of weight in Orange circles" who tried to put the objections of Ulstermen to those in power in Dublin was thrown into Kilmainham Jail. Some 20,000 "stalwart men of Ulster were ranged under the Orange flag;" the South issued a proclamation calling for patriotic recruits, and there was "within a week a body of 30,000 men, consisting principally of Irish-American adventurers, lawbreakers from the larger

towns of the United Kingdom, and a small proportion of the more ignorant inhabitants." The Orangemen marched south, getting as far as Malahide (a few miles north of Dublin). There was rumour in Dublin of a great defeat, and rioting and arson followed. In a stirring speech by the Rotunda (the historic hospital at the head of Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) in Dublin), Dubliners were urged to "stop this humbug which began with a farce and has ended in tragedy" and to "shoot the remaining agitators that are still among you, for England can't afford to lose such brave lads as you've shown yourselves." Gladstone/Gallagher left, disguised as a Scot, and Ireland returned to the Union.

Not all these attempts at futurology were quite so serious: two at least were set in the form of romantic novels. In 1888 Edmund David Lyon, an infantry captain, published *Ireland's Dream: a Romance of the Future,* featuring "melodramatic loves and fights amid horrible lawlessness of newly independent Ireland. Orangemen successfully resist Dublin. Irish-American gangsters loot and rape, finally Britain restores order" (Suvin's summary, p.35). And in 1893 the anonymous *1895, Under Home Rule* was published in Dublin as a response to the second Home Rule bill of that year. Dramatic effects are achieved by liberal (if that is not an unfortunate word) use of exclamation marks and clichés, much like Orange declamations today." 'Never!' cries Charles Fitzmaurice, his young face aflame. 'Give in to those murdering scoundrels!—not likely. No; England has thrown us over, but we'll fight to the end, and there are 10,000 Orangemen on their way from Canada. They'll sweep all the Healyites and the Dillonites and the rest of the cut-throat crew into the sea." (This is the first and only example where Orangemen admit they cannot win on their own.) The scenario is much the same as usual, and the reaction from Orangemen exactly the same. Fitzmaurice Castle holds out against the Dublin Parliament which had been established with Home Rule in '1893', and there is fighting in Ulster: "Erin's green isle is red with blood, but the loyalists are staunch and true. Deserted and betrayed, they hold their own still." Fitzmaurice Castle is taken, and so is one of its members, Charteris, the lover of Fitzmaurice's sister Kate, who has deserted rather than fight against the Fitzmaurice clan. Kate goes to Queen Victoria (according to the Home Rule Act still the ultimate legal authority), and begs for a pardon. "Be calm," says the Queen. "He shall not die." The pardon reaches him, just as he is about to be shot: one of the ultimate clichés of popular melodrama. In the meantime "the Orangemen have marched boldly on Dublin, and 10,000 men have landed at Queenstown" (now Cobh, near Cork). "Then, at the eleventh hour, England awakes from her sleep and rises from the long dream of madness . . . over the scene of strife and ruin hope hovers once more, and Erin turns her weeping face to the sister island to be comforted and forgiven."

Another response to the 1893 Home Rule Bill was by 'Phineas O'Flannagan', *Ireland a Nation!,* set in an independent Ireland in '1894', where, once more, the Catholic church rules an increasingly lawless country. Suvin describes it as "satire from chauvinist Ulster viewpoint" (Suvin 1983 p.53).

Our final tale, also published in Dublin in 1893 (and not read by Suvin), is rather less tearful and more bitter: it is written by a Protestant clergyman, the Rev. Alexander Donovan, and uncompromisingly entitled *The Irish Rebellion of 1898: a Chapter in Future History.* "For many years the English government had followed in that country (Ireland) the singular policy of weakening the loyal population and strengthening the disaffected." The Disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1869, fought through by Gladstone in the face of strong antidisestablishmentarianism (a word I learnt at the age of

six or so, and have never before had the excuse to use), benefited nobody, said Donovan, "not even the lunatics and idiots whom Mr Gladstone's fellow-feeling intended to relieve." In '1893' Gladstone transferred the government of Ireland from Westminster to Dublin; by '1898' Ireland had been reduced to "the lawless condition of Hayti or Mexico . . . The taxation was ruinous, and the ministers thought of nothing but enriching themselves at the public cost." (As someone who lived in the Republic of Ireland for eight years, I have some sympathy with that prophecy.) In '1897' all Protestant churches were confiscated, and the endowments of Trinity College Dublin were handed to the Catholic Church; a systematic persecution of Protestants began. In '1898', as England went to war with France, Ireland announced it would not fight for England, and as France won the war the Irish set up an independent republic.

The immediate consequences of that are by now familiar. The Ulster members met in Belfast and began to prepare for armed action, although first they solicited Westminster for permission. "The terrified and bewildered Parliament at Westminster granted the Ulster loyalists all they desired." As Catholic persecution of Protestants grew more ferocious, Lord Wolseley marched south at the head of an army made up of English troops and Ulster volunteers. On November 5th they met Irish troops at Dundalk (just south of "our" border), and defeated them. The war was over by '1899', by which time only Ulster MPs were left in the Imperial parliament, and all the Irish legislation of the previous five years was repealed. All that had happened was due to "the wicked folly of the Liberal Party in 1893 who, acting under the sinister influence of Mr Gladstone, handed over one of the United Kingdoms to the implacable enemies of England. It is charitable to suppose that the mental disease from which that statesman died raving mad in 1894 was incipient in his brain when he induced his followers to commit this act of reckless wickedness which brought England to the verge of ruin and replunged Ireland in the poverty, anarchy and misery from which the Union of 1800 had for a time rescued that unhappy land."

It is obvious that there is little literary value in these works. But they do have value for the historian, and for the historian of sf. For the historian they are a vivid demonstration of what Protestants feared from rule by a Catholic Dublin, and also a good guide to what Protestants were expecting to do about it. There is little political imagination here; the Unionist authors can think of no alternative to the continuation of the status quo, and display almost no sympathy with what we might regard as the legitimate grievances of the majority of the Irish people. All these works stem from a crucial period in the development of Protestant identity in Ulster, and are at the origins of what remains entrenched even today as the political mythology of a majority of the citizens of the Six Counties. In the twentieth century we have, to my knowledge, no comparable works of fiction to illustrate this mythology; one can well imagine that, if an Orangeman sat down today to express his political views in science-fictional terms, the results would not, *mutatis mutandis,* look markedly different from those we have been looking at. From the point of view of the development of science fiction too, these works are of interest. They show how, by the 1880s, it had become quite natural, in a way unthinkable even twenty years before, to express fears or aspirations about the future in fictional terms. Suvin's figures for sf books published in the UK show the picture dramatically: 9 in 1848-60; 8 in 1861-70; 39 in 1871-80; 110 in 1881-90; and 219 in 1891-1900. What happened in the 1880s and 1890s was, according to John Sutherland (in Suvin 1983 p.123), "the evolution of SF

from a satirical device to a genre." There may be an enormous literary and political gulf between these writers and Wells, whose works began to appear in the 1890s, but they lived in a similar intellectual world.

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Peter Brigg's book, A Reader's Guide to J.G. Ballard, *appeared towards the end of 1985 (Starmont House, PO Box 851, Mercer Island, Washington 98040, USA; 138 pp; $6.95). The following essay is not an extract from the book but a separate paper on one of Ballard's more underrated novels. Peter Brigg recently spent a year teaching English in Shanghai, where he was able to inspect for himself some of the landscapes described by Ballard in his war novel* Empire of the Sun.

The Night Dream and the Glimmer of Light: J.G. Ballard's 'Hello America'

PETER BRIGG

Set in 2114, J.G. Ballard's *Hello America* is a study in future archaeology, a science fiction fantasy of what America could become and how the ruins might develop. Looking for truth not only in the outcome of science, technology and ecology but in the barometers of cultural fixations and the potential effects of change on the American psyche, Ballard has created a novel of the twilight of the Imperium. Both the substance and coherence of Ballard's projection, (which has, I think, a lovely serio-comic elegance) and the novel's methodological blend of science fiction, fantasy, irony, the grotesque, satire and psychological projection will be considered in what follows to argue the assertion that *Hello America* is a perceptive guess about the American "destiny."

Central to the physical reality of the future Ballard projects is an America that has been abandoned in the early twenty-first century as the outcome of a collapse of national will. In the narrative an expedition from Europe is sent to investigate some recent nuclear fallout and when they discuss the past it emerges that the energy crisis collapsed the American economy, despite several brief respites, and that in the crumbling country which was left people simply could not come to terms with vastly circumscribed lives in a land previously defined by unlimited potential, and so gave up and migrated. After this vast inversion of the original settlement of America the world's governments collaborated on a Bering Straits Dam and the climate of the abandoned America continent was radically altered when Arctic water pumped over the dam into the Pacific forced hot water up the American East coast through the Greenland Gap. Northern Europe and Siberia became temperate but America east of the Rockies became desert and west of the Rockies warm Polynesian currents were driven inshore, resulting in the creation of a vast tropical rainforest.

The key to all of this is the shock of the failure of technology to cope with the crisis in energy. Although the novel does not say so, outright, it is implicit that any similar crisis could have precipitated a similar outcome. A failure in will resulting from the visible failure in possibilities of millions of stranded automobiles and the bankruptcies of General Motors, Ford and Exxon is essentially a failure of the great dream. With the techno-triumphs

removed the key image supporting the land of hope is gone. The rest follows.

What remains in the America pictured in the novel is the detritus of America today projected forward to its fall, set off against the radical imaginative focussing tools of desert and jungle. Ballard's initial picture of New York, the cactuses crowding Central Park, sand covering automobiles, the Statue of Liberty sunk in the harbour next to the USS Nimitz, gives way to a desert odyssey through New Jersey, the turnpike crammed with abandoned cars and rattlesnakes in sand-filled Holiday Inn swimming pools. Vast empty skyscrapers stand like modern day pyramids; a civilisation's leavings preserved by the sand. Changes before the fall had included the 200 storey OPEC Tower in New York City, the building of mini-Cadillacs, the erection of the Kennedy Memorial to Jack, Teddy, and John-John, the dead presidents, and President Jerry Brown's construction of a one and half lifesize fibreglass replica of the Taj Mahal in Washington. After crossing the vast dried up Mid-West the travellers reach a Las Vegas overgrown with tropical vegetation and with giraffes (descendants of zoo escapees of a hundred years earlier) wandering the streets. Here they find elements of American society re-created in unconscious parody by an ex-Berlin-American mental patient, a passive aging scientist, and a group of Mexican teenagers who have taken on the jungle and made the beginnings of a reproduction of the vanished America. The mental patient, holed up in Howard Hughes' suite at the Desert Inn, has taken the name of Charles Manson, chosen himself President and is reviving the nuclear might of the sleeping Cruise and Titan missiles. A phantasmogoria of paranoia, neon wealth and violence, Las Vegas is the end of the dream of America, where a madman spins a roulette wheel in his "War Room" at Caesar's Palace to choose the cities of a dead America he will destroy with the remaining nuclear weapons to "purify" America from any resettlement.

From this decadent vision the novel finally moves to a ray of hope, a re-opening of the dream by the narrator Wayne Fleming with an assist from his scientist father. As the last Titan missile arcs back to destroy Las Vegas the Flemings and other escapees from Manson's black dream flee in the "Sunlight Fliers," microlight gossamer-glass-and-wire sunpowered aircraft, floating to safety behind the Rocky Mountain shield. In this last poetic image, Ballard suggests that America lives on in the minds of those, like Wayne, who believe in it as an imperishable idea of change and progress, a place to take risks, and that the means, in this case the fantastic technological advance of the Sunlight Fliers, will always follow if the dreamers dream.

As a projection of America the novel effectively charts a perfectly acceptable combination of possibilities. The evils of excessive brute technological thrust, the potentially inflexible attitudes of ever-increasing consumption, the ingrown realities of military might and political personality cult, and the conceivable outcome of engineered climate change combine with the key speculation of the effect of dream-destroying physical limits on the national psyche to produce a sound future history of America. In what follows on the methodology of the presentation the basic coherence of the vision should be borne in mind, for there is such a cornucopia of images and variety of styles in this *tour de force* that it is all too easy to assume it lacks a sound core to its vision.

When *Hello America* was first reviewed it was generally seen as a fantasy, although I hope what I have already described confirms that it is as thoroughly grounded in scientific prediction, or "futurology," as most other science fiction novels. Ballard's place in the science fiction pantheon is an uncertain one because of two tendencies: on the one hand, he extrapolates much more from psychological science than physical science and tech-

nology while, on the other hand, he obviously, indeed exoskeletally, dresses fantasies and wishes in technologically realizable garbs. Escape from the decadant Las Vegas must be into the new, post-petroleum, post-heavy technology future America so Ballard creates the Sunlight Fliers. They image the abstract hope but in detailed fashion, their ultra-thin laser impregnated glass skins generating a heliodynamic cushion, their own supporting pad of warm, rising air upon which they can float. To capture the images which have made America in their full and imposing glory Ballard has Wayne see mile-high figures of John Wayne, Marilyn Monroe, Mickey Mouse and the slain John Kennedy. But these "dreams" of America turn out to be advanced holographs, mere toys floating in the skies for the crazed Manson. Like tethered balloons which keep bumping the ground Ballard's airy fictions of the soul of America keep contacting the full, solid flower of technological extrapolation. In this very definite aspect, *Hello America* is science fiction.

In another aspect, the novel is a series of ironic and satirical observations on America, what it is and what has made it. They owe a good deal to Ballard's "outsider" position. He has lived in England since 1946 and was raised in Shanghai, spending formative years under Japanese internment. His "eye," then, is almost that of a visitor to the American Empire who gets most of his impressions from the media. The ironies he produces include the identities of the last surviving Americans, the tiny desert nomad tribes who wander America bearing with them vestiges of the dying land. There are the Executives from the Jersey shore with three piece suits under their burnouses and long since useless pocket calculators and dry pens. There are the Professors, from Boston, with access to crude distillation apparatus in the empty laboratories. And, of course, there are the Bureaucrats of Washington, the Gays of San Francisco and the Divorcees of Reno, the latter resplendent in blue rinses and mascara. The Executives are named Heinz, Big Mac, U-drive, Texaco, 7-Up, Pepsodent and GM and the lone woman among them is named Xerox, as are all their women, "because they make good copies."

A much more telling, because less comic, attack on American surfaces often in the novel when Wayne Fleming is making his gestures towards restoring America as it was in preparation for carrying on into the future.

> For his part, Wayne had done everything to open Las Vegas up and give the young Mexicans a taste of real American life. The USA was not just about computers and high-tech industries. With Paco's grudging help Wayne had renovated a drug-store and a hamburger bar near the old Greyhound Bus terminal, the first of a chain of fast-food outlets that he hoped to see spring up all around the town . . . There was a derelict Coca Cola bottling plant in north Las Vegas, and Wayne was trying to persuade McNair to spare a brief moment from his work on the Hoover Dam and start it up again, using the abundant supplies of old syrup.
>
> Drug-stores and discos were what the youngsters needed above all else. At present they spent their spare time lying around in their suites in the big hotels, dozing, watching old porno films and smoking pot, like a lot of middle-aged vacationers. [1]

Isolated by nearly two hundred years, desert, and jungle the phenomena of normal American life seem as ritualistic, strange and without real meaning to the reader as the dynastic practices of Mesopotamia.

This texture of irony and satire runs throughout the novel and at its further and darker end lie elements of the grotesque. Wayne, for all of his knowledge of the old America, misses the Manson reference for a long time, but the whole of that real life horror film of messianic, paranoiac, drug and sex-filled events is familiar to the reader. When it is brought up by someone claiming to be the President of the United States it is shocking indeed. Equally grotesque, although in a slightly comic vein, are the robot models of the

American Presidents (borrowed, obviously, from Disneyland's famous Lincoln) whom old Dr Fleming sends into battle against the mad Manson. Here history, albeit typed and posing (Carter always smiles), marches on the pretender and destroys him. Inside all great dreams lie their inversions, and these darknesses are on view in the novel.

Hello America is very much a novel about myths and mythmaking. Ballard's America is the America of public heroes: John Wayne, the astronauts, Howard Hughes, Charles Manson, and the Presidents. It is a distillation of America as myth very much as America chooses to present itself: powerful, brutal, hero-oriented, colourful, a colloquium of the images that spread out from the dominant media country of the modern world. Manson's vast laser show begins with Mickey Mouse and Marilyn Monroe in her famous pink dress and then turns to:

> Superman and Donald Duck, Clark Gable and the Incredible Hulk, a Coca Cola bottle twenty stories high, the Starship *Enterprise* like an airborne petroleum refinery, all silver pipes and cylinders, a dollar bill the size of a football field and the colour of purest Astroturf.[2]

Ballard's attitude towards the myths is the central and energizing ambiguity of the novel. On the one hand he is able to give America's greatness its deserved romantic rendering, to write largely of those massive, vital, and impressive images which give the United States its grandeur in the eyes of a jaded Europe and the world. At a more critical level he seems to have got an important conceptualisation by the tail: that America is in danger of becoming what it projects itself as being. The elements of the romantic, the bizarre, the grotesquerie of American life come into focus in a contemporary media-dominated society as never before in the history of the world and they may well become the American national definitions of the nation. The bread and circuses of Imperial Rome have been replaced by the ongoing television circus of Imperial America but with the important difference that the use of such population-controlling diversions is far less deliberate in the diverse hands of the media makers and the public figures who wish to communicate various views and impressions by managing the media. This very real, free and democratic levelling of the media leads to reinforcing images of what America *is*, at its roots, and to a very great extent controlled *by* its roots—the viewers and readers.

The danger which Ballard obviously sees in this process may well come to him partly from his knowledge of China. In the mid-nineteenth century the great Empires ruled from "the throne of heaven" were suddenly faced with the world from outside their intensely xenophobic civilisation and in the century which has followed China's absolute image of being the nation destined, by power, culture, and intelligence to rule the world has been shattered as reality poured in upon it. This great delusion of world power and control may now become the *hubris* of the United States of America, a situation furthered by the ever growing body of images that constitutes the myth which America believes of itself. In the garish, satirical yet often romantically lyrical America which he presents, Ballard brings those images into the dreamlike juxtaposition of future fantasy, a science fiction based above all on the projections of the effects of the national psyche on the future of the American nation.

Footnotes

1 J.G. Ballard, *Hello America,* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1981), pp.150-151.
2 *Ibid.*, p.136.

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Negatives in Print: The Novels of Ramsey Campbell

JOEL LANE

". . . and I am re-begot
Of absence, darknesse, death; things which are not."
— John Donne

Though the novel is commercially a more successful vehicle for writing in the horror genre than the short story, it is rarely as effective. This may be largely because the emotional investment required of both author and reader is difficult to sustain for long. Most modern horror novels have an episodic structure, like a series of short stories strung together. To be effective as a coherent whole, a horror novel has to contain the working out of an idea which is frightening in its totality and not just in its component elements: in other words, it has to be more than just a story in which frightening things happen.

The horror novels of Ramsey Campbell have, by and large, been less acclaimed than his short stories. Unlike, say, Stephen King, Campbell is less a natural story-teller than a creator of images; he tends, like Lovecraft, to conceive of the supernatural in terms of a visual revelation (usually one that is incomplete). Indeed, a preoccupation with visual imagery (and reactions to it) is responsible for so much of the effect of the novels that reading to find out "what happens" can be quite frustrating. This is not to say that they are not well plotted—rather, that the events themselves are somehow unsatisfying (at least at face value). Thus (for instance) Campbell admits that *The Face That Must Die* "works least well when it's most like a conventional thriller."

Campbell's style is highly cinematic, though in a way that might be very difficult to transfer to the cinema. The visual elements are often described as though they were being experienced *as* film. For instance: "The room was growing distant as an old film, its perspectives flattened, its surface sparkling with threats of migraine."Or, in a less explicit example: "The uproar of the pub seemed to be losing perspective, as though overcome by the dimness. The paint on the walls looked like gelatin, coating drowned faces. An unstable almost unsubstantial shape floated uncontrollably out of a table." Reality takes on photographic distortions in the character's eyes; the verbal description distorts it further, creating an image of an image. Thus the effect of dislocation achieved permits a covert series of manipulations, a kind of double-jointed style.

The use of associations to make familiar objects strange sometimes resembles the "Martian" poetry of Craig Raine, which describes the world from alien viewpoints—for instance, a cloud seen from inside an aeroplane is "an empty house/with its curtains

boiling/from the bedroom window;" in a bathroom "Two armless Lilliputian queens/ preside, watching a giant bathe." Campbell shares with Raine a delight in surrealistic transformations; however, one is more likely to flinch from the former's images, because of both their squeamish nature and their threatening mode of presentation. Also, they are rarely isolated observations, but rather are integrated into s subversive attack on perception: the "known" and the "unknown" interpenetrate, exposing the artificial nature of the distinction between them. Developing a repressed idea in a character's mind from obscurity to complete consciousness is a technique which Campbell has developed thoroughly; and it is usually achieved almost wholly on the level of visual imagery. One is often reminded of the saying that the senses function more to keep the world out than to let it in.

In Campbell's writing, thought and experience are freely interchangeable. Rose Tierney in *To Wake the Dead* experiences a dissolution of the boundary of her self: "Were her gifts only making her more perceptive—or could they attract the things she perceived?" In *Incarnate,* the account of multiple, overlapping realities prevents the reader's distinguishing one "reality" from another, let alone establishing a system of priorities among them.

However, this is not a rationale for supernaturalism. The undermining of objectivity is not there to reinforce the occult elements, but rather the other way around. Lovecraft, a dogmatic non-believer, portrayed the occult as existentially traumatic in a way that many of his readers have found difficult to swallow. Campbell works in a more underhand manner, tending to imply that "the piecing together of dissociated knowledge" towards a supernatural whole is inherently an unsound course, for reasons having to do with the psychology of belief rather than the nature of the supposed knowledge: adherence to metaphysical absolutes weakens the power of human judgement. Campbell's perception of black magic (and evil in general, whether occult or mundane) stresses its lack of human dimensions—it is a one-sided attempt to impose one's will on others. Thus Peter Grace's first instruction to the séance is DO AS YOU'RE TOLD.

The fragility of individual "free will" is a recurrent theme. Figures of authority (psychiatrists, police, customs officials) are never to be trusted. Each protagonist's struggle against "evil" is a struggle to maintain a sense of identity in the face of negation. The character of Colin in *To Wake the Dead* is exposed early on, before his involvement with Peter Grace could be suspected: "Evolution must be given time to work—it must be engineered, if necessary. Some people are capable of evolutionary leaps, but not the blacks. Many of them refuse even to be educated to white standards." Colin's antagonist in this conversation, Des, is one of several reincarnations of the young Ramsey Campbell that appear in the novels: Peter Gardner, Jimmy in the pseudonymous novel *Claw,* Terry Mace in *Incarnate.* This character recurs as a kind of spectre of Communism doing its best to haunt Europe; he is perpetually trapped in futile and vicious arguments, but there is something talismanic about his repeated appearance. He usually acts as a kind of Chorus, providing an inadvertent commentary on events of which he is ignorant. Thus Peter, on an LSD trip, seems to develop clairvoyance: "In the clouds Craig's face was flaking away beside a woman's face . . . Beneath the floor, which felt thin as ice, lay an eager grave." (He is unaware that Fanny Adamson has been killed in the room below.) Des asserts: "A jackboot stamping on a black face, that's apartheid." (*He* is unaware that Colin is connected to a Nazi cult.) Jimmy tells yet another bigot: "The absolute authority of

parents is fascism in the home. Hardly anyone cares, even when they know what's going on." (Which applies ironically to the situation of Liz and her daughter Anna.)

A strikingly allegorical image occurs in *Incarnate* when Freda revisits Sage's shop in Blackpool, to find it derelict and hollowed out to the shell of a building. "This was the place, Sage's name above the doorway proved it was. She stumbled out onto the pavement and stared up at his name, and then she began to shake . . . Now she could see the letters from which the gilt had flaked on either side of his gilded name. The letters "SAGE" were simply the remnants of a newsagent's gilded sign." (Note the ironic repetition of the word "gilded.") The implicit link between revelation and propaganda could be taken as a comment on the contemporary "occult revival" and its appropriation of fantasy as received wisdom. Like the apparition composed of shredded book pages in Fritz Leiber's novel *Our Lady of Darkness,* this exposure of the magician's true name (Rumpelstiltskin-wise) satirises the notion of "occult lore."

Occultism shares with Catholicism an acceptance of the "higher truth" of texts. This may be related to their common development in the tradition of medieval scholarship. In Campbell's work, the perception of black magic as an inverted Christianity has an irony which it lacks in most of the genre: the reversals highlight the essential similarities—Satanism becomes a metaphor for the Church, or at least for its repressive and doctrinaire aspects.

There is a tendency for occult fiction to take the supernatural at face value, reducing the role of the sceptic to that of a dim-witted stooge. Even within the non-fiction category of popular occult study, a domino theory is assumed: if certain phenomena are accepted, then others can be considered probable . . ., and a whole spectrum of ill-formed and conflicting beliefs all gain reflected credibility. Of course, many sceptics ascribe to the same shaky argument: *après nous le déluge!* The scepticism implied in Campbell's writing is more ideological in spirit. Certain phenomena are accepted, if only for the story's sake (though the element of clairvoyance hinted at in the otherwise non-supernatural story *The Face That Must Die* suggests that Campbell may take the possibility of extrasensory perception seriously); but the occult philosophies underlying the practices of such as John Strong or Kaspar Ganz are clearly rejected. Yet they are neither Evil in an absolute sense nor irrational in any "hard" sense; rather, they represent false values. The occult conspirators are the most advanced "fascists" of Campbell's world, different only in degree from the mundane sadists, male chauvinists, Nazis, policemen and assorted bigots that occupy it. The title of John Strong's book, *Glimpses of Absolute Power,* recalls Lord Acton's line: "All power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Corruption is a much-used theme in the horror genre; but it is usually associated with sexual license and "the beast within"—by employing a different set of associations, Campbell is able to draw on the traditions of the genre without being tied to its prevailing ideology.

Like attracts like: those who believe in occult conspiracies tend to project their own world-view onto the supposed conspirators. While John Horridge is the most obvious instance of a character creating a "false environment," many of Campbell's characters are in a similar position: they become trapped in an escalating spiral of the derangement of inner and outer reality. Perceiving the environment as inimical, they perceive themselves as thus forced into anonymity, victimised. Barbara Waugh's sense of identity is bound up with her daughter: when betrayed by Angela, she feels "destroyed, worthless,

meaningful only as a victim." Rose Tierney is trapped by a group of cultists: "They were dwindling her. Their own personalities had been swallowed by fanaticism. They were a single personality, massive and overpowering." Most of the novels have female protagonists, confronting hostile forces which are usually representative of male dominance and sexual aggression. These characters are aware of, and struggle against, their imposed roles as victims—the struggle is not one to preserve innocence, but rather one to maintain free will. *The Face That Must Die* portrays the destructive environment with such intensity that the aggressor himself is struggling against the sense of being a "victim." Horridge equates being effeminised with being dehumanised (and as far as genre conventions are concerned, he is right).

