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FOUNDATION

37

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

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FOUNDATION

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

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Editorial

This issue sees yet another change in the editorial team. David Pringle, after editing seventeen issues of *Foundation* between October 1980 and Summer 1986, has decided to concentrate his spare energies on *Interzone* (whose first editorial he wrote in Spring 1982). He has worked wonders in both his editorial capacities—and still found time to write books like *Science Fiction: the 100 Best Novels*. The appearance of *Foundation* has seen a dramatic improvement in his time as editor, and even future improvements (such as the new covers which are planned from issue 38 onwards) will be a result of his initiative. To my great relief, he has consented to stay on the editorial committee in an advisory capacity; I hope his advice will be available for a long time to come.

As a result of his "retirement", the editor-in-chief of *Foundation* is, for the first time, a full-time university academic. I assure the readership that this is not as ominous as it sounds. In my defence I could point out that I am an early medieval historian and archaeologist, and no friend or advocate of traditional English Lit. Crit. values (or windbaggery: see Professor Hammerton's letter, this issue). I come to *Foundation* as a fan and reader of long standing rather than as an academic (though perhaps my experience at seeing six academic books through the press will be of some use to *Foundation*). There will be no change of policy. I shall continue to attempt to bring out three issues a year (frequency depends largely on our ability to attract sufficient material of quality from you, the readership). And I shall do my best to maintain the reputation that David has helped build up for the journal. Norman Spinrad, in the September 1986 issue of *Asimov's*, laments the fact that most of the sf criticism in the academic journals is "publish-or-perish stuff, narrowly focused, repetitive, and more concerned with scholarly minutiae than any comprehensive evolutionary overview. Only *Foundation* really consistently strives to maintain such an overview, and that overview, though the best available, is somewhat idiosyncratically British." It is obviously good to hear that we are the best available, and somewhat pleasing to know that we are idiosyncratically British—despite the large number of transatlantic contributions we publish—and I hope to keep things that way.

We print in this issue a letter from Brian Aldiss, objecting to Professor Hassler's comments on the volume on *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines*, edited by Marshall B. Tymn and Mike Ashley. It was only the first of several letters, very similar in tone, that we received. Robert Silverberg regards the volume in question as "an astonishing achievement . . . I have been an active participant in the life of magazine sf for the past three and a half decades and I can testify that their account of those magazines is amazingly accurate both in detail and in spirit, and is a rich, exciting document besides, which on this side of the Atlantic has been received enthusiastically by the very people who helped to create the magazines discussed. Reading that vast book, I felt at times as though I were reading my own biography; and it saddens me that anyone should cast stones at this monumental work for so trivial a ground as the omission of his own organization —which, after all, isn't a science fiction magazine—from the index." Joe Sanders, who contributed the chapter on "Academic Periodicals and Major Fanzines" to the said volume, writes that he decided on his own initiative not to include the *SFRA Newsletter* in

his chapter, because "while I scan it when it arrives, it never has seemed to be especially unique in its contents nor significant in its depth . . . I first replied to this attack (on Marshall Tymn) in the June 1986 *Science Fiction Chronicle,* which had published Hassler's open letter in its April issue. As a matter of fact, though, weeks before that, I'd given Hassler the same information over the 'phone . . . And, even earlier, I had explained the principles of selection in my introduction to the chapter in the book itself. Accordingly I am appalled that the charge is still being circulated, unretracted."

Despite the implications of that last word, I should be grateful if we could regard this correspondence as closed, and apologise for its appearance in these pages in the first place. Both the Science Fiction Research Association and the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts are fine institutions, with whom the Science Fiction Foundation would wish to have good relations, and it is sad that they are themselves not on good terms, and even sadder that a fine work of sf scholarship as the Tymn and Ashley volume should suffer in the process. In future, the only controversies and feuds we shall encourage in the letter columns are those begun by or in *Foundation* itself . . .

Finally, two errata. *Foundation* 36 was, of course, copyright 1986, and not 1985, as printed. And John Clute wishes to point out that the penultimate sentence of his review of Gibson's *Count Zero* should have read "a more than moderately good read", and not "a moderately good read". Readers will notice that one book reviewed in this issue (the John W. Campbell letters) was also reviewed in *F*36, and that here in *F*37 there are two reviews of Sterling's *Schismatrix.* These are *not* mistakes. We shall continue to publish more than one review of a book if it seems appropriate to do so; if any reader disagrees violently with a particular review, (s)he is welcome to offer the Reviews Editor an alternative viewpoint for possible future publication.

Edward James
October 1986

Patricia Monk is currently Associate Professor of English at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, where she specializes in Canadian literature and lately in sf. A Cheshire-born emigrée with English Honours from the University of Reading, she is author of The Smaller Infinity: the Jungian Self in the Novels of Robertson Davies *(University of Toronto Press, 1982) as well as numerous papers on Canadian literature, also on themes of marriage and the feminine image in sf.*

The Gulf of Other Minds: Alien Contact in the Science Fiction of C.J. Cherryh

PATRICIA MONK

Science fiction unsettles mindsets, especially of readers not accustomed to it, and one of its most unsettling and most fascinating topics is "alien contact" and the exploration of what C.J. Cherryh herself calls "the gulf of other minds".[1] Like other writers in the field, such as Hal Clement in *Mission of Gravity* (1954) and *Cycle of Fire* (1957), Randall Garrett in *Anything You Can Do* (1962), and Gordon Dickson in *The Alien Way* (1965) and *None But Man* (1969), Cherryh presents in her novels numerous encounters with aliens. My contention in this paper, however, is that her rich and disciplined imagination adds a new sophistication to the popular topic. From *Brothers of Earth* (1976) to the recent *The Kif Strike Back* (1985),[2] she explores alien contact by setting up what may be called the dichotomies of otherness among differing kinds of sapient being, not only within a single species but also between species. Moreover, by concentrating in each dichotomy not on the specific "other" but rather on the nature of "otherness" itself and by limiting her exploration to the interface between the opposites, she constructs what might be called the paradigm of danger in the encounter between different sapient species.[3] In so doing, she provides an illuminating insight into the nature of sapience itself and into what human priorities should be in preparation for meeting the Other.

Cherryh's definition of "alien", of course, whether in her fantasy or her science fiction, is only implied. Gardner Dozois, in his introduction to an anthology of stories devoted to alien contact, describes the literary and folkloric forerunners of science fiction's extraterrestrial aliens:

> People have always been fascinated by . . . the remorseless and unknowable Other . . . For uncountable centuries, the Other was supernatural . . . (or) one of the people who lived around the curve of the river or across the sea.[4]

He goes on to point out that, as the unknown parts of the world steadily shrink, the location of the unknown tends to move further out, so that "as the twentieth century advances, the Other has increasingly become the Alien, the creature from another

world".[5] Consequently, the older sense of the term *alien*, "a person belonging to another family, race, or nation; a stranger, a foreigner", has recently (following common use in science fiction for many years) been extended to include the concept of extraterrestrial origin.[6] Cherryh's exploration of the nature of otherness requires both the older and the newer sense of the word to be taken into account, for what she seems to be setting up is a pattern in which interspecies otherness (the otherness of different species) is different in degree but not necessarily in kind from intraspecies otherness (the otherness found within the species).

In studying intraspecies otherness, Cherryh sets up four primary dichotomies: those between self and not-self, female and male, us and them, naturally born and clone. Additionally, the us/them dichotomy involves two variants (between group and individual, as well as between group and group), and several pairs of groups are looked at in the group/group dichotomy. Each intraspecies dichotomy is set up in its own terms, although sometimes more than one kind of otherness is examined within a single novel and although different novels sometimes share similar if not identical future-universe settings (or what Christine Brooke-Rose terms "megastory" or "megatext").[7] With the exception of the female/male dichotomy, the intraspecies dichotomies studied are those found in the human species.

The most fundamental intraspecies dichotomy, that between the self and the not-self, is not considered until quite late. *Voyager in Night* (1984) discusses the problem of the self and the not-self by postulating an artificial intelligence, *Trishanamarandu-kepta,* who can read the personality as well as the form of any being and "recreate" it in the form of a self-aware holographic simulacrum. The live protagonist, Rafe, encounters several simulacra or "copies" of himself and tries to differentiate between original and simulacrum. He, however, has "the scars, the bruises, the pain that proved his title to flesh and life",[9] whereas his simulacrum points out to the simulacra of his dead companions, Jillan and Paul, that there is "not a mark on any of the rest of us" (*Voyager,* p.62). In suggesting this solution to the problem of distinguishing between the self and the not-self, Cherryh implies that the body must be taken into account as part of the self: the not-self is alien because it is not the complete self of mind and body. Here biology is for the first time overtly put forward as the key factor in considering the nature of otherness.

Biology and the body/mind relation also play a part in the second of the intraspecies dichotomies of otherness—the dichotomy between female and male. It is in part explored as one of a number of concurrent themes in the novels of the Compact: *The Pride of Chanur* (1982), *Chanur's Venture* (1985), and *The Kif Strike Back* (1985), and will presumably continue to be part of the forthcoming sequel *Chanur's Homecoming*. Cherryh examines, in a continuing story of the *hani* (a sapient felinoid species with a social structure similar to that of terrestrial lions), how alien male and female are to each other, presenting it from the point of view of the *hani* trader, Pyanfar Chanur, in terms of her relationships to her husband, Khym *nef* Mahn, and her brother, Kohan Chanur. The issue is brought into focus by the introduction of a male of another species (human): Pyanfar is disturbed by the presence of the "Outsider" on her ship, which has an all-female crew, not because it is an "Outsider" (alien), but because it is male:

> It was naked, and *he* was a reasonable guess . . . Pyanfar frowned, disturbed to be having a male on the ship, with all the thoughts *that* stirred up. Chur and Geran were being uncommonly courteous with it, and that was already a hazard.[9]

Moreover, Pyanfar recognizes in this Outsider symptoms of maleness similar to those of *hani* males: "it drew its line and meant to hold its territory. Male, maybe. It had that over-the-brink look in its eyes" (*Pride,* p.7). This point is reinforced in *Chanur's Venture,* in which the mere presence on board of two males (Pyanfar's husband, *Na* Khym, and the male Outsider, Tully) could provoke a fight:

> "*Na* Khym's aboard," she said . . . "*Male,* Tully . . . As long as you aren't in the same room, fine. Go where you like. Just stay out of his way. Males are different. Don't argue with him. Don't talk to him if you can avoid it. Just duck your head and for godssakes keep your hands off him and us" (*Venture,* p.170).

The territorial-sexual nature of the *hani* male, which does not permit him to tolerate another adult male *hani* anywhere within his territory, is triggered in *Na* Khym by the maleness of Tully, although the latter, being of a different species, poses no threat, either sexual or territorial. Nevertheless, shared maleness makes *Na* Khym and Tully more alike than shared *hani* nature makes *Na* Khym and Pyanfar, for, although Pyanfar and her crewwomen recognize the territorial-sexual nature of the males and accommodate themselves to it, it is not part of their nature. Moreover, Pyanfar is also shown suspecting, and even attempting to prove, that the territorial-sexual syndrome is maintained and reinforced, if not actually created by, historical patterns of acculturation among the *hani.* Throughout the Compact novels, in fact, the thrust of the argument concerns with the otherness of gender, but it is also suggested that in so far as gender alienation may be the result of acculturation it may be reconcilable, although in so far it is a result of biology, it may not.

Acculturation is also a factor in the intraspecies us/them dichotomy among humans. This dichotomy is examined principally in *Downbelow Station* (1981), which is concerned with the problems of otherness as they affect groups, and *Merchanter's Luck* (1982), which examines the otherness which separates group and individual. In *Downbelow Station,* the dichotomy between human groups is observed concurrently in different pairings among downworlders, stationers, merchanters, military, civilian, Union, and Alliance.[10] Stationers, downworlders, and merchanters inhabit different environments, and each environment creates in its inhabitants their sense of reality, as the merchanter Elene points out to her stationer husband:

> You don't get much view on a ship . . . Not what you'd think. It's the being there; the working of it; the feel of moving through what could surprise you at any moment. It's being a dust speck in that scale and pushing your way through all that Empty on your own terms, that no world can do and nothing spinning around one. It's doing that, and knowing all the time old goblin Deep is just the other side of the metal you're leaning on. You stationers like your illusions. And world folk, blue-skyers, don't even know what real is.[11]

Consequently, human behaviour in times of crisis varies between groups. Each group seems strange to the others in the response it makes to a commonly recognized problem: "A station could not shoot, could not run, could only suffer damage and repair it if there was time. Merchanters had other philosophies and different reflexes in time of trouble" (*Downbelow,* pp.20-21). Even though the difference, the strangeness, is recognized by members of the different groups, it nevertheless provokes quarrels and feelings of hostility and isolation, exacerbated by the different needs within the different environments. In this novel, the alienation of the groups is shown to be real. But it is environmental (and hence a matter of acculturation) not biological, and the unusual cross-group marriage of Damon and Elene is used to demonstrate that such environmental alienation

can be overridden by biological factors and that acculturated otherness does not preclude the achievement of a close and lasting relationship. All of the people involved in the different groups are human, and transfer between groups is possible.

The dichotomy between the individual and the group is explored in *Merchanter's Luck* (1982), the sequel to *Downbelow Station*. The protagonist, Sandor Kreja, has lived in almost total isolation on board his ship since pirates massacred his family. After an encounter with Allison Reilly, a member of one of the large merchanter families, he agrees to share the ship with her and her team, in return for being bailed out of trouble by the head of the Reilly family. Here again, the "otherness" of the two parties is environmentally determined: Sandor and Allison have similar physical environments (ships) but different social environments (Sandor's isolation and Allison's group). Sandor is almost feral as a result of isolation, and the book traces not only the differences between the feral and the domesticated human being, but also the processes by which the feral can be redomesticated, emphasizing that it is Allison's greater psychosocial flexibility (as a result of her group upbringing) which enables her to grapple more easily with the problem of Sandor's otherness. The dominance of biology over acculturation, however, also plays a part in this relationship, since it is Sandor's sexual attraction to Allison, sending him on a rash journey from one space station to another in a different star system, which initiates the relationship between them.

Biology is clearly also the prime factor in Cherryh's dicussion of the final intraspecies dichotomy—that between naturally born human and genetically engineered human clone (*azi*). Although *azi* come from artificial rather than natural environments (being produced in laboratories and brought up on "farms"), and their mindsets (like their bodies) are engineered to produce acceptable, predictable, and specialized temperaments instead of the chancy mixtures resulting from natural matings, these differences are shown to be more or less superficial. The essential point about otherness that Cherryh seems to be making through this particular dichotomy is that the tampering involved in genetic engineering and cloning does not produce a new species. (The point is emphasized by Cherryh's action in showing that the *azi* pass the test of interfertility, for although in *Port Eternity* the *azi* are sterile even among themselves, in *Forty Thousand in Gehenna* they are not only fertile among themselves but also interfertile with human beings.) Here again, otherness turns on a point of biology.

From her treatment of humans and *hani*, it is clear that biology is the key factor in Cherryh's concept of the intraspecies dichotomies of otherness. Whether or not the species is human (for obviously *hani* female/male problems are, *mutatis mutandis,* similar to human female/male problems), the presence of intraspecies biological difference (as in the body/mind gap and the gender gap) makes the dichotomy more pronounced and less reconcilable, but where other differences (differences of social and physical environment) exist, biology can be a reconciling factor between groups as well as a determining factor in deciding whether a group is or is not part of the species. But Cherryh is not content to limit her exploration of otherness to intraspecies differences, and when the dichotomy is between two different species, the difference must always be biological, or at least have a biological base, so that the reconciling effect of similar biology is lost. In looking at her interspecies dichotomies, therefore, I hope to show that Cherryh's superb sense of the otherness of aliens derives from her understanding of the importance of biology as it works quite differently within an alien being.

When Cherryh turns to the effect of biological differences in interspecies dichotomies, she sets up pairs (as she did with human/human dichotomies). The basic dichotomy is between human and alien (for example, between human and *mri* in the *Faded Sun* and between human and *ahnit* in *Wave Without a Shore*), but in some of the novels the dichotomy is between alien and alien (for example, between *iduve* and *kalliran* in *Hunter of Worlds*). There are multiple dichotomies in the Compact novels, which weave complex patterns of difference and similarity between eight different fully realized sapient species, including humans. Nevertheless, Cherryh's patterns of alien difference are developed without sacrifice of other aspects of narrative fiction and with a richness of invention unequalled by any other writer in the genre.

Her invention of aliens is disciplined, however, as well as rich. In it, she complies with the prime constraint of science fiction which is, as formulated by L. Sprague de Camp in his valuable early article on the invention of sapient alien creatures: "In science-fiction we try not to go contrary to known fact, however thinly we may spread our speculations about the unknown."[12] This constraint has different effects in different aspects of science fiction: in the field of invented aliens, it places certain restrictions on form and biochemistry. Since his article is designed to be a practical writer's guide to the invention of aliens, and does not attempt to be exhaustive, de Camp rules out at the beginning such exotica as "animated crystals . . . gaseous and electrical beings, and . . . disembodied intelligences", in order, as he says, "to make the problem manageable".[13] After working through the necessary biochemistry and mechanics, de Camp summarizes his results as follows:

> So the design of our e.-t. shakes down to the following characteristics: an active multicellular land animal with a weight between forty pounds and a ton made of carbon compounds and operating on an oxidation-reduction metabolism. This leaves a lot to be decided in the matter of physical details" (de Camp, 1, p.116).

To most science fiction writers, interpreting the primary constraint strictly, these requirements would represent the limits of *possible* aliens (some latitude is permitted). But some possible aliens are more *probable* than others, as de Camp suggests: "But if intelligent life did develop on another planet, it is very unlikely that it would look like a chrysanthemum, or a starfish, or a fire hydrant. There are good reasons for thinking that it would probably look *something* like a man, at least at a sufficient distance" (de Camp, 1, p.103). Within the range of the possible, de Camp here makes a simple distinction between the improbable and the probable forms of intelligent alien. The clarity and simplicity of de Camp's discussion make it a useful benchmark for the consideration of Cherryh's invention.

The design of Cherryh's aliens remains for the most part consistent with de Camp's parameters. To begin with, she avoids the exotics, such as "disembodied intelligences" or "artificial intelligences" (except in *Voyager in Night* and the recent novella "Companions"), as de Camp advises. She also works, for the most part, within the limits of the probable. But she does not interpret the prime constraint with extreme rigour: her methane breathers in the Compact novels take full advantage of the latitude available to her. Her imagination, however, takes her beyond de Camp in one important way. She makes a threefold distinction, rather than a simple twofold (possible, probable) distinction among the aliens she creates. Among her aliens, two groups fall within de Camp's probable ("*something* like a man") category, and one group falls outside,

although still within the scientifically permitted range of the possible. The first of her "probable" groups includes those of her aliens who are truly humanoid: the *mri* (Faded Sun trilogy), the *nemet* (*Brothers of Earth*), and the *iduve* (*Hunter of Worlds*); this group, which I shall term *homologous* aliens, [14]is extremely close to human norms (close enough for sexual interaction, for example, in the case of the *nemet*), except in such superficial variables as skin colour, number of digits, and so on. The second group, which may be termed *analogous* aliens, are aliens who resemble terrestrial creatures in form and behaviour: they are recognizably drawn to resemble familiar animals who are nevertheless sapient (the lionlike *hani* and primatelike *mahendo'sat* in *Pride of Chanur*), insects (the antlike *majat* in *Serpent's Reach*), and reptiles (the froglike *regul* of the *Faded Sun* trilogy and the saurian *caliban* of *Forty Thousand in Gehenna*). The third group, which may be termed *heterologous* aliens, have no terrestrial counterparts, except in so far as they are things which can be visualized: the *stsho, t'ca,* and *chi* of the Compact novels, and the *ahnit* of *Wave Without a Shore* (1981). Cherryh's invention has a solid scientific foundation, but she builds imaginatively on that foundation.

Cherryh's examination of interspecies dichotomies rarely involves the process of establishing the presence of sapience in a newly encountered alien. Since not every alien creature which falls within de Camp's parameters for alien intelligence is going to be a sapient being (even humans are not the only animals on earth which fit them), such a process must be developed. But within the current conventions of science fiction the process at the moment is the simple (perhaps simplistic) rule-of-thumb that the use of language, number, clothing, fire, and tools distinguishes people (human or alien) from animals. At the beginning of *The Pride of Chanur,* Pyanfar uses the same standards to assess the "bipedal, brachiate" creature "loose about the station dock" (*Pride*, p.5). When it invades the *Pride*'s decks, she observes that "it knew guns; it wore at least a token of clothing; it drew its line and meant to hold its territory", and that it draws "a precise row of symbols" on the floor in its own blood which she can see is "a writing system, probably numerical notation", and from these observations she concludes that it is "no animal" (*Pride*, p.7). (It is subsequently revealed to be the human, Tully.) Pyanfar does not think about the procedure or question it: for her, it is simple, quick, and successful. Elsewhere, nevertheless, Cherryh does maintain a considerable scepticism about the infallibility of the conventional approach to establishing sapience. In *Forty Thousand in Gehenna*, when the initial survey of Gehenna fails to establish the sapience of the indigenous saurians before settlement is permitted, she presents the consequences of that failure in some detail, and in the course of the presentation she introduces some of her rare direct comment on the nature of sapience through the characters of the xenologists Cina Kendrick and Elizabeth McGee. Even so, her narrative concerns in the novels are with the continuing consequences only, not with the occasion of the initial encounter in which the procedure is tried and fails. For the most part, however, Cherryh's thematic concern with exploring the dichotomies between sapient species leaves aside the initial establishment of sapience. Pragmatically, at least so far as the published novels are concerned, she accepts the current convention of initial contact, and pursues her own interest in ongoing interaction where the dangers of difference between sapients become effective.

Cherryh's interspecies dichotomies are biologically determined. Biology is the foundation of a sapient species' specific identity, because it dictates its cognitive and affective organization, its physical reflexes (in the individual member), its position on the

food-chain of its planet of origin, its reproduction and growth patterns, its patterns of socialization (both interpersonal and systemic), and its technocultural methods. Each pattern of behaviour and activity within a species' culture, therefore, refers back to its biology in some way, although this biological origin may be overlaid by later accretions of culture. Consequently, however similar such a pattern may overtly appear (even to the extent of appearing identical) in two different species, it must nevertheless be covertly different as a result of the dichotomy of the biological base, and this covert difference creates the high potential for failure of comprehension in any interspecies encounter, which may lead to simple misunderstanding, real danger, or total catastrophe.

The most likely way in which biological dichotomy will lead to non-comprehension is, in Cherryh's view, the simple physical reflex. In the most general sense, a reflex is "a simple stimulus response connection believed to be unlearned and characteristic of a species".[15] Consequently, the human smile, which bares the teeth, is often identified in science fiction as the reflex which will prove to be most obviously incomprehensible in encounters with extraterrestrial sapients, for in other animals, baring the teeth almost uniformly indicates hostility.[16] In *The Pride of Chanur*, Cherryh uses this differentiation in showing the *hani* Pyanfar's reflexive behaviour: she normally bares her teeth in displeasure (*Pride,* p.102), but on first meeting humans (other than Tully) she tries to appear friendly by covering her teeth: "She puckered her mouth into its most pleasant expression" (*Pride*, p.217). Later in the progress of their acquaintance, Tully demonstrates that he too is learning to adopt the *hani* expression of pleasure in place of his own: "He grinned, tried to stop himself, got his face into a hani pleasantness".[17] A sophisticated sapient in a multispecies society must learn to evaluate reflexive intraspecies signals made in interspecies contexts and adapt to or adopt them.

Biological dichotomy will also show up in basic patterns of cognitive organization, so that some patterns apparently essential to humanity's concept of human sapiency may not exist in other sapients. Our innate ability to "imagine" (to extrapolate thought into the future), for example, may not exist in other sapients. Cherryh demonstrates this in *The Faded Sun* trilogy in the *regul*, a species which has developed sapience without imagination and finds imagination in humans not only incomprehensible, but also dangerous:

> humans, (Suth) had observed, recalled things in time-ahead. *Imagination,* they called this trait; and since they committed the insanity of remembering the future . . . the whole species was apt to irrational actions. The future, not existing, was remembered by each individual differently and therefore they were apt to do individually irrational things.[18]

The awkward periphrasis "remembering the future" is forced upon the *regul* Suth while reflecting in his own language about a concept which does not occur in *regul* cognitive organization and for which, consequently, they have no existing term. The fact that humans operate by something which has no *regul* equivalent, which *regul* can hardly name, let alone comprehend, is an important source of the danger they constitute for the *regul*, at this point nominally their allies.

Similarly, biological dichotomy is manifest in the affective (emotional) organization of sapient species. This problem is brought into focus in *The Faded Sun* trilogy when, on board a human spaceship, the human Sten Duncan murders a *regul* "elder" (a *regul* who has reached sexual maturity), and the other humans on board immediately expel the remaining *regul* (all, including Suth, still immature "younglings") from the ship. When

Suth subsequently metamorphoses into an elder to replace the victim, he considers the expulsion:

> the cold haste in which they had been ejected from the ship . . . that was a reaction without sane emotion, a void where some emotion ought to exist and failed . . . A reaction existed in regul which—perhaps—humans did not feel at all. This insensitivity had vast implications" (*Kutath*, p.92)

Suth, it is made clear, does not expect the humans should feel distress at the death of the elder, but he does consider that they lack the proper feeling of distinction between the death of an elder and the death of a mere youngling (over whom a *regul* elder has unquestioned power of life and death). As Suth sees the human insensitivity, it is an insensitivity to the importance of elders. But from Suth's reaction to the human response, we can see that he is equally insensitive to our equivalence of immature and adult lives. Insensitivity to another species' affective patterns is as dangerous as incomprehension of their basic cognitive organization.

More dangerous than either, in some circumstances, is an interspecies dichotomy which springs from differing positions of the species concerned on the food-chain of their worlds of origin. In *Hunter of Worlds,* the predator/prey dichotomy is at the root of the encounter between the two spacefaring races, the *kalliran* and the *iduve.* Initially, the captive *kalliran,* Aiela, responds to his captor, the *iduve,* Chimele, with "such a physical terror mounting in him as he had never felt in any circumstances. He could not even shape it in his thoughts. He felt disconnected, smothered, wished at once to run and feared the least movement".[19] Later, he attempts to respond to her as an equal, on the grounds of their common sapience, by arguing with her. He provokes a terrifying and only half-comprehensible response:

> Chimele herself looked terrifed, reminding him for all the world of an essentially friendly animal being provoked beyond endurance, a creature teased to the point of madness by some child it loved, shivering with taut nerves and repressed instincts. (*Hunter,* p.60).

Finally, he is able to recognize their true relationship: "he knew Chimele in all the atavistic fears of his species. A predator who had assumed civilization" (*Hunter*, p.62). A prey species (low on the food-chain) and a predator species (high on the food-chain) cannot meet as equals, however deeply civilization has overlaid the essential biological difference.[20] Their encounter will inevitably be dangerous for the prey species.

Equally dangerous, but only when the two species are anatomically compatible, will be the interspecies dichotomy which arises from a different sexual biology. In *Hunter of Worlds, iduve* and *kalliran* are sexually compatible. Isande, a *kalliran* slave born in captivity, has experienced the "*katasukke*—pleasure-mating" which *iduve* practise with their slaves when compatibility exists, and she instructs Aiela about *iduve* sexuality through their implanted mindlink:

> union between iduve in *katasakke* . . . was fraught with violence and shielded in ritual and secrecy. *Katasukke* was gentler . . . (and) cruelty was *e-chanokhia,* highly improper, whatever unknown and violent things they did among themselves. But both *katasakke* and *katasukke* triggered dangerous emotions in the ordinarily dispassionate iduve . . . a madness as alien as their normal calm. (*Hunter,* p.55).

The violence between the *iduve* male and female is contrasted with the non-violent sexuality of the *kallia,* as revealed in Aiela's comprehension of the difference between that and the *iduve* pattern, which the concept of *vaikka* (literally, a demonstration of honour) turns into:

> a game that was indeed for iduve only, a name that shielded a most terrifying instinct, one that the iduve themselves must fear, for it tore apart all their careful rationality. The compulsion must indeed be involved in their matings—intricate, unkalliran instinct . . . A kallia quite literally did not have a nervous system attuned to that kind of contest. A kallia would want to play the game part of the way and then quit before someone was hurt; but there was a point past which the iduve could not quit. (*Hunter,* p.60)

The danger involved in *katasukke* is danger to the individual concerned, and is more dangerous perhaps for being covert because of the physical likeness which extends to sexual compatibility. Here, the covert difference derives some of its danger from the fact that it is concealed by overt likeness.

A further danger may exist in the biological dichotomy if the gross physical difference which makes sexual compatibility unimaginable includes reproduction and growth patterns. Such a difference exists between the ant-like *majat* and humans in the novel *Serpent's Reach.* In a human colony, twelve-year-old Raen a Sul hant Meth-maren, seeks assistance from the *majat* Blue-hive, her family's trading partners, when her family is massacred by a rival family and its associated *majat.* She asks the Hive-mother to massacre the murderers, and the Hive-mother agrees. In the ensuing battle, Blue-hive *majat* are wiped out and Raen is captured. As an adult, she recognizes the misunderstanding which has led to the destruction of Blue-Hive:

> *Is this the best action?* the Mother of Cerdin had asked. Among majat there were no children, only eggs, and adults. Mother had asked a human for advice, and a child had answered: Mother had not known. [21]

The covert difference is more dangerous here because the overt difference conceals it.

Differences in interpersonal socialization are also hazardous. Cherryh's most extended discussion of these takes place in *The Pride of Chanur,* in which Tully, the human kidnapped by the *kif* and rescued by Pyanfar and her *hani* crew, takes his place aboard the *Pride.* Tully's mistakes in dealing with the crew are treated relatively ironically: he causes consternation by wanting to shave his face and cut his hair (the *hani* of both sexes take great pride in their beautiful manes and beards), he hugs them in moments of triumph (which they find improper), and he is clearly under the impression for most of the novel that the all-female crew are all male. The confusion of behaviour patterns between species is displayed in this novel at its subtlest: the triviality of the misunderstandings allows for their multiplication to the extent that although Tully and the *hani* become allies, neither side properly understands the other.

Similarly, systems of socialization provide traps of varying degrees of danger for those who cross system boundaries. In *Brothers of Earth,* for example, although the *nemet* are homologous aliens, their highly ritualized social system is very different from the open and casual system of the human, Kurt, who is marooned among them. Being a stranger to it is dangerous because of the offence a stranger's ignorant behaviour causes the *nemet,* but it is a comprehensive danger: it can be recognized, measured, understood, and to a certain extent compensated for. But in *Forty Thousand in Gehenna,* as I have already mentioned, the difference of the calibans (analogous, saurian aliens) is such that it is not even initially recognized that they are alien people and not alien animals. Only after the destruction of a human colony and painful and dangerous contact by some of the survivors is the calibans' system recognized as the system of a sapient species. Recognition of the system does not create comprehension of it. It remains incomprehensible because it is unmeasured and undetermined, and its incomprehensibility is the measure of its dangerousness.

The biological dichotomy between sapient species will also be dangerous to some extent because it affects technocultural methods—the ways in which different species may acquire, store, and access the information out of which their technology and culture grow. In *The Faded Sun: Kutath,* Cherryh demonstrates how the *regul* have come, in contrast to humans, to consider their own eidetic memories as superior to writing and tapes for recording information (although they still use these). The *regul* abandon the library on Kesrith when they evacuate the planet, thus making (as the elder Suth later comes to understand) an important error:

> in the Alagn debacle at Kesrith, these aforesaid humans gathered up a great deal of regul paper and tapes. The library was lost . . . A minor loss, a poor colonial library on a mining colony? Regul lost nothing; but humans gained. Did humans much fret for the loss of the machines . . . lifted off? No. But humans swarmed over that library in the first days of Kesrith's occupation like insects over corruption. (*Kutath,* p.98)

By failing to recognize human respect for artificial memories in the form of tapes and documents (which at least in part derives from the absence of eidetic personal memory), the *regul* have allowed valuable information to fall into human hands. By so doing, they have placed themselves at least at a considerable disadvantage and at worst in considerable danger. The danger which results from this particular difference between species is general rather than specific, species-wide rather than individual, and perhaps even potential rather than actual. But it is still a danger.

What Cherryh has to say about interspecies difference supports what she says about intraspecies difference: biological difference means danger of some sort—limited or general, covert or overt, social or physical or psychological. In setting up the biological dichotomy and exploring its implications for interspecies relationships, however, she does more than establish the notion that the Other, in whatever form, is dangerous for a number of obvious and unobvious reasons. The sophistication which she adds to the concept of the danger of alien contact, contact with the stranger, is that the danger arises from the biological strangeness itself, not in whatever the stranger's motives may be. Mistakes are costly, she asserts, and any or every assumption in interspecies encounters (as well as many in intraspecies relations) may be a mistake. If Cherryh has a purpose beyond entertainment in her fiction, as I believe she has, more than one purpose may be served by this assertion of the dangers inherent in alien biology, and it is important to examine which is the operative one.

To begin with, the assertion could be construed as serving as a simple, practical, real-time warning. When we humans get out into space and meet the Other,[22] we had better be careful. This point is made by other science-fiction writers who keep one eye on human history, such as Robert Silverberg,:

> When human beings begin to encounter strangers in the universe, conflict is likely to erupt. Earthmen, by and large, are an aggressive sort of people, and it would not be surprising to run into a race of equally aggressive, militaristic creatures Out There. This could produce a nasty crash as one culture meets the other in a head-on impact.[23]

Allowing for a certain amount of exaggeration (not confined to Silverberg) on the subject of human aggressivity, there is enough evidence in history to suggest that such a practical warning by Cherryh would certainly be valid and almost as certainly be necessary in general terms. But by itself it appears too simplistic an explanation for the complexities of Cherryh's extended discussion of "alien menace".

Her assertion could also be construed as serving as a moral lesson on the dangers to our

present society of failing to recognize inherent and important differences between human beings of different sorts. The function of the alien as a mirror of humanity is widely recognized, as Gardner Dozois indicates:

> just as a distorting funhouse mirror can sometimes present the clearest picture of a man, so it may be that we see ourselves most plain and most instructively when we look into the face of the Alien. (Dozois, p.xi)

But as Ursula Le Guin demonstrates in her essay "American SF and the Other", we are selective in what we see in science fiction. Although in the real world, we can easily identify "the sexual Alien, and the social Alien, and the cultural Alien, and finally the racial Alien", in science fiction, there is (according to Le Guin) at least one noticeable omission:

> Well, how about the social Alien in SF? How about, in Marxist terms, "the proletariat"? . . . Are they ever *persons,* in SF? No . . . The people, in SF, are not people. They are masses, existing for one purpose: to be led by their superiors.
>
> From the social point of view most SF has been incredibly regressive and unimaginative.[24]

Indeed, Cherryh herself has little to say (except peripherally in *Serpent's Reach*) about the social alien, and what she does say does not suggest that her discussion of "alien menace" can be construed as any kind of warning on this level. There are social problems within her societies, but they do not translate easily into contemporary human equivalents such as class, colour, and religion. Again, simple metaphoric interpretation of aliens and alien ways of life is too simplistic to be credible by itself.

Even together, moreover, the practical warning and the moral lesson would amount to little more than propaganda, however necessary and well-intentioned. Both, furthermore, whether singly or together, fail to account for the function of biology in difference, and hence in "alien menace". The third interpretation of her purpose must therefore not only account for the function of biology in alien menace, but must do so more subtly than as some form of propaganda, although it will not necessarily exclude the practical warning and the moral lesson as incompatible.

