FOUNDATION

THE
REVIEW OF
SCIENCE FICTION

40

featuring articles on sf in Europe
and including others by Pamela Sargent,
Ian Watson and Kim Stanley Robinson

FOUNDATION 40

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FOUNDATION

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

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Editorial

Foundation celebrates its fortieth issue with rather more than a nod in the direction of World Science Fiction: it is hoped that this issue will be out in time for the World Science Fiction Convention, held in the UK this year, in Brighton. In this international issue we offer you an American author, who continues the ethnographic metaphor begun by David Brin in our last issue: he was the shaman, she is the nomadic hunter. We offer you probably our most internationally-minded British sf author, with comments on a diversion all too common in the world today. We present, from across the sea (Alderney in the Channel Islands), musings upon the sea-girt worlds of Lewis and Le Guin. We offer articles on a Czech Jewish myth that lies behind a well-known sf theme, on Czech sf in English translation, on the first Romanian sf author, on Flemish sf—and we even offer an article written by an American now living in Switzerland about Holland . . .

On the cover I have announced that we are featuring articles on sf in Europe. That was a Freudian slip. Despite the EEC, I still do not feel myself to be truly European. Certainly in critical writing about sf in English, British and American sf are usually conceived of as two different facets of the same object, while 'European' sf is different, a *terra* which is largely *incognita*. For various reasons—linguistic incompetence, publishers' policies —the Anglo-American world remains fairly ignorant of European sf. Oddly enough, it is East European sf which is best known—Čapek, Lem, Nesvadba, the Strugatskys. Where are our translations and critical studies of Andrevon, Curval or Jeury, for instance? Let alone of the Flemish or Romanian sf discussed below. Victor Anestin was not even mentioned, as far as I can see, in the Nicholls *Encyclopedia*. I hope that *Foundation* (which Peter Nicholls did so much to shape) will continue to do its bit to redress the balance.

For those who have actually taken out a subscription to *Foundation* at the Worldcon, a few words about what we do. We publish three times a year, usually in Spring, Summer and Autumn. Autumn rather than Fall, because, as Norman Spinrad said in *Asimov's* last year, we are idiosyncratically British. He also said that we provide the best available academic overview of sf, and that we try to do. Sometimes we overdo it on academese, perhaps. George Hay, founder of the Science Fiction Foundation, wrote in to comment on issue 39:

> All the articles are of high academic standard, save David Brin's, which specifically sets out to be Something Else. While I find his views very refreshing, I think in this case it might have been better if he *had* "played his union card": some people might dismiss this piece as being over-simplistic, which would be a pity. K.V. Bailey's article was very impressive . . . But this does take me to an overall comment on the issue. We really do have an overkill of self-referentiality. It gets to the stage, 'when I hear the word "metaphor", I release the safety-catch on my revolver'. There are moments when I feel that all contemporary literature—not just sf—has suffered a severe case of Clerk's Treason, and that the genius of Borges has wreaked untold damage by allowing lesser followers to explain everything in terms of everything else. Life may be a game, though I doubt it; in any event, it is dangerous to allow all and sundry to rush into the field in the absence of either an umpire or a clear set of rules.

George appeals for a minimum of one article in each issue "that the Man in the Clapham Space Shuttle can follow". Well, I think he would agree that we normally do provide much more than that mimimum. In fact we generally do avoid the kind of critical

articles written by English literature academics who have only read a little sf but who do know all the latest fashionable literary theories: the kind of thing that has given academic sf criticism a bad name, and justifiably so, in the sf world. But getting the right balance is not easy. We do regard ourselves as the most readable—or least academic, if you like—of the academic sf journals. But we do also have to keep up our scholarly standards. We are not going to be over-pedantic, though. For instance, I would hate to have destroyed the point made in the second sentence of Ian Watson's footnote 2, page 16 this issue, through sheer pedantry, by pointing out that certain mites of the genus *Adactylidium* are indeed necrogenes. (The eggs hatch inside the mother's body and feed off the mother until she is totally devoured, and the young then cut their way out of her external tissues. What is even more bizarre than the Brian Aldiss and Orson Scott Card extrapolations he refers to is that the males copulate with their sisters while still in the mother's body, and die immediately after "birth", their task on this earth accomplished.) I didn't want to spoil Ian's Darwinian world, and after all these things are not common, and *are* totally invisible to the naked eye . . .

One of the ways we try to avoid pedantry and academese is by printing articles by sf writers themselves—who, as one might expect, often write better and show more knowledge of and insight into sf than do most academics (viz. the three examples in this issue). A good proportion of our reviewers are practising sf writers too, which helps make the reviews the liveliest that you will find anywhere. And we never gag or censor our reviewers (see pp. 72 – 82).

Apart from articles and reviews, we also publish, from time to time, a "Foundation Forum", where controversies can be aired. (Next issue will have George Hay asking us to take the first of the two words in the phrase "science fiction" rather more seriously than most of us usually do.) And we have letters, where the curious, the helpful and the enraged can put their points of view and engage in debate (see pp 72 – 82).

If you feel like debate, do write now. The Autumn issue is in preparation. Since in the Autumn the Science Fiction Foundation's Patron, Arthur C. Clarke, will be celebrating his seventieth birthday, we felt that we must have a special Arthur C. Clarke issue. Already we have assembled a number of articles on his life and work, and it looks as if it is going to be exciting. If anyone out there wishes to contribute please make it before the end of October.

The first forty issues of *Foundation* have been, I think, a significant contribution to sf criticism. This is just to mention, again, that if you want a full contents and subject index to those issues, please send the special pre-publication rate of £2.95 ($6) to the Science Fiction Foundation. If we can gather together enough cheques to finance the printing (as I am sure we shall do), the Index will be out in the New Year.

Edward James
August 1987

Pamela Sargent studied philosophy, ancient history, and Greek at the State University of New York at Binghamton, where she later became a teaching assistant. She also has been a salesclerk, a solderer and fine assembly worker in a factory, a typist in a library, and an office worker and receptionist for a paper company. Soon after receiving her Master's degree from SUNY she became a full-time writer, based in upstate New York.

Gregory Benford has described her as "one of the leaders in a new generation of sf novelists", and called her Venus of Dreams *(1986) "a new high point in humanistic science fiction". Particularly noted for her fine portrayal of characters, there is a grand, generation-spanning scope to her thought, which led Algis Budrys to describe an earlier novel,* The Golden Space *(1983), as "a major intellectual achievement".*

Her young adult novels (Earthseed, Eye of the Comet, *and* Homesmind) *have been much admired. Besides, she is a noted anthologist—with her pioneering* Women of Wonder *trio—and author of many short stories.*

Pamela Sargent's latest British edition is The Shore of Women *(from Chatto and Windus in 1987, with a paperback due from Pan in 1988); and* Venus of Dreams *should be brought out by Corgi/Bantam/Transworld in 1988. Though Collins brought out her* Earthseed *in 1984,* Eye of the Comet *and* Homesmind *as yet await British editions—as do* The Golden Space, and her moving 1983 novel, The Alien Upstairs.

"The Writer as Nomad" will appear in Women of Vision, *a forthcoming book of essays by women writers of science fiction and fantasy, which is edited by Denise M. Du Pont and will be published by St. Martin's Press.* Women of Vision *will also include essays by Ursula K. Le Guin, the late James Tiptree, Jr. (Alice Sheldon), Anne McCaffrey, P.C. Hodgell, Joan D. Vinge, Suzette Haden Elgin, Suzy McKee Charnas, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and several other writers.*

The Profession of Science Fiction, 36: The Writer as Nomad

PAMELA SARGENT

Not long ago, I was asked to write an introduction to a second collection of my short fiction. Unable to think of anything to say about the stories themselves, I ended up writing about how, for years, even after the publication of a few stories, I couldn't really acknowledge that I was a writer at all. What was left unwritten was *why* I felt that way. Like the well-bred hostess of a dinner party, I did not want to invite readers to meet my guests, the stories, while bombarding them with too much unsuitable talk. I joked a little, made a few darker remarks, and left a lot of things unsaid.

The fact is that I did not, in the beginning, choose writing as a profession. Writing was,

for me, something I had to do to survive—not economically, but psychologically. Writing was a compulsion, a way to make sense, metaphorically, of various events, to find a purpose in my life and even, at times, to escape it. One might say that the stories were game to be hunted and tracked, brought down, and then eaten. Publication, like the mounted heads on a hunter's walls, was merely a byproduct of the pursuit, one that was not really essential; the act of writing and the mental nourishment gained from that act seemed far more important. Writing was a way of living.

I was, in fact, a kind of nomad, keeping my distance from communities where everything is fixed and settled. There's something to be said for being physically nomadic. I felt most free when everything I owned could fit into a couple of suitcases and a small trunk; this meant I had less to lose, and could always escape. But what I want to consider here is the psychological nomad, which is what many writers are and what science fiction and fantasy writers in particular may be.

At our best, we're trying to seek out new trails and find new game; we see more familiar literary hunting grounds as overhunted. We learn the skills we need from other hunters who keep nearer to their home ground, then move toward unknown lands and hope that some of our tribe will follow. We want a different kind of nourishment, and may also be trying to escape the tribal customs that constrict the movements of many of us.

During my teens, when some of my contemporaries were wrestling with such problems as grades, high school cliques, dates, or preparing for the PSATs, I was delivered into the hands of an institution in the hope that it might keep me from destroying myself. By then, I had two suicide attempts and various other attempts at escape to my credit; my family, who had done its best to rear me responsibly, despaired and no longer knew what to do with me.

During the months I was in this place, which was supposedly designed to help me, I learned how to appease one of my keepers with cigarettes, money, and some personal possessions so that she would not report my transgressions to her superiors. I learned how to tell those in authority what they wanted to hear and how to conceal the truth; I have distrusted such people ever since. I endured the assaults of one man, and didn't report them, although that wasn't out of any misplaced concern for him. Either I wouldn't have been believed, and would have had the additional problem of reprisals on his part, or I *would* have been believed, in which case I would be blamed for allowing the assaults to happen and would only lose what little freedom I had.

This sage advice on how to deal with my problem was offered by my friend Gwen, a ghetto kid who knew her way around such institutions and considered this place a paradise compared to the one she had been in earlier. She also gave me a few pointers on how to defend myself in fights, tips that did come in handy.

Some of my other friends were Lydia, whose parents had decided that she needed to be whipped into shape when they discovered she was a lesbian; Raul, an angry young man who had suffered abuse as a child and whom I planned to marry if we could get away and lie about our ages; and Bob, a boy who had occasional blackouts after which he couldn't recall what he had done, but who struck me as one of the gentlest people I had known. My ability to assess people was obviously impaired; a little more than a year later, Bob was in prison doing time for a murder he couldn't remember having committed.

None of us had any ambitions for the future other than getting out, and couldn't really

imagine what would happen to us after that. Bob had a fantasy of running away and finding a house where we could all hide out, but those plans never came to fruition; it was easier to dream about it. Our favourite recreational activity was washing down some of the tranquillizers and psychotropic drugs used to keep us malleable with large swigs of whiskey a bribed adult would smuggle onto the grounds. This wasn't hard to do; we pretended to swallow our drugs, spat them out, and saved them for later. We could escape for a little while by blotting out all thought.

The solace of writing, of struggling to recast some of my experiences into fictional form in order to make sense of them, or to create the refuge of an entirely imaginary world, was taken away from me. I had to learn how to face reality, my keepers reasoned; therefore, my writing, in which the imagined could take on a kind of reality, had to be discouraged. Clearly, it hadn't helped me before (so they believed), and wasn't likely to aid my adjustment now; I dimly felt that writing was considered somehow dangerous.

I did, however, find a tool to help me in my mental wandering. Someone had left an old, beat-up paperback lying around, a copy of Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination*. This story of the tormented Gully Foyle, who was able to "jaunt" or teleport himself from one place to another, immediately spoke to me.

That paperback became one of my treasures; I kept it with me most of the time so that it wouldn't be stolen. I was well aware that I couldn't teleport myself out of the institution, but did begin to imagine a future self, the adult Pamela Sargent who had finally escaped. I visited this self in my mind and saw myself looking back, free at last, safely distant and able to look back with some objectivity. Whenever I was enduring a painful or humiliating experience, or a dark, despairing mood, I tried to jaunt or migrate mentally past that time.

I also told myself that, some day, I would draw on what had happened to me in my writing, find a way to make order and sense of it, find a purpose in what would otherwise be only meaningless, brutal, or random acts. I would gain some freedom inside myself, if nowhere else. It didn't occur to me then that my situation, in an exaggerated way, reflected some experience common to other girls and women.

I have to consider myself lucky in the end. I returned to a school where a few fine teachers encouraged an intellectual ability that must have seemed latent at best. I won a scholarship to college and, later, became reconciled with those who I thought had abandoned me earlier.

But for a long time, I was also careful not to get too close to anyone. Close relationships, so I believed, would almost inevitably lead to either betrayal or violent confrontations; they meant giving someone else power over oneself. Under the guise of friendship, love, or concern, others could inflict a great number of wounds. I was scarred enough; I was going to travel light.

I continued to write from time to time; the solitude of writing was appealing. But for the most part, I hunted alone, and kept my distance from the rest of the tribe.

Often, I threw away my stories after they were written. Part of this was a natural fear of criticism, or insecurity about having the stories read and judged by others. But I also feared revealing too much of myself to anyone else; the most meaningful stories were the ones I kept hidden.

I ate my game myself, and didn't think of sharing it with anyone else. Writing was my

private act of rebellion, and I had seen what could happen when you rebelled too openly; writing was my refuge, one I might lose if it were revealed. Maybe I should have learned, through my experience with *The Stars My Destination* earlier, that writing could also be a lifeline to others.

During my senior year in college, I managed, to my surprise, to sell a story. This was unintentional; I'd been encouraged to submit it by two aspiring writers I knew, but had not expected that it would be bought. There was some satisfaction in actually getting a cheque for this small act of rebellion, but also a fear that future game might now evade me.

I reached a compromise, one that would allow me to keep writing while protecting my refuge. I wrote, but did not concern myself with what happened to the stories after they were published; I shared some of my game, but didn't want to hear other people's opinions of it. I put published stories on my shelves, but did not think of myself as a "real" writer.

I kept to my own trails. I stayed away from writers' workshops and other such gatherings, regarding them much the way a hunter would view chattering companions, they might frighten away whatever I was tracking. Gradually, I came to see that a good editor might lead me to a trail or hunting ground I otherwise wouldn't have explored; other writers could suggest new methods for trapping or bringing down my game. Writing remained a solitary pursuit, but there could be companionship after the hunt.

Writing became a way of communicating with others. Given the masks I had learned to hide behind much of the time, it was virtually the only way I had of doing so.

I was extremely fortunate to be doing my early writing at a time when the women's movement was growing, although I didn't see that in the beginning. The early complaints of feminists seemed strange to me at first. Didn't they understand that some things couldn't be changed, and that all we could do was to survive or escape in whatever small ways were open to us? The prospect of exposing oneself in sessions of consciousness-raising seemed repellent and threatening; the notion that others might once again tell me what I should think and feel was disturbing. I had found a way to shield myself and did not want to lose it.

It was the writing of feminists that brought about my change of heart and made me see that I did indeed have a bond with other women. In their work and their lives, I came to see that there were other choices besides either surrendering or retreating. I had believed that I had escaped; in fact, I had only imprisoned myself.

Other women were hunting; some of them were following the trails of science fiction and fantasy. The best fantastic literature and the most profound feminism have this in common: they are subversive, continually challenging the accepted wisdom of the tribe while seeking change and a new way of understanding and viewing the world. They question, and probe, asking why things are as they are and looking for ways in which they might be different.

I had dreamed of a future self able to look back at the past with some understanding. In a sense, science fiction involves a search for other future selves, imagined people who will look back on our present and near-future as their past, perhaps seeing what we cannot and showing us that there are paths out of the prisons our age has built for us all.

Women writers of science fiction and fantasy encouraged me, by their example, to

range farther afield. Some of them were exploiting territory other writers had avoided. Their stories and novels raised questions, illuminated some darker corners, expressed a rage I had felt but had learned to suppress, pointed the way to new possibilities, or entertained while poking fun at some of our tribal ways. The game they had successfully hunted nourished me.

I began to assemble some of their stories in the hope of putting together an anthology. If writing can be seen as hunting, then editing a collection of stories might be seen as gathering (or, perhaps uncharitably, as scavenging). These stories had fed me, and now I wanted to share them with others.

For a while, however, as I went from one publishing house to another with my proposal, I felt that no one wanted to accept this nourishment. Some editors responded out of ignorance; could there actually be enough science fiction stories by women to fill a book? Others were skeptical or hostile, no doubt trying to protect the tribe from contamination. Still others thought it was a fine idea, but did not want to be the first to accept the morsels I offered.

My anthology, *Women of Wonder,* eventually did see print, along with two successive collections of science fiction by women, and now the trails those writers made have become clearly-defined paths. I had done no more than gather the food to which those writers had guided me, and led others to their tracks; but working on those books gave me more faith in my own writing. I like to think of *Women of Wonder* as a book that frightened teenager clutching her copy of *The Stars My Destination* would have enjoyed reading.

It may be that a lot of my own writing, in some way, is for that girl as well. Much of my work, and not just the books ostensibly published for young adults, is filled with people in their teens, many of whom are outsiders or outcasts from their tribes, who often *want* to be like everyone else and feel that their inability to fit in is a defect. In *Watchstar,* my protagonist, Daiya, is a girl preparing for her "ordeal", the rite of passage all young people in her telepathic village must endure, when they are cut off from their community entirely and must confront their fears—fears that are given form and substance by the mental powers these people possess. In this society, people must conform, since even their thoughts can harm someone else. Daiya, with her questions and doubts, cannot fit in, and fails her ordeal; she becomes an outcast, yet cannot give up the ties she feels with her people.

My characters often wander quite a bit. In *Earthseed,* my first novel for young adults, my teenaged characters roam inside a hollowed-out asteroid that is itself a ship wandering through space looking for a planet where the young people can settle. The cybernetic mind of this ship is the only parent any of them have known, and the only source of information about an Earth they've never seen. But much has been withheld from the ship's mind; gradually, the young people discover that a lot of what they've been told is either misleading or a lie. They are forced to confront their own weaknesses and to overcome them before they can leave their ship.

In my novel *The Shore of Women,* I chose to write about a world where women live in vast, walled cities, while men roam the wilderness outside and follow the life of hunters and gatherers. A nuclear war is in these people's past, and women are determined that men will never again acquire the means to wage such a war; women control all technology and teach the men to worship them as divine beings. My central characters are Birana, a

young woman unjustly expelled from her city, and Arvil, a young man and a hunter who helps her to survive. The two begin to seek a refuge where they can be safe, but also have to overcome their most deeply-felt beliefs in order to reach out to each other. This story, however, is not theirs alone, but also that of Laissa, a young woman who begins to question her city's ways. Laissa's wandering is through historical records and archives, while the chronicle she eventually writes becomes a blow levelled at her society's assumptions.

No doubt my own experience is reflected in these tales, as well as in others. Yet these apparently recurring themes are not something I care to speculate about too much for fear of scaring off whatever stories my mind might be tracking now. I would not want to limit myself to only certain trails.

All of us who write are nomads and hunters, at least for a while. There are, however, traps for us.

We might find a well-travelled trail and decide to keep to it, instead of looking for new grounds. Some of us are tempted to settle near a likely grazing ground and to hunt the same herd over and over, preferring the safety of the familiar to the risks of new territory. Some of us domesticate our game, or stay in one place, tilling the soil and harvesting the same plants until the ground we work can yield no more. A lot of us see that, even if we pursue the hunt, it's less frightening to join a band or tribe led by one explorer, and to share his game instead of seeking our own.

Too many of us fall into such traps, and there are plenty of people preparing them for us—readers who want us to stay in familiar lands without finding anything new there; editors who want to appease both their tribal chieftains and the rest of the tribe; critics who believe we belong in a particular territory and nowhere else; and writers who cling to the security of being among a like-minded clan or group instead of realizing that companionship can only come after a hunt that must be made alone. This desire for security and the settled life seems contrary to what working in science fiction and fantasy can offer us—new ideas, a different and illuminating perspective, a means to imaginatively depict the changes that may alter what we are or underline the truths about our nature, a method of heightening the familiar and making it seem very strange indeed.

Even when a writer explores new territory, without familiar trails, there are other risks. You might expend more energy in the hunt than the game can possibly yield. You may find nothing you can use. You may bring back your capture and see the tribe refuse it. If you write for a living, as I do, you learn that you have to roam over a greater area in order to avoid the traps, and cannot afford the luxury of pursuing only one kind of prey. You learn when to wait, when to strike, when to abandon one story when a more likely prospect suddenly presents itself, and how to find your way back to the story you had to leave. Small wonder that so many writers, after taking the trouble of laying down a path to new lands, decide they'd rather keep to it instead of moving on.

The need for hunting and gathering is an integral part of us; that is the life we led for most of our history. It's a life that, barring any future catastrophe, we are unlikely to regain. But we can hunt and gather among the arts, sciences, history, and human minds our society has formed.

Science fiction and fantasy at their best recognize this need, giving us a way to wander

to new lands and then to return and share what we have found before we leave to go hunting once more. At their worst, they provide a bare subsistence, hunt the same herds until they are decimated, or offer the tribe a drug to keep it tranquil. Such writing dulls the tribe, leaving it without nourishment, illumination, or hope—much like the earlier version of myself I mentioned before, the one for whom I try to write now.

Writing the kind of work many choose to label as science fiction or fantasy has given me the chance to roam and to find mental sustenance. Publishing it has enabled me to share what I've found with others. This is territory I may leave at some point—labels are another way of fencing ourselves in—but which remains so vast that I'm likely to return to it.

Lately, I have been on the trail of those fascinating nomads, the Mongols, who, in their search for unity and order among themselves, safety from enemies, and more food and pasture land, ended up conquering most of the known world; this search is likely to yield some game in the form of a novel. I can't say where my writing will lead me in the future, only that I have to follow wherever the tracks I find lead me.

Except for some reviews and the italicised introductions to most of the feature articles, Ian Watson has not made an appearance in Foundation *for a long time—although he is naturally very active behind the scenes.* Foundation *has not even reviewed any of his novels since* Chekhov's Journey, *back in 1983—nor (yet) the anthology* Afterlives, *which he edited together with Pamela Sargent. So when I (this italicised introduction is by the Editor, I swear it) saw in the April issue of* Locus *that Ian had given a lecture at Sercon in Oakland, California, I immediately asked him if he would publish it here. He was modestly reluctant, of course, but the application of some exquisite forms of torture ("Otherwise I shall expect you to review the Hubbard dekalogy") eventually persuaded him to submit—and, indeed, to submit a revised and expanded version.*

The Author as Torturer

IAN WATSON

In this essay I want to discuss cruelty in science fiction, fantasy, and horror. I also want to consider censorship, both inflicted from outside by law or boycott, and self-imposed too.

In Britain and America recently we've been seeing the self-appointed guardians of public morals trying their best to suppress books which they find offensive on grounds of sexually provocative content and other kinds of blasphemy against the tribal codes of society.

Thus in Britain we've seen H.M. Customs and Excise raiding, confiscating from, and trying to prosecute the London gay bookshop, Gay's the Word, for importing corrupting

titles from America. Fortunately the Customs and Excise people made fools of themselves by confiscating a swathe of modern literary classics, which are already published in Britain without any bother. We've seen a bit of a storm brewing when the Books Marketing Council, the promotional arm of the Publishers Association, decided to follow up its previous campaigns (such as the Top 20 Young British Authors, and Writers on War) with a Teenread campaign, based on careful monitoring by schools and libraries around the country of what actually are young people's favourite titles. Quite a few of the books on the short list proved to deal with sex, rape, male homosexual love, lesbianism, or incest—leading a big book chain to announce that, if these titles were selected, then they wouldn't promote or sell them. Not long ago in one London borough another popular juvenile title about a daughter who lives with her dad and his homosexual lover was being hauled bodily out of school libraries.

Do these titles *reflect* the realities of modern society, hence their popularity and value? Or, as the objectors protest, do they promote the erosion of good social values, so-called?

In America there's worryingly strong conservative religious pressure pushing for grab-all laws to squash "offensive" literature: laws which are frighteningly vaguely worded, and which are getting scaringly close to their legislative goals, so that the prospect looms of the shelves of book stores in future being full of brown paper bags with health warnings on them.

And let's not forget that there's also such a thing as radical repressiveness: repression proceeding out of the feminist movement in its opposition to presumed sexist portrayals.

A good few years ago, back in the hangover from the Swinging Sixties, I wrote a novel called *The Woman Factory,* subsequently rewritten (much improved, in my opinion) as *The Woman Plant*. I considered this to be a radical political-pornography novel in support of women's liberation; and I wrote it as a liberatory book, a deconstruction of pornography. The book is still unpublished in English, though it would have appeared from Playboy Paperbacks (courtesy of a woman editor) had the Playboy empire not lost its London casino licence, and sold off Playboy Paperbacks. Other American editors told me privately that they liked the book a lot; but as one of these put it, if he published the book he would "have his lungs torn out" by friends in the National Association of Women. As of now, I've decided that it wouldn't be a good idea to publish this novel which I still consider powerful, moving, and even beautiful. A cultural mood-shift has occurred in the interval, so that what was genuinely liberatory would now likely be viewed as exploitative and counter-revolutionary, part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

True, I've been rebuked for this decision by Charles Platt, who wanted to publish a limited edition, and who argued that thus I condone and support the forces of censorship which would rob us of stimulating, controversial literature. I can see his point. Equally, I see the other point of view—and there's an argument that maybe the pendulum has to swing right the other way; although Geoff Ryman's story "Oh Happy Day" in the first *Interzone* anthology, about a future in which triumphant feminists are killing off "aggressive" males in death camps, shows in painful metaphor the possible consequences of good-thinking extremism, of radical repressiveness. Unless, of course, you analyse Geoff Ryman's story as part of the problem, deliberately undermining possible solutions, ways of deprogramming aggression and savagery out of the human race—which, goodness knows, we need to do somehow in a world packed with nuclear weapons, where

the Gulf War rages, et bloody cetera.

Myself, I'm of the British generation which still had to travel to France to pick up and smuggle back home Henry Miller, *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* the *Kama Sutra,* the Marquis de Sade. When our version of Prohibition ended and things loosened up so that British publishers dared print Jean Genet and Henry Miller and such, naturally this felt like a liberation, something devoutly to be supported.

But lately, although I'm utterly convinced that right-wing and religiously motivated attempts at legal censorship must be resisted at all costs—not least in a country like Britain which has a certain suspicion of enthusiasm, and an element of masochism, a tendency to prohibit and forbid—yet I've developed a bit of an ambivalent attitude to the question of how far writers can go, how far over the top, and of how far they might push themselves to go deliberately to give their works a frisson in a world where—in parallel with attempted repression—there is also a pressure to push the bounds as far as you can go, a world which echoes the words of that poet of the 1890s Decadence, Ernest Dowson: "I cried for madder music, and for stronger wine."

Is there a limit to the madness of the music, to the strength of the wine? I think there is—when it comes to the question of cruelty.

This is very dangerous territory, because I might be letting in the thin edge of a wedge—of that same Prohibition which stifles and strait-jackets the imagination; not least when the creative imagination addresses and satirises and attacks and holds up the mirror to a real world of organized savagery.

Yet fiction is becoming noticeably crueller. An even stronger flavour of cruelty is being used to entice the reader, to appeal (sometimes blatantly, sometimes very subtly) to the experienced palate.