Campbell's distinctive achievement in the novel form is his detailed unravelling of the psychological processes by which the "unknown" is conceived and transformed. Much of the modern "psychological horror" in fiction and film is essentially a translation of traditional categories into psychoanalytic jargon, the prejudices remaining intact. For "demon" read "psychosis"; for "hereditary taint" read "deep-seated neurosis, formed in early childhood." The locus of evil (or destructiveness) may not be called Satan, but projecting it deep within the individual is just as effective in removing it from the sphere of human interactions in the present. Popular simplifications of Freudianism are often reactionary, creating stereotypes of a rampaging "id" breaking through into the ordered and harmonious world of consciousness. The slide of the naturalistic horror film from *Psycho* to *Friday the 13th* entailed the development of the word "psycho" (which does not even carry the same meaning as its source word, "psychopath") into a talismanic label like "zombie," stripped of human associations. *The Face That Must Die* repairs some of this damage. While Horridge's past experience is related to his mental illness, so is his present environment, which erodes his sense of perspective and meaning: "He stared through the window. He might as well have stared at the pane itself: out there were small marshes of muddy grass, separated by paths and hemmed in by anonymous walls, but none of that was visible—most of the lamps had been smashed."

Irrationality is part of the everyday experience of dealing with the world. "If that's meant to mean something, it certainly means nothing to me" is a characteristic line of dialogue: language is being used not to communicate ideas but to establish boundaries, to declare parts of reality "unknown." Self and "other" are mutually dependent—in *The Nameless,* the child Angela "was finding out that her plastic mirror had two sides, shouting at the blank side, shouting louder as she rediscovered herself." Later in the same novel, Barbara runs along a hotel corridor "past glossy black doors, giant negatives set in the white walls. In each of them she looked close to developing . . ." Her own identity is being held in the back of the mirror. Horridge's experiences have similar elements: "A dread which he'd tried to suppress was creeping into his thoughts—that sometime, perhaps in fog, he would come home and be unable to distinguish his own flat."

The strategies which maintain "normality" are dangerously close to the "abnormal": prejudice, conspiracy theory, falsification of oneself. Ideology is a means—however artificial—of orientation. *Incarnate* links the themes of propaganda and pornography; both are attempts to force reality into a desired framework. Danny Swain imposes a sadomasochistic pattern on his experiences, perceiving all relationships in terms of dominance and submission. The inner and outer lives are engaged in a continuous redefinition of each other; *Incarnate* turns this process inside-out by projecting dreams

into the physical world. The propagandist word and the pornographic flesh become interchangeable. (David Cronenberg's film *Videodrome* is, coincidentally, very similar in theme.)

Campbell's approach to psychological disturbance has much in common with that of "existential" psychologists such as R.D. Laing. The processes of transformation described in the novels take place at the interface between individual and environment; thus the thematic concerns are focused on precisely those elements which are highlighted by the writing style. The dislocations of reality become the means by which the author comments on the subject matter. Having evolved this technique early in his work, Campbell has been steadily expanding its possibilities, giving more and more room to the subtext.

Derelict houses are a recurrent motif in all of the novels. The search for Chris Kelly proceeds through a series of houses which are progressively more suggestive of darkness and decay: Dr Miller's surgery (visited at nightfall), Mrs Kelly's house, finally the house on Mulgrave St. The territory gradually becomes more atavistic, drawing the characters back toward the past. *The Nameless* has a similar pattern, the series of derelict houses occupied by the nameless echoing both their own activities ("Perhaps the crimes formed a pattern over the centuries, or perhaps they were stages in a search for the ultimate atrocity") and Barbara's attempts to reclaim Angela from them, to "develop" her own image from the series of "negatives." Campbell describes "going home" as an underlying theme of the novels. However, this "home" is a place so transformed that its familiarity is a source of horror.

When Chris Kelly and Rose Tierney finally return "home," it is in each case to the home of the monstrous agency that has possessed them. Perhaps this agency to some extent represents a father. The foreword to the Scream/Press edition of *The Face That Must Die* makes it clear that the theme of the return to a deteriorating home has an autobiographical source.

However, there are literary sources as well: Lovecraft in "The Rats in the Walls" and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth;" Aickman in "The Inner Room" or "Wood" (a story anthologised by Campbell in 1976). Interviewed in the fanzine *Fantasy Macabre* in 1981, Campbell said "In a sense I still am a Lovecraftian writer, at least in terms of having learnt a sense of structure from him." This is particularly true of *The Doll Who Ate His Mother,* where a journey through a physical landscape is parallelled by a metaphysical journey into the past. The metaphorical environment is built up by recurrent images (birth, a dark room, deformity, cannibalism), but is kept just at the edge of vision. When the house on Mulgrave Street is finally entered, the metaphorical and actual environments suddenly jolt into a common frame. Perception is no longer distorted, but nakedly precise:

> Beneath the stairs a door stood ajar . . . The staircase was even colder than the hall. Each stair gave a separate sharp creak. A strip of wallpaper had flopped against the stairs. Small pale grubs squirmed on its underside; some had been trampled . . .
>
> The man was standing at the top of the stairs to the attics. His small body stooped as he peered at George with one eye; the other socket was bright pink. He wore a raincoat the colour of the dim light. One sleeve was missing; his bare arm hung slackly almost to the floor. He drooled. As soon as Edmund gazed up at him the man burst into tears and scuttled back into an attic.

Somehow, the *diminished* nature of this horror is what makes it so appalling. The "sense of wonder" has suddenly collapsed—this is truly "cold print."

From the second novel onwards, Campbell has developed a much more intense use of character viewpoints. (*Incarnate,* however, uses this approach rather less, at least on the level of moment-to-moment narrative detail.) This has made it possible to superimpose the metaphorical environment on the actual one by a shift (sometimes visible only in retrospect) from objective to subjective description. It is often not clear to what extent the description *is* subjective, since the character's thoughts are usually implied rather than overtly stated. This paragraph from *The Nameless* takes a sudden lurch into no man's land: "Soon the houses grew less welcoming. Their stone balconies looked drowned, eroded by the rain. Patches pale as grass beneath a stone gleamed beside porches, where name-plates had been removed. The gardens were a mass of drooling weeds. The empty sockets of street lamps dripped in the dark." The observation that "name-plates had been removed" signals the paragraph's intention rather in the way that a reference to the *Necronomicon* would act as a signal in a Lovecraft story.

Devices like that are often criticised for being artificial manipulations of the readers's repsonse. There is a risk of becoming mannered, of failing to let the story speak for itself. This is probably most true of *The Nameless,* with its obsessive rhetorical denials ("Surely nothing with a long whitish head could have scuttled down to drag the old woman into the bushes") and repetition of the word "nothing". In M.R. James the presence of a narrative "voice" justifies many elegant devices of suggestion which, echoed in Campbell's writing, have a weaker effect. When the sense of a description is not ambiguous, the use of an ambiguous-sounding construction only creates a sense of coyness or innuendo: "They must be hands, for they had fingers, though they felt soft as putty—far softer than putty, indeed, to be able to do to her what they began to do then."

However, there is generally a lot more than this to Campbell's descriptive technique. The underlying pattern of associations and symbols has a coherence which transcends the contrivance of short-term horrors. The use of settings has a didactic element; symbolic resonances are not so much imposed on the scenery as released from it, through a combination of close observation and sustained thought. This is particularly true of *The Face That Must Die,* Campbell's most intensely written work, where fictional conceits serve to amplify the reader's perception of realistic observations: "On the corner of the side street, a window was blocked by ripples of tin like a Venetian blind—but on the upper storey, light shone through curtains. She knew how it felt to live over emptiness."

Another recurrent theme in the novels is communication. Many of the major characters work in the media: journalism, films, publishing, television. The events of *The Doll Who Ate His Mother* are partly shaped by Edmund Hall's attempts to convert them into material for his book. In *To Wake the Dead,* Dietrich's film about reincarnation briefly intersects with Rose's experience: "When Rose held up one hand . . . she saw that it was trembling. It felt perfectly still. Panic seized her as she remembered the vibrations which had shaken her out of her body—then she realised that it was the light which made her hand flicker." Later during the film, "Flickering nagged at the edge of Rose's vision, like migraine. Her head was in the moviola screen, shrunken and distorted and blanched." In *The Nameless,* stories (and words themselves) become metaphors for the inner lives of characters. Paul Gregory's opening a book "only to find that the pages were blank" prefigures Angela's discovery of the mirror's "blank side." Ted's conversion by the nameless is reflected in the development of his novel. Barbara is made vulnerable by her dependence on information; she can be manipulated by lies: "She was surrounded by

books, by stories. She felt walled in by unreality. There was nothing she could grasp." The nameless are destroyers of words: Barbara finds charred books in the fireplace of one of their houses; when she is captured by the nameless, they gag her with a letter.

Film and television provide similar metaphors in *Incarnate.* On the one hand Martin Wallace, the director, displays a sense of personal responsibility towards his films, and is concerned that they should be objective rather than propagandist; a persistent feeling of guilt undermines his confidence in his own point of view. On the other hand, Danny Swain, the projectionist (who presents films rather than creating them), is obsessed with personal revenge. This desire finds expression in fantasies of sexual sadism, perceiving in any woman "a threat to be imagined as a victim." (Campbell underlines the connection between sadism and the horror genre in ways that are lighthearted to begin with: a video called *Kindergarten Rapist;* a porn shop called *Lovecraft* . . .) When Danny affects events in a film on television, and then "dreams" a wish-fulfillment in experience, is the former simply a stage in the development of his "dreaming;" or does he alter reality by first altering its representation (using the television as a kind of voodoo doll)?

The power of a film to shape the perceptions of the audience depends on the susceptibility of the audience to its ideas—Josef Dietrich recalls: "I film caricatures everyone will know are caricatures . . . But what happens? The audience believes this is how the British are, because this is what they want to believe." In other words, the media are highly effective in reinforcing prejudices, but much less effective in challenging them. This is a point to which Campbell frequently returns in discussions of fiction—and horror fiction in particular. In *The Nameless,* Margery Turner reads "a book for people who liked to imagine themselves in the role of criminal but who needed to believe that nothing of the kind could happen to them or perhaps to anyone else . . ." The point is made more ironically in *The Face That Must Die,* when Horridge decides to see *The Rocky Horror Picture Show:* "Horror films took you out of yourself—they weren't too close to the truth." The film provokes in him the fears he expected to avoid: "This was a horror film, all right—far too horrible, and in the wrong way . . . How could anyone be interested in this—unless they were homosexuals themselves?" (A further irony lies in the circumstances that the film itself presents the kind of reassuringly camp outrageousness that is calculated to appeal to straight audiences.)

"Trust the story, not the teller," a maxim often quoted by Stephen King, is tougher than it sounds: it implies that the author has to earn the reader's trust on the page, and cannot take it for granted. Campbell has often pointed out that horror fiction can serve as a refuge from actual fears; while trying to depict fears as realistically as possible, he adds a level of ironic self-reference, drawing attention—perhaps inadvertently—to his own writing. Thus *The Doll Who Ate His Mother* contrasts itself with Edmund Hall's *Satan's Cannibal.* The characters often seem to perceive themselves as caught up in fiction: Horridge "was being pursued by a murderer, as though he'd become trapped in one of the films;" Barbara Waugh "was surrounded by books, by stories;" Molly Wolfe "felt she was being dreamed." As the characters become engulfed by the stories that threaten them, their individuality is lost—Horridge, for instance, ceasing to be a viewpoint character in the closing chapters of *The Face That Must Die.* There is an implication that the conventions of the genre are themselves a destructive environment. An extreme example of this kind of alienation effect occurs in *Incarnate,* when the style seems to undergo a sudden degeneration into hardcore violence: the scene in which Danny Swain kills Dr

Kent with a red-hot film projector.

> "Her face and most of her torso were under the projector. Her hands kept trying to claw at it then recoiling, bruising their knuckles against the floor, clawing wildly at the air. The cramped room began to stink of burning plastic and then of something worse . . . The way the metal burned deeper into her fascinated him, but when she or her coat began to bubble like a slug, he clapped his hand over his mouth and hurried into the foyer."

Later, it becomes possible to view the scene as one of Danny's "dreams", formed by his sadistic obsession. The sequence satirises horror fiction of the more vicious type. Yet, in the middle of it, one sentence appears to parody Campbell's own writing: "After that she didn't move. Nevertheless Danny watched for a while to make sure that she wasn't playing another of her tricks." This is an echo of the killing of Craig in *The Face That Must Die:* "The man turned unsteadily and made for the stairs. He was moving as though his legs were crippled. By God, was he mocking Horridge?"

Communication is shown as problematic on the personal level as well as the public. Like the traffic noise which drowns out screaming in *The Nameless,* speech is a means of aggression. This attitude seems to have developed progressively in Campbell's writing. *To Wake the Dead* depicts a gradually deteriorating relationship, in which Rose sees herself as trapped. "You can't own me or my thoughts, Bill" she says; he replies: "It isn't a question of owning. It's a question of sharing, and we aren't doing much of that." As their difference in attitude widens, conflict becomes the only means by which they can communicate. When Bill criticises Rose's writing, she feels that her right to expression is under threat. Ironically, at the same time Rose's father is literally losing words through gradual aphasia. In *The Nameless,* dialogue takes on a more negative cast: denials, evasions, mute exertion of moral blackmail. "He knew what was coming—innuendoes, accusing silences, stares that meant he ought to know what she was thinking, that if he didn't that put him further in the wrong—and yet he couldn't stop at this point; he had never been able to." The devices of non-communication acquire a destructive eloquence —this is "the blank side" of language. *Claw* and *Incarnate* show the increasingly open resort to savage verbal (and even physical) abuse when close relationships become strained.

The Doll Who Ate His Mother ended with the faint hope of a personal expiation for Clare Frayn through the sharing of her memories. "Dorothy watched her small figure dwindling into the crowd . . . Now that she had been able to cry, Dorothy hoped she would be able to talk." But even as Campbell's confidence as a writer has developed, his faith in the private value of language seems to have faded.

If supernatural fiction necessarily deals with the unacceptable, the "other," then its greatest possibilities lie in exposing the mysterious nature of elements of experience that we take for granted. At the centre of Campbell's questioning of everyday assumptions is his preoccupation with the mystery of self-knowledge. Of course, this is true of many authors in the genre; but whereas Poe depicts the recognition of self with a fatalistic despair, and Lovecraft with appalled loathing, Campbell evokes a mute, childlike incomprehension: "He stared at the grey fragments around his feet. They had been him and his mother. He had been lying there in the earth; he'd broken himself in pieces. He couldn't understand what that meant."

The mirror is one of Campbell's favourite sources of imagery. His short story *The*

Telephones uses a Lovecraft device in reverse: "He put out his hand to obscure his treacherous reflection, and touched not glass but flesh." Given Campbell's oblique, complex mode of perceptual distortion, the mirror is apt as a locus of transformation because it is never clear *where* the change is happening: is the mirror "treacherous," or quite faithful? It can also be interchanged with other visual frames: windows, photographs, pages. Or—as in *The Nameless*—it can reverse itself, demonstrating that the space occupied by a reflection is null and void.

In *To Wake the Dead,* Rose encounters a reflected image of her own "astral body:"

> Its outline looked unstable. Perhaps it had a face, which seemed incapable of holding still . . . It looked vulnerable, unsure of itself.
>
> For a moment she was caught, unable to think. The appearance in the mirror was all she was. It looked unstable enough to turn into anything, to become terribly deformed.

It is as though a photographic print had been removed from the developing fluid at the instant that the picture began to take shape; the process of transformation has been trapped as a lasting state. The language too is defamiliarised, the phrase "unsure of itself" acquiring an unexpectedly literal significance.

Chris Barrow in *The Doll Who Ate His Mother* is introduced as an actor: "I reckon I'm most myself when I'm acting. Whoever myself is." His assumed surname is ironic both in its derivation from Clyde Barrow and in the meaning of "barrow" in its sense of "tomb." The pretence is an echo of his real uncertainty about himself; but it lends much of the dialogue an ambiguous character. One of Edmund Hall's vicious remarks, heavy-handed as a veiled reference to Chris Barrow, is inadvertently very appropriate as a reference to Chris Kelly: "There was this incredible queer at the next table . . . An actor, he sounded like . . . Seems to me, if you're invited to dinner you ought to eat what you're given." (Then he adds: "That's something wrong with Liverpool . . . The food. I haven't had a really good meal since I got back.") By causing Chris Kelly's death at the moment that Chris has broken the spell of John Strong, Edmund condemns Chris to the permanent role of "Satan's Cannibal".

In *The Face That Must Die,* repeated use is made of the idea of mimicry. Horridge's first perceptions define people as imitations: Craig is "a parody of a woman;" Peter is "pretending to be a man;" Cathy "didn't want to look like a woman." At several points in the narrative, Horridge unconsciously (or deliberately) mimics female or effeminate qualities. Watching Craig's window, "Suddenly he realised how he looked, standing beneath the lamp as though waiting to be seen . . ."He imitates an effeminate voice on the telephone; in Fanny's flat, he dresses in her overall; earlier, he imitates her handwriting. The more he struggles to preserve the sense of himself, the more he comes to feel "a puppet of his nerves" or "a ventriloquist forced to imitate his dummy." His limp (the source, at one point, of an obvious pun) increases his sense of the unfamiliarity of his body. His wooden self-control echoes Craig's artificial manner and confused self-perception—features which drew Horridge's attention to him in the first place. Ironically, Peter and Cathy are unable to agree on any feature of Horridge's face for an identikit picture.

Horridge's attempts to overcome his "enemies" have the effect of recreating for them elements of his own life; the "corrupt house" on Aigburth Drive echoes features of his own home (both the derelict house he has left and the flat in Cantril Farm). The house on Aigburth Drive empties from the ground floor upwards: "It was as though a plague of desertion were spreading through the house." When Cathy reflects "She knew how it felt

to live over emptiness," she could as well be thinking of Horridge's flat as of her own. In a dream, Horridge confuses Fanny's home with his own. The coincidence of Cathy's having developed a limp in the Epilogue seems to imply a transference of bad luck, or the role of victim—Horridge is no longer a human protagonist, but the threat of an impersonal destroying force, as the novel closes.

The kind of social existence depicted in *The Nameless* is more secure and affluent. The forces that threaten it are accordingly more remote, but brought into focus by the attempt to repress them. The nameless seem to embody a metaphysical principle of negation, harboured at the centre of a modern society: the darkness reflected in news stories of atrocity and in the social underworld, but kept on the margins of "normal" life by a shared faith in the sustaining power of communications. Barbara's losss of her child (and the guilt associated with that loss) make her vulnerable to the nameless, but the cult also draws on the cultural neuroses which are the reverse side of a society's self-image. (This is a recurrent theme in the contemporary horror story—see, for instance, Harlan Ellison's short stories.) To be nameless is to have no valid social existence; and what cannot be named cannot be assimilated into public knowledge. This was an implication of Lovecraft's repeated use of the word "nameless;" Campbell develops the theme of negation through ambiguous use of the word "nothing:" "Nothing can replace the family . . .;" "the dark inside herself where nothing could reach;" "Nothing could harm her in an empty house." Names, appropriately, are sometimes significant: Angela is the spirit of grace, defying the darkness with fire; Iris is capable of recognising one of the nameless (the phrase "the iris of darkness" occurs near the end).

If the denial of identity is the central theme of *The Nameless,* the opposite is the case in *Incarnate:* what is feared here is the multiple nature of the self. The metaphorical significance of the house whose floors multiply is made clear in Sage's words: "One may live in a single room of one's house, but something else will live in the other rooms. Something else will grow there." The apparent freedom created by serial existence is a trap, dissipating the self (rather in the way that mass-production diminishes the value of an artefact): ". . . it troubled her deeply that the stairs seemed somehow generalised, as if they were an idea that wasn't yet fully expressed. Worst of all was their utter meaninglessness." The novel's pattern is an infinite regression of reflected images. "The glare of the frosted glass left 'Know Yourself' in mirror writing on his eyes." An early remark that shop windows "seemed to prove Father Christmas could be in two places at once" is echoed later in Freda's thought: "As a child she'd believed God was in every image of himself . . . Trying to imagine how it must be for him to be in so many places at once made her head spin." Freda has a similar moment of vertigo when she tries to concentrate simultaneously on not believing in a staircase and on walking down it.

There are images of confinement in the story: prison cells; hospital rooms; a bedroom without windows; Molly's flat, where Danny Swain (for no clear reason—perhaps the fear of spies) tapes newspaper over the mirrors. But the overall feeling of *Incarnate* is one of expanding horizons. The style, too, is less claustrophobic than in any of the preceding novels; the downward-spiralling pattern of the typical Campbell narrative gives way to an open, "epic" form. While it contains some highly effective sequences of disorientation, the overall tone of *Incarnate* is gentle and even optimistic. This novel, then, shows Campbell exploring and improvising in new directions, beyond the scope of the enclosed and introspective world which his first four novels portrayed.

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Dr Johnson was once challenged by a lady, who demanded why he had defined the "pastern" of a horse completely askew in his Dictionary; and he told her, "Ignorance, Madam. Pure ignorance." The Johnsonian pragmatists at Foundation *suspect that the following* theory *of errors might even be a sly parody of the New Criticism, which takes the text as king and doesn't allow authors simply to have made mistakes; but we certainly feel that it provides a salutary read, especially for authors. And of course one recalls the first edition of* Ringworld, *in the early pages of which the Earth was revolving in the wrong direction . . .*

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A Theory of Errors: The Altered Worlds of Fiction

DAVID LAKE

All fictions set up altered universes: the world of a story is never the actual world whose history and geography we know. In some kinds of fiction, such as most sf and magical fantasy, this is obvious and part of the recognized convention of the work. C.S. Lewis's Narnia series could be the type specimen: Narnia is a universe distinct from ours, where the earth is flat, and animals talk, and the stars are people. But we should realize that even the most realistic "mundane" novel also sets up an altered world: a world in which non-actual people are supposed to exist and carry out actions which you will not find recorded in any actual document. The characters' birth certificates, for instance, are not in any public records office—if they were, the author would be in serious legal trouble. The difference of convention between fantastic and mundane fiction is simply this: both set up

altered universes, but the mundane fiction pretends that its universe is this actual one we know.

It is an enormous pretence, and often one that is difficult to maintain. In fact, of the two kinds of fiction, mundane fiction is perhaps more fantastic than overt fantasy; which is perhaps why it developed so late, a sophisticated creation of the eighteenth century. Especially when the characters in a mundane novel do something violent, I find myself thinking with a smile: "Well, if this is meant to be fact, why hasn't it been in the newspapers?" Indeed, for this one reason, many mundane novels are really borderline cases of sf: at least the novel creates an alternate history for "our" world, and alternate histories are usually classified as sf.

One example of this is Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*. This is set in Saigon, Vietnam, during the war with the French about 1950. And it's extremely realistic in setting: I was in Saigon in 1959, and I can vouch for the accuracy. All the streets and hotels have the right names, and I have actually been to the cinema where Fowler established his alibi. And yet the killing of the American agent Pyle does not seem to have got into the contemporary newspapers or the umpteen books of Vietnam reportage. Thus I say that Greene's story is set in an altered world, a parallel universe—but a universe very parallel indeed to the one we know. And it is meant as a direct topical comment on the world we know. Greene is saying that things *like this* were going on in Saigon during the French war; and that someone like Fowler could have behaved in that way to someone like Pyle. The force of the novel (especially its political force) depends strongly on its literal accuracy.

And yet in the novel Greene has made one tiny mistake. He calls the Cao Dai capital city "Tanyin," many times (so it can't be a typo),[1] whereas in fact the place was called "Tay Ninh." The place itself, and its cathedral, are described with photographic accuracy, so I think "Tanyin" is simply an error by Greene—one he would have put right if it had been pointed out to him. Elsewhere he does not alter actual names.

Now, let us notice the effect of this error. We can do two things with it. We can mentally correct "Tanyin" to "Tay Ninh" every time it occurs in the text. In that way we produce a *revised version* of the fiction. Or, we can accept "Tanyin", and thereby accept a *slightly more altered universe* for the novel—a universe in which the Cao Dai capital has always been called "Tanyin," not "Tay Ninh." (As in Hardy's Wessex novels, where Dorchester has always been "Casterbridge," and Oxford "Christminster.")

I know that this seems a trivial point. It is: but it indicates already the forking of the ways, the two methods of dealing with fictional errors. And we will have much more serious errors to deal with: in at least one case, below, an error so serious that it affects the whole nature and genre classification of the novel.

Of course, the problem of avoiding factual errors is at its worst in realistic mundane fiction, where (unless the author is very careful) "Tanyin"-type errors may abound. If an author sets a novel in London today, he must make sure that the buses are red double-deckers, or else people will laugh at him. Authors would be well advised never to set stories in cities they haven't visited. Lem's *The Investigation,* set in modern London, gives one a weird feeling of unreality, quite apart from the strange plot; I suspect Lem had not visited London before he wrote. And Shakespeare was laughed at in his own century by Thomas Rymer, because the Venice of *Othello* was very unlike the real contemporary Venice.[2] But of course we laugh at Rymer, not at Shakespeare, and accept his unreal

Venice, because it is *his* Venice, not the actual Venice, and the story of *Othello* requires such a parallel world. (Similarly, Lem's "London" does not invalidate his story.)

But we should note that a parallel world is not a recipe for unlimited licence. Shakespeare may have given his Venice strangely informal senators, but they still despatch ships which have to sail to Cyprus, not fly there by magic. And the time-scheme of the story has to be consistent and square with the world as we know it (it is in fact a sustainable objection, also made by Rymer, that it isn't and doesn't). And this principle applies also to overtly fantastic fictions: there are nearly always some rules that should not be broken. A convention may alter the universe of the story, but it does not alter it altogether. You can still have definite mistakes in works of sf and even fantasy. Because (except in dream-fantasy, such as the Alice books) even a fantasy should set up a self-consistent world (and one with *some* resemblance to our own). *Internal* mistakes (self-contradictions) are normally less pardonable than *external* mistakes (differences from the real world): because external mistakes may merely shift the fictional world a bit further from ours, whereas internal mistakes almost invariably call for emendation.