This purpose, is, I suggest, to make an assertion specifically about the biological nature of human beings. Most, if not all, presentations of alien menace concentrate on the notion that alien beings behave differently because they think differently. At its simplest, this point is made by Silverberg when, immediately after his remark about violent contact with aliens which I have quoted above, he goes on to point out that "one feature of alien beings is their alienness: they are not likely to think the way we do" (Silverberg, p.46), implying (if I read him correctly) that they are therefore not likely to behave the same way. From this viewpoint, alien thinking is the real problem, and what we have to beware of is the results of their thought. How they think will determine their intentions towards and their interactions with humans, which, as Dozois points out, may range over "a wide spectrum":

> Sometimes (the aliens) are benevolent space brothers, sometimes sinister monsters, sometimes they love us, or collect us, or keep us as pets, or teach us, or learn from us; sometimes they don't care about us at all—sometimes they don't even notice us. (Dozois, p.x)

This spectrum of possibilities affords much of the fascination of science fiction dealings with the topic of alien contact. But alien thinking is by no means central in Cherryh's work, where, if the Compact novels are taken as representative, alien intentions seem to boil down to more-or-less peaceful coexistence, profitable trade, border skirmishes, and (where necessary) self-defence. These are quite comprehensible and unthreatening, and

cannot by any stretch of imagination be described as a "wide spectrum". Alien biology, on the contrary, leads us into the minefield of a wide spectrum of unforeseen and unforseeable hazards.

If we accept, therefore, as I think we must with Cherryh, that aliens are only or at least principally dangerous because they are biologically different, and not because of their intentions, then the conclusion that we are pushed to is that it is not our rationality (our rational, technological, scientific, and civilized mind) but our animality (our vertebrate, mammalian, hominid body) which is important in interspecies encounters. What she asserts unequivocally, in fact, is that human rationality may propel us into the encounter with the Other, but it will be human animality which will have most bearing on (or even totally determine) the results of that encounter. One corollary of this would seem to be that to avoid disaster, humanity must engage in a thorough reexamination of its biology and of the manifestation of that biology in all areas of life that, translated into the classical and Aristotelian terms which, as a classicist by training she can hardly have missed, might be interpreted as a strategy for avoiding *hubris*. Moreover, because the Other, however different, is always a sapient being, her assertion that a reexamination of human biology is a necessary preliminary to alien encounter must therefore also bear importantly on her paradigm of sapience.

This paradigm of sapience remains implicit rather than explicit in the novels Cherryh has published so far. Roughly speaking, she implies that, although different sapient species may be different in biology, sapience is not dependent upon any particular kind of biology in either form (the Compact consists of both analogous and heterologous aliens as well as humans) or biochemistry (both oxygen-breathing and methane-breathing species are included in it), and species which in human terms might be called insectile, saurian, or mammalian in form, and herbivorous, carnivorous, or omnivorous in habit, and predatory or predable in status, can all develop it. In addition, sapience, although it enables the development of culture within a species, nevertheless does not necessarily produce parallel cultural, political, or social systems. Moreover, although, with some exceptions, sapience is recognizable across species-boundaries (hence the multispecies Compact in *Pride of Chanur* and its sequels) by the existence of certain characteristics, it guarantees nothing in the way of interspecific harmony. It does not render species mutually likable or even mutually intelligible: sapience enables sapients to see past species boundaries but not to cross them, and to recognize the otherness of the Other but not necessarily to understand it. In this general implied theory of alien sapience, Cherryh does not offer a great deal of contradiction to most of the more thoughtful science-fiction writers on the topic of "alien contact".

It is her exceptions to the concept of mutual recognition across species-boundaries, however, which differentiate her concept of sapience sharply from the generality of such concepts. Admitting that there may be forms of alien sapience which we cannot recognize according to the generally accepted standards (the use of language, clothing, fire, and tools) demands that humanity rethink not merely the standards but the mindsets (modes of thinking) which have been used to produce the standards. In *Forty Thousand in Gehenna,* the theory of the problem is set out in the reports of Dr Cina Kendrick, one of the members of the scientific team observing the failed colony on Gehenna. Repeatedly, Kendrick objects to the standards of the rest of the mission which she feels have no relevance to the problem in front of them. She objects moreover, not only to the term used

to describe the caliban's physical form ("reptile"), but to the principles behind the selection of the term: "even the concept of *analog* is anthropocentric. *Logic* is another anthropocentric imprecision".[25] Kendrick finds even the basic concept *sapience* questionable:

> I have objected to the description *sapience* in previous studies and again take issue with biological studies which attempt to attach this imprecise assessment of adaptive and problem-solving capacities to non-human life-forms. (*Gehenna*, p.198)

The key to her objection is the word "anthropocentric", for to be anthropocentric, in Kendrick's terms, is to view the possible alien sapience using anthropoid (human) sapience as a standard of reference. Anthropocentrism, therefore, is presented as a mindset from which, later in the mission's history, xenologist Elizabeth McGee attempts to free herself and her thinking. McGee, who later in the history of the mission comes to share Kendrick's unorthodox views, attempts to convey to the team director her "conviction that the entire body of assumptions and procedures on which my field of xenology is founded has to be challenged" (*Gehenna*, p.367). McGee experiences personally the failure of the accepted standards to accommodate the alien sapience of the calibans, and, in her efforts to set up new standards and become the intermediary between human and caliban,[26] she carries out the unorthodox procedure of reaching them by submitting herself entirely to their control in their own subterranean environment.

In this attempt, she challenges the conventional mindset of her colleagues on the mission. They, however, in contrast to Kendrick and McGee, cling fiercely to their anthropocentric system. They refuse to accept anything which cannot be measured by human standards:

> The Bureau has met measurable intelligences; it has never met an immeasurable one; it has never met a situation in which humanity is outcompeted by an adaptive species which may violate the criteria. (*Gehenna*, p.255)

This requirement for measurability and appeal to previous experience to validate information are part of what Kendrick and McGee are challenging, because measurability, competitiveness, and adaptiveness are criteria drawn from human development. Moreover, the "priorities of the mission" as initially laid down continue to demand data in terms which will fit the standard pattern: "The Bureau draws no conclusion on the sapience or competency of the calibans and awaits further data which the mission will supply" (*Gehenna*, p.203). They refuse to acknowledge both the challenge to their terms, which they stubbornly continue to use, and the concomitant challenge to their mindset. Consequently, as long as they continue to look for intelligence in human terms, it remains unrecognizable.

Even in this problem of non-recognizable sapiency, moreover, Cherryh's assertion of the primacy of biology as a determinant of sapience remains important. McGee's report makes clear that at least part of the mission's problem is its failure to deal properly with the biological nature of the calibans. As Kendrick describes it,

> the dominant lifeform of Gehenna II is a scaly endothermic quadruped without aesthetic attraction. The description that leaps too readily to mind is *reptile*, which does not adequately describe an interior structure which is not reptilian or pertinent to any previously catalogued lifeform. (*Gehenna*, p.199)

The team's implied readiness to accept the comparison of the calibans with reptiles is presented as symptomatic of the way its members' scientific mindset works. This specific mindset is a subset of their general mindset, which in its turn is, in Cherryh's terms, a

product of their own biology: human biology, it seems, determines human notions of biology. If Kendrick and McGee's colleagues (representing perhaps the normal run of humanity) cannot escape the limitation of their own mindset to determine correctly the nature of the biology of the alien being examined, then they will have no basis for recognizing the sapience it produces. They have to nullify, therefore, at least temporarily as McGee does, their own biology, in order to obtain a clear and unbiased mode of observation which can lead to understanding.

It is not clear whether Cherryh thinks that such a nullification can be satisfactorily achieved. McGee's attempt in *Gehenna* is only partially successful. She achieves some sort of understanding, just as the caliban riders have done to a greater extent, and the Weirds most of all. But the effectiveness of escape from one's own biologically determined mindset creates more problems than it solves in establishing communication between the human and caliban species. McGee gets stuck between two sapient groups: she only partially understands calibans after her initiation among them and yet has acquired problems thinking in human terms and communicating with the rest of the mission. Moreover, she does not even fully understand the human caliban-riders of the failed settlement in spite of their shared partial understanding of the calibans; the caliban-riders are even less intelligible to the mission team than to McGee. Furthermore, the Weirds, humans who appear to achieve complete understanding of and communication with the calibans, are as unintelligible to humans (and even to the caliban-riders) as the calibans themselves. *Forty Thousand in Gehenna,* however, ends with a caliban and its rider functioning in human society away from Gehenna itself. There is, therefore, some suggestion that McGee's attempt to nullify her biologically determined mindset, imperfect as it may have been, has provided some link or some narrowing of the gap between humans and calibans, but it remains an unproven hypothesis.

Instead of trying to nullify one's own mindset, it may be more effective to attempt to nullify, at least in part, the alien's own equally biologically determined mindset. Cherryh tackles this in *Cuckoo's Egg* (1985), where a human test-tube baby, Haras/Thorn, is brought up from birth believing himself to be a freak member of the *shonunin* race, learning human language only as a series of unexplained video and audio tapes. His *shonun* fosterparent, Duun, explains to him when he reaches maturity that "I took an alien . . . I made it shonun"[27] because the *shonunin* will need an interpreter or intermediary between them and the humans when the latter come looking for their missing ship, which the *shonunin* have captured, killing the crew. Some of the interpretation of the tapes taken from the human ship has been worked out by computers, but it is only Haras/Thorn, who can translate from his acquired *shonuninity* to his innate humanity and back, who can really make humanity intelligible to other *shonunin* like Duun:

> The ear picks up those messages. Perhaps there's something in the pathways of the brain; perhaps it's knowing one's own face; perhaps both these things. You duplicate the sounds on the tapes perfectly; no shonun can manage all those consonants—no shonun could read the faces on that tape—except maybe myself; except Sagot sometimes. You taught me. You taught me your reflexes and your inmost feelings; and when we gave you the vocabulary we've been able to guess for ourselves—perhaps it's pathways, gods know—you began to handle it. That's what you were made for." (*Cuckoo's Egg,* pp.305-306)

Since the novel ends before the humans return, this hypothesis, like those put forward in *Forty Thousand in Gehenna,* remains unproven. But the tone of the ending is at least optimistic.

A third hypothesis, which is touched on but not fully explored in Cherryh's work is the involvement of "artificial intelligences" as intermediaries or bridges between sapient species. Artificial intelligencies appear, as I have mentioned previously, in *Voyager in Night* and the novella "Companions". In *Voyager,* on the one hand, the distinction between the original self and the simulacrum is made on the basis of biology, but this method of seeking to nullify the biological basis of sapience ducks the question of whether it will provide a means of communication with alien intelligences, since each is a reproduction of a sapience which evolved in a biological form although it is now stripped of the flesh and blood of its original. In this novel, the alien being *Trishnamarandu-kepta* appears to be both sapient (judging by its behaviour) and an artificial intelligence ("we are the computer . . . We're its soft-structure. Its enablement", p.199), which can recognize and understand alien sapience such as that of the humans in the story. But unfortunately we are not given enough information to know whether it was created by the advanced programming of a computer or by the copying of a biological original into a computer, so that it offers no help in determining whether copying a biologically sapient mind into non-biological hardware will solve the problem of releasing the mindset from its biological determinants. In "Companions", on the other hand, the very advanced (by 1986 standards) ship-computer of the exploration ship *Anne,* with the addition of its "pseudosome" (a mobile android extension),[28] begins as a programmable machine and ends, seemingly, as an independent intelligence. But the relevance of this to communication between different sapiences is countered by the revelation that the non-biological intelligence which *Anne* has become cannot detect a biological intelligence which the human protagonist is convinced has contacted him telepathically. Effective though it may be, the end of "Companions" leaves the reader in doubt as to whether the human or the machine is correct about what is outside the ship: a telepathic alien intelligence or a non-intelligent hallucinogenic organism. From the evidence so far, therefore, it is an open question whether or not Cherryh postulates a distinction or an equivalence between biological (natural) and non-biological (artificial electronic) sapience in making communication with alien sapients possible. It is clear, however, that the use of non-biological computers, however advanced or retarded, runs counter to the general thrust of her implied continuing argument that sapience is a property of biological life and of the physical body.

Throughout this continuing argument, I would like to suggest in conclusion, Cherryh may appear to be playing games with the Aristotelian notion of a human being as the rational animal, as well as with the notion of *hubris,* but they are nevertheless very serious games, both artistically and in their wider implications. Her assertion of the importance of biology and animality in sapience, is, in the context of the science-fiction ethos (or mythos) with its hypervaluation of rationality and intellect, highly paradoxical. Yet it is also curiously appropriate, for she is unmistakably aware of and in agreement with the suspicion expressed by J.B.S. Haldane that "the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we *can* suppose".[29] Consequently, in her study of alien contact, she uses science fiction not merely to entertain by supposing the unsupposable, not merely to present parables of the present in disguise as the future, not merely to attempt to chart the future (although something of all these is present in her fiction), and not merely to stretch to their fullest all the considerable capacities of her powerful and disciplined imagination, but above all, to point out, uniquely among practitioners of the genre, that body, properly understood, will provide the bridge across "the gulf of other minds".

Notes

Textual note: All invented terms (i.e. invented by the writer as part of future version of English or of alien languages are treated as foreign terms and italicized (underscored for italics) in my text, but are italicized or not according to the author's own use in quotations.

1. C.J. Cherryh, *Chanur's Venture* (New York: DAW, 1985), p.170. Cited hereafter as *Venture* by page number parenthetically in the text.
2. I do not intend this to imply that there is a deliberate linear development of the topic from novel to novel (nor do I intend to discuss the novels as a chronological sequence), although in small instances something like this may be identified (such as the fairly consistent movement away from human-like toward non-humanlike aliens.)
3. The term which science-fiction writers use to identify the distinction between people and animals, especially when talking about "alien contact", shifts from time to time between *intelligence, sentience,* and *sapience.* The scientific community, at least as represented by Carl Sagan's group, currently seems to prefer *intelligent* (see: Carl Sagan (ed), *Communication with Extraterrestrial Intelligence (CETI),* (Cambridge, Mass. & London, MIT Press, 1973)), whereas writers such as David Brin in his novel *Startide Rising* (New York: Bantam, 1983) and Cherryh herself, for both of whom the nature and implications of the distinction are of specific concern, seem to prefer *sapient,* although Brin occasionally also uses a fourth term, *sophont* (n.). Since I am discussing Cherryh, I have chosen to adopt her preferred term.
4. Gardner R. Dozois and Jack M. Dann (eds), *Aliens!* (New York: Pocket Books, 1980). p.ix. Cited hereafter as Dozois by page number parenthetically in the text.
5. Dozois, *Aliens!*, p.ix. Indeed, Cherryh's own work in fantasy includes both types of alien. Two of her fantasy novels, *The Dreamstone* (1983) and *The Tree of Swords and Jewels* (1983), deal with the "supernatural alien" contact in the encounter between the humans of early Britain and the Faery Arafel of Ealdwood. In her "Morgaine" trilogy (consisting of *The Gate* of Ivrel (1976), *The Well of Shiuan (1978)* and *The Fires of Azeroth* (1979)) both humans and supernatural aliens are involved, although on distant worlds.
6. In the older sense, the word derives, according to the OED, from the Latin adjective *alien-us,* meaning "of or belonging to another person or place", itself a derivative of *ali-us* meaning "other, another" (OED, alien, as adj.), used as a noun. The newer sense has been recognized by the dictionaries only since the late 1970s, as in such illustrative examples such as "any being or thing foreign to the environment in which it now exists: *an alien from another planet,"* in *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* (London & Glasgow: Collins, 1979).
7. Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.243: "the realistic narrative (in fantasy) is hitched to a megastory (history, geography) . . . In the marvellous, there is usually no such megatext . . . SF usually creates a fictional historico-geographico-sociological megatext but leaves it relatively vague, concentrating on technical marvels."
8. C.J. Cherryh, *Voyager in Night* (New York: DAW, 1984), p.52. Cited hereafter as *Voyager* by page number parenthetically in the text.
9. C.J. Cherryh, *The Pride of Chanur* (New York: DAW, 1982), p.39. Cited hereafter as *Pride* by page number parenthetically in the text.
10. In *Downbelow Station,* the last of these pairings (the political dichotomy between Union and Alliance), although explained, is not examined in detail, but only introduced as the background cause of the war in which the characters are involved. We gain more insight into the philosophical differences between the groups in *Forty Thousand in Gehenna* (1984).
11. C.J. Cherryh, *Downbelow Station* (New York: DAW, 1981), p.114, italics in original. Cited hereafter as *Downbelow* by page number parenthetically in the text.
12. L. Sprague de Camp, "Design for Life", in *Astounding Science Fiction,* May 1939, p.107. Cited hereafter as de Camp 1, by page number parenthetically in the text. (Part 1 appeared in the issue for May 1939, pp.103-116, and Part 2 in the issue for June 1939, pp.103-115). Another useful study is Hal Clement's "The Creation of Imaginary Beings", in *The Craft of Science Fiction: A Symposium on Writing SF,* ed. Reginald Bretnor (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), pp.259-275.
13. De Camp, 1, p.104. He excludes "artificial intelligence" (intelligent computers and robots) from the terms of reference of his article.
14. I use the special terms *homologous, analogous,* and *heterologous* in order to avoid repetitious definition. The Oxford English dictionary cites as the reference for *analogous:* "Parts which correspond in their real nature (their origin and development) are termed 'homologous'; those which agree merely in appearance or office (function) are said to be 'analogous'" (*A Manual of the Mollusca; or a rudimentary treatise of recent and fossil shells.* Samuel P. Woodward, 1851-1856). *Heterologous* is defined as "having a different relation, or consisting of different elements; not corresponding" and is given as the "opposite" to *homologous.*

15. See *Dictionary of Behavioural Science,* compiled and edited by Benjamin B. Wolman (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973), p.317.
16. Whereas in the human the smile (according to ethologist Desmond Morris) is "a symbolic embrace" (*Intimate Behaviour,* 1971; reprint edition, New York: Bantam, 1973, p.20, 22), in chimpanzees the bared-teeth "full open grin" is (according to Jane van Lawick-Goodall) "usually shown by a chimpanzee who is frightened or very excited" (*In the Shadow of Man,* 1971; reprint edition, London: Fontana, 1974, p.264-265).
17. C.J. Cherryh, *The Kif Strike Back* (New York: DAW, 1985), p.83. Cited hereafter as *Kif* by page number parenthetically in the text.
18. C.J. Cherryh, *The Faded Sun: Kutath* (New York: DAW, 1979), p.92. Cited hereafter as *Kutath* by page number parenthetically in the text.
19. C.J. Cherryh, *Hunter of Worlds* (New York: DAW, 1977), p.25. Cited hereafter as *Hunter* by page number parenthetically in the text.
20. *Hani,* although modelled on carnivores, are apparently social carnivores and seemed to have evolved (if that is the word) to being omnivores, and hence meet other omnivores on more or less equal terms.
21. C.J. Cherryh, *Serpent's Reach* (New York: DAW, 1980), p.89. Cited hereafter as *Serpent* by page number parenthetically in the text.
22. I am assuming, for the sake of argument, that there are Others out there. There is no consensus (and even considerable controversy) on the subject in scientific and science-fiction circles. See David Brin, "Just How Dangerous *Is* the Galaxy?", in *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact* 105:7 (July 1985), pp.80-95.
23. Robert Silverberg, introducing "The Best Policy" by Randall Garrett, in *Earthmen and Strangers: Nine Stories of Science Fiction* (New York: Dell, 1968), p.46. Cited hereafter as Silverberg by page number parenthetically in the text.
24. Ursula Le Guin, "American SF and the Other", in *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction,* edited with an Introduction by Susan Wood (New York: Putnam/Toronto: Academic Press, 1979, pp.97-100), pp.97-98. Cited hereafter as Le Guin by page number parenthetically in the text.
25. C.J. Cherryh, *Forty Thousand in Gehenna* (New York: DAW, 1983), p.198. Cited hereafter as *Gehenna* by page number parenthetically in the text.
26. Cherryh's strategy in examining the interspecies dichotomies, once sapience is established on both sides, is to begin by setting up an intermediary figure. The Intermediary is always an individual from one species who finds herself or himself in close, complex, and sometimes involuntary contact with members of another species. But, whether the encounter between the Intermediary and the Other takes place involuntarily or deliberately, whether the dynamics of the interface are worked out in the narrative action or a preliminary to it, and whether the physical setting is broad or narrow, the interface itself is (with one exception) always internalized within the troubled psyche of the Intermediary and shaped by her or his personality, yet at the same time modified by the personality of the Other involved and by external circumstances. Each encounter has its own variant of the essential interspecies dichotomy to recognize and to deal with.
27. C.J. Cherryh, *Cuckoo's Egg* (New York: DAW, 1985), p.306. Cited hereafter as *Cuckoo* by page number parenthetically in the text.
28. C.J. Cherryh, "Companions", in *The John W. Campbell Awards,* Vol. 5, ed. George R.R. Martin (New York: Bluejay Books, 1984, pp.140-235), p.143. Cited hereafter as "Companions" by page number parenthetically in the text.
29. J.B.S. Haldane, "Possible Worlds", in *Possible Worlds and Other Papers* (New York & London, Harper & Brothers, 1928, pp.272-299), p.298.

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Asimov's Robot Novels and the Two Non-Series Novels

DONALD M. HASSLER

Asimov himself has identified the Fifties as the Golden Age of his fiction writing productivity. Although my own interpretation of his science fiction does tend to introduce and to reintroduce this elusive notion of peak periods (in Asimov's future history, in his own symbolic anthologizing, and in the periodization of the genre itself), it is appropriate here to notice Asimov's evaluation of his own progress:

> . . . most people associate me with the 1940s and think of the positronic robot stories, the Foundation series, and, of course, "Nightfall," as the stories of my peak period. I think they're all wrong. I think my peak period came later—in 1953 and the years immediately following.[1]

A look at the bibliography of Asimov's science fiction will show that the works he refers to are the later juveniles, some of the short stories, but more importantly the robot novels entitled *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun* as well as the non-series novel entitled *The End of Eternity*. I also will treat here his fine independent novel from the early Seventies entitled *The Gods Themselves*. None of these works requires any apology or special pleading about how it may fit into his overall scheme of future history though not be successful in its own right as a fiction; each work is a superb accomplishment. Further, the latter two novels, even though not part of the future history of Galactic civilization, do develop themes and images that fit Asimov's overall scheme of thought about variability, identity, and change in the nature of things.

When David N. Samuelson wrote one of the early comprehensive analyses of *The Caves of Steel,* which still is the best reading of the novel I am familar with, he opens with the strange assertion that Asimov could not produce such a well-written probe into human character of the future until he had "suppressed his fascination with the Galactic Empire".[2] What Samuelson is getting at is that the specifics of the setting in New York City three thousand years in the future and of the changing character of the detective hero Elijah Baley in his interactions with his robot partner R. Daneel Olivaw constitute very different literary effects from the broad and sublime images of Trantor, of psychohistory, or of the spatio-analysts such as Crazy Rik in *The Currents of Space*. The accomplishment of Asimov in this first robot novel, of course, is to narrow the window and to zero in on some details of character and setting. But I think it would be a mistake to assume that these details are not consistent with and part of the large scheme, that the Godwinian forces of the invisible hand are not also the exact forces which ultimately serve as the

context for a Lije Baley or a Daneel.

In fact, what Baley must learn, as we shall see and as Samuelson well points out, and what the robots continue to "simulate", is that sharing better communications and changing through the process of communication is the defining characteristic of civilization—whether that civilization is the smaller window of future New York or the larger Galactic window. In other words, insofar as any life can change (and Asimov does believe in understanding and accepting change), it must be a change in "character" and in the relation of character to the environment, such as the machine environment of robots. Thus for Asimov's overall scheme of thought to make sense (and this is separate from his need to produce entertaining and marketable fictions though it, obviously, has complemented nicely with that need) he must get down eventually to details of character challenged by profound change and to more details in robotics related to character. He does this well in *The Caves of Steel,* in its sequel, and is still working at the images in the most recent sequels. In a sense, as the previous chapter laboured at, language is the crux in changing human character, just as machine languages drive our computer robots. It is not change limited just to semantics, however, or to what new words will come into usage. Rather the key is open-ended communication theory, and we find ourselves back with Enlightenment ideals. On the practical language of communication that goes beyond semantics, Samuelson is very good:

> . . . man and machine or man and man cannot solve significant problems without communication, especially between opposing viewpoints, which are essentially different frameworks for looking at things. And communication is a key concept in this book (*The Caves of Steel:* Samuelson does not write about the sequel but the same emphasis prevails), as in much science fiction. Within the fiction, obviously, communication is responsible for breaking down prejudices between characters and between opposing factions. But on the level of technique, also, the book is designed for direct communication from the author to his readers, communication of the gospel of science to the non-scientist, communication to the scientist of the need to consider humanity. The plots, the mode of presentation, the structure, the level of diction, and the character of the hero are all directed toward this goal.[3]

Galaxy editor Horace Gold who had serialized and made strange suggestions about *The Stars, Like Dust* and who was as James Gunn says "at least as good with ideas as Campbell", suggested originally to Asimov that he write a robot novel that was also a murder mystery. Gold knew how much Asimov was a fan of detective fiction, and the suggestion was perfect for Asimov later prided himself on mixing the two genres in a "perfect fusion".[4] Many critics have observed that Asimov's most frequently used and successful plot structure involves the solving of a mystery, and in terms of character as well as language the challenge of problem-solving and of systematically reconstructing a crime that could be interpreted in a variety of ways (the old truism about how different observers see the same facts differently) provides ideal resonance. The character of detective Lije Baley must, therefore, be one of open-ended curiosity, so much so that even his deeply inbred agoraphobia must be open to some modification during the course of this story and its perfectly symmetrical sequel. If that curiosity were not present, no crime would be solved.

Before going on to describe the wonderfully balanced images of the domed City as opposed to open spaces and the lightening of Baley's agoraphobia as he learns and grows, the basic trait of curiosity and its relation to the practical communication notions Samuelson stresses above should be made clear. Baley is an experienced police investigator, and he is also an amateur historian who is continually curious about the roots of the

domed City in over-population, about the medievalist nostalgia for the old Earth among his family and friends, and even about the seemingly alien technological advances of the Spacers and their robots. In other words, like Asimov and many science fiction writers, Baley has an open curiosity for all forms of variety, though he himself lives firmly fixed in a particularly neurotic future replete with details the images for which, as we shall see, are the major effect of the novel and its sequel. As Asimov himself fears flying but imagines flights across the Galaxy, so Baley's character balances his setting with his imagination.[5]

Samuelson sums up one implication of this key character trait well and then identifies it as a "basic human quality distinguishing man from machine":

> Lije's "idle" curiosity is essential in his professional capacity, since a detective never knows what random piece of information may prove meaningful in combination with others.[6]

I think the important notion is randomness or "openness." Detectives, communicators, Godwinians, in fact, must believe in hunch and be open to all sorts of variety and possibility. With the character of Baley and the detail of the two murder mysteries, Asimov has found the perfect vehicle to illustrate the open workings of the invisible hand of the future. And, for Asimov, such an invisible hand is the only way to conceive of forces such as psychohistory or, much closer to home, the lucky twists and turns of his own career.

Robot Daneel's efficient recognition and yet appropriate machine-like rejection of Baley's open and loose curiosity is representative of a limitation that the technologically advanced Spacers also suffer from: he replies to Baley, "Aimless extension of knowledge, however, which is what I think you really mean by the term of curiosity, is merely inefficiency. I am designed to avoid inefficiency."[7] Thus in the human/machine epistemology that these narratives allow Asimov to develop and which is also balanced so nicely along the lines of old and new or Gold and Iron we can begin to see a consistent paradox. Even though the Spacers of the fifty Outer Worlds with their "iron" robots do ultimately bring about the delivery of Old Earth from its womblike reliance on the past and its static closeness, it is the human "random" capability for curiousity associated with the "gold" Medievalists rather than machine efficiency that is needed. The Spacers themselves acknowledge this use of the past for working toward the Galactic future.

The murder plots of both novels are symmetrical to each other and at least as paradoxical as the epistemology. In *The Caves of Steel,* the culprit had to get the blaster weapon past the neurotically tight security of Spacertown, or had to carry it across open space, which would be impossible for any agoraphobic Earthman. Similarly puzzling is the fact that though a robot could have managed the open spaces, a robot could, of course, never violate the First Law and murder a man. In *The Naked Sun,* the logical blocks due to the condition of neurosis and law are reversed. The murderer has easy access and freedom of movement; but no Spacer on Solaria, the underpopulated and open Outer World where Baley bravely has to go to solve this murder, could tolerate the proximity to another human needed for the bludgeon murder. And no robot, of couse, could be programmed to violate the First Law. In both cases, however, the clever use of a robot is the crux to the problem.

Just as the crimes and Baley's logical cracking of the puzzles are symmetrical and involve the interaction of robots and men, so also are the key science fictional themes of the two novels. Mystery writing for Asimov gives way ultimately to the more open-ended speculation about his large Galactic scheme. And although he structures these books in the classic way so that neither character nor reader knows the solution to the crime till the end of each book, the opening up of the continually expanding Galactic adventure may be

the more impressive story effect. At the start of *The Naked Sun,* Baley the practical detective calms his agoraphobia during an airplane flight with a short story from his world about Galactic expansion. He finds it silly reading:

> It was pandering to childishness, this pretense that Earthmen could invade space. Galactic exploration! The Galaxy was closed to Earthmen. It was pre-empted by the Spacers, whose ancestors had been Earthmen centuries before . . . They had penned in Earth and their Earthman cousins. And Earth's City civilization completed the task, imprisoning Earthmen within the Cities by a wall of fear of open spaces . . .[8]

In the course of the two stories, however, Baley changes. He learns that "science-fictional" ideas such as those in that story are not silly. And he learns that Spacers are, in fact, trying to open up the perspective of Earthmen.

I think most significant in Asimov's arsenal of paradoxes in these books is the fact that the Spacers also realize that, although their more advanced technology gives them longer and more leisurely lives (in fact, because of such surfeit), it is the Earthman's traits of"random searching", derived from their past, that have to be utilized. Asimov's understanding of this paradox seems to me penetrating, and very important for all his thought about the relation of the past to the present. It is the robot partner who articulates it:

> We crystallized the romantic impulses on Earth into Medievalism and induced an organization in them. After all, it is the Medievalist who wishes to break the cake of custom, not the City officials who have most to gain from preserving the *status quo* . . . the Medievalist will eventually turn away from Earth.[9]

The realization of Daneel, and of the Spacermen also, is that this process of awakening on Earth, which they have wanted, has begun inadvertently.

In order to focus on these symmetrically balanced settings and on these details for his Galactic vision, Asimov coins a new concept or image in these books and then uses it well to explore the ironies mentioned above. The image is written in the shorthand of chemistry: "C/Fe", pronounced see fee, and always written with the diagonal line as it "symbolizes neither one nor the other, but a mixture of the two, without priority".[10]Not to be too "alchemical" about Asimov's clear contrast of carbon-based life with the "life" of machines, I think the resonances here with Golden Age/Iron Age paradoxes are worth emphasizing once again. Solaria, the Spacer world where technology has become the most advanced and the most neurotic, is also a kind of Edenic paradise, suggesting that "Fe" or fee technology may lead back to the leisure and peace of an Age of Gold. But on Solaria such peace is decadent and effete so that Spacers themselves realize that in order to be more "practical" they need the Old Earth. Not only do the Spacers request Baley's help but also they clearly see that Medievalist "golden" curiosity is the only way now to advance more space colonization. Also, irony in the womb images in both novels is worth noting. The Cities of Old Earth are safe "wombs" and thus in a way Golden Ages in themselves. But it is the painful progress, of course, out of the womb that mankind needs. The Fetal Farm descriptions and discussions that help to establish the setting of the technological paradise on Solaria also suggest the speedup of the ontogeny/phylogeny relationships. Thus the rebirth of Baley's adventuresomeness at the conclusion of *The Naked Sun* has particular promise; and the pain and nakedness of birth is one more balance of the old and the new that, in Asimov's future history, is the road to Galactic civilization. The narrator says it very simply about Baley, but the resonance has been established and growth will surely continue: "He had gone out to solve a murder and something had happened to him."[11]

Asimov's detail in these two robot novels about the fifty Outer Worlds colonised from Earth is much more profound than in any of his previous fictions about this process, and he will return to this vision in his most recent sequels. Also, Gladia Delmarre, the wife of the murdered man in *The Naked Sun* and the prime suspect, represents the introduction of something unusual in Asimov's stories that both he and James Gunn pause to comment on—physical or sexual attraction.[12] In neurotic Solarian fashion, it is only the touch of hands between Baley and Gladia; but the reader will see more of Gladia in her developing sexuality in the recent sequels. Actually, the complex and important novel *The End of Eternity* (1955), written a year before the character of Gladia, is what Samuelson calls Asimov's "closest approximation to a conventional love story". But even here the depiction of love is never as explicit as the time paradoxes and the heroic assumptions about freedom or determinism. Although the Good Doctor often plays the role of the sexual gallant and did so also in the Fifties, his first love in writing is with the speculation over ideas and general systems.[13]

Significantly, *The End of Eternity* had its own origins in Asimov's character of amateur historian and nostalgia buff. Golden Age yearnings seem deeply ingrained in his personality as well as in his texts. And, again, the lucky accident of having something rejected, which forced him to recast the manuscript, came into play in the making of this book, which he values as one of his best and one the critics have not fully appreciated. (The role of inadvertent "invisible hand", as in the rational Spacers realizing how their intentions are being achieved, is also a major theme in this novel.) In *The Alternate Asimovs,* he prints the original novelette and repeats the account of nostalgically thumbing through old volumes of *Time* magazine once he discovered that as a faculty member at Boston University he could check out bound periodicals. An advertisement drawing that looked to Asimov on first glance like a nuclear bomb mushroom cloud in an issue published years before Hiroshima started him thinking of time-travel paradoxes, and so he decided to try his hand for the first time at this classic science fiction motif. The result was immediately rejected by Gold, and rather than try to sell to Campbell in the short version Asimov got a contract from Doubleday for an expansion into the novel, and completed it by the end of 1954.[14]

Unlike the robot novels or the juveniles that come from this same period and that focus on particular details in the overall scheme of Galactic civilization, *The End of Eternity,* with the wonderful pun in the title, opens up for Asimov considerations of the most theoretic nature, of purposes or "ends". Ultimately, these lead to a tie in and a context for his familiar Galactic scheme; but the story itself seems to stand alone as an intricate speculation about time-travel and about the invisible hand. I think Asimov needed to back off from imagining Galactic expansion or robotics for a thoroughgoing examination of the most general bases at the root of his thought, and the lucky revision gave him the opportunity to do this most thoroughly. Also, with the revision he added the link to his Galactic adventures. He writes:

> I wanted to tie it in somehow with earlier books of mine dealing with the rise and fall of the Galactic Empire. (It's a weakness of mine to try to make my science fiction novels consistent with each other, and it influences my writing to this very day.)[15]

The ideas in the novel wrestle with not only the possibility for the existence of a universe in which adventuresome and "random" Galactic expansion can take place but also the basic dilemma of how much rational control can be expected to apply in any large

system. How specific can the Seldon Plan be? How effectual can rational, long-lived Spacers be? How much of Asimov's own productivity as a writer can he control, or how much time ought he spend browsing through old periodicals? Finally, as I have said, I believe he opts for a good bit of the invisible hand in a Godwinian system that can never be totally rationalized; and it may be within the images, characters, and turns in plot in this most theoretic and yet vivid novel that Asimov works out best this peculiarly irrational sort of rationality.[16]

The plot turns on the classic sort of time paradox whereby it seems impossible to move back in time and change events so radically that the possibility for the original action is removed. Asimov's setting for the story, however, already involves the total management of such paradoxes by a highly organized bureaucracy. The organization called simply "Eternity" (its members are *not* immortal) had been created following the discovery in the 24th century of the Temporal Field. The purpose of the organization is to adjust events in all centuries and to exert total rational control by sending its workers upwhen or downwhen as needed for "the greatest good of the greatest number". The rational hero we come to know best from this organization is Senior Computer Laban Twissell. He and his colleagues are dedicated and fascinatingly thorough at the job of total control, and I think there is some pathos in such dedication: "I have heard (began Twissell) that I was born old, that I cut my teeth on a Micro-Computaplex, that I keep my hand computer in a special pocket of my pyjamas when I sleep . . ."[17]

In one of Asimov's more intricate complications of plot, Twissell and Eternity are defeated more or less by circumstance and by other members of the organization who acknowledge forces opposed to total control. But Twissell and Eternity are tempting as a total network of benevolent management; Asimov makes that clear. One of the highly trained and skilled subordinates, however, Andrew Harlan (who in the novel version is the point of view character but whose roles had been divided in the early version) comes to question Eternity's control for two reasons. He is led into a love affair by a mysterious Miss Lambent, and he discovers that the invention of the Temporal Field that allows Eternity to exist is dependent on a time paradox. The inventor used equations that were not derived till three centuries later. Eternity knows about this accidental, non-rational wrinkle and is working to rationalize it. Twissell insists in both versions that no paradoxes exist.