A while ago I was at a fantasy convention in Britain where a panel of horror writers were discussing the question: "How far can 'too far' go? Are some horrors best left unseen?" Shaun Hutson, who produces gut-wrenchers with titles such as *Spawn* and *Slugs* for the popular horror market, said that it didn't matter what you wrote because nobody could take these things seriously; and he related with relish how his publisher had asked him to really go over the top, resulting in a maniac armed with chainsaw and complete tool kit torturing tied-down prostitutes to death, for instance taking off their nipples with pliers, an incident which the author seemed reluctant just to gloss over since he related it three times.

Clive Baker argued that horror should aim to shake the assumptions of people, to destabilize a world view which is often deadeningly complacent, almost evil in its own banality; but he declared firmly that he would never write anything which was "repeatable", which could incite some reader with several screws loose to try to act out what he had read upon some victim in the real world. His own horrors simply could not be acted out physically; and he would not write horrors which could be acted.

M. John Harrison, from the audience, pointed out that a writer can put irony in a text, can nudge the reader in the ribs to signal that a story is actually a spoof, but that this is no use if the reader isn't trained to pick up on the sub-text, if he just reads literally and believes.

It occurred to me that maybe good horror twists the reader so much that the reader doesn't want to twist anyone else, ever, not even to stand on a snail or cut a worm in half, if that's in any way avoidable. Your nervous system would have been highly sensitized,

and empathized. Ideally you'd want to sit in a locked room with all the lights on, and not do anything dramatic yourself for quite a while. Certainly not go and torture anything.

Personally I've developed a fair bit of respect for horror fiction lately, and have written a number of horror stories and a horror novel, *The Power* (about U.S. bases in Britain, nuclear war, rural life, and ancient evil). Some interesting things are happening in horror, which at its best (Clive Barker, Ramsey Campbell, Jonathan Carroll) is almost becoming experimental literature. However, let's move over from horror, which inevitably involves a certain amount of hurt whether physical or psychic, to science fiction and fantasy.

Dick Geis's *Science Fiction Review* for Winter 1985 had a couple of pieces in it which bear on the subject of pain in sf/fantasy literature. One is a review by Geis himself of a volume called *Physical Interrogation Techniques,* "a book so horrifying and depressing," writes Geis, "it makes you wonder about mankind, God, reality . . . I review this for writers," he goes on. "Here is a rundown on the ways to torture a man (and woman) for information." If a writer needs to have a character inflict pain on another character—something which certainly mirrors a major aspect of twentieth-century reality, and which is increasingly becoming more "normal", more accepted all the time—oughtn't the writer to research his facts and get the state of the art of agony right? Or should the writer pretend that these things don't happen, or simply have his character interrogated offstage after a token "We have ways of making you talk!" To reappear later, a wrecked gibbering cripple.

Elsewhere in the same issue Orson Scott Card, in his short fiction round-up, speculates whether some sf authors are trying to make him feel like a failure. A propos Connie Willis's "All My Darling Daughters" and a tale by Aldiss he wonders why *he* never thought before that it would be more fun if his sexual partner cried out in agony, or realized that sexual pleasure is intimately bound up with power and exploitation. Maybe Card *needs* to learn these lessons, and apply them. Maybe he needs a copy of *Physical Interrogation Techniques.* (Though in fact Card is no stranger to other kinds of pain, as we shall see presently.)

When a society grows jaded and decadent, it tortures slaves and prisoners on stage. As in ancient Rome; now with snuff movies. As the demand for stimulation grows more extreme, as our original sensibility gets blunted, so only pain can fit the bill. Pain served up with relish.

I think, at this stage of history, with the torturers flourishing in a lot of countries (more so than during the Inquisition, quite likely) and with gore and snuff entertainment around, it's timely to have a look at the role of cruelty as entertainment in our own lucid, rational literature of sf, and fantasy too, but keeping to the *top* end of the literary scale. Let's look at classy, state-of-the-art sf and fantasy rather than the sf equivalent of *Slugs* and *Spawn* (which I hesitate to describe as "soft targets"). Let's look at this so that authors can be aware in full consciousness of the growing lure to torture their slave-actors, their characters, on stage—for gain, and for applause—which to my mind diminishes civilization and humanity and art. Inevitably so, since it blunts the nervous system and ethical sense. It desensitizes. It deprogrammes empathy, without which art is lacking, and human beings too are lacking.

We really have to start with Gene Wolfe, author of *The Shadow of the Torturer*—its hero, Severian, explicitly a trained torturer. Doesn't that title send a bit of a shiver—a

thrill?—down the spine? However, Gene Wolfe is definitely something of an exception, as well as being an exceptionally clever writer. Severian is apprentice to a trade of gentlemanly artisans, a craft guild whose victims are "clients". It's all very matter of fact and discreet. A visit to the torture chamber is more like a trip to the dentist's prior to modern anaesthetics, an unpleasant painful inconvenience. Much of the apparatus doesn't work, or is hardly ever used, and is barely described in any case. The most explicit scene—the subjecting of Thecla to "the revolutionary"—doesn't result in mutilations but more in a metaphysical agony, the imprinting on the victim of an inner demon that will consume her. Thecla is even requested to position herself in the apparatus so as not to embarrass and upset her torturer; and he, Severian, subsequently slips her a knife to kill herself with. Resulting, as we all know, in his banishment and greater things—compared with which the torture chamber recedes to the status of a small stone in a large mosaic. Gene Wolfe absolutely avoids grossing us out, and even quickens our empathy; though in so doing he does exploit—delicately, cleverly—the frisson of torture. One might even say that he normalises torture.

Alfred Bester's *Golem*^{100} is a different kettle of fish. It aims to rekindle the pyrotechnic exuberance of *Tiger! Tiger!* (*The Stars My Destination*), drawing this time upon horror motifs, which were visibly nudging sf aside on the book shelves at the time. The result reads like a dire parody of the earlier book's cosmic, paranormal, life-enhancing somersaults, replacing these with the subnormal of "evil" in a gratuitously grossing-out way. Oh, intense pain was suffered in *Tiger! Tiger!* Remember how Gully Foyle had his facial tattoo hammered out with acid . . . till Jisbella relented, and paid for anaesthetic. There's no such meaningful pain, or compassion, in *Golem*^{100} where one "slave on stage" is killed by being tortured to move in a circle, resulting in pulling out his own intestines. This is pain-for-pain's-sake, a torture spectacle for the jaded. Gee, what can I dream up that's even *worse*?

Onward to John Varley's *Demon,* volume three of the Gaean trilogy where Varley must reach for even grander, more cinemascopic effects to trump *Wizard* which already trumped *Titan*.

So for starters let's be hip, and toss in a nuclear war back on Earth that vaporizes billions of people. Hang on, let's be even more hip; let's call it "the *Fourth* Nuclear War".[1]

True, we learn much later that insane Gaea did have a hand in starting it; so it's *her* fault, and that's just another reason why it's so damned important that we defeat the current, loony incarnation of Gaea. But Varley's fault is the way nuclear war is presented, in flip, toss-off lines, almost a sideshow before we hasten on to the main attraction—which soon involves the torturing by Cirocco of her would-be assassin, screwed-up, *inexperienced* Conal. Naturally, Conal fluffs the assassination. So let's give him some *real* experience to wise him up to reality, hmm? Thus Cirocco—never really liking it, of course, and only because she perceives his submerged sterling qualities—tortures Conal till she breaks down his personality structure, so that it reforms in a mould

1. What are we to make of this? At first it seems so irresponsible it's almost unbelievable. And truly this notion of multiple nuclear wars *is* unbelievable. It's nonsense. However, by making thermonuclear holocausts multiple and repeatable, Varley lets global nuclear warfare be incorporated as jaunty background into a story which might otherwise be castrated, emotionally dominated by a single nuclear holocaust, which would compel adequate focus and attention (as it does in Greg Bear's *Eon*).

of loyalty and doting love, and finally genuine friendship, person to person, for the torturer.

True, we learn later that insane Gaea was responsible for setting Conal up and for giving him his false personality structure. Cirocco has saved and redeemed him—by torture.

Another piece of justifiable torture: that wiggly little demon called Snitch, whom Gaea had implanted in Cirocco's brain as a spy, just has to be tortured frequently to get him to tell the truth, after he has been removed by brain surgery. Snitch is pretty indestructible, so you can twist him, and mash him up, and tie him to incandescent, long-burning matches—or even stuff these down his throat all the way through his guts. Snitch complains a bit, but mostly he wisecracks about his agonising tortures. He's cartoon Tom, squashed by a boulder; he bounces back into shape.

Spice the action; let's torture Snitch. That should appeal to the readers. It won't do Snitch any real harm. Anyway, he's a malign sub-creature, though somehow cosy too: an endearing alcoholic, and ultimately almost a bosom pal of Cirocco's. It's funny how torture makes friends; it sort of establishes your sincerity.

And Varley comes over as a liberal, humane author who genuinely raps with his characters, and is obviously in favour of liberty, enhancement of human abilities, fulfilment of potential, et cetera. Christ.

Finally, let's look at Brian Aldiss's Helliconia trilogy.

An authentic epic. Ingenious, inventive, exuberant. A whole wonderful world is designed and landscaped and peopled. All human (or alien) life is here. So much energy, imagination, such prose! Alas, it's an epic of futility, of Jacobean tragedy piled on torment, of the cudgel of circumstances hammering anyone who tries to love or to achieve; of cul-de-sacs of suffering, and biological horrors sanctified by the natural necessity of the planet's orbit and the cycle of age-long seasons which freeze Helliconia for hundreds of years then heat it up for hundreds more. Vast panoramas of nature and society are delineated, but every malady is noted with gusto; while love is but folly or rutting lust. The orbiting observers are programmed prisoners, too, inhabiting another hopelessly doomed cul-de-sac.

The animals known as Yelks are necrogenes, giving birth only through their deaths. The "spurted sperm" develops in the warm innards "into small maggotlike forms, which grew as they devoured the stomach of their maternal host". The maggots then fight and eat each other till a couple of Darwinian survivors finally erupt from throat and anus.[2]

2. But is it Darwinian? So far as I have been able to ascertain there are no examples of necrogenes on Earth and never have been. Evolution tends to encourage creatures to spread their genetic material around, an aim which isn't well served by seppuku-conception first time out. An exception to this is the many insects which breed only once in their lives, and though some insects such as the ichneumons plant their eggs inside *other* living creatures so that the larvae can consume the victims' guts as food, no insects offer their *own* entrails on the altar of reproduction. If the pattern is successful—and how economical it seems!—why should it not have arisen evolutionarily and established itself somewhere on Earth? Necrogeny appeared in Philip José Farmer's *The Lovers,* with the affected Lalitha going quickly enough into a painless coma prior to calcifying into a womb-tomb. Necrogeny reappears subsequent to its role on Helliconia in Orson Scott Card's *Speaker for the Dead*—about which more anon—where tiny alien babies eat their way out of their tiny fertile infant mothers who lack birth canals. Those females who fail to become pregnant grow large, wise, and powerful. However, the victim mothers are understood to have very limited awareness, and thus perhaps do not suffer. Only in the Helliconia trilogy is necrogeny revelled in, as a nasty joke.

Nice invention. In the same league as the "phagor tick" which causes the population-culling bone fever, seasonal counterpoint of "the more obscene Fat Death"—a creature with "elaborate genital organs and no head". Gaea in her nastiest moments—when breeding zombi-snakes—never quite got into full swing.

This, in miniature, is the basic existential pattern of Helliconia. Hundreds of sailors are later wiped out (and bold hopes dashed to pieces) by a sudden aerial swarm of kamikaze necrogenetic fish which impale the sailors so that the threadlike maggots in their intestines—the next generation of fish—can gorge on the carrion.

Twenty-five billion cattle stampede perpetually around the bleak northern continent, forever fleeing the flies that torment them, trampling each other and anyone who gets in the way. No stability is possible for Helliconia, only ceaseless activity. "Nothing is important—nothing on this earth," declares a king, inflexibly, accurately. Free will is forever foxed; and even an afterlife is vile.

True, natural laws dictate the Helliconian vista, yet Helliconia is a chosen metaphor; all "inevitabilities" are of the author's design. There's no way out; the world itself is a gigantic torture chamber, operated with grim glee, with visceral zest.

True, Aldiss attempts to recuperate the situation in the final volume of the trilogy, *Helliconia Winter*. Benevolent telepathic emanations from distant Earth pour soothing balm into the peculiar afterlife of Helliconia, so that when Helliconians commune with dead relatives now they encounter helpful, kindly spirits instead of bickering, resentful, malicious souls as formerly. Meanwhile, Earth has at last gone down the tube, but in the post-catastrophe environment mobile crystal icebergs which act as mild power sources emerge from the frozen wastes, ushering in a contemplative new era for the survivors.

I'm not sure that this extraordinary soothing of the ungrateful dead across light years of space and the ambling emergence from nowhere of laid-back enigmatic icebergs quite balances the orchestrated agonies and despair that go beforehand.

To be sure, characters have been tortured in sf books in the past. There's a nasty episode in an early Heinlein novel where an innocent woman is tortured so extremely that you need a plastic sheet to remove what's left over; but the actual torture wasn't detailed. And in *The Space Merchants* a lady sadist who knows her anatomy plays with the hero; however he manages to escape precisely because of the needle she's using to torture him, when he contrives that the needle at last punctures the material restraining him.

The author as torturer is now moving more boldly towards centre stage as the audience cries for stronger stimulus. As the author feeds stronger jolts into his or her stories.

To be sure, pain belongs in books. It's a plain fact that people hurt people, often viciously so. Books where everyone was nice to everyone else wouldn't be very interesting, or realistic, or imaginative. Dramatic tension, tragedy, pity and terror would all fly out of the window, and we'd be reading bland pap.

And obviously pain, torture, might sometimes be integral to a story, something without which the story would lose much of its point.

Take the example of Michael Blumlein's "Tissue Ablation and Variant Regeneration" which first appeared in *Interzone* and is reprinted in the *Interzone* anthology. In this fierce, satiric story Ronald Reagan is dissected alive by surgeons so that his skin and bones and organs can be regenerated and multiplied to provide recompensatory goods for the Third World: the resulting thousands of bladders to be used as storage jars, the square kilometres of skin as roofing material, the muscles in meat pies, the ligaments as cord.

According to the story, tissues and organs regenerate best if the patient is not anaesthetised during dissection. Extreme agony acts as a tonic to tissue, a stimulus to flayed skin. So Reagan is simply immobilised by a paralysing drug, and tortured surgically at great length.

Blumlein's highly effective story is, I'd say, a nephew of J.G. Ballard's tough-minded satiric surgical or pathological fiction, a blood relation of stories such as "Princess Margaret's Face Lift". But now there's an extra ingredient, of forthright torture. Admittedly Reagan volunteered to donate himself, and himself being tough-minded he refused the one possible alleviation of his pain in the form of some oriental method such as acupuncture which was patently un-American. But it's still torture.

Would the story work successfully if Reagan *was* anaesthetised, and was simply awakened at the end of surgery as a basket case? If there wasn't this bit of rubber science about the beneficial effects of agony? A couple of decades ago, I think the story could have appeared in *New Worlds* exactly so, minus the agony, as a powerful satiric statement. Obviously it's even more nauseatingly powerful the way Blumlein writes it nowadays; and perhaps without the torture element "Tissue Ablation" might have seemed a mere copy of the Ballard method. But is the torture really intrinsic and essential, or is it there because over the past two decades we have moved on, and "matured". We expect more; without the agony a tale which would have shocked people and upset stomachs formerly now would seem bland. Have we habituated and desensitized ourselves, and are we now erecting our own Roman arenas, organizing spectacles of agony to amuse our jaded selves?

Alternatively, is fiction regenerating and extending itself through pain? Is the sub-text of "Tissue Ablation" a metaphor about the regeneration of fiction at a time when the commercial cloning of fictions which are copies of other fictions and even clones of clones, is flooding the shelves with unoriginality?

I don't exactly know the answer to this question, though it's a question that troubles me. Nor do I want to sound sanctimonious and holier-than-thou. In my own first novel, *The Embedding*, there's a nasty torture scene based on real happenings in South America. That was some fifteen years ago, and my publisher asked me to cut several graphic paragraphs from the scene. I did so. The scene is still pretty horrible, though not quite as ghastly as it was originally. I wonder whether any publisher now would have asked me to cut out those detailed few paragraphs?

Later, in *The Garden of Delight*, when I wrote the chapters set in the Hell section of Bosch's triptych, my publisher felt that I had made Hell a shade abstract, and suggested that I add an extra action scene. The publisher was right; I was shying away from confronting the essence of Hell. But aesthetically, structurally, and as regards meaning, I needed to. So I wove in chapter fifteen, featuring actual torture and more impending torture by demons. Desperate to escape this, my character Sean improvises. He says to the demons:

> "Look, the nature of living beings is to avoid pain. Pain forces them to do things, to cut out the pain. But really they want to do nothing—they just want to be stable, and still. Avoidance of pain's a negative feedback control, cybernetically, you poor machine. You're hungry, so you eat, then you aren't hungry any more. But that's all. Nature doesn't like much change, or there'd be no stability. Avoidance of pain is avoidance of rapid evolution."

Sean doesn't particularly believe this, but he does persuade the demons to reprogramme

themselves so that they too can feel pain. When the demons do so, they are thrown into confusion. Sean and company get away.

In the second volume of my "Black Current" trilogy, *The Book of the Stars,* my heroine is tortured though she deliberately doesn't go into any explicit details. Here's what she narrates:

> They got on with their fun. Pretty soon I was screaming and finding how very difficult it is to faint when you really want to.
>
> The fact that this was only a host body they were wrecking was, believe me, no consolation. All nerve endings functioned very nicely, thank you. Nor was it of much comfort that on this occasion Edrick lacked equipment such as a fingerscrew. I won't go into what they did to me. I've no wish to relive it. Suffice it to say that what seemed like a week later ingenious new pains stopped happening, leaving only the ones already in residence to carry on. But I hadn't spoken—I'd only screeched. When the symphony of pain changed key, I thought maybe it was bonfire time. I rather hoped it was.
>
> A hawser squeals and groans when a boat tries to snap it in a gale. Then the gale drops and the hawser goes slack. So it was with my mind. With the decrease in the force of agony, my mind went slack at last. I faded out.

Well, I believe that this episode belonged in the narrative, that the logic of the narrative demanded it. Equally, this was as far as I felt I could go in describing what actually happened. Minus specific physical details. Above all, I *liked* my heroine Yaleen.

In my more recent fantasy novel, *Queenmagic, Kingmagic,* there's a scene set in a torture chamber where a screaming prisoner is racked and branded to show my horrified hero what is in store for him. But actually the torture chamber is a masquerade. No one is really tortured there. The first prisoner is simply an actor, pretending pain to amuse the buffoon Mussolini king, whose torture chamber is a hobby, a semblance.

Is this a way of having one's cake and eating it too? Of evoking the frisson, but copping out of the consequences? Well, no, I don't think so; and in the case of *Queenmagic, Kingmagic* I was confronting, and perhaps pulling the teeth, of a rather horrid memory, since the torture chamber in question genuinely exists. It isn't in the mutated Yugoslavia of the novel but in Merrie England herself. It's part of Warwick Castle, a ghastly vault dolled up with torture gear for the tourists, which has stuck a thorn deep in my memory.

My own moral feeling—which may conceivably be rooted in the fear of being tortured myself some day, though I hope it isn't only based on self-interest—is that authors should consider very carefully what they're doing when they let it rip. We shouldn't design works and set up situations deliberately so that people can be tortured, if its avoidable. We shouldn't use Darwinian "tooth and claw" doctrine or Satanism or insanity or realism or political relevance as excuses, pretexts to excite the reader entertainingly, and nastily, whilst at the same time exonerating ourselves of responsibility. Otherwise we diminish life, humanity, and art. We cauterize the heart. We degrade the world, encouraging the real-life torturers to tiptoe closer.

Let us contrast two examples of torture which are given a biological and/or social rationale: in Piers Anthony's story "On the Uses of Torture", and Orson Scott Card's *Speaker for the Dead.*

In the introduction to the story in his collection *Anthonology,* the author explains that "I set out to write the most brutal fiction the market could sustain. It turned out that I was again ahead of my time."

The story had to wait ten years for publication. In the meantime, to Anthony's chagrin, Harlan Ellison's "milder" brutal story, "A Boy and his Dog", appeared and

collected all the fame for outspokenness, leaving Anthony on the sidelines.

In "On the Uses of Torture" a sadistic officer in charge of the penal corps makes lavish use of the pain box upon the imprisoned refuse of the Space Service (all non-whites, who had refused to commit genocide on an alien planet to clear it for mining interests). To further his career he volunteers to make a treaty with the aliens of a pleasant, peaceful planet who nevertheless inexplicably torture all envoys. Nauseating tortures follow, which culminate in the officer, who is now an insane basket case, becoming the first off-planet member of the aliens' ruling council. He immediately resolves to improve the psychology of torture, in which he finds the nice aliens somewhat naïve. Since his fiancée has arrived to try to bail him out, she can be the first demonstration model.

The rationale for all this is that once in the past these pleasant and gentle aliens set up an interstellar empire, but on one planet, alas, barbarians tortured them and drove them off. This painful experience didn't suggest to the aliens that the barbarians needed to become more civilized. On the contrary, it convinced the aliens that they themselves weren't ready for space. So they all went home and set up a system which would produce leaders who could resist such hurts. The result, long after, is a gentle, polite society where anyone who wishes to run for any office or rack up any prestige applies to be tortured. Those who endure most steadfastly, having most of their bodies shorn away in the process and thus having no material interests any longer to bias them, are fit to govern.

True, it appears that Stone Age tribesmen hacked off a finger-joint by way of initiation, and American Indian tribesmen proved their manhood by enduring pain, though not with the outcome that the braves' bodies were hopelessly crippled, which is hardly a survival strategy. Humans do have a habit of taking the knife to their fellows in rites of passage (of various degrees of barbarity from the "cosmetic" of tribal marks, via circumcision, to the sexist violation of clitoridectomy) but to conflate this with the utmost of the Inquisition described in loving detail, and to explain that it all started out when the amiable alien race lost a few members on a distant world is really taking catastrophe theory—the idea of a sudden, shock-provoked flip from one mode of behaviour to its opposite—to the point of bunkum, a dollop of nonsense as an excuse for nastiness that would hopefully prove prestigious.

Orson Scott Card's fiction exhibits somewhat of a specialism in human cruelty; so that Algis Budrys has remarked that the experience of reading Card's works resembles being punched in the stomach and left in the dark. But perhaps the dark is more the tragic dark of blinded Gloucester and mad, raging King Lear?

In *Speaker for the Dead*, the Xenocide Ender is still atoning three thousand years after the event (thanks to time dilation) for his wiping out of the hive-minded Buggers, the first alien intelligence encountered, due to massive cultural misunderstanding. On planet Lusitania, the second alien society—of the primitive but highly intelligent Piggies—is being handled under human interstellar law with extreme kid gloves and non-interference, only two xenologists being allowed to contact them, pan-faced, asking no leading questions and giving no leading answers.

The Piggies torture members of their tribes to death by live vivisection for elusive reasons; and do likewise to one of the humans, sending a shockwave through the hundred human worlds. (Instruments of pain, incidentally, are prohibited to governments under human law, though Lusitania colony is ringed by a pain-inducing fence, to preserve cultural quarantine.) Ender arrives to "speak" the life of a man who belonged to a family

more self-tormenting than anything in Strindberg or Dostoevsky—a process that causes extreme psychic pain, in order to purge the causes of that pain; classic catharsis. And the extremely peculiar biology of the Piggies is revealed. No, they were not torturing their fellows. They were giving them the greatest gift, of a second life metamorphosed into a tree. The Piggies chosen to be thus honoured were all anaesthetised (to a reasonable degree) by a wad of local grass containing a powerful drug, so that pain was felt but one did not *care* about the pain, a notion which is perhaps not fully thought through. (One can imagine feeling the stages of vivisection as physical slices during a drugged detachment and not experiencing pain; but it's surely difficult to imagine feeling pain as such and not bothering about it.)

The planet's extremely limited range of biology is an evolutionary adaptation to an exotic virus which can unzip DNA and bind the DNA of different orders of life together. The Piggies are fertilised by genetic material in tree-sap, and their corpses sprout into trees when they die—long-living *sentient* trees if they are dismantled and planted while still alive. The "torture" is a red herring (though not for the two humans who were mistakenly vivisected), and the outcome is a moving affirmation of a worthy, life-enhancing alien society in true brotherhood with humanity.

Granted the remarkably odd biology, then the theme of vivisection, of (apparent) torture, is inherent and essential—in the service of ultimate joy and fulfilment. But can one grant a bunkum biology which then logically requires live vivisection? Or is the said biology deliberately chosen in order to allow vivisection to take place—all be it offstage, with the single final cathartic exception, when we know the truth and understand.

In this case, I'd say that there is bunkum, and bunkum. Utter bunkum, and ingenious bunkum. Ultimately many sf novels are founded on scientific bunkum. According to what we know of physics all novels featuring faster-than-light travel are grounded in bunkum; yet sf writers still use, and need, and even dignify and exonerate FTL travel as an integral part of narrative. And do we know the whole of physics yet? Or, of biology? (Could our own cells have arisen through symbiosis? How and why did sexual reproduction arise?) The metamorphosis of animal to plant and vice versa is, I'd say, permissible bunkum; and vivisection (with a wad of drug-grass in the mouth) is an objective correlative to Card's own exploration of tragic and finally humanitarian anguish, which is his authentic voice rather than a species of unpleasant ventriloquism designed to attract applause.

Yet what if torture itself, *per se,* is a "peak experience", one of the great confrontations of life—in the class of sex or revelation or a close encounter with death?

This is the case in a rather remarkable Ace Book from 1978, which so far as I know has been almost totally neglected. It is called *Coriolanus, the Chariot,* and its author is Alan Yates. In this novel the whole federated galaxy dotes on dramas recorded on planetoid Thesbos—dramas involving real joy, real agony, real death. The rulers of Thesbos, the Playtors, who are continually scheming for power amongst themselves, have reached their present positions by each undergoing "the high emotions" and surviving. This process involves their minds being probed for their deepest fears and horrors, and these being brought to life, enacted with the candidate as the victim. The ultimate aim of the hero of the novel, so he thinks, is the destruction of the Federation and of this whimsically sadistic regime which he hates—but by obeying whose vicious codes alone he gains power. As in Blumlein's "Tissue Ablation", but now mentally, psychically, torture tones up the system.

Perhaps torture in a book, which only employs one single episode of torture and which doesn't exist in a literary context where torture is common currency of narrative, is a genuine shock to the system in this sense. It galvanizes the reader. It's like a powerful electric shock to a faltering heart. It repaces the heart.

One hears talk of pain as a teaching experience, a purger, a strengthener, from some people who have suffered physically through accident or illness. It hauls people out of routine and banality and makes them question their lives, and existence. Thus with the real-life case of Sheila Cassidy, tortured in a Chilean prison, though I suspect an element of religious hysteria, a martyrdom complex, when faith is reinforced by torture and degradation rather than being obliterated. Doctors and psychiatrists who have provided therapy for freed torture victims might disagree that in most cases the experience taught anything positive . . . though it may have taught lifelong anxiety.[3]

Equally, if the heart has already stopped beating, the torture shock might only requicken a zombi heart, a kind of cold vampire heart. Such is indeed the case for the characters in *Coriolanus, the Chariot.*

Likewise torture is the awakener of a paranormal power in Julian May's *The Non-Born King,* where Culluket the Interrogator inflicts the high emotion of torture on Felice, who till then was only a latent metapsychic, her mind talent locked up tight. Because his torture of her accidentally mimics an extreme mind-altering technique, Culluket transforms Felice into an operant metapsychic whose powers of psychokinesis are greater than anyone else in the world.