The two types can be illustrated in some of the finest works of Ursula Le Guin. Astronomy is a rich source of errors, and Le Guin, who is usually careful, has made one or two slips, I think, in *The Earthsea Trilogy*[3] and *The Left Hand of Darkness*.[4]

There are many indications throughout the Trilogy that Earthsea is a planet very like Earth (though set in a universe where magic works). It is quite certainly a sphere, for new stars rise on the southern horizon as one sails south (*Farthest Shore,* Chap. 5, p.367); and there is a single moon which behaves just like our moon (p.156 and elsewhere). But in *Farthest Shore,* Chap. 8, Arren is watching the great southern constellation, and we read:

> always he saw Gobardon, and the lesser or the greater triangle; but it rose later now . . .(p.407)

Rose later! But in our world, as the seasons progress, stars never rise later—they always rise earlier, on average by four minutes per night. This is entailed by the Earth's "direct" rotation. For stars to rise later, the Earth would need to have a retrograde rotation, like Venus or Uranus.

Well, why not? This "error" could easily be emended—but I am not inclined to do so. It is true that the fantasy convention does not usually include subtle effects of altered astronomy; but I find the notion that Earthsea rotates *the other way* than our Earth rather pleasing. It is symbolically fitting. Le Guin probably did not intend this symbolism, but since the New Critics we know that a text means what it does to the average intelligent reader, sometimes in spite of the author.

In any case, the rotation of Earthsea is an "external" matter. It does not contradict anything else in the Trilogy. But in *The Left Hand of Darkness* there is an internal contradiction, if we compare Chapter 1 with the astronomical Appendix. In the Appendix it is made clear that the calendar months are also precisely lunar months of 26 days, Day 1 being New Moon, and hence Day 20 is Last Quarter. The events of Chapter 1 take place on the 22nd of a month (p.9), so the Gethenian moon is two days past Last Quarter. Yet Genly sees it in the sky as he is leaving Estraven's house at midnight (p.21). In fact the moon could not be up till about 1¾ hours later (unless it has an extremely inclined orbit, which is highly unlikely, since Gethen's equator almost coincides with its ecliptic, and moons tend to follow one or other of these planes). So here we have a trivial internal contradiction—easily emended by changing the day of the month from "22nd" to "19th".

(A last-quarter moon rises at midnight.)[5]

Moon mistakes bother me whenever I come across them; which is, very frequently. All mundane fiction, much science fiction, and some fantasy, is set on our Earth, within geologically recent time, and therefore under the familiar Moon which we have all seen. Now, most writers of mundane fiction are extremely careless with the Moon. They seem to treat it as a piece of stage machinery, to be hauled up in any desired phase at any desired time. Luckily, they mostly use their Moon as a bit of extra "atmosphere," not as an element in the plot, so we can usually follow my first method with mistakes: we can mentally emend the text, and either get rid of the impossible moon or bring it back to possible behavior.

One type of moon mistake is the Successive Nights error. If you have a crescent moon in your story one night, you cannot have it full the next, or vice versa. You need about ten nights between. I suspect some readers may know of instances of this error, in romantic novels. Shakespeare is under grave suspicion of it in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* where in the first lines of Act One it is four days to a visible new moon (i.e. two or three days to astronomic New Moon), yet in Act Two, the following night, Titania is "met by moonlight," when the tiny waning crescent would actually be drowned in the pre-dawn twilight; and Puck has the wolf "behowl the moon" about midnight in Act Five, when the new moon of the wedding day must have long set. But I am not sure whether we should call these slips: whether Shakespeare intended them or not, the discrepancies underline the convention of the play; it is all moonshine, a Dream. However, in more realistic fictions the Successive Nights error is ridiculous. It is an "external" error, but difficult to fit into any possible world, and so needs to be emended out.

A more forgivable error, because the point is less well known, is the seasonal moon error. Because a full moon is always opposite the sun in the sky, a winter full moon is high in the sky at culmination, but a summer full moon (except in the tropics) is low. Especially in north Europe, the summer full moon is very low indeed—about as low as the winter sun. Yet I find the following in a fine short story by Isak Dinesen, "The Deluge at Norderney:"

> young wives walked . . . to gaze straight up at the full moon, high in the pale summer sky.[6]

Norderney, the setting of the story, is on the west coast of Holstein, Denmark (now Germany) in about 54 degrees North latitude. There the midsummer full moon is never more than 17½ degrees above the horizon at utmost maximum, and usually much less. Now, what do we do with this error? There is no point in pushing the story into an altered universe, because in any conceivable universe the full moon must be opposite the sun, and so a summer one must be low. And it would spoil the atmosphere to change the latitude of Denmark and push it into the tropics—though this is where the mistake may have originated, as the author spent much time in Kenya. No; the best solution is to emend the text, and say:

> young wives walked . . . to gaze at the full moon, hanging low in the pale summer sky.

Another instance of a moon mistake—or something rather like one—occurs in a novel by Iris Murdoch, *The Nice and the Good.*[7] There's a very exciting sequence in the novel where a man, a boy and a dog have got themselves cut off by the tide in a sea-cave, and it is a dreadful question whether the tide will rise high enough in the cave to drown them. The human and the dog are at the highest point in the cave that they can reach, and the man

puts out his hand and touches *limpets* on the rock. Limpets imply that the tide sometimes does rise that high, and the man knows it (p.305). That's the end of Chapter 35. Breathlessly one turns the page, and then in the sixth line of Chapter 36 one sees:

> A large round moon was turning from silver to a mottled gold (p.306).

When I first read this, I groaned, and assumed that our heroes were doomed. Because, of course, a full moon goes with a very high (spring) tide. That fitted in with the limpets... But I read on a few pages, and—everybody swam out at the next low tide—dog, boy, and man. Now, this really will hardly do. Those limpets need explaining: they also need water from the sea. If a full moon tide won't reach them, what will? It's true that some full moon tides are higher than others, but only by a little. A poor look-out for those limpets. All we are told, a little later, is this:

> By the decree of fate and chance the water had abated within feet of them. (p.310)

This is bad management. There is no need to invoke "fate"—a supernatural entity, or a euphemism for the author—and "chance" doesn't rule the tides. The moon does. Now I, as a science fiction writer, would deal with this problem very simply. Instead of "a large round moon" I would make the text read "a small half moon," and then to any astronomically minded reader the message would be clear: the people and dog are going to be saved by a lowish neap tide. Or if more suspense is needed, I would say "a large gibbous moon:" a moon not quite full, but near enough to be threatening. Oh well.

Iris Murdoch is only marginally in error, I suppose; but there is a very definite Moon mistake in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. It's a case of Moon Not Up, like in *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Of course, Tolkien is writing fantasy, but he makes it very clear—pedantically clear, in his appendices—that his story is laid in this very world of ours, with the heavenly bodies behaving just as today; in fact, he specifies in Appendix D:

> long ago as those times are now reckoned in years and lives of men, they were not very remote according to the memory of the Earth.[8]

And in fact Tolkien is usually very careful to get his Moon phases right: so much so that Barbara Strachey, in her delightful atlas, *Journeys of Frodo*,[9] is able to give a moon-phase with every period-map of the journey. But Tolkien makes one slip, when the heroes reach the Door of Moria soon after sunset, and read the magic letters on the Door *by moonlight* (I, 318). This happens on 13 January. But we were told earlier (I, 299) that the Moon was full on 8 January, five days previously. Now a moon five days past full cannot rise soon after sunset; and even if it could, it could not shine on a *west facing* door, since the Moon, like the Sun, rises in the east. The Door of Moria is certainly west-facing, since it is set in a cliff on the west side of the Misty Mountains, and the moon would have to pass into the western sky to shine on it. I reckon that it would pass into the western sky, when it is five days past full, about 3 am. And it is certainly not 3 am when the heroes reach the door—they have a long night march ahead of them through the tunnels before their first sleep in Moria. In fact, it is most likely 6 or 7 pm of a winter's evening, and the moon would not even rise till about 9 pm. Tolkien therefore relates an impossibility; and this is a mistake, not a piece of deliberate magic.

However, the mistake is not structural to the story. We are told that the magic letters on the door can be read either by moonlight *or starlight*. So I would emend the text to get rid of the Moon. Where Tolkien says:

> The Moon now shone upon the grey face of the rock . . . (I, 318)

I would read: "The stars now shone . . .;" or if that's not enough light, we could use mingled starlight and twilight. We must either do that or place Middle Earth in a different universe, where the moon can bob up in the sky whenever it feels like it; but that would be totally out of keeping with Tolkien's general precision. I'm not sure that it would do even in Narnia, where the moon is doubtless alive, but has to follow the course Aslan has laid down for it. So, the best solution is emendation. We may imagine that Tolkien has been a little inaccurate in his translation from the Red Book of Westmarch.

There is a still more obvious Moon error in William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* (first published, 1954).[10] This novel is on the borderline between mundane fiction and sf; at any rate, it is about English boys being marooned on a tropical island after their plane has been shot down in a near-future war. And it is set in our world, under our moon. But early in Chap. 6 we read:

> A sliver of moon rose over the horizon . . . (p.104)

A "sliver" implies a crescent, and it is clear from the context that this is happening after twilight, but fairly early in the night. At least Golding is consistent between nights; for the next night the same "sliver of moon" rises about the same time (Chap. 7, p.36. Perhaps it should be a little fatter the second night; but let that pass). But now I must object that a crescent moon does not "rise" at any time in the evening. The waxing crescent does not *rise* after sunset, but emerges out of the deepening gloom in the western sky. A waning crescent (properly, "decrescent") does rise, but only about dawn. So Golding is clearly wrong here: he has made a crescent behave like a big moon a day or so past full. An evening crescent could rise—in the west—only if the moon were in a close rapid orbit, like Phobos around Mars. This mistake could push the story onto an alternate Earth (as we shall see later, another mistake by Golding pushes the story into an alternate *universe*) but there is no need to be so drastic here. In any case, this moon is not structural to the story. We can emend by eliminating it; or making it a big moon; or making it emerge out of the darkening west. In any of these ways, the pretence that this is our actual world can be restored.

Exactly the same Moon mistake as Golding's is made by Coleridge in "The Ancient Mariner;" but Coleridge has two impossibilities at once, and the second is so glaring that it is surely no mistake at all, but an indication that the verse-narrative is a dream-like fantasy. Here are the lines:

> Till clomb above the eastern bar
> The horned Moon with one bright star
> Within the nether tip. (11. 209-11)

Of course stars can't be seen within the horns of a crescent moon, except on certain flags; so perhaps we shouldn't worry that this crescent is rising in the east just after sunset. In dreams, anything can happen.

But apart from dream-fantasies, or "lucky slips" as in my Earthsea example, when is a "mistake" not a mistake? Surely, when it is deliberate on the part of the author. Sometimes, as I think in the Coleridge instance, the mistake is meant to be spotted, and it then signals the convention of the narrative. But there is also another class of deliberate mistakes: those the author does *not* want the reader to spot, because they would destroy the story. The author here is unscrupulous: he needs an impossibility to make the story work, and he also hopes to get away with it. Aristotle had this sort of thing in mind when

he recommended that authors use "probable impossibilities" (*Poetics,* Chap. 24). A very good dealer in "probable impossibilities" is H.G. Wells.

Wells in his early fantasy and sf has several times written stories which depend on plausible impossibilities. In one case, he certainly intends the impossibility to be spotted, because this defines the convention and makes a polemic point. But in other cases, he equally clearly hopes to get away with the impossibility unnoticed.

The first case is the story "The Man Who Could Work Miracles."[11] This is a whimsy from its start to its circular finish—as Wells subtitled it, "A Pantoum in Prose"—and Wells wants it clearly understood that he does *not* believe in miracles. To emphasize this, he has buried a discreet (external) "error" within a glaring internal impossibility. The glaring impossibility is this: if everything goes back to Square One at the end, and all memory of the miraculous events is wiped out, how could the narrator know anything about the story? Yet there clearly is a narrator, who says "I" on the first page, and buttonholes the reader with direct address from time to time. And one of these times is the long paragraph of direct address in the middle of the story:

> And so, incredible as it may seem . . . on the evening of Sunday, Nov. 10, 1896, Mr Fotheringay, egged on and inspired by Mr Maydig, began to work miracles. The reader's attention is specially and definitely called to the date. He will object . . . that he or she, the reader in question, must have been killed in a violent and unprecedented manner more than a year ago. Now a miracle is nothing if not improbable, and as a matter of fact the reader *was* killed in a violent and unprecedented manner a year ago. (p.309; emphasis in original.)

The discreet "error" has to do with the date. I followed Wells's narrator's instruction, and checked the date—and lo! There was no "Sunday Nov. 10, 1896." This is two days out: in 1896, Nov. 10 was a Tuesday; so the date should have been "Sunday Nov. 8." But this must be a deliberate mistake by Wells: the story was first published in 1898,[12] and he could easily work out the correct date two years back, if only by referring to an old calendar. So this is surely another signal saying: "Impossible! Don't believe a word of this!"

The other type of deliberate Wellsian error—the error that Wells does not want the reader to spot—is best detected in *The Invisible Man.* But no one can take credit for detecting it: Wells revealed it himself, in a private letter to Arnold Bennett (October 1897). He wrote:

> You raise the point of the transparent eyelids in your review, but there is another difficulty behind that which really makes the whole story impossible. I believe it to be insurmountable. Any alteration of the refractive index of the eye lenses would make vision impossible. Without such alteration the eyes would be visisble as glassy globules. And for vision it is also necessary that there should be visual purple behind the retina and an opaque cornea and iris.[13]

In other words, a totally invisible man would be totally blind. The point is obvious once you think of it. But I don't think anyone did think of it till Wells pointed it out, in private, to a friend. The reader, while reading, is not meant to spot the mistake.

Now here is an "external" mistake, once we have spotted it, that cannot be "emended out." It is structural to the story. We have instead to imagine a world of "paraphysics," such that a totally invisible man can still see. It is a world just like our own, but with one subtle change in physical law (very difficult to formulate—best left vague!). "External" mistakes obviously comprise two sub-types: (a) counterfactual, such as "Tanyin," but not counter-physical (b) counter-physical. Here we have type (b), which requires greater suspension of disbelief. Wells's story is a success, I think, because the change of physics required is a subtle one, not part of our daily experience. (And it occurs also in a context of

very unlikely sf: we are already required to believe that the refractive index of a body's whole tissues can be reduced to that of air without materially altering the body's chemistry and viability. When we have swallowed that, we may be in a mood to swallow more.) Wells, finally, knows what he is about: following Aristotle, he is in the business of making us accept a "probable impossibility," and he is using every literary trick to make a success of this. And so it works.

But Wells is not always the master of his impossibilities. In some cases, like many other sf writers, he simply makes mistakes unawares; mistakes which we may or may not be able to "emend out."

For instance, in "The Man Who Could Work Miracles" there is one mistake of arithmetic which is certainly not motivated as a sly hint to the reader: Wells surely made a slip and got his sums wrong. In describing the final disastrous miracle, when the solid earth stops spinning, the narrator says:

> the surface at its equator is travelling at rather more than a thousand miles an hour . . . (p.314)

So far so good; I reckon the equatorial speed as about 1037.5 mph; but then he goes on:

> So that the village . . . and everybody and everything had been jerked violently forward at about nine miles per second . . . (ibid.; *sic* in all editions)

Nine miles a second! If that was the surface speed of rotation, most of the surface of the earth would take off right now for points beyond the moon, since this is well over escape velocity. The correct figure is the equatorial speed multiplied by the cosine of the latitude. Since the story is set in Sussex, the latitude is about 51 degrees; cos 51 = .629321, x 1037.5 = 653 mph, or 10.882 miles per *minute*. Possibly Wells at one stage had in his mind the figure of nine miles per minute, which would have been nearly right; then "minute" became "second," an error which has never been corrected. Now this is an internal error which cannot be disposed of by placing the story in an altered universe; for in any universe the speeds "a thousand miles an hour" and "nine miles per second" are simply contradictory. I suggest we mentally emend the text to "about eleven miles per minute"—which is right to the nearest whole number.

Internal self-contradictions are errors which are almost impossible to dispose of except by emendation; and even that is not always possible. An instance is Wells's story "The New Accelerator." Here a drug speeds up the metabolism and movements of the two central characters by a factor of some thousand times, so that they find themselves walking or running at "two or three miles a second" (p.348; the figure is about right this time), thereby subjectively almost eliminating time, gravity, and the movements of all external objects. Of course any such drug would cause instant death by the catastrophic overstrain of a dozen bodily systems, but we can let that pass for the sake of the story: the important thing is to observe accurately the resulting subjective phenomena. And here Wells does pretty well; except for one basic contradiction. If the heroes are moving so fast that their clothes start to burn from air friction, and if gravity seems to be suspended (p.345)—how are they *walking?* They do a lot of walking, and leave deep footprints on a gravel path (p.351)—whereas you can't walk at all without gravity to drag your feet down. So far from leaving footprints, they ought to be soaring through the air into the stratosphere, three miles a second being a goodly speed for a rocket take-off.

There is also a peculiar piece of (Aristotelian?) ballistics on p.349, where Gibberne hurls a dog into the air, and it "hung at last over the grouped parasols of a knot of

chattering people." This is impossible in our universe, drug or no drug: a thrown object near the earth's surface describes a parabola, and if the dog was hurled at (say) two miles per second it should move rather like a V2, and possibly land in France, not "hang suspended." We can put this Type (b) external error (paraphysics) right only by moving the story into another universe—for the dog is needed to land unharmed among the crowd soon afterward. But I do not see how the two-mile-per-second *walking* can be dealt with at all. It is a self-contradiction. We have to let it go as a "plausible impossibility;" one that may get by most readers, but not, alas, the more vigilant.

Again, Wells makes a classic error or two in his novel *The First Men in the Moon*,[14] concerning the motion of objects within a spacecraft. Jules Verne, as is well known, didn't understand the logic of free fall, and in his novel *Round the Moon* (1870) has gravity within his spacecraft—objects fall toward Earth till the ship reaches the "neutral point," after which they fall toward the Moon. Wells makes the same mistake in *First Men,* Chap. 5:

> Four windows were open in order that the gravitation of the moon might act upon all the substances in our sphere. I found I was no longer floating freely in space, but that my feet were resting on the glass in the direction of the moon. (p.37)

Admittedly, Cavorite is funny stuff, but here we are told expressly that it is totally switched off, so that the rules of free fall ought to apply. I presume Wells simply copied Verne (and, as we shall see, C.S. Lewis will copy Wells). But Wells adds another mistake that is all his own. When the Cavorite blinds are working, and objects within the sphere are shielded from all external gravitation, the result is this:

> everything that was not fixed to the glass was falling—slowly because of the slightness of our masses—towards the centre of gravity of our little world, which seemed to be somewhere about the middle of the sphere . . . (Chap. 4, p.35)

Here Wells either contradicts Newton, or at least makes a huge magnitude error (and once more there will be bad repercussions in Lewis). Newton in his *Principia* showed that within a hollow sphere, the gravitational effects of the various parts of the sphere cancel out to zero.[15] So the only forces within Wells's sphere are the forces between the free-floating objects; and these forces are so tiny that they can be neglected over a period of months. Of course we have an advantage over Wells, in that we have actually witnessed free fall conditions in spacecraft on TV—but even so, it should have been possible to work out the (non-) effect in 1901.

This error could be dealt with by either of the two methods: we can emend it out, or push the story into a non-Newtonian universe where the gravity constant is much higher. But I think the previous error, the Vernean lack of free fall, can only be emended out, as free fall seems to be a matter of logic, not merely alterable physics. But luckily neither error is structural to Wells's story.

And strictly in terms of plot the same is true of the errors of C.S. Lewis, in his sf novel *Out of the Silent Planet*.[16] Lewis seems to have known almost no science at all: he relies for his sf effects on previous sf writers, and these let him down. Especially Wells; for Lewis's novel is largely based on *The First Men in the Moon* (and is a polemic answer to it). Wells's spacecraft is a sphere, so Lewis's is also a sphere; and Lewis makes both the lack-of-free-fall mistake (Verne/Wells) and the central-gravity mistake (Wells only). This latter mistake is committed in almost exactly the Wellsian wording; the scientist Weston says:

> The ship is roughly spherical, and now that we are outside the gravitational field of the Earth "down" means—and feels—towards the centre of our own little metal world. (Chap. 4, p.30)

But Lewis gets it still more wrong than Wells, for his central gravity is clearly much higher.

These are non-structural and insignificant errors; but there are more serious ones. Lewis's picture of his Mars is beautiful, and not too incredible when the novel was published in 1938, and much of it is based on the correct datum that Mars's surface gravity is only about one-third that of Earth. (This point Lewis might easily have picked up from Wells, e.g. from *The War of the Worlds.*) His Martian scene can be exemplified by the second-last paragraph of the novel (pp. 186-87). This is a wonderfully beautiful passage—but it contains no less than four mistakes of science, all easily avoidable in 1938. I will list them below.

(1) "I see myself bathing with Hyoi in the warm lake. He laughs at my clumsy swimming; accustomed to a heavier world, I can hardly get enough of me under water to make any headway." We've had this one previously in the novel (Chap. 10, p.68), where boats stand very high out of the Martian water. But there would be no such effect: the proportion of an object below the water surface depends only on the object's density, which is the same in all gravity fields.

(2) Ransom sees a chain of asteroids rising "in the west." But nothing rises in the Martian west except Phobos (which Lewis doesn't mention). Asteroids, if seen at all, would rise in the east.

(3) These asteroids are very bright, "a dazzling necklace of lights brilliant as planets." But the asteroids as seen from Mars are *not* bright. Lewis knows that the asteroid belt is closer to Mars's orbit than to ours, and has jumped to the wrong conclusion. Most of the asteroids are still a long way from Mars, even when Mars is passing them; at other times, they can be even farther from Mars than from Earth. Ransom would be very lucky to see any asteroids at all with the naked eye, apart from Vesta, which is visible to the naked eye occasionally even from Earth.

(4) Also rising in the west is Jupiter, and "I turn my eyes away, for the little disc is far brighter than the Moon in her greatest splendour." Same blunder as for the asteroids, but even more so: Jupiter from Mars is marginally brighter than from Earth when Mars is passing Jupiter; at other times it is fainter than from Earth. It would never show a perceptible disc, it would never be even as bright as Venus usually is to us. Lewis here has an enormous exaggeration, simply because he is non-numerate. But the calculation is easy, from any table of planetary distances. In a.u. from the Sun, the distances are: Earth 1.0, Mars about 1.524, Jupiter about 5.203. From this it follows (using the distance-squared law for brightness) that Jupiter at opposition is about 1.3 times brighter from Mars than from Earth, which would push its magnitude from -2.6 to about -2.9, much less than Venus at about -4 or the Moon at -12.5 ("at her greatest splendour"). From Earth at opposition Jupiter shows a disc only with optical aid, of about 47 seconds of arc; from Mars, by simple proportion, this becomes 54 seconds—less than the maximum apparent size of Venus from Earth. Hence, no naked eye disc.

These four errors of Lewis are external ones; Nos. 2 – 4 are counterfactual, and No. 1 is counterphysical. None are structural to the plot of *Out of the Silent Planet;* but Nos. 3 and 4 are serious all the same. For the *plot* of this novel matters much less than the rhetorical strategy, which works mainly through scenic images: we have to be convinced that Mars is a beautiful paradise. And the nearness and brightness of Jupiter are thematic;

for symbolically, Jupiter is God. Lewis is trying to convince us of God's presence in this very universe of Earth, Mars and the other planets, with angels filling space and guiding the planets in their courses. It is not a little thing, therefore, that there are almost no true facts to back up Lewis's rhetorical ploys. Another (external, counterphysical) error is still more significant: Ransom in the spaceship repeatedly sunbathes under unshielded windows, with marvellous effects:

> he felt his body and mind daily rubbed and scoured and filled with new vitality. Weston, in one of his brief, reluctant answers, admitted a scientific basis for these sensations: they were receiving, he said, many rays that never penetrated the terrestrial atmosphere. (Chap. 5, p.35)

This is the worst blunder of all; because in fact the rays that don't penetrate the atmosphere would be hard ultra-violet, and Ransom would rapidly die of skin cancer. Yet Lewis uses these rays as a symbol of the presence of angels and of God. This is what is wrong with Lewis as a science fiction writer: he uses astrology rather than astronomy, and this sort of rhetoric can only work on the scientifically ignorant. He is trying to revive the primitive belief that God is "out there;" but as the first cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, noticed, he is not. Space is space, black and deadly; it is not, as Lewis would like to believe, Heaven.

In fact, most of the mistakes in *Out of the Silent Planet* cannot be emended out, for they belong to the symbolic core of the book. Their effect is to push the novel out of the genre of sf into that of fantasy—a fantasy of a universe filled not with hard ultra-violet rays, but with angels. This is an instance of "external" errors, Type (b), having most serious effects on the classification of a book.

I will now conclude my catalogue of errors with a similar case—possibly the most egregious and notorious mistake in all recent literature. I mean the matter of Piggy's spectacles, in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. I don't know who first spotted this one, but it must have been one of several scientifically-minded readers back in 1954—or possibly even a small boy who suffered from myopia. I think I spotted the mistake myself when I first read the novel, because I did suffer from myopia as a boy, and I knew very well that spectacles for myopia are concave, and so cannot possibly be used to focus the sun's rays to start a fire. Yet this is what happens repeatedly in the novel, beginning with Chapter Two (p.45). Later, one lens of the pair is broken (Chap. 4, p.78), but the boys marooned on the island go on using the remaining lens as a firelighter (pp.79-80 and often thereafter). And this device is crucial to both the plot and the symbolism of the novel: we cannot mentally emend in any way. Here I disagree strongly with the view of Julian Barnes (or his mouthpiece, "Braithwaite"), who discusses this point in his semi-fictional book *Flaubert's Parrot*. He writes:

> With Piggy's glasses, I should think that a) very few people . . . would notice; and b) when they do notice, they merely detonate the error . . . What's more, this detonation (which takes place on a remote beach, with only a dog as witness) doesn't set fire to other parts of the novel.[17]

Barnes/Braithwaite is factually wrong: the witnesses are all the main characters of the novel, and there is no dog in the story. By "detonation" he seems to mean what I call "mental emendation;" and I am afraid this is impossible; and yes, Piggy's impossible fire does set fire to the rest of the novel. In fact, if the world of the novel must be taken as the actual world, it consumes it altogether.

For Piggy is a victim: he needs his glasses to see anything more than a few centimetres

from his eyes, and other boys keep snatching his glasses away to make fire. Piggy at last meets his death for this very reason; for Jack's gang have stolen his glasses for the usual purpose, Piggy goes to them to beg for his glasses back, and in the following confrontation he is killed (Chap. 11, p.200). Now, any emendation would ruin the novel. Piggy could not have a box of matches; because losing the matches would not render him sightless. Moreover, the glasses are also symbolically right: as a sophisticated artifact they suggest both science in general and scientific "vision" in particular; and Piggy stands for scientific rationalism, which becomes a casualty as the boys revert to superstitious barbarism. Nor would it do to give Piggy thick convex lenses for *long-sightedness,* since a long-sighted person only needs glasses for reading or other close work, and on the island a long-sighted Piggy would be hardly handicapped at all. Besides, long-sightedness is a typical affliction of the elderly (like myself at present), not of small boys. No, there is no way out; Piggy must be short-sighted, and his glasses must be needed to light the fires which will attract the rescuers. And, *pace* Barnes, the mistake is not a remote one: it has been spotted by a great many readers; this is not at all like the problem of the retinas of an invisible man. One science fiction buff (I'm afraid I forget who) said that when he came to this point in *Lord of the Flies,* he gave up the book in disgust.