In order to find a safe place and time for his mysterious love (she seems to drive it all as, perhaps, a sort of pale, invisible hand), Harlan decides to send the individual he has been told to use to correct the time paradox far back beyond the 24th century into the primitive era. Under pressure from his bosses, and since he is good at primitive history (it's his hobby, as it was Baley's), Harlan locates the lost traveller in the 32nd year of the 20th (1932 or 19.32) trying to convey a message through a similar *Time* advertisement to the one Asimov had seen. Harlan goes to 1932 with Lambent and learns from her then that she is actually from the Hidden Centuries. Eternity had known about this strange period of 80,000 years way upwhen that had been closed to their workers for some reason. Lambent explains to Harlan that in this future mankind advances to even more control of time and space than Eternity. In fact, the supermen there are so ethereal (so much more like computers) that they are just discovering interstellar space travel (apparently with rational control one does not need to travel much) only to find the Galaxy inhabited by other intelligent races. Thus the suggestion is that these supermen, working like invisible hands through Lambent, are actually hoping to break up the static utopian effects of

Eternity so that mankind can get to the stars sooner. The supermen of the Hidden Centuries had discovered one timeline they call the Basic State, which is *our* timeline of early nuclear power, space flight, and Galactic expansion. The lovers know they would rather have such an open adventure than all the control of Eternity, and inadvertently it happens. It happens, just happens, in 1932 (primitive times) when Asimov himself is twelve years old. And so he has established the link to his Galactic schemes, but the more profound link is the invisible hand: "He wasn't even aware that he had made his decision until the grayness suddenly invaded all the sky as (Eternity) disappeared." His lover had just reassured him about his inadvertent decision: "Eternity will go and the Reality of my Century, but *we* will remain to have children and grandchildren, and mankind will remain to reach the stars."[18] In the early version, Asimov had not destroyed Eternity; in the revision and expansion he found his roots.

If Asimov's roots are in open-ended possibilities and in large general schemes of history and origins, the coming decade of the Sixties and his award-winning novel of the early Seventies were a real test of confidence and direction for him as writer of science fiction. Gunn implies that "getting to the stars" for Asimov, associated with the realities of Sputnik and our own space program, meant turning in his own career to the writing of non-fiction, especially on science; and Gunn also points out how clearly Asimov realized that science fiction itself was the hardest sort of writing for him.[19] Also, his autobiographical recollections seem to make it clear that when the New Wave writers such as Zelazny and Ellison and the British were the strongest in the Sixties Asimov feared that his own large fictional schemes were outmoded. Some of his expressions of this fear, in fact, suggest how deeply rooted was his sense of passing time and of lost Gold or lost Titanism: "Now it was I who was one of the dinosaurs, and there was a New Wave of mammals, whom I scarcely knew and who wrote in ways I could scarcely understand."[20] Although he produced little science fiction during this decade, his energy and enthusiasm as writer and producer of books never waned. He expresses great glee over all the deals connected with *Fantastic Voyage* (1966), his movie novelization that saw first serial publication not in any of the science fiction magazines but in *The Saturday Evening Post;* and as Gunn argues the exhilaration of real space expansion is important to him. Asimov writes:

> On February 3, 1966, the Soviets made the first soft landing on the Moon and obtained photographs of its surface *from* its surface. These were the first surface photographs . . . I felt exhilarated enough to tackle the last bit of *The Universe* (a book of science popularization).[21]

A minor character working for Eternity near the beginning of that novel, however, had made a contrast between literature and real science in a way that has never left Asimov; and this comment may serve as a motto for bridging these dry years that he now has recovered from so well: "I hope you'll forgive me for using picturesque language rather than precise mathematical expressions."[22] *The Gods Themselves* (1972) not only is one of the richest "picturesque" fictions Asimov has written, strong in images; but also it is much more successful with sensual details of writing, even sex, and with a sublime science fictional core of speculation than any New Wave fan might have expected from the Good Doctor. If the new writing produced a crisis of confidence in Asimov, he recovered well with *The Gods Themselves.*

When he wrote *The Gods Themselves* he knew it was a revival for him of strong science fiction writing and of strong image creation. He was even afraid momentarily (or more correctly his future wife Janet was) that he might not live to put the final, polishing

touches on the work when a trip was coming up to interrupt the writing.[23] Also, like so much in his career the origin of the story had an inadvertent, accidental base that he acknowledges and seems to analyze fully in his autobiographical recollections. The fuller account is in *In Joy Still Felt*; in *The Alternate Asimovs* he chooses not to identify Robert Silverberg as the one who first amused him by the notion of plutonium-186 but correctly associates the book with *The End of Eternity* as a short piece that grew, under pressures of its own images and publishing needs, to become a novel.[24]

The images themselves are what drive the story. After Asimov had worked out a plausible and detailed storyline to explain the impossibly unstable plutonium isotope that Silverberg's slip of the tongue had given him and after he had built images for how indirectly science and scientists often work and how alien messages might be interpreted by a skilled linguist, he was asked to expand more. So he turned to the parallel universe where plutonium-186 was a natural element, and then returned in a third section to more sociology of accident and "stupidity" in the most rational of human activities, science, and finally to more cosmic speculation about other parallel universes and about the equilibrium that might be established among universes in which sub-atomic forces balance one another. Not only would the cosmology that Asimov images in the book involve delicate balances in the electron population in order to avoid either anemic drains or explosive destruction of whole universes, but also the book itself is a *tour de force* of balanced and symmetrical organization. In three arenas, he demonstrates the truth of his title motto from Friedrich Schiller: "Against stupidity, the gods themselves contend in vain"; and his account of the vagaries of scientific work in the near future is as seemingly accurate as anything in fiction till Gregory Benford's recent novel *Timescape,* which surely used both this work and *The End of Eternity* as models. The three sections of the book are mirrored in the Triad alien creatures of the middle section, and the midpoint of our universe between the para-universe and the Cosmeg universe (echoes of the Cosmic Egg image from 18th-century cosmology) also suggests continually adjusting symmetries. A comment near the conclusion of the book evokes the symmetry of the Seldon Plan, but again it is only Asimov's mode of thought and not any specific link to his Galactic works: "In any case, there are no happy endings in history, only crisis points that pass."[25]

From his autobiographical account, however, as well as from the interest that the critics have shown, Asimov wrote best in this novel when he portrayed the aliens of the middle section. These images are rich with suggestions not only about sexuality, over which Asimov nearly chortles with glee in his autobiography at having pulled it off so well, but also about the relation of the sensual to the intellectual, about life after death, and about threepart combinations of identity and personality that range from Freudian to Christian overtones.[26] This is hard science fiction extrapolation at its best because the aliens seem plausible in their own amoebic, energy-starved reality and also suggestive to the reader of what it seems like to be human. The following passage may be read as sensual, Trinitarian, or religious in our terms, and at the same time as clearly decipherable in alien terms. The "male" speaker is telling his "female" partner about how he sees now through a "glass darkly, then face to face":

> Listen, Dua, whenever we melt, whenever the triad melts, we become a Hard One. The Hard One is three-in-one, which is why he is hard. During the time of unconsciousness in melting we are a Hard One. But it is only temporary, and we can never remember the period afterward . . . there comes the possibility of the final stage, where the Rational's mind by itself, without the other two, can remember those flashes of Hard One existence. Then, and only

then, he can guide a perfect melt that will form the Hard One forever, so that the triad can live a new and unified life of learning and intellect. I told you that passing on was like being born again. I was groping then for something I did not quite understand, but now I know.[27]

With poetic art, Asimov leaves this image of the alien threepart individuals suggestively planted in our minds. It is a fine accomplishment. Fortunately, it was not his last. And when he returned to science fiction novels, he returned to his large schemes—his more characteristic and open-ended poetry.

Notes

1. Isaac Asimov, *In Memory Yet Green: The Autobiography of Isaac Asimov 1920-1954* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), p.680. His 1974 anthology *Before the Golden Age* was the initial catalyst for my interpretation of "Golden Ages" in his work.
2. David N. Samuelson, *Visions of Tomorrow* (New York: Arno Press, 1975) p.124. The study was a doctoral dissertation completed in 1968, one of the early ones on modern science fiction.
3. *Ibid.*, 150-51.
4. James Gunn, *Isaac Asimov: The Foundations of Science Fiction* (New York: Oxford UP, 1982) pp.109-110.
5. Alan Elms, a member of the psychology department at the University of California at Davis and a colleague in the Science Fiction Research Association, is currently engaged in research on Asimov's own agoraphobia.
6. Samuelson, p.149.
7. Asimov, *The Caves of Steel* (New York: Ballantine, 1983) p.192. This book was first published by Doubleday in 1954.
8. Asimov, *The Naked Sun* (New York: Ballantine, 1983) p.3. This book was first published by Doubleday in 1957.
9. *The Caves . . .*, p.189.
10. *Ibid.*, p.50.
11. *The Naked . . .*, p.207.
12. Gunn, in particular, is delighted to have been sent a letter by Asimov when he was working on the hand touching scene between Gladia and Baley joking about his use of sensuality, p.130.
13. See chapter 55 in the first volume of the Autobiography, cited above, for a candid statement by Asimov about sexuality and about its relation to his energy and confidence in writing. The comment by Samuelson is in his entry on Asimov in *Twentieth-Century Science Fiction Writers,* ed. Curtis C. Smith (New York: St. Martin's, 1981) p.28.
14. See Asimov, *The Alternate Asimovs* (New York: Doubleday, 1986) for his partiality to this book.
15. *Ibid.*, p.210.
16. I discuss Godwin in chapter three and rationality in chapter one of my forthcoming Starmont book.
17. Asimov, *The End of Eternity* (New York: Fawcett, 1971) p.148. This book was first published by Doubleday in 1955. In the short version, Asimov says less delicately of Twissell: "It was also said that at an early age his heart had atrophied and that a hand computer similar to the model he carried always in his trouser pocket had taken its place." *The Alternate Asimovs,* p.156. Despite, or indeed because of, the ironic treatment, I believe that Twissell's drive for control is still tempting to Asimov.
18. *The End of . . .*, p.191.
19. Gunn, p.189.
20. Asimov, *In Joy Still Felt: The Autobiography of Isaac Asimov, 1954-1978* (New York: Doubleday, 1980) p.418.
21. *Ibid.*, p.389.
22. *The End of . . .*, p.12.
23. *In Joy Still Felt . . .*, p.575.
24. *Ibid.*, p.552. Also, see *The Alternate Asimovs,* p.212.
25. Asimov, *The Gods Themselves* (New York: Fawcett, 1973) p.287. This book was first published by Doubleday in 1972.
26. *In Joy Still Felt . . .*, p.567.
27. *The Gods . . .*, pp.165-66. For a set of images treating metamorphosis of symbiotic alien life forms into a sort of immortality see the fine Hal Clement novel, *Cycle of Fire* (1957).

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A Young Man Raised by Apes on Mars: The Hero as Displaced Person in Budrys' Novels

RUSSELL LETSON

While I was reading Algis Budrys' novels in preparation for the 1983 SFRA panel on his work, I was struck by the consistency with which he returns to several themes, but one in particular: the *Bildungsroman* theme of coming of age and its extension to the making of the extraordinary man, the leader. Maturity appears in Budrys' work as a combination of knowing and acting; to put it perhaps too simply, he asks: How does a man come to know the world and himself, and what does he do with that knowledge when he has attained it?

Budrys repeatedly shows young men reaching adulthood by recognizing some crucial fact or circumstance about the world and finding in themselves the ability to come to grips with the new reality. But adulthood is not the end of growth; even among adults there are adults, those who exercise authority and take responsibility, who see *something* beyond what others can see, or who can make themselves act on what anyone can see. But just as the process of growing up requires a kind of disillusionment, acceptance of the leader's role brings with it isolation even from other adults, an emotional and intellectual exile, for if the world were not problematic, if certainty and the ability to act were available to anyone, there would be no need for leaders. Instead, the world is uncertain, knowledge costly, and illusion and self-deception are endemic; thus the loneliness of the leader.

In a world where civilization has dissolved into anarchic individualism, adulthood consists of recognizing the virtues of cooperation, and leadership consists of taking responsibility for seeing to the dirty work of nation-building. Budrys' first novel, *Some Will Not Die* (1961; originally published in truncated form as *False Night,* 1954) is a generation-spanning account of the re-establishment of civilization after a worldwide plague drives humankind back to a condition of urban caveman-ism. The overarching plot follows the slow accretion of social structures from anarchic individuals to married couples to cooperating neighbors to a militarily unified city and region. This

recapitulation of social evolution incorporates the coming-of-age stories of three generations of young men of the Garvin-Berendtsen lines. Of the generation that survives the plague, Matt Garvin relearns the need for cooperative living from his father-in-law, his marriage, and especially from his neighbor, Gus Berendtsen, and eventually founds the "Second American Free Republic". Gus's son, Ted, discovers in himself the capacity for leadership and becomes a military conquerer, explicitly a Caesar-figure. Matt's son, Bob, reinvents machine politics, propaganda, and idealistic individualism and plays Brutus/Cassius to Ted's Caesar. Bob's son, Cottrell, inherits from his father a social philosophy that reads like a parody of Heinleinian individualism, and which eventually kills him, while Cottrell's younger brother, Jeff, successfully repeats his grandfather's progress from lone-wolf scavenger to civilized man.

The idea of leadership is at the centre of the book. The framing plot, set more than a generation after Ted Berendtsen's betrayal and death, shows desperate lesser men attempting to use his legend to prop up their own failing enterprises. He has become an epic figure, and while they might try to steal his name, they cannot reproduce the essence of his heroism, which is to recognize and carry out hateful but necessary decisions. One defining trait of the leader would seem to be his ability to act or to cause others to act, to "trust himself" (*Some Will Not Die,* II,4) and not to betray any doubts to his followers. The leader need not be right; Bob Garvin, whose social philosophy is shown to be a dead end, manages to lead an effective takeover thanks partly to his complete commitment to his vision. Nor is it enough to know—the book has *raisonneurs* (Matt's father-in-law; the wandering philosopher Harvey Drumm) who possess the necessary certainty and insight into self and world but are unable or unwilling to act. It is the combination of insight and will that makes the leader.

Budrys' fourth novel is an excellent companion piece to *Some Will Not Die. The Falling Torch* shows Michael Wireman working his way through a series of unsatisfactory roles, looking for the place he "fits", growing from an unformed youth to a capable adult to incipient world-liberator and leader. In fact, the book is not "about" the liberation of Earth—that happens off-stage between Chapters Six and Seven—but, as the prologue, set on the day of Michael's funeral, makes clear, the riddle of how heroic leaders come to be.

The first stage of Michael's growth begins with his discovery of a Cause (throwing the Invaders off Earth) and continues through military training and experience of guerrilla life, until his recognition of the megalomania that drives the guerrilla leader Hammil leaves him disillusioned with the Cause, at least under current leadership. Michael's subsequent experiences bring him to the realization that while he might not "fit" (e.g., the Invaders' placement test does not work for him), other people need, want, and manage to create for themselves satisfying roles and world-views even if those views have little to do with the world as it is.

He first sees this clearly in the case of Mrs Lemmon, the tea-shop owner who comes to his aid when he activates the romance-novel expectations that she has been carrying around for most of her life. Michael realizes that he also has been living according to prepackaged values and expectations: he recalls how his mother read fables to him and told stories of Old Earth, and the reader has already seen how he stepped into the role of liberation fighter that was set up for him. Mrs Lemmon's dream world and Michael's ability to influence her behavior and perceptions by accepting his role in it are the model for all effective political leadership: it is the manipulation of symbols as much as the use of

real force (recall Bob Garvin's use of machine politics and propaganda in *Some Will Not Die*) that allows him to rise to power and replace his father in the end.

Despite the importance of force (in this case the backing of the Centaurian military), the irony of power is in its illusory nature—the myths that people live by, the fantasies they inhabit are the keys to their control. Long after his intuitive grasp of the principles, Budrys tell us, Michael will realize that it is the refuge of the powerless to "turn to a belief in universal moral principles for its hope of deliverance" *(The Falling Torch,* VI, 1) when military strength will not suffice. When Michael becomes the romantic hero that Mrs Lemmon has always wanted and expected, he acts out the essential drama of leadership. The disillusionment that accompanies his acceptance of that role comes after his rejection of the way of the guerrilla and the classification test's rejection of him, that is, it has failed to tell him who he is and what he will do with his life. This frees Michael to become the savior and leader of Earth, and, as it must be, to become a complete outsider, an exile among his own people.

These ironies are central; Budrys seems to have conflicting attitudes toward power and leadership, and his books show some seesawing between a rather cynical attitude (humans are sheep) and a more traditional democratic view that people can and should make their own destinies (see Ted Berendtsen's valedictory). The paradox shows in the insistence in *Some Will Not Die* that only military force can bring about the necessary level of civilized cooperation out of which can rise a democratic and peaceful government. Thereafter physical force is replaced by force of character, the leader's self-confidence and insight into the limitations of the people he leads. Budrys attempts to reconcile the tensions between the power and responsibilities of leadership in the meeting of Michael and his father, the President of the government-in-exile, after the expulsion of the Invaders.

For Ralph Wireman, the essence of leadership consists of that force of character that makes others accept the leader's whims as orders (Ted Berendtsen made a similar discovery). Like Michael, he sees that people want and need leaders and that the leader is not greatly better, only more confident, organized, and consistent. Will is required to establish direction so that others may follow. There is danger, however, in that there are no external checks on the power of the leader; only the great man's own maintenance of "a careful balance between (his) self-awareness of his unique gift, and an overweening, fatal sense of godlike predestination. On the one side of the balance lay benevolence. On the other, tyranny" *(The Falling Torch,* VII, 1).

In Wireman, Sr.'s universe, power is the central fact of human relationships: "in any act beween people one had to gain control over the others or no one's purpose would be served" *(The Falling Torch,* VII, 1), and the leader's "unique gift"gives him that control over his fellows, who want and need it. Michael does not agree with his father altogether; he sees leadership as less a matter of a unique gift than as a "mechanical" skill that "(a)nyone could learn". Where his father sees a confrontation in which one must "gain control", Michael sees a meeting between two babies in which each must "decide what is rightfully its own, and what belongs to this other individual, *and how to come to an agreement on that point" (The Falling Torch,* VII, 2; my italics). In de-emphasizing the uniqueness of the leader's skills and stressing the mutuality of the social encounter, Michael also steps back from the danger of megalomania and tyranny inherent in his father's model. Recognition of his own limits and illusions keeps the leader in line: "A man cannot lead himself. He can only do what he can for others, because he can see them

as they are, *instead of what they must think themselves to be,* and so we help each other" *(The Falling Torch,* VII, 2; my italics). This is an idealistic, even a sentimental view of leadership, and I wonder if the remote and isolated old man recalled in the prologue felt the same way at the end of his tenure as "The final authority. The lawgiver. The iron conscience of us all" *(The Falling Torch,* "2513 A.D.").

In *The Amsirs and the Iron Thorn* (1967), Budrys gives us another hero who does not fit; unlike Michael Wireman, however, he does not eventually find his place as the isolated leader. Honor Jackson lives in a culture and environment especially suited to the sf coming-of-age story. The idea is to show a culture, usually from the point of view of a young man about to achieve adulthood, and drop enough hints to allow the reader to figure out the nature and history of the world as the hero does. (The Cook's ancestors and relatives include Heinlein's "Universe" and Brian Aldiss's *Starship*, to name two of my own favorites).

The boy becomes a man by coming to an understanding of the true nature of the world and finding in himself the ability to deal with it. This often requires breaking through the roles called for by the child-culture and building a new identity on the values implied by the new vision of the world. Honor Jackson fulfills most of the requirements for this sort of tale, but Budrys changes the formula by making Jackson's breakthroughs nearly effortless: he comes to see internal workings of his society while walking home from his first Amsir kill, reasoning from the clues supplied by the fact that the Amsir could speak and carried a weapon, something concealed from ordinary citizens by Honor (hunter) elite. When the Eld Honor (the patriarch) tells him the Big Secret, Jackson secretly scorns the information, since he has already figured it out and is therefore actually several jumps ahead of the Eld and the elite he represents.

As with other Budrys heroes, one of Jackson's central insights concerns the nature of leadership, and as with Michael Wireman, the insight comes in the form of a disillusionment. Jackson sees that the basis for his society is a swindle perpetuated by the Honor class, and that there is even a swindle within that swindle, as the "smart ones", as the Eld Honor calls them, use competition and class to keep improving the strength and toughness of the whole group: "That's what makes things better—the hammering and the stabbing. It's what gives everything its shape. It's what gouges out the weak places" *(The Amsirs and the Iron Thorn,* IV, iii, p. 41).

Jackson sees through this pair of illusions and seeks out the Amsirs, where he hears from the Eld Amsir a similar explanation of the workings of society; this time those who see through the first-level illusion (superstition this time) are "the few enlightened persons" *(The Amsirs and the Iron Thorn,* VIII, i, p.73), but that view is exploded when Jackson is able to enter the Object, an intelligent spacecraft sent to observe the Martian experiments. The ship gives him an instant education which has the effect of super-imposing on the old Jackson all the knowledge and culture of a long-dead Earthman.

On returning to Earth, though, the new, supersophisticated Jackson finds not a true home of "smart ones" or "enlightened persons", but a world of amateur esthetes and consumers of second-hand experiences (called, ironically, "actualities") who see in him a charming wild man, a Tarzan of Mars (Budrys says that this is "(t)he story of a young man raised by apes on Mars"; see "Galaxy Bookshelf", *Galaxy,* February 1968), and who are incapable of seeing the world as he does. There is no question of leading these people: a nearly magical technology provides a life of physical luxury, and leadership is reduced to

the social domination of a permanent floating picnic of dilettantes. In an ending that I find disturbingly ambiguous, Jackson is reduced to telling his story to an audience of one, the not-too-smart but quite sympathetic woman Pall, in nearly the same words as those of the book's beginning. Is art the last refuge of the frustrated leader?

While Budrys' other novels are not dominated by the *Bildungsroman* pattern and the question of leadership, these themes can be seen operating strongly in the account of Martino's youth in *Who?* and in Barker's obsessive and adolescent urge to prove himself a "whole man" in *Rogue Moon*. *Michaelmas* might be considered a study in the successful exercise of power—the hero has passed through the watershed experiences that occupy most of the other books and come to the position of secret ruler of the world long before the novel begins—but it has little to say about how Laurent Michaelmas learned about the world or how he discovered in himself the wisdom and restraint to wield such power. Given Michaelmas's isolation and his ability to see effortlessly through illusions and deceptions (a trait he shares with Honor Jackson), it seems reasonable that the story of his coming of age might share some interesting parallels with those of earlier Budrys heroes, but we may never know.

This piece started out as an attempt to describe several themes that run through and hold together all of Budrys' novels, but the focus eventually narrowed to the single theme of the *Bildungsroman,* which, while certainly central to the three novels treated here (and to *Man of Earth* as well), is only a part of larger patterns in the three novels not treated, which also happen to be the Budrys works most commented on by academic critics. Those three books almost certainly deal with questions within which coming-of-age is only a subtheme. A convenient hint of Budrys' larger concerns appears in his "Books" column in the July 1983 issue of *Fantasy and Science Fiction,* where he writes, "...SF in its ultimate nature leads its practitioners to the big question: Why is it that we are mindful of the Universe, when clearly it does not know we are within it? That gets you into wondering if there *is* some purpose to intelligence, to tenacity and curiosity, and what the ultimate end of it all will be." And that is matter for a later and much harder essay.

The last time Gordon Chamberlain's name appeared in these pages (35, p.13 n.31) it was as co-author of a bibliography of alternative history sf. An updated version will shortly appear, together with an afterword on what he now calls "allohistory", in Alternative Histories, *edited by Martin Greenberg. While waiting for this, here is an interesting look at Wells and story-telling techniques c. 1900.*

Decoding Across the Zodiac; or, H.G. Wells Un-Burdened

GORDON B. CHAMBERLAIN

In *Foundation* 35, Brian J. Burden lists six pages of similarities between Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and Percy Greg's romance of a dystopic Mars, *Across the Zodiac* (1880), and concludes that since "coincidence is out of the question", they must be due to plagiarism.[1] His premises are correct but his conclusion does not follow. Even to an amateur student of nineteenth-century scientific romance, it is evident that half Mr Burden's similarities are due to logical requirements of narrative and most of the rest to contemporary concerns about society. Similar issues addressed in similar form will look similar in print; if Wells stole for *The Time Machine,* so must Greg have done for *Across the Zodiac,* and so must all their predecessors and successors from Lucian to C.S. Lewis. In an author whose previous article on Wells drew on sources as diverse as Aeschylus and Evelyn Waugh,[2] such inattention to genre and period is both surprising and unfortunate.

"The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship", advises Lewis, "is to know *what* it is."[3] To modify categories from Nicholls's *Science Fiction Encyclopedia,*[4] the "what" here is a *fantastic voyage* to an *otherworld* with overtones of *utopia.* (I use "otherworld" to cover Nicholls's alien worlds, alternate and parallel worlds, lost lands, utopias—any settings outside our here-and-now that are developed fictionally at significant length.) For such a voyage, the port of departure is characteristically prosaic—some Kentish cottage, Kansas farmhouse, Cambridge lodging, or Midlands lane—and the log, if not itself a long-lost document, very likely begins with reference to one; the voyage itself, however fantastic its incidents, is anchored to reality by authentic details of naval architecture, commissary, and ordnance. Once landed in the otherworld, our travellers must first overcome native suspicions or even violence, then learn the language (generally with un-English facility), and so provide the reader with sociopolitical background. In utopias as such, the background takes up the rest of the book; in stories with a plot, this academic interlude is followed by more adventures, which for maximum effect should involve the visitors in local wars or loves or both. Finally, "some sort of maturity or acceptance"[5] on their part brings the survivors or their story home.

As alert readers have guessed, the above scenario draws primarily on my grandparents'

collection of Rider Haggard. But *mutatis mutandis,* the reminiscences of Allan Quatermain and Horace Holly can be matched by those of Lucian, Gulliver, Professor Pierre Aronnax, and Julian West; Kukuanaland and Zu-Vendis by the New Atlantis, Utopia, Erewhon, and Oz; the England of Victoria by those of Twain, Morris, and Nesbit; this sublunary surface by Lytton's underworld, Wells's Moon, Barsoom, and Malacandra. The voyage as such may dominate action as with Lucian or merely introduce it as with Swift, the didactic content may approach one hundred per cent as with Bellamy or zero as with Burroughs, the hero may win his love or lose life, but the formula still holds good: Documentation, Preparation, Voyage Proper, Adventures *En Route,* Arrival and First Impressions, Accommodation with Natives, Explanations and/or Adventures *In Situ,* Conclusion. Why not? It works.

Where all such stories look most alike is inevitably the stage of arrival and first impressions. The otherworld must be brought to life, and fast. It must be perceived as strange, yet strange in a believable and familiar way. (This is especially important when the travellers do not expect the world to be other, as on alternate timelines: "Kilted brachycephalic whites, mixed up with Indians and using steam-driven automobiles, *haven't happened."*[6]) As Mr Burden unwittingly admits (p.28), "by far the majority of the passages" that he uses as evidence of plagiarism come from precisely this stage in both works. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of *The Time Machine* (3 and 4 as renumbered in the 1927 collected short stories) correspond not only to chapters 4 and 5 of *Across the Zodiac* (significantly titled "A New World" and "Language, Laws and Life") but to chapters 11 through 13 of *Allan Quatermain,* 1 through 4 of *Connecticut Yankee,* and 2 of *News from Nowhere,* all of which were published before Wells's book; among predecessors of Greg, "similar passages" to *Across the Zodiac*'s appear in "the same sequence" in chapters 6 and 7 of *Erewhon,* 3 through 5 of *The Coming Race,* 7 through 9 of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea,*[7] and so on back through *Gulliver's Travels* and *The New Atlantis* to Lucian.

The details employed to (as Wells puts it) *"domesticate* the impossible hypothesis"[8] vary in order but not in kind. Allan Quatermain sums up the Zu-Vendis level of culture from nautical technology and female costume; William "Guest" (i.e. Morris) goes spluttering under the Thames at his first glimpse of 21st-century English decorative architecture. John Carter notices the Marscape with egg incubator and the low gravity before the lance at his back; Dorothy, literally admiring local color, has unwittingly begun her sojourn in Oz with witchslaughter.[9] Greg leads off with *landscape,* and since his hero lands on a mountaintop, it is *viewed from above.* Though *The Time Machine* subordinates scenery to people and buildings, the same Moses-on-Pisgah effect (to paraphrase Butler) helps dramatize "The Country of the Blind", *Erewhon, The Coming Race,* and *King Solomon's Mines;* Butler and Haggard throw in drifting mists, while landscape observed from other angles serves to suspend reader disbelief in Wells's Moon and Lewis's Mars and Venus.[10] Even Bellamy in *Looking Backward* subdues his preference for the verbal over the visual long enough to dazzle the awakened Julian West with a rooftop panorama of A.D. 2000 Boston.[11]

After an atypical look at "Martial" farms and livestock,[12] Greg joins Wells in describing *native physiognomy and costume.* Clothing, I believe, surpasses even the technology of transport as the preferred means of otherworld characterization. At the barbaric extreme, Haggard and following him Burroughs titillated their readers with

enough scantily clad native lovelies for the old *National Geographic.*[13] But in dressier otherworlds, too, clothing (like other domestic details) is typically more colourful, natural, simple, and practical than in Victorian England, perhaps because it could not easily be less so—generally falling, like Morris's, "somewhat between... the ancient classical costume and the simpler forms of the fourteenth century".[14] Not surprisingly, then, both "Martialists" and Eloi, besides being *small,* are characterized by *colourful* clothes and *simple* sandals. Where the Martialists got their sandals is unclear, unless from the "fibrous leggings" of Lytton's Vril-ya; they are small for the same reason they have deep chests and wear knee-length combinations, to suit their small cool thin-atmosphere planet.[15] Contrariwise, the "sandals or buskins" of the Eloi go with the "bright, soft-coloured robes" on their slender epicene bodies to suggest a factitious Golden Age of humanity's second childhood; too delicate to go barefoot, what else could they wear?[16]

Next, Greg's narrator gets into *trouble with the natives;* in fact, he winds up under house arrest after narrowly escaping a lynch mob. Failing any direct parallel in *The Time Machine* (since the Morlock episodes come later), a really dedicated smeller-out of plagiarism should have aimed an accusatory witch-wand at the imprisonment of Bedford and Cavor on the Moon and Nunez in the Country of the Blind; serious researchers will also recall the spots of legal bother experienced by newcomers to Barsoom, Camelot, Erewhon, Lilliput, and the New Atlantis,[17] not to mention She alone knows how many adventurous temporary jailbirds in Rider Haggard. Once the scene shifts to a *domestic interior,* Mr Burden's similarities do resurface: both on Mars and in A.D. 802,701, people dwell in *large buildings* and sit on *cushions* to eat *fruit.* But since the technologically accomplished Martialists pursue their researches in all-electric Pompeiian villas of poured concrete, keeping in touch by facsimile telegraph and waited on by specially bred animals, whereas the devolved Eloi picnic and flirt in what amount to ruined ancestral vaults; since the virtue of dietary simplicity—"the childlike innocence of fruit"—was enough of a Victorian shibboleth to be asserted by She and the Vril-ya and given a go (with predictable results) in Erewhon;[16] since cushions also turn up among the Vril-ya and the Zu-Vendi;[17] and since cushions on the floor at mealtimes serve specifically to distance the reader from Victorian propriety, evoking for Greg the seraglio[20] and for Wells the nursery, Mr Burden's cushions and fruit tell no more strongly as evidence than his sandals.

Finally, both visitors achieve *communication.* Now although writers do exist who finesse this difficulty or even openly scout it (especially when addressing children),[21] for most authors of otherworlds the sequence from first contact through sign language to philology and linguistics affords both immediate verisimilitude and corroborative background. Thus Greg, like Swift and Butler earlier and Lewis later, finds semiotic use for a watch; thus the Time Traveller, like Gulliver, has trouble adjusting his vocal volume.[22] Lytton's Vril-ya learn English through concentration of thought, Wells's Selenites through division of labor.[23] The volatile and artistic Zu-Vendi speak a "soft-sounding and very rich and flexible" language in which "the sound of the words adapts itself to the meaning to be expressed"; the creatures of unfallen Malacandra, like the rational Houyhnhms, can discuss falsehood, crime, and war only by circumlocution.[24] Greg's Martials, like the Vril-ya, employ systematic inflections of quite incredible rationality; the two-word noun-verb sentences of the Eloi amount to babytalk.[25] In the travellers' attempts at communication above all, if Mr Burden's two pages of similar quotations do indeed result from "a process less innocent than coincidence" (p.24),

anyone who has travelled in reality can give the process a name: narrative logic.

So much, then, for common literary form. Before assessing social content, let us just clear away the few similarities between Greg and Wells that do not attach to the epoch of first contact: for instance, the obligatory Victorian love interest. Mr Burden's argument from the names Weena and Eveena collapses when we find the /ina/ feminine ending also attached to Wells's Eudena, Butler's Arowhena and Mahaina, Haggard's Mameena,[26] and Hollywood's Sheena, Queen of the Jungle. (What makes "Weena" somehow seem "appropriate enough"[27] is the initial "W", suggesting weeniness, weakness, and racial weariness; "Ev" suggests Eve and *ever.*) And though both ladies are little, otherwise they could hardly differ more. Violet-eyed, rosy-skinned Eveena, well under five feet high and perhaps six stone with Martial pectoral development; "a miniature type of faultless feminine beauty... perfect in proportion, form, and features" whom the narrator—an aging French soldier of fortune with long experience in the Orient—seizes the earliest opportunity of marrying, physically suggests a scaled-down Elizabeth Taylor;[28] her interaction with her husband and the rest of the harem gives *Across the Zodiac* its only scenes of human interest. Affectionate little Weena is built like a ten-year-old (even after rescuing her, the Time Traveller is unsure of her sex) and her mental age is about half that; here, Wells's failure to provide his adventurer with a properly pneumatic native popsy (remedied in the film by Yvette Mimieux) is original indeed.[29] As for the heroic rescue of both ladies followed by their tear-jerking loss, I will waste no more sentences on this melodramatic commonplace than does Mr Burden himself.[30]

A few other alleged similarities need only be raised to be deep-sixed. The Martial bioengineered domestic servants or *ambau,* for instance, are described by Mr Burden as "prototypes for Wells's Morlocks", although Greg's adroit little sciuro-simioids, trained to knock on bedroom doors before bringing in the drinks, share nothing with Wells's "bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing" but size.[31] For Greg as for Wells, says Mr Burden, "there is a subterranean interlude (through an artificial tunnel, aboard a canal-boat) and an underground fraternity (in the figurative sense)". Wells's original "rococo title",[32] *The Chronic Argonauts,* must derive from Greg's *Astronaut,* since no educated person in the 1890s knew Greek myth. Both Greg's traveller and Wells's at one time point at the sky (though for different reasons) and at another manage a glimpse of the sea; and unlike, we suppose, narrators of any other fantastic voyages ever logged, both have trouble getting their stories believed.

Now for the social content. Both books present speculum-worlds—otherworlds invented to cast a reflected light on our own—and all such worlds, in Wells's phrase, also "reflect the anxieties and discontents amidst which they were produced".[33] As topics for American sf, alien infiltrators and MadAve hucksters have been supplanted within a generation first by Taoism, drugs, and whales and then by variations on *Star Wars.* Victorian England changed more slowly; despite their authors' opposite political stances, *Across the Zodiac* in 1880 and *The Time Machine* in 1895 addressed public concerns that were enough alike to account for all the similarities Mr Burden finds so telling. Thus when each writer presents a society that is superficially happy and prosperous, he assumes that readers will think of communism. (This of course means pure communism—in the *Britannica* definition,[34] "ideally arranged communities composed of individuals living and working on the basis of holding their property in common"—not Lenin's version and not necessarily Marx's.) "A surprising number of early sf works", remarks Nicholls,

"espouse some form of socialist system";[35] the surprise would be if they ignored it. When *Across the Zodiac* came out in 1880, the spectre had recently been re-evoked by "the great example in practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat", the Paris Commune;[36] Greg's Mars is post-communal, having reacted from social polarization and civil war into the authoritarian bureaucratic propertarianism, mitigated by know-nothing conformity and lynch law, that Mr Burden (p.27) chooses to term "benevolent despotism". *(Across the Zodiac,* in fact, might well replace Jack London's *The Iron Heel* as the first presage of fascism.[37]) While Wells was recasting *The Chronic Argonauts* into *The Time Machine,* the planned-economy gradualism of Bellamy's *Looking Backward* was competing for readers with the decentralized communist revolutionism of Morris's *News From Nowhere,* and even the highest circles could proclaim that "we are all Socialists now."[38] In fact, Wells's A.D. 802,701 is not communist but the reverse—the final dysgenic harvest of class division under capitalism.[39] But even had Wells not cut his intellectual teeth on Plato and Henry George,[40] for any 1890s futurologist to leave the possibility of leftist social revolution unexplored would have required a level of sociopolitical naivety unmatched outside American space-empire sf of the 1950s.