True, he also brings out all of her previous psychotic streak—and small wonder—thus producing a monster. Still, here is the principle of transcendence through torture, once again. To become superhuman one must first pass through destructive, agonising initiation—which is almost the old procedure of shamanism, incidentally, with the added ingredient of degradation inflicted by others upon the person.

Usually, in reality, the result of genuine torture—so well evoked in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*—is the deconstruction of a person, their reduction to a grey, sickly, mind-washed puppet willing, eager, to walk to the wall to be shot, at long last. But here in fiction torture and transcendence are being yoked together, though not without ambiguity.

The recent work of Samuel Delany, who is well versed in the decipherment of ambiguities, and also in their encipherment, notably yokes degradation and transcendence. It also radically questions our own codes, not least our moral codes and our cultural assumptions, implicit amongst which—amongst mine, at least—is the gut feeling that oppression and the infliction of pain is evil, or pathological, a malignancy in the body politic and the human heart, something to be avoided and tuned out of the waveband of possible behaviour.

I'm sensitized to this particularly by an insightful (and favourable) essay on *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand,* which appeared in *Australian Science Fiction Review* for September 1986 entitled "Debased and Lascivious?"[4]

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3. This is appreciated in Michael Bishop's story of a torture victim in a rehabilitation centre, "With A Little Help From Her Friends" *(F & SF,* Feb. 1984). "As a result, their own bodies were strangers to them, mangled suits of armor imprisoning their souls."

4. Blackford's essay exemplifies for me what constitutes good criticism in the sf field, for here is real revelatory response rather than just dutiful analysis, of which there is something of an academic surfeit. But equally it points up a shortcoming or myopia, for the aspects of *Stars* which Blackford focuses upon seem to me to be less major in the context of the whole book than Blackford maintains. They are a strand rather than the tapestry.

In *Tales of Nevèryon,* in "The Tale of Dragons and Dreamers", a torture chamber figures, perhaps not surprisingly in the barbaric milieu of that book and in the context of slavery, and liberty—to which Delany opposes the most radical form of non-liberty and oppression, namely that of the torturer's victim. With its "little pains, spaced out", its treatment of torture almost as a text (a critical analysis and deconstruction of the body, or *corpus*), and victim Gorgik's comment after being rescued that it was the stupid questions that were torturing him, this realistic yet discreet episode could almost be called meta-torture. It's real, it's detailed, yet our attention is guided to other concerns, to social and iconic ambiguities, the deconstruction of historical patterns on the verge of obsolescence.

Perhaps more significant is Gorgik's "reading" of his slave collar, so that this collar becomes at once a sign of servitude and also a sexual affirmation. Likewise in *Stars* Rat Korga—the degraded product of selective brain-burning to wipe out aggression, anxiety, and volition—simultaneously experiences splendour and misery when he is obtained by a woman sadist as her personal, and illicit, slave.

She rapes him, in the sense that he's homosexual and uninterested in making love to her (though he cannot disobey), and she whips him. But she also gives him a super-science glove which not only repairs his broken mind for as long as he wears the glove, but allows him to process information and absorb books hundreds of times faster than someone who hasn't undergone brain-burning. Torment and transcendence come hand in glove—and when the authorities catch up and the glove is ripped off Korga, when Korga is rescued from the woman, as Blackford puts it, "we feel immediately—some might say that Delany has tricked us into feeling—that he has suffered a net loss."

Elsewhere in *Stars in my Pocket* Delany ingeniously destabilises our ordinary assumptions of "normality" not least as regards gender—and also as regards beauty, or perhaps one should say sexual focus. What people now normally regard as deformities or blemishes may equally function as sexual attractants.

Also, contrasted with the woman sadist who kidnaps Korga, is another more radical sadist, Clym, who prompts the feeling that "even within the ambit of sadism, it is possible to make distinctions as to what is tolerable and what is not tolerable behaviour." However, Delany refrains from applying any conventional blanket judgements, and the overall non-moralistic moral of the book is that "the most intense assumptions within a culture of what is nice and what is nasty might be without foundation."

So, although (to quote Blackford finally) "*Stars in my Pocket* is a courageous attempt to dramatize explosive themes in the teeth of traditional social attitudes and the recent anti-sex attitudes that have been having a successful run, encouraged by social elements as disparate as cultural feminism and the New Right," one does still have to address the question: Is torture ultimately neutral, or is there a universal moral imperative which says no to it, whatever? Is torture at times even liberatory in the sense that it undermines social clichés which stifle the imagination? Is there such a thing as intolerable behaviour?

To return to Bester's *Tiger! Tiger!*, that earlier novel where Jisbella finally pays for anaesthetics during Gully Foyle's agonizing operations to remove his tattoo: on Mars the space captain who scuttled refugees, and whom Foyle is hunting, has retired to the Sklotsky Colony. The original Sklotskies of old Russia castrated themselves to cut off the root of all evil. The future Sklotskies believe that sensation itself is evil. Therefore they have their nervous system severed and live out "their days without sight, sound, speech, smell, taste, or touch". "The ultimate in Stoic escape," broods Foyle. "How am I going

to punish him? Torture him? . . . It's as though he's dead. He is dead. And I've got to figure how to beat a dead body and make it feel pain." Which he achieves by kidnapping a projective telepath, thus proving that there's nowhere to hide from pain. Except perhaps in death, in the act of resigning from existence—though horror fiction casts doubts on *that* premise! The Sklotsky solution is no refuge.

To evade the question of torture is perhaps likewise to resign from the world. To use torture for entertainment is, to my mind, immoral and evil. To use torture to optimise, to redeem, to drag a person up by their bootstraps into a transcendent state—this is perhaps a mis-yoking of elements akin to the mis-yoking of sexual foci and, say, leather boots in fetishism. Or is this so at all, when our moral code is perhaps merely a deeply rooted assumption which could be wrong? Or, if not wrong exactly, culturally relative.

Does the author as torturer expand our horizons? Or does that author show us the door to darkness, to a blunting of our sensitivity, to a new barbarism of the human spirit such as the Nazi empire would have been?

Perhaps a key to a solution is offered by a novel which features, as a principal (and not *abominable*) character, a sadist: Elizabeth Lynn's *The Sardonyx Net*.

The Planet Chabad relies economically on slavery, the slaves being criminals who are shipped there from neighbouring star systems for fixed terms of indentureship. On Chabad the slaves do "enjoy" certain basic rights, though at the same time the majority are kept permanently drugged by a euphoric-tranquiliser, dorazine, which is illegal elsewhere (as is slavery), otherwise there might be massive discontent, a slave rebellion. So here is a form of "civilised" slavery, arguably preferable to a long prison sentence behind bars. To those with psychological vested interests in the system, it is logical and desirable. Anti-slavery voices seem fanatic or obtuse, and in a sense repressive. But Lynn equally conveys the utter inner resentment (beneath the mask of obedience) felt by undrugged slaves due to their being owned by another person. (Robert Silverberg's subsequent *Star of Gypsies* also incorporates civilised future slavery, but misses out on this worm in the heart of the apple.)

Zed Yago is commander of the starship which transports new batches of slaves to be auctioned, a position which allows him to boil off his sadism when the inner pressure builds. When Dana Ikoro, likeable freelance Starcaptain and would-be smuggler of dorazine (suddenly unobtainable) blunders into Zed's hands, he is tortured for days, for information and for Zed's pleasure; and Zed seems obviously a monster. The actual torture, by nerve pressures, results in no mutilations. There are no grossed-out cuttings or genital-squashings, but Dana's experience is terrifying, and his sick fear of any repetition pervades the rest of the book more tellingly than if Zed was repeatedly rampaging. Which he is not. In fact he is trying—without ultimate success—to control his aberration, which results from frustrated desire for his look-alike sister, Rhani, from whom he was exiled by a domineering mother. A potentially ardent, gentle lover has had his libido routed underground, into the psychic pit, establishing a powerful and malign pattern. When Dana, the victim, finally comes to a crux where he has to save his torturer, the situation is considerably more complex than when Conal was "converted" by Cirocco's "sincere" torture of him. For Zed has emerged as a complex character, the roots of whose behaviour we can understand, and even feel some paradoxical compassion for; since this sadist is trapped and anguished by his own patterns, and characters do not simply collide as subject and object one to another, but interplay—particularly at moments (such as the

threat of new torture, or mistress dismissing slave) when the opposite appears to be occuring.

To say more, Lynn says less; though she says ample, and what she says remains fundamental, a root of the book, not a mere *fleur de mal* used as a cockade of pain, a pain-fix, ornamental agony. Here a horizon *is* extended, though it's a dark horizon.

Nor would anyone gain the impression that pain is acceptable—even while Rhani has to accept, and allow outlets for, her brother's perversion, an accommodation with which we can at least part-way sympathise.

At the same time, the main crusader against slavery (who should, according to our own value systems, be in the right) engages in terrorist tactics and is revealed to be himself a repressed sadist who resented the opportunities for inflicting pain which the system offered to Zed. The crusader's moral passion is fundamentally hypocritical. The man did not hate Zed because he had been a previous victim of Zed's, but because he himself wanted to be Zed, and never could be. Zed, who can be, and is what he is, would so much rather be something else.

For the sadist is trapped by himself, in an imprisoning pattern.

Authors rule countries of the mind. Hermaphroditically, authors conceive and give birth to their characters to populate these countries; but those characters, with whom authors can do as they choose, are also ultimately the author himself, herself. Even if modelled from life, upon other living persons, they are still the interior vision, the model within the author's head and heart.

If authors deliberately tie characters down to torture them for entertainment, for decoration, without urgent necessity, in the end the authors are trapping themselves. The puppeteer will be incorporated into the machinery of the puppet theatre instead of those puppets coming alive to dance freely, in rapport with their creator, in the Siva dance of joy—and yes, anguish too—which is life, and the mime of life.

While hardly suggesting that fictional tormentors and torment ought to be rendered more "sympathetically", with even more psychological necessity—Elizabeth Lynn's tightrope was not an easy one to balance on—yet to employ deliberately inflicted pain in a book requires a deeper understanding and compassion than often is deployed. A compassion, a suffering-with.

Otherwise, finally, the author is not the torturer but the victim.

Baudelaire wrote, "Je suis le victime et le bourreau", "I am the victim and the torturer."

Turn it around: I am the torturer, and the victim.

Note

This essay expands a talk first given at Sercon, Oakland, in January 1987. The original talk and subsequent discussion are available on cassette from Sound Photosynthesis, 533 Charles Lane, Mill Valley, CA 94941.

K.V. Bailey, a regular contributor to Foundation *over the years, once more shares his broad literary experience with us. "It has an odd history," he wrote in January. "A year or so ago Sue Thomason wrote to me saying that she was planning a fanzine devoted to Le Guin's* Earthsea *trilogy . . . At the time I was preparing a paper on Wells and C.S. Lewis for the H.G. Wells Symposium and there were spin-off ideas from which this Lewis/Le Guin study developed. After a lapse of some months Sue Thomason has had to say that unhappily she couldn't get her project off the ground, so my effort was wasted." Not so, not so.*

Counter-landscapes of Fantasy: Earthsea/Narnia

K.V. BAILEY

C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* has certain things in common with Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea*. Both sequences, the former of seven, the latter of three inter-related novels, envisage and achieve young audiences, but have many levels of adult appeal; both are of the fantasy-with-magic genre; both create, though in quite dissimilar fictional modes, imagined worlds; both bring to the reader's attention moralities and immoralities. Peter Nicholls in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* says that *Earthsea* "in terms of the moral teaching it conveys is perhaps more mature than the comparable and even more celebrated "Narnia" series . . ." One purpose of the present study is to consider this comparability and the role and appropriateness of moral teaching, of whatever degree of maturity. Another, and main purpose, is to consider how, and in what distinctive ways, these two series stem from the stock-root of fantasy.

C.S. Lewis wrote extensively about the art of story-making, particularly about the making of fairy tales and fantasy. The gist of his thought is that those images which form in the story-teller's imagination enable him or her to create worlds which, though different from the worlds of empirical knowledge and experience, are plausible and moving in their "otherness" because they "draw on the only real 'other world' we know, that of the spirit". The spirit is the home of the archetypes. Though Lewis in certain essays part-endorses Jung's concepts, he prefers to talk about "themes" and "grand ideas"—such as finding Atlantis, homecoming, reunion with a beloved. These may be the substance of a story but do not provide its plot. The plot consists of a series of events which Lewis likens to a net snaring for a time that elusive thematic bird, so that its plumage may be enjoyed. In "real life", Lewis says, our successive moments are also such a net, attempting to catch that which is not successive—and failing more often than not. The story-teller's art may be more successful. Pursuing his argument to the extreme, he proposed (in 1947) that if men ever reached the moon "that real journey will not at all satisfy the impulse which we now seek to gratify by writing such stories." Abiding strangeness would not be found on the moon by any man "unless he were the sort of man

who could find it in his own back garden": a case of "he who would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry the wealth of the Indies with him."

For Lewis this "wealth of the Indies" possessed by the story-teller manifests itself in images which embody aspects of his theme and provide starting points for the incidents which constitute his plots. In one of his short essays (written for children) Lewis said that at a point when he didn't know how the story would go "suddenly Aslan came bounding into it". He adds: "I think I had been having a good many dreams about lions about that time. Apart from that, I don't know where the Lion came from or why He came. But once he was there, he pulled the whole story together . ." A lion's flaming mane, its purring growl that can rise to thunder, its strength and emblematic majesty, as shaped in his imagination, are in fact the matrix for his impress of both an ordering and a redeeming archetypal figure. Onto a cantering, rolling, leg-kicking, mane-tossing image of a horse he stamps the characteristics of a free being, or a being questing for freedom—and we have the creation of Bree in *The Horse and His Boy*.

Ursula Le Guin in *Earthsea* has made excursions into all four elements with an active imagination able to bring back "the wealth of the Indies". She creates and shapes through these novels great landscapes of the mind in which sea or earth, mountain or desert, stick or stone may host her archetypes. In *A Wizard of Earthsea* Ged is returning to Oskil to hunt the shadow: "On the sea he wished to meet it. He was not sure why this was, yet he had a terror of meeting the thing again on dry land. Out of the sea there rise storms and monsters, but no evil powers: evil is of the earth." In *The Tombs of Atuan* the mad priestess Kossil "has prowled these caverns as she prowls the labyrinth of her own self, and now she cannot see the daylight any more." But earth, and particularly planetary light, may image forth beauty. The chapter following the escape of Ged and Tenar from the nightmare of the crumbling Tombs starts on a note of sensual and radiant earthiness which yet reflects spiritual intimations: "She opened her eyes to a golden light, and smelled the pungency of sage. A sweetness came into her as she woke, a pleasure that filled her slowly and wholly till it overflowed." The elysian flavour of that chapter ("The Western Mountains") is transferred to a sea setting in the chapter "Sea Dreams" in *The Farthest Shore,* where "the sea basked in the hot, gold noon, endless water under endless light." (Arren and Ged are lazing in their sail-boat *Lookfar* and Le Guin in metaphor merges their moods with elemental ones: "the sea basked"; "the sea was hushed".)

While it is true that Lewis found his starting point for *Perelandra* in a mental vision of floating islands, generally Le Guin is more disposed than he is to draw from or project on to planetary features the extremes and the points of equilibrium which map the contours of her inner world. In *Earthsea* the dragons are about as far as she goes in the way of magical creature-imaging; and even they are at first mistaken by Arren, not gifted with Sparrow-hawk's distant sight, for circling seagulls. The transformation into or identification with a magically formed creature is suspect: it is to yield core identity, symbolised by "true name", and to be in danger of being engulfed by elemental imperatives. Thus when Ged, fleeing the pursuit of the dark shapes of Terrenon, takes falcon form to fly back to Gont, he loses speech, looks out only through a hawk's eyes and becomes bereft of his own thought, knowing at last "only what a falcon knows; hunger, the wind, the way he flies."Ogion retransforms him into a man but, recalling the wizards who had become irrevocably fixed as a bear or as dolphins, he warns Ged not to transform himself again: "The shadow seeks to destroy your true being. It nearly did so by driving you into the hawk's being."

In the Narnia stories the image is projected into a great range of good, evil and neutral protagonists. Transformations may take place, sometimes almost playfully, as when the Magician turns Duffers into Monopods, sometimes with prime symbolic effect: Aslan may appear as lion or as a lamb; the Witches of the North may Lamia-like take the form of an enchanting "Belle Dame sans Merci" or turn into a scaled serpent; Eustace is metamorphosed into dragon and back again into boy (much improved by the trauma). Many of these images arose out of virtually eidetic experiences such as a queen on a sledge or a faun carrying a parcel in a snowy wood. That latter picture Lewis said had been in his mind for over twenty years before he made it the starting point for *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.* Faun and snowy landscape came complete, and, as we saw in the case of *Perelandra,* Lewis's "other world" and planetary landscapes could arise in the same way. They were very much material for the story-teller's sometimes games-like purposes. When J.B.S. Haldane berates him for depicting an astronomically impossible Mars in *Out of the Silent Planet,* he replies: "The Professor has caught me carving a toy elephant and criticizes it as if my aim had been to teach zoology. But what I was after was not the elephant but our old friend Jumbo."

Settings of the imagination in the Narnia novels have indeed certain basic differences from the environments contained in *Earthsea.* Le Guin's terraqueous realm is an organic whole, in many ways a familiar and casually functioning ambience. Its seas and lands are warmed and chilled by geophysically viable winds and currents. Although a planet of the mind it is with its sun and moon, its fauna and vegetation, a surrogate earth, fictionally "given", needing no narrative device for the entering or leaving of it. Lewis's Narnia is also a world of the mind, but it is of a different category. Its exits and entrances are by wardrobe, by picture-frame, by garden-gate, by fantasy-world devices similar to those used by George Macdonald and Lewis Carroll—even by H.G. Wells ("The Magic Shop", "The Door in the Wall"). Narnia may also be an alternate earth with cities, castles, deserts, woods, islands, oceans, but these can be subject to change or dissolution, as often as not by magic—as when the invasive woodland plants transform Beruna *(Prince Caspian)* or when Charn vanishes away *(The Magician's Nephew)* . Narnia's "ice age" is brought on by witchcraft. Within Narnia's boundaries are sub-worlds, underground worlds, underwater worlds, often encountered as inconsequentially as in a dream (though as in a dream conveying covertly or overtly their own particular symbolic flavours).

Both Lewis and Le Guin in the course of their voyages of initiation, ordeal and quest open up worlds of strangeness and fascination which we are invited, may feel compelled to "go along with"; but their different natures can be seen clearly if we look at a couple of closely parallel instances.

A memorable chapter in Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore* is "Children of the Open Sea". It presents a fairly detailed picture of the life and yearly rhythm of the Raft People with whom, rescued from starvation, Ged and Arren stay before continuing their mission. The orientation of their quest, in its "eternal" nature cyclic, is in its progress linear: the life of the Raft People is in the most simple way cyclic. In the style of an anthropologist (which her father was), Le Guin establishes an ecology and a pattern of communal customs within which these ocean-conditioned people follow the migrations of the grey whale north and south. It is a lotos-eating interlude: "By night and by day the rafts drifted southwards, but there was never any change in the sea, for the ever-changing does not change; the rainstorms of May passed over, and at night the stars shone, and all day the

sun." Ged and Arren are at last driven on, as I shall note later, by the intervention of the Dragon of Selidor.

Now for Lewis. Towards the end of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* occurs the chapter "The Wonders of the Last Sea". Lucy, leaning over the taffrail and following the ship's shadow on the sea bottom, finds it crossing roads, climbing hills, passing cities of towers and minarets, parks, hunting forests through which ride on sea-horses tiny Sea People, loosing small fierce fishes from their wrists to bring down fish quarry swimming near the surface. The sea's shallows are their valleys; its depths their mountain wildernesses. The people are creations of fairy tale fantasy: "There were men and women both. All wore coronets of some kind and many had chains of pearls. They wore no clothes. Their bodies were the colour of old ivory, their hair dark purple. The King in the centre . . . looked proudly and fiercely into Lucy's face and shook a spear in his hand." Later, Lucy looks into the face of a Sea Girl who with a sort of crook is herding fish over the weed pastures. The face was that of a friend for life, though they might never again meet "in that world or any other".

In one aspect this Sea People episode has a "siren" quality, and in another, like that of the Raft People, one of "lotos-eating". The "Dawn Treader" sailors' faces are turned away from the Sea People lest they fall in love with a Sea Woman, or with the underwater country itself and jump over board. Both Le Guin's and Lewis's idylls exert their spell, but whereas Lewis's is beautiful, magical, unearthly, half-hallucinatory, Le Guin's equally beautiful, equally seductive, has a distinctly ethnographic flavour—is a *tour de force* of the imagination, plays a symbolic role in the narrative, yet is based on realistic considerations of balance and relationship between community and environment.

Again (and this is my second paired example) each writer wrote a novel the central action of which takes place below ground. In Le Guin's *The Tombs of Atuan* one might almost say that a main "character" is darkness, the absence of light; and that the priestess Kossil is an embodiment of it. It is Ged who brings "mage-light" into the cavern beneath the Tombstones (where light had been forbidden since the world's beginning) and reveals to Arha/Tenar the glowing stalactites and crystals, a vision which turns the set of her mind to "life in the place of death". That moment of illumination is a mid-point, the pivot of a story which moves from light through darkness into light. It starts in the valley of the Prologue with dusk advancing towards the grassy groves where "the apple trees were on the eve of blossoming" and where Tenar as a little girl ran free and happy for the last time. The dark nightmare ends at the time of release when, the earthquake behind them, she and Ged "stood on dry ground yellowed by the rising sun and streaked with the long, sparse shadows of the sage." Between dusk and dawn the crystals mark a nadir, signal an ascent. The chapter is called "Light under the Hill".

We turn now to Lewis. In *The Silver Chair* after Jill and Eustace in their quest for Prince Rilian have escaped from the Giants of the House of Harfang by squeezing through a hill-side hole, they spend most of the rest of the book underground. It is a world epitomised by the chapter title "Travels without the Sun" and one which must owe something to Wells's *The First Men in the Moon* (a book Lewis much admired), but differing from it in that its phenomena are "magical" rather than "natural". It is tenanted by myths. Dragonish beasts entering Deep Realm lie sleeping there until the End of the World, and old Father Time, filling the length of a cathedral-sized cavern, dreams of all that happens in the upper world. Puddleglum (a kind of humanoid frog) and the children

are taken as captives by dwarfs (Earthmen) on a journey through caves and rock passages lit by a phosphorescent glow (rather as Bedford and Cavor were on the moon by Selenites) to the ruler's city (this wonderfully described—almost like a photographic negative).

There follows the breaking of the Silver Chair's spell, the release of the Prince, Puddleglum's defiance of the Witch after her hypnotic attempt to make the upper world appear a dream, her transformation to a dragonish serpent and her decapitation. The subsequent episode of the liberated Earthmen's migration back to Bism, when with the Witch's death a chasm opens up for them a pathway there, is a half-Dantesque, half-Boschian phantasmagoria. Through the crumbling city "in and out . . . the shapes of Earthmen were darting. There were big faces and little faces, huge eyes like fishes' eyes and little eyes like bears'. There were feathers and bristles, horns and tusks, noses like whipcord and chins so long that they looked like beards." And soon "down the rugged sides of the chasm, looking like black flies against all the fiery light, hundreds of Earthmen were climbing" towards where the Salamanders dwelt in flaming rivers and where rubies were edible, and diamond-juice delicious. This sub-sub-realm of Narnia at first entices Rilian, as the undersea world offered temptation to the sailors, but eventually he and his liberators, quest accomplished, find their way out through a hillside hole into a Faun and Dryad sector of surface Narnia. There they take "great deep breaths of the free midnight air" and, lying on beds of heather, wake to morning sunlight.

The whole pattern of these "Travels without the Sun" is not dissimilar to that of *The Tombs of Atuan,* but the tone is different. There is in Lewis less unity of action; the adventure is framework for a series of mini-myths, each centred on a particular congeries of images, sometimes startling, sometimes almost hypnagogic in their effect. The narrative has a broken continuity suggestive of dream. In fact, just ten minutes after emerging from Underworld, Jill and Eustace feel as if all that had happened there "must have been only a dream"; and although Lewis does not use total dreamworld frameworks for the Narnia books, he does so in such other works as *The Great Divorce* and *The Pilgrim's Regress.* There are dreams in *Earthsea,* natural dreams, drug-induced dreams; but only in the penultimate chapter ("The Dry Land") of the last book do dream, illusion and "reality" seem to merge, as Arren encounters the dark, barren moors of his dreams on entering the land of the dead. This was a shapeless darkness that swelled and dimmed the sunlight: "Between the arms of the Unmaker it was like an archway or a gate, though dim and without outline; and through it was neither pale sand nor ocean, but a long slope of darkness going down into the dark." But when after Arren's conquering of Cob he crawls away from the gulf to look over the edge of darkness, "below him, only a little way below, he saw the beach of ivory sand; the white and amber waves were curling and breaking in foam on it, and across the sea the sun setting in a haze of gold." We are at once back under familiar stars that rise and set, and where tides ebb and flow.

For the most part Earthsea is as believable-in and as ecologically consistent as any Hainish world. Take for example this from Le Guin's novella *The Word for World is Forest:* "New Tahiti was mostly water, shallow seas broken here and there by reefs, islet archipelagoes, and the five Big Lands that lay in a 2,500-kilo arc across the Northwest Quartersphere. And all those flecks and blobs were covered with trees. Ocean: forest. That was your choice on New Tahiti. Water and sunlight or darkness and leaves." It shares exactly the environmental mood of Earthsea. The Athshean humanoids of Planet 41 with the custom and rituals proper to their forest home are comparable to Earthsea's

Raft People of the Whale's-way, or the pastoralists and farmers of the downlands of Gont.

Where Earthsea differs from a world as "scientifically" conceived as, say, Planet 41, is in the presence of magic. It is to frustrate raids on the peaceful Gontish communities that Ged first uses his latent powers of wizardry. Throughout the trilogy he exercises them chiefly on occasions of extremity. He brings the "mage light" when natural light fails; raises the "mage wind" when at sea the failure of the "world's wind" spells disaster. Although it may be used sparingly, even reluctantly, we are left in no uncertainty that the wizardly hegemony is source of a sustaining power on Earthsea. And this brings us to differences in the functioning of magic in the fictions of Lewis and Le Guin. Lewis's operates within the structure of his Christian/pagan neo-platonically imagined worlds. Within that structure magic works rather arbitrarily; yet one accepts his magic because spells and talking animals, centaurs and sorcerous metamorphoses, all his varied and often unrelated devices and images, are akin, as are his most bizarre landscapes, to the crystallisations, the weavings and innovations of dream, or at least of the subconscious. Some invention seem almost casual, just for the fun of it—Marshwiggles, Dufflepuds; others such as Jadis and Aslan carry a weight of allegorical or symbolic intent, though even Aslan's appearances often *seem* arbitrary when the Lion suddenly appears in Narnia, erupting from his own sphere.