Well, yes: the story of the novel is impossible—in our universe. It is founded on a Type (b) external error: paraphysics. It follows that *Lord of the Flies* is not mundane fiction but sf or fantasy, and is set in an altered universe where the lenses needed to correct myopia are *convex.* I would hate to describe the paraphysics of that universe, but still—that is what we have to imagine.[18] And while we are about that, I suppose we could also try to imagine a universe where crescent moons (as I have mentioned above) rise in the late evening.

Lord of the Flies, then, is a good test case for my theory of errors. I submit that real errors—internal contradictions or external violations of fact or physics (that are not deliberately planted by the author)—can only be dealt with in two ways. They can be emended out; or they can be left in place, thereby pushing the story into an altered universe.

Notes

1. London: Heinemann, 1955, p.103 and passim.
2. Rymer, *A Short View of Tragedy,* 1693; rpt. in Signet edn. *Othello,* pp.187-204.
3. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.
4. St Albans: Panther, 1973.
5. A trivial "external" mistake in *The Left Hand of Darkness* occurs in Chap. 3, p.26, where rubies are classified as "carbon jewels." But rubies are corundum (Al_2O_3), not carbon.
6. *Seven Gothic Tales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p.122.
7. London: Chatto & Windus, 1968.
8. London: Unwin, 1966, 3 vols, III, 385.
9. London: Unwin, 1981.
10. London: Faber, 1958.
11. All Wells short stories are quoted from *Selected Short Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958).
12. In the summer number of *Illustrated London News.* The date is given as "Sunday, Nov. 10, 1896" in this and all editions of the story, so no typo can be involved.
13. Harris Wilson, ed., *Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1960), pp.34-35.
14. First published 1901; rpt. New York: Berkley, 1967.
15. Thus E.R. Burroughs's Pellucidar must also be set in a paraphysical universe.
16. First published 1938; rpt. London: Pan, 1952.

17. London: Cape, 1984, p.77. Though I disagree with Barnes on Piggy's spectacles, I am indebted to his general discussion of literary errors, and have adopted the terms "external" and "internal" from him. I am also indebted in an indirect way to Christopher Ricks, whose lecture on this topic is reported by Barnes (but Ricks has told me that his lecture has not been printed).
18. We also have to imagine several other improbabilities in the novel, such as a "passenger tube" which drops the boys unharmed on the island when their transport plane is shot down in flames; and that there are no supervising adults in the "tube" (p.8). Really, this is not a very convincing sf set up. Disbelief has to be not merely suspended, but drawn and quartered.

We welcome Sam Moskowitz, pioneer historian of sf, to our pages for the first time with a strong rebuttal of the other science-fictional commentator Sam—Sam Lundwall —who in Foundation *34 lambasted received wisdom about Anglo-American sf.*

Sam Moskowitz is currently working on the last two volumes of his series Science Fiction in Old San Francisco, *which "delineates a fantasy and sf epoch buried by the earthquake in 1906."*

Setting the Record Straight: A Response to Lundwall's 'Adventures in the Pulp Jungle'

SAM MOSKOWITZ

Ever since the appearance of *Science Fiction: An Illustrated History* by Sam Lundwall in the United States (Grosset & Dunlap 1977) I have been waiting for an opportunity to rebut his statements and innuendos, particularly those which are surmises based on his ignorance and others which are outright misrepresentations to support a false premise. The publication of "Adventures in the Pulp Jungle" (*Foundation* 34, Autumn 1985) offers me that opportunity, for obviously it is futile to write a rebuttal to a book company: no one is going to see it except the editors and the author, and the original statements will appear to the world to have remained unchallenged.

First, I would like to take up his jingoistic rewriting of science fiction history in his mendacious attempt to prove that Sweden had a science fiction magazine before the United States. In doing this I wanted to make the following points clear:

1. A magazine specializing in supernatural and horror fiction does not become a science fiction magazine because it mixes a minority of such stories in its contents
2. An adventure magazine does not become a science fiction magazine, just because it runs one or more such stories an issue
3. A one-shot special issue is not a science fiction magazine nor does it make the periodical that issues it a science fiction magazine
4. A magazine that runs entire issues with no fiction is not a science fiction magazine.

In his book *Science Fiction: What It's All About* (Ace, 1971) Lundwall states quite positively:

> At that time, Sweden had a Hugo Gernsback of his own, by the name of Otto Witt, who in practice was more Gernsback than Gernsback himself. His magazine *Hugin*, which appeared with its first regular issue on April 7, 1916 (were there *irregular* issues before that?—*SM*), can with good reasons be regarded as the first attempt to make a science fiction magazine. Altogether eighty-five issues of *Hugin* were published up to the last issue Christmas, 1919. The literary quality was pitifully low, and Witt's sense of logic seemed to sleep around the clock (he wrote every word in the magazine himself) but the honor of having published the first sf magazine undoubtedly belongs to him.

In "Adventures in the Pulp Jungle" Lundwall states: "The author of numerous novels and non-fiction books, (Otto Witt) launched the sf magazine *Hugin* in 1916 and filled 86 issues of this strange publication with his own writings—articles, short stories, reviews, even novels—glorifying the science of the future and quite a number of unusual inventions of his own creation."

Note that Lundwall no longer states it was the *first* science fiction magazine and he has increased the number of issues from 85 to 86 (we assume the latter is correct). He also unequivocally states that Witt filled the magazine with his own writings.

This raised enough questions in my mind to cause me to take an issue of *Hugin* to Hans Stefan Santesson, who was born of a Swedish mother and lived seven years in Sweden before coming to the United States. He spoke, read and wrote Swedish and was for many years well-known in science fiction circles as editor of *Fantastic Universe* and *The Saint's Mystery Magazine*. The issue I brought him was dated September 21, 1916. The magazine was quarto sized, printed on coated stock, 20 pages and covers, saddle stitched. He went through it with me. There was a lead article on telescopes; a second article on telescopes; a third article on astronomy; a fourth article on astronomy (all illustrated with diagrams or photographs); brief news stories, all under a page in length, on subjects like perpetual motion, etc; an article on metalworking (12th in a series); another in a series of columns by J.H. Munktell and some ads. There was *no fiction at all.*

I am willing to concede that in some of its 85 or 86 issues the magazine ran some fiction and that it might have been science fiction. I am willing to concede that at one time or another it ran speculative articles on future science. I am not willing to concede that a magazine that runs no fiction is a science fiction magazine. Lundwall may have felt safe in the knowledge that no one could possess so out-of-the-way and unlikely a publication to challenge his veracity, but I do so and the reason I procured the issue was because of Lundwall's claim that it was a science fiction magazine! I would also like to point out that unless Munktell was a pen name, Witt did not fill the entire magazine himself.

The reason Lundwall did not repeat his claim that *Hugin* was the first science fiction magazine was because he asserted he had found an earlier one named *Stella*.

> The earliest truly modern sf magazine that I know about myself is one published in my native country, the magazine *Stella* published from April, 1886 through August, 1888. Supposedly a monthly magazine and a sort of a supplement to a popular Swedish weekly, *Svenska Familj-Journalen Svea*, it only managed four issues before it folded, however, so it would appear it was way before its time. It published most of the leading European sf authors of the time, however, including Kurd Lasswitz, E.T.A. Hoffman, Claes Lundin, Achim von Arnim and Jules Verne. Evidently it never became very popular, though, and thus remains an interesting footnote in the history of sf magazines. ("Adventures", p.6).

I am reluctant to keep an open mind on *Stella* for I think the burden of proof is on Lundwall and that would entail a list of contents with at least a sentence about each story

and photostats of a couple of science fiction covers, if there are any. I would like to point out that "a sort of a supplement" is *not* a magazine regardless of the contents of *Stella*. And after *Hugin* I would further state that Lundwall's credibility, to put it mildly, is shattered.

After this we read of Karl Hans Strobl, who:

> edited the Austrian-German magazine *Der Orchideengarten* during its three years of existence, 1919-21, making it into a leading sf and fantasy magazine that published practically all the leading European writers in the genre. A total of 54 issues were published before it folded . . . During its brief life, *Der Orchideengarten* was an extremely good and intelligent sf magazine, far removed from the low-brow *Amazing Stories,* but this one, too, sank without much trace. *Hugin* and *Der Orchideengarten* failed, died and were forgotten. *Amazing Stories* lived on.

Here, Lundwall is in deep trouble, because I own a complete set of 52 issues (not 54: the last two issues were double-numbered, which leads me to believe that Lundwall never has seen a run of the magazine and is basing his statement on something he has read elsewhere). *Der Orchideengarten* was indeed an earlier supernatural and horror magazine than *Weird Tales* and a very sophisticated, avant garde publication with outstanding full-color covers and marvellous original and reprinted illustrations. It was a little larger than letter size and until the last few issues ran 20 pages and covers, on pulp paper, saddle-stitched. It started off publishing twice a month, but after the second year became roughly a monthly and then irregular (18 issues the first year, 24 the second and 10 the third). I repeat it was a *supernatural and horror magazine,* and *not* a science fiction magazine. It ran one special science fiction issue (Zweiter Jahrgang-Viertes Heft, 1920 Volume 2 No. 4, 1920), which it called the "Phantastik der Technik" (Technical Fantasies). The total science fiction content of that issue was 15 pages including five pages of illustrations, so there were actually 10 pages of text for a total of roughly 6,500 words (a bit weak to inspire Gernsback on the remote chance that he had ever seen it). The stories in the issue were "Die Luftsäule" ("Column of Air") translated from the Swedish of Ossian Elgström (about a flying automobile); "Die Lokomotive" ("The Locomotive"), subtitled "Ein Traum" ("A Dream") which was *also* about a flying automobile and by Leopold Plaichinger; "Mischa Strongins Sieben Versuche" ("Mischa Strongin's Seventh Experiment"), by Alexander Poljenow, the longest story in the section, with a Russian locale, though no translator is given; and "Galvanostegie" by Hanns Wohlbold.

Now it is important here to make a sharp differentiation. Lundwall seems to think that if a special science fiction issue is produced the publication becomes a science fiction magazine. If that is the case, then *Der Orchideengarten* is more probably a *detective* magazine for it produced two all-detective issues. Issue Vol. 2 No. 14, 1920 was one such featuring a *new* Sherlock Holmes story written by one of the editors Alf von Czibulka titled "Sherlock Holmes' Letztes Abenteur" ("Sherlock Holmes' Last Adventure") and Volume 2 No. 16, 1920 was another all detective issue marvellously illustrated. There were two "Das Galante Abenteur" (Gallant Adventure) issues, sexy and historical, so that proves *Der Orchideengarten* was an adventure magazine and there was one issue which was devoted to an appeal to help the unfortunates in Siberia (Vol. 2 No. 22), so that proves it was a magazine of social conscience and protest (although its editor became a Nazi official).

Collier's, which for almost 60 years was the second leading weekly magazine in America next to *The Saturday Evening Post,* published its October 27, 1951 issue as an entire

future war number. Titled "Preview of the War We Do Not Want," its theme was "Russia's Defeat and Occupation 1952-60" and every word in its 130 tabloid-size pages was devoted to that subject. Outright admitted fiction and simulated fact were contributed by 20 famous names including Robert E. Sherwood, Philip Wylie, Arthur Koestler, J.B. Priestley, Hanson W. Baldwin and Edward R. Murrow. That did not make *Collier's* a new science fiction magazine, nor did the frequent science fiction it did publish.

The only person known to have found a copy of *Pears Annual* 1919 and *reported* on it was George Locke, proprietor of Ferret Fantasy and unquestionably one of the great bibliophiles and bibliographers of our era. I am certain Lundwall has never seen a copy, yet he reports on it as though he has examined one and writes ("Adventures", pp.5-6) that: "Hugo Gernsback must have heard about the success of the sf issue of the British *Pears Annual* in 1919 and the *Phantastik der Technik* issue of the German *Der Orchideengarten* in 1920. So in 1923, Gernsback emulated these precursors with a science fiction issue of *Science and Invention.*" I worked for Hugo Gernsback for 15 months and had dinner or lunch with him twice a week during that entire time and innumerable conferences, and I questioned him thoroughly. If he ever had the slightest inkling of either of those two publications it was strictly "classified." In fact, to my knowledge, I was the first person in the United States ever to speak or write about the *Der Orchideengarten,* doing so at Classicon I, on November 8, 1976 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. I still have notes elaborate enough for a full-length article.

This brings us back to Lundwall's statement (p.6): "Gernsback was preceded in North Europe by two men with personalities even stranger than his, who launched modern sf magazines before he did, and did it better." He names Otto Witt of *Hugin* and Karl Strobl of *Der Orchideengarten.* As I have just demonstrated neither one was even remotely a science fiction magazine; *Hugin* was not even a fiction magazine. Lundwall's statements are outright falsehoods, not exaggerations but *falsehoods* which leads us to believe that *Stella* belongs in the same category.

Lundwall has set up this literary sleight-of-hand to prove how much brighter he is than the Americans or British when it comes to the history of science fiction and how their ignorance has led them to a nationalistic chauvinism. The truth is that Lundwall was just as ignorant as they were, because in his first book *Science Fiction: What It's All About* he never mentions *Stella* or *Der Orchideengarten,* which means he was ignorant of their existence in 1971. By 1977 when *Science Fiction: An Illustrated History* was published he had discovered them and with great hypocrisy excoriates the Americans and British for not crediting their "role" in the history of science fiction.

To round off his heap of falsehoods, he states "a number of magazines like the British *Pearson's Magazine,* the French *La Science et la Vie, Journal des Voyages* and *Travers le Monde,* and the Russian *Priroda i liudi,* were sometimes "indistinguishable" from sf magazines. Even the USA had a few magazines catering for science fiction readers." I happen to own the first 20 years of *Pearson's Magazine* complete, both British and American editions (which are different) and have *read them* and noted every science fiction, fantasy, supernatural, horror and off-trail story. The key word here is "indistinguishable." They rarely ran more than one such per issue and sometimes when they did not have a serial of that type there would be six issues with nothing at all. Most of what they did run was good quality, particularly H.G. Wells, but they were a general

family magazine. Science fiction covers were rare. The same is true of the French and Russian magazines mentioned.

Weird Tales ran several stories that could be considered science fiction every issue, but I know of no one, except possibly Lundwall, who has ever claimed it was a science fiction magazine. *The Argosy* up until 1920 ran more science fiction than any pulp magazine except its companion *All-Story,* with which it combined. The magazine ran in excess of 100,000 words an issue and counting every chapter of a serial as a unit (if there were 6 parts it counted as six stories) in its peak year which was 1919 (before *Amazing Stories*), it ran 48 sf units (counting *weird* stories): less than one per issue, since it was a weekly. *Argosy* would run 64 sf units in 1929 *after* Gernsback, in desperate competition with him. They ran 150 units of westerns: did that make them a western magazine? *Science and Invention* from 1920 to 1926 averaged two science fiction units per issue and it was not a fiction magazine. Additionally Gernsback ran science fiction in its companions, *Radio News* and *The Experimenter.* In 1925, the year before he published *Amazing Stories,* Gernsback ran 47 units in 36 issues of three magazines, while *Argosy* ran 18 units in 52 issues. *Argosy* at that time had a policy *against* science fiction.

Getting back now to *Pears Annual* for 1919, it was a "Fifty Years From Now" issue, showing what the world would be like in 1969. It contained six stories and one speculative article. It was very similar in concept to *Collier's* special issue and enlisted such world-famous writers as G.K. Chesterton and A.A. Milne as contributors. It was especially noteworthy for its illustrations in color by H.M. Brock and W. Heath Robinson. That type of thing, the "One Hundred Years From Now," is not unknown in magazine and newspapers, whether in a single article or an entire issue.

Similarly, when *The Overland Monthly* published for June, 1890 and entire issue inspired by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* it was an interesting number but definitely not a science fiction magazine. There were as many as several dozen Bellamy clubs in California alone at the time and such an issue would draw additional readers. The most interesting thing in the issue was a translation from the German of Kurd Lasswitz's 1871 story "Pictures Out of the Future," featuring an odour piano.

Lundwall makes another absurd claim when he states (p.6): ". . . the germinal *Marvellous Magazine* (1802 – 03) and the flood of horror magazines from the 1820's and on with titles like *The Ghost, Tales of Terror, Terrific Register* and *The Magazine of Curiosity and Wonder.* These were the real precursors to *Amazing Stories,* offering cheap thrills for a mass market, utilizing the symbols of their time." Those magazines ran gothic stories, where any "supernatural" event was logically explained at the end, true crime stories, stories of the pyramids, of dogs born with two heads, family secrets of the famous, catastrophic events of the past, tales of young prodigies, but despite the titles, they were not fantasy magazines.

He develops his thesis further when he says (p.7) of Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories:*

> Hugo Gernsback appeared with the right product at the right time, offering a simplified version of the future to an audience ignorant about science, politics and sociology, and thus worried about the rapidly changing world in which it was caught. Using the pulp magazine formula of cops and robbers in a slightly new overcoat, and reprinting those European works which best fit into this formula, he presented US readers with the sort of science fiction that Jules Verne had written fifty years, and H.G. Wells thirty years, earlier.

First, I was not aware that Jules Verne and H.G. Wells were writing the "cops and

robbers" formula. He goes on to say: "It was old hat in Europe, but US magazine readers had never seen anything like it before." That statement is absurd. Does Lundwall claim that Verne and Wells were never printed in the United States before Gernsback started *Amazing Stories*? Is he even trying to say that Wells and Verne never appeared in magazines in the United States! Well if so, he is a fool, because more books by Verne and Wells were bought in the United States alone than all the nations of Europe combined. Verne and Wells were serialized in the mass market magazines beginning in 1874, and eventually reached millions! Verne and Wells were serialized in *hundreds* of United States newspapers. When certain of Verne's stories were appearing in serial form in France, the copy was *telegraphed* to the US so Americans could keep up with the events simultaneously. Not only Verne and Wells but many other European authors of merit were being translated. I can not only document it; I have them in my collection, in magazines, newspapers and books.

Lundwall seems to have forgotten that the United States had the largest middle class in the world, even in the nineteenth century, who were educated and well-to-do. That our magazines were the finest in the world and our newspapers the best in the world, with the largest circulation, is not chauvinism but fact. In Europe most of the good works of science fiction that were not written by the big names, particularly on the Continent, enjoyed only modest sales. Their authors were not well known even in their own countries. It demands scholarship and effort to locate them, particularly when the language is something other than English, French or German.

In his statement that "Gernsback then started moulding local authors into the sort of writers he wanted—Murray Leinster, Ray Cummings, Otis Adelbert Kline, Francis Flagg and others, who soon learned to write exactly the pulp-magazine fairy tales extolling the wonders of science that Gernsback felt the public needed, and secretly wanted" (p.7) Lundwall proves he has never examined more than a few issues of the Gernsback *Amazing* and is spouting from the inspiration of his prejudices. Let us take the authors he says that Gernsback "moulded." Gernsback never bought a Murray Leinster story until 1953 when I became editor of *Science-Fiction Plus*. The three he ran, "The Runaway Skyscraper," "The Mad Planet" and "Red Dust" originally appeared in *Argosy Weekly* and *Argosy All-Story* 1919-21 and they were not cops and robbers stories nor do they extol the wonders of science. Gernsback only printed a single Ray Cummings story in *Amazing Stories,* "Around the Universe," which was a *reprint* from *Science and Invention*. Since Cummings scored his first big success in 1919, he could scarcely have been "moulded" after 1926. In fact, by the end of his career Cummings was repeating with sickening frequency the atomic world plot of his first story. Otis Adelbert Kline had but two stories in Gernsback's *Amazing Stories*. The first, "The Malignant Entity," an old plot, even then, about a blob of protoplasm eating people, appeared in the June, 1926 issue and was a *reprint* from the May – June – July 1924, First Anniversary Issue, of *Weird Tales,* so there is no way Gernsback could have "moulded" that. The second one, "The Radio Ghost," in the September 1927 issue, was a story that as part of its plot demonstrated how the manifestations of spiritualists could be duplicated by radio and chemicals. (It is interesting to speculate for what market this story was first written. It could have been for *Weird Tales,* to which Kline was a regular contributor. It could have been for Gernsback's *Radio News*. It could have been for *Science and Invention,* for Gernsback carried a continuous exposé of spiritualism, and it could also have been for *Amazing Stories*. Kline certainly touched all bases.) Finally, Francis Flagg, whose real name was Henry George

Weiss: Francis Flagg was his brother's name. His brother was laid off during the recession of 1920-21 and had to take a job which paid so poorly, that through lack of funds his wife and still-born child died. He died of a broken heart a few months later and this tragedy converted Weiss into a rabid socialist and foe of capitalism. He was discovered by Gernsback who bought his first story "The Machine Man of Ardathia," which appeared in *Amazing Stories* for November, 1927. He used "Francis Flagg" on all his fiction as a continuing memorial to the memory of his dead brother. His first story told of a "man" from 30,000 years in our future, who through genetic engineering has been altered to live an extended life of 1,500 years encased in a transparent container and kept alive mechanically, who travels through time to pay a brief visit to the past. No cops and no robbers.

We find then, that of the four authors Lundwall asserts that Gernsback "moulded," only one was discovered and "developed" by him and his first story had a highly advanced concept. Flagg would sell two other stories to Gernsback, one about a man trapped in another dimension and the other about ants enslaving humans. They are so disparate as to rule out any formula.

Commenting on the relevancy of the content of the stories Gernsback published, Lundwall said: "Gernsback never realized that what particularly Wells and to some degree Poe wrote about, and Verne in his later years, was not fairy tales of science and prophetic vision, but stories about politics and psychology, of sociology and the human soul." This brings us to the authors that Gernsback did mould (David H. Keller, MD, Miles J. Breuer, MD, Stanton A. Coblentz, A. Hyatt Verrill, Harl Vincent, Bob Olsen and Fletcher Pratt) as well as what he actually bought and published. Let us start with Keller, who was one of America's earliest full-time practicing psychiatrists. When Gernsback read his first story, "Revolt of the Pedestrians," published in *Amazing Stories* February, 1928, he made an *agreement* with him to take his entire output and also put him to work on other projects. "Revolt of the Pedestrians" was about the future when from the advancement of scientific comfort, part of the humans have lost the use of their legs and those that have retained them have another society and are regarded as an underclass, not permitted to live in the cities, run down by cars without compunction, regarded as hopeless inferiors until one day the power goes off. If that is not a story of sociology and the human soul, what is?

The second story Keller wrote was "The Yeast Men" (April, 1928), a satire on war in which unkillable yeast "men" invade a war-like country by the millions and in dissolving leave so fetid an odor that surrender is mandatory. In "A Biological Experiment" (June, 1928), the world of the future has all children laboratory produced and obtainable only with a permit. A young couple circumvent the laws and run off in the wild to have a natural child. The mother dies in childbirth, but the event arouses the women of the land who revolt for the right to have children. "The Psychophonic Nurse" (November, 1928) was a story about the problems of two working parents wishing to take care of their child: they have a robot nurse built, freeing the mother to be an author with all the social activities that go with it. But at night the father would slip out of bed, turn off the robot and take care of the baby himself. A "male" robot is built to walk the baby: when it left the house the father would disconnect the robot and walk the baby himself. When a storm arises on one walk, he saves the baby's life and leads his wife to an agonizing reappraisal of mechanical child rearing. In Keller's "The Worm" (March, 1929), the owner of a grist

mill that has been in the family for generations begins to hear strange sound beneath his building. He establishes that some gigantic creature is working its way up. As a hole appears he drops mill stones into the mouth of the creature, detours a brook into it, explodes dynamite, fires at its eyes, tips a hot stove into its mouth but nothing prevails and he is consumed. In "The Flying Fool" (July, 1929) a ribbon clerk, doomed to a niggardly existence, dreams of escaping and slowly builds a chair that will nullify gravity and can be propelled through the air. His dream of escape is to fly off the balcony and never return. As he is about to turn on the power, he hears his child cry. He finds himself emotionally incapable of leaving at that moment and abandons his dream forever. In *Amazing Stories Quarterly,* Summer, 1928, David H. Keller had four connected stories titled "The Menace" about American negroes, desperate about their situation, inventing a chemical to turn their skins white and engaging in elaborate plots to overthrow the white majority. In the same magazine for Fall 1928 he had "Stenographer's Hands" about a giant corporation in a controlled town that genetically breeds humans with extra long fingers and unusual eyes so they will make more efficient stenographers. There were more. And *these* are what Lundwall calls "cops and robbers" stories without social or psychological content.

Gernsback bought Stanton A. Coblentz's first story, a novel titled "The Sunken World" (*Amazing Stories Quarterly,* Summer 1928), a satiric utopia laced through with action and wonder. Did Gernsback buy it for the adventure? Not if you read the blurb which states: "But the idea behind the author's theme is the holding of present-day science and progress up to a certain amount of ridicule, and showing up our civilization in a sometimes grotesque mirror, which may not be always pleasing to our vanity and to our appraisal of our so-called present-day achievements."

He then bought another novel, "After 12,000 Years," which displays a remarkable bit of imagination and satire even today, 58 years after its publication in *Amazing Stories Quarterly* for Spring 1929. This novel prickles with marvellous social satire, and, unlike many of those considered "great," its inventiveness and predictive accuracy transcend *anything* by Huxley, Orwell or Zamyatin. Again in his blurb Gernsback pointed out: "Mr Coblentz . . . seems to have a genius for showing us up to ourselves, in a most casual and incidental manner. You sometimes wonder whether he is conscious of poking fun at us, all the time quietly laughing to himself . . ."

Miles J. Breuer, MD, sold Gernsback many stories, no two of them remotely alike, no suspicion of a formula, and later wrote, what is in my opinion the greatest novel ever written on the sociological impact of the takeover of men by machines, "Paradise and Iron" (*Amazing Stories Quarterly,* Summer 1930).

Far from having a formula, no editor since Gernsback has published such a wide variety of material with almost no taboos. He ran science fiction horror ("The Colour out of Space" by H.P. Lovecraft); took science fiction to the galaxies ("The Skylark of Space" by E.E. Smith); more humour than any editor since ("Experiment in Gyro Hats" by Ellis Park Butler); future war ("Armageddon 2419" by Philip Francis Nowlan); scientific romance ("The Master Mind of Mars" by Edgar Rice Burroughs); economics ("John Jones Dollar" by Harry Stephen Keeler); scientific detective ("The Man Higher Up" by Edwin Balmer and William MacHarg); science-fantasy ("The Moon Pool" by A. Merritt); lost race ("The Land That Time Forgot" by Edgar Rice Burroughs; educational ("The World of the Giant Ants" by A. Hyatt Verrill) in additional to the socially

significant tales of psychology and psychiatry by Keller and the social satires of Coblentz.