So with the other common concern that Mr Burden considers significant enough for a page of quotation (p.27): sex equality and its implications for population growth. Never mind that—as Mr Burden omits to state—the answers given by Greg and Wells are very different (in A.D. 802,701, lack of evolutionary pressure has all but ended sexual dimorphism; on Mars, nominal equality under laissez-faire freedom of contract has reduced the physically weaker sex to chattels).[41] The point is that women's rights had been a living political issue in Britain at least since the first suffrage society was founded in 1857; in Greg's 1870s signatures on suffrage petitions averaged 200,000 a year, while Wells's early 1890s saw women get the vote in two British colonies and two states of the Union.[42] In literature, while *Punch* perennially recycled the jokes about women pretending to be men that had got laughs for Aristophanes,[43] equal rights were asserted not only in the utopias of Lytton, Bellamy, and Morris but among—of all people—the Amahagger of *She,*[44] and one year after *The Chronic Argonauts* halted its serial run, "the most dramatic (theatrical) event of the decade" saw the first London professional portrayal of "the socialistic Nora".[45] The Malthusian problem similarly appears not only in Plato, More, and Lytton but in standard Victorian economics texts and Bedford's drunken cant about the Moon as an outlet for "our poor surplus population";[46] its presumed solution in the declining birth rates of advanced countries was well known; and although the "race suicide" bogey did not put the wind up the British until after 1900, the French had been worrying about *dépopulation* since before 1870 and the Bradlaugh-Besant obscenity trial had made contraception newsworthy as early as 1877-78.[47] "Excess of fertility, through the changes it is ever working in Man's environment, is itself the cause of Man's further evolution", Wells could have read in the Victorian pundit Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Biology;* "and the obvious corollary here to be drawn, is, that Man's further evolution so brought about, itself necessitates a decline in his fertility."[48] From declining fertility to declining population, for a *fin-de-siècle* evolutionist given the example of France, was only one corollary the more.[49]

Mr Burden concludes his unique revelation (as the editors describe it) with two passages that he sums up as "Wells's most audacious borrowing from Greg; the similarities both of language and of ideas are unmistakable." Here is his evidence

verbatim—first Greg's narrator on Mars, then the Time Traveller on A.D. 802,701:[50]

> "Mars ought, then," I said, "to be a material paradise. You have attained nearly all that our most advanced political economists regard as the perfect economical order—a population nearly stationary, and a soil much more than adequate to their support: a general distribution of property, total absence of any permanent poverty, and freedom from that gnawing anxiety regarding the future of ourselves or our children which is the great evil of life upon Earth and the opprobrium of our social arrangements."

> Social triumphs too has been effected. I saw mankind housed in splendid shelters, gloriously clothed, and as yet has found them engaged in no toil. There were no signs of struggle, neither social nor economical struggle. The shop, the advertisement, traffic, all that commerce which constitutes the body of our world was gone. It was natural on that golden evening that I should jump at the idea of a social paradise. The difficulty of increasing population had been met, I guessed, and population had ceased to increase.

The only significant similarity of language here is the word "paradise", and it also accounts for the comparative similarity of ideas. Though Greg's projection is material and propertarian and Wells's noncompetitive and social, both promise the same blessings as More's original:[51]

> There is in no place of the world neither a more excellent people, nor a more flourishing commonwealth . . . In no country is greater increase and plenty of corn and cattle, nor men's bodies of longer life and subject or apt to fewer diseases . . . There nothing is distributed after a niggish sort, neither there is any poor man or beggar; and though no man have anything, yet every man is rich. For what can be more rich than to live joyfully and merrily, without all grief and pensiveness, not caring for his own living . . . nor dreading poverty to his son, nor sorrowing for his daughter's dowry?

"Every great utopia", writes a defender of Bellamy against similar charges of plagiarism, "is the work of a man who had become familiar with the great utopian tradition, and had made it part of his thinking and feeling."[52] And from the Peaceable Kingdom to the Big Rock Candy Mountain, from ideal justice in the ideal polis to Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land, the tradition remains recognizably constant. The Enlightenment foresaw the technological means, "Cokaygne made practical by scientific knowledge";[53] the Victorians, mindful of "six countries overhung with smoke", specified that the technology should be nonpolluting.[54] But ultimately, Greg and Wells, like More and Bellamy and Morris, are describing the same vine and fig-tree.

So much, then, for period, as earlier for genre. The overriding fallacy of Mr Burden's argument can be summed up as blindness to both. If *Across the Zodiac* and *The Time Machine* were the only two works in the literary universe, the first might be assumed uniquely original and the second uniquely derivative. But Wells was no 20th-century undergraduate to copy verbatim from a single text. As Greg drew on the literary forms and concerns of his own time (including the then-recent works of Butler, Verne, and especially Lytton[55]), so Wells on those of his. Voracious reader from the age of seven, enthusiastic debater, science teacher, book reviewer, theatre critic, and budding socialist, he himself probably could not tell where all his ideas came from. We know that he heard Morris, read Bellamy, and reviewed Haggard and others; he can hardly have avoided Verne.[56] The index to Bergonzi's *The Early H.G. Wells* offers a dozen more possible influences, from *Alice* through *Vathek*.[57] And like any reviewer, he must have got through much that is now deservedly forgotten, and like any journalist, listened to much more. There is no reason to believe that the one book Wells kept on his desk—no doubt carefully if surreptitiously dog-eared—was a leisurely vintage-1880 two-decker whose romantic Toryism had gone out with Disraeli.

Enough destructive criticism. Now, how might Mr Burden's essay have been written right? Unblinkered by the *idée fixe* of one-to-one resemblance, a student seriously concerned to test the hypothesis of Greg's influence on Wells would begin with Sam Moskowitz's introduction to *Across the Zodiac* in its 1974 Hyperion reprint; though no academic, Moskowitz does do his homework. As sources for "apergy", Greg's spaceship power source, Moskowitz nominates *Voyage to the Moon* (1826) by George Tucker, or more probably *The History of a Voyage to the Moon* (1864) by "Stephen Howard and Carl Geister"; the latter, he thinks, inspired the Cavorite shutters for Wells's moon lander.[58] As emulators of Greg, Moskowitz lists four early interplanetary romancers, of whom three published before *The Time Machine* and one may have influenced Burroughs.[59] The reading list would also include for openers not only Hyperion's Classics of Science Fiction but Arno's Science Fiction, Utopian Literature, Lost Race and Adult Fantasy Fiction, and even—since voyages to otherworlds need not be hard sf—Supernatural and Occult Fiction. And of course one would also cover unreprinted books and fiction in periodicals; real readers will look at anything.

An alternative approach would analyze *The Time Machine* itself in its six versions, from *The Chronic Argonauts* in 1888 to book publication in 1895. The first of these, according to Wells, got its premise of time as a dimension from a fellow debater and its portentous overwriting from Hawthorne;[60] the superstitious villagers who attack the mad scientist's cottage in the final instalment anticipated movie versions of *Frankenstein*.[61] The next two drafts (1889-92) reflected Plato, perhaps with help from Disraeli, in dividing the future sharply between rich and poor; one of them also involved the travellers in a civil war and a romantic entanglement *à la* Haggard and Hollywood.[62] The fourth and fifth versions, published as magazine serials in 1894-95, were still not quite the chapters we know.[63] If Wells plagiarized Greg, where in this process did the cutting and pasting start?

A third potential source is contemporary journalism—both Wells's own reviews, which evidence his reading habits, and comments on his work by others. When the *Daily Chronicle* reviewer opined that "for his central idea Mr Wells may be indebted to some previously published suggestion", according to Mr Burden he was hinting at plagiarism. Lacking a file of 19th-century British journals from which to put the quotation in context, I suggest that *prima facie,* for any ordinary reader, the "new thing under the sun" offered by *The Time Machine* would have been either the machine itself, the idea of time as a dimension, the devolution of humanity, or the entropic finale—none of which appears in Greg. At any rate, there is no reason to omit checking the original review or to limit investigation to what Wells himself termed "such organs of cheap criticism as the *Daily Chronicle*".[64]

Mr Burden's failure is the more regrettable because despite its didactic *longueurs, Across the Zodiac* may have originated some recurrent sf themes and does manage better than most scientific romance at integrating its setting with its plot. Though long-lost memoirs had been a byword since *Northanger Abbey,* Greg's may be the first to be recovered from a crashed spaceship; though other voyagers first encountered meteors and carried plants for oxygen, his may have been the first to travel by pressor beam; and though his Martials were not original in utilizing balloons, electricity, and submarines, they may have pioneered aquaculture, bioengineering, copying machines, facsimile messages by wire, hologram stage shows, piped-in music, and sewage recycling.[65] Unlike the dilettante tourists who visit most otherworlds, Greg's hero gets involved locally, like

the Savage in *Brave New World,* specifically because he represents an earlier historical stage; as I suggested earlier, Greg may have been the first to foresee, after an abortive triumph of the Left, an authoritarian counterrevolution that would restore law, order, and property unconstrained by the lost traditional sanctions of religion, family life, and public spirit. Serious study in historical context, using English libraries, could test these hypotheses and others—for instance, my own tentative judgement that the awful-warning society of Greg's Mars extrapolates its public life from Tory images of revolutionary Paris, its private life from the Orient of harem romance, its political theory from the utilitarian laissez-faire of Scrooge and Gradgrind, and its moral atmosphere from *The Last Days of Pompeii.*

Conceivably, so thorough a study of Greg and Wells might document real one-to-one correspondence after all. To choose only parallels that Mr Burden omits, Greg's was not the only whited-sepulchre crypto-dystopia available to Wells (the form was used by critics of *Looking Backward*[66]), but it may have been the first chronologically. The Time Traveller's fear that future humanity may prove cruel, "inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful"—realized later in Wells's Selenites and Martians—may owe something to the logical cowardice and sadism of Greg's Mars; but it may equally reflect the cold-blooded rationality of Houyhnhms and Vril-ya and the conscious decadence of the *fin de siècle.*[67] And it is conceivable that the narrator's fear of an invasion of Earth by Martials endowed with space flight and his infection of one wife with a fatal Tellurian disease, little though either theme is developed by Greg, provided a premise and a conclusion for *The War of the Worlds.*[68] Or it might prove, as I suspect it would, that by the time Wells wrote, fifteen years after Greg, adventure fiction and scientific romance treated such stuff as routine.

The considerations above are not those of an expert; I have not formally studied Victorian literature or intellectual life since taking my B.A. in 1960. The citations supporting them are not obscure; they come from writers known by reputation at least to every student of sf and from reference sources readily available on the library shelves of a Western U.S. university that specializes not in sf, English literature, or even the liberal arts, but in engineering, oceanography, forestry, and agriculture. How they can have escaped the attention of an avowed specialist in Wells, the professor in charge of his M. Phil. thesis (if that is the source of the article), and the editors of the leading scholarly journal of sf in Great Britain, is not for an outsider to speculate. But they should be taken into account before any attempt is made to turn Mr Burden's articles into a book.[69]

Notes and References

1. Brian J. Burden, "Decoding the Time Machine, 2: Across the Zodiac," *Foundation* 35 (Winter 1985/86), pp. 23-29. I use his abbreviations, *TM* and *AZ*—the former in *The Short Stories of H.G. Wells* (London: Benn, 1927), the latter in the combined-volume 1974 Hyperion reprint with introduction by Sam Moskowitz.
2. Burden, "Decoding the Time Machine," *Foundation* 31 (July 1984) pp.30-37.
3. C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1942), p.1.
4. Peter Nicholls, ed., *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia* (Garden City: Dolphin Books, 1979), s.v. Alien Worlds, Alternate Worlds, Lost Lands, Parallel Worlds, Utopias.
5. Brian Stableford and Peter Nicholls, "Fantastic Voyages", in Nicholls, p.210. Cf. reviews by Wells in *H.G. Wells's Literary Criticism* (thereafter *Lit. Crit.*), ed. Patrick Parrinder and Robert M. Philmus (Sussex: The Harvester Press, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1980), pp.230, 436; also the "adventure story in the Edwardian mode" discussed in Jared Lobdell, *England and Always: Tolkien's World of the Rings* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, c1981), pp.1-25.

6. Poul Anderson, "Delenda Est," *Fantasy & Science Fiction* (December, 1955), in his *Guardians of Time* (New York: Ballantine, 1960), p.108; (enl. ed. New York: Pinnacle, 1981), p.194; italics mine. For more on the use of symbolic details to authenticate alternative worlds see my "Afterworld: Allohistory in SF", in *Alternative Histories*, ed. Martin Greenberg (New York: Garland, forthcoming).
7. H. Rider Haggard, *Allan Quatermain* (hereafter *AQ*) (1887; Silver Library, Longmans, Green, 1922), pp.117-158; Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889; New York: Washington Square Press, 1948), pp.4-29; William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1890; *Collected Works* XVI, London: Longmans, Green, 1912), p.7-13; Samuel Butler, *Erewhon* (1872; New York: Signet, 1960), pp.48-61; Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, *The Coming Race* (1871; Blauvelt, N.Y.: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1972), pp.16-35; Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870; *The Omnibus Jules Verne,* New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1931), pp.36-51.
8. H.G. Wells, "Preface to *The Scientific Romances"* (1933), *Lit. Crit.*, p.241; italics Wells's. On Wells's "skillful use of incidental detail to create the air of reality", with specific reference to *The Time Machine,* cf. Mark A. Hillegas, *The Future as Myth: H.G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp.27-28.
9. Edgar Rice Burroughs, *A Princess of Mars* (1912; New York: Ballantine, 1963), ch.3, pp.20-26; L. Frank Baum, *The Wizard of Oz* (1900; Looking Glass Library, 1960) pp.17-18.
10. Butler, *Erewhon,* chs. 3 and 6, pp.34-35 and 48-49; Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (1885; London: Collins Classics, 1955), pp.92-95; Wells, "The Country of the Blind" (1904), in *The Short Stories of H.G. Wells* (London: Benn, 1927), pp.172-173, and *The First Men in the Moon* (hereafter *Moon*) (1901; New York: Ballantine, 1963), ch.7, pp.43-49; C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (hereafter *OSP*) (1938; New York: Macmillan, 1944), ch.7, pp.39-43, and *Perelandra* (1943; New York: Macmillan, 1955), ch.3, pp.30-32.
11. Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1887; New York: Grosset & Dunlap, n.d.), ch.3 *ad fin.*, p.38. For Bellamy's nonvisual technique see especially ch.8, pp. 79-80, in which Julian West struggles to reconcile the new Boston with the one he remembers.
12. Livestock also attract attention right after landscape in *Erewhon, The Coming Race, Moon* (mooncalves), and *Gulliver's Travels* (Yahoos).
13. Cf. Richard Dale Mullen, "The Prudish Prurience of H.R. Haggard and E.R. Burroughs", *Riverside Quarterly* 6 (April 1974) pp.134-146.
14. Morris, pp.7-8. Cheerful, colourful simplicity is typical of *fin-de-siècle* social-reformist utopias; cf. Robert Blatchford, *Merrie England: A Plain Exposition of Socialism* (1895; New York: Commonwealth, 1896), p.34; E. Nesbit (Bland), *The Story of the Amulet* (1906), ch.12, reprinted in *Five Children and It, The Phoenix and the Carpet, The Story of the Amulet* (London: Octopus Books, 1979), pp.576-578; or Theodor Hertzka, *Freeland* (1890; tr. Arthur Ransome, 1891; New York: Gordon Press, 1972), pp.187-188. Anti-collectivist futures usually dress drably, e.g. the unromantic Shavian jaegers of Max Beerbohm's "Enoch Soames" (1912; in his *Seven Men and Two Others* (1919; Penguin, 1954), pp.31-32). Bellamy (ch.4, pp.44-46) deliberately passes up this opportunity for local color.
15. Lytton, ch.4 *ad fin.*, p.20; Greg, I, pp.87, 117, 231-235. Martial females wear a sort of Greek peplum; the costume assumed by the narrator, "convenient and comfortable beyond any other, and generally handsome and elegant", features blouse and trousers "diapered scarlet and silver" plus a green leather belt with a golden clasp. He complains, however, that Martial sandals let feet get cold and dirty.
16. *TM,* pp.30-31. Sandals are also worn in Freeland (Hertzka, p.188).
17. Bacon's voyagers are allowed to land on conditions including an initial quarantine period: *The New Atlantis* (1627; in *The Advancement of Learning and New Atlantis,* pref. Thomas Case, World's Classics ed., Oxford Univ. Press 1906), pp.258-265.
18. Josiah Oldfield, "Vegetarianism", *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 11th ed. (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1910-11) (hereafter *EB*/11), XXVII, pp.967-968; Lytton, chs.15, 22, 23, pp.103, 177, 189-90; Haggard, *She* (1887; Silver Library, London: Longmans, Green, 1921), ch.13 p.151; Butler, chs.26-27, pp.199-214. Though the Martials are not vegetarians, for them "flesh and fish are used . . . as relish and supplement to fruits, vegetables, and farinaceous dishes, rather than as the principal element of food" (*AZ* I, p.264). "The childlike innocence of fruit" is characteristic of unfallen Perelandra (p.39).
19. "I was conducted into a chamber fitted up with an Oriental splendour . . . cushions and divans abounded"—Lytton, ch.5, p.23. "I took up the cushion she (the language instructor) had been sitting on and threw it after her"—Haggard, *AQ,* ch.15, p.178.
20. With its despotism (governmental and familial), physical comfort without public spirit, and small veiled females on cushions, *Across the Zodiac* often suggests Oriental romance; the harem intrigues, indeed, remotely recall Montesquieu's *Persian Letters. AZ,* I, p.239; II, pp.2,

109, 166; for the "Oriental" as archetypal alien see Chamberlain, "Ming Meets Yoda: The Oriental Stereotype in SF," unpublished talk presented at academic session of LACON II, 3 September 1984.

21. "Now, once for all, I am not going to be bothered to tell you how it was that the girl (a predynastic Egyptian) could understand Anthea and Anthea could understand the girl"—Nesbit, ch.4, p.443. There are generally no language problems in dreams or in mental transfers into an otherworld identity, and apparently none in Narnia or Oz.
22. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels,* ed. Herbert Davis (*Works,* XI; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1941, rev. 1959), 1st voyage, ch.2, p.35, and 2nd voyage, ch.8 *ad fin.,* p.147; Butler, chs.7-8, pp.59-61; Lewis, *OSP,* p.115.
23. Lytton, ch.6, pp.36-47; *Moon,* ch.23, pp.139-141.
24. Haggard, *AQ,* ch. 13, p.157; *Gulliver's Travels,* 4th voyage, ch.4, pp.240-44; Lewis, *OSP,* pp.146-149.
25. *AZ,* I, pp.110-113; Lytton, ch.12, pp.77-87; *TM,* p.43.
26. The Zulu temptress Mameena catches Hunter Quatermain's eclectic eye in *Child of Storm* (1913). "Eloi" suggests *elfin, éloigné, élite,* and *eld,* "Morlocks" *Moloch* and *mors*: Bernard Bergonzi, *The Early H.G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances* (Manchester Univ. Press, c1961), p.48; David J. Lake, "Wells's Time Traveler: An Unreliable Narrator?" *Extrapolation* 22 (Summer 1981) pp.117-126.
27. *TM,* pp.29, 46.
28. Eveena is described in *AZ,* I, pp.104, 148, 172, 230-31; when Greg wrote, even "a good figure" (to say nothing of a perfect one) required "a well-developed bust, a tapering waist, and large hips"—; C. Willett Cunnington, *Feminine Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century* (1935; New York: Haskell, 1973), p.222. Her husband "was born the subject of one of the greatest monarchs of the Earth", II, p.120, but is not Russian, II, p.122; is at ease in French, Italian, and Latin, II, p.108; writing in the 1830s, was "yet a youth" in 1815, II, p.51, but managed to fight "Scindia and the Peishwah", II, p.20; served the Sultan with distinction, II, p.45; boasts "ten years of constant practice in the field and in the chase", I, p.172, and "the varied experience of twenty years against every open peril", II, p.94; considers age fifty the cutoff for automatic male response to female admiration, I, p.173. He must be French and is certainly not in his first youth.
29. *TM,* 46; on Weena's ambivalent sexuality cf. John Huntington, *The Logic of Futurity: H.G. Wells and Science Fiction* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1982), p.44. The 1960 George Pal version of *The Time Machine* was reviewed with insufficient disrespect by Bosley Crowther in *The New York Times,* 18 Aug. 1960, p.19.
30. Cf. the rescues of Foulata by Captain Good, Aouda by Phileas Fogg, Rebecca by Ivanhoe, Andromeda by Perseus . . .
31. *AZ,* I, pp.99-100, 227; *TM,* p.50.
32. Wells, *An Experiment in Autobiography* (hereafter *Experiment*) (New York: Macmillan, 1934), pp. 253-254.
33. Wells, "Utopias" (broadcast talk 19 Jan. 1939), *Science-Fiction Studies* 9 (July 1982) p.119.
34. *EB/*11, VI, p.791, s.v. "Communism".
35. Peter Nicholls, "Politics", in his *Encyclopedia,* p.467.
36. A.L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1952), p.211.
37. *AZ,* I, 119-143; Jack London, *The Iron Heel* (1907; New York: Review of Reviews, 1917); cf. H. Bruce Franklin, "London, Jack," in Nicholls, p.361, and Morton, pp.228-229, 236. The chief objection to regarding London's and Greg's kakotopias as anticipating fascism is their omission of both the "national" side of fascism (militarist racism) and its "socialist" side (reconstruction of society by a mass party on quasi-revolutionary lines).
38. Peter Marshall, "A British Sensation", in Sylvia E. Bowman et al., *Edward Bellamy Abroad* (New York: Twayne, 1962), pp.86-118. "We are all Socialists now" was stated by Gladstone's second-in-command, Sir William Harcourt, in 1888, and/or by the Prince of Wales in 1895: James Bonar, "Socialism", *EB/*11, XXV, p.303; *Oxford Book of Quotations* (2nd ed., 1953), p.195.
39. This assumes that the Time Traveller interprets the Morlock role correctly; but see Lake, loc. cit. (above, n. 26).
40. Wells, *Experiment,* pp.106, 140-146.
41. *TM,* pp. 33-34; *AZ,* I, pp.131-134, 213-217.
42. *EB/*11, XXVIII, pp.785-788, s.v. "Women". Wyoming entered the Union in 1890 with women already voting; Colorado and New Zealand recognized them in 1893, South Australia in 1894.
43. Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae* (The assemblywomen), in *The Complete Greek Drama,* ed. J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938), 2, pp.1003-1055; presumably the author had got wind of what was to be Book 5 of Plato's then unpublished

Republic. A Century of Punch, ed. R.E. Williams (London: Heinemann, 1956), pp.26-32; dates of cartoons cover 1853-96.

44. Lytton, chs.10, 26-27, pp.66-73, 227-229, 235-237; Bellamy, ch.5, pp.255-270; Morris, ch.9, pp.59-63; Haggard, *She,* ch.6, pp.81-82. Lytton's females are physically the stronger sex; Bellamy and Morris combine legal equality with concessions to motherhood and housewifery; Amahagger men do all the work but occasionally assert themselves with a massacre.
45. James Walter MacFarlane tr. & ed., *The Oxford Ibsen,* V (Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), pp.458-464; quotations respectively from Harley Granville-Barker and the *Daily Telegraph.* New Women and Women Who Did turn up frequently in Wells's reviews: *Lit. Crit.,* pp.32-35, 44-47, 59-61, 462-465.
46. Plato, *Republic* 1.372-373, 5.460, tr. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), pp.64-66, 183; Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516), tr. Ralph Robinson (1551; Everyman's Library, 1910), 70; Lytton, ch.18, p.147; *Moon,* ch.10, p.62. Cf.William Roscher, *Principles of Political Economy,* tr. John J. Lalor (13th ed., Chicago: Callaghan, 1878), II, pp.273-361; Charles Gide, *Principles of Political Economy,* tr. & ed. Percy Jacobsen (1891; Boston: Heath, 1898), p.323.
47. Samuel J. Holmes, *A Bibliography of Eugenics* (U.C. Publications in Zoology, v.25; Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1924), s.v. "The Birth Rate" and "Neo-Malthusianism; Birth Control"; S. Chandrasekhar, *"A Dirty, Filthy Book": The Writings of Charles Knowlton and Annie Besant on Reproductive Physiology and Birth Control and an Account of the Bradlaugh-Besant Trial* (Univ. of California Press, 1981), pp.44-49; Peter Fryer, *The Birth Controllers* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1965; New York: Stein & Day, 1966), pp.160-189.
48. Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Biology* (c1866-67; New York: D. Appleton, 2 v. 1898), II, p.501; the argument is repeated e.g. in Gide, loc. cit., and Jervoise Athelstane Baines, "Population", *EB/*11, XXII, p.97. The French experience is possibly summed up in P. Leroy-Beaulieu's "The Influence of Civilization upon the Movement of Population", *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society of London* (June 1891), cited in J.L. Brownell, "The Significance of a Decreasing Birth-Rate", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 5 (July 1894) pp.53-54.
49. On Wells and the *fin-de-siècle* mood of degeneration see Bernard Bergonzi, *The Early H.G. Wells* (Manchester Univ. Press, 1961), pp.1-22; a somewhat different view is taken by Robert Philmus, "The Logic of 'Prophecy' in *The Time Machine",* in *H.G. Wells: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Bergonzi (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1976), pp.57-65. Although the *Malthusian* formed part of Wells's early reading, he seems to have taken an active interest in eugenics only after 1900: *Experiment,* p.146; Roslynn D. Haynes, *H.G. Wells: Discoverer of the Future* (New York Univ. Press, 1980), pp.105-106; John R. Reed, *The Natural History of H.G. Wells* (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1982), pp.156-158.
50. *AZ,* I, p.138; *TM,* p.36.
51. More, *Utopia,* pp.76, 94, 131.
52. Arthur E. Morgan, *Plagiarism in Utopia: A Study of the Continuity of the Utopian Tradition With Special Reference to Edward Bellamy's* Looking Backward (Yellow Springs, Ohio: the author, 1944), p.1.
53. Morton, p.43. As early as 1771, according to Nicholls's *Encyclopedia* (s.v. "Mercier", p.393, and "Utopias", p.622), L.S. Mercier's *L'an 2440* (englished in 1772 as *Memoirs of the Year 2500*) had "proposed that the perfectibility of mankind was not only possible, but inevitable, with the aid of science, mathematics and the mechanical arts".
54. Absence of smoke is especially noted by Bellamy (ch.4, p.41), Morris (ch.7, p.46), and Hertzka, pp.199-201; the quotation comes from the prologue to Morris's *Earthly Paradise* (1868; *Collected Works,* III, p.3).
55. *Across the Zodiac* shares its enthusiasm for electricity with Verne and its romance between the narrator and the daughter of his custodian-host with both Butler and Lytton; according to Morgan, pp.28-29, the latter theme goes back to Berlington's *Adventures of Gaudentio di Lucca* (1737). The intellectual stagnation of Greg's Martialists, their synthetic language, their coldblooded willingness to dissect the visitor as insufficiently human, and even their cremation practices also suggest Lytton's Vril-ya. Compare *AZ,* I, pp.110-113, 117-120, and II, pp.242-244 with Lytton, chs. 12, 22, and 24, pp.77-87, 177-178, 196-199. The authors also shared an enmity to democracy.
56. *Lit. Crit.,* pp.55, 98, 111-114, 131, 230; Marshall, loc. cit. (above, n.38); Bergonzi, index, s.v. Beckford, Bellamy, Carroll, Hawthorne, Johnson, Kipling, Lytton, Nietzsche, Poe, Shakespeare, Shelley, Stevenson, Swift.
58. Moskowitz attributes *The History of A Voyage to the Moon* (n.p., 1864) to the author of its introduction, "Chrysostom Trueman", and identifies its antigravity with the directional

pressor beam employed by Greg's narrator (I, p.23) to "act upon a remote fulcrum" in space, where otherwise "there is no such resisting elements on which repulsion can operate." The book—significantly subtitled "An Exhumed Narrative"—is listed in the British Museum *General Catalogue.*

59. Robert Cromie, *A Plunge Into Space* (London and New York: Frederick Warne, 1890); John Jacob Astor, *A Journey to Other Worlds* (New York: Appleton, 1894; Gustavus W. Pope, *Journey to Mars* (New York: Dillingham, 1894); Edwin Pallander, *Across the Zodiac* (London: Digby, Long, 1896). The books by Cromie, Astor, and Pallander are in the British Museum catalogue, together with Pope's second volume in his "Romances of the Planets", *A Journey to Venus: The Primeval World* (New York: Neely, 1895); Cromie and Pope were reprinted by Hyperion in 1974. Moskowitz suggests a connection between Pope and Burroughs in his introduction to the Hyperion reprint, but the resemblance is not close.
60. Bergonzi, pp.25, 31, and texts of "The Chronic Argonauts", pp.187-214.
61. According to Donald F. Glut in *The Frankenstein Legend* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1973), 117, this routine originated in the 1931 Universal Pictures film directed by James Whale. Had Whale read *The Chronic Argonauts?*
62. Bergonzi, p. 38-39; Geoffrey West, *H.G. Wells* (New York: Norton, 1930), Appendix I, pp.259-264. The second and third versions now exist only as recollections by A. Morley Davies. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 4.423 (Modern Library, pp.132-133, and Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil: or, The Two Nations* (1845). Wells cites this sometime classic in an 1897 book review (*Lit. Crit.*, p.146). "The abduction of a ward in the year 4003" is promised in the original *Chronic Argonauts* (Bergonzi, p.203).
63. The fourth or *National Observer* version and key sections of the fifth from *New Review* are reprinted in *H.G. Wells: Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction,* ed. Robert M. Philmus and David Y. Hughes (Univ. of California Press, 1975), pp.57-104.
64. *Lit. Crit.*, p.100.
65. *AZ,* I, pp.12-16, 22-25, 115, 203, 206, 241; II, pp.111-112. Moskowitz's 1976 introduction lists "black and white and color photocopy machines, microfilm, telephones, plastics, conversion of waste to fertilizer, electrically-driven balloons, electrically-powered ploughs, scented showers, gas guns, scientific raising of fish for food, meals prepared in central commissaries for the entire country, boats propelled by a jet expulsion of water that are capable of submerging, telegraphs for communication, and a wealth of other technological inventions"; but not all of these are original with Greg, and "photocopy" does not describe the Martial copying process, which operates electrochemically on contact.
66. A total of sixteen responses to *Looking Backward,* pro and con, can be made up from the Arno Press "Utopian Literature" reprint list plus Marshall, loc. cit.
67. See above, notes 46 and 51, and cf. "the cold inhuman reason of the moon", *Moon,* ch.25, p.159. On Greg's Mars, capital punishment entails vivisection, and the chief instrument of husband-wife communication appears to be the slipper: *AZ,* II, pp.64, 80, 109, 166, 247, 261.
68. *AZ,* II, pp.118-121, 229-233.
69. One final note: Mr Burden's climactic sentence is inaccurate; according to the *DNB,* Greg died in 1889, not 1899.

Foundation Forum

In our "Foundation Forum" section we always welcome manifestos, declarations, controversy, and—as here—committed responses at length to previous pieces printed in Foundation. *Jenny Wolmark graduated in English and History, took an MA in Literature, and now teaches Literature and Media Studies at Humberside College of Higher Education in Hull. A socialist and feminist, she is currently working on a study of popular fiction and feminism, in which feminist sf plays a major part.*

Science Fiction and Feminism

JENNY WOLMARK

The recent review of *Despatches from the Frontiers of the Female Mind* by Avedon Carol (*Foundation* 35) raises some interesting questions relating to feminism and sf which I think merit wider discussion. The review is mainly critical of the anthology and while individual stories are praised many are criticised, perhaps justly, for being sketchy and inaccessible. Avedon Carol has two main disagreements with the editors of the anthology, the first of which stems from the fact that all the stories appear to have an undercurrent of despair and hopelessness running through them as a kind of unspoken theme which, the review implies, makes the stories less effective than they should be. Secondly, the editors are criticised for failing in their intention "to reclaim Science Fiction for women". Interestingly enough, this intention is restated by Carol so that it becomes a failure to "help create a feminist literary tradition in sf" (p.99). I would like to take issue with the narrow and over-simplified view of the way feminist sf works that is reflected in these two criticisms.

It is the question of what a feminist literary criticism is and whether it has anything to do with sf that needs immediate clarification. There is no doubt that feminist literary critics have done immensely valuable work in promoting the reconsideration of many major literary texts from the point of view of what they tell us about the experience of women under patriarchy. Rather than placing it at the periphery, feminists place that experience at the centre of any critical interpretation of texts. This process of re-reading literature from a new and woman-centred perspective is one of the means by which it can be said that literature can be reclaimed for women. An important result of this has been the establishing of a feminist literary tradition. It is appropriate at this point to ask what the nature of this tradition is: in other words, what kind of literature finds its way into this tradition? Almost invariably, popular literary forms, including sf, are not to be found there. Feminist literary critics have been as dismissive as any other kind of critic when it comes to popular fiction, whether or not it has been written by, or for, women. Popular fiction as a whole is either considered to be an inferior version of mainstream literature which is unworthy of critical attention or it is regarded as the kind of fiction which is

capable only of crudely reproducing the dominant patriarchal view of women as intellectually and physically inferior. This narrows the field down considerably as far as inclusion in the feminist literary tradition is concerned. It also results in the identification of that tradition with the notoriously elusive notion of 'good' literature. A feminist literary tradition, in common with any other literary tradition, appears to consist of major literary works which can be situated within the accepted range of mainstream literature. It is therefore very easy to exclude sf from the feminist literary tradition, despite the existence of those writers who have made explicitly feminist interventions into sf in the last ten or so years. From the vantage point of this literary tradition, sf has little or nothing to offer its readers except escapism or light entertainment. The kinds of changes that have taken place in sf, especially since the 1970s with the impact of feminism, and the fact that there are increasing numbers of women who now both read and write sf, are arbitrarily ignored. This approach is fundamentally elitist not only because it continues to foster the increasingly dubious division between popular and mainstream literature but also because it puts forward an abstract idea of literature as being somehow separable from the social and material reality in which it exists. Thus, although it is recognised that changes in society are reflected in literature, it is on literature's own terms that this occurs. Avedon Carol's suggestion that there should be a "feminist literary tradition in sf" simply transfers this abstract framework from mainstream fiction to popular fiction; it does not recognise any complexity in the relationship between fiction and the society in which it is embedded, preferring to look for complexity in the texts alone. From this point of view, the possibility that fiction is subject to the same kinds of ideological constraints and contradictions that prevail in society as a whole can be ignored.

The emergence of a distinctly feminist sf in recent years and of an increasingly wide female readership for sf represents such a major change in the field that it demands a different kind of analysis, one that is less concerned to repeat treasured myths about literary traditions and is more prepared to shift the focus of analysis onto the interaction of sf with its audience and its market. In this way it will become clear that reclaiming sf for women isn't just a matter of issuing anthologies, whether they are pessimistic or optimistic. Feminist sf itself is not an isolated cultural phenomenon but is part of the emergence and growth of feminism as a social, cultural and political movement which has consistently challenged the dominant patriarchal ideology. It makes sense to see the reclaiming of sf for women as being one of many cultural interventions being made by feminists, in this case into an area of popular fiction that has appeared to be obdurately resistant to the kind of changes that feminists would like to see taking place. The Women's Press in this country and the various women's presses in America have played a crucially important part in enabling this cultural intervention to take place. Without their challenge to the male dominated publishing industry, many writers would not be in print at all and many readers, particularly in this country, would not have access to those books by women writers that had managed to get into print. This is amply illustrated by a quote from Suzy McKee Charnas, author of *Walk to the End of the World* and *Motherlines*, who received the following comment from a male editor at a time when she was trying without much success to get her stories published: "You know, if this book was all about men it would be a terrific story."[1] The women's presses have enabled significant changes to take place in the actual production of sf and have broadened the potential readership for sf as a result.