In *Earthsea,* however, one may say that magic is deployed as part of a system, as an essential meta-bionomic component of the planet. Its dragons "do not work magic: it is their substance, their being. When the Long Dance of the Raft People is interrupted by the descent of a talking dragon to urge Ged forward on his hunt this is seen as frightening but not against the accepted order of things. The later "unnatural" behaviour of the dragons of Dragon's Run is occasioned by an evil sorcery which has deprived them—as the people of Wathort and Enland are deprived—of the balance sustaining their truest natures. The failure of hierarchy and equilibrium in the South Reaches is due to certain mages "in whom great strength and knowledge served the will to evil and fed upon it".

It is revealing to compare planet Earthsea further with Planet 41, already cited as a "non-magical" analogue. On Planet 41 exploitation and murder, destructive of the natural economy of the native Athshean humanoids and of their social complexes, eventually perverts their essentially non-violent natures. In an "Afterword" to the *Again, Dangerous Visions* anthologising of *Word for World* Le Guin says that, setting out to write a story incorporating a certain ecology and certain contemporary theories of brain functionings in sleep and dream, she found herself, by an inner compulsion, making a tale of ecological balance destroyed, and emotional balance rejected. In *Earthsea* the loss of balance is made to equate the loss of a world-sustaining magic. It is a powerful metaphor; but *because* she has given her archipelago so captivating and convincing an ecology, it can jar on some readers (myself included) that an available "technique" of magic (Lewis's thaumaturgy works unpredictably—never through a discipline) can take over from and replace the skilled handling of a ship or the catching of an animal; that wizard-made fogs, in face of an understandable meteorology, can be conjured up to change the course of events; or that earthquakes may be magically set-off or staved-off.

This is a demur that I would like to develop through some widening of the literary perspective. Fictions of fantasy (and this embraces a considerable stretch of the science fiction spectrum, particularly where other worlds are imagined) are related to various

strands of the literature of romanticism. A seminal happening in the history of romantic literature was the publication in 1798 of *Lyrical Ballads,* a collaboration between Wordsworth and Coleridge. It was a volume which contained Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner". Contributory to the imagery of that poem, as John Livingston Lowes showed in *The Road to Xanadu,* was Coleridge's wide reading in the literatures of science and of voyages of discovery. The reader, however, says Lowes, is faced with a predicament: "There before him, to be sure, are the tangible facts of a charted course beneath the enduring skies. But the broad bright sun peers through skeleton ribs, and the moon glitters in the stony eyes of the reanimated dead . . . The most ancient heavens themselves have suffered, with the sea, the touch of goblin hands." Those seas and their denizens, the winds that rule them from pole to equator and the skies above them, are, as the Mariner repents and is redeemed from his curse, a theatre of supernatural breezes, angelic or deathly powers, shocking or comforting sounds and visions: the natural universe is interlaced with the magical. Professor Norman Fruman in his book *Coleridge, The Damaged Archangel* quotes stanzas from Wordsworth's Prologue to "Peter Bell" which, he suggests, were intended as a counterweight to Coleridge's use of the supernatural. Two of the stanzas read as follows:

> Long have I loved what I behold,
> The night that calms, the day that cheers;
> The common growth of mother-earth
> Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
> Her humblest mirth and tears.
>
> The dragon's wing, the magic ring,
> I shall not covet for my dower
> If I along that lowly way
> With sympathetic heart may stray,
> And with a soul of power.

Coleridge as much as Wordsworth reached for "a soul of power", even though it so often cruelly eluded him: "there are times when my thoughts—how like music! O that those times were more frequent!" (*Notebooks*). It is something with which, adding wisdom and modesty, Le Guin invests Ged; with which, adding authority and compassion, Lewis invests Aslan; and in both authors their "novice" characters are motivated towards recognising and attaining such qualities.

Lewis's imagined route for these exponents and aspirants is more Coleridgean than Wordsworthian (Le Guin, like Coleridge interlaces nature with magic, but in her approach to nature and use of nature's symbolism is more Wordsworthian, despite "the dragon's wing, the magic ring"). It is not only in Lewis's green, vermilion and purple sea-snake, his metamorphosing evil serpent-witch, his midnight Gothic scenery, that the magic of Coleridgean romanticism appears in Narnia: there are passages where the very language of, in particular, "The Ancient Mariner" seems pervasive, as for instance in *Dawn Treader*: ". . . the deck and the sail and their own faces and bodies became brighter and brighter and every rope shone. And next morning when the sun rose, now five or six times its old size, they stared hard into it and could see the very feathers of the birds that came flying from it . . . Drinian said: 'There is not a breath of wind. The sail hangs dead . . . And yet we drive on as fast as if there were a gale behind us.'"

Like Coleridge, Lewis was eclectic in the matter of sources and influences—he was described as the most widely-read man in Oxford. I'm not necessarily suggesting that he

drew directly on Coleridge, but that his vein of romanticism is kindred, similarly visualised symbols occur, and maybe some once-read images filter through and are recreated—a process prevalent in Coleridge's own work. Their brands of Christianity differed, but they were neither of them strangers to the *philosophia perennis* and platonism. Moreover, Lewis's concepts of relationship between the spiritual and the natural are not far distanced from Coleridge's non-mechanistic stance. Fundamental to Lewis's own belief is a recognition of, as he puts it, "our lifelong nostalgia to be reunited with something in the universe from which we feel cut off"; and, in animating his Narnia images and landscaping his worlds, he creates, first of all magical stories, but also a theatre of the imagination in which symbolic dramas of separation and redemption, quest and return, pilgrimage and arrival, are played.

Le Guin: "And when Ogion spoke at last it was as if he had, just then and for the first time, invented speech. Yet the words he spoke were no great matters but had to do only with simple things, bread and water and weather and sleep." What could be more Wordsworthian? Or more so than the boy Ged, sent forth to gather herbs in the wet, sunlit meadows above Re Albi? All is as radiant as the opening lines of *The Prelude.* At the same time, Le Guin is haunted by something like that dark shape, the huge Cliff of *The Prelude* which "Rose up between me and the stars, and still,/With measur'd motion, like a living thing,/Strode after me." There are many moments of such eerie dread in *Earthsea* when the "shadow" is encountered; for example: "The fog blew through the faceless vagueness of its head, yet it was shaped like a man deformed, and changing like a man's shadow." Again, when Ged ran over the moors of Osskil, the gebbeth "like a shell or vapour in the form of a man . . . followed a pace behind him, unable to outrun him yet never dropping behind." But the "good" mages' "spirit of power" extends throughout, even through mutability and the shades of death, a sustaining unity. Ged, in the last pages of *The Farthest Shore* is a great Wordsworthian figure. He cannot be found at Gont Port or at Re Albi when the young King comes seeking him: "No one could say where he was, only that he had gone afoot up into the forests of the mountains. Often he went so, they said, and did not return for many months, and no man knew the roads of his solitude. Some offered to seek for him, but the King forbade them saying, 'He rules a greater kingdom than I do.'"

To turn for a moment away from *Earthsea* to a very different work, *The Dispossessed,* there is a distinctly Wordsworthian element in the philosophy of Shevek: "If you can see a thing whole it seems that it's always beautiful. Planets, lives . . . But close up a world's all dirt and rocks. And day to day, life's a hard job, you lose the pattern. You need distance, interval." Wordsworth constantly sought to gain or regain the pattern. The early passages of book VIII of *The Prelude* provide a classic example. Valleys glimpsed, human sounds heard "through the depth of air" at Helvellyn's summit; the recollection of shepherd and dog viewed through mountain mist, "inhabitants/Of an aerial island": these are "triumphant over all those loathsome sights/Of wretchedness" confronting him in the great City. In *Tintern Abbey* he is conscious both of "the still, sad music of humanity" and of "the dreary intercourse of daily life" but these are placed in the perspective of his:

> . . . sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the sound ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

Let me stress again that I am not particularly looking for "influences". I am simply saying of the two novelists that their imaginations tend to operate to one side or the other of the boundary drawn by Wordsworth in his "Peter Bell" verses. "The Ancient Mariner" really stands at a watershed of proto-evolutionary and magical world-views. Follow a line from the latter, and you get the kind of scenery of the mind, in which Wagnerian, Tolkienian, Lewisian magic energises the action, is integral to its symbolism. Follow the other and the scenery is that of cosmos as organism; and various evolutionary modes operate, including the spiritual (e.g. Teilhardian) and those arising from the interaction of man and environment. These modes provide much of the symbolism—"the dragon's wing, the magic ring" are not greatly called upon, even when the scientific and the natural are twisted and stretched into the dimension of fantasy. This line in the nineteenth century would include works by Mary Shelley, Bulwer Lytton, Conan Doyle, H.G. Wells; and in this century by e.g. Bradbury, Clarke, Ballard, Aldiss, Le Guin, Watson. The lines, of course, do not run pure. Writers may cross from one to the other (we have been considering Le Guin doing this); and there are all kinds of cross-breedings. In the nineteenth century Kingsley's *Water Babies* and Camille Flammarion's *Lumen,* though in other respects not comparable, are cross-breeds. Of twentieth-century works a fantasy such as Lem's *Solaris* is of cosmic-organic lineage, while Holdstock's *Mythago Wood* is of the other, the magical, tradition—both pretty pure of their kind. Ian Watson's black current in *The Book of the River* is, with its riding Worm, the magical component of the River, which is itself an artery of history and trade. Together they offer scope for symbolism in both modes and contexts which Watson attempts with considerable success to inter-relate. In his eldila/solar system concept Lewis himself, in *Silent Planet,* does, in my view some successful cross-breeding.

But in the light of these distinctions it can be seen that the Earthsea trilogy is a cross-breed in a way that the Narnian saga is not. I am not disturbed when, in *The Magician's Nephew,* the cab-horse Fledge suddenly sprouts Pegasus wings, or when, in *The Silver Chair,* the Lion's breath whisks Jill and Eustace clear into Narnia; but I am less happy when in *Earthsea* the "mage wind" takes over from the "world's wind", or when a blade of grass by magic becomes a wooden staff. Lewis is manipulating figures, playing out his allegorical dramas in a "construct" world; Le Guin, I know, is using magic in an anthropologically sophisticated way to indicate powers establishing equilibrium in relationships between individuals, communities and the natural world but its impact in the narrative runs across the grain of a natural world otherwise so ecologically viable. It's a cross-breed that worries me in a way that the waking-dreaming of the Athsheans in *The Word for World* does not.

Having stated a preference, which amounts perhaps to no more than saying that I favour fictions in which the symbols are of a fairly homogeneous nature, I am at last confronting the question of maturity of moral teaching. If moral teaching it should be called, Le Guin's is mature, if sometimes complicated by her magic; Lewis's is transcendental within his fairy tales, obsessive and intrusive when he rides a hobby-horse such as his dislike of experimental education or of any kind of exclusive snobbishness. Lewis would, however, have jibbed somewhat at the phrase "moral teaching". In an essay on writing for children he firmly rejected a specific moral or didactic approach and said: "Let the pictures tell you their own moral . . . The only moral that is of any value is that which arises inevitably from the whole cast of the author's mind." We come round to the

fact that deeper than any surface "moral teaching" are certain configurations, distinguishable but structurally akin, which rise from the authors' minds to impress their archetypes on both *Earthsea* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The archetypes are of the hero/heroine figure called or compelled to a quest, undergoing forms of initiation and ordeal and, by virtue of these, achieving or returning triumphantly to a blessed or more blessed state.

This is basically the path traced by the human protagonists through mini-epics in each of the Narnia stories, and, on the grand, all-inclusive scale over the span that runs from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* ("historically" from *The Magician's Nephew*) on to *The Last Battle*. It is likewise the path of Ged/Sparrowhawk through all of the *Earthsea* novels, from the pastoral of his forest-wandering, river-swimming, goat-herding days on Gont, to his pursuit of, confrontation with, and triumph over—or neutralisation of—the adversary shadow. Events symbolise the triumph of acceptance and balance over rejection and imbalance. Their course leads to what Jung described as the process of "individuation" and what Le Guin calls recognition of the "true name". Le Guin projects this "politically", and indeed cosmically, when towards the end of *Farthest Shore* Ged (in "Merlin" aspect) addresses the boy Arren as future King, anticipating the final conflict: ". . . first we two must stand upon the balance-point, the very fulcrum of the world. And if I fall, you fall, and all the rest . . . For a while, for a while. No darkness lasts for ever. And even then, there are stars . . ." At the book's close we find this hierarchic equilibrium established and Ged returning to a paradisal solitude in the mountains of Gont, or even more paradisically carried westward among the isles by the boat *Lookfar*, moving "without wind or sail or oar".

Inset within and in some ways central to Ged's questing pilgrimage is the *Tombs of Atuan* story of Tenar. This has additional archetypal overtones—the carrying away below ground and return of the maiden. Tenar is taken away from the orchard groves and the blossom and held as "queen of the underworld" amidst the segregation of tombs and labyrinth, until she is returned to the outer and upper world by Ged, reenacting the myth of Hermes or of Orpheus. The last sentence of this book reads: "Gravely she walked beside him up the white streets of Havnor, like a child coming home." Tenar is a Kore figure who before her "abduction", like Wordsworth's Lucy, "grew in sun and shower"; so is Ian Watson's Yaleen before she goes under the mountain into the milky darkness of the Ka-store cavern.

I have previously cited *The Book of the River*, the commencement of Yaleen's story; and in two succeeding volumes Ian Watson works variations both on that "Kore" motif and on the major and related theme of quest, ordeal, and fulfilment or return. This major theme, in "cosmic" or in "magic" dress can be found in works as diverse as Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Mary Gentle's *Golden Witchbreed*, Delany's *Nova*, Ballard's *Hello America*, Silverberg's *Lord Valentine's Castle*, Aldiss's *Non-Stop*, Pohl's *Man Plus*, Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*, Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun*—I could go on and on, always recognising, of course, that the large themes may appear in fragmented form, or in conjunction with minor or more incidental ones; and certainly not contending that all of these authors are busily contriving allegories or attempting moral teaching. They are, like Lewis and Le Guin, concerned to tell good stories; but the images and constructs their themes summon to that purpose are such as to transmit the major archetypal patterns. This is the strength and the contemporary relevance of the genre and

its sub-genres, which mine deep and take us intellectually, speculatively, often numinously, far beyond the conventional limits of mimetic fiction. Of these genres *Earthsea* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* are, in some respects disparate, in others closely comparable, but in all respects compelling, examples—by whatever age and at whatever levels of perception they may be read.

Ellen M. Pedersen was born in 1948 and is a writer of miscellanea on such subjects as ethics, sexuality, and humanistic technology. She is also translator of Stanislaw Lem and Joan Vinge into Danish.

The following is the (self-contained) first installment of an investigation into the fascinating legend of the "artificial person" who may—or may not—be a precursor of science fiction's androids and robots.

Joseph the Golem—The Limits of Synthetic Humanity[1]

ELLEN M. PEDERSEN

In histories of science fiction it is regularly maintained that the antecedent of robots and androids is the Golem figure associated with Rabbi Loew of Prague. Commentators are often suitably vague about the exact nature of the Golem, the rabbi's precise connexion with it, and what it is that links it with modern science fiction. For brevity's sake, let me take as example my own cautious definition of 1984: "An artificial human being in a legend associated with a Judaic ethical writer, a 16th century Rabbi of Prague."[2]

Suitably vague that seemed then, because even in some of my less secondary sources the Golem legend would sound like an ethical metaphor, and in some like voodoo in the uninformed sense of the term. One version, elicited from a friend,[3] implied that all families had one, and that they grew to be large and vicious. In other words, in this contemporary, oral version, the Golem was rather like a gremlin or goonie.

Other accounts evoke an image of the Golem as a little clay figure designed to absorb Christian curses and accusations. And some leave the impression of a departed friend writing by candlelight, speculating about the nature of humankind, and projecting a selection of human qualities into an imaginative figure of dust.

In the course of the centuries most of these accounts have attained some truth, with the exception that in the picture of the writing by candlelight Frederic Thieberger implies that *two* men would often be sharing the light.[4]

Some examples of what the science fiction sources have to say:

Sam Lundwall, in *Science Fiction: An Illustrated History* (1977) mentions a series of mechanical servants to popes and kings.[5] When he gets to the time of King Louis XV of

France he says that "(At this time) the tales spread in Germany of the android called Golem, created by the Jews to defend themselves against their tormentors". He says it is "like the classic artificial men in *Frankenstein* and *R.U.R.*", and promises to take it up later. When he does, the Golem has become "perhaps the most intriguing and fascinating of all modern tales of artificial men", referring to Gustav Meyrink's novel of 1915 which, he says, was "based upon old Hebrew tales about the artificial man Golem, the savior of the Jews".[6] Lundwall's errand here is to call readers' attention to Wegener's movie of 1914, and to stress the latter's influence on Whale's *Frankenstein* movie, so this is all we learn about the Golem tale this time around.

Not surprisingly, the most elaborate account found in any of the illustrated histories is in the other European one, Franz Rottensteiner's *The Science Fiction Book* (1975). Rottensteiner, using "golem" as generic term, states that

> "Many Jewish scholars were credited with the creation of golems, ever since the thirteenth century, but the most famous is the one created by the Rabbi Judah Loew (c. 1525 – 1609), called the 'High Rabbi', who was even acquainted with that strange and moody Hapsburg emperor, Rudolf II, himself interested in the arcane arts. Not exactly a monster, though somewhat sinister and certainly literal-minded to the point of stupidity, this golem was created for the protection of the Jewish community against pogroms, serving as a detective and bodyguard, but when used for profane works, such as doing the laundry for the Rabbi's wife, the golem was likely to get out of control. In some versions of the legend, the golem grows too tall and smothers the Rabbi in collapsing clay when deactivated by having the *Shem* pulled out of his mouth."

The dramatic description of the de-activation scene refers to the creation of the golem, the infusion of life by insertion into its mouth of a piece of paper bearing, according to Rottensteiner's sources, "the secret name of God, consisting of 72 letters". In Meyrink's novel, says Rottensteiner, "the golem does not appear in person, but is rather conceived as a symbol for the spirit of the ghetto".[7] A similar, although much condensed account is given in the most recent European pictorial history of science fiction, Dieter Wuckel's *Science Fiction. Eine illustrierte Literaturgeschichte* (Hildesheim 1986). James Gunn, in *Alternate Worlds,* in the midst of a discussion of *Frankenstein* and mad scientism, talks about alchemy, the elixir of life, and blasphemy, culminating, before he gets to "recent times" and Isaac Asimov, in his mention of the Golem, which, "too, turns against its creator".[8]

It seems to be a common, cultural fallacy to assume that what intelligent creations do, as opposed to unintelligent creations, is turn against their makers. James Gunn, perhaps suspecting there is something wrong with the way he allows his argument to run, inserts a parenthesis about a remark made by Asimov at the 1970 Nebula Award Banquet to this effect: "What kinds of goals would a Golem have, if a Golem could have goals?", but Gunn himself, focusing on the inventory of science fictional universes, makes no real use of the statement.[9] I'll get back to that.

I am not really going to use the interpretations and distortions made by the authors of these picture books against them. They might have made a greater effort to locate more reliable sources, but then, some of the confusion obviously comes from the writers having goals of their own in dealing with the material. And it appears from Robert Plank's 1965 article "The Golem and the Robot" that a major source of corruption is Jakob Grimm's 1818 rendition of the "tale", later accounts having been filtered through his *Kleinere Schriften*.[10]

Brian Aldiss in *Billion Year Spree* (1973), despite the obvious (in terms of inventory)

link between the Golem and Mary's monster, does not mention the Golem, probably because of his emphasis on narrative mode, rather than theme. Mary Shelley started it all. In *Trillion Year Spree* (1986) he mentions the Golem briefly (p.183) in relation to Czech sf, and comments "No doubt Mary Shelley was familiar with this tale."

The sometimes unnecessary imprecision of the picture books is partly compensated through Scholes and Rabkin in their *Science Fiction. History – Science – Vision* (1977), who in their more accurate account (except that they miss the time by a century) say that the image of the Golem, according to *Talmud,* dates from ancient times, that the modern Prague version was created in order to protect the Jewish community, and that although it is clearly related to both Mephistopheles and to Frankenstein's monster, "it is a separate and probably more ancient strain of legend". They see the scene in Whale's Frankenstein movie where the monster "hesitatingly and lovingly" approaches a child as a demonstration that "the roots of science fiction, like the roots of science itself, are in magic and mythology".[11] They are absolutely right, of course, especially if now, some years after the publication of their book, they are willing to include "the roots of literature" in that statement. Friendly facetiousness aside, I should say that they hint that American cinemagoers have been cheated of several chances to see a number of earlier versions of this scene, since it was first done in a Golem movie by Paul Wegener of 1920.[12] Scholes and Rabkin's juxtaposition of Mephistopheles and Mary's monster is partly justified in that they see all un- or pseudohumans as *Doppelgängers* in the psychological sense. What they have to say about this partly bears on my later arguments, so although the concept does not fully apply to the "animated clay slave" of Prague, and although the analytic construct of *Doppelgänger* seems less useful in literary analysis than in discussions of male adult psychology, I would agree with their statement that "Doppelgängers, whether ghostly or not, may always be thought of as two psychic aspects of a single character, objectified for dramatic clarification". This is how the Golem becomes for them, first and foremost, a "potent image", although it is "mystically called into life by a holy man who knows the proper incantations and who can inscribe the proper word on the clay statue's forehead".

I have located some of the Golem tales in a source that seems to be as close to the original as possible in English. That some of the secondary accounts sound like magic, and some like ethical or psychological metaphor is not so surprising. The *material* contains both. And the *text,* having been put together by sound scholarly principles, both illuminates the genesis of the literary man-made man-like creature, and provides a corrective to the mythical speculations attached to interpretations of the material. The text that will here be considered primary is in Micha Joseph Bin Gorion's collection *Mimekor Yisrael.*[13]

Using the word "original" about orally transmitted material is highly pretentious. One has to rely on the authenticity of written sources, and in this case Bin Gorion's claim of originality must rest on whether his text seems to be a fair selection from existing materials, and on the extent to which it preserves the essence inferrable from non-popular sources, i.e. Talmud and Bible.

One of the previous readers of the material, E. Isaac-Edersheim, talks about the Golem tale proper ("die eigentliche Golemerzählung").[14] There obviously isn't one. There is the word Golem, from David's Psalm 139. There is the rabbinical metaphor reflected in two Talmudic legends, one in tractate Sanhedrin 38b, the other in Sanhedrin 65b. There

are tales which may at the same time have been told as stories and as parables, in Yiddish and in Hebrew. This is the material which entered the texts of Bin Gorion and others. Then there are readings, which are mostly interpretations of the psychological, or mental, or cultural content of the material, the most recent book length one being Elie Wiesel's *The Golem: History of a Legend* (New York 1983). Among these, however, is one consistent reading of the material Bin Gorion used (together with a presentation and *critique* of a number of Golem fictions): Arnold Goldsmith's *The Golem Remembered, 1909–1980* (Detroit 1981). There is some mention of the legend in studies of the real Rabbi Loew and his thought. There are, marginally related to all this, brief attempts to "place" the Golem among other artificial beings in works about science fiction. And, finally, there are numerous fictional uses of the Golem idea, from Gustav Meyrink's novel of 1915, Leivick Halper's Yiddish play of 1921, several films, and a dialogue in poetry between Borges and John Hollander, to Abraham Rothberg's novel *The Sword of the Golem* (1970), and a couple of fairly recent stories for children.

Unlike other compilers of Jewish legends, Bin Gorion did not retell but sought to retain the style and language which he felt reflected the "original narrative and text" as well as theme and content. (Dan Ben-Amos' Introduction p.XXXIX). What he accepted for inclusion had to satisfy certain criteria—not necessarily his own esthetic taste—but "literary element . . . inner truth . . ., and documentation" (Emanuel bin Gorion, p.XXV).

The most famous Golem, the one that, as Robert Plank says, was spoken of as if he had been an historic person, is also the one found in the most elaborate of the tales in *Mimekor*. Rabbi Judah Loew's Joseph is not only a very large mudcake, but also thematically a gem, not only an historical precursor, but a thematic forerunner, being centrally placed in the issues concerning mechanical men and intelligent machines. As the material was transmitted by Bin Gorion there is nothing strange, exotic, or mysterious about it. It is the most clear-headed human-machine thinking produced after the Three Laws of Robotics—or rather, long before.

Joseph the Golem was the only one of his kind, a male type figure fashioned out of the sand and mud lining the Vltava, the river running through Prague. Rabbi Loew with a couple of learned friends shaped him, somewhat oversized him, and by means of kabbalistic formulas attempted to bring him to life.[15] The Golem did come to life, got himself a name and a bed and, like other citizens, a social function. He was a policeman in the ghetto of Prague.

The immediate motivation for undertaking the project was not the scientific curiosity underlying many other fictional endeavours. It was no attempt to discover whether human life could be fashioned, and under what conditions, as later interpretations would have it. It was no development of technology with subsequent adaptation of human life. And it was totally unlike alchemy, another semi-technological type of experiment.

The dramatic postulate of this version of the tale is that real, social pressures forced the rabbi, as leader of the community, into a position where extreme measures had to be taken and thereby forced him to use the most powerful means at his disposal; Kabbalah as tool, the power of the word to shape, create, or kill, produce changes, in other words rather than using the technological methods that came first to mind in later times. The community was regularly threatened, the legend says, particularly at festival times, when dead Christian children would be thrown into the streets of the ghetto, and the Jewish

community would be accused of having killed them. Throwing one's children about in this manner sounds unbelievable today, but the historical background is the blood accusation, i.e. the belief that the blood of Christian children was used to make the unleavened bread for Passover, an idea that ever since the Dark Ages occurs at regular intervals in Europe and the Near East, and is reflected throughout *Mimekor*. That the Prague Golem is linked with the blood accusation is evidence, however, that this is tale rather than historical account; not because European history progressed beyond this—the last documented case in Europe proper to have reached a court of law was in Hungary in 1882—but because Prague, besides having been a major centre of learning and culture for several centuries, during the Renaissance had comparable political freedom for every community.[16] As Thieberger says in his Introduction, "All the intellectual currents of the time met in Prague during the 16th century."

The "historical" background takes the Golem idea out of its abstract, ethical context, and places it squarely, along with the people with whom it is associated, in the realm of practical action.

There is a sense, even in the text, that if Rabbi Loew had not traditionally been connected with the Golem figure, someone else would have been.[17] The generic nature of the material notwithstanding, the events, the *acteurs,* time and place, everything, is described with biblical precision. Judah ben Bezalel, also known as Judah Leon, or Loew, or Loeb, was born in 1520 to Rabbi Bezalel of the city of Worms, grew up to be a great scholar, a rabbinical polyhistor, "knowing all the sciences and all the languages", moved to Posen (Poznan) as a rabbi, and in the year 5332 (1571-72) was appointed Rabbi and head of the court in Prague.[18] The blood accusation brought great distress to the community, so he "asked a question of the heavens in a dream". The answer read in Kabbalistic terms, i.e. by the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, "And Be Creating, Dedicate Earth Fittingly, Golem Handles Israel's Jew-hating Knife-bearers". Terrible English, which the translator, I.M. Lask, only uses in order to demonstrate the principle. More elegantly, he suggests the heavens' advice to read, "You create a golem of adhesive material that shall cut off strangers, the horde who rend Israel". Since this came from the heavens, there is obviously no reason to talk of "blasphemy" in connection with Rabbi Loew's Golem, but one might wonder how the purveyors of the dream might assume that the dreamer knew what the word *golem* meant. The idea seems to be that both dreamer and purveyors knew David's Psalm 139, which is the only place in the Bible in which it occurs. Leo Rosten translates it as "matter without shape" or "a yet un-formed thing".[19]

The Rabbi determines that this is not only a message, but that the medium itself is significant, containing as it does, "various combinations of divine names by the power of which it would be possible to fashion a living golem from earthly matter". He decides, though, that the subsidiary aid of the astrological combination of his own basic temperament, and those of two others, will be necessary (astrology was not so much an instrument of personal analysis then, as a theory of how the world and its creatures were put together), so he makes sure that besides his own element of air, someone brings fire, and a third water. Together they can produce earth, he hopes. They cleanse themselves with prayers and other propitiatory actions for seven days, and so, "In the year five thousand three hundred and forty of the Creation, on the twentieth day of the month of Adar (February—March), at the fourth hour after midnight" Rabbi Loew, his son-in-law and a disciple "left the city of Prague for the river."