Lundwall is correct when he says that Gernsback was trying to turn back the clock with *Science-Fiction Plus* but by the third issue I had reversed his direction. But there was even some merit in that, because the publisher of the Swedish *Häpna* stopped in my office one day to negotiate for rights to reprint from *Science-Fiction Plus* and when I suggested to him that since he was paying a fair rate he pick and choose from close to 30 other existing magazines, he frankly stated that he wanted ours because in our first few issues the less sophisticated stories would be more easily understood. We got the same story from the Argentine magazine *Mas Allas* and the Australian magazine *Science Fiction,* all of which reprinted our stories and art work until we folded.

Lundwall laments all the other nations reprinting from the United States, but I would point out that this was not done at the point of a gun. Even those countries that had some history in science fiction infrequently reissue their old titles and continue to import American and British stories. As I write this I have received the December 1985 issue of *Science Fiction Chronicle* with a report on Italian science fiction in 1984. In this case we find, eight years after Lundwall's appraisal was originaly published, that 80% of all Italian science fiction published is American translations. The truth of the matter is that many foreign nations do not have a population or reader audience large enough to create a base that will give any domestic writers a living. Therefore, those writers turn to something other than science fiction. Publishers must then use foreign works obtained at reasonable reprint rates, produce small printings at relatively stiff prices, to satisfy the existing demand.

For example, a sale to Spain is only possible because the book can be marketed in all the other Spanish speaking nations of the world. Spain alone could not support a vital science fiction industry, though it has printed some for centuries. Portugal publishers buy only what they can also sell in Brazil which is a Portuguese-speaking nation: Portugal itself is too small and too poor to represent a big book market.

As far as incorporating the science fiction of all the various nations into a history, how many nations have a good history of their science fiction? Even when we find occasional articles or introductions to books on the subject, the record is diffuse and haphazard and in many cases no strong connection can be made between the works that have been published. Not that there may not be a continuity and influence, but no one has delved deep enough to establish it.

Even in a nation like England, with its marvellous literary tradition, I had to travel from America to England to research William Hope Hodgson, George Griffith, and Olaf Stapledon. Sure I had a mass of material, assembled through the years, but the trick is no different than fiction: you must give the material narrative flow by connecting it. Lundwall would expect someone to learn 20 languages, travel to as many nations, interview countless authors and publishers, explore archives in remote languages when all *he* has been able to do himself is to take a few titles or scraps from a variety of countries, throw them at us and say: "See! You haven't included all these." Except for tokenism, neither has he!

Lundwall sees no contradiction between his complaint that American science fiction inundates the world and his statement: "British and US science fiction stays behind its own borders, self-complacently acting as if nothing existed outside their own backyard." Further, he goes on: "An occasional sf work from the world outside might by accident

find its way into the English-language ghetto." If that is the case, why do I own (in round figures) over 100 books from the USSR translated into English; 20 titles by Stanislaw Lem translated into English; about 200 books from the French translated into English; about 30 books from the German, and roughly another 100 from all other languages but English?

That is close to 450 titles, and maybe an actual count would establish many more. That does not include several thousand books, magazines and paperbacks in their original languages. There are many people who do not have a collection that large in *English*. Nor does that include many titles I did not buy or know about. I forgot to include some 110 Perry Rhodan, which Lundwall bitterly deplores. It must be remembered that in the American printings, the editor Forrest Ackerman and his wife Wendyne, Americanized the text and made them little magazines with short stories, articles, and collector's rarities that gave them an appeal even to those who did not particularly care for the stories. Further, they had a great appeal for the younger and foreign-born market. I have seen many people walk into the Science Fiction Book Shop in New York City and ask for Perry Rhodan—and most of them had a foreign accent. They only made up a small percentage of the total paperback science fiction market. There has been no Perry Rhodan published in the US since roughly 1978.

Lundwall predicts that science fiction will "wither and die in isolationism in the US and United Kingdom." In the eight years since he made that prediction the quantity published has exceeded the efforts of anyone to assemble it all.

In concluding, Lundwall is grateful that the science fiction magazines are dying and will be replaced by something else that will be more mature. It would be a sad day for science fiction if all the magazines died. They are the cohesive force that unifies the field, that provides a market for the short story, that through its editorials, book reviews and readers' columns, keeps funnelling new writers, readers and artists into the field.

When Lundwall says that Gernsback forced English-language science fiction into a self-contained ghetto, he is talking through his hat, particularly when he adds "with no contacts whatsoever with the outside world." Gernsback could read French and German and had a consultant C.A. Brandt who could also read French and German, and they translated and published novels and short stories from France and Germany continuously over a period of 10 years. He also had translations of science fiction from Russia and Hungary and his readers' department had letters from many foreign readers.

During the twenties and early thirties Russian magazines reprinted a substantial number of stories from Gernsback's magazine and for better or worse some of his influence can still be seen in later productions there. Following the appearance of *Ralph 124C41+* in the USSR in 1964, Russian science fiction author A. Kasantsev sent Gernsback a copy of his book *Guests from the Cosmos* (Moscow, 1963) affectionately inscribed: "To esteemed Mr Hugo Gernsback who surely deserves that to his name should be added +, the same as to his name of Ralph (+)."

As early as 1932, Russian bibliographies of science fiction were listing *Science and Invention, Science Wonder Stories, Wonder Stories* and *Everyday Science and Mechanics,* all Gernsback publications.

When *Science-Fiction Plus* appeared, a book was received by Gernsback from France, *Voyage dans La Planète Vénus,* an interplanetary published in Paris in 1892 and written by Charles Guyon. The very shaky hand of a very old man had inscribed in rough

translation: "To Monsieur Hugo Gernsback: A souvenir of Charles Guyon from his son Réne Guyon."

Then there was Andrew Lenard, Hungarian reader of *Wonder Stories* who was so inspired by Gernsback's fiction that he produced a Hungarian interplanetary film, a still of which was reproduced in *Wonder Stories.*

All the foregoing provide ample evidence that Gernsback did have contacts with other countries.

And as I write, an anthology of fiction published in Germany has just arrived from a West German antiquarian bookman. Originally published in January 1934 it contained as one of its selections "The Planetoid of Doom" by Morrison Colladay from the December, 1932 issue of *Wonder Stories* reproducing the magazine illustration by Frank R. Paul.

Lundwall quite correctly describes his "love/hate relationship" with science fiction. I am not a psychiatrist, nor do I know the subject well enough to diagnose the base roots of his attitude. Possibly he feels he has not received the recognition he deserves, yet his two books on science fiction were published in the United States. He should realize that he is writing a polemic and "shooting from the hip" without adequate evidence to back up his assertions. He should also realize that time has not been kind to his arguments. He is in the position of those religious fanatics who predicted the end of the world when Halley's Comet arrived so brilliantly in 1910 and 75 years later the world is still here and Halley's comet has returned. The world could end, but we know for sure it will not be because of Halley's Comet.

Letters

Dear *Foundation:* December 1985

I recently met Gregg Rickman, the man who interviewed Philip K. Dick the day before his eventually fatal stroke. Rickman is writing his own, book-length, biography of Dick, and he noted, kindly, a minor error in my article (*Foundation* 34). Perhaps you could publish a brief erratum.

The particular passage is on page 72, sixth paragraph. Dick's mother did not immediately marry the widower of her sister. Dorothy and Phil returned to Berkeley in June 1938, and Phil lived at home until the age of 19. Dorothy did eventually marry Joe Hudner, widower of her sister and father of twins, in 1953, when Phil was 24. Kleo's quote about the unfinished family still stands, and the distance that existed between Dick and his mother obviously lasted until her death. He didn't go to her funeral.

Rickman double-checked the rest of the article, and found no other factual errors. I apologize for the one he did find; testimony on Dick's childhood and on his relationship with his mother was a little hazy, to say the least, and it was a part of his life that I did not, admittedly, emphasize in my reporting. That is for books such as Rickman's.

Jeffrey Wagner *Oakland, California*

Dear *Foundation:* December 1985

This is a belated response to two pieces on Wells's *Time Machine:* Brian J. Burden's "Decoding *The Time Machine*" (*Foundation* # 31) and K.V. Bailey's mainly respectful response in his long letter in # 33.

I don't want to sound academically egotistical, but I think your contributors should do their homework a bit better, i.e. read some of the previous critical literature; and also take a hard look at what is evidence, in symbol-and-source-hunting, and what isn't. The game of parallels to other works (the Bible, Blake, etc) is a very dangerous one; and while Burden and Bailey do have some valid insights, much of their source/parallel hunting strikes me as Fluellenism. This useful term was invented by Richard Levin in his excellent critique of critics, *New Readings versus Old Plays* (1979). Levin was considering the wilder critics of Elizabethan drama, but the same strictures apply to all literary fields. Fluellen, in *Henry V,* was concerned to press the "significant" parallel between Macedon and Monmouth. His proof was that both countries have rivers, "and there is salmons in both". The fact is that you can easily find parallels between any two literary texts; and Brian Burden duly finds a parallel between *The Time Machine* and Matthew X, 25 because "there is sparrows in both". He claims (p.36) that this is an "evident reference". I would say rather that this is evidently *not* a reference. The sparrows in Matthew X (actually X.29-31) have to do with God's caring love for his disciples; but the *obvious* meaning of all Wells's work is that there is no such loving God. This consideration makes nonsense of Burden's conclusion that the Time Traveller has changed future history and "rendered the world of 802,701 as ephemeral as Elfland". I don't know how any sensitive reader of Wells can come to so preposterous a notion—which destroys the basic and obvious meaning of *The Time Machine* and indeed all of Wells's other early work. (It's more like the George Pal film than Wells's book.)

Fluellenism can lead critics badly astray if it is not controlled by common sense.

Neither Burden nor Bailey show any signs of having read my article on *The Time Machine* in *Science Fiction Studies* # 17 (March 1979). If they had done so it would have saved Mr Burden some labour, and Mr Bailey from one mistake. The mistake: I showed in my article, on the evidence of *Love and Mr Lewisham* and *Experiment in Autobiography,* that Wells was a very sound Latinist even in his early years—in spite of Bailey, he was much beyond "the simplest requirements of pharmacy". So Burden is quite right to look at (e.g.) the Latin meaning of Lemur. Only, I had already pointed that out in 1979; along with the significance of the White Sphinx.

I sympathize with academic laziness; I'm lazy myself. But before writing learnedly on Wells you really should check on what has been written on the same topic 5 years before.

David Lake *Brisbane, Queensland*

Dear *Foundation:* January 1986

Open Letter on the Academic Politics of a Former Officer of SFRA

It is a common, if not totally effective, political tactic to deny the existence of the opposition—the ultimate ineffectiveness stems from the opportunity such a tactic provides for the affirmation of identity if not from the exigencies of truth itself. We know

that peoples who are denied the status of "existence" by the state always rise up; the Swiftian rumour that an enemy has passed from this world always invites the individual to assert that he or she is not dead. Therefore, I should be delighted to be afforded this opportunity to say that the Science Fiction Research Association is alive and well.

Unfortunately, what all this preamble verbiage is about may, in fact, be less a matter of literary warfare, which is fun, and more a simply sad matter of poor scholarship. The issue is this. The other day I received my copy of a massive new reference work in the field, *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines,* edited by Marshall B. Tymn and Mike Ashley and just published by Greenwood Press. The book totals nearly a thousand pages and was written by 36 contributors in addition to the two editors. My own minor contribution was completed over 5 years ago. I am very pleased to have the finished work and would, of course, not expect such a large project to be free of error. Scholarship has come a long way in this field, and all scholars know how slippery enormous detail can become. What I do notice, however, is a pattern of omission that is either paranoia (on my part or on the part of the editors), poor scholarship, or the sinister and ineffective politics I mention above. Tymn and Ashley as editors fail to note the existence of SFRA though many of their contributors mention this oldest scholarly organization devoted to the study of the field *and* mention it in what they write about themselves in the contributors section of the book.

Specifically, two omissions puzzle me and both must be acts of the editors. The Science Fiction Research Association does not appear in the index, though it is mentioned often in the text; and there is no entry for the *Newsletter* of SFRA, though similar publications are included. Editor Tymn, in particular, knows well what SFRA does, and has done, to promote exactly the sort of study of the field that this book represents because he served a number of years as treasurer of the organization. Can it be that scholarly rigour has failed in this instance, or is this a clear attempt to deny the existence of an important precursor? Though I cannot answer that question, I invite others to consider it and let me end on a less playful and more elegiac note. I am certain that organizations are less important than books and books less important than ideas, and when my term of office in SFRA is over I'll return to ideas. But it appalls me how collective actions can work to hide the truth, and this is particularly appalling when scholarship adopts such tactics.

Donald M. Hassler *President, SFRA*

Dear *Foundation:* February 1986

I wish I could spare the time to comment in detail on *Foundation* 35, but I have a novel to deliver by July and people keep tossing interruptions at me (latest: will I fly to Athens next month for a big promotion of Penguin Books, because they're issuing *The Tides of Time* and it's set on a Greek island . . .?) I did, though, promise Richard Slaughter that I'd take another look at his piece, which I'd read when it deservedly won the essay prize at Yorcon III, and I have a couple of I trust pertinent observations.

In general, of course, I agree entirely with his hope for a "post-galactic" sf, though the inevitable paradox arises that if we knew how to make it come about we'd already be doing it. My concurrence is on the basis that in our world of rapid change what is called for is a fiction in which past and future are treated as in a sense coexistent.

Trouble arises when—as in the Scholes quote on p.54—one starts saying "we" require a fiction that . . . and so on. Who, one is obliged to ask, are "we"? Certainly the mass public in the English-speaking world appears to have little inclination toward fiction that "satisfies our cognitive and sublimative needs together", and this regrettable state of affairs is not wholly a by-product of cinema and TV, or 20th-century commercialism. There's a form of Gresham's Law at work, and has been since the advent of mass literacy —conceivably even before. Certainly Shakespeare had his audience, and holds it . . . but what the groundlings of his day wanted was blood and guts, and one suspects that the main reason they cheered *Hamlet* was not for its psychological subtleties but for its ghost and because it winds up with a good fight and bodies all over the stage.

This inclines me to continue in my long-established posture of pessimism. One hopes that it is indeed "too easy, too simplistic . . . to see the future *only* as 'a kind of continuing catastrophe' " (p.55)—but such hopes tend to be dashed with dismaying promptness. On the same day as I read this article I saw it stated in the *Guardian* that about six more nuclear weapons are added to the world's stockpile every day. This process has acquired so much inertia, and is forwarded by such a horde of dedicated scholiasts concerned with the minutiae of yield-per-warhead and type of delivery system yet totally unwilling to entertain the possibility that the whole damned setup may have been wrongly conceived from the start (much as orthodox theologians accepted the policy of burning heretics as a means of extinguishing heresy without asking whether it was intrinsically moral or even counter-productive), that it itself accounts to a great extent for the disintegration of belief systems—again, like heresy, which spread in defiance of oppression, indeed thrived on it, until Christianity ceased to occupy its former dominant place in people's thinking.

Long before Eco coined his phrase about the novel as "a machine for generating interpretations", Max Brod said no poem was worth the name that could not be interpreted in at least six different ways. I'd like to apply the principle by analogy to our civilization: it is not, and can't be, worth the name unless it offers a wide range of foreseeable outcomes that its citizens can look forward to eagerly and with approval. The story of our century is the story of how more and more hopeful-looking futures have been closed off from us, and I'm afraid sf will continue to reflect that fact rather than any other aspect of the contemporary world.

It follows, tragically, that few people will concern themselves within the sf context with Lem's "labyrinth of dark passages"—because what dwells there has oozed forth into the light of day, externalised by our machines, and most of us prefer to make the monster welcome in the outer world with endless sacrifice rather than hunt it to its lair. Grendel is loose, and Beowulfs are in short supply.

John Brunner *South Petherton, Somerset*

Reviews

The New World: An Epic Poem
by Frederick Turner *(Princeton University Press, 1985, 182 pp, $26)*

reviewed by Thomas M. Disch

That there exists an innate correspondence between poetry and science fiction was an article of faith among the evangelists for the New Wave. The basis for such a belief was often no more than that both arts were products of the Imagination with a capital I, while stricter apologists urged that sf, like poetry, had a special relation to metaphor such that the "ideas" of sf were themselves "poetic" in a manner transcending their written form. This argument from metaphor was the theoretic basis for a few quasi-narrative poems by D.M. Thomas and George Macbeth published in *New Worlds*, in which these certified poets served up reheated recensions of such familiar sf stories as "The Cold Equations." But these seeds were either infertile in themselves, or fell on stony ground, for sf poetry, so-called, never made headway in a narrative mode. Instead, it has characteristically adopted a form common to much contemporary, non-confessional poetry (especially in the US), that of a brief (less than 100 lines), semi-surrealistic vignette or expostulation. Within this lyric frame it deploys the familiar tropes of sf as a kind of allegorical shorthand. Reference to a common stock of images has the convenience that mythological or religious allusion once possessed: most readers will be able to extrapolate a coherent *mis-en-scene* from a minimum of auctorial cues. Sf shares this advantage with the other conventional (ie., well-mapped) lands of Faerie, that having often been there before, it is easy to return.

Yet for twenty years or more, despite the theorists' claims and despite the single less-than-breath-taking instance of Harry Martinson's *Aniara* (the English translation appeared in 1963), there has not been a long narrative poem to put the theory to the test, a poem that tells an sf narrative in poetic form, an epic of science fiction. The reasons for this aren't far to seek. Most sf—indeed, most fiction—is written to meet the demands of a market (of editors, really) in which "poetry" exists only as an absolute prohibition. Any poet with the yen and the stamina to produce long narrative fictions would be a fool to do so in verse, and indeed both Thomas and Macbeth took to prose when they felt a narrative urge. So too did Frederick Turner, whose first long sf narrative, *A Double Shadow,* (Putnam, 1978) took the prudent and prosaic form of a novel. But now Turner has had the courage to be a fool for art and has written the first genuine epic poem in the sf genre, and *The New World* wonderfully fulfils the hopes of the theorists. The form is not just frosting on the narrative cake; the story is genuinely richer and more resonant because of the specifically poetic gifts Turner brings to bear. The reciprocal benefit is no less remarkable: the task of writing an epic for a modern audience is made altogether smoother and more viable because the tale is set not in the mythopoeic past but in the science-fictional future.

Consider some of the difficulties. First, the sheer labour of writing six and a half thousand lines of verse, a good portion of which must, if the whole is to register as worthy the name of poetry, pass beyond mere prosodic acceptability and register as

inspired—or why this fuss with invoking the muse? The history of literature is strewn with the wrecks of would-be epics that died becalmed in Sargassoes where the winds of Speriminh (as Turner names his muse) would not blow. Turner adopts an unrhymed five-beat line of no particular metre, though with the language's natural tendency to iambic patterns and hence to blank verse. While in some hands so protean a metre might serve as an excuse for avoiding the rigours of strict form and doing pretty much whatever one wanted to, as Turner uses it, the five-beat line does the job nicely, allowing him to move among the various voices his narrative requires with flexibility and ease, achieving a high style (noble but not pompous) without the corsettings of compressed diction that strict blank verse encourages and which modern readers are unwilling or unable to negotiate at book length. Even Homer nods, of course, and Turner can produce a narrative patch as flat as this:

> The Tuscarawans must have decided to hold
> the crossing of the River Ahiah, and to wait for help
> from their eastern allies Mohican, Sandusky, and Wyandot
> but even with those reinforcements they are badly outnumbered . . .

But Homer doesn't characteristically nod, and neither does Turner. Here he is at a representative moment, not at the top of his form by any means, but doing a good job at one of the tasks traditional to the epic, describing a battle scene at high speed in a series of telling but not too high-flown similes:

> . . . that moment the second wave strikes, cutting
> the line, choking the flow of reinforcements, and setting
> new panic among the Somerset men.
> The segment of enemy line, a cut worm, must turn
> in two directions at once, but they still outnumber
> the Ahians by three to one, did they but know it.
> Now the third platoon, strung out in a line,
> hears the order to charge, breaks into a gallop,
> thundering down the slope. Among them Rollo,
> his face very white, his eyes like coals in his head,
> lashes his sword from its scabbard, the hiss of a meteor,
> raises his voice in the family war cry: "Aoi!"
> They burst on the enemy line as surf on the breakwater
> shatters in blossoms of phosphorescence and sweeps
> in green tons over the wall . . .

The next difficulty of the epic is less obvious but more formidable: it must forswear, or radically alter, a good part of the aesthetic resources available to the novel—not on grounds of generic purity but because the looseness and diffuseness that give the novelist so ample a canvas are death to poetry, whose glory is to suggest in three or four lines what a novel would project onto as many pages of scene-setting and dialogue. An epic is not a novel in verse; it does not aim to create, as most novels do, a kind of hypnagogic movie on the screen of the reader's half-dreaming mind, a movie usually enjoyed with a naïve, vicarious satisfaction. Epic is more akin to our experience of another no longer living art, history painting or the painting of mythological subjects. The object in both cases is to produce ideal human figures on a scale larger than life, whose actions are conducted not at the tempoes of ordinary life but with the sacramental solemnity of (to cite another lost art) *opera seria*. Done wrong, it is ludicrous, and science fiction (and its sibling, heroic fantasy) has been doing it with exemplary ineptitude for decades, as witness the creations of Robert E. Howard, J.R.R. Tolkien, Frank Herbert, and their legions of imitators,

whose fustian fairy tales bear the same relation to the epic's potential as do their illustrators' covers—the Frazettas and Vallejos—to the standards set by the Apollo Belvedere and the Sistine Chapel. The greatest risk, therefore, of undertaking an epic in our time is that such a work will seem only the versified counterpart of these devolved and declassé descendants of the epic narrative.

Turner does not succeed unequivocally in evading the guilt of this association. While he has invented a cunning rationale for a future that accommodates both swordplay and microcircuitry in the conduct of national wars, his motive in promoting such a union is surely as much to meet the demands of his supposed audience (all admirers of *Star Wars*) as those of his muse Speriminh. He does it well, but ought it be done at all? That's to say, is the heroic ideal inalterably wedded to images of a chivalric contest of arms? Or is it, rather, that knives, swords, and armoured horsemen are on file in everyone's visual memory? Putting aside this bone of contention (which can be urged equally against Tennyson and the pre-Raphaelites), I have to applaud the imaginative vigour with which Turner pursues his martial artifice, however arrived at. His battle scenes are done with the catsup-spilling panache of a Kurosawa.

More to the point in grading *The New World* on the EAS (Epic Achievement Scale), where Homer is 10 and Jack Chalker −5, is an evaluation of the moral meaning of the plot. Do the figures of the tale engage in actions that have an import beyond the bogs of Romance, beyond even the uplands of domestic tragedy? That is, do their personal fates come to have an emblematic reference to the larger patterns of history? That's asking a lot of a poem, however long, but it is what the epic requires, and why they are so rare.

To answer these questions with reference to *The New World* requires a synopsis of its plot at more length than is usually consistent with book-reviewing, and so here I will suggest that those readers who are willing, already, to take my recommendation on faith should read the poem before continuing with these reflections on its (considerable) merits. Any précis of the plot will inevitably spoil Turner's own narrative strategies and *coups de théatre*. For those too impatient to follow these counsels of perfection, and to Turner, my apologies.

The Argument, then, as briefly as I can, is as follows: In the year 2376 America is divided in three parts: the utopian Free Counties of the midwest, the fanatical fundamentalist theocracy of the Mad Counties in the southeast, and the Riots, anarchic remnants of the inner cities, whose debauched citizens are kept supplied with food and joyjuice through the slave labour of the captive Burbs. The hero, James Quincy, was raised in Hattan Riot (most of the poem's place names can be solved as easily as this, but a few are posers), the son of a disgraced Free Countian martial arts expert living in exile. He has a mythical boyhood ("Now that's a dandy story," one character comments on hearing James' account of it, "But I hope you don't mind me saying—it's shot full of holes"), inherits his father's sword Adamant, and escorts his mother back to the family farm in Mohican County. On the way he joins an Ahian military force and earns his first battle stripes. He becomes one of three suitors for the love of the poem's heroine, Ruth McCloud. The first of these suitors is her half-brother Simon (the fruit of an adulterous liaison between Ruth's mother and James's father, whence his exile) and so not a legitimate contender. Simon attempts to rape Ruth, gets caught, is outlawed, and departs for the Mad Counties to perfect his villainy. The second suitor is Antony Manse, a young black whom Ruth loves but who can only marry her if he passes three tests set for him. He

fails the third test, and James then passes all three to become her husband. Up to this point Turner's plot has been as traditional as a nativity pageant or a Harlequin romance. Now it takes a turn that bears the signature of the past decade. Ruth, though friendly towards James and the mother of his son, cannot bear his conjugal attentions and experiences all his ardour as a renewal of Simon's rape. She remains drawn to her earlier lover Antony, but when she is tempted to adultery, she instead pretends a passion for her husband. Then Simon, who has become the false Messiah of the Mad Counties, makes a raid on his old home town, killing Ruth's father. A war ensues. Simon, as a Parthian shot in the moment of defeat, tells James a lie that makes him suppose his union with Ruth incestuous, and this sends him back to Hatton Riot to consult an oracle called Kingfish, who advises him in this wise:

> "Love de game, boy: de flesh be de life
> ob de spirit, an' de spirit be all a game. But de game
> be all dat dere be, boy, an' dat be better
> dan nothing."

James, returning home, has various adventures very quickly. In just seven pages he's captured by pirates, has good sex with the pirate chief's daughter, is wrecked in the crash of a dirigible, is tempted to become the consort of the queen of the lotus-eating natives of Jorgia's Blue Ridge county, and for a capper takes a job on a starship and works his passage out to the 'Gellan worlds. He returns to Ruth just in time to prevent her from consummating her love for Antony. James, disguised as Antony, at last awakens a reciprocal passion in his wife, and there follows a salute to the seasons and the principle of growth and increase that is a particularly good set-piece. Simon reappears, this time leading a horde of Rioters, and the Free Counties are overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of the enemy. Worse, James' and Ruth's eldest son Daniel is kidnapped by Simon through the connivance of a traitorous servant. Simon demands the father as his price for the son. In the final showdown James sneaks in his sword Adamant for some final hugger-mugger but is killed by the traitorous servant acting under the influence of Simon's last lie. It is left to Ruth and two other women to polish off Simon, and the problem posed by the invading hordes is solved by the suicide of the traitorous servant, Judd, which is misinterpreted by Simon's followers as a sign that all must, after the fashion of Jonesville in Guyana, follow their fallen leader to the grave. Antony becomes Ruth's husband at last.