But one of the major problems for women making interventions into sf is that they have to use the available conventions and clichés in order to write stories that are recognisably sf. These conventions are steeped in the history and meanings of a male-dominated genre functioning in a patriarchal culture. Although sf gives women the freedom to explore alternative and non-patriarchal social and sexual relationships, it does so at a price. The available narrative conventions of sf inevitably contain a residue of meanings associated with both the male dominated history of sf and the dominant attitudes and values of the whole culture within which sf resides. Roles for women in sf continue to demonstrate the widely held view that women are necessarily inferior to men—it is still rare to find a female hero in sf. This means that there is a very real tension generated between the desire to re-work sf conventions from a feminist point of view and the familiar associations and assumptions that are contained within those conventions. This is very clear in some of the notable feminist sf of the 1970s where, for example, the disaster convention is used to put forward a feminist critique of contemporary patriarchal society and to present alternative, separatist societies of women. In Suzy McKee Charnas' *Walk to the End of the World* (1974) and *Motherlines* (1979) all women are slaves in the remaining cities of a post-catastrophe world but some escape from the cities to become "free fems" and establish their own communities. Similarly, in Sally M. Gearhart's *Wanderground* (1976) men have absolute power over women in the cities, so women leave the cities in order to set up separate, non-hierarchical communities. In Vonda McIntyre's *Dreamsnake* (1978) society-as-we-know-it has been destroyed by some unspecified nuclear catastrophe. What remains is a variety of individual and social groupings which McIntyre uses to explore alternative networks of relationships other than those based on patriarchal models. What is interesting about these stories is that, despite their presentation of alternative societies from a feminist perspective, they are far from being the kind of optimistic sf that one might expect. They are, like The Women's Press anthology, full of undercurrents of despair and hopelessness. This stems in part from the presence in the fiction of general political and cultural anxieties about society in the 1970s. It also stems from the nature of the disaster convention itself, which is deeply imbued with pessimism and which extrapolates the most conservative values and assumptions of the present into the future. This seems to suggest that the residue of meanings contained in sf conventions is far more resistant to change than might have been expected.

Examples of sf written from a less overtly feminist stance exhibit similar problems. Fiction by C.J. Cherryh, Mary Gentle, Cecelia Holland and Octavia Butler, for example, undercuts sexual and racial stereotypes while retaining a familar sf narrative framework. Rather than the conventions being rewritten, they are subverted from within, so to speak. This provides rather more of a sense of dislocation for the reader, whose expectations are geared to the familiar narrative devices and storylines, than is provided by the novels of Charnas, Gearhart and McIntyre. The reader is presented with a world in which all the usual sf roles are present—spaceship commanders, space station administrators, soldiers, ambassadors to other worlds. But it is the women characters, not the men, who take on these roles. That they are strong, resourceful, intelligent and brave enough to do so goes without question in the stories. There are no sly hints in the narrative that there is something basically "unfeminine" about such women, for example. The reader is thus encouraged into a reconsideration of the sort of sexual stereotypes still found distressingly often in sf. However, the conventional narrative frameworks of rival inter-planetary

ambitions, warring political factions and alien races rest on taken-for-granted assumptions about the social and economic structures of patriarchal, capitalist society which are incorporated wholesale into the stories. The tension in these stories arises from the fact that a radical subversion of stereotypes exists alongside other unquestioned assumptions about human behaviour and social organisation. This in no way negates the positive presentations of women in the writing, but it does illustrate the kinds of constraints at work in the stories. If there is a certain ambivalence in the stories as a result, recognition of it can provide the means by which we can perceive the wider cultural and political meanings in the stories which would otherwise go undetected. Without a recognition of those meanings, sf is likely to remain in a comfortable literary vacuum which will prevent it from having any real impact.

What we are seeing in these stories is a confrontation between an exploration of choices and possibilities which could and should be open to women and the in-built assumptions about society and human nature which actively deny those choices and possibilities to women. It is hardly surprising, then, that many of the stories mentioned—including The Women's Press anthology—have a perceptible undercurrent of feeling that can be interpreted as despair and hopelessness. This might lead some readers to feel let down in some sense by sf that is written by and for women because it seems unable to depict a fully formed utopian future. But this would be a misrecognition of what is actually happening in the stories. They are neither wholly pessimistic nor wholly optimistic. They are entirely open-ended and this is where their radicalism lies. As I suggested earlier, sf written by women, whether or not they are feminists, is part of a general cultural intervention being made by women. All cultural interventions are, above all, struggles for meaning. Anyone writing or reading radical sf has to confront that apparently unassailable fabric of ideas which sustains the status quo and enables change to be resisted. We should surely expect evidence of that struggle and confrontation to appear in the fiction—how else can we know that it's going on?

Notes

1. Charnas, Suzy McKee, 'A Woman Appeared', in Marlene S. Barr (ed.) *Future Females* (Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981), p.107.

Letters

Dear *Foundation* July 1986

The letter you publish in *Foundation* #36, entitled *Open Letter on the Academic Politics of a Former Officer of SFRA* has been circulating for some while. I was sorry to see you giving it further currency.

It is a sad day when the President of the SFRA snipes in this fashion at the President of the IAFA. A snipe is no less a snipe for being described by its originator as "playful". As a member of both organisations (and indeed owing a debt to both), I must cry STOP!—

before one or other organisation is damaged.

It is surely no oddity that the SFRA is not mentioned in the Index of Tymn and Ashley's *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Magazines.* Nor, for that matter, is IAFA. As it is, the Index runs to over thirty pages, and a generous consideration might compute that only strictly necessary names could find a place there; august bodies such as the Oxford University Press are also missing from the Index, though mentioned in the text. And so on.

This quarrelsome letter must not be allowed to obscure the fact that these two wicked fellows, Tymn and Ashley, have presented us with a mammoth and definitive—and above all pleasureable—book which is so much more than a work of mere reference. To give one example, the Berger-Ashley history of *Astounding/Analog,* which runs to 42 pages in all, is absolutely magisterial. All magazines are well considered.

Greenwood Press do not pay me to say this, but this is the most valuable and spirited reference work on sf since the Nicholls/Clute Encyclopaedia. Anyone interested in sf should procure a copy, despite the awful price, and ignore all "playful" remarks to the contrary.

Brian Aldiss *Oxford*

Dear *Foundation,*

One of the contributors to *Foundation* 35 refers to "Victorian Windbaggery". Having read *F* 35 from cover to cover, I find 20th Century windbaggery even more distasteful, as it manages to combine smugness and prolixity with fashionable guilt complexes in a most unsavoury way. Its practitioners can, however, sometimes manage to be right, though for the wrong reasons.

Thus, your reviewer concluded that *West of Eden* was a pretty poor book: so it is; but not because of the concealed propaganda she contrived to convince herself was in it. It is poor because the narrative is dull and above all because the culture of the Yilanè is simply preposterous. Mr. Harrison is entitled to his basic "What-if", to rather old-fashioned (i.e., cold-blooded) archosauria, to a most implausible stem for the emergence of intelligence (why not the ornithoidids or even the dromaeosaurids?) and even, with reservations, to suppose an evolutionary sequence on an isolated North America which somehow replicated what actually happened elsewhere. What he may not have is a culture with an extremely advanced bio-technology and no orthodox technology at all. It is simply not on. How could any culture find out about, let alone learn to manipulate D.N.A. without advanced spectro-chemistry? How could it achieve that without a solid foundation of physical Science? Yet Mr. Harrison's Yilanè are ignorant of fire! In short, he breaks the basic rule of serious sf, to be consistent within his chosen premises.

When Mr. Harrison's Humans and Yilanè meet, they promptly embark upon schemes of mutual genocide; but that I find entirely credible.

Professor M. Hammerton *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*

From a further letter: Having now read *F* 35 and *F* 36, I offer the following rule: books praised by your reviewers are sure to be worthless; some books damned by them may have merit.

Dear *Foundation,*

David Lake's "Theory of Error" in *Foundation* 36 is both entertaining in the way that well-constructed detective stories are entertaining—and usefully admonitory. I rather doubt, though, whether C.S. Lewis would have been much moved by his admonitions. Dependent on its definition, he would I think have accepted fantasy as a description of *Out of the Silent Planet.* He wrote that its setting drew on a myth of Martian canals already existing in the common mind; yet its supposed planets are those of the actual solar system. He said that he once took a hero to Mars in a spaceship, but that when he knew better he had angels convey him to Venus. *Silent Planet* is a fantasy hybridised between the "real" and the imagined, much as is "The Ancient Mariner" with its angels and daemons.

Coleridge's hybridisation has in it a very great deal of the "real", and Professor Lake may himself be in error when he classifies the rising hornéd moon and the star within its nether tip as errors, even, as he suggests, deliberate ones. John Livingston Lowes in *The Road to Xanadu,* citing the Harvard astronomer Harlow Shapley as in support, follows the mariner *through* the night of dim stars and lantern light "*Til* clomb above the eastern bar the hornéd moon, with one bright star/Within the nether tip". (In *Lyrical Ballads* it is "Almost between the tips".) In other words it is the waning, dying, sickle moon, "star-dogg'd", that rises in the *east.*

As for that notorious star which "dogg'd" the moon (a sailor's ill-omen sign, incidentally), what Coleridge is recounting surely is the near-occulation of a star or planet, his description derived from half-consciously surfacing recollections of his readings of phenomena recorded in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society and in the journals of such travellers as Cook, Bruce, Hawkins and James, all, as Lowes shows, contributory sources to much in Coleridge's remarkably visualised and associative imagery. Commenting on this, so stringent a critic of Coleridge as Professor Norman Fruman has said that ever since the publication of Lowes's research it has been "clear that, for all its supernatural machinery, 'The Ancient Mariner' is for the most part based on solid and palpable fact." *(Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel* p.315.) Here the fact is, in the words of that authoritative lunar observer Dr. Patrick Moore, that "as the Moon creeps closer and closer to the star, the unwary watcher may think that the star has moved 'between the horns', so to speak, as in the Turkish flag." He illustrates such a dark-limb occultation in his *Naked Eye Astronomy* with a sketch of the optical illusion that might have been designed to justify Coleridge.

David Lake may, of course, have read and rejected Lowes. In the matter of the rap he gives me in his letter of the same *Foundation* 36 for not having read his article of 1979, I plead guilty, though I have indeed read *Love and Mr. Lewisham.* I should have said Wells's earliest (not early) Latin met only the simplest requirements (a smattering, Wells observes) of pharmacy. That was at the age of 15. In his later teens his skilled self-tuition was motivated by the appeal of a language which he recognised as integral to the admired "Up Park" cultural heritage, one with a glamour made explicit in such autobiographical novels as *Tono Bungay* and *Mr. Lewisham,* and which in the latter work is stressed by his ironic self-mockery when he makes his hero use *Schema* instead of Scheme as heading for his schedule of advancement. Latin was, in fact, overtaken by scientific and other urgent preoccupations. He wittily signifies this in Chapter 2 of *Mr. Lewisham* when his hero is

torn between concentrating on the vocabulary of Horace and giving attention to the fluttering skirt and revealed ankles of Ethel. ("*Ludubrium* passed out of his universe.") It was, however, in the matter of curriculum learning, the concentrated pursuit of scientific knowledge that entered in. I doubt whether Wells was ever what pedagogues would call a Latinist or (and this was my main point) whether any formal or "text-book" education gave him that knowledge and imaginative penetration of classical mythologies which his discursive but intensive extracurriculum reading of eg. Shakespeare, Shelley, Goethe, Pope, Milton, in the Dyce and Foster Reading Room at South Kensington, undoubtedly did.

I admit to a "respectful" appreciation of some of Brian Burden's first conjectural decoding of *The Time Machine* and indeed of his second instalment (*Foundation* 35) which illustrates, with plausible textual references, how in the 1890s (as the Mackenzies also documented, with other illustrations, in *The Time Traveller*) everything was grist to Wells's borrowing, reshaping and creatively transforming mill. At the same time, as again the Mackenzies point out, he "had found a knack of writing that was akin to dreaming", in that images and sequences of action would surge almost unbidden from his subconscious. The eclecticism of content resulting from these two processes, and particularly from the latter, while not entirely countering the thrust of Professor Lake's charge of "Fluellenism", must blunt it considerably. I hold no brief for Brian Burden's St. Matthew sparrows, ubiquitous fowl that they are, but his Sphinx in those argued myth-sustaining contexts is a different proposition; and when I find in Dryden/Virgil "along the waste dominions of the dead" before the River Acheron, the giant Briareus of the hundred hands, and subsequently in Wells's beside the corpse-bordered Thames, the giant Martian, referred to as Briareus, whose tentacles are described as so many hands, then, salmon or no salmon, it is not unreasonable that I should look for something like a network of tributary and confluent streams.

K. V. Bailey *Alderney, C.I.*

Reviews

Voyager in Night by C.J. Cherryh *(DAW Books, 1984, 221pp, $2.95; Methuen 1985, 221pp, £2.50)*

Forty Thousand in Gehenna by C.J. Cherryh *(DAW Books, 1984, 445pp, $3.50; Methuen 1985, 445pp, £2.95)*

reviewed by Hannu Hiilos

In these two books C.J. Cherryh develops her typical subject-matter, a perceptive, minute and emotionally charged treatment of alien encounter, in two opposite but equally fruitful directions. Her characters have always represented different imaginary societies and different biological heritages. In her earlier books character and background were on the whole evenly balanced: her tales were about individuals, but there was always a larger framework of history and society and politics within which her characters groped and struggled. In *Voyager in Night,* however, there is a more exclusive emphasis on the individual, for both the human and alien protagonists are castaways, uprooted from their worlds and packed together into a ship tiny in the immensity of space. Their native societies, lost in space and time, exist only as the hidden determinants of individual thought and action. In *Forty Thousand in Gehenna,* again, the story of the first three hundred years in the intercourse between the humanity and the saurian-like indigenes of Gehenna, the emphasis naturally falls on the human and alien groups as such and on the biological and cultural factors that influence the course of the confrontation. The individual actors moving across this greatly enlarged stage are as memorable and distinctive as ever in her books, but their roles are subordinated to the superindividual drama of generations of human beings trying to cope with a radically different kind of intelligence.

In *Voyager in Night,* three human beings are captured by an alien ship that has been wandering in space for 100,000 years of subjective ship-time. Both its captain and passengers are computer programs, simulacrums of beings of flesh and blood dead long ago. The simulacrums possess both consciousness and the ability to learn from experience, change and grow mentally. Paul and Jillan, who perish bodily during the capture, also come to exist in facsimile, while Rafe, the one of the three to come through whole, acquires a doppelganger in the form of a similar electronic facsimile of himself. The ship itself is divided because there are two different copies of what one may call the master program, the simulacrum of the original captain, that periodically contend for supremacy in the ship.

The idea of a computer adrift in space, as it were, with its crew as the software that makes it function, does not supply C.J. Cherryh with technicalities to be laboriously explained if the reader is to understand the plot, but with a powerful and original imagery that gives depth and meaning to the story. The basic idea serves as a tool to transform the milieu of supernatural and psychological horror into an intriguing external and mundane reality of another kind. The setting where the human characters find themselves is as frightening and as irrational as any nightmare, delusion or ghostly visitation ever was, but

it belongs to the same world as *Downbelow Station* or *Forty Thousand in Gehenna*. The incorporeal existence of a ghost becomes the electronic state of being of a paradoxically self-conscious computer program. The almost complete lack of familiar human points of reference in the surroundings reflects the fact that it is an alien place with its own alien logic. The captain of the alien ship, able to copy an intelligent being down to its concealed memories and suppressed aspects of personality, and playing with multiple copies of his human captives to learn what is to be learned of these new objects of interest, might be a god or demon. He himself and his passengers are potentially immortal, at least within their ship, in a way that does not seem to contradict the laws of nature.

As she rationalizes these fantastic themes—without losing any of their original suggestive power—the author also discards the sharp polarity of good and evil that is typically a central feature of this kind of fantasy. Rafe and Jillan and Paul are not fighting with inherently evil monsters. It is a confrontation between different intelligences with goals and values shaped by different biological, cultural and personal backgrounds. As in the case of human groups and individuals with similar divergences, there is always some form and degree of antagonism and contention. A relativistic view of human conflict is extended to the relations of intelligent beings in general. Encountering an alien is analogous to encountering another human being—who is in any case the original, real and inescapable alien lurking behind all the bug-eyed monsters and lesser frights from outer space. In the worlds of C.J. Cherryh there are no simple moral judgments. One cannot just say that one way of life is good and another evil, for both are attempts to solve the problems that its native surroundings pose to a species.

It is a measure of her skill as a writer that she does not make her aliens humanly intelligible by minimizing their otherness. On the contrary, she can easily equal the most paranoid figures of fear and hatred found elsewhere in sf and fantasty, as *Voyager in Night* in itself shows. One way in which she guides her reader towards accepting her aliens is using the point of view of the apparent monster, who is then revealed to have its own cogent if often strange reasons for its actions. A more central device is to make what would conventionally appear simply as its helpless victim, the chief protagonist—not necessarily human but otherwise much like us in his sensibilities and general attitudes —achieve an understanding with it. *Hunter of Worlds* is a very good earlier example of this technique, but one finds the pattern in various forms in most of her books. In *Voyager in Night* too there is recurrent use of the perspective of the alien captain and his even more alien passengers, but chiefly it is the human characters that neutralize the conventional reactions to monstrosity and otherness. There is the relationship that grows between them and the aliens and, more importantly, there are the things the three human characters learn of themselves.

Paul and Jillan, perishing in bodily form, go through a form of death, and Rafe, the one member of their close-knit group to retain his solid body, feels both guilt for being so lucky and loss for having been left behind—there is a sting even in this semblance of death. He is unbearably close to his double, Rafe Two, for original and copy have complete knowledge of one another. At the same time, the simulacrums, conscious beings on their own right, do not remain identical with their originals or even with other copies of the same original. Rafe, Jillan and Paul are forced to meet variants of themselves, different personalities potentially present in their psychological makeup and unconscious memories, realized in response to the traumatic situations created by the master of the

ship. Suppressed resentments surface, the hidden strains inherent in their mutual ties come to light and the comfortable pretenses and illusions on which their common life was based break down. That which seemed most familiar becomes alien.

The Cherryh hero is always, even in spite of himself, walking on the edge of a precipice. Being less afraid of death than of losing his personal integrity and sense of identity, he constantly courts pain and destruction. Somehow he always does win through, though his success is rarely exactly what he would himself have wished for. In *Voyager in Night,* winning through depends on the kind of courage that can bear living without the social masks on which human intercourse is normally based and the private pretenses that help us to keep our fragile ego more or less intact. It depends on accepting the dark underside of human personality and existence and on realizing that the potential value of life does not depend on illusory comfort and false security. This insight is gained and tested in the struggle between the two copies of the ship's master program, a series of events as unpredictable and intricate as it is self-consistent. Working out all the possible developments of the basic situation, the author creates a rich and complex story out of a relatively simple underlying design.

The final victory of the Cherryh hero also depends on the other party of the encounter. The alien figures of power which her protagonists meet are neither simple monsters nor benign superbeings. In any case their very tangible alienness comes from the fact that their actions and even more their motives are only partly explicable. What is common to all of them, however, is that faced with a being different from themselves they exercise a certain restraint, showing a readiness, however reluctant, to endure the alienness of the other. Though the captain of the alien ship is not primarily concerned with the well-being of his human captives, he does not capriciously torture or destroy them either. Despite the lack of any common set of values or motives, he does take them into account as long as this is not in direct conflict with his own basic goals. As usual in Cherryh, finally he proves generous.

There is thus a biased fortune working in a perilous universe. Confrontations take place between individuals or groups able and willing to come to some kind of understanding. The ordeals that must be overcome as well as the quite ruthless way minor characters may be disposed of—reminding what might well happen to the chief characters —make the happy ends seem both satisfying and convincing. Her heroes reach a degree of security through very credible dangers. Here is a strictly secular variant of the "Joy" that J.R.R. Tolkien saw as one of the basic qualities of good fairy-stories. What it reveals is not any glimpse of a final victory of good in another life, but the unlikely fact that here in this life, even in the depths of space and on strange worlds, there may be found accommodation, tolerance and even real liking across stark biological and cultural barriers.

The night of the title, both literally the night of deep space and metaphorically everything that threatens and finally eradicates individual existence, is where one must find the good things of life if one can. There is no better life to come, but against the background of endless night, the value of all good things, however small and transient they may seem, is immense. This is the general purport of all her fiction, here expressed with great concentration and imaginative power.

A happy end for a few characters is plausible even on the level of realism chosen by C.J. Cherryh. When tales of individual vicissitudes are woven into a larger narrative encompassing whole societies, the good fortune of this and that man or woman is over-

shadowed by the disasters and afflictions that overwhelm others. Accordingly, though *Forty Thousand in Gehenna* too finally reaches a kind of happy end, before that most of its many minor and major characters have fought a losing battle against the powers of darkness.

The book is remarkable for the unity which its strong thematic continuity imposes on a discontinuous narrative. It falls into parts of 4 to 179 pages (sections I – III, section IV, sections V – VI, sections VII and VIII) covering 3 – 27 years each. Even within these five closely connected sequences of events there are frequent gaps in the chronological continuity. Between different sections there are gaps of up to a hundred years. All these fragmentary stories of various length about the lives of different Gehennans, capturing with sensitive skill the changing reactions of successive generations and individuals to their surroundings, augmented by transcripts of official documents and scholarly reports, correspondence and debate, add up to an authentic and moving analogue of real history.

Cherryh's alien encounters always take place on more than one level, but in *Forty Thousand in Gehenna* there is an uncommon diversity of levels and perspectives. In the background is the rivalry of the two human polities in space, Union and Alliance, introduced in *Downbelow Station,* and here contrasted in their actions on Gehenna. They remain on the fringes of the central action, but their responses provide the human comparison that sets off the otherness of Gehenna. In the second half of the book, the reports of Alliance scientists are a kind of chorus to the central events outside the human base. At the same time, in their different styles of action Union and Alliance are an alien encounter in a minor key.

Between starfaring humanity and the indigenous aliens fall the azi, the lab-born familiar from earlier books of Cherryh, and their naturally born descendants. Theirs was a kind of slavery where perfected techniques of indoctrination have supplanted open brutality. When technology breaks down, the new generations grow out of human attitudes and prejudices, gradually cutting their ties with humanity. Here is another aspect of the typical Cherryh pattern—the protagonist, unable to find a place for himself among his own people, in a sense betrayed by them, is forced into the encounter with the aliens. Here it is the azi and their descendants that must go through a painful process of cultural adaptation, involving not only the calibans but also different groups of survivors. The final polarization occurs between the two settlements of Styxside and Cloudside, who stem from different encounters with the calibans. Jin, the founder of the ruling line on Styx, for a time a helpless prisoner in the caliban mounds, comes to despise what he sees as his earlier naïvety and vulnerability; his first act outside the mounds in parricide. His cousin Cloud, faced by Jin's destruction of their home village and its remnants of human ways of life, flees. He escapes Jin but not the calibans, who come to him and his people as they came to Jin. Styxside arises from the shame and resentment of its first founder, while Cloudside is based on honest fear of the calibans. Cloudside is vulnerable and knows it. Styxside is equally vulnerable, but its whole way of life is an attempt to forget the fact. Being simply afraid of the calibans, Cloudsiders perforce learn to live with them. Unable to face their fear and resentment of the calibans, Styxsiders profess to be their masters.

The strain of maintaining an illusion of human mastery over the alien world is also reflected in the Stygian's aggressive show of physical courage and self-assertion. Both Cloudsiders and Styxsiders engage in a game of challenge and counterchallenge, a constant probing of the strengths and weaknesses within and between the two groups. On

Cloud there is both advance and retreat, and much of the aggression is absorbed or at least contained by the endless shifts of the game. On Styx, it seems, it is not possible to retreat, and antagonism builds up until it erupts in open violence. Accepting one's basic and unavoidable insecurity in alien surroundings, on the other hand, opens the way to a more sane and balanced kind of courage based on a clear appreciation of the real situation. One must know when to act and when to stay put. On Cloud it makes sense to ignore the threat posed by a dangerous enemy, because that is a way of deflecting if not nullifying the threat. Elai can afford to wait until Jin of Styxside makes his move, while her enemy is compelled to attack because in the eyes of his men anything else would be a sign of weakness.

The Alliance researchers cannot finally avoid taking sides in the struggle, though only Dr McGee, who becomes the friend and adviser of Elai, is honest and perceptive enough to admit this. Science fiction rarely has anything interesting to say of science, but here the debate between Dr McGee and Dr Genley not only manages to sound authentic but even takes up real and relevant issues and does this in an intelligent and compelling way. This dialogue puts the local conflict between Styx and Cloud in a wider perspective at the same time as the events, in turn, become an illustration of the everyday practicalities behind some of the abstractions of scientific methodology and social philosophy. Attitudes to the Gehennans, both to the descendants of human settlers and to the calibans, become closely associated with radically different view of human society.

The calibans, the ultimate factor behind the human drama on Gehenna, come slowly to the foreground. Retrospectively one can surmise that from the beginning they have been sounding their new human neighbours, more or less consciously steering their development. They are among C.J. Cherryh's farthest ventures from humanity. Even the weird aliens of *Voyager in Night* make more obvious human sense, for they possess feelings and urges at least analogous to human ones and, above all, the most important ones are made to speak human language. The calibans "speak" in a writing on the scale of cities, discussing issues that are intelligible only in their broadest outlines. There are no real translations, only the responses of the human characters to help the reader believe that there really is a language too strange to be simply conveyed in human terms. It is skilful indirection and the deliberate refusal to explain everything that makes the calibans a fine and intriguing evocation of alien intelligence. And of course, this successful indirection is finally based on the vivid and precise depiction of human characters.

The Book of Kells
by R.A. MacAvoy *(Bantam/Spectra, 1985, $3.50, 335pp)*

reviewed by Judith Hanna

Tracing the intricate spirals of a carved stone Celtic cross is as fitting a device as could be devised for opening a time-gate between twentieth-century Dublin and tenth-century Ireland, some twenty years before Brian Boru beat the bejasus out of the Danes at the Battle of Clontarf. And what better characters to walk through such a time-gate than a student of Irish history, Dr Derval O'Keane, and John Thorburn, a graphic artist with more sympathy for the aesthetics of the period than our own time? They walk into an Ireland of Christian monasteries where, when not burning from Viking raids, the old

pagan stories are being written down as Europe's earliest substantial body of vernacular literature, to be rediscovered by Matthew Arnold, Yeats and, most recently, the post-Tolkien spate of coarse-Celtic genre fantasy which has now taken over from space opera as marketing flavour-of-the-month for those readers whose preferred escapist reading is neither melting romance, nor murder, but into an imaginary world.

Alternative history has always been one of the sf staple themes. To a great extent, fantasy is exploited as an easy way to all the glamour of an exotic milieu, without any of the hard work that researching for a historical romance requires, and without the limits on plotting and character that the events of history dictate. Any historical novel is to some extent an alternative account that works the gaps between the "facts" of the historical record, offering interpretations of those facts not as dry academic hypothesis, but as fictionalized reconstruction. *The Book of Kells,* like Tim Powers's *The Anubis Gates,* is both an historical novel, and a fantasy. But then, most of the historical novels I read as a child (by writers like Henry Treece, Geoffrey Trease, Jane Oliver . . .) incorporated the "fantasy" element of some sort of time-gate—perhaps falling asleep in a magical cave, perhaps hitting one's head on a rock.

As historical reconstruction, MacAvoy has done a sound job of fleshing out the current scholarly consensus on the tribal nature of Celtic "chiefly" society, with its heroic ethics centred on cattle-raiding and possibly head-hunting, with warriors' exploits celebrated during feasting and story-telling in great (probably round) halls. Poets *(filid* or *ollamh)* were honoured as the repositories of the heroic traditions for which warriors died. (It seems to have been a way of life which had more in common with African pastoralist tribes like the Masai than with medieval and post-Malory romances or the modern coarse-Celtic of stock genre fantasies.) Two features which have made the traditional Celtic world so attractive to fantasy have been the richness of the oral tradition, written down by the Christian monks to preserve it from dying out, and the openness to magic that pervades those stories. Goddesses, the "Sovereignty of Ireland" and the Morrigan, and gods appear freely, mortals wander or are lured into the Otherworlds of Tír na nÓg or the Land of Women. Insofar as that mythic frame of mind survives in the modern, secular, scientific-material Western world, fantasy is where it finds its home. Historical recreation, however, to be plausible must preserve the delicate balance between retailing what people believe may happen, and what we can believe could *really* happen.

Except for two features, one of which is the time-gate, MacAvoy's *Book of Kells* is straight historical reconstruction rather than fantasy.

The time-gate is a narrative tradition we can accept as a way to step from modern mundane world into the story; the characters thus transplanted are ordinary people for us to identify with. They carry with them into the new world our viewpoint, our common-sense knowledge and assumptions, and so we expect that as they see and experience the new world they will comment, as we would, on how it differs from, and how it resembles, our own. This narrative device implies a certain approach to characterization. It is because MacAvoy does not exploit this identification, but instead as impersonal narrator presents and interprets the world and her characters to us, rather than speaking through them, that the reader remains distanced from the story, never caught up in it.

The other anomalous feature is the visit of the goddess Brigid (called "Bride" by MacAvoy, a spelling which besides being anachronistic invites mispronunciation) who

comes to sit by the campfire, and is hailed by the monastery-raised Ailesh as a hermit saint, a holy woman living wild in the woods. As such, she would be historically convincing as well as psychologically interesting—a Christian manifestation of the divine madness exemplified by Suibhne Gelt. But when she proves herself the veritable goddess all the previous painstaking historicity is ripped apart. Myth is a powerful ingredient; on one level it is simply another sort of story which people believe as a way of rendering their world accountable to themselves: as such it was a strong force in the Ireland MacAvoy is describing. But by presenting the goddess to us as a *reality* within this tale, MacAvoy creates the expectation that, from this point on, in the world we are reading of, myth is as real as what we accept as history. We are entitled to expect that so momentous an event as the appearance of a major goddess will have more consequence for the course of the story than simply putting a wounded poet back on his feet even more quickly than a miracle of modern medicine.

Here again, MacAvoy's concentration on merely presenting what happens, denying her characters the opportunity to comment and speculate upon the meaning of the visitation, leaves unsatisfied the questions and expectations roused in the reader. Why "Bride the Brewer"? St Bridget is the Virgin Mary's midwife, a healer, loved by animals, Brigid was a goddess of fire and poetry and healing, it was Medb, her name cognate with "mead", one would expect to be "the Brewer". True the Celtic deities were not narrowly focused specialists, but . . . Again, to what extent is Bride's appearance, with transformation from hag to radiant beauty, a "Sovereignty" manifestation? One may assume that MacAvoy is aware of these traditional meanings, but there is no evidence in the text of such awareness.

The Book of Kells confirms that MacAvoy is a storyteller who, working within the sf/fantasy genre, consciously avoids repeating its stereotypes; rather she produces quirky variants that play around its themes: here, upon the pseudo-Celtic fantasy; in *Tea with the Black Dragon* blending Chinese myth with computer hi-jinks and the mystery tradition; in the *Damiano* trilogy, a more thorough-going exercise in blending history (Italian Renaissance) with myth (Christian). She's a conscientious writer, building up background detail in order to offer more than mere story, but this painstaking conscientiousness applied to her characters does not allow them to develop any liveliness. The limitation of her aims, and consequently her achievements, becomes evident if *The Book of Kells* is compared with Rhoda Lerman's *The Book of the Night,* (recently published by The Women's Press sf list); the difference is between a storyteller working within a simple convention to produce a simple entertainment, and a writer possessed by a chaotic vision that weaves the Irish monastic island of Iona in with esoteric philosophical speculations which unite Irish myth, Christian dogmas and heresies, and the modern technological/secular world with immensely more verve and depth than all MacAvoy's care can encompass.

Why the title *The Book of Kells*? True, the illuminated Gospel now in Trinity College Library, Dublin, does make a cameo appearance. But, as with Brigid's brief walk-on part, the numinous name is simply tacked on for surface decoration. If MacAvoy can think through more thoroughly the implications and logic of her story, using such strong elements as foundation rather than trimming (or else leaving them out as irritating distractions), and if she can become more at ease with her characters, she may fulfil the promise that won her the John W. Campbell Award (Best New SF Writer) in 1984.

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

reviewed by Donald M. Hassler

Very bright young writers dedicated to much more than *mere* high art literature and usually evangelically charged with fervent good news seem to be the hallmark of science fiction from Wells to cyberpunk. And we know that religious zealots seldom agree with one another. Thus it does not surprise me to read Brian Stableford's powerful review in these pages (*Foundation* 36 pp.100-01) of the John Campbell letters, and I make no quibble with his carefully discovered cavils. Writing as a scholar, Stableford uncovers what is absent in this collection; and I agree with and lament the fact that none of the editors seems to feel that a rigorous historical methodology is necessary here. I believe Stableford's call for rigour, however, masks his dislike of what I hope future scholars will be able to map as the significant belief structure as well as "literary" contribution of the Campbell era. This collection is a document from that era, published now for our use by survivors from that era. And I think it is an exciting document.

For example, in the small amount of scholarly apparatus that prefaces the book the editors give a brief outline of their criteria of selection from the "tens of thousands" of letters (more on this below), clues as to the current provenance of this wealth of literary material, and acknowledgement of "initial financial assistance" from Forrest J. Ackerman, Isaac Asimov, L. Ron Hubbard and A.E. van Vogt. The introductory essays by the editors quote extensively from these disciples of Campbell's as well as from a number of others, and it is George Hay who pinpoints in his own words from out of this mass of quotation the key Campbellesque traits: free-wheeling thought, optimism, and a kind of continual, naïve move toward the transcendental. I believe it is in his recollections about this period in *The Early Asimov* that the supreme rationalist himself says that the Campbell writers themselves knew exactly at the time that Joyce was not their model nor Freud their inspiration, and they knew that it was Campbell who was leading them toward an optimism and toward a cosmic, quasi-religious generality that was so different from the prevailing Augustinian heaviness of modernism. These same writers are still hopeful, still opposed to literary modernism and despair, and still putting up money to get the optimistic and energetic gospel into print.

Again, I think the role of Asimov here is my best example of the tone and nature of this book. Certainly he is leery of religious fanaticism and has gone on record against dianetics (as has Hal Clement in conversations with me), but both in the letters themselves when Campbell talks about him (and I agree with Stableford and other reviewers that we want to see more of the actual early letters in which Campbell was pushing Asimov toward his grand fictional designs) and in Asimov's recent cooperative efforts to bring out this book we see a liberality of pure thought underlying the crazy ideas. In the fall of 1953, well into dianetics, Campbell writes:

> Isaac Asimov's an experimental biochemist—a brilliant guy, and a fine human being. We like each other. I don't make him study the mind; he doesn't make me study biochemistry. We report tidbits to each other, and each of us gets useful help from the other's work.

Along with this liberality of mind and openness of thought, the real influence upon this

book and dominant tone in the letters selected comes from Hubbard and the mentalist belief structures that he and Campbell worked out. I think this is interesting, refreshing, and indeed makes the book useful as a document for anyone who wants to understand how different modern science fiction is from modern literature.

In fact, I began reading through these letters in wide open, optimistic Southern California shortly after hearing Gregory Benford and David Brin, my favorite new Campbellesque advocates of optimism and the "hardness" of continuing thought, hold forth against literary elitism and despair over precursors; and when I picked up the *LA Times* the next day there was the glossy, paid supplement on Hubbard. One of the final letters the editors choose is a 1970 discussion with Benford of the physics of tachyons; Brin was still in the wings when Campbell died. The point, I think, is that the belief in the liberating power of pure thought has a momentum from the Campbell years that still pays for evangelical work and still clearly influences the genre. What did I read recently in *Locus* about Hubbardesque methodologies of mental discipline being taught to the Writers of the Future workshop participants in New Mexico? Stableford and others are rightly suspicious, perhaps, of such cowboy-American optimism now associated with the West Coast. And so the real objections to be found with this collection may not be with the lack of scholarly methodology but rather with the clear selection strategy that highlights the optimism and the liberality of thought and the Hubbard belief structures. On the other other hand, that strategy makes the book powerful and an important document.