> There they searched along the riverbank until they found a spot containing clay and mud, and from it they fashioned the shape of a man three ells long, and they drew a face in it and made him hands and feet, and when they had finished, this was like a man lying on his back. Then the three of them stood at the Golem's feet facing his face, and the rabbi ordered his son-in-law to make a circuit of the Golem seven times, proceeding from the right and going around as far as the Golem's head, and from the head to the feet on the left. And he entrusted him with combinations of letters to be uttered as he made the circuit. This he did seven times. When the circuits were completed, the body of the Golem had grown as red as glowing coals.
>
> Then the rabbi instructed his disciple to make seven such circuits likewise, and entrusted him with other permutations and combinations of letters. The disciple did what his master required and when he completed his circuits, the fire died down, for water reached the body and vapor began to rise from it, nails sprouted at the fingertips, and he likewise became as hairy as a thirty-year-old man." (pp.473 f.)

The rabbi himself made a final set of circuits whereupon all three together recited Genesis 2:7, the creation of man as a single entity, and the Golem opened his eyes. The rabbi immediately tells him his name and function, and the Golem nods as if he agrees. "In brief, the Golem became a man like all others. He saw and heard and understood, but he had no power of speech in his mouth." (p.474)

In terms of hubris reinterpreted as blasphemy, this is all terrible, as terrible as the Promethean complex that psychoanalytical readings have seen in it.[20] Rabbi Loew's greatest worry, however, was not whether it was right doing what had been suggested to him in a dream—essentially it would be—but whether the result came to match the purpose, whether he had done it well enough. Their action was questionable because they decided to ensure the community's survival by means other than communal prayer and individual good action. Once the decision was made however, there was no sense in discussing whether the imitation of the original process of creation was a transgression or not. They were, even inside this text, which I have precariously defined as fiction, generally conscious members of a species whose prime characteristic is the ability to shape the environment to its needs.

Joseph was created as a tool by a group of men who knew their responsibility towards their community. Because of the enormity of this particular creation—there are almost no limits to his physical power—the rabbi does not wish the Golem's origin to be known. He makes his assistants promise never to reveal the secret, and his household is told that this is a poor simpleton whom he took pity on, and hired to assist the bailiffs of the court. In a couple of other tales in *Mimekor* about the deeds of Judah Loew, the Golem has a natural place as a character. There is a mention of the "court house where Joseph the Golem habitually slept", and in one tale he is sent for some extra wine during a ceremony at the Synagogue, does some automatic writing, and goes to fetch a dead woman out of her grave—innocent stuff like that—but his main function was, and he is told so immediately after he has come to life and been decently dressed, walking his beat in the ghetto, inspecting what people were carrying; and if a burden turned out to be a dead child, he would "drag them by force to the council house" for criminal prosecution.

Robert Plank says the Golem is at the point in literary history where fantasy ends and science fiction begins. In Bin Gorion's treatment, the form of the first two sections, "The Fashioning of the Golem", and "The Death of the Golem" is indeed fictional: "In the city of Worms there dwelt a certain great and saintly man named Rabbi Bezalel unto whom a son was born on Passover Eve in the middle of the Seder ceremony" (the precision again), whereas the form of section three, "On the Nature of the Golem" is such that it can more reasonably be said to be "ascribed to", or associated with, Rabbi Loew. Its form is

similar to that of narrative and philosophical portions of the Talmud, and, incidentally, to sections in works by Judah Loew, several of which are extant.[21] The Golem was made an end of as soon as the land grew quiet, by a reversal of the process whereby he had come to life; but before letting go of him, Rabbi Loew speculated about his nature beginning with these words, "Reb Loew declared that when he endeavoured to bring a spirit into the Golem there were two spirits that came to him . . .", but later in the same section, "There are those who declared, on the other hand, that . . ." implying that now we are beyond the fictional format of the first two, in which it is obvious that nobody is to know, or speculate about the origins of this very useful servant.

So, with these reservations about the third section, it is fiction, but there is no need to claim the mute, three-ells-tall, clay-made policeman of Prague as *science* fiction. On this thematic-historical level science fiction does not necessarily exist. The Golem exists. Human-Machine exists. Cognitive estrangement exists. If human and machine is a relevant issue in sf, then the Golem story is central, not because of the way the estranged element, the *novum,* allegedly comes into existence—that may irreverently be referred to as voodoo—but because of the way in which he goes in and out of the text, and because of the epistomologically validated speculation about his nature as *Maschinenmensch.*

For the crucial point regarding the nature of the Golem is as follows:

> The Golem had not the slightest whit of either the good inclination or the evil inclination.[22] Whatever he did was done of compulsion and because he dreaded that he might otherwise be eliminated from existence at once. There was nothing difficult for him and nothing beyond his powers to a height of ten ells above the earth and ten ells below the surface of the earth, and nothing could restrain him when he had some deed to perform. (p.476)

In other words, no practical limits, just like the inexhaustible computers of later times, and like robots which only need the occasional drop of grease. But also no motivation, unlike Lem's later automata, who try to get away with as little work as possible, and who of course (or they would not be *Lem's* automata) speculate about the nature of good and evil.[23] Some of them. Similarly in matters relating to the senses, "the sense of smell possessed by the Golem was adequate", but "it was necessary for the Golem to be created without any power of engendering or desire for women. For if he had had that strength no woman would have been able to escape from him"—the creators of lecherous, cinematic computers were later to violate this rule. The limitations implied that he was not to develop new skills outside the work he was made for, but these matched the restraints put on members of the community. The rabbi's household is told specifically that he is "not to be employed for any household duties"—Isaac Asimov made a later incarnation violate this rule on a number of levels—and the most important reason for this, it seems to me, is that it emphasizes his status as community servant, as common property. A powerful instrument like that, semi-demonic origin or not, was a gift to be shared with the whole community. Nobody must be tempted to abuse his powers using him for the private advantage of members of Loew's household, nobody could be allowed to use him to further the family's business.[24]

The Golem theme, then, becomes a description of what this man-like creature is designed to do, a pretence of a report on the goings on in another universe—there *was* no Golem, remember; it is only made to seem likely that there might have been one—and a speculation about what it might do at other times and in other spaces. Which is meant to serve as an apology for not introducing any new terminology at all, using "theme" about

the Golem and, more generally, about human-machine issues.[25]

Having this other universe, brief though the description of it is, established for it, the Golem is a Suvian *novum* validated, not through Suvin's own requirement of Cartesian and post-Baconian scientific *method* (Darko Suvin's own italics), but certainly through its "presence as the determining factor of an SF narration", its narrative consequences.[26]

So, rather than discard everything associated with the Golem legend, including fictional uses of the idea, as "Jewish mystical and fantasy writings", as Nachman Ben-Yehuda does,[27] I would suggest, in view of the reading Bin Gorion's treatment invites, inspecting what is in the material, seeing how the idea is used, or how the material is read. Bearing in mind that one should not be proscriptive I don't think one should, in the context of science fiction theory, ignore narrative traditions because of their pre-Cartesian or pre-Baconian flavour. And Dan Ben-Amos's remark on some of Bin Gorion's sources, "the overall rhetorical posture is that of a historical account"[28] in a curious way echoes Darko Suvin's own statement that the flight from the author's social context in "significant sf" is "an optical illusion and epistemological trick".[29] Both statements challenge, in their separate ways, the status of "realism", of mimesis, in fiction. And this is as far as this article gets into *that*.

Notes

1. This is one of a series of articles on the Golem as tool, *shlemiel,* and paradigm, a work in progress. Conceptually, this is the inner part.
2. *Science Fiction,* Denmark's Radio 1984, with Johan Heje, p.55. The definition was based on that of D.B. Runes' *Concise Dictionary of Judaism,* 1966.
3. Niels Dalgaard, the present editor of the Danish sf journal *Proxima.* The intention was to check what an informed reader remembered offhand.
4. Frederic Thieberger, *The Great Rabbi Loew of Prague. His Life and Work and the Legend of the Golem* (London 1955). Dr Thieberger speculates that Loew's son-in-law may have acted as his secretary, planning his working time (p.31).
5. In the chapter headed "Robots and Mechanical Men", p.122.
6. Lundwall p.135.
7. Rottensteiner p.53.
8. *Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction,* 1975, p.46.
9. In his book *Isaac Asimov: The Foundations of Science Fiction,* 1982, p.56, Gunn tells the story again. It is impossible to infer whether Asimov is reviewing his own work of the forties here, or asking a rhetorical question. James Gunn later told me that what happens after Marvin Minsky's talk on teleological goals in Artificial Intelligence is that Asimov gets up and says the question that had been running through his mind during the talk was this one. Minsky is at MIT, and has been involved in the field of AI since the Dartmouth Conference in 1956 when AI first received funds.
10. Robert Plank, "The Golem and the Robot", *Literature and Psychology* 15 No. 1, Winter 1965, p.12. His approach is psychoanalytically biased, but the article is highly recommendable. See also Plank for a further exploration of Grimm's sources. Grimm's version is found in *Kleinere Schriften von Jakob Grimm,* 4. Band. (Berlin 1869).
11. Scholes and Rabkin p.183.
12. This seems to be a common deprivation. At the science fiction convention Yorcon II in Leeds, 1981, a sombre looking programme announced the showing of Piotr Szulkin's post disaster golem-in-reverse movie of 1979, but the film never appeared.
13. Micha Joseph Bin Gorion, *Mimekor Yisrael. Classical Jewish Folktales,* ed. by Emanuel bin Gorion (Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1976), vol. I, p.472–477. Translated into English by I.M. Lask from the 2nd Hebrew ed., (The Fountain of Israel), 1965, with a preface by Emanuel bin Gorion, and introduction by Dan Ben-Amos.
14. E. Isaac-Edersheim, "Messias, Golem, Ahasver. Drei mythische Gestalten des Judentums". *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse und Imago* XXVI, 1941, p.179–213.
15. The Kabbalah has been shaped, interpreted, reshaped, and reinterpreted throughout the centuries. The most accurate, twentieth-century definition seems to be "a model of the relation between idea and matter on various levels". Moshe Idel, in his entry "cabala" gives an account

of its permutations *(Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (New York 1983), Vol. III, p.1 – 3. Edward Hoffman's *The Way of Splendour* (London 1981) is an attempt to relate kabbalistic approaches to human personality to modern, popular psychology.

16. Agreeing with Gershom Scholem, the famous scholar on Kabbalah, the editors of *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem 1972) add to his entry "golem", "The connection between the *golem* and the struggle against ritual murder accusations is entirely a modern literary invention." (Jerusalem 1972). On the blood libel case, see Tomas Gergely, "Affären Tiszaeszlar. En ritualmord-proces i det sk. liberale Ungern 1882" ("The Tiszaeszlar Affair. A ritual murder case in so-called liberal Hungary"), *Nordisk Judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies* vol. III, 1, Dec. 1979, p.32 – 43. Translated into Swedish, from the French, by V.M.Nelhans.
17. Which indeed they were, but not in terms of the serial production envisaged by Jakob Grimm who, in Robert Plank's translation says, "The Polish Jews . . . make the figure of a man out of clay or loam . . .": "The Golem and the Robot", p.13). Thieberger is implying, however, that for a lengthy period any well-respected Polish rabbi ran the risk, at least posthumously, of having a golem story attached to his name.
18. On the two Rabbi Loews, see besides Thieberger (1955), Arnold Goldsmith, *The Golem Remembered, 1909 – 1980* (Detroit 1981), in which one chapter is headed "The Two Judah Loews"; Byron Sherwin, *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent.* (London 1982); and Abner Weiss, *Rabbi Loew of Prague: theory of Human Nature and Morality* (Doct. Diss: New York 1969). That there is a life, and a separate legend, is evident. The family chronicles of 1727 disagree with the legend on the date of Loew's birth, for example. The later scholars disagree among themselves. Thieberger concedes, on the polyhistoricity of Loew, that "from indirect sources he had certainly acquired some knowledge of general science, some geometry and astronomy" (p.35). But Abner Weiss says, on the language side, that there is no evidence he knew either Arabic, Greek or Latin (p.28).

    Perhaps Bin Gorion's major achievement is indicating in just five pages that this discrepancy exists, and also implying that Liwa and Loew, as Thieberger calls the two, do after all converge.
19. In *The Joys of Yiddish* (1968, Penguin ed. 1983), p.139. *Lehmiger Golem* ("clay golem") as idiom for an awkward person at one point began spreading in Central Europe (Thieberger p.93), and Rosten gives as modern meanings, "simpleton", "clod", "subnormal", or "robot".
20. Isaac-Edersheim's is an example. Robert Plank has a touch when he says he aims to explore "for what longings (the literary creations of golems, robots, etc.) provide vicarious fullfilment."
21. See Thieberger (1955) for one of the first twentieth-century surveys in English of Loew's surviving works, with a discussion of his thought. The scope of Sherwin (1981) appears from the title. Weiss (1969) discusses how he continued tradition through innovation, treating in depths his influence on Kabbalah and on Mid-East European Judaism.
22. "Good inclination" and "evil inclination" is English Standard Rabbinic; evil inclination is the translation of a word which is also rendered as "passions".
23. It casts a curious light on the historical role of the police that in other stories in *Mimekor* princes used eunuch slaves as the Prague ghetto used Joseph the Golem, placing the same emphasis on the undesirability of their developing a motivation of their own.
24. In a distinguished non-source on the Golem, Pamela McCorduck's *Machines Who Think* (San Francisco 1979), the semi-official history of Artificial Intelligence, the author, despite having read Robert Plank's article, not only accepts Grimm's idea that ownership was involved here, but gives it a twist to the effect that things would go particularly wrong if *Mrs.* Rabbi Loew were to use Joseph.
25. Robert Plank uses "motif" to denote both the Golem and "man-made man-like creature".
26. Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), p.70. DS's concept of *novum* is defined on p.63.
27. Nachman Ben-Yehuda, "Sociological Reflections on the History of Science Fiction in Israel", *Science-Fiction Studies* no. 38, Vol. 13, 1, March 1986. Ben-Yehuda gives Goldsmith (1981) as a reference, though.
28. Introduction to *Mimekor,* p.XLV.
29. Suvin (1979) p.84.

Cornel Robu was born in 1938 in Romania, and is currently lecturer in the Department of Romanian Literature, Comparative Literature, and Theory of Literature at Cluj-Napoca University. A specialist in literary theory and aesthetics, in recent years his special theme has been sf. He wrote articles about all the prominent Romanian sf writers for a comprehensive dictionary of Romanian writers which is due to appear; and he was co-author of a large panorama of the post-war Romanian novel published in 1974. In addition, he has published numerous essays, studies, and reviews in Romanian journals.

The original version of the following essay first appeared as the English language summary of the introduction to a critical edition by Cornel Robu of a novel by Victor Anestin, În Anul 4000 sau O Călătorie La Venus, *published by Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, in 1986.*

Victor Anestin, The First Romanian Science Fiction Writer

CORNEL ROBU

Victor Anestin (1875 – 1918) was a newspaperman, working for the great Bucharest daily papers of the time *(Dimineata, Adevarul, Universul* etc.), but was known mainly as an amateur astronomer and science popularizer. He was founder and editor of the first Romanian journal of astronomy. *Orion* (1907 – 1912), founded the *Romanian Society of Astronomy "Camille Flammarion"* (1907) and was co-founder of the *Bucharest Open University* (1912) and of *"The Friends of Science"* Society (1913). He edited the second series (1912 – 1916) of the *Journal of Popular Sciences and Travels (Ziarul stiintelor populare si al călătoriilor)*—the most important Romanian journal of science popularization of the time. He wrote about 30 books of popular science, astronomy mainly, and translated about other 20 of the same kind. He published papers on astronomy in foreign reviews as well: *L'Astronomie* (France), *Rivista di Astronomia e Scienze affini* (Italy), *Nature* and *English Mechanics* (England), *Monthly Register* (U.S.A.), *Bulletin of the Astronomic Society* (Mexico).

Victor Anestin's work also includes three science fiction novels (novelettes in size). *In the year 4000 or A Voyage to Venus (În Anul 4000 sau O Călătorie la Venus)* (1899) is the first book published by Victor Anestin and at the same time the first science fiction novel in Romanian literature.

Victor Anestin assimilated the idea of the plurality of the inhabited worlds in the Universe from the writings of the famous French astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842 – 1925), the master whom he revered all his life and from whom he received material and moral support. Anestin himself was called by his contemporaries "a Flammarion of

Romania". Flammarion's early work *La Pluralité des mondes habités* (1862), resoundingly successful at the time, was Anestin's bedside book, as well as other books of his master. Starting from this idea Victor Anestin imagines in *In the year 4000 or A Voyage to Venus* a utopian "intelligent humanity" in the miraculous setting of Venus—the planet he preferred both as astronomer and as writer. The people on Venus are divided into two different biological species: "the bird people", an inferior species, do nothing but obey the proper Venusians, who are the real masters of the planet resembling physically and psychically the two explorers from Earth. The latter have come from Earth by an electrically driven spaceship in the shape of a missile, which covers distances at the "terrible speed of 300 km/sec". The two explorers – Asales and Saitni – spend their time on Venus in a continuous state of admiration of the idyllic harmony that reigns between masters and servants, unlike on Earth, where the yellow race—to which the two belong— has taken supremacy using as their weapon the "power of electricity", and set up the dictatorship of the scientists, of "the 25". At the end of the book the reader is assured of the overthrow of the "reign of science" by a general uprising that destroys all the "electric machines and devices through which the 25 dominated the world"; the uprising is followed by a paradisiac era of everlasting love on Earth. But the two explorers will not share this happiness because on the way back the ship's trajectory is deviated by a comet; unable to land on Earth they manage to land on Mars where they contact another "intelligent humanity". The author intended to write another book on the sojourn on Mars, but abandoned the project, as he did all literary projects, for some time.

Meanwhile, in 1910, something happened that made him turn back to the literary projects: the passage of the Halley comet and the "panic of the cyanogen" which preceded it. As a newspaperman Anestin was confronted with a lot of ridiculous and absurd manifestations of this panic which he tried, as far as his field of activity permitted it, to anticipate and neutralize by scientific and common sense arguments, a mark of evidence being the 1910 file of *Orion* and the booklet *What Are Comets? The Halley Comet. The Fear of the Halley Comet (Ce sunt cometele? Cometa Halley. Frica de cometa Halley),* published at the beginning of the same year. This irrational "Halley panic" is acknowledged, however, by Victor Anestin as a fact and turned to account by the writer; transformed into fiction and transfigured accordingly it becomes *A Sky Tragedy (O tragedie cereascâ),* an "astronomic tale", published in 1914. The book is based on two old ideas of his. The first, the plurality of the inhabited worlds—consolidated by the hypothesis of the Martian "channels", set forth by the Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli and developed by the American astronomer Percival Lowell (names appearing frequently in Anestin's journalistic writings). The second, the hypothesis of the cosmic catastrophe fatal for the Earth, only partially Flammarion's version from *La fin du Monde* (1893); in *A Sky Tragedy* Anestin replaces the comet which in Flammarion's book devastated the Earth by a "huge dark body", a kind of "dead sun" travelling rapidly and giddily through space and destroying everything in the way. The idea had already been expressed by Anestin in 1899 in the article *The End of the Earth (Sfîrsitul Pământului).* Later he found the same idea in the volume *Astronomical Essays* (1907) by the Irish astronomer John Ellard Gore (1845 – 1910) and reported it in *Orion,* whose editor he was. After J.E. Gore's death Anestin invented a German astronomer, Ebert, said to have demonstrated the hypothesis by calculation. Anyway, what interests most is the literary result of these premises—the best of the fictional books written by Victor Anestin.

In 3000, the year of the catastrophe and of the action, our solar system includes three planets inhabited by "intelligent humanity". The oldest and the most advanced scientifically and technologically are the Martians; they are also psychically superior (*psi* communication, without words) and morally exemplary: Mars is most sorely tried, but the Martians accept their destiny with manliness and spiritual devotion, handing down in the last moment the scientific inheritance accumulated by the advanced Martian civilization in thousands of years. The Venusians are the "youngest" of the three humanities, the dearest to Anestin for they are the only one which he saves from destruction, letting it to come off lightly only suffering fright and the five thousand victims of the "Martian rays" (a deadly weapon constructed by physicist Vasi according to the instructions received from the Martians through the "wireless telegraph" in order to save the Venusian astronomers from being lynched by a maddened crowd). Venus is organized as a planetary state, without frontiers, with the capital at Samiri, governed by scientists. From a scientific and technological point of view, Venus is about at the same level as the Earth—the Western world only, that of *la belle époque* of the beginning of the century in which Anestin lived. The main conflict on Venus in the year 3000 takes place between the venerable and conservative senior Venusian astronomer Asales (only the name is common with the character from *In the year 4000*) who obstinately denies the existence of intelligent beings on Mars and Earth, and two young astronomers, Ralta and Aldin, who, with the help of physicist Vasi, prove the existence of intelligent beings on Earth and Mars getting into communication with them by the "wireless telegraph" on the day before the catastrophe that will leave the Venusians alone in the Universe. The people on Earth are somewhere between the "old" Martians and "young" Venusians as regards science and technology, but they are morally inferior to both. Before meeting their end in the huge tides caused by the attraction of the "dead sun" called "Satan", the humans show an abominable lack of dignity and spirituality (the scenes of irresponsible gregarious panic are placed mainly in Bucharest and Paris, but also in Berlin, Moscow, Budapest). The only exception is represented by the scientists, astronomers above all, who retire to their observatories in the mountains in order to keep in touch with their cosmic brothers on the other planets. The last to stand to the end are the Asian astronomer Nanki-Po from the observatory of Gaurisankar, Himalaya, and, after his death, the Romanian astronomer Receanu at the observatory in the Carpathians. The mountains are stormed by the huge waves of the Black Sea which has covered the whole south of Romania, including Bucharest; Receanu's observatory is swept by the storm like a toy and thrown into the sea together with the men in it. This chapter of *A Sky Tragedy*, with the title "The Last Days of the People on Earth", is the best thing Anestin ever wrote.

With an inborn sensitivity to the sublimity of nature—the immensity of the starry sky, "the terrible revolt of the elements", with the devastating storms, colossal tides, "waves growing higher and higher, like hills, like mountains", with the planetary flood covering all land except a few "pointed islands with the everlasting snow"—Victor Anestin achieves, by projection into the imaginary, to promote the sublime in nature to the rank of aesthetic sublime. And in the conception of today's interpreter of Anestin, science fiction is, at its highest, precisely a literature of the sublime, as defined by Immanuel Kant in the 18th century and by Nicolai Hartmann in our century: the basic aesthetic concept in science fiction, the "master key" that "opens" the masterpieces of the world's science fiction which are much more famous than Victor Anestin's *A Sky Tragedy*.

Anestin's last sf novelette *The Power of Science or How the European War Was "Killed" (Puterea științei sau cum a fost "omorit" Războiul European)* (1916), with the sub-title "Fantastic tale", does not reach the same aesthetic value, its interest and contemporary significance lying mainly in its ideological message. Victor Anestin's attitude toward science belonged to the century in which he was born and brought up, and Francis Bacon's old saying that "knowledge is power" was understood by Anestin in the spirit of the nineteenth century in which positivism, optimism and faith in progress and in the beneficial superiority of science were unaltered. This is the dominant note of everything written by Victor Anestin, fiction included. This idea in which he believed all his life is to be found in the end of his life when he wrote, during the world war, *The Power of Science*. A group of scientists, devoted not only to science but to the morality of science as well—the English physicist John Proctor, the French physiologist Henri Loyal, the German chemical investigator Hans Meyer, financed by the American multi-millionaire of Romanian origin Arthur Shaw and with the technical assistance of the Romanian Ionică Moldoveanu, Shaw's nephew—find a "scientific" antidote (artificial fog and laughing-gas bombs launched from airships) which annihilates, by convulsive laughter, the epidemic of hate and bestiality unleashed by the First World War. When the book was written, Romania was not engaged in the war yet, which explains the main role ascribed naïvely by Anestin to the country in arresting the hostilities and making the peace. Of some literary interest remain the passages describing the comical and burlesque effects of the laughing-gas bombs exploding in the United States.

And yet the ultimate significance communicated objectively by Victor Anestin's life and work is not the "power of science", in which he believed fanatically, but the "power of fiction" in which he did not believe at all, which he denied, and which finally offered him survival in a position he disdained, that of a writer. Anestin wrote his numerous books of popular science with a deep faith in their mission, while the three fiction books he wrote for entertainment and, undeclaredly, as a revenge for the frustrations imposed by his condition of "intellectual worker". Today, seven decades after his death, the dozens of "scientific" books signed Anestin, which brought to the Romanian reader the "last word" of science, preserve only the obsolete charm of a long gone promise of future modernity, superseded by other and greater "scientific discoveries". On the other hand the three books of fiction grant Victor Anestin the place he deserves in literary history as the first Romanian science fiction writer. And this in spite of the naïvety, oversimplification and awkwardness inherent in any beginning, in spite of incongruities, anachronisms and false tracks, revealed by the evolution of science. The mere fact that they belong to fiction confers them more charm, a particular charm, the charm of the purely imaginary, "doomed" never to meet reality again.

Guido Eekhaut, born in 1954, started writing fiction and essays in 1976. He has published two novels and a story collection, his novel The Circle Years *winning the 1986 Literature Prize of the City of Brussels. His essays range from studies of myth (the motif of the labyrinth) to English Literature (Coetzee) and sf (Herbert, Ballard, and Silverberg).*

His partner in the following essay, Robert Smets, has been writing intricate sf stories since the Sixties. A specialist in Utopian literature and Soviet sf, he was long-time editor of Flanders' leading sf magazine of the Seventies, Info-Sfan *(later* SF-magazine, *later* Rigel *magazine, but now defunct). He wrote several radio plays which were broadcast on French and Swiss radio. Currently he is working on an essay for* Foundation *about Casanova as sf author.*

SF in Flanders

ROBERT SMETS & GUIDO EEKHAUT

The duality of the Belgian linguistic situation usually baffles the foreign reader and we therefore felt it necessary to explain some historic contexts that will permit a better understanding of Flemish sf, its influences, and some very specific problems with which Flemish sf-authors are confronted.

Originally, the "Comté de Flandre" was situated in the Western part of present-day Belgium and partially in Northern France (still known as French Flanders). Today Flanders is a sort of general name for those Belgian provinces (or parts of them) where Flemish is spoken. Similarly, the "Flemish language" is a sort of intermediary between several more or less local dialects that all have some relation to Dutch, and this Dutch itself as it is institutionalised in Flanders and Holland. Apart from some particularisms the Flemish language approaches more and more the Dutch language, certainly in its written form. The first problem for the Flemish writer proposes itself here however, where he has to adopt to a subtle but nonetheless actual difference in choice of words and in style to get accepted in Holland, where now the large publishers are situated.