Laid bare in this way, some of the difficulties of the plot become quite evident. The concluding showdown is a succession of missed bulls'-eyes. The Judas figure of Judd is barely sketched by the author, yet the entire denouement hinges on his actions. This misplaced emphasis is symptomatic of a deeper flaw: Simon, who must do double duty as a villain, being the heavy both in the domestic drama and in the larger political conflicts, is a stock figure from melodrama. On one occasion he's given an Iago-like speech asserting the joys of a pure nihilism, but he is without human dimension or features, a Darth Vader. When the forces opposing the protagonist are led by such a bogey, epic is impossible. Epic heroes derive their dignity from having enemies as noble as themselves, for Achilles a Hector, for Aeneas a Turnus.

It is not just in the figure of Simon that Turner fails to do justice to the forces of darkness. He is very scanty in his treatment of both the Mad Counties and the Riots. Three times James appears in the caverns beneath the Hattan Riot to consult the oracle Kingfish, but these visitations more resemble Dorothy's visit to the Wizard than a descent to Avernus. The Riots, though conceptually interesting, remain an off-stage threat, their

exemplary wickedness a matter of report. The same is true of the Mad Counties. Indeed, both these dystopias come straight from sf's central casting department: the fundamentalist Mad Counties deriving from classic novels by Heinlein, Brackett, and Vidal, the Riots from the sets of movies like *Escape from New York*. These are the lands we love to hate, and Simon is rightfully their lord.

These objections are chiefly to what is absent from Turner's poem, and to a lesser degree to what is present by way of meeting the formal requirements of the epic (the oracular Kingfish, the grab-bag of "adventures" before the hero returns to his Penelope), and while they vitiate the poem's claims to epic status, they do not bulk very large against its actual accomplishment. *The New World* may not earn full marks as an epic, but it constitutes a first-rate utopian romance, one that by adopting the costume of Epic outflanks the bane of so many utopian narratives, which is that their plots are dictated by the author's didactic requirements: a Visitor as a stand-in for the reader arrives in Utopia and gets a guided tour by the Polonius in charge of the place. The Visitor raises objections and his guide shoots them down. Turner avoids all this by an astute recognition that poetry is the stuff that utopias should be made of, and that the arguments supporting his utopian theses need not be conducted as formal debates with the dice always loaded in favour of the author's spokesman, but that he can speak in his own poetic voice, as in this passage in which, in the context of Ruth's possible marriage to Antony, the author urges the benefits of miscegenation and of an extension of the marriage contract to the larger kinship group of the extended family:

> We are the holy and dangerous beast that dared
> to domesticate not only our plant and animal servants
> but also ourselves: and not for usefulness only
> but chiefly for beauty, the blazon of expressed shapeliness.
> And so the heroic hang of the Great Dane,
> the pretty baroque of the King Charles Spaniel,
> the deathlike elegance of the Siamese cat, the fire
> of the fighting-fish, bulbous flash of the poi, pout
> and delicate feather of pigeon and dove that Darwin
> admired, crimson petals of rose and peony,
> are only attendants on the sovereign differences given
> to this clan of mutated monkeys, to itself by itself.
> Once a marriage between a white and a negro
> was looked on with horror, for men believed that the races
> differed by nature, not, as we now know,
> by the choice of persons following, altering what
> the cultural rules of beauty dictated. But we
> especially prize the unique, and therefore are pleased
> when lovers break the habit of choosing a beauty
> that resembles that of themselves and their family . . .
> It is our custom also that parents and relatives
> should share in the work of consent, and thus help
> to make the projected marriage a real one: for marriage
> is real so far as it penetrates into the world
> of interpersonal verification and gains
> the consent of its living environment. Lovers, of course,
> as lovers, live in a world of their own, a dream
> that need not encounter the touch of reality;
> and therefore we reverence them, treating them lovingly
> just as we honor the harmless insane. Marriage,
> though, is the work of a lifetime, the greatest of arts.
> And therefore the kin of the bride and the groom must set
> them tests of their own and be satisfied . . .

In earlier discursive passages concerning the Free Countian laws of property and inheritance Turner had laid the groundwork for these marriage tests. The tests, when they come to be recounted, would smack too much of the fairy tale if they were not buttressed by these discursive passages, and the discourse is leavened by the traditional ornamentation of the narrative. The wedding of the distinct genres of fable and utopia is an altogether inspired and fruitful union, and does much to mitigate the shallowness of the depiction of the darker forces in the story. For if the task of the poem is to create a utopia rather than an epic, the shorthand environments of the Riots and the Mad Counties suffice for the task. They point to those present-day realities we all recognize—the growth of a permanent criminal underclass in the nation's inner cities and the seemingly dialectical resurgence of a fascistic "Moral Majority"—realities which the utopian arrangements of the ideal city of Mount Verdant are designed to correct.

By casting his utopia in a poetic form Turner avoids having to contend against those literalists who could argue, in a naturalistic utopia, that his commonwealth is demographically or otherwise impracticable, that a Jeffersonian democracy of philosopher farmers doesn't answer to the real needs of the present. Turner's utopia is not literally intended. He is not, for instance, advocating that the problems of the inner city may be solved by mass suicides; rather, as in Dante's *Inferno,* where the punishments of the damned represent their sins viewed under the aspect of eternity, the suicide of the Rioters is a poetic image for the horror of ghetto life as it exists now, and the beauties of Mount Verdant are those of an ideal Middle America stripped of obscuring, inessential blemishes like the arms race, pollution, and sexual inequality. For many readers Turner's *New World* will seem altogether too good to be true, both as overt narrative and as an allegory of an unachievable but ever-to-be-hoped-for polity, but such a judgement reflects a political basis more than an aesthetic preference. As a long narrative poem *The New World* has few equals in the English poetry of recent times, and as a work of science fiction there can be no dispute that it possesses an epochal significance. It should be read at once by anyone with a serious regard for science fiction and incorporated into the syllabus of all courses surveying the field, especially at college level. This is a work of singular nobility and excellence; we must all be grateful to Turner for the love and labor that have gone into its creation.

The Cat Who Walks Through Walls
by Robert A. Heinlein, (*Putnam, 1985, 382 pp, $17.95; New English Library, £9.95*)

reviewed by Brian Stableford

First, a warning: in the course of the analysis offered in this review there is given a detailed breakdown of the story told in *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls,* which includes a description of the ending. Those who intend reading the book and would rather be kept in the dark should therefore postpone reading this review until after they have finished the novel.

An intellectual, the hero of *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* assures us at one point, is a man who cannot count past ten with his boots on. One gathers from this that Col. Colin Campbell, *alias* Dr Richard Ames, would not worry a great deal were he to fail to win the good opinion of an intellectual, and might indeed take a perverse pride in the

fact. Were an intellectual to criticize him openly, though, he would probably not remain unperturbed; one infers that only his ample generosity would prevent him from gunning the man down (with or without boots), because he argues elsewhere that he is morally entitled to execute people for bad manners.

One must beware of reading the opinions of a character as those of the author, and must also beware of taking hyperbole too literally. What is more, the text occasionally gives grounds for supposing that Campbell/Ames's opinion of Robert A. Heinlein is not as high as all that, though he would undoubtedly not insult his creator by calling him an intellectual. In spite of all these caveats, though, there is some reason for suspecting that Campbell/Ames's way of thinking does in some measure echo that of his maker. If we are to pay *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* the compliment of taking it seriously at *some* level (Heinlein presumably would not give a damn about the kinds of seriousness admired by would-be literary intellectuals) then we must surely accept that its robust and scathing rhetoric is intended to instruct us as well as taunt us. It would certainly be a grave mistake to equate Campbell/Ames with Heinlein, but he is nevertheless Heinlein's instrument—an existential situation which generates problems even within the text, because one of the things *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* is about is the nature of authorship.

The narrative device which here wears (among others) the names Campbell and Ames was once a soldier, though when he shed his Campbell identity he buried that past along with a shameful incident whose details we are at first not told. When we first meet him in the pages of the novel he is Ames, and has for some time been following the profession of authorship. This is, he contends, because "writing is a legal way of avoiding work without actually stealing and one that doesn't take any talent or training." This observation is followed in the text by some revealing remarks on the psychology of authorship:

> "But writing is antisocial. It's as solitary as masturbation. Disturb a writer when he is in the throes of creation and he is likely to turn and bite right to the bone . . . and not even know that he's doing it. As writers' wives and husbands often learn to their horror.
>
> "And—attend me carefully, Gwen!—there is *no* way that writers can be tamed and rendered civilized. Or even cured, In a household with more than one person, of which one is a writer, the only solution known to science is to provide the patient with an isolation room, where he can endure the acute stages in private, and where food can be poked in to him with a stick. Because, if you disturb the patient at such times, he may break into tears or become violent. Or he may not hear you at all . . . and, if you shake him at this stage, he bites." (p.43-44)

The Gwen to whom Ames is talking here is his new wife, and he is explaining why it might not be easy being married to him. He is indulging in calculated exaggeration for the sake of being colourful (he likes being colourful) but he is certainly not lying (he has great respect for honesty). What he is saying is that writing is obsessive, that it puts writers into a strange and irrational frame of mind, and that it is behaviour which can easily be likened to mental illness. (I am labouring this point a little, I admit. I have been blacklisted from the review list of Messrs Victor Gollancz Ltd for suggesting that a book published by that company belonged to a species which resembles the product of neurotic behaviour. I shall be arguing later that *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* can readily be understood as the product of mental abnormality, and I hope to curtail angry reactions by making it clear that on this point the text and I are in complete agreement.)

The above-mentioned comments about the business of authorship are not the only ones to be found in the text, and Ames is not the only author we meet there. The woman he marries also travels under a series of aliases, and in one of her identities has been the co-

author of a popular series of TV space operas whose hero did constant battle with the Galactic Overlord and, in so doing, won Ames' admiration. Ames is quite ready to defend his love of such fantasies against the criticisms of those who would condemn them as infantile; he thinks the customary criteria of "literary merit" to be a hollow sham, and that the true virtues of fiction lie in telling an exciting story. The worst insult he can think of is "plotless". It is no mere coincidence that these two main characters of *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* are both soldier/authors, and that Robert Heinlein was a navy man who had to take up the profession of authorship because he was no longer able to follow the profession of arms (his phrase). The significance of these parallels in the context of the novel is considerable.

The story of *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* begins with a striking set-piece. Ames is dining with Gwen, whom he has just met, and while she is temporarily absent a man appears, offers a password recalling the dark secret in Ames's past, tells him that he must commit a murder, and is promptly shot dead. The body is spirited away *post haste,* and Gwen—apparently under the misapprehension that Ames shot the mysterious visitor himself—volunteers to marry him. This scene opens a whole series of questions: Who was the man? Why has he instructed Ames to kill an unknown target? How did he get the password? Who killed him, and why? Ames and his new wife set about trying to find answers to these questions, but find themselves blocked, persecuted and harassed by various authorities and mysterious assailants. For a couple of hundred pages they duck and run, escaping annihilation on several occasions by a whisker, mostly by virtue of their own courage and know-how, but often aided by other heroic characters—most of them women or small girls who would dearly like to be laid by Ames (despite his white hair and artificial foot, Ames is loaded with sexual charisma). While on the run Ames and Gwen pick up a small-time criminal and no-hoper named Bill, whose moral and political re-education they reluctantly undertake; he is a convenient earpiece for their lectures, though he is too far gone to be saved.

As the story unfolds, regular Heinlein readers soon are alerted to the fact that it is a sort of sequel to *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress,* and that the mystery facing its protagonists is in some way related to the fate of Mike, the sentient computer of the earlier novel. Hints thrown out by Gwen, though, suggest to the *cognoscenti* even during the duck and runs phase that it is not simply characters from *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* that we will be meeting again. These hints remain very much a subtext until the end of chapter XIX, by which time the hero, heroine and all other good guys and gals are fortuitously gathered together in one room, beseiged by powerful forces of evil and with no apparent hope of escape. Shortly after the beginning of chapter XX, though, the text undergoes a total transformation; it is probably no coincidence that this transformation is signalled by the phrase "a new door dilated", given the way that Heinleinian dilating doors have been charged with such magical significance by the observations of Samuel R. Delany.

From chapter XX onwards the reader is in a very different kind of text. All the questions opened by scene one, which have so far been the motive force of the story, are either completely forgotten or written off with throwaway answers. They have simply ceased to be relevant. Ames/Campbell has now been abducted by the Time Corps, to which Gwen already belongs and which is mostly staffed by characters from earlier Heinlein novels—notably the extensive family of Lazarus Long (cf *Time Enough for Love*) and the main characters from *The Number of the Beast.* Ames is rejuvenated,

becoming Campbell again—by a little sleight-of-hand in time he is *properly* restored, the unfortunate incident which made him into Ames being conveniently eliminated from history. He is given a new foot, and invited to join the Time Corps in order to go on a very special mission. Feeling that he is being put under unfair pressure, he refuses (this after spending a hundred or so languorous pages meeting and sleeping with lots of people, many of whom turn out—as Heinlein fans will be unsurprised to learn—to be blood relations of his). He becomes especially resentful of the machinations of Lazarus Long, and does not forsake this hostility even when he discovers—Heinlein fans will again be unsurprised—that Lazarus Long is his father. In the end, he has to be summoned before the High Command of the Time Corps, who are in charge of trying to regulate the histories of numerous timelines, in order that they can appeal to his better nature and impress upon him the importance of the task which they have in mind for him. Alongside several Heinlein characters here we find John Carter of Mars, a Grey Lensman, and the hero of the TV space operas which were supposedly written by Gwen.

Ames has been sceptical about many of the things his hosts have tried to tell him. He is even more sceptical now that he finds himself confronted with characters who are fictional from his viewpoint as well as ours. He notes (rightly) that this is absurd and irrational, but is not permitted to draw from this observation the conclusion that he is dreaming or deluded. Instead, he is asked to realize that the universe *is* absurd and irrational, and that the true test of what is real is not a rational scientific philosophy but rather a philosophy of fictional conviction. Here the universe, as well as the things Ames used to write, is defined by the virtues of good storytelling. Jubal Harshw of *Stranger in a Strange Land,* the mouthpiece through which Heinlein the didact had his most extravagant and eloquent say, is resurrected here to make this clear to Campbell:

> "It is logic itself that is impossible. For millennia philosophers and saints have tried to reason out a logical scheme for the universe . . . until Hilda came along and demonstrated that the universe is not logical but whimsical, its structure depending solely on the dreams and nightmares of non-logical dreamers . . . If the great brains had not been so hoodwinked by their shared conviction that the universe must contain a consistent and logical structure they could find by careful analysis and synthesis, they would have spotted the glaring fact that the universe—the multiverse—contains neither logic nor justice save where we, or others like us, impose such qualities on a world of chaos and cruelty." (p.364-65)

We must be careful at this point to remember that *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* is a work of fiction, and that this is a fictional character making claims about a fictional universe. Heinlein readers know well enough what a delight Heinlein has always taken in bringing his characters inexorably to discoveries about the nature of their world which require shifts of perspective even more radical than those Philip K. Dick became fond of; we find such shifts in "The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag", in "By His Bootstraps", in "They" and in "All You Zombies . . ." as well as some of his more recent novels. Heinlein characters have always walked in peril of discovering the fictitiousness of their own existence, and it is by extrapolation of an established trend that Colin Campbell arrives in his desperately trying situation. We might also remember, though, that Heinlein once wrote an essay on "Science Fiction; its nature, faults and virtues" (in *The Science Fiction Novel,* introduced by Basil Davenport, Advent 1959) in which he claims that science fiction is essentially a species of *realistic* fiction—i.e., that it constructs fictional universes which could, conceivably, be the one in which we actually live. He distinguishes science fiction from "fantasy laid in the future", which apparently includes some so-

called science fiction (about 10%, he implies, of material so labelled, presumably as of 1959) but the tone and style of the early part of *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls*—and the tone and style of many of the stories whose content is absorbed by it—certainly seems to indicate that this is science fiction rather than futuristic fantasy. This is a puzzle, which I shall not attempt to unravel; I shall simply observe that *if* this novel is science fiction, in Heinlein's view, then it implies that Heinlein the author is in some danger of trapping himself with a circular argument, just as he once trapped the protagonist of "By His Bootstraps", in proposing by means of a "realistic" fiction that there can be no such thing as a "realistic" fiction.

In *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* the universe—or multiverse, in that it contains many parallel universes—is the creation of Authors, who are the cream of the crop of authors. Authors worthy of the capital letter are those who can create entire and convincing worlds and heroes to populate them. If to be an Author means to be worthy of standing in the company of such men as Edgar Rice Burroughs, E.E. "Doc" Smith and L. Frank Baum, then Robert A. Heinlein would surely be entitled to name himself an Author, and though he is not actually mentioned in the text he is nevertheless present in its realm of discourse. Campbell's eventual acceptance that the multiverse is made of fictions inevitably entails acceptance of the fact that he is a fiction himself, and though he never quite says so in so many words, we are led to believe that he knows it. This acceptance and his eventual acceptance of the mission on which the Time Corps wants to send him, are really part and parcel of the same reconciliation.

In another essay ("On the Writing of Speculative Fiction" in *Of Worlds Beyond*, edited by Lloyd Arthur Eschbach, Advent 1964) Heinlein wrote that there are only three basic plots: "boy meets girl", "the little tailor" and "the man who learned better". *The Cat Who Walked Through Walls* started out being all three of them, but by the time it reaches its supposed climax it can no longer be any of them. It has gone beyond plot, and beyond the possibility of actual resolution. When Campbell and the Time Corps now ask the question of who it is that they are fighting against, they can no longer be satisfied with the answer that it is the Galactic Overlord, or something standing in his stead. Once the game is known to be a game they must look beyond the pieces on the board to the hypothetical players. They know—and though they are hesitant in admitting it, they do—that they are really up against an Author; their ultimate fate, no matter how hard they try or how heroic they are, is not in their own hands. To be custodians of several developing timelines really does not amount to very much once they have asked, and glimpsed an answer to, the question *quis custodiet custodes?* Where else can we find Campbell at the end of the book, therefore, than alone in darkness, surrounded by the dead, waiting to see what his Author has in store for him? Heinlein, having made his point, does not tell us.

The Cat Who Walks Through Walls actually does feature a cat who walks through walls. Its sole function in the story is to be killed, in order that the hero can tell us how much he despises the Author who has killed it. This is a circularity as viciously ironic as any that Heinlein (a man who loves cats) has ever produced.

What then, are we as readers to make of this remarkable work of fiction? Let me say immediately that I am glad to have had the opportunity to read it—it is in its own way as interesting a piece of fiction as I have ever read (I have never written a book review as long as this one before). It is a book which may attract attention as a fascinating specimen for

many years to come. It is interesting, however, primarily because it both lacks and calls into question exactly those qualities which not only other critics, but Heinlein himself, cite as making fiction worth reading.

The Cat Who Walks Through Walls fails by a vast and partly calculated margin to pass muster by any of the traditional canons of literary realism and literary merit. The dialogue in the novel is frequently excruciating; when they talk about sex (which is most of the time) the characters often resort to a kind of cavalier baby talk which fails utterly to carry the burden of affective communication which is intended. The philosophy of life which its characters embrace is aphoristic to the point of inanity, and shorn of its hyperbolic ornamentation is so stupid that I find it hard to believe that even the kind of knee-jerk illiberalism to which it panders can possibly find room for it.

Heinlein fans would presumably dispute these two points, but they are, perhaps, less telling than the observation that taken as a whole, *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* is a wordy patchwork which turns out to be in all meaningful respects *plotless*. What we are offered in Chapter 1 as the moving parts of the plot are eventually discarded, along with several of the characters (most obviously Bill). We are offered as hero a man who learned better, but what he learns negates his heroism, leaving him utterly empty, unable either to win or to lose. His story is neither an account of triumph nor of tragedy, and though there is not a genuine joke in the entire text it is entirely right that it should be subtitled, Cabell fashion, "A Comedy of Manners". If it is anything, a comedy is what it is, and manners—the etiquette of authorship—are what it is about. The text makes something of the ouroboros symbol (which the hero does not like) and this is entirely appropriate too; in a far more complete and cunning way than Eddison's *Worm* this is a novel in the process of swallowing its own tail and digesting itself. It is not *really* a story at all, and by Heinlein's own criteria it can hardly be a good piece of fiction—Heinlein knows this, and is prepared to savour its irony.

There is much in the text which attracts and invites psychoanalytic interpretation. It is revealing, I think, in its preoccupation with "the profession of arms" and its glorification of military heroism and violence as the means to good ends. Heinlein was invalided out of the navy in the mid-thirties, and missed World War II. It is not too difficult to understand how a man with his values must have deeply regretted this, and how this regret has infected his fiction. One of the reasons why Heinlein represents the experience of being an author in such extreme terms, even while recommending to would-be authors a ruthless and vulgar professionalism, is that he has never really been the kind of efficient commercial hack he pretends to be. Instead, he has used his fiction to express deeply personal yearnings and doubts; when he writes he writes from the heart, and he projects himself into his fiction with a desperate fervour perhaps unmatched by the most pretentious of highbrow poets. He indulges himself in the exploits of his heroes in a way that only a man embittered and frustrated by the loss of the opportunity to be a *real* hero could. His claim to be only a working professional reveals the unease he feels in being what he really is, and *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* is an extraordinary elaboration of that unease. This is not mental illness, no matter how extreme its symptoms might be, but it *is* mental abnormality. Authentic run-of-the-mill professionals do not write books like this.

There is a further irony which may need comment here. Heinlein is now nearly eighty years of age, and has recently survived serious illness and drastic medical intervention that would have completely disabled a lesser man. Whatever its oddities, there is nothing in the

least senile about *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls;* however silly it may be, it is clear and sharp and in its fashion meticulous. Being a working and caring writer must surely be one of the things that has kept Heinlein's body and soul together, and his obsession with heroism is surely one of the things that has given him the strength to stay active and creative in the face of acute stresses and difficulties.

Such are the achievements of Authorship.

The Little People
by MacDonald Harris *(Morrow, 1985, 299 pp, $16.95)*

reviewed by Gregory Feeley

The Little People, MacDonald Harris's twelfth novel and his eighth since *The Balloonist* won him acclaim ten years ago, continues his exploration of Eros and reality's uncertain hold on the psyche. Like most of Harris's novels, *The Little People* is international in character; Bonner Foley, a Baltimore academic on sabbatical in London, is the author's figure of the American abroad, the Christopher Newman or Daisy Miller who appears—often in disguised form—in almost every Harris novel. Also characteristically of the mature Harris, *The Little People* takes on the heightened colors of what is popularly called magic realism, while retaining (perhaps) the formal unities of mundane fiction. Fanciful, witty, and ultimately mysterious, *The Little People* brings the familiar elements of Harris's work—the intellectual playfulness, the numinous sexuality, the disturbing sense of fatalism—together into a half-fantasy novel of great appeal and surprising power.

The novel opens as Foley, who has suffered a mild breakdown and spent a season convalescing outside London, retires to the country to stay with friends. These prove to be the family of James Boswin, a rich American industrialist who has married into—in fact virtually bought up—a venerable but reduced family of landed gentry, and seems intent upon transforming himself by an act of will into an English country squire. His daughters, although American born, seem already to have reverted to their mother's blood, and exert a peculiar influence upon Foley. We are on familiar ground here: intelligent, diffident MacDonald Harris man at the mercy as usual of MacDonald Harris woman, as well as something else—the mysterious summons to art as in *Tenth,* or the local influences in *Yukiko* and *The Treasure of Sainte Foy.* But this time there is something sinister in Foley's unworldliness; his delusions of sensitivity to iron, and his odd susceptibility to the engaging but eccentric Boswins, presage a darker journey through the undergrowth of the soul than is offered in most of Harris's books.

When Foley goes tramping in the countryside surrounding the grounds he hears a distant murmur, which resolves into unearthly singing. Pushing himself deeper into a wood, Bonner discovers the Little People, barefoot, child-sized, and seeming to come from an older England, when iron was unknown and the power of Faerie still held sway. The creatures address him by name, then entertain him with a dance, by which he is guiltily aroused. They end by giving him a gold coin, which upon inspection the next morning appears to be the Krugerrand he had earlier found in the drawer of his nightstand.

Foley does not speak of his encounter, and soon has involved himself deeply with his otherworldly friends, to the extent of leading them on a nighttime excursion into the

village, where he helps them break into a shop where they can loot honey jars. When a local train derails after the driver reportedly saw a little man on the tracks, Foley—by now wondering about his soundness of mind—seeks the driver out and questions him, but concludes that the man's muddled account, which seems to corroborate some of his own details, was tainted by leading questions. Nevertheless Foley impulsively smuggles the slow-witted engine driver away from his domineering household and installs him in one of the estate's outbuildings. Soon he has orchestrated a full-blown *folie à deux.*

Although some details suggest there may truly be something to Foley's talents if not his mysterious Little People—the Boswins at least are convinced he can sense iron—Harris intends no Jamesian ambiguity as to whether it is supernatural or psychological forces at work here. Foley, who has made a name for himself studying archetypes and myths in old English literature, has unluckily happened onto the ideal circumstances in which his growing delusional system may resonate. The two beguiling sisters, with a rich and benevolent father (a folktale template peculiarly amenable to modern revision, as the obvious parallel with Crowley's *Little, Big* attests), create a mysterious allure whose spell infuses the text as well as the pliant Foley. It is a measure of Harris's great skill as a novelist that this insidious mythopoeia, which can only end in calamity for Foley and those around him, manifests in the telling as an aesthetically satisfying form even as it compels Foley for other reasons, like an exquisitely designed dagger.

It has not perhaps been remarked how peculiarly American this theme has become. Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and Goethe's "The Erl-King" hover over any literature of man's surrender to fantasy, but the prose successors to this tradition seem resolutely of the New World: from Washington Irving to Conrad Aiken's "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" and modern writers as dissimilar as John Crowley (in his short stories) and Joyce Carol Oates. Harris's 1982 *Screenplay*, technically his only outright fantasy, suggests an affinity between the mythic appeal of film and the mechanisms of repression and the pleasure principle, and his immediately preceding novel, the wonderful *Tenth,* makes formal comedy out of the propositions that art is a dangerous thing and the artist a hapless reed. For Harris, human kind cannot always bear very much reality. "Thank God for the featherbed!" cries a character at the end of *The Balloonist,* recalling an earlier adventure when it is in fact freezing asphyxiation that confronts him.

The significance of Harris's work to imaginative fiction touches the poles of both sf and fantasy, for all that he has produced no recognizable genre work. *The Balloonist,* a scientific romance of the nineteenth century, takes on the heady *zeitgeist* (of the 19th century and sf alike) of progress, discovery and mortality as explicitly in the spirit of Verne (to whom it is dedicated) as Christopher Priest's *The Space Machine* is in that of Wells, but more profoundly and movingly. *The Little People* may be read, among other readings, as a cautionary tale which the trilogy-consuming public of mass-market Faerie is least likely to heed.