Tom O'Bedlam
by Robert Silverberg *(Arbor House, 1985; Gollancz, 1986, 320pp, £9.95)*

reviewed by Rachel Pollack

What are the relationships between paranoid hallucinations, mythological cults, mystical visions, and science fiction stories? In *Tom O'Bedlam* Robert Silverberg seeks, if not to map these relationships, at least to stake out some of the territory. The novel raises more questions than it answers, not only in terms of issues and ideas, but also, and very pointedly, in terms of its plot. Throughout the book the characters wonder and argue whether or not their dreams and visions are real. Towards the end the book gives a clue that the visions do indeed depict genuine places and beings. Yet the quality of these visions—naïve wish fulfillment for salvation from a world on the edge of social, cultural, and ecological destruction—make it hard for the reader to believe in the visions' literal reality.

Those readers who expect Silverberg to answer this question will be disappointed, maybe even mildly shocked. In a literature which brags about its sense of wonder, almost all science fiction stories end with a neat wrap-up, every question duly logged and answered. We have learned to expect this. Sf stories can get away with a non-happy ending much more easily than a non explained ending. The plot, or the character, or the language, may suggest ambiguity; but ambiguous information remains taboo.

Cryptozoic by Brian Aldiss is one of the few sf novels to end without a firm explanation. The novel posits two possible conclusions—either we take the events literally, or the main character is psychotic. Aldiss constructs the ending so that neither conclusion is

possible. As the evidence points in one direction some hint turns us the other way.

Silverberg takes a simpler—and for that reason more radical—approach to the same issue. Are Tom's visions, shared by waves of desperate people, actual communications or simply psychotic hallucinations which Tom has managed to project into other people's minds? The book leads to a climax in which the characters leave their bodies. Either they go to Tom's other planets or else they die. The reader never finds out. The book stays here.

Silverberg's story takes place at the beginning of the 22nd century, after a radioactive "dust war" has left much of America uninhabitable and the rest fragmented, with life dwindling and little hope of a restoration. It is curious that Silverberg sets his novel so far ahead. The weapons used are pretty much today's technology, the two sides in the war were the USA and the USSR. And except for certain exotic technological touches, such as a "synthetic woman" or android, the world is recognizably our own, with televisions, taxicabs, vans. The psychiatrists in the novel discuss and argue in very contemporary terms. The story could take place more plausibly in forty years rather than a hundred and twenty.

Paradoxically, this extended time gives the story more impact. By calling it so far ahead yet depicting our world, Silverberg makes us very aware of the book as a story, a conscious metaphor. And this contrasts nicely with the book's theme, sf as unconscious metaphor.

In a society without hope people face four choices: despair, neurotic rejection of the facts, retreat into psychotic hallucination, or messianic hopes for divine deliverance. The first two choices appear in the book as, respectively, the patients and doctors in a psychiatric clinic. The patients, a collection ranging from a priest to an android to a con man, supposedly suffer from "Gelbard's syndrome", an affliction characterized by anomie and helplessness. But in fact they have only recognized the facts. The psychiatrists, by calling despair a "syndrome" and trying to cure it, have retreated into neurosis. The treatment (we never hear of anyone actually cured of Gelbard's syndrome) consists of daily use of a "mind pick", a device which destroys memory. The psychiatrists believe that by scraping the mind clean of bad thoughts a healthy core will emerge. But they cannot scrape out truth.

The dreams and visions that come to the patients, and then to the doctors, provide a much better "treatment"—an alternative reality. What is remarkable about these visions, what enables the characters to insist on the visions' objective reality, is their uniformity. Extremely detailed, they consist of several distinct worlds. Everyone who dreams of them dreams the same images.

And yet, the visions are all different. Each person, or group of people, interpret them in their own way. The priest believes he has seen God on his throne, Senhor Papamacer creates a Vodoun-like cult around the images, others consider them worlds in outer space. And, of course, still others consider them psychotic mass hallucinations.

The last view gains credence when we and the characters discover that all the visions originated with one person, the wanderer who calls himself Tom O'Bedlam. Even Senhor Papamacer, who claims to have brought the news of the gods, turns out to be a former taxidriver who took Tom home one night.

We encounter Tom at the very beginning of the novel. We are told in the first page or two that a vision is coming. But when Silverberg describes it (or rather, describes the way

Tom sees it) something very interesting happens. We expect a glorious image. Instead, we get a story—a science fiction story.

> Shining elegant crystalline forms . . . were beginning to glide across the screen of Tom's soul . . . Their faceted eyes, glittering with wisdom, were set in rows of three on each of the four sides of their tapering diamond-shaped heads . . . "That's the Misilyne Triad, d'ye see? The three in the center, the tallest. And that's Vuruun, who was ambassador to the Nine Suns under the old dynasty."

There are characters here, history, plot. This is not only sf, but sf of a recognizable sub-genre, the picaresque space opera, with all its galactic emperors and glittering detail. It is the sf of Jack Vance, the sf of *Lord Valentine's Castle.*

If the genre is hackneyed, Silverberg carries off his parody in great style, surpassing even the wonders of Majipoor.

> It was like a torrent, a wild flood . . . He saw quivering transparent life-forms too strange to be nightmares. He saw whirling disks of light stretching to the core of the universe. Through him raced libraries of data, the lists of emperors and kings, gods and demons, the texts of bibles sacred to unknown religions, the music of an opera that took eleven galactic years to perform. He held on the palm of his hand a jewelled sphere no larger than a speck of dust in which were recorded the names and histories of the million monarchs of the nine thousand dynasties of Sapiil . . . He saw the fifty demigods of the Theluvara Age that had been three billion years ago when even the Kusereen were young, and he saw the Eye People of the Great Starcloud yet to come, and the ones who called themselves the Last, though he knew they were not.

If we recognize the dreams as sf stories the people in the novel do not. They take them as, alternatively, psychosis, revelation, or invitations to a journey across the stars. Silverberg has not invented the relation between sf and each of these alternatives to daily reality. The constructions of psychotics bear remarkable resemblance to the plots of science fiction stories, a connection explored by such writers as Philip K. Dick, Doris Lessing, Robert Heinlein, and Frederick Pohl. Sf as religious vision has long fascinated writers such as Arthur C. Clarke, Olaf Stapledon, and again, both Lessing and Dick. Sf's relation to mythology shows up strongly in the work of Roger Zelazny, Alan Garner, and all those post-Tolkien fantasy writers who base their plots and settings on myths of ancient cultures.

We can also see the last relationship from the other side. The UFO belief in wise beings from outer space who will guide helpless humans away from self-destruction is a modern equivalent of the belief that gods or angels will help us through life. Around the world today millions of people believe in such intervention. It becomes the dominant view of the characters in *Tom O'Bedlam.* But is it "true", as in Stephen Spielberg's *Close Encounters of The Third Kind*? The book refuses to say.

To some extent, sf has replaced gods and spirits because the scientific universe remains open while the old religious one has closed down, kept going mostly by nostalgia. In *Tom O'Bedlam* we are told, "Ferguson didn't believe in heaven". But who does? Certainly not the precise heaven of Dante. Some years ago one of the small evangelist radio stations in America offered for sale star maps with the location of heaven marked along the constellations. One doubts they could have sold many copies. But if we switch mythological claims to "space gods" in UFO's, who can say for certain that such things cannot exist?

The different interpretations of his characters allows Silverberg to compare and contrast such things as religion and myth, or hallucination and vision. Father Christie

comes from a religion that has shed its myths. He sees only a static image of God. Senhor Papamacer, however, mixes Vodoun, established mythology (he gives the name "O Minotauros" to one of the beings in his vision), and UFO ideas into Silverberg's compelling version of a cult.

Silverberg looks at the difference between true vision and psychosis in an encounter between Tom and Ferguson. Ferguson suffers so deeply from despair that he cannot even recognize his own lack of connection to life. When the others at the clinic begin dreaming of strange worlds Ferguson longs to dream as well. He tells himself he only wants what everyone else has. In fact, he yearns for deliverance. Tom implants the vision in him, shattering the ice around the con man's heart. Revelation heals; hallucination only fragments further. Does this imply verity to Tom's claims? So many other details point the other way.

The character of Elszabet helps bring out the relationship between sf and psychosis. As a psychiatrist she resists the dreams, though she recognizes their attraction. When she gives in she goes further than the others, entering the dreams as a participant rather than a passive observer. What she enters is Tom's stories. Again we find the galactic dukes and duchesses, the ambassadors, the fantastic touches, such as a poet who composes in light instead of words.

And yet, the quality is that of hallucination rather than literature. The other world is too perfect, too lovely, an escape. A mark of madness is the subsuming of the real world into the hallucination. The poet, tall and shy, clearly represents Elszabet's colleague at the clinic, Dan Robinson, whom Elszabet desires but doesn't approach for fear of entanglement.

The psychotic substitutes wish fulfillment for reality. So does some escapist sf, but the writer recognizes her or his creation as a fantasy. Serious sf does not use its creations as escapes, but as metaphors for conflicts in reality. The only conflict in Elszabet's dream is with reality itself, the fact that she must return. She thinks of her waking moments as a "sojourn" on Earth, a classic paranoid attitude. And yet, Silverberg does not allow us the simple explanation of insanity for Elszabet's journeys. The plot insists on the possibility of objective fact for the other worlds.

As well as plot the book uses reference to develop its themes. In the first sentence Tom decides to try "going westward", i.e. towards the coast. But the expression "going west" used to mean dying. At the end the reader does not know if Tom's power has sent the people to a real place, or simply killed them.

The book says of Elszabet, "A great abyss was opening before her and Tom was inviting her to jump." This description may be only a cliché. However, it also describes the ending of Carlos Castaneda's *Tales of Power,* in which Castaneda's shaman-guide leads him to jump off a cliff. Ever since Castaneda's first book his devotees have insisted on the reality of his experiences, while others have taken them for metaphoric stories—in other words, sf. Interestingly, *Tales of Power* ends with the leap, but does not tell what happens, just as with the open ending of *Tom O'Bedlam* (though of course Castaneda obviously lived to write his bestseller about the experience).

One or two of Silverberg's touches do not resonate as deeply as others. The name "Elszabet" suggests Elizabeth, and thus royalty. It also recalls the demon Beelzebub (a European degeneration of Ba'alzebuth, a Middle Eastern divinity whose name meant "Lord Of The Flies"). If these references exist, however, Silverberg does not appear to use

them in the development of the character or her place in the story.

Probably most significant of the characters' names is Tom O'Bedlam himself. The name comes from an old song, which Silverberg quotes at the head of each section of the novel. But the name also recalls *King Lear*. In *Lear* Edgar feigns insanity as Tom O'Bedlam in order to survive in an insane world. He is not the Fool. When his blind father wishes to jump off a cliff, Edgar/Tom leads him to a small rise where he can jump without hurting himself. Silverberg's Tom is no fake, and the abyss to which he leads Elszabet and the others is very real, though the characters (and thus the reader) remain blind to what will happen when they leap.

Tom is a fool, an innocent who trusts and loves the world for he believes he can see God's hand in all creation. By the end of the book he compares himself to Moses, believing he will send the children to the promised land but remain behind himself.

In *Tom O'Bedlam* Robert Silverberg has written a true novel of ideas—not the artificial conversations in which so many sf characters chat away about relativity or metaphysics or whatever other concept the writer wishes to display. The ideas here emerge as they should, through the story and the telling.

The Conglomeroid Cocktail Party
by Robert Silverberg *(Gollancz, 1986, £8.95)*

reviewed by Geoff Ryman

I hate it when people say that sf is a literature of ideas. It's so pompous. Ideas for what, about what? Ideas to be used how?

A fancy about a space-station zoo stocked with reconstructed dinosaurs is not an idea, except in the sense that it is an idea for a science fiction story. It has no other application.

If the story is "Our Lady of the Sauropods" by Robert Silverberg, it will be an sf story in the classic mould, providing colourful incident in an organized framework. When the dinosaurs turn out to be intelligent, telepathic and plotting to re-take the Earth, it's not a serious speculation; it's a denouement, a note on which to end. The story is a pleasing imagining that makes ritualistic passes at what sf calls ideas. Conceits would be a better word for them.

Silverberg is a classicist. His stories derive shape, tone, context and meaning from familiar models. Here are some brief summaries of stories from his collection *The Conglomeroid Cocktail Party*.

A time traveller enlists the aid of his past self to eliminate a future rival in love. The surprise ending: this new past self eliminates him, too, to avoid paradoxes in time.

A man goes to Israel in search of hallucinogenic mushrooms that might have been the source of Christianity.

A man visiting Mexico takes part in the Day of the Dead celebrations and encounters a supernatural being.

In a far future, jet-setters constantly remodel their own bodies in pursuit of fashionable pleasure.

Heinlein, Philip K. Dick, Malcolm Lowry, Michael Moorcock . . . it's difficult to read these tales without tasting the flavours of other material, and not just sf or horror. The ghosts of the great short story writers hover here too—de Maupassant, perhaps in a tale of

adultery; Henry James in the way a low-key situation is meant to be given a final wrench in a killing last sentence. This is a writer who has learned many lessons.

He is a great talent whose virtues are traditional. There is little in the prose or the shape of these stories that would surprise Robert Louis Stevenson. Except for a greater sexual frankness, there is little in the content that would have been unusual in sf stories of thirty years ago. The stories read as you were always taught short stories should: an interesting opening to hook the reader; no extraneous detail; a beginning, middle and resolving end.

But the tidy endings are often less arresting than the promising beginnings. In at least seven of these tales, there is a falling-off, a loss of energy. These particular stories disappoint.

In "Waiting for the Earthquake", a human colonist takes a last tour of his adopted homeworld that is about to be destroyed by a recurring earthquake. He visits all the tourist sites, remembers his past life, and realizes that the native aliens regard the earthquake as a ritual purification. The world is then destroyed.

In "The Changeling", a man finds he has slipped into the life he would have had in a slightly different parallel world. He doesn't like it, but decides to adapt.

In "The Man Who Floated in Time", a peculiar fellow explains to a young writer how it is that he can travel backwards in time. He offers to teach the writer how. The writer declines, is given the chance again, and declines again.

Such stories don't seem to go anywhere. A very few of them have a twist or surprise ending. By these, Silverberg himself seems unconvinced. More often they end up exactly as you would expect in real life—in uncomfortable, long-term adjustment. These endings are not always unhappy. In "The Trouble with Sempoanga", a man catches a horrible new venereal disease from a casual affair and finds himself permanently quarantined on an alien planet—an exile in a forest paradise with the woman he comes to love.

It could be that Silverberg is insisting in these tales that life does fall off, that stories do not end as much as straggle on, that life does not have a satisfying shape. It is his own brand of subtlety, seamlessly joined to the demands of the genre.

But I also think it would be fair to say that most of the stories in this collection are not about anything. Most of them do not confront personal, emotional, social, political, spiritual or even technical matters. They touch on them for the purposes of story telling. The exotic aliens, the other-world landscapes, the time-travel tourism, the edgy love stories, the religious imagery . . . these are formal elements. They are not meant to be taken to heart. As practised by Silverberg, sf is a minor art form, like some kinds of verse, to be admired for its surface polish and adherence to form.

The stories are full of the pleasures of fantasy and fine craftsmanship. You find yourself anticipating things about the characters, like the shape of their bodies—Silverberg can somehow imply the shape of a body by describing other things. The title story of the collection is lightning quick and does catch something real—the fear men have of being seen through by women. This is a common theme in these stories, but one embodied here in fantastic colours and prose that seems possessed by the life it is describing. Both the other two stories I most liked—"The Pope of the Chimps" and "A Thousand Paces along the Via Dolorosa"—marshal religious imagery to achieve the kind of culmination at which he says he aims, the "classic short-story pay-off". Though I was left wondering how much religion really means to him.

The stories sell and pay well, and Silverberg is a pragmatic professional—which is not

to say he is without ideals. He is determined to write beautifully and does, and the stuff keeps pouring out of him. He has most of the field beaten by an Olympic mile. But he does not outpace himself. He writes fiction as if fiction didn't matter.

Soldier of the Mist
by Gene Wolfe *(Tor Books, 1986, 352pp, $15.95; Gollancz, £10.95)*

reviewed by Gregory Feeley

Gene Wolfe's new novel, clearly the first of a series, reverses with almost formal deliberation the tenets framing *The Book of the New Sun:* instead of a far-future narrator who can forget nothing, we have one from antiquity who can remember nothing. Given a sword and sent roaming by circumstances greater than his understanding, the protagonist comes to write the book we are reading, not some time afterward as Severian the Lame had the leisure to do, but the evening of every day recounted, before the debility attending his head injury wipes the recollection from his mind.

The time, we are told in a note preceding the "Forward", is 479 B.C. The text, we learn from "G.W.", a scholar who sounds something like John Ray introducing *Lolita,* was written on the first of several ancient papyrus scrolls, herewith translated. Its author, a wounded soldier, writes "Read This Each Day" on the scroll's outer edge, and writes when he is reminded to, though often without reading what he has earlier written and now forgets. He learns his name only on the novel's last page, although he is called "Iatro", which is Latin for mercenary, and throughout the novel accepts a physician's assumption that this is his name. "Latro" is neither Asian nor Greek, but a Latin-speaking "barbarian" from the north, in the pay of the Persian army of the Great King (not named but clearly Xerxes, whose campaign to conquer the Greek states foundered that year).

Thus the novel is a first-person account of an adventure, but it is also an essentially non-narrative document, an instrument almost, as in their various ways are *Pale Fire, The White Hotel, Flaubert's Parrot,* and Pamela Zoline's "Instructions for Exiting This Building In Case of Fire", all instances of what E.L. Doctorow, identifying a salient post-Modernist strategy, has called "false documents". Ursula LeGuin is quoted as saying that "Every time Gene Wolfe writes a new book we need a whole new definition of 'science fiction' ", which sounds like standard dustjacket superlative but merits serious reflection. *The Book of the New Sun* may be Wolfe's attempt to write a Dickensian evocation of a full-blown world and a young man's coming of age, but it is also strikingly a false document, a validation, as John Clute and a few others have begun to show, of Severian's ascension to the throne that is perhaps disingenuous in the extreme, which good David Copperfield never was. *Free Live Free* is positively subversive in conceiving life in inner-city America in bucolic terms, an attempt at validating suburbanite Wolfe's sentimentalized, ethnically stereotyped topos so rhetorically effective that nobody noticed it, just as nobody noticed that Alden Weer in *Peace* is a ghost freed in the novel's first sentence by the fall of the tree planted over his grave, which Wolfe finally had to point out himself. Beneath the strong narrative line that can be clearly traced in all Wolfe's novels, and notwithstanding the crusty mien he often presents in his autobiographical remarks (coming across as a redoubt of solid sense and probity in fatuous times), runs a current undermining the seemingly-proffered principle that in the

progression of outward events can truth be gleaned—an undermining that one hesitates to call modernist or post-modernist, if perhaps only because Wolfe's animus toward academia and the literary establishment is so effective—again, rhetorically—in putting us off the trail.

So Latro's text, its vocabulary and odd interstitial lacunae, informs the story it tells more problematically than the reader, even one aware of the fine capillaries suffusing the *New Sun,* is often lulled into thinking. The vocabulary is the more evident case: although Sparta, Athens, Attica, and other prominent places are frequently mentioned, Latro does not give their Greek names but translates or mistranslates their meanings, removing from the text those resonances the reader would hear in the mention of Athens (here "Thought") or Sparta ("Rope"—Spartans are the Rope Makers). A far more complex estranging device is the necessity of Latro's recounting an event within hours of its occurrence, or else accepting someone's account for it. Latro does not recognize his travelling companions each morning, and occasionally describes major characters as though they were onlookers, sometimes casually enough that the reader may fail to recognize them. When Latro is deprived of his scroll for a period of weeks, he cannot write later what had occured in the interval. Wolfe is careful to make Latro's entries credibly short, and to give him time enough to write the entries we read, although I believe a few chapters end on cliff-hangers that Latro's method of composition cannot account for. And in the middle of the book is a single chapter written by someone else, a helpful account of "the events of the past night and day" that Latro might retain a record of them which, characteristically for Wolfe, ends up being largely about other things instead. It is a modernist feint such as Robert Musil might have relished.

And what is it, beneath these estranging and subverting layers, that the ingenuous Latro writes in recounting his tale? He is captured and enslaved, sold and then commandeered when Pausanius (a hero of the battle of Plataea, yet to take place as the novel ends) dreams of him. What Latro is slow to comprehend, knowing as little as he does, is that—perhaps as a consequence of his injury (the text does not specify, though the dustjacket seems confident)—he can see the gods as they move about the land and sea. Like Severian, who attracted the attention of an undine, Latro seems to hold some importance to at least some of the gods, goddesses, lycanthropes and ghosts that he sees. The possibility is raised that Latro's injury may have occured not in battle but at the hand of a goddess near whose shrine he fell. Clues are strewn, and with the line "(*These are the last words of the first scroll*)" the novel ends.

What kind of series does this work inaugurate? Unlike the *New Sun,* we are not told with this first volume its eventual dimensions, and if there is to be a book for each scroll the total number will be "several". Wolfe seems unlikely to have drafted the entire work before releasing its first part as he did with the earlier series, but there is no reason to suppose he does not know where he is going, whether an overall title is vouchsafed us yet or not. Drawing parallels with the tetralogy may seem labored—although if Latro proved to be some avatar of Severian looping through the Atrium of Time I would not be astonished—but the book seems by an almost subliminal pressure repeatedly to raise the issue.

As a novel, *Soldier of the Mist* does not read so smoothly or stand alone so well as *The Shadow of the Torturer:* the estranging tactics interfere with any superficial attempt to read it as gorgeous romance. The fictitious Forward, which warns that the translation

may sometimes err in reconstructing Latro's heavily abbreviated and unpunctuated text, seems almost intended to prompt mistrust, but proves reliable, as far as it goes, in explaining the place names. Nevertheless a reader who does not consult Herodotus or at least de Selincourt will have little sense of Latro's itinerary or the status of the war unfolding about him. (A Glossary appears at the end, possibly at the insistence of Wolfe's editor, like the chronology so grudgingly appended to the U.S. trade edition of *Free Live Free*. If so, Wolfe had the last laugh—the Glossary is singularly unhelpful, rarely giving more than did the text passage that sent the reader thither.)

Soldier of the Mist lacks the density of the tetralogy, although the varying repetitions of Latro's daily discovery of his world bring their own strange felicities. The last prominent contrast with the *New Sun*—an ingenuous versus a disingenuous narrator—seems to limit the book's verbal complexity, yet Wolfe wrings much even from this evident constriction. What more may be wrung it is too soon to say, but readers will be some time looking. Wolfe is once again pushing against the definitions.

In Milton Lumky Territory
by Philip K. Dick *(Gollancz, 1985, 213pp, £8.95)*

The Cosmic Puppets
by Philip K. Dick *(Panther/Granada, 1985, 143pp, £1.95, paper)*

reviewed by Stef Lewicki

This is the second of Dick's non-sf novels to appear in this country (the first was *Confessions of a Crap Artist*) and though superficially it seems to be yet another novel portraying the awfulness of life in mid-town USA, after a more careful consideration it is seen to mirror both aspects of Dick the person and fictional themes that are more common to the reader through his sf writing.

The characters and places of the novel are very *ordinary*—Dick has a touch for the details of small-town life, and characterisation to match—but the main characters are people desperately seeking and in need of mental and emotional contact with others. Susan, a twice-divorced ex-teacher and now partner in a run-down office services business, quickly ensnares the travelling commercial buyer Bruce, enticing him to abandon a promising job to live with her and use his commercial acumen to set her failing business on the right tracks, to which end she quite brutally forces out her existing woman partner.

The bleakness and emptiness of Life is emphasised by the unseemly haste with which all this takes place, in a portrait of the American vastness which has the feeling of a permanent limbo; their swift marriage seems almost unreal until we remember that this is a society which cannot countenance failure, either commercial or in relationships, which I feel we can notice in Dick's life too, in his series of relationships and marriages, and the fact that he often lived on the verge of poverty. Bruce feels a failure compared with his elder brother, and for Susan, marriage to Bruce is her third attempt: it is as if the need to be married is more important than the quality or nature of the relationship itself. All this is complicated by the fact that Susan was Bruce's secondary school teacher: as well as adding a certain sordid, almost incestuous feeling to the relationship, it seems to presage

its ultimate failure too.

It is distinctly unnerving and painful to follow these characters who seek desperately without knowing what they want, and always seem to be living on the knife-edge between sanity and madness or crisis. Susan is constantly on the verge, veering between indecisiveness and threatening in business and emotionally, which foreshadows Dick's perceptive studies of life on the borderline in such novels as *Martian Time-slip*, for instance: narrative rooted in personal experience, for, knowing the bare outlines of his own painful life, it is almost impossible to miss the autobiographical sense which exudes in so many ways from this book originally written in 1957.

The ethereal and enigmatic Milton Lumky of the title—also a commercial traveller—develops the "on the road" theme of 'fifties America. He is aging and ill as well as much more astute in his judgment than Bruce; he is also a more likeable human being, and selfless in his decision to help Bruce on a quest for a job-lot of cheap Japanese imported typewriters which will finally enable Bruce to succeed commercially. The journey reveals the seediness and emptiness of the physical aspects of life in transit: motels, food, the awful roads and semi-conscious towns on the way, the "kipple" of the American landscape.

Philip Dick's spiritual concerns, which preoccupied his later life and writings emerge through Milton Lumky who is also living on a knife-edge because of his chronic kidney ailment: he accuses Bruce of being mad, and of lacking any permanent values in his life, of not believing in God. Milton is the one redeeming character who rises above the materialist and self-seeking attitudes of the others.

In Milton Lumky Territory is a series of cameo portraits of an almost unbearably depressing world peopled with lost characters, through which shines the humanity of Milton Lumky, despite the cynicism of age and experience. In the end Susan dumps Bruce for very specious motives after his purchase of a batch of dud typewriters—a particularly nasty twist of the cut-throat commercial screw, for since he cannot type he does not realise that the keyboards are Spanish rather than English—sacks him and writes him out of her life. The paranoia finally spirals into insanity as we leave Bruce in a motel room mentally re-writing his relationship with Susan as a success and wondering whether she has just punished him for being an obnoxious pupil at school.

The Cosmic Puppets resembles a cheap, 'fifties horror novel: it was published in 1957 and then disappeared; indeed according to one rumour Dick so disliked it that he destroyed his copy of the manuscript. Fans will of course read this skimpy, sketchy, characterless novel, thin on explanation and full of holes, not out of masochism but because it nevertheless presages so many of the themes that Dick later wrote about at greater length and much better: the changeability of reality, the search for the real self. The hero, on his return to his home town after a long absence finds a totally unfamiliar town where he supposedly died aged nine, and so he has to find out the truth. Add a few battles between mysterious forces of good and evil, and people living in each other's universes . . .

If, however, this is your first Philip K. Dick novel, do not judge him on it: most sf writers have to write some junk just to stay alive and he was no exception.

The Postman
by David Brin *(Bantam Books, 1985, 295pp, $15.95)*

reviewed by Scott Bradfield

After a nuclear war devastates America it takes almost seventeen years before anybody can even *think* about putting together a decent postal system again. And by now, of course, America needs more than your average ordinary postman to get things going; by now America needs a really great postman, the sort of man who's not afraid to believe in the really "big ideas" like freedom, love, honour, commitment—you know, all those things that presumably made America great in the first place. America needs a postman like Gordon Krantz, the hero of David Brin's latest novel. Gordon refers to himself as the last idealist in a harsh, unimaginative world. He's secure enough in his masculinity to fall in love with a radical feminist (just because he doesn't agree with her politically doesn't mean he can't respect her as a person). And he firmly disbelieves in violence—unless, of course, it proves absolutely necessary and then, well, Gordon may be even-tempered, but that doesn't mean he's going to take any nonsense—not from *any*body. Like Robinson Crusoe, Krantz represents the implicitly ethical man, that formerly Rousseauist, currently libertarian dream of "natural" morality and order. Unlike Crusoe, however, Gordon has obviously spent a lot of time in California. Brin's entire novel, in fact, may have spent a little too much time in California; its highly contrived narrative, as well as the post-holocaust America it depicts, seems luridly convenient, like one of those midnight mini-markets for which California is so deservedly famous.

Even Brin's Apocalypse doesn't qualify as a disaster so much as a sort of patriotic convenience. Gordon only rarely recalls the "Doomwar", and then only to recall the selfless, fundamentally American courage of his fellow soldiers; though the war was purportedly very nasty—including famines, plagues, Darwinian combat—these expositional assertions (in a novel which is almost *exclusively* exposition) are dramatically contradicted by the villages Gordon visits while in his mythic guise of postman, villages with names like Oakridge filled with people like Adele and Mrs. Thompson, very nice, hospitable people patiently awaiting the day they can crawl from the swamp of thermonuclear barbarism and become thoughtful postal correspondents again. Americans are innately good people even after a "Doomwar" has deprived them of such civilized essentials as Megavitamins and toothpaste, and Brin's postman seeks to reunify this "good" country—resembling now nothing more than scattered suburbs in search of a reputable shopping mall—by means of a patriotic "idea" or "symbol". I place these terms in quotations in order to emphasize their persistent, litanic recurrence in Brin's narrative. Gordon Krantz doesn't develop as a character so much as iterate and reiterate the same thin, breezy ideology; he envisions himself saving not America so much as "America", what he calls the "dream that would not die". Apparently he means *America: the Motion Picture.* And just as democratic ideology demands a metaphysic of The Greater Good (God, say, or Freedom), Brin's novel also elevates everything to the level of some inexplicable abstraction.

Ultimately *The Postman*'s ideology generates its own technical inefficiency. Brin exposits rather than depicts, his characters explain rather then converse. Gordon Krantz himself isn't a character so much as a "symbol", much like the American flag which appears on porch-fronts wherever he makes a delivery. Gordon, like the postal insignia on

his cap, is a "shinier metal" than other metals, just as his love for Dena embodies a greater love than most earthbound mortals can ever hope to experience; he isn't even sure "prewar America, with all its sexual variations, had ever come up with a name for the kind of relationship they had". Symbolic, nameless, essentially cliché ideals subsume individual characters and their relations just as individual actions are subsumed by Brin's clumsy enveloping plot, a plot which reduces human motivations and personalities to articulated contrivances. When Gordon sneaks through Cyclops security, personnel conveniently reveal (in voices loud enough for Gordon to overhear) prominent opinions concerning, of course, Gordon Krantz. Though Gordon loses his diary on the west coast, a series of ridiculous coincidences cause it to reappear in the hands of his Holnist enemies in the deep south, just in time to imperil Krantz and help Brin to generate a suspense-filled "grand finale". These unremitting and awkward manipulations of the reader prove that *The Postman* is not simply technically incompetent; it is fundamentally and unregenerately *dull*. That it has also proven a commercially successful book (it has been nominated for both Hugo and Nebula awards, and won the Locus Readers' Poll for Best Novel) forces me to conclude that it must testify to some innate complicity between adolescent patriotism and the ideology of science fiction in general. The American dream is the dream of science fiction writers and fans as well: the dream of irrefutable and abstract laws, propositions, data. Like America, the science fiction "community" dreams of the group, the pack, an indissoluble network of *chums*. Whether it's the dream of technology, or the dream of summer retreats in fantasy lands, both America and science fiction struggle to imagine a communal and enduring Life which supersedes and makes bearable human and mundane living.

But even Gordon Krantz (and, we hope, his author as well) can at least *suspect* the ideological duplicity of "idea" and "symbol". He recognizes, if only briefly, that the Holnist survivalists are not only the rival of "America", but its monstrous double as well. Relying upon legends in order to legitimate their militaristic barbarism, the Holnists even possess a constitution of sorts, an originary and immaculate text entitled *Lost Empire* written by their founder, Nathan Holn. Holn's handbook of survivalist theory is also predicated upon "big ideas", but big ideas which at the same time are "big lies". Gordon verges on an enormous question: what makes his own metaphysical strategy different from that of the Holnists. The moment Gordon verges, though, the novel veers, and Gordon's tentative speculations are quickly cut off by the uneasy, sadly overextended author. The hard relentless contraption of plot carries its protagonist far away from a political question which can only trouble him, and a novel which purports to be speculative ultimately avoids speculating about the very questions it generates. As readers, invert Brin's strategy. Disregard his novel; consider, instead, its disregarded questions.

Brian W. Aldiss: Starmont Reader's Guide 28
by Michael R. Collings *(Starmont, Mercer Island, WA, 1986, 115pp, $6.95)*

reviewed by Steve Lockwood

This work is a solid and helpful thematic guide to Aldiss's novels. Students of sf and especially readers of Aldiss will find it a useful addition to existing Aldiss studies. Collings

divides the *Guide* into fifteen sections:

I. list of important dates
II. introduction
III-XI. chronological discussion of the novels
XII. Aldiss' short fiction
XIII. Aldiss as critic
XIV. selectively annotated primary bibliography
XV. selectively annotated secondary bibliography

The *Guide* begins with a "Canon and Chronology", which lists important personal and publication dates, with parenthetical notations for such works as *Hothouse* (1962), which was retitled *Long Afternoon of Earth*. Mysteriously the Chronology does not tell us why these novels were retitled, an annoying omission in an otherwise welcome listing. For example, the entry "*Hothouse* (retitled *Long Afternoon of Earth*)" could more helpfully read "*Hothouse* (American edition retitled *Long Afternoon of Earth*)".

Section II introduces Collings's approach to Aldiss's fiction and non-fiction, entitled "Brian W. Aldiss – Cartographer". This approach is useful for discovering one kind of thematic unity in the Aldiss canon because in virtually everything Aldiss has written, Collings can identify mapmaking imagery and show us how either a character or the author (as in his history of sf, *Billion Year Spree*) defines new territory and points out the need for mankind to understand it. In *Non-Stop,* for example, characters explore their environment and discover that they live in a spaceship; in *Helliconia,* a quarter of a century later, Aldiss reinforces his images of discovery by supplying, at the book's beginning, a printed map of the fictional territories. Collings makes the point, necessary for a fair evaluation of the novels, that Aldiss offers symbolic guidelines rather than certainties; he expects readers who follow his journeys "to assume much of the burden of interpretation and understanding" (p.6).

Collings has arranged his study of the novels chronologically by decades, beginning with the 1950s and *Non-Stop* (1958), Aldiss's first sf novel, through the 1980s and *Helliconia Winter* (1985). In the next eight sections (III-XI) he discusses the novels in sufficient detail both to help us understand their imagery and to illustrate connections with Aldiss's other works. Collings does an especially good job at the latter, detailing how Aldiss will introduce a theme in one novel and explore it fully in another; in *Greybeard* (1964), for example, Aldiss introduces the idea of time as subjective, both in the flashback structure of the novel and with frequent references to the subjectivity of time, and then develops the idea fully in *An Age* (1967), by suggesting that mankind is born in misery and suffering and works his way, through experience, to innocence (p.30). And Collings also points out concerns that Aldiss treats in many of his works, themes such as "entropy and change; the artist; time and space, and their relationship with humanity; drugs; and the metamorphosis of humanity into something new" (p.37). Indeed we find that these themes are prominent in works such as *Report on Probability A* (1968), *Barefoot in the Head* (1969), *Frankenstein Unbound* (1973), and *The Malacia Tapestry* (1976).

Besides the "Canon and Chronology", the selectively annotated primary and secondary bibliographies and the selective index direct readers to useful information about Aldiss's work and to works about Aldiss. These sections of the *Guide* are not free from eccentricities. The index, for example, lists art, mapmaking, communication, drugs, ecology, entropy, language, observation, Odyssey, sexuality, stasis and change,

and time right where one would expect to find them under the rubic "Themes, techniques, and motifs." However, this heading is itself listed under the main entry of "Aldiss, Brian W." – 21 letters away from the position we might expect the list to occupy. To take another Index instance, the entry "X for Exploitation" is followed by "(see *Bow Down to Nul*)" rather than a page number; when one looks to the Nul entry one finds six page references, none of which contain the information that warrants the index entry. To find that "X for Exploitation" is the title under which *Nul* was serialized in *New Worlds SF* in 1960, one must travel to footnote #2 on page 19.