With the exception of "fantastic" elements in medieval literature, the origin of rational conjecture in the West is to be found between the Renaissance and the early nineteenth century. Within this period, Flanders had no literary contributions to offer, indeed not before the twentieth century was well under way. The explanation for this is simple: its literature was in decline and would have disappeared altogether were it not, at the price of much effort, revived after 1850.

The starting-point for this decline can be found in the independence which the Northern Provinces (now Holland) won from the Spanish and the Inquisition in the seventeenth century. Flanders, under harsh Spanish rule saw its intellectuals and traders emigrate to the North and got more than its share of repression, counter-reformation, economic isolation and repeated invasions (Spanish, French, Austrian). After an early and very rich contribution to European literature, intellectual life in Flanders sunk into lethargy. The authorities and the church were suspicious of the political and religious

liberties in Holland and in the Anglo-Saxon world and feared contamination by means of the written word. In this context their preference for a "Belgique Latine" should be seen. The French predominance was so overwhelming that, after Belgium won independence in 1830, the Flemish cultural identity was almost nonexistent. The bourgeoisie, administration, commerce, higher education, armed forces, justice and culture in Belgium were French-speaking and this situation remained well into this century (and has not completely disappeared).

Since the Flemish part of the country was slow in finding its proper language it should not surprise that many writers chose to express themselves in French. Some reacted to this and contributed heavily to a later cultural, social and economic revival of the Flemish intellectuals. The most important figure here is Hendrik Conscience of whom is said that "he taught his people to read", a sad but almost correct proposition. His best-known book is *De Leeuw van Vlaanderen* (1838, *The Lion of Flanders*) about the historic Flemish uprising against the French in 1302.

The inspiration of Conscience and his contemporaries was popular and romantic, in the spirit of E.T.A. Hoffman and Walter Scott. It owed much to references to a glorious past and fantastic themes of medieval literature, of folklore and religion. It was, however, far from rational anticipation. The rare extrapolations that can be found in this period are situated in the drama: *Het Aerdsch Paradijs, of de Zegepraal der Broederliefde* (1836, *The Earthly Paradise, or the Victory of Fraternal Love*) and *De Wereld binnen Duizend jaar* (1857 – 59, *The World in a Thousand Years*) by H. Van Peene. This last one concerns a man, frozen in Siberia and rewoken in 2857 in the City of Centralis. The play contains some technical details and some slight social criticism. The title refers to *L'An 2440* by Louis-Sébastien Mercier which had been translated into Dutch in 1792.

We should mention in passing two major merits of Flemish romantic literature. The first was to draw attention to a sort of local imaginary background from which a generation of symbolists and a range of French-Belgian authors (Charles de Coster, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Michel de Ghelderode) would extract powerful works of art. The second, more prosaic, merit was to have invoked a taste for reading, satisfied by a large number of popular periodicals. When mainstream literature would concern itself for a long time to come with social documentation and naturalism, it was precisely in these somewhat marginal publications that we find a rich soil for anticipation. From this point of view the phenomenon is not much different from what happened in the United States.

As in most European countries, it was mostly the technical and political innovations following World War I that evoked the first true anticipation in Flanders: *Het Einde van de Wereld* (1929, *The End of the World*) by Jef Scheirs, *De Man die het Licht Stal* (1931, *The Man who Stole the Light*) by Theo Boogaerts and *De vredesmens van het jaar 3.000* (1933, *The Pacifist of the Year 3000*) by Theo Huet. Although the work of Huet is closest to modern sf, it is the apocalyptic work of Scheirs that received attention. His book was translated into French and was to be adapted for film in Germany when the war broke out. Scheirs literally transposed the Apocalypse into a future "collectivist" society. However rightwing, ultra-catholic and even anti-semitic it was, it contained some very precise and surprising anticipation. The idea of the world's end incited other writers, each in their way, to confront this theme, in view of actual political developments. This tendency returned after 1945 when the potential horrors of totalitarianism and the nuclear danger entered the scene. One should cite here such names and titles as Anton Van De

Velde's *God en de wormen* (1947, *God and the Worms*), Cor Ria Leeman's *God in de strop* (1955, *God in the Rope*), Frans Buyens's *Na ons de Monsters* (1957, *After us the Monsters*), Felix Dalle's *De Bom* (1961, *The Bomb*), Jan Christiaens's *De Lachende Krokodil* (1963, *The Laughing Crocodile)* and Ward Ruyslinck's *Het reservaat* (1964, *The Reservation*). Not to forget one of the very rare examples of post-war collectivist Utopia: *Nieuwe Reis naar Utopia* (1946, *New Voyage to Utopia*) by Jean Versou.

As we mentioned above, anticipation was rare in literature but it abounded in the many forms of popular entertainment. General schooling and lending-libraries multiplied the number of readers quickly. Many of them were kids, impassioned by science and technology. The clergy remained in control of most of the schools and libraries but scientific anticipation was considered sane and educational, and one of the most popular series of booklets, published weekly, the "Vlaamse Filmpjes", was published by the Abbey of Averbode and distributed in large numbers in schools. The series still exists today. Authors like Jean Ray and Roger d'Exsteyl felt it not below their dignity to write for it. Other postwar writers of occasional anticipation were (and are) Lode Lavki, A.M. Lamend, Julien van Remoortere, Leopold Vermeiren, John Vermeulen (now specialising in thrillers), Maria Jacques and William Vananderoye.

A step forward in the evolution of Flemish anticipation would have been the creation of specialized magazines, at a moment where Europe discovered the English-American brand of sf. Unfortunately, all attempts in that direction failed. There were translations like *Galaxy* and *Futura* (1945 – 46), *Utopia* (1961 – 64), *Morgen* (1972) and *Apollo* (1972 – 74). Only in Holland did there seem to be enough interest to make a Dutch sf-magazine a sane undertaking, although *Orbit* (published by Kees van Toorn) is the only one of its sort to remain. It has published some Flemish authors like Julien Raasveld and Guido Eekhaut.

The editors of *Morgen* (Manuel Van Loggem) and *Apollo* (Albert van Hageland) have done much for young Flemish sf-writers, accepting stories for their magazines or including them in occasional anthologies. The same work was done by Danny de Laet and, more systematically, by Vincent Van Der Linden in Holland who edits the long-running anthology series *Ganymedes* for pocket publisher Bruna (since 1976).

This is more or less history now, and we have arrived at the place to make a short survey of who's who in Flemish science fiction today.

A trend of magic-realism has been noticeable in Flemish literature for some time, starting during the war with Johan Daisne and continued mainly by Hubert Lampo. This trend still has its supporters and followers, but we will concern ourselves here with material much closer to sf, material which does partially exist in the context of mainstream literature. In Flanders, as in Holland, social and political extrapolation is generally accepted as a literary form. The division between this sort of extrapolation and the rest of literature is not made as it used to be in England or America. The ghetto-effect has only been applicable to the few hard-sf books. One important name is Hugo Raes with three of his books: *Reizigers in de anti-tijd* (1970, *Travellers in Anti-Time*), *De Lotgevallen* (1968, *The Adventures*) and *De Verwoesting van Hyperion* (1978, *The Destruction of Hyperion*). This last one is most close to classic sf. Important literary figures like Jos Vandeloo (*Het gevaar,* 1960, *The Danger*) and Ward Ruyslinck (*Het reservaat,* 1964 and *De Apokatastasis,* 1970) chose anticipation as a modus towards social criticism. Another work of anticipation to be mentioned, although more philosophical

and not unlike the work of Stapledon, was *De Ring* (1969, *The Ring*) by Gust Van Brussel. More recently books like *Huis der Liefde* (1984, *House of Love*), by George Adé and *Het zesde Zegel* (1984, *The Sixth Seal*) by Henri Van Daele show that sf in Flanders can be either rich in clichés or original in style and tone. Guido Eekhaut's *De Cirkeljaren* (1986, *The Circle Years*) has connections with entropy in both social and psychological senses, while again political criticism was used in *De Stoelendans* (1983, *Musical Chairs*) by Paul Koeck and in several thrillers by Jef Geeraerts.

But there exists some sf that will freely admit its origins, although this attitude is rather problematic towards publishers if not towards larger audiences. The market for sf in Flanders is very small and steeply on the decrease for ten years now, but a few dozen people continue (occasionally) to write in the genre.

Paul Van Herck (born 1938) is probably best known abroad. His collection *De Cirkels (The Circles)* was followed, in 1968, by *Sam, of de Pluterday (Where were you last Pluterday?)* (published in Holland by Meulenhoff). This was translated into French and English (DAW, 1973) and is a masterpiece of quiet but disconcerting ironical writing set in a world where only the very rich and powerful have an extra day in the week, Pluterday. Another novel, *Caroline, Oh Caroline* (where we find Hitler among the Was-Shintogo Indians) was published in France and remains unknown in Flanders. Van Herck's writing has justly been compared to Frederic Brown and Robert Sheckley, and it is a pity this author writes so little.

The tribulations of Eddy C. Bertin are typical of the state sf-publishing has been in Flanders. Early in his career he decided to write his stories (sf, horror, fantasy) in English and had them published in *New Writings in SF* and *Pan Book of Horror Stories* among others, and even in one *World's Annual of Best SF stories* (DAW). When a Dutch publisher (Bruna) decided to give him a try with a collection it hired a translator to have his stories translated from English to Dutch.

Bertin is certainly the most prolific sf-writer of the low countries. He has published several collections: *De Achtjaarlijkse God* (1971, *The Eight-Yearly God*), *Iets Kleins, Iets Hongerigs* (1972, *Something Small, Something Hungry*), *Eenzame bloedvogel* (1976, *Lonely Bloodbird*), *Mijn Kleine Duisterlinge* (1979, *My Small Darkling*), *Sluimerende Stranden van de Geest* (1981, *The Slumbering Beaches of the Mind*), *Het doofstomme beest op de kale berg* (1983, *The Deaf-mute Beast on the Bald Mountain*). With Bob Ban Laerhoven he wrote a novel: *De kokons van de Nacht* (1977, *The Cocoons of the Night*) and alone he wrote one around the life of Edgar Poe: *De Schadüw van de Raaf* (1983, *The Shadow of the Raven*). Apart from this he wrote many stories, texts for illustrated books, novelisations of TV-scripts, performances, essays. Bertin's work should be divided in horror and sf. He admires Poe, Lovecraft and Matheson but refers also to Bradbury, Ballard or Sturgeon and searches to recreate their psychological *angoisse*. His stories vary, even in one collection, from baroque grand-guignol to new wave sf. His work would sometimes benefit from reflection, but recently he introduced some form of unity in his series of 'membrane'-stories and some of these are really remarkable.

Apart from these two authors almost nobody seems to have been able to reach a larger audience even when publishing outside fanzines and anthologies. Robert Smets, whose intricate stories, very literate and in themselves a private new wave revolution in the late sixties, were never collected and can be found only in semi-professional magazines and literary periodicals. The same applies for Julien Raasveld (born 1944) who had some of his

stories collected in *Het Menselijk Monster* (1977, *The Human Monster*) with a rather marginal publisher, and for Guido Eekhaut (B.1954) who had a little book in 1980, *Labyrinten (Labyrinths)* with 11 stories, some of them sf. He published an anti-utopian book in 1983, *De Afgrond van de Verwerping,* but it hardly saw distribution. Bob Van Laerhoven (born 1953) proved easier to publish with now some ten books to his credit, some of them borderline sf. He wrote some intriguing and engaged sf in the seventies: *Dit Gore geheugen van Me* (1976, *This Nasty Memory of Mine*), and *Inner Smog* (1978) and recently had a surprising mainstream novel: *Nachtspel* (1985, *Nightgame*). His most recent book, *Schermen* (1986, *Fencing*) shows his evolution into the borderland of semi-fantastic literature (not unlike that of Chris Priest) in which only the tone reminds of sf.

Other names have to be mentioned (they deserve more than passing glances however): Wilfried Hendrickx, J.P. Léwy, Alex Reufels, Yves Vandezande, Mark Ruyffelaert, Son Tyberg. Most of these wrote interesting stories but saw their talents confined to fanzines and semi-professional publications.

Writing any kind of sf in Flanders means being confined to very small "markets" for publication. The solution is an intermediate between non-genre literature and slight (anachronistic, speculative, "fantastic") elements and backgrounds. This sort of writing can be found in people who have gone out of the sf-medium (Van Laerhoven, Smets, Eekhaut) as well as with those who from the start were incorporated into the "mainstream" (Hugo Raes, Paul Koeck, Jef Geeraerts). This should not be seen as a limitation, since all of the elements of traditional sf can, in theory at least, be used in writing without having to resort to the clichés of the genre itself. No aliens, spaceships, planets, robots. But even without them, walking the borderline is a more than intriguing experience.

"There is a whole group of excellent sf writers now, establishing a sort of syntax of forms, a language, an audience", writes Stan Robinson in these "Notes for an Essay". And he, of course, is one of them. (See Foundation *38 for more detail.) But he is also known as a critic, as an author of a book on Philip K. Dick, and here he turns his attention to an author who has been unjustly neglected by the critics, and looks at the connections between her work, and the whole genre of historical fiction, and science fiction.*

Notes For An Essay On Cecelia Holland

KIM STANLEY ROBINSON

1. Science fiction is an historical literature. In fact this historicity defines the genre. The simplest way to say this is, "Science fiction stories are set in the future." Unpack this statement and we get something like the following: "In every sf narrative, there is an explicit or implicit fictional *history* that connects the period depicted to our present moment." The reader assumes that, starting from our present, a sequence of events will lead us to the "present" described in the narrative.

Not all science fiction stories are set in the future. There are, for instance, the stories we call "alternative histories". But we can easily explain why the alternative history is part of sf, by revising the statement above to say, "In every sf narrative, there is an explicit or implicit fictional history that connects the period depicted to our present moment, or to some moment of our past." It is the same process, connecting to a different point in time. Because no sf story describes the actual future that will ensue in the real world, one could even say that all science fiction narratives are alternative histories—some branching away from our present, others branching away from some moment of our past.

Using this historical definition we can distinguish sf from fantasy: sf is historical, fantasy is ahistorical. Sometimes the worlds described in fantasies have histories, but they do not connect with our own. Fantasies are not alternative history, but alternative reality.

This definition can also explain the hybrid called "science fantasy". Typically such a narrative is set in the very far future; accepting this, we label the text sf. But we cannot truly imagine millions of years of history, so the connection is not a felt relationship, and the text seems like a fantasy narrative, about a time that never connects to ours. Calling the narrative "science fantasy" labels this clash of generic impressions.

To say that sf is historical fiction is not to say that it is the same thing as the genre called "historical fiction". The two genres are not the same, nor are they mirror images; the future is fundamentally different from the past.

But the two literary genres are more alike, in some respects, than either is like the literary mainstream. They share some methods and concerns, in that both must describe cultures that cannot be physically visited by the reader; thus both are concerned with alien cultures, and with estrangement. And both genres share a view of history which says that

times not our own are yet vitally important to us, and worth writing about.

So I propose to discuss the historical novelist Cecelia Holland in this journal of sf criticism, because we are, in the end, her natural audience.

2. A partial bibliography (annotations by Cecelia Holland; some corrections and additions made by Edward James, who takes responsibility for any mistakes or omissions remaining).

1. *The Firedrake* (Norman invasion: 1066) Atheneum (USA), 1966; Hodder and Stoughton (UK), 1967; Signet (USA) pb, 1967: Hodder (UK) pb, 1970; Ballantine (USA) pb, 1973.
2. *Rakóssy* (Turkish invasion of Hungary: 1527) Atheneum, 1967; Hodder and Stoughton, 1967.
3. *The Kings in Winter* (Ireland, 1014: Battle of Clontarf) Atheneum, 1968; Hodder and Stoughton, 1968; Penguin pb, 1969; Futura (UK) pb, 1975.
4. *Until the Sun Falls* (Mongol invasion of just about everywhere, 1230s) Atheneum, 1969; Hodder and Stoughton, 1969.
5. *Antichrist: a novel of the Emperor Frederick II* (1235) Atheneum, 1970; Hodder and Stoughton (as *The Wonder of the World*), 1970.
6. *The Earl* (End of Stephen's anarchy: 1153) Alfred A. Knopf (USA), 1971; Hodder and Stoughton (as *Hammer for Princes*), 1972; Ballantine pb, 1972.
7. *The Death of Attila* (Death of Attila: 453) Knopf, 1973; Hodder and Stoughton, 1974; Ballantine pb, 1974; Futura pb, 1975.
8. *Great Maria* (A heavily fictionalised and compressed view of the Normans in Europe in the eleventh century, containing elements of Robert Guiscard in Sicily, William of Normandy in Normandy and England) Knopf, 1974; Hodder and Stoughton, 1975; Warner Books (USA) pb, 1975.
9. *Floating Worlds* (Sci-fi—setting, the solar system, c.3000 AD—KSR) Knopf, 1975; Gollancz (UK), 1976; Pocket Books (USA) pb, 1977; Sphere (UK) pb, 1978; re-release by Gollancz pb, due 1988.
10. *Two Ravens* (Iceland: 1100) Knopf, 1977; Gollancz, 1977; Sphere pb, 1979.
11. *Valley of the Kings: a novel of Tutankhamun,* published under the name Elizabeth Eliot Carter, Dutton (US), 1977; Warner pb, 1979; published as by Cecelia Holland, Gollancz, 1978.
12. *City of God: a novel of the Borgias* (Rome: 1503) Knopf, 1979; Gollancz, 1979; Warner pb, 1981; Magnum (Methuen, UK) pb, 1981.
13. *Home Ground* (Northern California: 1970s) Knopf, 1981; Gollancz, 1981.
14. *The Sea Beggars* (Dutch revolt against Spain: 1580s) Knopf, 1982; Gollancz, 1982.
15. *The Belt of Gold* (Byzantium: 803) Knopf, 1984; Gollancz, 1984; Arrow (UK) pb, 1986; Ballantine pb, 1987.
16. *Pillar of the Sky: a novel of Stonehenge* (Stonehenge: c. 1000 BC) Knopf, 1985; Gollancz, 1985; Ballantine trade pb, 1986; British pb, 1987?
17. Works in progress, untitled (Hundred Years War in France, 1346 – 1358)

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

1. *Ghost on the Steppe* (Mongols in Mongolia: thirteenth century) Knopf, 1969.
2. *The King's Road* (Frederick II as a boy) Knopf, 1970.

3. An "Essential Holland":

Until the Sun Falls. This long novel describes the Mongol invasion of Russia and Europe, and the political infighting between the heirs to Genghis Khan's throne. The general Psin commands many of the Khan's potential successors during military campaigns, but has no chance at the throne himself; this position gives him political problems and opportunities that Holland describes in detail. Many of Psin's conflicts end in physical combat, so it is a particularly direct politics, but nonetheless one very subtly wielded, by a psychologically acute politician. It is a full portrait of an alien mind in an alien culture. Add to this intricate detail the large-scale story of the Mongols at war (the "alien invasion", seen from inside), and the result is a novel much like the Eurasia it describes, vast and complex. Holland's first great novel, which remains one of her best.

The Earl. Fulk is the eponymous Earl, and as Henry II wrests his way to the English throne during the chaotic years of King Stephen's reign, Fulk must negotiate his way through a tricky maze of alliances with the other earls, to restore stability to England by giving Henry the crown—at the same time acting to contain Henry's intense and dangerous ambition. As with Psin in *Until the Sun Falls,* Fulk pursues a very canny personal diplomacy, based on an ethics of consistency and loyalty. A compact and dramatic novel, with tremendous insight into the machinery of power politics.

Great Maria. Another big book, this is the first of Holland's to feature a woman protagonist. Maria is married to a ruthless young baron in medieval Italy, and the novel tells the story of their rise to greater power. Sometimes they co-operate, but often they are in conflict, and Maria must exploit the limited power she wields. Much of this power —influence over her husband's advisors, for instance—has to be gained and exercised clandestinely, and in opposition to her husband. She becomes a skilled analyst of the political system, which she must understand well to be able to manipulate at all.

Floating Worlds. This book makes a matched pair with *Great Maria;* again a woman protagonist marries an ambitious political leader, this time the leader of a society living in the gas clouds of Uranus, around the year 3000 AD. The Uranians have evolved biologically in a few significant respects; however, the personal combat on which political leadership ultimately rests in this society is most reminiscent of the squabbling among the heirs to the Khan in *Until the Sun Falls.* Even in the distant future, power is contested for with great violence. The wars between Uranus, Mars, and Earth devastate whole cultures, and the protagonist must struggle with enormous difficulties in her fight to maintain a bit of order in a chaotic world. There is a passage in this novel in which a decade is described in approximately a hundred pages; it is one of sf's great extended bits of writing. And the novel as a whole is a neglected sf masterpiece.

Home Ground. This is Holland's only "mainstream" novel, set in California in the 1970s. One of the main points of interest here is to see the sensibility of the historical novelist turned on contemporary society, because in a way our time is historicized for us, and subtly estranged. At the same time it is a very accurate portrait of the California counter-culture as it ages, retreats, and deals with the passing of the Sixties. As in *Floating Worlds,* we see there is consistency in Holland's dark vision: the book is about modern times, and at first the violence we always see in Holland is sublimated in civilized pursuits, such as tennis, watching football on TV, or driving cars too fast; but by the end the guns are out, and the struggle for power in the microcosm of a small northern Californian valley has become a matter of brute force once again.

The Belt of Gold. This novel describes an historical moment—8th century Byzantium—which Holland clearly means to make analogous to the early 1980s, when the book was published. Political leaders manipulate the populace with supposedly threatening opposition, and revivalist religious fanaticism; most people live in ignorance and poverty; and there is a "society of the spectacle", where giant athletic events serve to distract the populace from their daily woes. The action of the novel tells the story of an outsider who sees the Byzantine situation with new eyes, understands the corruption of the political leaders, and does all he can to help overthrow them.

Pillar of the Sky. Holland's most recent novel is not just about how Stonehenge got built, but also about how the Stone Age turned into the Bronze Age—how a matriarchal culture of prehistory turned into the patriarchal culture of history—how "history" began—and how violence for political ends became institutionalized. These huge cultural changes are all lived through in the course of the plot: in the beginning we have grooming as among chimps or baboons, and in the end we have wife-beating, and many other ills of modern life. Moloquin's story—institutionalizing violent power to pursue a great, visionary Project—can stand for much that has happened since, as many of our greatest monuments rest like pyramids on a base of human oppression.

4. Holland is a political novelist. Her principal subject is political power—how people get it, how they wield it, and how those with less power deal with those who have more.

This principal subject leads to a secondary subject, which is the presence throughout history of organized violence. In all Holland's settings, from prehistoric society, through European history and our present, to a planetary society of the far future, organized violence is a dominant force.

For Holland we haven't moved far from the social organization of chimpanzees or baboons. In fact this is a useful lens through which to view her work; her books are dominated by "alpha males", men who attempt to control their societies. These men are dangerous, because they are willing to use violence in their ambition for power. They must be dealt with by all the other members of their social unit; so these characters are the driving force of Holland's plots, and, she implies, of history itself. Typically her novels, especially the early ones, are organized around the figure of a single alpha male, and the plots tell how the secondary powers underneath this character deal with him.

Thus *The Firedrake* tells the story of an independent knight's uneasy relationship with William the Conqueror. *Rakóssy* shows a baron in defeat, from the point of view of his underlings. *The Kings In Winter* and *The Earl* describe "beta males" dealing with the flux of power in societies containing very active alpha males. This is also true of *Until the Sun Falls,* which is combined with the story of an alpha male getting older and dealing with challenges from younger males ambitious to replace him. *Antichrist* tells of an alpha male with the sensibilities of a beta male. *The Death of Attila* shows what happens when the alpha male dies and there is no replacement.

With *Great Maria,* Holland shifts her attention to what primatologists would label the "alpha female". The women protagonist in this novel, and those in *Floating Worlds* and *Home Ground,* are among the most powerful women in their social systems, and their conflicts with the alpha males they consort with are very personal. But again the subject is political power—in these novels, how the most powerful women wield it.

Continuing to think in the primatologist's terms, we can say that *The Belt of Gold*

describes an alpha female who has managed to take over the alpha male's supreme power. The historical moment when a beta male's personal strategies become codified into a formal political policy is described in the Machiavellian Florence of *City of God*. A historical moment when the alpha male's strategies for dominating his social unit will no longer work satisfactorily is described in *Two Ravens*.

In short, almost all of her novels can be better understood when looked at through this particular metaphorical lens.

5. Holland's novels invert many of the conventions that dominated the historical novel before her time. All the genre's sentimentality, often originating in romance, is swept away in a harsh blast of realism. Her early novels in particular are very obviously designed to do this; the feudal past is seen not as a glorious parade of knights in shining armour, etc., but rather as a brutal existence, felt intensely by people who lived amongst much ugly violence and death. This is taken to almost comical extremes in *Rakóssy*, when all the principal characters are killed as the Turks overrun Hungary. A similar effect is achieved by the extremely dark and bloody ending of *The Death of Attila*. These books state forcefully that the violence of the past was real, and that most historical fiction has lied about what the past was really like.

Style is an important part of this revisionism. There is no heightened language for rhetorical effect, nor any attempt at anachronisms or "period speech". Holland's prose is often reminiscent of Hemingway in its deliberate plainness, although Hemingway's mannered syntax is missing. Holland's deliberate, accurate, unadorned prose is a sharp reversal of the conventionally inflated language of the historical romance.

6. There is a utopian drive in Holland's work, in that most of her texts attempt to solve the problem of how members of society can oppose institutional violence, and create a more peaceful and just society. These fictional solutions are crucial in Holland's work, especially after the first few novels, which are usually content to describe the problem.

To oppose the violence of ambitious leaders, the people with less power need to be very active and intelligent; they need to make alliances; they need to be willing to manipulate people in ways that fall short of violence; and they must even be willing to use violence, if necessary, to avoid more. Holland's form of *Realpolitik* is not morally simple business, and it seems clear she finds the matter problematic and troubling; this would explain the obsessive return to the issue.

Her early formulations tend to remain on the level of personal relations: first as portraits of ethical personal diplomacy, as practised by men in positions of power just below the leader; then as portraits of the private behaviour of the powerful women who consort with the leaders.

But most people cannot marry the leader and manipulate him in a ceaseless war of mental judo, and few have personal contact with him of any kind. These novels therefore do little to suggest strategies for general use. In the novels published since the "women's trio", we can watch Holland seeking for political strategies that anyone could use. The novels are in that sense thought experiments.

This perhaps partially explains the failure of *The Sea Beggars*, which is the weakest of Holland's novels: the strategy suggested is set in the context of the revolt of the Netherlands against tyrannical Spain. We are shown an historical moment when an armed

citizen's revolt against tyranny could still succeed fairly easily; but the same option does not exist today, and to imply that this response from the past could be used as a model for our political resistance is a sort of nostalgia.

City of God is a thought experiment which shows that completely unscrupulous, Machiavellian *Realpolitik* is a dangerous strategy. It can very quickly make the "hero" as dangerous and violent as the tyrant.

In this context, *Home Ground* serves to show that the "escapes" from tyranny fashionable in the 1970s are no escape at all. They only lead to a microcosm of the dominant situtation, which remains violent.

The Belt of Gold hopes to make us understand our political situation by analogy to an earlier historical moment, and it urges us to resist it. As a political novel *The Belt of God* is one of Holland's strongest; it gives us analysis, it suggests strategies for action, and it shows these strategies bearing fruit, in a powerful utopian wish.