Such a summary may not do justice to the humour, sense of adventure, or passion in Harris's novels, all of which *The Little People* has in ample store. Often praised by critics but yet to enjoy a popular success—only *The Balloonist* and the subsequent *Yukiko* have had paperback editions in America, where Harris has been published by a succession of fine houses to indifferent sales and the damning accolade of being "a writer's writer"—MacDonald Harris may win with *The Little People* a wider audience, "here" and elsewhere.

Always Coming Home
by Ursula K. Le Guin, with composer Tod Barton and artist Margaret Chodos *(Harper and Row, 1985, 523 pp, $50 (in boxed set with cassette tape); Gollancz, 1986, £10.95, plus £5.95 for cassette)*

reviewed by Peter Brigg

Ursula Le Guin's detractors, who come mainly from the combat/blood/gadgets American macho school of science fiction, that of Rambo as engineer, are going to be asking certain questions about this novel. The first question will be "Is it a novel?" The second question will be "Is it science fiction?" (more likely to be phrased as an accusatory negative). The third question will be "How could such a world come about?" (also likely to be phrased as an accusatory negative). I suppose such questioners need answering, even though they are unlikely to read anything that lacks exploding Commie heads on alternate pages. In any case, on such questions I can hang a consideration of this fine new book.

Always Coming Home is, in fact, an experimental novel if readers grant that novels portray human behaviour in carefully constructed fictional universes, places which "are" only within the pages of the text. The Valley, the scene of most of the book, is a revised version of the Napa Valley of California about 2600 years in the future, at a time when the cities of the West Coast have sunk beneath the Pacific, or been driven down by nuclear upheaval. Le Guin varies the usual pattern of novels by placing the emphasis on the richest possible vision of life in that time at the expense of the telling of a single story set against a backdrop. There is one narrative, presented in three parts at various points in the text, and there are other short stories or histories inserted. But the book rambles very carefully, evoking a complex culture through its poetry, the pattern of its days, its ceremonies, its music (provided with a haunting realism on the cassette tape), and its visual bases (the text is most sensitively illustrated). Ms Le Guin, as Pandora, enters the text on a few occasions with the fluid ease of simply "being there" in the Valley while holding the perspective of the 1986 now. In one passage, an interview with an archivist, she has the archivist assert that the book is not a utopia but: ". . . a mere dream dreamed up in a bad time, an Up Yours to the people who ride snowmobiles, make nuclear weapons, and run prison camps . . ." So what she gives the reader in this novel is a coherent vision of a society in which stories form only a part. She has said herself in a radio interview that it can be read in parts, interrupted perhaps by listening to the tape or looking at the illustrations.

Well, is it science fiction? Yes, in the broadest sense: that an imagined universe extrapolated from our present circumstances is science fiction. But it pays only minimal attention to the development of that future. The expected explanation of world history never comes. Instead, the reader finds clues, bits, hints as to what has come to pass and discovers the fascination of reconstructing history. What is clarified is that the industrial technologies have faded, leaving the perfected mechanical and information world to thinking machines which (who?) constitute The City of Mind, whose only contacts with the Valley are through the Exchanges where a few interested experts study the past or obtain useful information. The Valley dwellers fail to see value in the machine world. They, and presumably all other humans (the book stays in or near the valley so this cannot be known for certain) have simply turned their backs on it without anger and without violence. In devising the portrait of this land with its rich life of myth and pattern Le Guin

has adopted the practices of the science of anthropology. Presenting the whole structure and functioning of a society is the real aim of the book, and it is on the success of that integrated vision that its merit finally lies. Moreover, it is an exceptionally integrated culture in which the people have a pattern to their lives and an understanding of that pattern that gives them an enviable wholeness. In this they fulfil the anthropologists' vision of the cultures they study with the added aspect that this people are not "primitives" but post-industrial sophisticates who have arrived at a way of life which will not be eroded by technology but has emerged from its dominating influence with the passage of historical time. Technology is not gone from this worldview. It is simply not viewed as very important or central to fulfilled human lives.

As to whether such a world could come about that simply cannot be known. But then we cannot "know" that we must move to an ever more dominantly technological reality, however powerfully obvious this may seem to us through the tiny window of our moment in history. Nor has Le Guin chosen to describe the precise steps which "must" lead to her world. It is simply there, a fiction of enormous attractiveness in which the human spirit has vast spaces in which to roam at the price of having abandoned air conditioning, the automobile and fancy synthetics. In this anthropology of the future not everything is known or understood by the observer-creator, any more than contemporary archaeologists can fully explicate the cultures of the past which they try to reassemble. Once the reader gets beyond the reflexive response that history is just not going in this direction the world of the Valley becomes the sort of fascinating future which leads the reader to consider that things could go thus and that what the world seems to value now can be seen in opposition to what might be valued in the future. To be set thinking in such directions opens the doors of delight in speculation as only the finest of science fiction can do.

Footfall
by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle (*Gollancz, 1985, 495 pp, £9.95*)

reviewed by Neil Gaiman

Footfall is a blockbuster. Blockbusters can be distinguished from regular books, because they are bigger, and have long casts of characters at the front. Blockbusters tell large stories, with equally large corps of viewpoint characters. Blockbusters are ideal for long air flights—which is, perhaps, why so many of them seem to concern skullduggery in airports, and heroically saved planes. If you hit someone with a blockbuster (especially in the original hardback) you could do some serious damage.

Footfall is a novel of First Contact, and it is signalled early on that the contact is not going to be particularly friendly: if you miss THE ULTIMATE NOVEL OF ALIEN INVASION on the cover, the alien's description of us as "the prey" on page 2 of the Prologue should clarify that these aliens are Up To No Good. The Fithp, looking like baby elephants with branched trunks, have been lurking on Saturn for a while, and are now heading for Earth. The spotting of the ship provides a starting point for the huge cast of characters to assemble: astronomers, politicians, survivalists and a couple of Russians all appear, as do a few science-fiction writers. The sf writers, including Heinlein, Niven and Pournelle, disappear off to an underground US base pretty quickly, and from there serve the function of explaining the plot to the US Government ("This is what the aliens

are doing and why . . .")—much in the way that Asimov's *Robots and Empire* robots perform incredible feats of deduction purely to let the reader grasp the plot—mourning the lack of spaceborne weaponry, and, eventually, coming up with the Final Solution. If the aliens had had a cadre of sf writers, it is implied, they would have understood the significance of *Deep Throat* and beaten us to boot.

Human reaction to the approaching ship covers the first hundred pages, and is a mixture of curiosity, fear and hope. The Survivalists, who have been building an underground bunker on the West Coast for quite a while now, feel vindicated, and go to ground; a Californian Congressman arranges to be on the welcoming spacecraft; various American top brass scurry around strategically; the sf writers go off to their underground base, and ruminate on the significance of alien actions; and the KGB suspect an American plot.

After hijacking the space-travelling congressman, Wes Dawson, and a couple of Russians (they are on the Russian equivalent of Skylab; it is crawling with KGB men, but they are all killed in the first Fithp attack) the aliens proceed to land in Kansas, seeing it as our food source. They are forced back into space, and decide that humanity needs to be persuaded to surrender by . . . The Foot!

The aliens, and their psychology, are the most interesting aspect of the book. Niven and Pournelle extrapolate from elephants to a herd-based society: a coup has taken power from those Fithp who were in suspended animation, and given it to the shipborn; the Sleepers were all required to surrender—the signal of submission involving a forefoot placed on the belly of the surrendering animal. The Fithp cannot come to terms with the concept that humanity does not have a similar surrender mechanism, or that we are not herd animals, and their later bafflement with things human—most engaging of which is probably their confusion about the purpose of *Deep Throat*—is enjoyable. We, of course, have no such trouble understanding the aliens: this is because *we* have hard sf writers. The plot then lurches towards two main events. The first is the eponymous Footfall (the aliens drop an asteroid into the Indian Ocean), the second, an atom-bomb-powered jerry-rigged spaceship, with which we go up and give them what for.

But it's the dropping of The Foot that shows the book's main weakness. "That's India going under," muses one character. "Half a billion people" clarifies another, helpfully. Floods hit most of the rest of the world, but all our cast carry on as before. Perhaps Niven and Pournelle were afraid of getting too close to *Lucifer's Hammer*, but a blockbuster novel, leading toward a disaster scenario for three hundred pages, cannot simply mention the catastrophe off-screen. It reinforces the impression that the book is essentially parochial: The World is not threatened by aliens, only America is. Nowhere else (except brief visits to a Russia made familiar by programs such as *Mission Impossible*—resolutely two-dimensional) exists. The list of over a hundred names at the start of the book contains a number who wander on for a sentence or so and are never seen again, and others (like the Survivalists) who serve no useful purpose, while one Indian (or perhaps more easy for Niven and Pournelle to write, one aging sf writer in Sri Lanka) among the cast would have engaged the reader, and perhaps made one care more than one does.

In the bestselling disaster idiom—as exemplified by the disaster movies of the seventies—one rounds up a number of different people, with different backgrounds, and then sets light to the their tower block, sinks their ship, drops buildings on their heads, or whatever; in the airport bestseller idiom, the *Hotels* and the *Laces,* one tells an overall

story using a number of different, relevant, viewpoint characters. In *Footfall,* however, few of the viewpoint characters seem relevant, and the disaster—although not the subsequent triumph—seems to happen elsewhere.

What could have been a gripping novel of alien contact is diffused into a Why Americans Are Best, Why Star Wars (And, For That Matter, Anything Else We Can Get Into Space That Packs A Punch) Is Very Necessary, and Why Atomic Weaponry Is A Good Thing Book, with some incidentally enjoyable aliens, infallible sf writers, and a great deal of unrealized potential.

Things Invisible To See
by Nancy Willard *(Knopf, 1985, hc; Bantam, 1986, pb)*

reviewed by Rachel Pollack

God appears as a character in Nancy Willard's splendid novel, *Things Invisible To See.* A minor character, intervening at odd moments, and speaking up with annoyance whenever anyone takes His name in vain.

> "God broke the mold when he made you," said Ben.
> *Mold!* exclaimed God. *I never repeat myself.*

This strikes an interesting parallel with Stanley Elkin's novel, *The Living End,* in which Ellerbee dies and finds himself in Hell. After several million years of torture Ellerbee looks up from the shit (literally) to discover God floating above him. Elkin's God owes much to Mark Twain as well as to the Gnostic vision of Jehovah as a paranoid bully. Wearing a white suit and smoking a big cigar (an image of Twain) God has come down to gloat. Gathering all his courage and despair, Ellerbee rises up and demands to know what he could have done to deserve such monstrous punishment. Immediately God goes into his voice-from-the whirlwind-where-were-you-when-I-laid-the-foundations-of-the-world routine. Compare Willard:

> To Ben it hardly seemed worth God's time to make an island that had so little on it.
> *I gave unto Hewitt Island a host of microbes, seashells, sandworms, terns, albatrosses, cormorants, the speckled shark, the striped marlin, all lovely and lively beyond description,* said God. *Where were you when I made this island?*

Ellerbee will have none of this. No "Job job" he says, and demands an answer. God tells him:

> "You took my name in vain. 'Come on, sweetheart,' you said. 'You're awfully g-ddamn hard on me.' "
> "That's why I'm in Hell? *That's* why?"

If Elkin's God invokes the bitterness of Mark Twain's *Letters From The Earth* Nancy Willard's God recalls the sweet humour and nostalgia of such books as *Tom Sawyer.* Her God is gentle in His intervention, whimsical in His annoyance. Perhaps He owes His good humour to the calming effect of His favourite activity. God plays baseball. The book begins: "In Paradise . . . the Lord of the Universe is playing ball with his archangels."

In the past many Americans have looked on baseball as a kind of mystic rapture, though never so blatantly as Nancy Willard. She can do this in part because baseball has fallen in recent decades (it doesn't televise as well as football). Distance gives her the freedom to parody the awe once given to the game. The novel takes place during World War II.

Baseball in the book does not just enhance life. It gives life. God uses baseball as His means of intervening in the world.

> In Paradise the Lord of the Universe tosses a green ball which breaks into a silver ball, which breaks into a gold ball, and a small plane lands safely at Willow Run.

One of the book's mortal characters remarks that baseball existed before the world. Willard implies that God used baseball to create the cosmos. This idea—that some apparently human institution predates creation and, in fact, served as God's instrument for creation—belongs to an old tradition. Often the institution is language, or letters. An old Jewish tradition has God consulting the Torah when the time came to begin the universe. Mystics have given this honour to the Hebrew letters themselves. The same has been said for Sanskrit and the Scandinavian Runes. As far as I know, no one has made such a claim for baseball.

Despite the fact that baseball begins and ends the book it serves as only a sub-theme in the book's primary concern, which is exactly what the title says. Willard seeks to expand our vision so that it will encompass the wonders of the invisible world. She shows us the ways in which people move in and out of knowing.

The plot concerns, in part, Clare Bishop, who has become paralyzed after being hit in the head by a baseball (batted by the boy who will become her lover, Ben Harkissian). As a result of leaving part of her body she becomes aware of the Ancestress, a spirit who watches over her and shows her how to travel into the bodies of other creatures.

Because the doctors cannot help Clare her family consults an ouija board, under the guidance of a Mr Knochen, who is actually Death. (Death appears in the novel more prominently than God, a fitting arrangement considering Death's greater (apparent) prominence in our daily lives.) The planchette spells out the message "COLD FRIDAY DONE DIED FIVE TIMES."

Only later does the family discover that Cold Friday is a "root doctor", a spirit healer. At the request of the Bishops' maid, Cold Friday breaks her habit of never treating white people. Willard handles the racism of the time with the same gentle wit she shows in the rest of the book. Though Clare's mother is desperate to have this woman heal her daughter she worries about having a strange Black woman in her house. Will she expect lunch? Will she try to steal everything? The maid tells her to give Cold Friday a "treasure" as payment, and makes it clear that this means something of personal, not monetary, value. The family ignores her meaning and looks for some discarded item they think will satisfy a Black woman. At the same time they hide objects of value in a large vase. Cold Friday appears, described magnificently as a tribute to the Afro-American spiritual tradition, a tradition which has always kept contact with the invisible world. The healing sets the house on fire and Clare runs to safety. Only when the excitement has died down does the family discover that nothing has actually burned. However, both the junk "treasure" and the "good stuff" in the vase have vanished with the healer.

Death follows the characters because of a coin that Ben's father found in World War I. Belonging to Death, the coin protected Ben's father and now protects Ben. But Death wants it back. This plot allows Willard to develop her other major theme, the power of people to choose between life and death. In the war, Ben and his superior officer find themselves marooned on a raft. With the aid of the Ancestress, Clare enters the body of an albatross to visit Ben. In a takeoff of the Ancient Mariner, Captain Cooper shoots the

albatross, whose dead body glows with phosphorus. This act allows Death to take Cooper and threaten Ben.

Ben makes a contract with Death. Ben and his local baseball team will play a game against a team chosen by Death from the great players of the past. If Death's team wins, Death gets to take Ben and all the others. If Ben's team wins they will all survive the war. In one of Willard's delightful touches, not only do the other players readily accept that Ben has arranged for them to play ball against the dead, but the whole team accepts it. The local radio station comes to the ball park to cover the game.

I will not reveal the outcome of this game except to say that it recalls Stephen Vincent Benet's story "The Devil And Daniel Webster." The comparison makes us realize that the Devil does not appear in Willard's novel (though Cold Friday claims that Clare's illness comes from one of the Devil's leftover spells). Evil in this book comes from human greed and weakness. Even then, evil only serves the real enemy. Despite the book's many supernatural presences that enemy is Death, and the weapon we use against him is life.

Fire and Hemlock
by Diana Wynne Jones *(Methuen, 1985, £8.95)*

reviewed by Gwyneth Jones

What makes the difference between children's fiction and adult fiction? The frontier is unmapped. Semi-literate adults remember vaguely reading round the class from the Brontës, Dickens, Jane Austen: and assume their shift to Jackie Collins and Sidney Sheldon is a promotion. On the other hand some writers deliberately choose children's fiction as a genre, without intending to give up any adult sensibilities. Explicit sex and violence are not supposed to feature in children's books: but that's a question of degree, depending on taste and fashion. In the realm of Fantasy especially, it's impossible to draw any fixed line. Therefore it is always interesting to find a Fantasy writer, especially one so distinguished as Diana Wynne Jones, making a "breakthrough" from one age group to another.

A lonely child befriends a lonely adult. She introduces him to the pleasures of make-believe: unaware that he is, in real life, in thrall to the queen of the fairies (Mrs Leroy Perry: or Le Roi Peri); under constant magical surveillance and pursued by all kinds of paranormal ill-will. *Fire and Hemlock* is both a realistic "growing up" story and a fantasy based on the ballad of Tam Lin—a young gentleman of mediaeval Northumberland who was spirited away to be a fairy gigolo but eventually saved by his intrepid girlfriend.

It would be nice to say that one or other of these themes survives. Unfortunately the pressure of writing "for older readers" seems to have broken some vital spring in the Wynne-Jones machinery. Polly's growing up, in spite of her broken home and taste for older men, is a readable but tedious school story: set in that odd children's shelf land where young girls acquire "hips and bosoms" but never menstruate. The love between young Polly and Mr Tom Lynn is described with such reticence after the blow-by-blow amplitude of the rest of the book, that it never takes on the significance it must have, to carry the other—supernatural—story.

Ms Wynne Jones' usual tactic is to confound the ordinary and the fabulous without warning or apology, creating a triumphantly integrated real/unreal whole. But here the

fantasy is always uneasy: as if not even the writer can believe these odd inconsequential incidents have any great significance. Too often the make-believe shared by Tom and Polly—which is highly important to the plot—seems inadequate even to keep a five year old amused. The ballad of Tam Lin, as we are expressly told, is one of many fragments recalling the fate of young men used and discarded by "Mrs Leroy Perry". But the contemporary story fails to fuse these distinct sources; and at the denouement several different legends are fighting for place. Even the use to which Tom has been put is never made clear. Though this is not supposed to be a children's book a discreet mist descends; which seems odd, once the writer had chosen such a robust sort of myth for her embroidery.

A sub-plot charts the apprenticeship of a young fantasy writer (perhaps Wynne Jones herself). But it amounts to no more than an irritating booklist (do "older readers" really wish to be told they ought to read *One Hundred and One Dalmations*? Or *The Golden Bough,* come to that).

In her children's books, Diana Wynne Jones has perfected the art of portraying children as people. And surely one reason why serious fantasists choose to write either explicitly or implicitly for pre-adolescence, is that they mean to discover the hidden codes of humanity—the level where the mere accretion of experience is irrelevant, and a *person* may be eight or thirty eight, with no great distinction between the two. In Crestomanci's garden (in *Charmed Lives*); in the elemental prehistory of *The Spellcoats* Wynne Jones reaches this secret landscape of myth and mind. She also manages to be extremely entertaining. But the problem with this new book is not that it deals with adult concerns: nineteen-year-old Polly appears younger than many fictional child characters. Nor is it that it deals with too-solid reality. Rather it seems that the dull streets of "Middleton" 198X, are not real enough to their creator, to contain her great gift for fantasy.

Fire and Hemlock has its moments, especially in the touching stoicism of the child Polly, caught between her awful parents—paranoid Ivy and feckless Reg. It has glimpses also of a writer's intention far beyond anything that actually arrived on the page. In the first scene of importance, ten-year-old Polly walks with Mr Lynn in a rose garden, past a dry pool, dry concrete. While they watch, it fills with visionary liquid brightness (out of heart of light): the redeeming love that will finally save them from a deadly fairyland. But the label is not the product. References to T.S. Eliot, and Beethoven's last quartets, signal a profundity that is not here. Perhaps they are pointing to another book, waiting to be written.

Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels
by David Pringle *(Xanadu, 1985, 224 pp, £3.95 pb; Carroll & Graf, 1986, $14.95 hc)*

reviewed by Gregory Feeley

David Pringle's two-page appreciations of one hundred genre sf novels are of an uneasy dimension, falling somewhere between those of a critical review and a blurb. The constraints of this form deserve a few words, but the book comprises two discrete elements, the list and the appreciations, and the former is likely to attract the more attention. The tendency to be resisted is simply to review the list (or more precisely, to suggest by agreement and demurral one's own, which no reviewer will wholly forego). An

American reviewer (in *Locus*) has already accused Pringle of showing British chauvinism in his selections, a charge which will likely be greeted with contempt but probably is not wholly unjust. Pringle's subtitle, "An English Language Selection, 1949 – 1984", cogently sets out his limits, which he intelligently defends on the grounds that the book market for sf in Great Britain and America, and the consequent viability of the sf novel as something other than a magazine serial, did not appear until the late 1940s. Pringle marches through his list in chronological order, and, as with Anthony Burgess's *Ninety-Nine Novels* (his acknowledged model), every book gets its two pages.

Any list of the *n*-best anything, whether rock albums or Italian restaurants, should meet certain procedural criteria, as any game must adhere to some rules. It should justify not only its choices but such omissions as deviate from received wisdom, and while Pringle's format makes for some difficulties here he manages it, noting for example in his piece on Heinlein's *Have Space Suit—Will Travel* that his dislike of the Master's bloated late works extends to *Stranger in a Strange Land.* The list should also contain at least one surprise, for any author who is to be indulged with a rationale for his book so conductive to caprice must bring up at least one pearl. This Pringle provides in Brian Stableford's *The Walking Shadow,* which this reviewer did not know and could not locate for sampling, and perhaps Philip José Farmer's *The Unreasoning Mask.* The list should also steer between the Scylla of excessive methodological rigour and the Charybdis implicit in the conceit itself, of justifying every choice by citing taste. Pringle allows series to count as single works (a practical necessity in dealing with works like the *Roderick* books and *The Book of the New Sun,* though if Pringle intends disapprobation to its sequels when he lists Moorcock's *The Final Programme* alone, he does not say). Pringle discriminates intelligently between sf and fantasy, i.e. he essays no definitive distinctions but is consistent in his judgments, for example counting alternate histories as sf and so allowing in *Pavane, The Man in the High Castle,* and *Bring the Jubilee,* but omitting such novels that partake essentially of fantastic traditions even though tortuous sf rationales could be made for them, as with *Little, Big* and *The Malacia Tapestry.* Pringle also includes a few books he does not like for (ill-defined) reasons of balance, which seems a mistake in at least a few instances, such as Asimov's *The End of Eternity,* which Pringle so grudges even damning faint praise that it were better omitted (especially when one considers how gracefully Pringle could have noted that Asimov's most influential sf, his Foundation and Robot series, had their origins as magazine stories in the 1940s, safely beyond his purview). On the whole, one understands what mesh Pringle has chosen for seining his sea, and knows he knows the sea.

Any game must have winners, and one can tabulate the final posting without fears of violating the proper spirit. Leading the pack is Philip K. Dick, with six (including *The Man in the High Castle* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* but not *Solar Lottery* or anything since 1968). Ballard is represented four times (though not with *The Atrocity Exhibition*), and there are three each for Aldiss (though not *Helliconia* or *Barefoot in the Head*), Disch, and Heinlein. Authors represented twice include Michael Moorcock, Ian Watson, Bob Shaw, Gene Wolfe, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Clifford D. Simak, while those mentioned only once include James Blish, a bevy of obvious one-shots (Walter M. Miller, Frank Herbert), and the last three entries: Michael Bishop, John Calvin Batchelor, and William Gibson, who have come into their own only with the novels cited. In short, one can question individual choices but the overall sense is one of balance (any librarian

taking Pringle on faith would have an unexceptionable collection, a good final defence for his selections). Yet one feels that had Pringle followed his own impulses and repudiated any duty to librarians, the results, if more greatly skewed in favour of the most heavily represented authors, would have been more controversial, sincere, and interesting.

Bob Shaw's *Orbitsville,* which Pringle describes more affectionately than he did Asimov's book but clearly has no great regard for, seems to have been included on the strength of its alien artifact, a charmingly quintessential essay in genre gigantism. Since the artifact is a Dyson Sphere, which was introduced into science fiction by Larry Niven's greatly superior *Ringworld,* one wonders why Niven's book was not included in its place (Niven is represented only by the Pournelle collaboration *Oath of Fealty,* which Pringle lamely commends because "it raises a number of valid questions and refrains from answering them too glibly"). Decisions like these prompt the suspicion that Pringle's balancing has an internationalist aspect (he admits that he sought out an Australian novel, although he found a good one). M. John Harrison, who belongs in the company of the best sf writers on the strength of his short stories and fantasies, is admitted with *The Centauri Device* as a credential, which can only be regarded as a courtesy. One suspects that the Stableford novel, the tepid praise of which by now sets off warning bells, is another reward for labours in the field.

None of this really matters, for a list with flawed or even suspect criteria displaces no other, "better" list. Pringle echoes Burgess in noting that his book exists in part to be quarrelled with, and his arguments are good, when you can see his heart is in them. That the ideal book underlying this one, neither balanced nor politic, would devote perhaps a third of its space to three or four writers suggests the gulf between criticism and survey, and the perils of attempting both in an essentially light work.

The appreciations, conversely, are clear and forthright, and Pringle's real enthusiasms are unmistakable. Like Jimmy Carter, Pringle has the admirable trait of betraying when he is being less than sincere, and the lukewarm praise of books whose faults he has just outlined are as clear as a conspirator's wink. Two pages proves too little space for anything more than the briefest description and assessment, but Pringle does show a keen eye for one aspect of the novels' construction beyond the fundamentals of plot plausibility or adequacy of prose: the tendency of many of these novels (and not, interestingly, only the good ones) to create resonant and not immediately explicable central metaphors. Pringle notes that the *donnée* of Priest's *Inverted World* constitutes "a powerful metaphor which is open to a number of interpretations, psychological, social and philosophical," but stops short at remarking how those of several other novels—as with Dick's *Time Out of Joint*—prove almost banally explicable yet work for other reasons. I hope Pringle takes a look at this point in a considered work, one not self-condemned to procrustian constraints.

Let me end with a few more posting results. Most incomprehensible omission: D.G. Compton. Missed Chance at Covering Bases: perhaps James Blish's tetralogy *Cities in Flight,* which would have provided at a clap the influential and still vigorous "Okie" series as well as two of the first (and very effective) sf novels unflinchingly to dramatize a set of philosophically pessimistic and deeply melancholy premises. Most disappointing instance of received wisdom: perpetuating the saw that Philip Dick's incoherent *Palmer Eldritch* stands near the top of his achievement, a commonplace overdue for re-examination.

Especially welcome inclusions: Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains,* Barry N. Malzberg's *Galaxies,* Cordwainer Smith's *Norstrilia.*

The Man Whe Drew Tomorrow
by Alastair Crompton *(Who Dares Wins, 1985, 215 pp, £7.95)*

reviewed by Mark Gorton

It's early morning, April 14, 1950, and one of a million British youngsters is running for all he's worth towards the newsagent's shop on the corner. He's heard that something new and wonderful has just gone on sale, price threepence. He hands over the money, and in return he's given a comic, the likes of which he's never seen before. Back outside, in the Spring sunlight, heart bumping a little, the young lad looks hard at the front page.