But why quibble about these instances? The index points to larger omissions. It lists page 85 for both J.G. Ballard and Michael Moorcock, contemporary authors and personal friends with whom Aldiss worked closely for *New Worlds* (c.1963-1971). On that page Ballard and Moorcock appear as part of a list of names for a chapter in Aldiss' "Provisional Outline" for *Billion Year Spree*. In this quotation is Collings' only mention of either man; *New Worlds* does not rate an index entry. The drawback for Collings' study is that, by concentrating only on themes and connections among Aldiss' works, it cannot convey to readers a more comprehensive understanding of Aldiss' importance to the development of sf in the tumultuous decades of the 1960s and 1970s.

Perhaps Collings feels (I admit I didn't ask him) that this assessment is already available in other works, to several of which (e.g. Richard Matthews' *Aldiss Unbound,* 1977, and Brian Griffin and David Wingrove's *Apertures,* 1984) he makes frequent reference. Griffin and Wingrove in particular attempt to assess Aldiss' work historically in the context of the sf field and the field of literature generally. In their introduction, they state that one of their goals in *Apertures* is to show that "Aldiss is the (sf) genre's most perfect and most exemplary writer" especially when "modern sf" is viewed in the light of the Modernist literary movement of c.1890-1930 (p.x). They also claim that the sf genre "is, in its essentials, more a marketing phenomenon than a genuine literary movement" (p.xi). Regardless of whether we ultimately believe these statements, we have no doubt what Griffin and Wingrove aim for in their book. Collings could have helped readers by clearly delimiting his scope in his first chapter, and by referring them specifically to other works which attempt an historical perspective. For example, Colin Greenland's *The Entropy Exhibition* (1983) provides valuable information about Aldiss' association with Ballard, Moorcock, and *New Worlds,* as well as an extended discussion of Aldiss' Joycean experiment with language, *Barefoot in the Head.* Perhaps referring to competitors' products is contrary to the editorial wishes of Starmont; perhaps they feel that such announcements would imply that Collings' volume is incomplete, an implication incompatible with the claim on the book's back cover that Starmont's Readers' Guides form "the most extensive and important series in the field of science fiction criticism." (Such speculations appear less arbitrary after discovering that of the 28 *Guides* in print and the 46 forthcoming, one each is devoted to Robert Bloch, Tanith Lee, and Christopher Priest, but none to Michael Moorcock.) However, Collings does indicate a preference for Matthews' *Aldiss Unbound*; in his secondary bibliography he describes it as "The best and most accessible introduction to Aldiss" (p.109). In any case this *Guide* could better serve readers by announcing its scope at the outset.

On the other hand, Collings admirably succeeds in convincing us that Aldiss creates symbolic maps and is "self-admittedly a guide" (p.7). By focusing on Aldiss' chronological development of interconnected themes (such as stasis vs. praxis; art as

mimetic map; artist as cartographer), Collings's chapters gain continuity and coherence, and lead us through Aldiss's thirty years of writing, leaving us with a fair grasp of the artist's concerns as they manifest themselves in his works. Evenly impersonal, Collings's study concentrates on what Aldiss has produced rather than attempting to identify (as Griffin and Wingrove often do) sources that may have influenced the shape of what Aldiss produced. In the introductory chapter Collings explains his view of Aldiss the writer.

> For Aldiss, science fiction explores the possibilities of space, time, and humanity. He does not substitute for the discoverer and conqueror (there is only a "sense" in which the two overlap); he does not create power-fantasies complete with heroes who can rescue universes; nor does he offer easy entry into alien worlds. Instead, he draws maps, provides human guides—common, ordinary men and women, less than superhuman, who must understand change beyond their abilities to adapt. Through these characters, readers may follow Aldiss' guidelines as he penetrates the convoluted "inwardness" and "outwardness" of humanity (to borrow his terms from *B(illion) Y(ear) S(pree)*. (p.5)

Several paragraphs later Collings presents his own map for this *Guide*. "To read Aldiss' stories, novels, and criticism as maps rather than as escapism, prophecy, or dogma makes them more individual, more compelling, and more meaningful Aldiss' themes emerge clearly through his maps . . ." (p.6). Indeed, throughout his study Collings identifies these cartographical images and through them cogently demonstrates Aldiss's fascination with and development of his themes.

Collings's prose is generally free from academic jargon, and his judgments of Aldiss's writing, in addition to his own adroit explications, have impressed Aldiss as reasonable and fair. The book itself is cleanly printed and edited; I discovered only seven typographical errors. Part of Collings's success must be due to experience; this *Guide* is his second for Starmont in three years (his first was *Piers Anthony* in 1983). Starmont House is certainly getting its money's worth from Collings. And considering that we can own Collings's Aldiss volume for about the price of a small pizza, so are we.

Seasons in Flight
by Brian Aldiss *(Cape, 1984, £7.95; Atheneum, 1986, 158pp, $10.95; Grafton, 1986, 160pp, £1.95)*

reviewed by Brian Stableford

Brian Aldiss's tenth collection testifies to the distance he has travelled since *Space, Time and Nathaniel,* in both a literal and a metaphorical sense. The stories here are cosmopolitan, with earthly settings ranging from Eastern Europe to Sumatra, and the representations of foreign cultures are no more and no less strange than the hypothetical Helliconian culture which crops up in one of the tales. Not one of the stories is set in a high-tech environment—the only futuristic one is placed in the Third World—and the usual focus is on the very tiny victories over circumstances which it is possible for people to win when they are living on the margin of survival. The lightest story—the ironic Helliconia-set "The Girl Who Sang"—and the grimmest—"The Plain, the Endless Plain", following the career of an insectile species over several trouble-torn generations —are the only ones set in other worlds than ours, and the second may only be "other" because its viewpoint is so strange. By and large, this is a collection of stories about the

desperation of the human predicaments that occur on the fringes of dynamic civilization. It takes a very jaundiced view indeed of the mythology of progress, which Aldiss always used to treat ironically, even in his early days.

The most revealing story in the collection is perhaps "The Blue Background", which is by no means science fiction, though its first appearance is credited to *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*—the last place in the world I would have expected to find it. It is set in a small village in what is now Czechoslovakia, where the poor villagers know only the daily routine of life and rarely see a stranger. The core of the story is the meeting between a small boy, whose imaginative horizons have been expanded by his discovery in a ruined church of a carved Christ, nailed directly to the pale blue wall, and a visitor taking photographs of the "vanishing heritage" of the region. The villagers assure the visitor that they have nothing worth photographing, but the boy takes him to see the carved figure, which is exactly the sort of thing he is looking for. Alas, when the boy—now grown up—eventually receives a copy of the book with the photograph in, he realises that the photographer has entirely missed the point, because the monochrome picture fails to reproduce the blue background—the suggestive "glimpse of infinity" that the boy once treasured before he grew up and "life closed in".

The reason that "The Blue Background" seems to me to be significant—quite apart from the fact that it is a deft and poignant story, showing all of Aldiss's skill—is that it seems sadly symbolic of the collection as a whole. The cover illustration shows this very Christ, with the background beautifully blue, but the stories inside are in sombre monochrome, making it clear that for the writer who once produced *Galaxies Like Grains of Sand,* the world has closed in. Aldiss has not lost any of his artistry, nor any of his narrative skill, but even the one old story in the collection ("The O in José", from 1966) shows a noticeably different world-view from the rest. It is the only one which—in one of the several interpretations of the carved legend "JOSE" which its characters offer—has even the merest glimpse of infinity, and even then it is a rather sour glimpse which is ultimately subverted by mundanity.

This is a collection of neat and well-executed stories, but I miss that glimpse of infinity, and the days when Aldiss was a more colourful writer.

Man of Two Worlds
by Frank and Brian Herbert *(Gollancz, 1986, 317pp, £9.95)*

reviewed by Brian Stableford

I do not know the extent of the late Frank Herbert's contribution to this novel, but suspect the greater part of the work to have been done by his son and collaborator; it has far more in common with Brian Herbert's *Sudanna, Sudanna* than with Frank's *Dune* books. If that seems to be minimizing the book's status, perhaps it does, but Brian Herbert is not without his virtues as a writer; he has a zestful interest in the bizarre and—on the evidence of *Man of Two Worlds*—might yet take up the torch of A.E. van Vogt as a writer of convoluted fantasies which, though difficult to take seriously, have an undeniable charm and fascination.

The hero of *Man of Two Worlds,* Ryll, is a Dreen, Dreens being a race with the power to bring into material existence the figments of their imagination. Dreens are compulsive

storytellers, and have presumably been responsible for the creation of the entire universe; unfortunately, they are no longer quite in control of it, having created beings (including humans) whose power of free will makes them independent, and perhaps dangerous. As the story begins, the powers-that-be on Dreenor are contemplating erasing Earth from the universe, lest Dreenor be threatened by the wicked ingenuity of men, but the hero knows nothing of this, being a young Dreen barely out of school, with a very imperfect command of the elements of "idmaging". On arrival in the solar system, the hero is involved in an unfortunate collision with an Earthly vessel, and can only save himself by merging his flesh and personality with the anti-hero of the novel, Lutt Hanson jr., a swashbuckling entrepreneur who embodies all that is ominous in human nature. Hero and anti-hero duel for control of their shared body, blackmailing one another into periodic capitulation, while other Dreens search for Ryll, Hanson's various enemies inside and outside his immediate family circle try to render him harmless, and the French Foreign Legion fight a desperate war against the Chinese for control of Venus. The plot lurches along, grinding its gears occasionally when it changes direction and perspective, but maintains a reasonable pace and takes us through some interesting scenery.

Although some perennial Frank Herbert themes are touched on—science-fictional substitutes for traditional theology, moral restraints on the exercise of power, etc.—this is basically a fun book, entertaining without being mere costume drama. Certain aspects of it are a little hard to swallow—particularly Lutt's weird uncle, who is part Zen mystic and part *deus ex machina*—but it is the sort of book which encourages the reader to say "what the hell" and swing along regardless.

There are worse ways for a writer to bow out at the end of a long career, and worse ways for a relatively new writer to begin the serious business of getting into his stride.

The Darwath Trilogy: The Time of the Dark, The Armies of Midnight, The Walls of Air
by Barbara Hambly *(Allen and Unwin, 1985, 285pp, 314pp, 321pp, £2.50 each)*

reviewed by Hannu Hiilos

Probably the most distinctive achievement of J.R.R. Tolkien was the careful balance between natural and supernatural and realistic and romantic elements that one finds in his works. The supernatural settings of Mordor and Lorien have a counterpoint in the familiar Shire and the heroic society of Rohan and Gondor is offset by the homely world of the hobbits. It is the interplay of these disparate settings that create the mood and flavour peculiar to Tolkien. That this really is an achievement is shown by the uneven quality of books influenced by his conception of fantasy. Take David Eddings, whose *Belgariad* only succeeds in deflating the supernatural beings and powers that might otherwise enhance the other, less fantastic ingredients of his story.

Another heir to Tolkien, Barbara Hambly, confronts contemporary California with an alien world, Darwath, set across "the Void" in another universe parallel to ours. Darwath is a vaguely medieval world where real magic coexists precariously with a church that considers all magic inherently evil. Into this world plunge a research student of medieval history from UCLA and an airbrush painter from the fringes of the world of the motorcycle gangs.

Here the story elements are much more heterogenous than in Tolkien, who, by and

large, gave greater emphasis to some of the more realistic elements of traditional heroic romance, usually kept firmly in the background—it is as *central* characters only that the mundane hobbits are atypical of romance—and told his romantic story with realistic detail and precision. Stephen Donaldson has already shown, nevertheless, that putting a concretely depicted contemporary milieu alongside an alien world may work very well indeed. But then both Tolkien and Donaldson do balance their various materials, while Hambly, despite a fair skill as a writer, does not.

This is chiefly because the differences between contemporary California and archaic Darwath are played down so much that the familiar tends to overwhelm the unfamiliar. Linguistic difficulties are resolved once and for all by a spell that translates modern English into Darwathian speech and vice versa. Not only Rudy, the airbrush painter, but even Gil, supposedly a researcher of history, mostly see Darwath in terms belonging to their familiar California. As a result, even attitudes and actions very different from what one might expect in California fail to convince. It is as if the whole was a drama enacted to us by amateur actors from our own world that even at their best do not quite succeed in taking on their exotic roles. There is little feeling of a meeting between different cultures and ways of life, and one misses the interplay of the familiar and the unfamiliar and the constant opening of new vistas that is characteristic of Tolkien.

My other quarrel with Hambly is about the evil powers that threaten humanity in Darwath. In Tolkien's world the forces of good and evil, whether natural or supernatural, share a common moral constitution. Sauron is, morally speaking, Bilbo's grasping relative Lotho Sackville-Baggins writ very, very large. The evil residing in the Ring merely reinforces the flaws and weaknesses inherent in all the intelligent beings of Middle-earth. That is why the Ring cannot be used even by characters of such power and integrity as Gandalf or Galadriel—what Sauron is they too might become. Barbara Hambly, on the contrary, falls back to a wholly externalized evil, strongly seasoned with characteristics taken from the more unsavoury aliens of science fiction. On the other hand, "the Dark" are another kind of intelligent beings, with mankind a descendant of their domestic animals, on the one hand they are as throughly evil and revolting as any creatures of supernatural horror ever were.

In pure fantasy this might do, but evil as a part of the physical substance of a being, reflected in all its features, clashes with the sf elements of the story. In sf, as in realistic fiction, literal embodiments of absolute evil are at best melodramatic.

And then there are the moral and ideological implications of such ideas of evil. Somehow anyone threatened by an overpowering enemy instantly becomes an innocent victim. Imagining horrible beings plotting the downfall of mankind seems to absolve human beings—and vicariously us, the human readers of such fictions—of all sins and shortcomings at the same time as it paints its enemies—and projectively in our mind, all those real people that we suspect of similar wicked disregard of our comfort and continued well-being—blackest black. If the good win, they are heroes, if they lose they are martyrs, while the enemy will always lose, morally if not physically. There seems something fishy about this—I usually find myself wondering whether the hapless "powers of evil" haven't after all, been cleverly framed by the sanctimonious narrator. That would be just like us decent, God-fearing human beings, wouldn't it?

Too, evil figures of this kind tend to be limited in narrative scope. It is difficult to make anything out of them that has not been made already ages ago, and much better then than

now. In the case of the Dark it seems to me, the author is wasting another chance to analyse and compare two very different ways of life. Just imagine what C.J. Cherryh might get out of this kind of story! But instead of the arresting strangeness that one may reasonably expect from fantasy, both the human and non-human inhabitants of Darwath are reduced to dull familiarity.

There are good parts too, such as Rudy and his mentor Ingold in Quo, the city of the wizards, and Gil using her scholarly skills to reveal the cause of the current attack of the Dark, but to me at least the trilogy fails as a whole. Here fantasy seems to succumb both to the mundane reality it is supposed to transform and to those traditional clichés of its own that it should either discard or use in a new and fresh way.

The Return from Avalon: A study of the Arthurian Legend in Modern Fiction
by Raymond H. Thompson *(Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn.; London, 1985, £29.95)*

reviewed by Peter T. Garratt

This book is something of a Merlin's cave, for what a character in Anthony Price's 'Our Man in Camelot' would refer to as an "Arthurian": a fanatic with an obsessive interest in all matters to do with Arthur, the lost Emperor of Britain.

As a fully paid up, semi-professional, member of Arthurians Anonymous, I ventured into the depths of the book overcome with eagerness to see what treasures lay buried there.

I was by no means disappointed, but, like Lancelot, returned feeling that I had beheld the Grail at a distance, without partaking of it in full.

After a brief introduction, the author attempts to survey the entire canon of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Arthurian written literature. (There is no section on Arthuriana in the visual media, and very little on poetry.) He divides the material into five main headings: "Retellings", "Realistic Fiction", "Historical Fiction", "Science Fiction and Science Fantasy", and "Fantasy". The last-named is further subdivided into "Low", "Mythopoeic", "Heroic", and "Ironic".

Thompson admits that there could be disagreement about his classifications. This is certainly true. A good example would be the Mary Stewart "Merlin" trilogy. Thompson includes this among the non-fantastic historical novels. However, the novels revolve around Merlin's paranormal powers. Some of these are based on classical science, forgotten by most in the Dark Ages, or the imagination of the onlookers. But Merlin does have certain powers which defy obvious explanation. As his problems with his powers—they are unpredictable, and cannot be summoned by magical ritual—somewhat resemble those encountered by parapsychologists, in getting their subjects to "perform" reliably, I feel the trilogy could adequately be classified with the Science Fiction.

The book consists entirely of accounts and reviews of the fiction—which could scarcely be objected to, except that the whole field of Arthurian studies is very complex, especially when one comes to the influence, on the Mediaeval Romances, of Celtic traditions, which are almost certainly pagan and very ancient, often misunderstood by the later writers. Richard Cavendish, in his *King Arthur and the Grail,* has laid out a subtle and convincing psychology for the development of the legends, and there are a number of similar contributions. It is unclear how familiar Thompson is with this sort of material

(there is no non-fiction reference list), but I do not feel he can have made much use of it. As a result, his comments, while seldom unreasonable, seem a little on the shallow side.

This is well illustrated in Thompson's enthusiasm for "Mythopoeic" fantasies, in which the human characters play a small part in a vast, cosmic struggle of Good and Evil, normally illuminated in this sort of thing as "Light" and "Darkness". This is all very well in children's books, but in work intended for adults, such as Gillian Bradshaw's *Hawk of May* trilogy, the Mythopoeic conflict comes over as an irritating simplification of the human condition. Bradshaw's most interesting characters, such as the anti-heroine Elidan, are those who have least to do with this conflict: she fails to convince with the witch-queen Morgawse, utterly consumed by the powers of Darkness she has invoked, and her various minions.

Thompson is irritatingly dismissive of Andre Norton's *Merlin's Mirror*, one of the few works of science fiction he discusses. Here, the cosmic conflict appears to be raging as usual, this time under the aegis of ancient, galactic civilisations which appear at first to be the "Light" and "Dark" in technological garb. Later, in an economical but very powerful passage, it becomes apparent that the conflict and contrast between Merlin and his enemies is scarcely as stark and total as mythopoetry would require; and what conflict ever is?

A large body of work is described and discussed here, including much of interest which I had not heard of before. The omissions are surprising, not for their number, which is small, but for the quality of some of the works left out. On the realistic front, Thompson can perhaps be forgiven for missing *Land without Mercy*, by the fifteen-year-old Alan Lacey (1974): but not for the marvelous *Men went to Catreath*, by John James (1969). Although the presence of the young Arthur in this retelling of the "Gododdin" may be an anachronism, it remains the finest, most moving, and most uncompromising recreation of the Dark Ages I have yet encountered.

He has omitted some works which can roughly be classified as Science Fiction. *The Finger and the Moon*, by Geoffrey Ashe (1973), is not published as such. However, its contrast between sophisticated psychology, with powerful hallucinogenic drugs, and occult rituals which achieve little, suggests that this is the best place for it. *A Midsummer Tempest* by Poul Anderson (1974), has a major Arthurian component, and it is surprising that no one has yet pointed out the innumerable Arthurian references, in Philip José Farmer's "Riverworld" series.

The Return from Avalon is the first review of modern Arthurian fiction, of any substance, that I have seen. It tries hard to be comprehensive, and to raise the tone of discussions, of the relevance of the Arthurian legend today. In some ways it has oversimplified, and not quite succeeded, but I think that Arthurians will read it with enjoyment and qualified approval.

Schismatrix
by Bruce Sterling *(Arbor House, 1985, 288pp, $15.95)*

reviewed by Stephen O'Kane

A tale of a genetically restructured, cybernetic, and yet often chaotic future in a Solar System of biologically engineered republics in which increasingly artificial forms of *post-*

homo sapiens are plundering the resources of other worlds, not least asteroids. Earth is now derelict, exhausted, overrun with weeds—save for the still untapped, primeval resources of the ocean floor. If (s)he wants to, the reader can see *Schismatrix* as a suggestion of what we can expect in a future where genetic engineering increasingly supplements, or even supplants, more traditional methods of procreation and healthcare.

Yet the new man(s) is not so different from the old. Ancient themes of dynastic politics, clan rivalry, love and separation, degeneration, and search for a cause to die for, all find their home in the new environment, along with superpower rivalry. Some of the artificial or asteroid-based republics that form the Schismatrix are already rotting and fetid with biological corruption. Even the influence of diverse species of aliens from outside the Solar System does not seem to change things all that much. Most prominent are the Investors, who have been given a name that suffices in itself to explain their main concern with human affairs—they are not even particularly subtle about it.

The hero, Abelard Lindsay, appears as already a partly remade man, having an artificial right arm. He is further reconstructed as the story progresses, but his human emotions repeatedly break through. And yet once again things remain strangely unchanged. Lindsay appears first as a "sundog", an adventurer with no permanent attachment to any republic. But after adventures with pirates, love and a new marriage, and struggle against his former friend and ally Philip Constantine, Lindsay finds himself back in the role of adventurer again as an old man. The story ends with the prospect of a Paradise being created on Europa with the aid of samples of the creatures of Earth's ocean depths; a genetic treasure to be rebuilt for Europa's conditions. But what reason is there to suppose Europa's eventual ecological fate will be any different from those of other manipulated environments? And Lindsay is to continue his adventures.

Bruce Sterling thus sustains a paradox. *Schismatrix* is full of ideas and powerful images, and yet at the fundamental level the future—amid all the different environments—is like the past. Not an easy read, but often interesting and even occasionally exciting.

The Artificial Kid
by Bruce Sterling *(Harper & Row, 1980, 245 pp, $10.95; Penguin, 1985, £2.50)*

Schismatrix
by Bruce Sterling *(Arbor House, 1985, 288 pp, $15.95; Berkley Books, $2.95; Penguin, 1986, £2.50)*

reviewed by Gregory Feeley

Not all futurists put computers in control, and not all "future histories" get corrupted and grow into trilogies. Bruce Sterling's first published story was "Man-Made Self", which appeared in *Lone Star Universe,* a small-press anthology of sf by Texans, in 1976. His first novel, *Involution Ocean,* appeared a year later as part of the Harlan Ellison Discovery Series, with an introduction by Ellison. (Sterling's first fiction sale, "Living Inside", had been bought a few years earlier by Ellison for *The Last Dangerous Visions.* The story evidently impressed Ellison, whose enthusiastic introductions to both novel and anthology recall those Lovecraftean horror stories whose narrator discovers a remarkable text which

we hear of but never see.) Neither work attracted any attention, nor suggested the pyrotechnic bravura to follow in *The Artificial Kid,* which appeared in 1980. Brash, witty, and —surprisingly in a first-person account of a punk celebrity "combat artist"—proficient in its dramatization of such matters as alien ecologies, planet-sculpting, and biological transfiguration, *The Artificial Kid* marked the emergence of Sterling's authentic voice. The novel also received virtually no critical notice, although it is difficult to see why. (Earlier oversell deterred this reviewer.)

Christopher Priest, writing in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* (May 1981), noted that the strutting voice of *The Artificial Kid* shows "an auctorial relish that is dismaying; you can sense that spectacular violence is soon to erupt and that the reader will be expected to condone it." Both Priest and the reader find their fears unrealized as the narrative takes off into an empyrean flamboyance now characteristic of Sterling, but Priest has rightly sensed that Sterling's panache contains among its active ingredients egoism and partisanship for youth. Plutocratic geezers hover throughout Sterling's fiction, and the qualified successes his protagonists wrest from the stacked decks of circumstance tend to leave the greater picture unchanged. Nevertheless his fiction remains notably buoyant, in contrast with that of say William Gibson, an obvious comparison, whose characters usually reflect on the impossibility of changing the big picture with grey resignation. "Just wait till the Kid grows up", the Kid promises at the novel's end, but such a story is one that Sterling is not yet ready to write, for even *Schismatrix,* which follows its twenty-six year old protagonist through nearly two centuries, remains a young man's novel, unconvincing only when it seeks to dramatize the malaises of middle and extreme old age.

Reverie, the world of the Artificial Kid, is surrounded by a cloud of orbital cities, inhabited by sophisticated descendents of the visionary founders who spent a century mining a neighbouring planet in order to secure the rights to Reverie. Reverie is idyllic but most of its population lives in orbit, preferring to enjoy the planet's felicities by video, a taste which stylized combat artists sedulously gratify. The Artificial Kid, young and on the rise, narrates with aplomb his adventure, which takes him across the world's colourful ecosystem with an assortment of strange characters, pursued by the gunners of geezers. The verve with which Sterling tells the story is its most attractive feature, but the elements of the novel's background, none of them original to Sterling but drawn from disparate sources ranging from O'Neill space colony technology to punk iconography, are combined with notable inventiveness. Some details seem shaky—the world is over eight billion years old but circles a "butter-yellow" sun, and while the original continents have been worn away by erosion, one of the coral-atoll land masses has limestone formations—but the assemblage works. The novel also first introduces the notion, implicit in much of Sterling's fiction, of computer technology rejecting artificial intelligence research as arid or sinister, and embracing instead the development of self-replicating drones to create wealth and free human potential. Punk without being cyber, *The Artificial Kid* anticipates later developments in sf, and intriguingly explores a road not otherwise taken.

In the years which followed this novel Sterling began to publish the series of stories set in the Mechanist/Shaper universe, where self-sustaining orbital cities break all relations with a depleted Earth (foreshadowed in "Spook", which seems otherwise unconnected with the series), and human settlements spread throughout the solar system, eventually polarized by the struggle for dominance between the genetically tailored Shapers and the cybernetically augmented Mechanists. "Swarm", "Spider Rose", and "Cicada Queen"

showed greater concision and control than Sterling's earlier work, and were nominated for awards. "Life in the Mechanist/Shaper Era: 20 Evocations", a relatively late Mechanist/Shaper story, shares the form of *Schismatrix*, relating a young man's life through the course of the Schismatrix, the "posthuman" civilization of fragmented cultures changing rapidly as technologies develop. The short story is almost a skeleton for the novel, both in its timescale and in what thesis Sterling chooses to enunciate plainly. "Futility is freedom!" Nikolai Leng cries in his terminal revelation in the "Evocations", while Abelard Lindsey, the picaresque hero of *Schismatrix,* realizes during a climactic visit to a collapsed Earth that "There were no final purposes. Futility, and freedom, were Absolute." Much is conveyed less baldly in the stories, including a lively sense that self-interest alone propels consciousness (the eternal question the alien Investors hope humanity will help them answer is "What is it you have that we want?", and the utopian social system on Reverie is a corporate state in which all citizens are shareholders).

Schismatrix, as the culmination of the Mechanist/Shaper series, possesses a density and complexity of evocation rarely seen in 1980s sf. It is also, despite the seriousness of its goings-on, extremely funny. The "future history", comprising an informal sequence of both novels and shorter works (as distinct from trilogies and other all-volume ventures), had been infrequently seen in sf after the advent of Larry Niven, but has enjoyed something of a resurgence since about 1982, most interestingly from Gibson, Sterling, and Kim Stanley Robinson. Of the three, Sterling is the most interested in the radical transformations of technology, the least interested in allusive tradition (literary or popcultural), and—fittingly for an unflinching futurist—the first to move on.

Unfortunately for bibliographers, Sterling seems to have gotten creative with his recent past as well as the near future, or at least been careless towards detail in a way that reinforces the image of youthful prodigy he so admires. He has allowed *Interzone* to state and Penguin to repeat that he began publishing short fiction only after the first two novels, so that "his first two published stories were both nominated for Hugo Awards in 1983". Similarly, the dust jacket for *Schismatrix* states that "Bruce Sterling's six stories previously published . . . have been nominated for five major awards in the sf field". By the time Sterling gained his fifth award nomination for a story ("Sunken Gardens"), he had published more than six stories, even if (as above) one erases "Man-Made Self" and then dubiously rules out the William Gibson collaboration "Red Star, Winter Orbit".

Whatever Sterling's bibliography or politics, the stories he has published since *Schismatrix* show a deftness more confident and assured than in either novel. In "Green Days in Brunei", a young Canadian engineer struggles to fulfil his contract to help modernize an industrial plant in the arcadian Green backwater of twenty-first century Brunei. He discovers that the sultanate's cultural elite, including an aging western rock star and a beautiful princess, all hook into an underground computer net beneath the nose of the benignly anti-modern royal family; and complications ensue. "The Beautiful and the Sublime" is set in a twenty-first century where the American Southwest has been restored to its natural beauty after the dismantling of its rivers' hydroelectric dams, and artificial intelligence is so discredited that the narrator must apologize for speaking of *agape,* as "the Greeks are out of favor these days, especially Plato with his computerlike urge toward abstract intellect". With cybernetics developed into a utility that "comes through wires just like electricity", docile computer systems practise medicine and pilot vehicles, and the central image of the story is an ultralight aircraft winged like a dragonfly,

too complex in its airflow patterns for the miniature computers with whose aid anyone can fly: a craft that can only be piloted by trained intuition, hovering on the interface between vibrant if effete humanism and moribund Western industrialism. The story is a comedy of love and daring told with great wit, and while it contains a fair amount of braggadocio—as in "Green Days in Brunei", the hero runs off with the daughter of a powerful oldster—Sterling's willingness to invest the hero with some dandyish self-importance (he resembles a *boulevardier* from the Paris of Alfred Jarry) forestalls the suspicion that the author is asking us to side with "his" character against others.

Still in his early thirties, Sterling seems poised to write a major book. His work in progress—a novel also set in the next century, according to an interview, offering "a plausible version of a liveable human future"—sounds distinctly more promising than the projected flight-paths of other young sf writers who have attained prominence in recent years. Professedly unconcerned with tradition beyond genre ("Readers who seekout mainstream literary values prefer their literature untroubled by visionary lunacy . . . If we are to expand our readership, as I think we must, it will not be by recruiting literateurs but by capturing those other fringe-types who are most like sf fans. Techies, cyberheads, dopers, rockers . . ."), Sterling runs some risk of over-indulging the pre-adult pleasures of taking easy swipes at any established order and attributing creative energies to the marginally socialized (one imagines he had not known many dopers). Real talent has survived worse, if only while leaving lessons to be misinterpreted. We will wait till the Kid grows up.

Blood Music
by Greg Bear *(Gollancz, 1986, 263 pp, £9.95)*

reviewed by Colin Greenland

Good times in science fiction, of which this is one, are marked (some would say marred) by schism, by name-calling and sloganeering, the blowing of trumpets, the drawing of battle-lines. When standards are raised, crusades, it seems, inevitably follow. Enormous amounts of energy and quantities of words are expended fighting over grounds which will probably never appear on any future cultural map; territory which is, first and last, illusory. Five years hence, dragged back by critics to the muddy spot where entrenched East Coast humanists were legendarily attacked by an uneasy alliance of Californian scientists and mutants in mirror shades, the dejected survivors will all say: In fact, there wasn't ever really a crusade at all, or if there was, I wasn't ever really a part of it. For the world is not saved by art, nor art by manifesto. All that will remain is a good number of good books, of which this is one.

Blood Music is a book to bring cheer to the Californian scientists, because it is the story of how the world will be saved, by a nerd, a nerd in a lab, a nerd who does not wear mirror shades but proper prescription lenses in thick black frames. *Blood Music* is also highly satisfactory for the rest of us, because the apocalypse is a true apocalypse, not a wish. The new order displaces and redeems the old order through devastation, pain and loss, all of which Greg Bear knows and shows. Vergil I. Ulam saves the world by destroying it; he does it by accident (though the accident is also redeemed and justified); he does it out of nerdish innocence and irresponsibility. The book answers to our experience and our fear

of science, as well as to our yearning for achieved transcendence.

In the first main section ("Anaphase") of the novel, Vergil works at Genetron, a Southern Californian institution about to produce medical and military biochips, "the incorporation of protein molecular circuitry with silicon electronics". Secretly, he bypasses this breakthrough to take the next step.

> Why limit oneself to silicon and protein and biochips a hundredth of a millimeter wide, when in almost every living cell there was already a functioning computer with a huge memory? . . . The computing capacity of even bacterial DNA was enormous compared to man-made electronics. All Vergil had to do was take advantage of what was already there—just give it a nudge, as it were.

Caught thus making unauthorized use of Genetron facilities, Vergil is fired. Unwilling to destroy lymphocyte cells he has modified and educated to the level of mice, he injects them back into himself, where they not only survive but thrive, reprogramming him in turn, toning up his system and rebuilding him, as his medic friend Edward Milligan discovers, "from the inside out".

"It should have taken a whole research team, maybe even a Manhattan Project, to do what I did," Vergil muses. "I'm bright but I'm not that bright. Things just fell into place. It was too easy." Thus Bear, renewing one old generic chestnut, modulates genre altogether and shifts into the second section ("Prophase") of his plot. Instead of the mundane and routine groupwork of contemporary scientific research, he gives us back the maverick genius and the experiment that gets out of hand, the blob that eats America. What Vergil has created is an intelligent plague. The undercover scientific adventure now turns into a sociobiological horror story: the selfish gene armed and on the loose. Edward Milligan and distinguished biologist Michael Bernard attempt to contain the epidemic, but very soon North America is littered with empty clothes and pools of an organic brown goo that creeps all over the cities and starts to dismantle them. In "Metaphase", the second half of the book, a handful of survivors negotiate a metamorphic landscape with special effects out of *The Thing,* John Carpenter's 1982 film. In an unaffected Europe Michael Bernard lies in an isolation chamber, communing with his cells. John and Jerry Olafsen, twins, drive their truck down from Livermore to see what's happened to L.A. "Slow" Suzy McKenzie from Brooklyn makes a nightmare pilgrimage to the top of the World Trade Center, where enlightenment awaits her, and all of us.

Blood Music is a panoramic study of America dissolving into information. "Anaphase" is characterized by human control and organization, the hierarchies and rituals of Genetron and other "Enzyme Valley" labs, the block architecture of North Torrey Pines Road. Vergil Ulam tries to attract the attention of Michael Bernard to his secret project, but is fended off by a superior. Information is contained, restricted, routed. In "Prophase", Bernard and Edward discuss Vergil's new girlfriend.

> "Yes, I see what you mean," Bernard said. "She could be a security problem."
> "No, that's *not* what I mean," Edward said emphatically. "Not at all what I mean."

Human exchange of genetic information overflows precaution. Both men try to withold information, Edward lying to his wife, Bernard to himself. Both get swept away. Eventually, the characters of "Metaphase" are islands of residual individuality in an undifferentiated, or rather self-differentiating, sea of information. Suzy McKenzie struggles to retain a human self.

"I'll be brave," she said around a bite of the granola bar. "There's nothing else I can be."

The *Locus* reviewer who compared *Blood Music* to *Childhood's End* and Greg Bear to Arthur C. Clarke did more thereby than merely gladden the hearts of Arbor House and Gollancz publicity and sales departments. There is indeed something distinctively Clarkean about the relay of characters that carry the plot on its way out of the "surprisingly delicate and sensitive hands" of Vergil Ulam and up the exponential stair to sweetness and light—all partial people, all steeped in or threatened with solitude. Vergil is a sociopath; Edward's is a childless and fragile marriage; fleeing America for Germany, Bernard can't think of anyone to say goodbye to. All the characters in "Metaphase" and the epilogic "Telophase" have lost everyone they knew to the undulant biomass. Down there, however, "the camaraderie is overwhelming"; selves are routinely copied and multiplied; "there's an alternative to being alone and afraid." Like Clarke, Bear describes a melancholy quest for cosmic communion made by a loose association of fractured individuals, distanced from society and from each other, each functioning only in engagement with the scientific process, or a function *of* the scientific process. For the scientific process *is* the plot, the continuity, breaking out here and there in the lives of actual people. The occasional viewpoint problems, jars in the narrative, disappointed expectations that linger at each gear-change up the gradient of genres from intellectual thriller through disaster story to apocalyptic vision—all these inhere in the form of fiction determined by science. *Blood Music* is classic in its purism, and in its conscientious and resourceful approach to the restrictions of form. The professors will extol it, the mutants acknowledge it, the mandarins will fail to be persuaded, because they do not recognize the form. The world will not be saved, and the war will continue.