7. The reception of Holland's work is typical of that given genre fiction. Those who are familiar with her work regard it very highly indeed, but certain signs—irregular paperback publication, the absence of her name in the mainstream critical discourse, and so on—indicate that she is not as widely read or known as her books would justify. Occasional dismissive reviews reveal the bias of the dominant culture against genre fiction; the inaccurate and inept review of *The Belt of Gold* by Caroline Seebohm in *The New York Times* serves as a perfect example of this kind of response.

It is no coincidence that science fiction and historical fiction are both marginalized by the dominant culture in America; it is a culture that would prefer to think that the present, with its comfortable American hegemony, is all that ever existed or will exist. Thus in "serious" contemporary literature nothing except the problems of our time are fit for fictional treatment. This effectively keeps history and historical thinking out of sight, and comfortably fixes the present moment. The dominant culture of our time is a kind of ostrich.

Sadly, the reaction of the science fiction subculture to Holland's *Floating Worlds* was not much more open than the dominant culture's reaction to her historical novels. This is perhaps partly the result of the slight xenophobia common in subcultures. Holland is an outsider, and her work is not conventional; so even when it is praised, it is praised as the work of an outsider, and then forgotten.

This is unfortunate, because if Holland does lack familiarity with the conventions of current sf (a questionable notion in itself), this only frees her from the homogenizing effect that over-awareness of convention creates in so much American sf. It makes *Floating Worlds* even more interesting, as a thing distinct.

To a certain extent the neglect of *Floating Worlds* results from the fact that it is a "sport", in the palaeological sense—we cannot make it congruent with a whole body of other work by a writer. If *Floating Worlds* had been published under the name Ursula K. Le Guin, for example, it would have been lauded, showered with awards, written about; most importantly, it would still be in print, and widely read. For we are used to great sf from Le Guin. But because this book is a sport, the sf community has not yet given it the attention it deserves. This is part of the unreliable mechanics of canonization.

The truth is, by her choice of genres Holland has to an extent marginalized herself. Despite writing several major novels, she is not well known by the dominant culture,

which does not consider historical fiction serious work; and she is not much read by the science fiction community, although the members of the latter know well that the dominant culture's idea of what genres are important is suspect. And there is no historical fiction subculture.

8. Why write historical fiction, then?

In more ways than one, this is very like asking the question, Why write science fiction? When one writes historical fiction, the displacements into the past serve as a sort of estrangement device, as outlined by Brecht. The reader reads of a remote period in time, says "how strange, how awful!"—and then recognizes our moment in the description. The recognition strikes home with more force than any straightforward description could.

In other words, when speaking of a novel's ideological intent, it is possible to write historical fiction for the same reason one writes science fiction; to take advantage of the psychological power of the estrangement effect, which in pulling readers momentarily out of their ordinary world views, gives them the chance to see things anew.

This shared purpose is the strongest link between science fiction and historical fiction.

9. Holland's latest novel *Pillar of the Sky* is concerned with prehistory rather than history *per se*, and this returns us to the matter of genre definition we began with, because prehistoric fiction is very often considered a "fellow traveller" with science fiction and fantasy. Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, Joanna Russ, and Samuel R. Delany are just some of the writers who have written prehistoric fiction that is packaged, reviewed, and read as sf/fantasy.

The instinctive grouping of this subgenre with sf/fantasy is perfectly consistent, and makes good sense; prehistory, like the future, is an historical period that is closed to us. In some ways we have a better idea of what prehistoric humanity was like than we do what future humanity will be like, but in both cases, when we write fiction we must speculate and invent—because we do not know what happened or what will happen, and we never will. The methods used to describe these alien cultures are the same.

It is even possible to divide up prehistoric novels between sf and fantasy, saying that they are sf when they attempt to create fictional prehistoric cultures consistent with what archaeologists have told us (i.e., connected to our history)—while they are fantasy when they merely use prehistory as a convenient *terra incognita* in which to place alternative realities (unconnected to our history).

Considering the impenetrable barriers placed between us and the prehistoric past, and the future, and alternative courses of history, it is possible to revise the "historical" definition of science fiction a final time, and say that *science fiction concerns itself with the history that we cannot know.*

10. I have taken the easy road here, and talked about the parts of these books that are easiest to talk about: the themes they share, their political and sociological implications, and so on. A full study would have to discuss Holland's aesthetics, the artistry and sheer creative imagination that are as crucial to her accomplishment as the moral content I have concentrated on. Such a study would include discussions of, among other things, the big, complex structures of her novels; the relationship between these structures and the "real

history" of the times she writes about; her spare, precise, and musical prose; the "moments of being" scattered through the text, when reality is suddenly flooded with epiphanic clarity and meaning; and the novel's quirky, intriguing characters, with their Shakespearean combination of the universal and the individual. Such a study would state more clearly that these novels are beautiful, as well as important.

11. Holland's body of work is valuable because, among other reasons, there is nothing else like it. The mainstream literature of the dominant culture, in coming after the great masters of high modernism, are like the Jacobean tragedists after Shakespeare, suffering badly from the anxiety of influence. They live in the desert created by the rain shadow of a great mountain range. But Holland has side-stepped that situation. Like the best sf writers of the last thirty years, she has used the historical estrangement as a method to speak about our most important concerns; as with the sf writers, the historicity of her work is its crucial, political aspect. But unlike the writers in the sf community, Holland has taken a much lonelier road. There is a whole group of excellent sf writers now, establishing a sort of syntax of forms, a language, an audience. But in the historical genre, novels with the political engagement of the highest art are being written only by Cecelia Holland. Earlier writers—Robert Graves, Mary Renault, C.S. Forester, Kenneth Roberts, among others—can provide Holland with provocative precursors, and the genre's inventor Sir Walter Scott is a more important model for the serious use of the genre than one might think. And good historical fiction appears more and more frequently these days, in "sport" works—notably by Golding, Burgess, Mailer, Fowles, and Guy Davenport. But essentially, Holland has gone a long way on this road by herself. She has put the historical genre fully to use for the first time in its history, almost two hundred years after its invention. That is an important achievement.

It is an achievement that the science fiction community is best equipped to understand and appreciate. We should join Holland's audience, read these books, talk about them, write about them, help keep them in print.

We do not usually publish straight bibliographies—indeed, we don't think we ever have. But this one was so useful, with an interesting commentary, and fitted in so well with the general international flavour of this issue, that we are creating an exception in this case. Its author describes himself as "a professional bibliographer with an interest in sf and fantasy literature"; he lives in London.

Bibliography of Czech Science Fiction in English Translation

CYRIL SIMSA

Introduction

Czech sf, despite the growing popularity of certain newer writers like Jaroslav Veis (1946 –), and despite the continuing popularity of certain older writers of sf juveniles like František Běhounek (1898 – 1973) and J.M. Troska (pseud., 1881 – 1961), is dominated by four figures. Of these, Karel Čapek(1890 – 1938) and Josef Nesvadba (1926 –) are by far the best known in the West, and will need little introduction here. The other two – Jakub Arbes (1840 – 1914) and Jan Weiss (1892 – 1972) – will be less familiar to English-speaking readers, though both are highly regarded and have been very influential in their own country.

Jakub Arbes—friend of the Czech poet Jan Neruda (the man from whom the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda borrowed his pseudonym), newspaperman, political activist and author of several volumes of rather Poe-like tales of mystery and imagination—is generally credited as the first generic sf author in the Czech language. Though there were many writers of Gothic horror stories in the Czech language prior to Jakub Arbes, he was the first author among them to insist that all his horrors and phenomena have scientific rationales. In some cases, such as "Duhový bod nad hlavou" ("A Rainbow Point Above the Head") where the inexplicable astronomical phenomenon turns out to have been caused by a spider on the telescope, this means that the whole story is explained away at the last minute. In other cases, such as the justly famous "Newtonův mozek" ("Newton's Brain", 1877), the explanation takes the form of an as yet uninvented piece of scientific apparatus, or an as yet undiscovered scientific phenomenon, which allows him enormous scope for narrative invention without ever straying off into the realms of the supernatural. This is what distinguishes him from his colleagues in the ranks of Gothic horror writers.

Arbes is still enormously popular in Czechoslovakia, is regarded as a national classic, and has been constantly reprinted since his death. His "romanetos" (a term invented for him by his friend and mentor Neruda, to describe his short novels of the fantastic) have been paid homage many times by later sf writers. To give just one example, the title of the Josef Nesvadba short story "Einsteinův mozek" (rather unfortunately translated into English as "The Einstein Brain") is clearly an allusion to Arbes's "Newtonův mozek".

Jan Weiss is a very different sort of writer, but like Arbes shows the influence of Poe. Much of Weiss's best work has a very interesting dreamlike quality about it, and there is always an element of ambiguity about what actually has come to pass. One of his best known early stories, for example ("Bianka Braselli, dáma se dvěma hlavami"; "Bianka Braselli, the Woman with Two Heads", from the collection *Zrcadlo, které se opožd'uje,* 1927), concerns a two-headed woman from a circus sideshow, and the power struggle that develops between her two heads when she starts being wooed by one of the locals at one of the circus's stopping points. At the climax of the story the circus strikes camp overnight, and when the local man returns the following morning he finds that the only evidence of the woman's ever having really existed are the holes left by the circus tent poles in the surrounding turf. As he stands there contemplating them, even these are rapidly being trodden into nonexistence by the milling crowds. In another story ("Apoštol"; "The Apostle", first published under the title "Poselství z hvězd" in the collection *Barák smrti,* 1927), a strange old man (described as an apostle) turns up at a prison camp talking of his lives on distant stars, and how he will be returning to these other lives after he dies. Some of the prisoners immediately hail him as a saviour, others denounce him as a madman, still others are indifferent. When they ask him how they can achieve transcendence to these other worlds, he points them in the direction of a nearby river and tells them to drink. The river is, of course, infected with typhoid, and it transpires that he himself is also suffering from the disease. When he dies at the end of the story, the reader (like the prisoners) is left none the wiser whether he really was an apostle, or just an itinerant madman, or neither. He passes out of the prisoners' (and the reader's) consciousness as abruptly and inexplicably as he came into it. (All this has even greater resonance when one realises that Weiss himself almost died of typhoid in a prison camp during the First World War, spending several days on the brink of death in a state of complete delirium. Much of his later interest in the relationship between dream and reality stems, by his own confession, from this experience).

Of his longer works, by far the most famous is his novel *Dům o 1000 patrech* ("The House with 1000 Storeys", 1929), which has been translated into several languages. This work, with uncanny prescience, describes the society of a gigantic corporate skyscraper in which the denizens have been reduced to a condition of slave labour. One hope keeps them working against all odds, the promise that when they have given their all they will be transported at the expense of the philanthropic corporation boss Ohisver Muller to a new life elsewhere in the universe, a life of relative comfort and ease. When the worn-out Muller employees can finally work no longer, they are taken to the cosmic departure lounge and herded into the circular hold of an enormous starship. There, as soon as the doors of the hold are shut, they are gassed.

All four of these leading Czech sf writers have had works translated into English, though in the cases of both Arbes and Weiss the translations amount to no more than a couple of short stories each. There is, additionally, the problem that there has been a bias on the part of translators towards translating just about anything by these two writers other than the fantasy stories for which they are now most famous. It is thus with regret I must report that there is only one sf story by Arbes available in translation, and that there are no published translations of Jan Weiss's sf stories, though some of his other works are available. A more detailed discussion of these materials may be found below.

Bibliography

1 Karel Čapek (1890 – 1938)

Čapek's major sf works are the play *R.U.R.*, and the three novels *The Absolute at Large, Krakatit,* and *War with the Newts.* There are also sf or fantasy elements in a number of his other works, however.

(i) Full-length works with sf or fantasy elements:

R.U.R. (= *R.U.R.*, 1920). Translated by Paul Selver. (Oxford University Press, London, 1923). Play.
Note: the date of the original publication of this work is often incorrectly cited as 1921. It was first published 1920. 1921 was the date of its first production on the stage.

"And So Ad Infinitum" (= *Ze života hmizu,* 1921, with Josef Čapek). Translated by Paul Selver. Play. (Oxford University Press, London, 1923). Now better known as *The Insect Play,* but first published under the title above. Also known as *The World We Live In* in U.S.

The Absolute at Large (= *Továrna na absolutno,* 1922). Translator uncredited. (Macmillan, London, 1927). Novel.

The Makropoulos Secret (= *Věc Makropoulos,* 1922). Authorised translation by Paul Selver. (R. Holden & Co., London, 1927). Play. There was an earlier unauthorised translation in 1925, under the same title.

Krakatit (= *Krakatit,* 1924). Translated by Lawrence Hyde. (Geoffrey Bles, London, 1924). Novel. Also issued under the title *An Atomic Phantasy.*

Adam the Creator (= *Adam stvořitel,* 1927, with Josef Čapek). Translated by Dora Round. (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1927). Play.

War with the Newts (= *Válka s mloky,* 1936). Translated by M. & R. Weatherall. (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1937). Novel. New translation by Ewald Osers. (Unwin, London, 1985).

Power and Glory (= *Bílá nemoc,* 1937). English version by Paul Selver & Ralph Neale. (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1938). Play.

(ii) Short stories:

All Čapek's early stories have a pronounced metaphysical bent. It is on these grounds rather than any specific sf or fantasy content, that they may be regarded as borderline sf material. The collection *Money and Other Stories* (1921; trans. 1929) belongs to this period. There are also four other early stories which are available in English but have never appeared in any of Čapek's book-length English collections. A fifth story, published in English under the title "System", is exceptional among those stories available in translation in being an out-and-out fantasy.

Of his later work, the two books which make up the basis of his *Tales from Two Pockets* collection do have a few fantasy stories in the Czech-language original, but these do not appear to have been included in the English translation. The dominant genre is in any case the detective story. One of the omitted fantasy stories from these collections was later translated as "The Last Judgement" (see listing below).

Apocryphal Stories (1945; trans. 1949) is a posthumous collection of stories from various sources, all of which recount apocryphal versions of actual or literary events. It

has some marginal sf or fantasy material.

(ii-a) Collections with sf or fantasy contents:

Money and Other Stories (= *Trapné povídky,* 1921). Translated by Francis P. Marchant, Dora Round, F.P. Casey & O. Vocadlo. (Hutchinson, London, 1929).

Apocryphal Stories (= *Kniha apokryfů,* 1945). Translated by Dora Round. (George Allen & Unwin, London; Macmillan, New York, 1949). One story from this translation ("The Death of Archimedes") is reprinted in Clifton Fadiman (ed): *Fantasia Mathematica* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1958). Reprint not seen.

(ii-b) Miscellaneous short stories in English:

"The Island" (= "Ostrov", from *Zářivé hlubiny a jiné prózy,* 1916, with Josef Čapek). Translated by Marie Busch & Otto Pick, in Busch & Pick (eds): *Selected Czech Tales* (Oxford University Press, London, 1925), pp.165-179. Variant translation by Šárka B. Hrbková, in Maxim Lieber & Blanche C. Williams (eds): *Great Stories of all Nations* (Brentano's, New York, 1927), pp.965-972.

"The Living Flame" (= "Živý plamen", from *Zářivé hlubiny a jiné prózy,* 1916, with Josef Čapek). Translated by Marie Busch & Otto Pick, in Busch & Pick (eds): *Selected Czech Tales* (Oxford University Press, London, 1925), pp. 180-192.

"The Imprint" (= "Šlépěj", from *Boží muka,* 1917). Translated by Paul Selver, in Richard Eaton (ed): *The Best Continental Short Stories of 1923-24* (Small, Maynard & Co., Boston, 1924), pp. 42-58.

"Help" (= "Pomoc", from *Boží muka,* 1917). Translated by William E. Harkins, in Harkins (ed): *Czech Prose, an Anthology* (Michigan Slavic Translations 6; Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1983), pp.317 – 321.

"System" (= "Systém", with Josef Čapek, first published 1908; collected in book form in *Krakonošova zahrada,* 1918). Translated by William E. Harkins, in Sam Moskowitz (ed): *Masterpieces of Science Fiction* (World Publishing Company, Cleveland & New York, 1966), pp. 420-427.

"The Last Judgement" (= "Poslední soud", from *Povídky z jedné kapsy,* 1929). Translated by Norma Jeanne McFadden & Leopold Pospíšil, in (1) James B. Hall (ed): *The Realm of Fiction: 61 short stories* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1965); (2) James B. Hall (ed): *The Realm of Fiction: 65 short stories.* Second edition. (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1970); (3) Wilfred Stone, Nancy Huddlestone Parker & Robert Hoopes (eds): *The Short Story: an introduction* (McGraw-Hill, New York etc., 1976), pp. 491-495; (4) James B. Hall & Elizabeth C. Hall (eds): *The Realm of Fiction: 74 short stories.* Third edition. (McGraw-Hill, New York etc., 1977), pp. 243-247. Nos. 1 & 2 not seen. Variant translation by Jeanne W. Němcová, in Němcová (ed): *Czech and Slovak Short Stories* (Oxford University Press, London, 1967), pp. 112-118. There is also a version of this story in Douglas Angus & Sylvia Angus (eds): *Great Modern European Short Stories* (Fawcett Publications, Greenwich, CT, 1967). Not seen. I am not sure which translation is used in this anthology. Note: the second edition of Stone et al. (eds): *The Short Story: an introduction* (McGraw-Hill, New York etc., 1983) has substantially revised contents, and does not include "The Last Judgement" by Čapek.

(ii-c) Variant translations:

There are variant translations of a number of stories from the collections listed in (ii-a) above. These are:

"Money" (= "Peníze", from *Trapné povídky,* 1921). Translator unknown. In Richard Eaton (ed): *The Best European Short Stories of 1928* (Dodds-Mead, New York, 1929), pp. 58-83. Not seen. Also a version in Hiram C. Haydn & John Cournos (eds): *A World of Great Stories* (Crown, New York, 1947), pp. 677-688. Not seen.

"The Fathers" (= "Otcové," from *Trapné povídky,* 1921). Translated by Paul Selver, in Selver (ed): *An Anthology of Czechoslovak Literature* (Kegan Paul, London, 1929), pp. 285-292.

"The Decline of an Era" (= "O úpadku doby", from *Kniha apokryfů,* 1945). Translated by J.R. Edwards, in Mojmír Otruba & Zdeněk Pešat (eds): *The Linden Tree: an Anthology of Czech and Slovak Literature* (Artia, Prague, 1962), pp. 204-206.

"Pseudo-Lot, or Patriotism" (= "Pseudo-Lot, čili o vlastenectví", from *Kniha apokryfů,* 1945). Translated by J.R. Edwards, in Mojmír Otruba & Zdeněk Pešat (eds): *The Linden Tree: an Anthology of Czech and Slovak Literature* (Artia, Prague, 1962), pp. 199-202.

(iii) Other works sometimes claimed to be sf:

Tales from Two Pockets (1932; = a selection of stories from two Czech-language originals, *Povídky z jedné kapsy* and *Povídky z druhé kapsy,* both 1929). See notes earlier in section (ii).

Fairy Tales (1933; = *Devatero pohádek,* 1931, a collection of modern fairy stories with one story by Josef Čapek). This is essentially a children's book using fairy tale elements. It is not sf or fantasy in any conventional sense.

Meteor (1935; = *Povětroň,* 1934), presumably because of the translator's choice of title, is sometimes confused with Čapek's sf novels. It is not sf, however. It is a straight mainstream novel.

(iv) Non-fiction by Čapek of sf interest:

The most interesting of Čapek's non-fiction from an sf point of view is "Towards a Theory of Fairy Tales" (= "K teorii pohádky," 1930; translated in *In Praise of Newspapers,* London, 1951, a selection of Čapek's literary essays), which propounds Čapek's views on myth and fairy tale and their relation to modern fictional narrative.

(v) Recent reprint editions of Čapek:

All three of Čapek's major sf novels were reissued in the mid-'70s by library reprint houses in the United States, two of them by more than one company at the same time. All three are still available in at least one of these editions. There were also U.S. paperback editions of *The Absolute at Large* (Hyperion: Classics of Science Fiction series, circa 1973), and *War with the Newts* in the Weatherall translation (Berkeley, at least two editions, one circa 1973 and one circa 1977). A further reprint of this translation, with a new introduction by Ivan Klima, was published by Northwestern University Press in 1985. There was also a reissue of *Apocryphal Stories* by Penguin Books, in their Modern Classics series (1975).

R.U.R. and *The Insect Play* have never been out of print since their original publication, and are currently available as a two-in-one omnibus edition from Oxford University Paperbacks. *R.U.R.* has also been available separately in the U.S. from Pocket Books-Washington Square Press (various printings throughout the '70s).

The new translation of *War with the Newts* which appeared in 1985 is published by Unwin Paperbacks in their Unicorn imprint.

Caveat: the U.S. reprint edition of *The Makropoulos Secret* (Branden, various printings), appears to be of the 1925 unauthorised translation.

2 Josef Nesvadba (1926 –)

Although a prolific writer in his native country, Nesvadba has had only one book published in English, a collection of stories. However, this has been through two different versions with considerably different contents, and to make matters even more complicated the earlier version is now so rare as to be virtually unobtainable (there is no copy in the British Library, any of the Cambridge or London University libraries, the Library of Congress copy has gone missing, and so on). The copy I eventually tracked down is at Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island.

I have tried wherever possible to give the source of the Czech-language original for all stories listed below. Most of Nesvadba's stories in translation are taken from three early short story collections: *Tarzanova smrt* (Mladá Fronta, Praha, 1958), *Einsteinův mozek* (Mladá Fronta, Praha, 1960), and *Výprava opačným směrem* (Ceskoslovenský Spisovatel, Praha, 1962). These have been abbreviated to T.S., E.M., and V.O.S. 1 respectively. A few of the later translations, however, appear to have been made from stories which appeared first only in journals or anthologies, as they do not appear in any book-length collection of Nesvadba's stories until some years later, in *Výprava opačným směrem* (Mladá Fronta, Praha, 1976), abbreviated to V.O.S.2. In these cases the English translation may pre-date the first Czech-language appearance in a book-length Nesvadba collection.

(i) Variants of Nesvadba's English collection:

Vampires Ltd. Translated by Iris Urwin. (Artia, Prague, 1964).
In the Footsteps of the Abominable Snowman Translated by Iris Urwin. (Victor Gollancz, London, 1970). U.S. edition under the title *The Lost Face* (Taplinger, New York, 1971). British paperback edition with new introduction by Brian Aldiss, back under the title *In the Footsteps of the Abominable Snowman* (New English Library, London, 1979).

(ii) Stories in both *Vampires Ltd.* and *In the Footsteps . . .:*

"Expedition in the Opposite Direction" (= "Výprava opačným směrem", from V.O.S.1.)
"The Lost Face" (= "Ztracená tvář," from E.M.). Reprinted in Harry Harrison & Brian Aldiss (eds): *The Year's Best Science Fiction* No. 4 (Sphere Books, London, 1971), pp. 51-74, and in the U.S. version of that anthology: *Best SF: 1970* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1971). U.S. version not seen.
"The Chemical Formula of Destiny" (= "Chemický vzorec osudu", from E.M.).
"Inventor of his Own Undoing" (= "Vynález proti sobě", from E.M.).

"Doctor Moreau's Other Island" (= "Druhý ostrov doktora Moreau", from V.O.S.1).

"In the Footsteps of the Abominable Snowman" (= "Po stopách sněžného muže", from E.M.).

(iii) Stories in *Vampires Ltd.*, but not *In the Footsteps . . .*:

"Pirate Island" (= "Ostrov pirátů", from T.S.). Also published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* 22(2), Feb. 1962, and in the British edition of that magazine, 3 (7), June 1962, pp. 42-48. U.S. version not seen.

"The Einstein Brain" (= "Einsteinův mozek," from E.M.). Also published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* 22(5), May 1962, and in the British edition of that magazine, 3(10), Sept. 1962, pp. 82-90. U.S. version not seen.

"The Half-wit of Xeenemuende" (= "Blbec z Xeenemuende," from E.M.). Also published under the title "The Xeenemünde Half-wit" in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* 22(6), June 1962, and under the title "The Xeenemuende Half-wit" in the British edition of that magazine, 3 (11), Oct. 1962, pp. 72-77. U.S. version not seen. Reprinted, back under the title of "The Half-wit of Xeenemuende," in (1) *Short Story International,* Summer 1965, pp. 107-113; (2) Brian Aldiss & Sam J. Lundwall (eds): *The Penguin World Omnibus of Science Fiction* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1986), pp.17-23.

"Vampires Ltd." (= "Upír Ltd.," from V.O.S.1). Reprinted in (1) Donald A. Wollheim & Terry Carr (eds): *World's Best Science Fiction, 1965* (Ace Books, New York, 1965); (2) *Short Story International,* Jan. 1966, pp. 75-84; (3) J.J. Strating (ed): *European Tales of Terror* (Fontana, London, 1968), pp.62-74; (4) Darko Suvin (ed): *Other Worlds, Other Seas* (Random House, New York, 1970). Nos. 1 & 4 not seen.

"The Last Secret Weapon of the Third Reich" (= "Poslední tajná zbraň Třetí říše", from V.O.S.1). Reprinted in Judith Merrill (ed): *10th Annual of the Year's Best SF* (Delacorte, New York, 1965), and in the British version of that anthology: *The Best of Science Fiction 10* (Mayflower, London, 1967), pp. 126-139. U.S. version not seen; see note in section (vii) below.

(iv) Stories in *In the Footsteps . . .*, but not in *Vampires Ltd.*:

"The Death of an Apeman" (= "Tarzanova smrt", from T.S.).

"The Trial Nobody Ever Heard Of" (= "Proces, o němž se nikdo nedověděl", from T.S.).

(v) Miscellaneous short stories in English:

"Mordair" (= "Mordair," from V.O.S.2). Translated by Jeanne W. Němcová, in Němcová (ed): *Czech and Slovak Short Stories* (Oxford University Press, London, 1967), pp. 226-238.

"The Planet Circe" (= "Planeta Kirké", from V.O.S.2). Translated by George Theiner, in Theiner (ed): *New Writing from Czechoslovakia* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967), pp. 158-167.

"Captain Nemo's Last Adventure" (= Posledni dobrodružství kapitána Nema", from E.M.). Translated by Iris Urwin, in Franz Rottensteiner (ed): *View from Another Shore* (Seabury, New York, 1973), pp. 123-150. Reprinted in Harry

Harrison & Brian Aldiss (eds): *Best SF: 1973* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1974), and in the British version of that anthology: *The Year's Best Science Fiction No. 7* (Sphere Books, London, 1975), pp. 144-169. U.S. version not seen.

(vi) Non-fiction by Nesvadba in English:

Nesvadba has written two articles in English, both of them to coincide with his visit as Guest of Honour to Seacon '84, the 1984 European Science Fiction Convention in Brighton. The second was first delivered as a speech at that convention.

"The View from Prague", *Foundation* 30, March 1984, pp. 48-50.
"Reason and Rationalism", *Vector* 122, 1984, pp. 12-14.

(vii) Note to section (iv) above:

I place "The Last Secret Weapon of the Third Reich" in Volume 10 of the U.S. edition of Judith Merrill's anthology series on the strength of W. Contento's *Index to Science Fiction Anthologies and Collections* (G.K. Hall & Co., Boston, 1978), p.181. According to Peter Nicholls's *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (Granada, London, 1979), the numbering of the British and American editions of this anthology series does not match. Yet the item does unquestionably appear in No. 10 of the series as numbered in the British edition. I have been unable to resolve this anomaly with the materials available to me.