Cor! Blimey! Gosh! Wow!

And all of a sudden he's transported to a weird and wonderful future, a million miles away from post-war rebuilding, austerity and the rationing which still prevails.

It's the future of space pilot Dan Dare.

Mind you it's plain that in the year 1996 the world still has major problems. That's why Colonel Dare, Chief Pilot of the Interplanet Space Fleet, has been entrusted with a vital mission to Venus! Aboard the mighty spaceship Ranger, Dare and his colleagues are leaving an Earth which is over-populated, and threatened ultimately with global starvation. If this brave new world is to survive "the Pilot of the Future" must find a plentiful source of food beneath the heavy clouds of the mysterious second planet.

The weeks go by, threepence a time, and hope turns to despair. For on Venus Colonel Dare comes face to face with the hideous Mekon, ruler of the automatic Treens and would-be dictator of the solar system. Confrontation is inevitable: Dan has a lantern jaw and the stiffest of upper lips; the Mekon is green, with a totalitarian streak a light-year wide. They are natural enemies, their all-colour clash is a corker, the other stories ain't bad, and threepence follows threepence for the most popular weekly comic ever published in Britain.

The universe of Dan Dare was dreamt and drawn by the late Frank Hampson. Born in the Audenshaw district of Manchester in 1918, he was schooled in the seaside town of Southport, leaving at the age of 14 to become a Post Office telegram boy. He'd already revealed a distinctive gift for art, but it was to be some time before he could perfect his skills. However, he had laid down a marker for the future in the same year, 1932, when his first published cartoon appeared in *Meccano Magazine.*

Hampson attended evening classes at the Southport School of Arts, and in 1938 he made the decision to resign from the Civil Service and become a full-time art student instead. But then the war intervened—he served with the Royal Army Service Corps—and in 1946 he tried again, supplementing his government grant with a few extra shillings earned for contributions to a local religious periodical called *The Anvil.*

The Anvil was edited and published by Marcus Morris, then the vicar of St James's Church, Birkdale, just outside Southport. Author of an article called "Comics Which Bring Horror Into The Nursery", a wary look at the increasing popularity of American strip-cartoons in Britain, Morris had adopted the "if you can't beat them, join them" attitude, and was nurturing ambitions to spread the Christian message using the same

medium. Morris discussed his idea with Hampson, who put together a dummy issue, and Frank's wife, Dorothy, inspired by the lectern in St James's, provided the name.

Eagle.

Then, dummy in hand, Marcus Morris repeatedly wandered the length and breadth of London's Fleet Street, the centre of British newspaper publishing. Refusals were frequent, until the project was finally accepted by Hulton Press, publishers of another national institution, the *Picture Post* magazine.

Shrewd judgement on their part, because the first issue was an instant sell-out, forcing a hurried re-print: in the end a million copies were sold, and for the next ten years circulation rarely fell below 750,000. *Eagle,* a curious mixture of cliff-hanging adventure, Biblical tales, advertising strips, Western gun-slinging, as well as life-stories of saints, missionaries and philanthropists, was literally an overnight success, and front-page hero, Dan Dare, an instant legend.

But the search for that hero had proved difficult. First there was Lex Christian, a tough parson working in the slums of East End London; then Hampson tried a heroine, a lady detective called Dorothy Dare; next came a trouble-shooting flying padre, an airborne answer to all sorts of moral problems. Finally, though, he settled on a space story; Hampson had seen Wernher von Braun's V2 rockets in Antwerp during the latter days of the war; he knew space travel was just around the corner. The result was *Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future.*

Dan Dare, along with Hampson's other strips (in the early days of Eagle he was astonishingly prolific), was brilliantly cinematic in style, a feature film on paper. Realism was paramount, characters were strong, dialogue crisp; he cut quickly from scene to scene; breathtaking panoramas suggested an entire, thought-out world. He carefully identified the source of light, and used angle to suggest mood or emotion . . . It all added up to a new kind of comic strip.

He built scale models of spacecraft and hardware to ensure that his work was always accurate and correctly detailed. And, equally important, his characters were drawn from life, thus endowing them with an unprecedented degree of naturalism. Colonel Daniel McGregor Dare was an idealised version of Hampson himself; in fact he said Dare was everything he had wanted to be: fearless, decisive, yet gentle, a born leader. Hampson's father, Robert, was the model for Sir Hubert Guest, Marshall of Space; while friend and fellow *Eagle* artist Harold Johns posed for pictures of Digby, Dan Dare's podgy and faithful batman.

Hampson wrote and drew for all he was worth as *Eagle* went from strength to strength. But there, in a sense, lay his undoing. He never thought to negotiate any copyright or royalty agreement for his creation. The comic, and merchandising of *Dan Dare* products —uniforms, spacesuits, toothpaste, film shows, belts, you name it—made million of pounds. But Frank Hampson, lost in the future world of his creation, simply drew a salary.

In 1960 *Eagle* was sold off, first to Odhams Press, then to the International Publishing Corporation. By now times had changed and *Dan Dare* was removed from the front page. Hampson, having lost artistic control, left the comic, disillusioned and saddened. From then on his health declined, his drawing career ended by two strokes. Then he was found to have cancer, and after a long illness he died on July 9 1985.

Anyone who wants to know the full story of Frank Hampson, *Eagle* and *Dan Dare* will

not be disappointed by *The Man Who Drew Tomorrow.* Alastair Crompton's book is thoroughly researched, clearly written and beautifully illustrated. Hampson emerges as a man of immense talent, integrity and trust who never reaped either the recognition or financial rewards he deserved for his hard and clever work. At the outset, he described the comic-strip market as "a scrapyard of rusty old bicycles into which I'm going to drive a Rolls Royce". *The Man Who Drew Tomorrow* documents this journey, which, sadly, took Hampson from youthful enthusiasm to obscurity and a sense of betrayal. Though in 1975, at the Eleventh Salon of Comics, Animation and Illustration, an international jury voted him *prestigio maestro,* it seems to me that *The Man Who Drew Tomorrow* is the most fitting tribute to date to a man who took a generation by surprise.

Count Zero
by William Gibson *(Gollancz, 1986, 269 pp, £9.95)*

reviewed by John Clute

For anyone who was both impressed by William Gibson's first novel and at the same time slightly embarrassed by *Neuromancer*'s garnering of all too many of the all too many awards the duckpond splashes each year onto each year's official waterproof duck, the publication of his second novel must have been awaited with some apprehension, because too much success, whether or not you actually touted for the chromium stars of fame, reeks of hubris, and the glistening Hugo Duck of 1985 might therefore well and deservedly bellyflop in 1986. Fortunately for those sympathetic with Gibson's plight, *Count Zero,* his second novel, has appeared without much delay, and does the primary thing it is most important that all second novels do: it exists. More than that, it is a good professional job of work. It is more neatly constructed than *Neuromancer,* staying more effectively within the boundaries of the game it sets itself to play; and it is inherently more modest. Mr Gibson is no Prat Icarus.

All the same, *Count Zero* is unlikely to have anything like the impact of the earlier book. It is, to begin with, set in the world of *Neuromancer* a decade or so later, and the rough novelty of that world, as first experienced, seems altogether too smoothly deft and syncromesh in its depiction second time round, so that what read as streetwise in 1985 seems all too Designer Cyberpunk a year later. It would be cruel to blame Mr Gibson for this loss of rawness, however: not only does the duckpond market forcibly mandate tales set in a milch of pheromones (or rules of configuration) that tell the reader he/she's in the recognizable world of sequellae, not only, then, does Mr Gibson exude ant-pong like virtually every other writer in the genre, he also gives every appearance of believing he is telling something like the truth. The world of both *Neuromancer* and *Count Zero*—like the much simpler world of Ridley Scott's *Alien*—is an archaeology of spent momentums, but it is not only that. As a register of the cacophony that obtains in a complex world when the bearers of all categories of human destiny (everyone scarred with hi- and low-tech stigmata like some coercive gridwork out of Levi-Strauss; Sprawl and desert just like today; L5s and AIs and Japanese MU-based hegemony and slums out of John Carpenter just like today doubled) use the same toilet to shit in, Mr Gibson's model is apt, flexible, mantric, grave, off-hand, blank and black. It is a world of amphibolies going bang in a nightmare where the ancient is new, Gondwanaland is cyberspace. He can be forgiven, by

those who feel he is trying to tell the truth, for trying to tell the same truth twice.

The triple spiral of the plot is more of a problem, maybe. It is surely less original in effect than the world it draws dovetailing lines through. And there is a sense of moral elusiveness, it may be, in the consummate generic through-composition of every character in the novel; Mr Gibson puts on rules of generic legibility like a coat of many colours, and the reader can end up feeling something like vertigo at the result: because every character comes across as a swift smooth automated assemblage of genre rules, we end up lacking a sense of the opinion of the book. Certainly it is the case that some folk are angry, some do the dirt on others, some have aesthetic senses, some revel in power, and so forth: but there is finally a sense that Mr Gibson is too knowing about his febrile mannikins, that, in *Count Zero,* he permits the human beast no mysteries. There is, to repeat, a great deal of telling graphic action in the book, but no drama.

The three stories are pretty complicated, and tangle themselves together dextrously. Turner, a creature ponging with the ambience of the California private-eye loner genre, is hired to supervise the obtaining of Maas Biolabs' biochip technology, ends up in the Sprawl (Boston-Atlanta) with a daughter-moll. Marly, a creature irradiated with mini-series skin-glow, is hired by the immensely wealthy Josef Virek to track down the artist of some extraordinary object-collages. Count Zero, who longs to pong of the streets but desperately needs the wisdom he slowly gains, is seconded to help recover some numinous technology. As in Lucius Shepard's *Green Eyes,* a pantheon of highly pragmatic, non-theological, ultimately unmysterious voodoo entities inhabits the substrate of the world itself, which, in *Count Zero,* is, of course, cyberspace. There are twists, terrors, lots of action. If there is something lacking, it is that sense that the cast are a series of claptraps (ie tricks to gain applause of audience or of oneself), that they cannot introspect, or gain their souls.

So there may be something lacking. It may also be that Mr Gibson was not attempting to shape his text to utter certain kinds of humanistic piety. It is surely the case that humanistic assertion can come cheap, can emit just as surely as any genre claptrap the ant-pong of adherence to sets of rules for making words mean acceptable things. And underneath the pragmatic vacancy at the heart of Mr Gibson's hirelings, there is a hard stubborn insouciance; if they lack autonomy as souls, they do display, like acrobats in their cage of pheromones, a certain sprezzatura, grace under pressure. It is not perhaps surprising, given the genre's interminable triumphalism about the human animal, how little credit is given to the concept that there may be something significantly joyful in sprezzatura, and in the apprehension of fictional creatures who manage merely to survive, without compunction but gracefully. (How often does the slightest whiff of wit or pragmatism tell Captain Kirk that a whole planet can be allowed to perish for the sake of freedom and democracy? How many sf Tricksters sneak unaltered out of the backside of the books that entail them, without becoming shamans, climbing the world-tree, returning with the grub, dying for us all but not really dying at all, becoming Dad? Not many.) Because it is not the dancing hirelings of William Gibson's novels who are supposed to survive. In echt sf, it is the hero who survives, not the survivor.

Nothing good comes out of the fin-de-siècle decadent aesthetical pages of *Count Zero,* except the intricacy of its passage in the night. It is a cheap shocker full of old tricks and sleaze, and it is a thing of beauty, and a moderately good read. Goodness has nothing to do with it.

Burning Chrome
by William Gibson, Introduction by Bruce Sterling *(Arbor House, 1986, 200 pp, $14.95)*

reviewed by Gregory Feeley

William Gibson's first novel since *Neuromancer,* and the story collection trailing in its wake, have become a publishing event before publication. Sold to Ace before *Neuromancer* won its awards, *Count Zero* was subsequently leased for hardcover to Arbor House, who shot it into print with impressive dispatch. *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine,* noted for not publishing serializations, seemed honoured in having the chance to break its rule for the novel, which it ran not only uncut but unedited, with characters committing such faux pas as sitting down in the same chair twice or addressing someone by the wrong name. Arbor House did clean up such lapses, even as it prepared the collection *Burning Chrome,* comprising what stories Gibson has so far published, to appear a month later. Both are expected to impact on the American market with force.

The reader may be excused for having trouble approaching the volumes as *texte pur,* for their status as trend and as possibly big money bulks very large at present. Several of the stories in *Burning Chrome* are set against the same background as the novels—Bruce Sterling calls it the "Sprawl series"—though in their haste to get a collection into print Arbor House and Gibson have assembled *all* his short work, including some tentative early material, three collaborations (each with a different partner), and the title story, which is sufficiently similar to the later *Neuromancer* to have properly been supplanted by it—all to reach a total of some 200 pages, the practical minimum. Although Gibson's success in the marketplace and the awards are impressive—there is something awesome about selling six of one's first ten stories to *Omni,* however imperfectly the feat correlates with literary achievement—the reader may feel a bit conned. Anyone feeling so should be advised that for a dollar more *Count Zero* gives good weight, and is unlikely to displease anyone who liked *Neuromancer* or the best of these stories. For those who hold reservations, or may be willing to sit for such heresy, an attempt at formulation follows.

The virtues of *Neuromancer* are unmistakable, and have been generally noted; what has gone surprisingly unremarked about the novels and the stories (which were widely anthologized prior to collection) is the immaturity of the attitudes subtending them: the image of romantic love ending inevitably in betrayal and abandonment fires the conclusions of *Neuromancer,* "Burning Chrome," the bathetic "New Rose Hotel" and a few others, while the collaborative "Dogfight" (with Michael Swanwick, who tends unerringly toward slickness in collaboration) gives us the streetwise but failing punk on his way down, grasping at a last chance for a big time which (surprise!) turns to ashes in his mouth for reasons arising from his deficient character. The tragedies and knowing world-weariness of these stories echo the self-indulgent pseudo-profundities of the present youth culture, especially as reflected in rock music; and if one of Gibson's publishers doesn't solicit a laudatory quote from George R.R. Martin, they will have missed a sure thing.

Gibson's fiction moves swiftly and does deal (if glibly) with issues of import to our (if not the stories') day; and if it can nowhere be thought moving—all of the characters are types, their catharses largely banal—it is highly readable and even provocative if only, like Bester to whom Gibson has previously been compared, *piquant* rather than prompting

real reflection. "Cyberpunk" or "Technosleaze" is finally a sensibility of surfaces, and Gibson knows this. The early and very witty "The Gernsback Continuum" suggests as much: its send-up of the (admittedly rather easy) target of America's pre-War vision of the future can be applied with equal force to Gibson's own Sprawl series, which is too greatly an exaggeration of Eighties trends and product-names to come plausibly from the next century.

Gibson's real strength lies not in his "unparalleled ability to pinpoint social nerves" (Sterling), still less in his characterization or fast-action plots, but in his style. This distinction may be hard to see, since his verbal density lies close to the deracinated imagery and affected idiom for which he has been damagingly praised, but can be heard if one listens. "In New South Wales a young physicist began to slam the side of his monitor, like an enraged pinball finalist protesting TILT." Gibson's predeliction for high-tech or dumb-game imagery is not pushed too far here, and the last five words achieve a beautiful concision that shimmers with nuance. "She was talking about the odds and ends of 'futuristic' Thirties and Forties architecture you pass daily in American cities without noticing: the movie marquees ribbed to radiate some mysterious energy, the dime stores faced with fluted aluminium, the chrome-tube chairs gathering dust in the lobbies of transient hotels" ("The Gernsback Continuum"—imagine now readers of the next century making the same observations about "Burning Chrome"). Such flecks of crystal occur throughout his work, and are greatly more promising than the seen-it-all cynicism of his "voice," or such hackneyed nuggets of counter-cultural iconography as monstrous truths that drive their discoverers mad ("Hinterlands"), or the creation of important, disturbing art from the literal junk of our culture ("The Winter Market", *Count Zero*). What Gibson has to *say* is not worth hearing, but the way he sometimes says it (tending tellingly more to wit than romantic angst) is frequently arresting.

Bruce Sterling buys most of what I find jejune in Gibson's work, sounding in his Introduction a brash manifesto that makes the cyberpunk writers—Sterling does not use the term—sound like a self-important brat pack ("And we are lean and hungry and not in the best of tempers. From now on things are going to be different"). Interestingly, Sterling's own best work, such as the recent *Schismatrix* and "Green Days in Brunei," abjures the adolescent tragedy that permeates Gibson's, achieving instead a cool, more genuinely distanced knowingness that doesn't strain for effect with technicolor dramatics and achieves its own superior comedy. Their collaboration "Red Star, Winter Orbit" shows an unusual combination of their recognizable signatures, as it contains the usual flagrant romanticization of an underground culture yet is one of the few Gibson stories to end on a note of (here almost zany) affirmation.

Gibson's talent is manifestly strong enough that his limits body forth more as questions of maturity—of character, finally—than of experience or technical skill. Such a suggestion is deeply unfashionable these days, and Gibson ("If they think you're crude, go technical; if they think you're technical, go crude. I'm a very technical boy") is a very fashionable writer. *Count Zero,* with its surprisingly pastoral (if slick) ending, may signal a shift in Gibson's work, as Sam Shepard (whose "The Tooth of Crime" resembles the Sprawl series in several crucial respects) went on to write better plays. If so, Gibson will be lucky to have crossed that threshold after just one collection.

The Handmaid's Tale
by Margaret Atwood (*McClelland and Stewart, 1985, 324 pp, $24.95 Canadian)*

reviewed by Peter Brigg

Margaret Atwood will not be known to science-fiction readers but she is a major Canadian writer who has won Governor-General's prizes for both poetry and fiction. *The Handmaid's Tale* is a fabula about women's roles and the potentials for oppression which are inherent in the right-wing Bible-Belt thinking presently sweeping the United States of America. Because she has chosen to tell the tale as a memoir written in the future and "discovered" even further in the future this book is as science-fictional as, say, *Dune,* and it is as much an extrapolation from present trends as most mainstream sf novels.

The Handmaid's Tale is fascinating partly insofar as it typifies what happens when writers put on the mantle of science fiction (as, for example, has Doris Lessing or William Golding or Thomas Pynchon). Atwood places her interest on the emotions of her central character, producing a vivid sense of what it would feel like to live in this horrendous future. It is not hard science but social organization and circumstances which are at the centre of her narrative.

The handmaid of the title is a Rachel, a woman who has been allowed to live in order to breed children. The household she lives in includes a Martha (a cook-servant), a Commander and his wife, and Guardians (soldiers and workers). Pollution has made conception and childbirth difficult and because sexual pleasure is banned the Rachels fornicate with their Commanders once a month lying between the open legs of their Commanders's Wives (the wives hold their arms) while the Commanders stand to their work of fertilising. No other touching is permitted. This is the sort of detail with which the book abounds as it extrapolates the extraordinarily rigid and inhumane society of Gilead, a military state based on old testament religion which has triumphed over the permissive society of the twentieth-century United States. Many of the details of dress and behaviour are taken from Puritan New England and the novel is apparently set in what is presently Cambridge, Mass. The horror of this world is accentuated by its contrast to Rachel's memories of her husband and daughter who were torn from her when they sought to escape in the early years of the change.

The Handmaid's Tale is a deeply disturbing and effective book. Its overwhelming sense of futility and despair are not dissipated by a clever and far-ranging afterword in which a scholar of 2195 offers outline information about the history of Gilead without answering the question of whether the horror continues. Miss Atwood uses this afterword to tie the developments of Gilead to the history of modern Iran and other events of our time. The novel is a woman's book in a horrible and negative sense, containing as it does so much of the despair which a reversal of current trends to equality and self-respect of our present day could engender. As with *Brave New World* or *Nineteen Eighty-Four* this book *uses* the format of science fiction to issue a moving warning of the directions in which things could go in America. Nor does it betray itself with any sudden optimism or facile salvation. One can only hope that Miss Atwood will write again within the infinite realms of extrapolative fiction.

The John W. Campbell Letters, Volume 1
edited by Perry A. Chapdelaine, Sr., Tony Chapdelaine & George Hay *(A.C. Projects Inc., 1985, 610 pp, $5.95 paper)*

reviewed by Brian Stableford

This book, we are assured by the blurb, is "*chock full* (their italics) of science fiction speculation and science precepts". This statement, however odd, is at least half true if what the writer means by a "science precept" is a matter of empirical fact or theory on which John W. Campbell Jr. was able to make up his mind before bothering to accumulate the relevant evidence. By far the greater part of this stout volume is, I fear, taken up with the relentless chronicling of the eccentricities which Campbell developed during the 1950s, when he gloried in the luxury of being an intellectual outsider, on the grounds that only among outsiders can one possibly search for the cutting edge of progress.

To some extent, I can sympathize with the man who reveals himself so extravagantly in this garrulous correspondence. Long ago, when I was a research student in population dynamics, I confessed to my supervisor a certain admiration for Paul Ehrlich, and was surprised by the reaction that this elicited: a contemptuously curled lip and a grated dismissal: "The trouble with *him* is that he'd rather be wrong than orthodox!" I was captivated, and longed for the day when somebody would say the same about me. One of the fascinating things to be found in the pages of this book is the extent to which it was Campbell, and not Mark Clifton or Frank Riley, who was responsible for that tub-thumping Hugo-winner *They'd Rather Be Right,* which pillories the poor unfortunates who cling desperately to the certainties of orthodoxy, and with *that* Campbell—the determined devil's advocate, the stimulant of the imagination with his proto-Feyerabendian conviction that only a philosophy of "Anything Goes!" can generate creativity in science—I can join in the game. There is, however, another side to the character we find in these pages, in which the philosophy of "rather be wrong than orthodox" turns on itself, swallows its own tail and becomes just as dogmatic as the standpoints it is ambitious to subvert. Campbell tells his correspondents often and anon that he and his wife are on the verge of a breakthrough in psychology, inspired but not constrained by the insights of L. Ron Hubbard, and that he *knows* certain truths which the scientific community-at-large will one day have to acknowledge. He *didn't* know, but he does seem, on the evidence of these letters, to have loved and relished the feeling that he did. At the end of the day, he too would rather be right, even though his was the kind of rightness that rested on the strength of individual conviction rather than the authority of general consensus.

The editors have tried to make this collection attractive to buyers by selecting out letters which Campbell sent to science-fiction writers whose names are known. Thus, some letters have no content at all worth preserving, and are there only to add one more prestigious name to the table of contents. The longest and most substantial letters Campbell wrote were to his intimates, and to people who had ideas which overlapped his own. Some of these were sf writers, but most were not, and the impression one gets from these particular letters is that we are often getting a kind of overflow. We are promised further volumes of letters which might provide a more coherent picture of the development of Campbellian thought, but which might not.

The reader who comes to this collection hoping to find light cast on Campbell's influence on the evolution of American science fiction will probably be frustrated. There *is* some interesting material here—it is fascinating to read the rejection slip for "Starship Soldier"

(the magazine version of *Starship Troopers*) and to see Campbell feeding input into some of the stories we always suspected that he had a hand in (*Dune,* for one, and Lloyd Biggle's *The World Menders*)—but it is thin on the ground. The period from 1938, when Campbell took over at the helm of *Astounding* to 1950, when the so-called Golden Age was dead and buried, is covered by only five letters, three to Ron Hubbard and two to A.E. van Vogt. It was, apparently, only after 1950 that Campbell's penchant for writing long letters developed, presumably as part and parcel of his personal obsessions. Readers who don't already know a great deal about Campbell and his concerns will inevitably find themselves completely at sea as they plough through this material. There is no editorial commentary at all—no footnotes to tell us who the correspondents are and what they might have written in the letters to which Campbell is replying. We are told nothing about the stories to which Campbell refers, and though some are familiar many are not, and some familiar ones are either not referred to by title or are called by working titles that were eventually replaced. This lack of commentary occasionally creates mysteries. Why, for instance, do we find on p.476 a letter addressed to "Dear Mr Anvil" written in 1966—billed by the editor as a letter to Christopher Anvil—when we find on p.483 a letter (dated ten weeks later) addressed to "Dear Harry", billed by the editor as a letter to Harry C. Crosby, which mentions some of the same stories. Harry C. Crosby and Christopher Anvil were, of course, one and the same—so why is John W. Campbell writing to them in different ways as if they were different people, and why does the editor confirm this eccentricity? Campbell had been publishing Crosby's Anvil stories for more than a decade, and I cannot believe that he only found out in 1966, especially as he was writing rejection letters headed "Dear Mr Crosby" and "Dear Crosby" in 1958. It would be nice to have an explanation of things like this.

The editors of this book obviously felt that it was both proper and reasonable to let Campbell speak only for himself, but this seems to me to have been a mistake. Letters are communications between particular individuals, which often respond directly to other similar communications, and which always assume a stock of common knowledge held by the two correspondents. To snatch the letters out of this context without attempting to compensate in some way is to do their author something of a disservice. It makes much of what is here unnecessarily enigmatic, and hence tedious. On the other hand, the editors assume an attitude of such awesome reverence to their hero that one can understand their craven humility in refusing to pollute the strange flow of his supposed wisdom with their own interjections. If Campbell really were the genius which they believe him to have been, perhaps it *would* have been better to let him speak entirely for himself. I can't believe that he was, and I can't believe that this volume offers much evidence in support of the claim. Readers will ultimately have to judge for themselves. Here are a few samples to whet their appetite:

"Until I can develop the basic laws of psionics, it is futile to seek to use them in this society . . ." (p.166).

"The psycho-socio power of fiction as a medium of communication has been somewhat overlooked and underrated, I believe . . . Currently, I am seeking, through the fiction, to nudge interest in psionic powers as an engineering value . . ." (p.225).

"And what if there is a Fourth Field Force—a *pattern* field, a tendency-to-organize patternwise field?" (p.387).

The last of the passages cited was written in 1961, long before Rupert Sheldrake became dubiously famous by promoting the same idea. That's one of the things the editors don't bother to point out.

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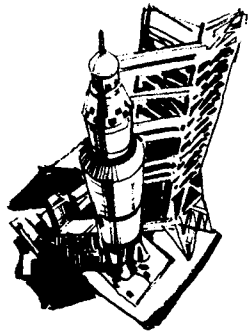

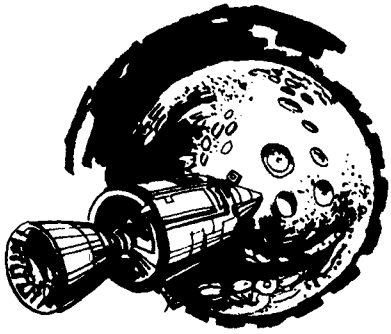

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