Human Error
by Paul Preuss (Tor, 1986, 350 pp, $14.95)

reviewed by Russell Letson

A few years ago, in a demonstration of the proposition that we'll railroad when it's time to do so, Arthur C. Clarke and Charles Sheffield produced near-simultaneous but independently-conceived novels about the building of orbital towers. It is apparently time to railroad again, but this time the topic is computers based on specially-engineered microorganisms and the synchronized books are Greg Bear's *Blood Music* and Paul Preuss's *Human Error*. So close are these two in idea and treatment that although the latter work is the official subject of this review, I find it nearly impossible to deal with it alone.

The central ideas, situations, and casts of characters are remarkably parallel—a neurotic scientist develops computer-like abilities in cells; the new entities are infectious, giving us the first disease which is communicative as well as communicable. A more responsible, emotionally mature colleague is left to deal with the mess; institutional politics are examined; transcendent or apocalyptic events provide the finale. Some of these similarities follow nearly inevitably from the generating idea of artificial organic intelligence. The creation of a new form of life, thus Frankenstein/Faust overtones, right down to the mad (okay, neurotic) scientist; intelligent microorganisms, thus intelligent infectious disease; microorganic timescales, thus vastly speeded up evolution or develop-

ment; germ computers, thus especially alien and powerful intelligences.

Nevertheless, I sense something else pushing these books toward similar resolutions—namely, our collective anxiety over messing around with "life itself". On the one hand, the authors and readers (me included) are impressed and excited by the potential of genetic engineering in general and organic computers in particular; on the other, we are all aware of the demonic side of this research and its cousins: governmental fascination with disease as a weapon, possible sinister uses of genetic technology, the mixed motives of private enterprise, predictable sloppiness and inevitable accidents with unpredictable new biological creations, the possibility of a new Plague. Both books recognize these anxieties and more, and in fact use them to provide suspense and dramatic tension—but both also imagine their supergerms to be not only beneficial but of transcendent importance, kicking us up the evolutionary ladder, making us what we would like to be if only we were smart enough and sane enough. I confess that as much as I like the books, this optimism leaves me a bit uncomfortable, although perhaps a bit less so in Preuss's case, for reasons I will get into below.

Bear's tale of expanded consciousness and mystical physics follows early Clarke and, to a lesser degree, Stapledon, while the spirit that hovers over Preuss's book is that of Theodore Sturgeon. The resolution of *Blood Music* is apocalyptic and metaphysical—the universe turns out to be made of *thought,* and the supergerms and the humans they have absorbed leave the apparent universe for the larger real one in an ending right out of *Childhood's End* (as the paperback's blurbs remind us pointedly). Preuss, on the other hand, settles for many individual transformations as the infectious intelligences, designed and programmed to learn and solve problems, optimize each host's mind and body, finding the best expression of whatever capabilities are present. This means not so much smarter people as it does better-adjusted and more fulfilled people—for example, the cryptographer who discovers that he was born to play the saxophone and goes and does so. All this takes place while the world goes on normally and in the context of the story of a major character's love for his friend the neurotic scientist and the psychologist who treats him. The ending promises a utopia to come: the last two words of the story are "Golden Age".

On the other hand, think of the fate of *homo superior* in Stapledon's *Odd John,* or the two-steps-forward-one-step-back progress of humanity in *Star Maker* and *Last and First Men,* or the fact that Clarke's superchildren destroy the Earth as they leave to join the Overmind. I suppose those earlier stories can be seen as expressing bourgeois anxiety over the possibility of revolutionary change, but somehow they seem more balanced visions of the evolutionary path upward, of the price of transcendence. I like "quiet optimism" well enough, but somehow it doesn't ring entirely true in these last years of our millennial century. All the same, I found *Human Error* skilfully made and engaging, with satisfactions not negated by my (probably neurotic, bourgeois, mid-American) scepticism about the ease with which things end well.

The Year's Best Science Fiction: Third Annual Collection
edited by Gardner Dozois *(Bluejay Books, 1986, 624 pp, $10.95)*

reviewed by Roz Kaveney

When we were young, we believed that it might be possible to change things, radically. We made all sorts of millennial noises about sf as a literature of the future, for which new forms and vocabularies had to be discovered, so that new modes of thought and emotion could be adequately expressed, modes which were to be worth exploring for their own sake, modes which did not necessarily preclude the more old-fashioned sorts of narrative, perhaps applied ironically and in quotation marks; we were too sophisticated to think that purely aleatory techniques were the panacea, or that there was any harm in pleasing people. But in the end, what has come of it? Like all supporters of revolution, we find ourselves beached in sidestreet cafés, pleased by a few reforms, angry at the maintenance of Old Corruption and muttering about the ingratitude of a new young that never knew the barricades, or site them elsewhere.

If there is a uniting factor to the stories contained in Gardner Dozois's *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Third Annual Collection*, it is a deep, if not always cloying or morally disreputable, sentimentality. Science Fiction has become, it seems at times, a set of devices whereby a protagonist can get him or herself into a peculiarly elaborate and inextricable mess in which we can pity him or her and watch him or her pitying him- or herself. The pity of things is no bad thing to celebrate, but leaving no dry eye in the house is not precisely the most radical aim we ever thought of. Even when stories have what is impolitely called a happy ending, there is this sense of the prisoners chained in the cellarage at whose expense perhaps, and certainly at no benefit to whom, the happiness of the protagonist has been achieved. Science Fiction seems to have become a middle class literature, apologising for its values in that fundamentally insincere tone which says that "of course we know that there are injustices, but we are the salt of the world, and we could not be here without them."

What is distressing about "Dogfight" by Michael Swanwick and William Gibson is that all the angry noise of cyberpunk and all the cynical display of high-tech and street drugs has so soon come to a moral tale about how no one loves a cheat, a moral rarely observed in the world outside and only true in the context of the story because the cheat starts off as so loadedly dislikeable a loser. We all know the trope from Hollywood—the out-of-town hustler who goes up against the local champ—only this time the game they hustle is a three-dimensional hologram videogame and that of which the protagonist deprives the rich-girl heroine is her stash of some future version of speed rather than her purse or her virtue. The story is chockablock with intriguingly nasty glimpses of its social context, of course, but one would hardly expect less; at the level of emotional truth one expects more.

The culmination of Bruce Sterling's "Green days in Brunei" comes close to being a definitive statement of the worship of material success that is a part of the naïve charm of cyberpunk: "Look, you're bound for Hawaii with a princess and eight million dollars. Somehow, you'll just have to make do." Sterling's story is of how both scientific advances and the consequences of political idealism get subverted to business as usual. The sultans of Brunei used an ecological movement to reinstate a version of their rule, and then

double-crossed its leaders as individuals while coopting their movement as a convenient way of preserving independence from high-tech and from that sense of the urgency of life which might cause their overthrow. What makes the story attractively instructive is Sterling's gleeful sense of the way a superficially and often genuinely attractive social order may be the byproduct of the self-interest of a class, and maintained with as much ruthless repression as a more obvious police state. Much of the cynicism of the story's ironic reversals does, however, become a little too formulaic—"I'm older than you, so my romantic gestures come first"—and when the innocent hero finally accepts "his future laid out before him, clear and predestined, like fifty years of happy machine language", the slickness of the image does not entirely hide a certain lack of emotional intensity in our response. "Oh how nice", we say, and turn the page. Sterling's other story, "Dinner in Audoghast", is an accomplished piece in a rather different vein—a bunch of the precious in a now forgotten mediaeval Saharan city discuss with amused disbelief a soothsayer's prophesies of doom. The moral for our world is clear enough, and well taken, but there are rather too many well-turned ironies of the breed of "We take pride in the exalted status of our women . . . It's not for nothing that they command a premium market price." And the touches of exoticism are a little too worked up and obtrusive, a little too reminiscent of James Elroy Flecker. But at least there is not a computer terminal in the whole story.

Of the authors contained in the forthcoming canonical cyberpunk anthology *Mirrorshades* we also have Pat Cadigan, with an effectively nasty little anecdote about the difficulty of knowing how not to give gratification to alien perverts; Lewis Shiner with an economical and unoriginal story about the long term consequences of Vietnam's resistance as a myth Americans might be tempted to live out; and James Patrick Kelly with another moral tale about drugs, rock concerts, video-artists, clone incest and other standard furniture. All very readable and creditable, but none of it material that we would not have expected in the '60s to be still reading in the '80s.

The people we were reading in the '60s are doing the same things as they were then for the most part, sometimes literally. Avram Davidson is represented by "Duke Pasquale's Ring", another outing for the incredibly learned Dr. Eszterhazy, principal savant of the late 19th century Triune Empire of Scythia, Pannonia and Transbalkania. Given the excellent dying fall with which he ended the last story in the published series, Davidson has the sense to make this a prequel to the earlier cycle and give us a younger Eszterhazy, with somewhat fewer doctorates and slightly less preparedness, to deal with, rather than observe, the machinations of an unpleasant visiting medium to gain the jewel which is the last pretention of a starving pretender and his wife. These stories were always an admirable vehicle for Davidson's interest in expressing his personality—and in particular his quirky scholarship—and the nostalgia for a lost central European world where injustices are righted not by reform but by Arrangements being Made is a phony enough piece of sentimentality to work as a literary conceit since it does not have a serious argument. "Fermi and Frost" is Frederik Pohl in his slide-show vein, giving us enough human story to make what he has to say about the probabilities of a nuclear winter matter to us; a scientist makes it onto one of the last planes out of New York before the bomb and grabs a lost child into his lap as a gesture of humanity, and in Iceland they try, and perhaps, irrespective of human virtue, succeed in making a life in the dark and cold. The whole thing is a routine, but one gone through with a degree of passionate commitment to the subject of the story that almost makes up for the lack of commitment to the process of

writing it. Silverberg presents us with a 20th century visitor (or is he?—as they used to say in pulp blurbs) to a far future in which the precious drift between reconstructions of past metropolises: the whole idyll goes on a bit, and the title "Sailing to Byzantium" telegraphs for the literate both the hero's nature and the solution to the heroine's problem of being a mortal in a world of the unaging. Still, when a story has moments of real grandeur, some charming travelogue vignettes and the usual Silverberg urbanity, it almost seems uncool to complain. In "The Only Neat Thing To Do", James Tiptree gives us a tale of adolescent thoughtlessness and redeeming self-sacrifice which comments on the style of the protagonists of e.g. Heinlein juveniles and does that ethos the service of pointing out rather more sharply than Heinlein has in recent years the moral toughness that goes with all that pawky enthusiasm: in her interview with Charles Platt, Alice Sheldon revealed the closeness with which, when young, she approximated to Podkayne of Mars—she writes quite well about an awful but admirable child because she can remember being one. Having said that, it is also needful to remark that the early Tiptree stories were rather full of innocently world-destroying aliens apologizing that it just came away in their tentacles or whatever, and that, at this stage in her career, Tiptree/Sheldon sees little need to change a winning formula. Joe Haldeman does a rerun of the old story about the cyborg who starts to feel superior to the common run of flesh, the variation being that this time the central figure is almost entirely unsympathetic and the thrust of the story is how he can get his come-uppance; you might as well do the story again for the thrills because the mystery and poetry of it were milked decades ago by C.L. Moore and again by Damon Knight. R.A. Lafferty does an R.A. Lafferty story as well as he always does.

Of the last batch of bright stars, we have a story by Howard Waldrop, "Flying Saucer Rock and Roll", which for most of its length is an exemplary description of the self-improving impulse that caused so many kids in the '60s to form close harmony vocal groups as an alternative to getting good with a blade, and then, having worked on our nostalgia and been smart about being a black teenager of the period, introduces a science-fictional deus ex machina which stops the story rather than finishing it. George R.R. Martin works some fairly standard variations on the alteration of history in "Under Siege"; the story works because of the conviction with which he writes of an obscure moment in Swedish military history, rather than in the rather standard sordid bunker life of his time-travelling mutant and oppressive keeper. As usual, Martin is arguing with some of the stock immoralities of the genre; his hero refuses, at the last, to make the man he is possessing commit a dishonourable act, and stays in the past to alter it for the better the hard way. Though Martin keeps the evidence that he has respectably slight, the story is still based on consolation to an extent that many will find a trifle starry-eyed, and which contrasts with last year's story on similar themes by Kim Stanley Robinson, "The Lucky Strike", by not having its hero hurt very much. Orson Scott Card preaches some hard morals about enforcing austerity in a post-holocaust desert, and if his story as usual follows this through to an odd conclusion—demonstrating as it does the social worth of the informer—well, that is a conclusion that is earned by the protagonist's pain. But Card, having noticed that hard morals are best enforced by playing on our sympathy, has rather overdone the amount of pain that his central character has to endure; the story might have been a little more, shall we say, subtle, had the hero had one or two fewer congenital deformities. But whoever accused the Labour Day Group of failing to overegg most puddings they came near?

Of the newer writers not associated with groups, Kim Stanley Robinson revisits the terraformed Mars, full of amnesiac immortals, that he used to such effect in *Icehenge,* itself a fixup of novellas. "Green Mars" is a story about mountaineering, of considerable interest to people who are interested in mountaineering, and with enough felicities of imagery and those aspects of character which emerge when dangling from a rope to keep the attention of those of us who would normally be bored rigid. Science fiction has had its fair share or more of stories about climbing—they usually get called evocative—and it is nice for once to have a story which sounds as if it were getting it right. The story's central conceit is that his hero is a conservationist, which means that on the whole he objects to exchanging the suffocating barrenness of Mars for a green and terraformed world full of trees and newly invented animals. Unlike his coevals, he can still remember the good old days of wildness, but in the end, after a sexual reunion with a woman he knew two and a half centuries ago, and who cannot remember him, even when trying to be polite, he accepts the universe as it is. The best of Robinson is not perhaps so obviously liable to the charge of mild pointlessness, but he is a writer with a strong visual sense who ends up making us forgive him, this once.

John Crowley works a variation on the body of sf stories about funerary arrangements and makes it yet another of his meditations upon memory. A gigolo who grew to love his patroness visits the establishment that plays back endless fragments of filmed moments that a robot camera snapped for the last few decades of her life—but gradually the images become obsessionally of one kind . . . Crowley is making a point about memory and mourning; he does it quickly and gets to the end of his tale efficiently, and he writes in his usual delicate risk-taking prose, while making of his own distinctive style a vehicle whereby we come to know and like his narrator.

James Blaylock's prose is altogether less well-mannered, carrying to excess a tendency to the overornate and the fustian; though since he is writing of the way one might "startle a world of oddities aloft in the skies", it seems churlish to complain. His narrator watches one of his neighbours avoid giant crabs and dread the last of a progressively larger series, and another imitate his reversed master by making a robot dragon. The last crab never comes; the robot only works momentarily; the narrator sees but does not speak to said revered master. Things get odd, but they still don't matter much, except for the fact that there is beauty in the world, even if often for moments only. Here, as in some of his novels, Blaylock is disquietingly at an angle to the rest of the genre.

What makes this anthology particularly worthwhile is the presence in it of not only one but two stories by the excellent Lucius Shepard. The first and slighter of these, "The Jaguar Hunter", could have been written many decades ago as far as its subject matter goes—the hunter sent after a werebeast who feels more comradeship with it than with his employers and who disappears with it into fairyland—and indeed there is to the plot thus summarised the feel of myth as well as of consoling fantasy. Shephard's redaction of the material has the particular bite of taking on board the fact that in recent years South America has become first the home of a sort of glowing metafiction and secondly that it has become the rallying cry again of the struggle against Yankee imperialism. In magazine stories of an earlier vintage, there would have been a patronising tone to the use of a Central American milieu; now there is an anger and a power that is not merely flavour of the month. "A Spanish Lesson" is an altogether weirder affair; a narrator who shares the author's Christian name is trying to be an artist, and succeeding in being a layabout, in the

Spain of the '60s. He gets involved—out of what in retrospect he regards as shabby motives of perversity—with a young couple considered weird even by the crowd he is knocking around with. They turn out neither to be straightforwardly refugees from an alternate universe where Hitler rules, nor emanations from some mystic state akin to those in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, but pregnantly both. He tries to help them, muffs it at the cost of three dead and helps, by drug smuggling, the survivor to find peace in a Tibetan nunnery. More than any story in this anthology, this stresses the concept that tragedy hurts and that some things are irreparable. It is a story brimming with a selfhatred and selfcontempt that we are forced to share. Where Shepard scores over all of his coevals is in his moral seriousness; when, as so often he does, he lays down a moral at the end, you feel obliged to believe it. In his angry radicalism and mythmaking there is a force that could not be reduced to the formulae of a videogame or fitted cheerfully into a programme. In an eloquent final paragraph he lays down a prescription which refuses selfserving sentimental regret. "Some will tell you that to feel guilt or remorse over the vast inaction of our society is utter foolishness; life, they insist, is patently unfair, and all anyone can do is look out for their own interests . . . For the sake of my soul . . . I tell you it is not." Fine as some of the other stories in this representative anthology are, and great as are the merits of those writers represented by secondary work, would that they had some of the same moral seriousness; this ain't no party, this ain't no disco, this ain't no fooling around.

Staring at the Sun
by Julian Barnes *(Cape, 1986, 195 pp, £9.95)*

reviewed by John Clute

The difference between science fiction and science fantasy is the difference between staring at the new sun and staring at the old. Science fiction promulgates (though strictly does not enact) a view forwards in which the plot secret to be unfolded will change the world, and we shall be free—how easy it is. Science fantasy enacts (though often it denies so doing) a view into the deep past in which the secret to be deciphered will ineluctably demonstrate for us how the world became the World we live in, and we shall not be free—how easy it is. In sf the world is a labyrinth to be razed; in science fantasy the World is the rays of the labyrinth. Although Julian Barnes may never have heard of science fantasy, or as a man of letters of the British mainstream may conceive of it as a marketing term without substance, it's a good thing that *Staring at the Sun* is indeed science fantasy, and not sf at all. His rendering of the future (2020) is impossibly exiguous, crippled by that genteel paucity of imagination so endemic to mainstream engagements with extrapolative material, and if his new novel were to be read as sf it would have to be read as desperately incompetent. But *Staring at the Sun* is a superlative novel. Its thisness is retrospective.

(There is something slightly gormless about the word *thisness,* and this reviewer has in the past used a dictionary term—he has certainly been informed that it is nothing but a dictionary term—to substitute for *thisness* when he wished to speak of a book's density of presentation of the texture of a world or a life or tiny twig. This word is *haecceity,* and is defined in the OED as "the quality implied in the use of *this,* as *this man;* 'thisness'; 'hereness and nowness'." For *this* reviewer there is, in addition to its denotative clarity,

an orthographic involvedness to *haecceity* that seems positively onomatopoeic, and it would be nice to see it used more often.)

The haecceity of *Staring in the Sun* is retrospective. The sun at which the heroine of the novel stares is the unmiraculous constant sun to which we are attached. The world that puts the world of 2020 in bondage is ours, as seen through the life of Jean Serjeant. She is a heroine of the grave mundanity and finite bournes of the human state. She is no carrier of sf transcendentalism. Born about 1922, she begins her seemingly unremarkable adulthood in a small unnamed English city. She marries a flat-footed leaden-hearted constable, survives the Blitz and the Festival of Britain. She remembers Thomas Prosser, an RAF pilot who saw the sun rise at 18,000 feet and rise again at 8,000. This twice-born dawn is the only miracle of the world. There is nothing else in her life. She seems mute, a mere resident of the century. The melancholy one initially expects to feel at her condition furtively resembles that self-exempting sadness at the human condition of others, that morose slumming condescension about the mute and inglorious so often apparent when the well-bred properly educated English writer begins to speak of those whose function it is to be lower in the social order than he is. But this is a trick of the lighting.

She is nearly 40 and pregnant for the first time. Because it is simply and merely obvious that she must do so if she is to maintain her selfhood, she leaves her husband. She does nothing spectacular. She works as a waitress here and there in provincial England, does not remarry, raises her son, does not much enjoy his lover's attempts to engage her in a lesbian affair, ages with a dignity that falls well short of the epiphanic, travels to the Grand Canyon, which is like travelling to the miracle of the sun, and to China, which is the echoing world:

> Jean remembered China. Perhaps this was why she hadn't felt as much of a stranger there as she had expected: because being in China was like living with a man. Men juggled with goldfish and expected you to be impressed. Men gave you fur coats made out of dogs. Men invented the plastic bonsai. Men gave you very small address books which they thought would meet your needs . . . Most of all there was the way men talked to you. In Asian times. [She is recollecting Chinese English.] The temple was repented. We grow ladies. Here is the sobbing centre. They talked at you through a megaphone even though you stood only a couple of yards away. And when the batteries failed, they still preferred to shout down the instrument at you rather than adopt the frail equality of the voice . . . They pretended there was something wrong with the question. That is not a real question. Why do you ask such a thing? There is no answer because there is no question. Here is the sobbing centre. Put your finger on the knot and help me rope the pig. The temple was repented. In Asian times. Do not forget we live in Asian times; we have always lived in Asian times.

Asian times is how ancient times come down to us. That we have always lived in Asian times has always been the deep message of true science fantasy; it is surely a message from the heart of Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun,* the new Sun Who, after 1300 pages, we still do not precisely see: He stares at *us.* Jean Serjeant has no such ambition, nor is the world of 2020 hovering at the edge of redemption. Her task, though clearly more modest, lacks nothing in courage. In the thin air of the future and her own great old age, she needs only to hold on to her self, to the world, to the mundane haecceity of the Canyon and the sun.

Her child is 60, and consults the General Purposes Computer—portrayed by Mr Barnes with all the negligent exiguity of the mainstream writer cut loose from his normal signalling mechanisms—but finds no answers to the mystery of life. He asks his mother if death is absolute. Yes, dear. If religion is nonsense. Yes, dear. If suicide is permissible.

No, dear. The novel ends. The future is a crackle of Chinese men, drumming their hollows. The world is the thing itself, this labyrinth. Clearly the rays are Jean Serjeant.

Cry Wolf
by Aileen La Tourette *(Virago, 1986, £3.95 pbk)*

reviewed by Gwyneth Jones

Once upon a time there was a little boy who was set to watch over the sheep. If a wolf appeared and threatened the flock he was to cry Wolf! Wolf! to attract the rest of the community, who would come and drive the predator away. But he was lonely and bored all by himself, so one day he called Wolf! Wolf! when there was no danger in sight. Everybody came running, naturally. Pleased by the excitement the boy got into the habit of giving false alarms. The community soon worked out that their warning system was not to be trusted. So one day, when the danger was real, the little boy cried Wolf! Wolf! and nobody came. And he got eaten up along with the sheep.

This is a cautionary tale, supposed in popular mythology to have survived from a long ago pastoral society: its significance changing on the way from the particular to the general so that nowadays "the little boy who cried wolf" refers to any child (or adult) who invalidates an alarm system by using it frivolously. The most interesting thing about this fable, along with others of its kind, is that on examination we can be fairly sure it is a tissue of lies. There never was a flock of sheep, there never was a child, there never was a wolf. On the one hand boy guardians of precious flocks, in the sort of society invoked, are not expected to run off screaming when a predator appears (cf. 1 Samuel 17). On the other hand, supposing this is a pack of wolves we are talking about, by the time the child has done running and screaming and the reinforcements have mustered themselves, there won't be much left for them to do for those unfortunate sheep. The arrangement doesn't make sense. This true-life object lesson is entirely a didactic invention, imposing on the gullibility of uninformed five-year-olds. It pretends to be an abstract from genuine experimental data, but in fact there is no original material at all. The diagram came first; the picture is just sham decoration.

The story of the little boy who cried wolf has strong parallels with the story of writers who use non-realistic genre as a medium for conveying political or satirical information. It is obvious, of course, that there never was a Lemuel Gulliver, first a Surgeon and then a Captain of Several Ships: and there never was a Victor Frankenstein, student of mysterious natural forces. To varying degrees in different parts of the works involved, the fictional device becomes frankly transparent, in a way that would be unacceptable in a literal picaresque travelogue or gothic melodrama. However, substance and character remain, in the undisguised voice of the satirist or commentator. The journey is into the mind of Swift: the investigation into human nature is undertaken by Mary Shelley herself. But when writers become more sophisticated, and too self-conscious to speak frankly from the soapbox, a further dilution of the fiction occurs; and in the end there is very little left at all.

Aileen La Tourette's admonitory fable is the work of a practised writer of fiction. In her non-genre work she is accustomed to using the technical freedoms with modernist enthusiasm: time-shifts, language games, juxtaposition of several versions of the fictional

"reality". It would be almost impossible for her to undertake the task she has given herself naïvely: from the outset it is clear that everything is going to be highly stylised. The last survivor from the world before the Bomb has been trying to give the new human race a fresh start. The fatally flawed past exists only in her memory: if she can keep quiet it will vanish forever. She is challenged by one of the new generation, finds they are not so innocent as she had imagined, and is prevailed upon to tell her story.

Curie's story is the book. In her past, in the last days of our civilisation, she was a peace protester, and became involved in a—non-realistic—plot which was intended to keep the missiles from being fired. In her present, equipped with a telepathic amanuensis who is able to discuss what she has never experienced, she examines her own heroic legend and in a series of flashbacks reveals "what really happened" at the end of the world.

This is a tale that did not grow in the telling. So many of its elements are acknowledged and swiftly dismissed as transparent fictional devices, that the net result is a very slender narrative. Symbol, metaphor, allegory are boldly juxtaposed, with no connective tissue or gradation between. The new humans are the descendants of political dissidents, rounded up somewhere in the Arctic by Those Who Launch Missiles and subjected to genetic experiments. These parents have turned into pillars of salt (white, still figures in the post-nuclear twilight) by the time Curie and her friends arrive, because they could not stop looking back and grieving for the world. The feminist reinterpretation of myth is a natural feature. The blurred identity of *Them* is a reasonable extrapolation for both the sermon and the story: how should anyone know or care "who started it" if only about fifteen people were left alive, a generation ago? It does not interfere seriously with the how-we-survived adventure, when finally recounted. But it is impossible to get a grip on the Neo-Arctic, which slips from symbol to (fictional) reality and back in the course of a sentence.

Undoubtedly La Tourette is well aware of the vagueness of her future world. She is invoking science fiction themes and images: the near-future thriller; the post-holocaust desert; the embryonic utopia. But she does not want there to be any doubt as to what is really going on. She does not intend the book to be readable as simple science fiction. And indeed it is not.

> The child is real and the wolf is real and the child is ultimately devoured, by the wolf or by the fear of those who do not listen either to the cry or to the silence.

The missiles in the silos are crying Wolf! Wolf!; the women outside the fence are crying Wolf! Wolf! Both alarms are at once false and genuine. If either group stops shouting will everybody die? The intimate relationship between peace protesters and warmongers is the real subject of this book. The cloudy post-holocaust is a metaphor for La Tourette's investigative position: looking (back) at the struggle from the outside. Certainly there is more substance and presence in the part of the narrative that deals with Curie's revolutionary cell, and its haphazard and disingenuous formation. There are straightforward observations. Man, the individual, is not the enemy. Neither, by extension, is the male principle: the "wolf energy". It is the pack instinct, the loss of imagination, that is to be feared. And the peace women, contemporary saints and martyrs, arrive at their unassailable virtue by very devious and contradictory routes.

But La Tourette writes as someone who has gone beyond the camp. She has packed up and left those gates, and the mud and the cold and the boredom. She describes, with an insider's unsparing honesty, an inadequate little group of people, living the cloistered

lives of literal nuns. Their plot to save the world is, in the end, absurdly ineffectual. Their relationship with the forces on the other side of the wire is closer than they ever dared admit.

The message finally becomes clear, a sermon worthy of some attention. The human condition is a subject that transcends politics, even the sexual kind. Truth and lies, woman and man, good and evil blur together. We survive in spite of our virtues and because of our betrayals . . . However this content is almost lost in the empty spaces where the naïvely realistic plot and detail ought to be. Sophisticated fictionists despise practical experiments, knowing the difficulty of distinguishing the observer from the observed; results from interpretation. But if there is any purpose involved besides literary *dressage* it would be better to learn to accept these limitations, with humility. An unreflecting narrative, a story without a meaning, is a poor thing. A meaning without a story is equally defective.

Tales of the Quintana Roo
by James Tiptree Jr. (illustrated by Glennray Tutor) *(Arkham House, 1986, $11.95)*

reviewed by Lisa Tuttle

Here's a slim volume (unpaged) containing three fantastic tales, decorated, illustrated, obviously produced and published with care. It could be the archetypal Arkham House book.

James Tiptree Jr. is better known as a science fiction writer, but these stories are fantasies of a very traditional type. They are traveller's tales, of strange events in a strange land, and the strange country figures almost as a character itself in these stories. This is the Quintana Roo, a real place, as Tiptree explains in the introduction: "It is the long, wild easternmost shore of the Yucatán Peninsula, officially but not psychologically part of Mexico." The stories were obviously inspired by love for this country—not the love of a native, but the romantic, fantasizing love of an outsider—and this is both a strength and a weakness in them.

These are all stories within stories. The events are distanced not only by locale, but by the way they are related. Never "this happened to me", always "I met someone who told me this." The people to whom the strange things happen are always strangers. The last story actually begins, "My informant was, of course, spectacularly unreliable."

The narrator, the presumably reliable authorial persona within all three stories, is presented as an "elderly gringo" who returns to the Quintana Roo year after year from the U.S., an experimental psychologist who also writes—in other words, James Tiptree Jr. Or is it Alice Sheldon? Tradition and some internal evidence suggest the narrator is a man, but the same reasoning led to the assumption that Tiptree was a man until Alice Sheldon revealed her identity in 1977. In "The Boy Who Waterskied to Forever", the narrator identifies himself as *viejo amigo* ("old friend"), using the masculine endings, but as we are told in the very next line that "My Spanish has been called *únicamente desastroso*", this is not an entirely reliable clue.

Does it make any difference? It doesn't seem to. There's never any suggestion that the sex of the narrator affects the stories we're told, and if not for the photograph on the book jacket, readers might be unaware of the difference between the author and the Tiptree persona.

But gender confusion *is* an important element in the first story which is also, I think, the strongest in the book. In "What Came Ashore at Lirios", the Tiptree-narrator offers hospitality to a wandering *gringo,* a young swimming pool designer from Des Moines. In return for water and a taste of maple syrup, the young man tells the story that haunts him, about a gift from the sea. One fine, moonlit night, looking for trash or treasure in the waves, he came across a wrecked boat bobbing in the shallows. Tied to its mast was something that at first he took for a corpse, and then for a living woman. Cutting her free, he managed to pull her to shore where she became not a woman but a beautiful, arrogant young man, seemingly a Spanish aristocrat from another century. Or was she (as his physical responses kept telling him) really a woman disguised as a man? Or—as the authorial persona later reflects—perhaps both and neither? This is a fine story, strong and strange. Every detail counts, and it gets even better with re-reading. It feels the least contrived of the three, the most convincing in its strangeness, yet it is also the most complex, putting the reader through mental changes even as the two narrators are forced to reassess their perceptions, the structure reflecting content.

By comparison, "The Boy Who Waterskied to Forever" struck me as a slight and pointless fantasy about miraculous time-travel. Although pleasant enough, and not very long, it seems over-extended. "Beyond the Dead Reef" is about something nasty in the ocean. It is the closest to traditional horror, with an obvious moral, and that is its weakness. It is heavy-handed and melodramatic where "Lirios" is matter-of-fact and subtle. Yet they're both entertaining enough, and, even if there are other Tiptree stories I'd rather see given the special illustrated treatment, it's an attractive little book, and worth it for "What Came Ashore at Lirios".

Modern Science Fiction and the American Literary Community
by Frederick Andrew Lerner *(The Scarecrow Press, Metuchan, N.J., distributed by Bailey Bros & Swinfen Ltd., Folkestone, 1985, xviii + 325pp, £26)*

reviewed by Edward James

A ninth-century historian, generally known as Nennius, announced at the beginning of his work "I have made a great heap of all that I have found." The result, the *Historia Brittonum,* is a mass of fascinating detail, but all so disconnected that it is almost impossible to construct a comprehensible history out of it. Lerner is no Nennius: he is, for a start, much too systematic and industrious. But far too much of his book is constructed, like the *Historia Brittonum,* of isolated fragments which state baldly: "In this year X published an article on sf which said Y." The historical conclusions drawn are often superficial, and do not add greatly to the general impression gained by anyone familiar with the sf field.

Even Lerner's systematic approach has its drawbacks, as we shall see. But let us be thankful for it: as he himself says (p.ix), "All too many books and articles on science fiction base their conclusions not on any systematic study of the literature, but on *ad hoc* reading of whatever material is conveniently available." Lerner defines his procedures with admirable clarity. "Modern American science fiction" is the sf that originated in the specialist sf magazines. The prolific modern American sf writers he uses as a sample are the 94 who published 50 or more stories in sf magazines between 1926 and 1970, together

with the eight who won awards between 1970 and 1976. He justifies the appearance of the odd British, Canadian and Australian writer, and at least one totally fictitious character (Ivar Jorgensen), by arguing, justifiably enough, that the average (non-fan) sf reader in the United States did not distinguish between the American and the non-American when he or she read them in the American magazines. Lerner aims to show how these writers were treated by the general literary community in the States—by book reviewers, writers for the popular periodicals, writers for literary and political reviews, scholars, teachers, librarians and futurologists. He went through the *Book Review Digest* to find the books which received three or more reviews outside the specialist sf press. He went through *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* to identify articles on sf: a source used by many libraries to choose periodicals, and thus listing periodicals likely to reach a wide audience. And he went through sources such as *Humanities Index, Education Index,* and so on. It *is* systematic, in the way that only a librarian (or a doctoral researcher) can be systematic. (The book began as a doctoral dissertation in the School of Library Service at Columbia University.) But the system, like most systems, does not make very much allowance for common sense. His *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* clearly lists British periodicals, for instance. Is it really much use, in a study of the acceptance of American sf by the American literary community, to be referred to articles by J.B. Priestley, Sir Bernard Lovell or Robert Conquest in the *New Statesman*; by Maurice Goldsmith in *The Spectator;* by Brian Aldiss in *Encounter*; by Edmund Crispin in the *TLS;* by Hilary Bailey in the *TES*?

After a brief discussion of the definition of sf (he adopts Spinrad's), Lerner looks at the history of American sf, in relation to his theme. He documents the great change brought about after 1945, when *Saturday Evening Post* began publishing sf for the first time, and periodicals started publishing reviews of the sf books that began to appear in greater and greater numbers. (Often together with mysteries and westerns, in corners called "Astray, Astride, Asteroid" or "Nosey, Mosey, Cosmosy".) He takes the story through the early 1950s, when "science fiction attained a level of popularity and public consciousness not to be duplicated for another twenty-five years", up to the emergence of sf on the best-seller lists. His chapters go from the atom bomb, from Sputnik, and from Apollo: events which perhaps had more impact upon the American literary community, and hence upon their attitude to sf, than upon the sf community itself. Ultimately, he seems to conclude, sf's commercial success by 1976 only confirmed the American literary community's general contempt for the field; sf was ignored by mainstream book reviewers just as it always had been.

The next few chapters deal with the growing acceptance of sf by scholars, teachers, librarians and futurologists. The twenty pages on the growth of sf scholarship (both fan and university) is a useful guide to the subject, incorporating a good basic bibliography. The section on libraries deals not only with the reaction of librarians and cataloguers to sf, but also with the establishment of specialist collections. The standard library purchasers' guides themselves provide potted histories of changing attitudes. In 1941 H.W. Wilson Co.'s *Fiction Catalog* mentioned only 29 works of "pseudo-science", mostly by Verne, Wells and Doyle: by 1950 Asimov, Heinlein and Williamson had made their appearance, and "Science-fiction" had replaced "Pseudo-science" as a heading. The *Reader's Guide* introduced the term "science fiction" in 1949; look it up and it referred you to "pseudo-scientific stories", a category which only disappeared in 1961. Lerner has dug up all kinds

of interesting nuggets for us. And it is all documented and cross-referenced extremely thoroughly in the notes and bibliography. There are about 600 items of background information in the "Sources consulted" bibliography; about 200 sf novels listed with references to three or more reviews in mainstream journals; about 600 items in "articles, essays and stories examined"; rounded off by extensive notes and a twenty-six page index. Unsatisfactory it may be as a balanced and critical history of changing attitudes, but it is almost unparalleled as a mine of information. Lerner is going to remain a work of reference for anyone interested in his subject for a long time to come.