3 Jakub Arbes (1840 – 1914)

Jakub Arbes has had three stories translated into English, all of them in obscure American journals which are now rather hard to obtain. Of the three, only one has sf elements; fortunately, however, it is one of the most popular fantasy stories he ever wrote, and (for once) is entirely representative of the author's oeuvre. The translation is also of a good quality for its period. It is a mystery to me why it has remained unreprinted since the 1890s.

Story available:

"Newton's Brain" (= "Newtonův mozek," 1877). Translated by Jiří Král. *Poet Lore* 4 (8-9), Aug-Sept. 1892, pp. 429-449; 4 (10), Oct. 1892, pp. 511-515; 4 (11), Nov. 1892, pp. 569-580; 4 (12), Dec. 1892, pp. 616-634. Reprinted in Charlotte E. Porter & Helen A. Clarke (eds): *Clever Tales* (Copeland & Day, Boston, 1897), pp. 120-204. Reprint version not seen.

4 Jan Weiss (1892 – 1972)

There are two stories by Jan Weiss available in English translation, but unfortunately both of them belong to his non-sf output. In view of his great importance to the Czech sf genre, however, I have decided to list them anyway. Interested readers can at least get some measure of his style from these translations. Of the two, "Hands" is by far the better story, and is also more representative of his work as a whole. "Faithful Service" is a rather pedestrian piece of Socialist Realism and is of little interest nowadays.

According to a Czech-language source (Jan Weiss, *Příběhy staré i nové,* 1954, p. 289), there was also an unauthorised book-length translation of the novelette "Bláznivý regiment" (1930), under the title *The Regiment of Madmen,* circa 1930. However, I have been unable to find any trace of this publication in any catalogue or reference book I have consulted, and if it did appear at all, therefore, it must have had a very limited circulation indeed.

Stories available:

"Hands" (= "Zpověd člověka," from *Barák smrti,* 1927). Translated by N. Egon, in Franz C. Weiskopf (ed): *Hundred Towers, a Czechoslovak Anthology of Creative Writing* (L.B. Fisher, New York, 1945), pp. 40-52.

"Faithful Service" (= "O věrnosti," from *Příběhy staré i nové,* 1954; also published as a separate novella under the title *Lojzka,* 1956). Translated by Iris Urwin, in Urwin (ed): *Four Czech Stories* (Orbis, Prague, 1957), pp. 51-118.

5 Further reading

There is one previous article about Czech sf in English; this is the article by Josef Nesvadba which was published in *Vector*, see Section 2 (vi) above. There are also a number of encyclopaedia articles and the like, e.g. that in Peter Nicholls's *The Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* (Granada, London, 1979; under "Eastern Europe"), but none of these mention any writers other than Josef Nesvadba and Karel Čapek, and few go into any detail.

Karel Čapek as an individual, on the other hand, is well documented in English. There are two full-length literary biographies (Harkins 1962, Matuška 1964), and a large number of critical articles in various scholarly journals, of which the one by René Wellek (1936) is one of the earliest, and the one by Elizabeth Maslen (1987) is probably the most recent. He is also extensively discussed in general works of literary scholarship, usually either in the context of the Czech literary mainstream (e.g. Novák 1976), or in the context of world Utopian or sf literature (e.g. Philmus 1970, Suvin 1979). There is no study in English specifically on his significance for Czech sf.

The best sources on Josef Nesvadba in English are the two non-fiction articles he himself has written, see Section 2 (vi) above. There is also an article by Brian Aldiss, published as the introduction to the British paperback edition of *In the Footsteps of the Abominable Snowman* (Aldiss 1979). An earlier book review by Aldiss to mark the hardback publication of the book in Britain (Aldiss 1970) uses more or less the same material but is less expansive. The only other book review in English of even the slightest note is the short commentary by James Blish to mark the U.S. publication of *The Lost Face* (Blish 1972). All other English-language book reviews are of negligible critical content. In addition to these, however, there is also a very valuable encyclopaedia entry by Hájek (1976), which contains translations of three extracts from Czech commentaries on Nesvadba's work, and is particularly useful for the light it sheds on Czech attitudes towards his work. The same title also includes an entry on Čapek.

Other writers: there is one brief article on Arbes available in English, dating back to 1892 (Král). There are also brief discussions of Arbes and Jan Weiss in Novák (work cited above), on pp. 180-181 and 305 respectively, and in Selver (1942). For those readers who can read French, there is an intelligent discussion of Weiss's work, as it appeared in the mid-1930s, in Jelínek (1935), pp. 426-427. Arbes is discussed in a related work by the same author (Jelínek 1933), pp. 92-94. There have also been two short anonymous book reviews of titles by Jan Weiss in the *Times Literary Supplement* in the early 1930s (Anon. 1930, 1931).

The following makes no claim to be a comprehensive list:

Aldiss, Brian W. 1970. "The Labyrinth-Maker", *Speculation* 3 (3), Sept. – Oct. 1970, pp. 18-20.

Aldiss, Brian W. 1979. Introduction, in: Josef Nesvadba, *In the Footsteps of the Abominable Snowman* (New English Library, London, 1979), pp. 7-11.

Anon. 1930. Dům o Tisíci Patrech (The Thousand-Storeyed House). *Times Literary Supplement,* 24th July 1930, p. 612.

Anon. 1931. Bláznivý Regiment (The Regiment of Madmen). *Times Literary Supplement,* 23rd April 1931, p. 327.

Blish, James. 1972. (Review of *The Lost Face). The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* 42 (2), Feb. 1972, pp. 39-41.

Hájek, Igor. 1976. "Czechoslovak literature", in Vasa D. Mihailovich et al. (eds): *Modern Slavic Literatures* Vol. 2 (A Library of Literary Criticism; Frederick Ungar Publishing, New York, 1976), pp. 38-230. Čapek is on pp. 50-58, Nesvadba on pp. 160-163.

Harkins, William E. 1962. *Karel Čapek* (Columbia University Press, New York & London, 1962). The basic English-language biography.

Jelínek, H. 1933. *Histoire de la Littérature Tchèque. (Tome II). De 1850 à 1890.* (Éditions du Sagittaire, Paris, 1933).

Jelínek, H. 1935. *Histoire de la Littérature Tchèque. (Tome III). De 1890 à nos jours.* (Éditions du Sagittaire, Paris, 1935).

Král, Jiří. 1892. "A Modern Bohemian Novelist", *Poet Lore* 4 (1), 15th Jan. 1892, pp. 1-6. Not seen.

Maslen, Elizabeth. 1987. "Proper Words in Proper Places: The Challenge of Čapek's *War with the Newts", Science-Fiction Studies* 14 (1), pp. 82-92.

Matuška, Alexander. 1964. *Karel Čapek, an Essay.* (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1964). Translation of *Člověk proti skaze: pokus o Karla Čapka,* 1963? (in Slovak). Translator uncredited. English translation was apparently also issued under the imprint of Artia, Prague. Some sources refer to a Czech version under the title *Člověk proti zkáze,* 1963. Neither Czech nor Slovak original seen.

Novák, Arne. 1976. *Czech Literature* (Michigan Slavic Publications, Ann Arbor, 1976). Translated by Peter Kussi from *Stručné dějiny literatury české* (Olomouc, 1946); edited with a supplement by William E. Harkins. Čapek on pp. 296-299. Novák is one of the most important historians of Czech literature this century. This translation, even though only of an abridged edition, is invaluable.

Philmus, Robert M. 1970. *Into the Unknown: the Evolution of Science Fiction from Francis Godwin to H.G. Wells* (University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1970). Čapek is discussed on pp. 155-159.

Selver, Paul. 1942. *Czechoslovak literature: an outline.* (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1942). Arbes on p. 17, Weiss on p. 22. There is also a discussion of Čapek on pp. 19-20 and 30-33, which is interesting for the light it sheds on the opinions of one of Čapek's principal translators into English.

Suvin, Darko. 1979. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: on the poetics and history of a literary genre* (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1979). Čapek is discussed on pp. 270-283.

Wellek, René. 1936. Karel Čapek. *Slavonic Review* 15 (43), July 1936, pp. 191-206. Reprinted in René Wellek: *Essays on Czech Literature* (Slavistic Printing & Reprinting 43; Mouton & Co., The Hague, 1963), pp. 46-61. Some of the other essays in this collection also provide useful background information.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr C.M. Janis of Brown University, Providence, R.I., for arranging to have materials unavailable to me in this country checked at Brown University Library. I would also like to thank the staff of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., the New York Public Library, and Harvard University Library, Cambridge, Mass., for their prompt and helpful replies to my written queries.

Letters

Our bulky correspondence this time relates mostly to the almost equally bulky review by Roz Kaveney of Trillion Year Spree *by Brian W. Aldiss with David Wingrove, which we published in* Foundation *38, pp.69-76. I would like to offer editorial apologies to all concerned for the copy-editing and/or proof-reading errors in the review, referred to below.*

Dear *Foundation,*

At the bottom of page 71 of her review, Roz Kaveney talks of 1973, the year of the original publication of *Billion Year Spree,* as some kind of magical watershed, instantly recognisable in a reading of the newly revised edition. The implication is that we, as authors, have been lazy and cobbled together an up-date, tacking it onto the old edition. Such an approach would have been entirely unsatisfactory. Let me quote Kaveney further: "This tendency to fragment author's work is also visible in the handling of those authors whose careers have continued in the period subsequent to the publication of *Billion Year Spree.* What usually happens is that rather than writing a completely new account, to be inserted in the place of the original, the original is allowed to stand and a second instalment placed later."

There is a partial "truth" in this which, as with most misrepresentations, gives it the air of credibility. Several authors *are* described several times—Asimov, Clarke, Herbert, Dick and Heinlein amongst them—but this is done for good reason. These are writers whose work and careers have straddled several generations and numerous "revolutions" of the genre, and we felt it important to demonstrate that science fiction is a continuous admixture of old and new. But this is not what Kaveney *means,* nor, except in the cases of Pohl and Clarke, and to a much lesser extent, Heinlein—is what she says true. On this matter, as in all others here, I call upon fact and ask the reader to judge for themself. Contrary to Roz Kaveney's assertion, *Trillion Year Spree was* heavily revised in just the manner she implies it was not. Let the reader compare these passages (old editions by Weidenfeld and Corgi quoted before the author's name, new Gollancz edition afterwards) and make their own evaluation of the extent to which this revision of old material was undertaken: (pp.298-301/pp.341-4) Ballard (pp.299-303 and pp.438-9); (pp.274-6/pp.313-5) Herbert (pp.314-6 and pp.385-9); (pp.305-6/pp.349-50) Le Guin (pp.346-52); (pp.229, 232, 249/pp.260, 264, 284) Asimov (pp.218-9 and pp.389-93); (pp.265-9/pp.303/7) Tolkien (pp.260-3); (pp.254-6/pp.289-92) Orwell (pp.244-6); (pp.251-2, 310/pp.286-7, 355) Blish (pp.240-2); (pp.248-9/pp.283-4) Sheckley (pp.236-7);

(pp.247-8/pp.281-3) Bester (pp.235-6); (pp.310-14/pp.355-9) Dick (pp.328-35 and pp.408-10).

This was one aspect of the revision—the other was to provide new and extensive material on the sixties, seventies and eighties. This includes much that creeps in before that magical 1973 watershed—in particular entries on Ellison, Delany, Zelazny, Moorcock, Tenn, Simak, Sladek, Disch, Leiber, Bunch, Farmer, Henderson, Pangborn, Russ, Moore, Panshin, Piper and so on. This illustrates the depth of misrepresentation—the sheer scale of distortion in Kaveney's sweeping generalizations. It was Adolf Hitler who said, "When you lie, tell big lies . . . working on the principle, which is quite true in itself, that in the big lie there is always a certain force of credibility . . . The grossly impudent lie always leaves traces behind it, even after it has been nailed down." In presenting *Trillion Year Spree* as a broken-backed, cobbled-together collection of tired old material and, to use her term, "daft" new pieces, is to tell the Big Lie.

Talking of *Double Star,* Kaveney delights in misrepresenting not merely our text but also that of Heinlein. I quote from my old Panther edition of that enjoyable work—"I sat for several minutes fiddling with my drink and wondering what had happened to my spaceman friend. I had hoped that his hospitality might extend to dinner and, if we became sufficiently *simpatico,* possibly even to a small temporary loan. My other prospects were—I admit it!—slender. The last two times I had tried to call my agent his autosecretary had simply recorded the message and unless I deposited coins in the door, my room would not open to me that night . . . That was how low my fortunes had ebbed: reduced to sleeping in a coin-operated cubicle." (p.7). In the light of this, our commentary on Lorenzo Smythe as "a pathetic failure of an actor" is far from misrepresentative, and only fine-hair-splitting (such as Kaveney tries to specialise in with regard to Asimov's *Foundation* series and Blish's *Case of Conscience*) would have it otherwise.

The Heinlein quotation brings us to another matter dwelt on in Kaveney's review—the influence of writers upon each other. One might recognise the genesis in Heinlein of many of Philip K. Dick's ideas—here of the coin-operated room, used by Dick in *Ubik*. Such insights are fun in single-author studies, but, if done either extensively or consistently, are unsightly padding in an historical overview of the genre. Nonetheless, this interactive influence *is* shown and referred to in *Trillion Year Spree,* particularly in those pages on John W. Campbell's *Astounding*. Roz Kaveney presumes to write as though the authors of *Trillion Year Spree* were wholly ignorant of such matters. This too is part of the misrepresentation—a kind of "holier than thou, more erudite than thou" attitude, which, unfortunately, permeates every line of her review. Kaveney refers explicitly to Heinlein's drafting-in of his "buddies"—specifically Isaac Asimov and L. Sprague de Camp—"into the bit of the war effort he was running"—specifically the Navy Yard in southern Philadelphia. This, it is implied, is one of those instances which demonstrates that "sf authors are not, are even less so than others, windowless monads, producing their work in mental isolation, unaffected by each other." But lets us look, say, at the group who had dinner at that same Naval Yard on Saturday, December 2nd 1944: L. Ron Hubbard, Jack Williamson, Heinlein, Asimov and de Camp. Few cross-currents—maybe only slight ones between Asimov and Williamson—can be discerned, and a detailed examination of the kind of work produced by each of these authors at this time (in some cases none) would seem to negate rather than affirm that such influences exist.

This might seem a mere quarrel over interpretation, but it is more than that. In talking

of the "collective vision" (p.71) of sf authors of whatever generation, Kaveney states: "It is not that Aldiss and Wingrove should necessarily have accepted this theory of what is wrong with recent sf; but they might, they should, have discussed it." This is to ignore the explicit discussion of this very subject in Chapter XIV, The Stars My Detestation, where the new and markedly literary influence of Silverberg and Le Guin can be traced through to and seen to influence writers as diverse as Bishop, Benford, Martin and Crowley. It is also to fail to recognise that in what Kaveney erroneously terms "a catalogue"—i.e. the book's final chapter—the authors *are* grouped in terms of influences of the very kind Kaveney insists are not mentioned in the book, and the shadowy presence of older writers like Dick, Clarke, Delany and Herbert are noted explicitly. Perhaps it is only that Kaveney is happy to accept the false labels of "cyberpunk" and "humanist" and "Labor Day Group" rather than make the attempt to trace genuine affinities.

Factual misrepresentation and hair-splitting false erudition are in tandem in the review, seeking on the one hand to demonstrate our unprofessionalism and on the other a failing of intelligence. Let me then return to fact. On page 72 of the review, discussing our treatment of Poul Anderson, Kaveney states: "Actually, there is something a deal closer to an idea proper in the future history of Poul Anderson, which gets ritually denounced. . . . Again, his stories are based on conceits, but they are undoubtedly the conceits of a man who has ideas, and it is unworthy to dismiss him without acknowledging this." I refer the reader to the text of *Trillion Year Spree*, page 314, where, after discussing the lack of serious ideas in Vance, we go on: "That accusation cannot be levelled at Poul Anderson who, while being a *bête noire* of the New Wavers for his emphasis on hardware and militarism, deals with real issues quite often in his work, whether we agree with his conclusions or not." Then, after a comment on style, we add, "This aside, what is often overlooked in the welter of space operas produced by Anderson is his ability to present a balanced argument about militarism". A further discussion of *Tau Zero* continues this business of balancing the books about Anderson's writing. Nowhere do we infer, as Kaveney insists, talking of Anderson as one of sf's conservative Right, that we thought he was "necessarily stupid".

We are similarly misrepresented over Leiber. Kaveney writes (page 71): "to ignore the importance to his work of essentially theatrical structures" (a sentence which, I hesitate to suggest, is, like others in her review, never finished). The reader of *Foundation* will not, by now, be surprised to find, on page 310 of *Trillion Year Spree,* the following, talking of Leiber's novel, *The Big Time:* "a novel which is at one and the same time highly theatrical and acutely realistic".

Kaveney, in the same paragraph, dwells on the distinction between science fiction and fantasy which, she insists, is "not maintained when the authors happen to want to talk about writers they happen to like; in the accounts of William Hope Hodgson and Tim Powers, writers where the distinction hardly operates at all." Again, we come close to interpretation, but the matter is by no means as vague as Kaveney states. Hodgson's *The House on the Borderland is* a fantastic vision, but its cosmological far future setting and the development of its visionary ideas is palpably science fictional. And though Powers's *The Anubis Gates* draws upon fantastic elements, in its use of the rigorous logic of time travel it distinguishes itself from fantasy—which is not to mention the rest of Powers's currently obtainable work, which is overtly science fictional in every way. Strange to see, then, that Kaveney, having berated us for breaking down the distinction, "when the

authors want to talk about writers they happen to like", immediately contradicts this statement by bemoaning the fact that we do not discuss Crowley's *Little Big,* despite clear evidence that both authors like Crowley very much. For all Kaveney's waffling about its "near future setting" (a factor ignored when discounting the far future setting of Hodgson's work), the novel is clearly fantasy and was not discussed purely because it didn't fall into our brief.

Without wishing to fall into Kaveney's error of overstatement, here we enter the realm of the utterly daft. On page 71 Kaveney states: "And to discuss Stephen King almost exclusively in terms of those of his horror novels which can be fitted into sf is merely ludicrous." First, this once again misrepresents grossly what we actually do in *Trillion Year Spree,* and I refer the reader to pages 413-5, where a clear distinction is made between King's use of the paranormal and his use of overtly science fictional devices. Secondly, Kaveney is saying that we should not "ignore that portion of authors' work which falls on the wrong side of the fence!" (p.71). This is an idiocy. *Trillion Year Spree* is a history of science fiction, not the presentation of all the works by all the people who ever dabbled in sf. King's presence is legitimate. He's a big name who has worked in sf. His sf novels have been filmed, to great success. To ignore him—and to neglect to bring to attention the quality and logical rigour of his sf work—would be to do the reader of *Trillion Year Spree* a genuine disservice.

There are numerous other things which might be said against Roz Kaveney's strange, almost vindictive review—refuting her accusation of using mere buzzwords when dealing with *Golden Witchbreed;* querying our supposedly "overly brief" (p.76) mention of Joanna Russ (only two pages from 510!!); arguing with her nitpick over Connie Willis; questioning her strangely insensitive and almost chauvinistic remark concerning my personal note on feminism (perhaps she should look at Dale Spender's *Man Made Language,* sections 3 and 4, where the importance of personal utterance is stressed and the traditional male dismissal of it identified); refuting by example her ready assumption of our political ignorance (beside pointing to the commentary on Disraeli, Wells and Orwell, it might be pointed out that one of the overall arguments of the book is that sf is preoccupied with power in one shape or form, and what is more political than power?); or politely pointing out to her that far from being ignorant of the coda to *The Four-Gated City,* I've written identifying its importance on her development as a writer of science fictional material, lately for the Worldcon book—all these things I leave for fear of boring the reader. But it is necessary in view of the general incompetence of the review, and the suggestion that our book is riddled with error, to cite Kaveney again—p.76—"It is not necessary to multiply examples of any of these faults further" and claim that, quite the contrary, the necessity exists, because this too is part of the Big Lie.

All this said, I take one tiny phrase as a personal insult both to myself and to my co-author, Brian Aldiss—one small part of that final, and quite astonishing paragraph on page 76: "What is almost intolerable is the arrogance whereby earlier faults have been perpetuated, the elevation in so many of the critical judgements of prejudice over good sense." I bring to Roz Kaveney's attention the non-legalistic meaning of "prejudice" as stated in the Oxford English Dictionary: "a premature or hasty judgement" or "preconceived opinion". Ignoring for the moment the overwhelming arrogance that raises Kaveney's value judgements far above our own, there is, I am confident, nothing in *Trillion Year Spree* that was not the result of long and deep consideration. Nor is there

anything second-hand or pre-conceived about the volume. We read the material first hand, considered it and discussed it, then attempted to set it into context—*without* prejudice (even in its legalistic sense of "Injury, detriment, or damage, caused to a person by judgement or action in which his rights are disregarded"), and, we hope, did it with a degree of professionalism. If there is a charge of prejudice—in both senses—to be faced, I believe it is not we, the authors of the book, who should be brought to account, but the writer of this shoddy, inaccurate misrepresentation. But let the reader judge.

David Wingrove *London*

PS: Perhaps the reader would care to note that the hardback is £15.00, not £19.95, as advertised in the heading to the review.

Dear *Foundation,* April 1987

I expect that most readers of *Foundation* will feel drawn to examine Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove's *Trillion Year Spree* for themselves, and will make up their own minds whether Roz Kaveney's general criticisms of the book are fair or—as in my view—remarkably ungenerous. But in addition to lambasting the book Roz Kaveney presumes to instruct the authors—and by extension the rest of us—in matters of etiquette, and I think this demands a response. Of course, as editor of the Gollancz edition of the book I have an interest to declare; but I propose to confine myself to matters of fact. There are three points which particularly struck me.

First, Roz Kaveney says (p.75): "In a rebuke to publishers for the systematic production of work which fills narrowly defined genre expectations, space opera and sword-and-sorcery, Wingrove lists and ritually sneers at a number of titles, ignoring the fact that of the authors listed, Barbara Hambly at least is well out of the common rut of her chosen form. It is bad manners, both social and academic, to sneer at authors one has not read . . ."

Hard words, but let us look at what Aldiss and Wingrove's text actually *says* (pp.407-8): "If we were to accept a marketing vision of the sf genre—a view gleaned from glossy ads for latest products—we would be presenting here a genre schismatically divided between hard, technological sf and out-and-out fantasy . . . presented with a sameness of cover illustration which deliberately irons out any diversity of writing within . . . a commonality of packaging if not of purpose . . . This impression of uniformity and product marketing is by no means the whole story." [I have elided four paragraphs here to save space, but they can be reproduced in full without changing the thrust of the commentary I have extracted.] Aldiss and Wingrove are here talking *solely* about the ways sf and fantasy are packaged, and the way in which distinctions in quality are thus blurred. Publishers are being criticized; no authors are being sneered at.

If it is bad manners to sneer at authors one has not read—a charge I do not think Aldiss and Wingrove are guilty of anywhere in the book—it is surely equally unacceptable (and slovenly to boot) to sneer at authors one has read carelessly.

Second, Roz Kaveney refers to "clear factual misstatements" in the second half of the book, and immediately goes on to say: "It is correct to say that Doris Lessing had been writing sf-influenced work for some time before *Canopus in Argus* [sic], incorrect to say

that this started with *Briefing for a Descent into Hell.* The last of the realistic political Martha Quest series *The Four-Gated City* moves into a devastated future for its final chapters."

Again, let us look at what Aldiss and Wingrove actually say (p.433): "Lessing has . . . published seven novels which are recognizably sf, beginning with *Briefing for a Descent into Hell." The Four-Gated City* is a 647-page realistic contemporary novel which, after its close, presents as an appendix a 63-page section written as from the year 2000. There is certainly an sf influence here, but is this a "novel which is recognizably sf"? Only the most fanatically imperialist sf critic would claim such a thing.

Is it good manners for a critic to misrepresent the authors' words in order to show off her supposedly superior knowledge?

Third, Roz Kaveney speaks often in the review of Aldiss saying this and Wingrove saying that, as though the book were divided into individually-credited sections. Obviously it is sometimes possible to identify Brian Aldiss in the text, where it reproduces material from *Billion Year Spree* or where the first person singular emerges. Otherwise, what Brian Aldiss says in his signed introduction is: "We have rewritten each other's text to such an extent that it is now hard to determine who exactly said what." I can testify from my experiences editing the book that this is no more or less than the truth. By what authority does Roz Kaveney ignore Brian Aldiss's statement and presume to divide the book into Aldiss parts and Wingrove parts? At the very least (to quote from her review) this is "a case that needs demonstrating rather than asserting".

Roz Kaveney also says: "at least we are entitled to expect accuracy". True enough, and as the book's editor every factual error that crept into its 500+ pages grieves my soul. But in the course of a 6-page review, in addition to the misrepresentations I have already pointed to, Kaveney manages to misspell the names of Phillip Mann and Michael P. Kube-McDowell, as well as getting wrong the titles of *The Moon Goddess and the Son* and *Canopus in Argos.* She also says that Avram Davidson and R.A. Lafferty, at the time of *Billion Year Spree*'s publication, were "important and respected writers both, with their fair share of Hugos and Nebulas". Of course, "fair share" is a nebulous term, but it does imply possession of *some* of the relevant objects, whereas in fact at the time Davidson had one Hugo (no Nebulas) and Lafferty had no awards at all. (Lafferty won a Hugo—his only award, as far as I'm aware—in 1973, a month or two after *Billion* was published.) Is accuracy *less* important in an extensive review for a major critical journal?

On the omission of Aldiss himself, I must take part of the blame, if blame there is. The authors were genuinely uncertain on the matter, and to the extent that I had a voice I advised against inclusion. Nobody is likely to read *Trillion Year Spree* without some awareness of Brian Aldiss's central position in sf over the last 30 years; but surely the last place to look for a dispassionate discussion of the matter is a book co-authored by Aldiss. At least, so I thought. I may have been wrong.

Malcolm Edwards — *Gollancz Ltd., London*

Dear *Foundation,* · — May 1987

My review of *Trillion Year Spree* was, as Malcolm Edwards remarks, six pages long and covered a number of topics, criticising both the book's methodology in principle and its accuracy in practice. I am gratified in a sense that Wingrove and Edwards find, for all

their fee-fi-fo-fumming about my inadequacies, so few points with which to take issue, while being disappointed that they have chosen to do so in ways which, in most cases, largely ignore the points of substance that I raised in my review for the easier path of indicting my judgement and accuracy in matters that are essentially peripheral. It is of course the case that I went in for some detailed criticism of the accuracy of Aldiss and Wingrove in my review, but only after addressing matters that I considered to be of greater importance, those matters of methodology which take up the greater part of my review and which Edwards in particular chooses not to address.

In what follows, there will be no emotional spasms of the kind that has led Wingrove to compare me with Hitler, even though I feel obliged to remark that comparisons which trivialise the Holocaust to the same level of unimportance as a scholarly squabble are, in my opinion, obscene. In what follows there will be some minor mea culpas; my review aspired, in spite of its length, to compression, and as a result, at certain points, my terseness betrayed me into ambiguity of expression which Wingrove and Edwards have, at times legitimately, exploited in their ripostes. In such matters truth lies in the general direction, the broad thrust, of what is argued as much as in fine quibbles over the *mot juste,* and I am content that the reader judge on this basis the issue between us. I would, though, find it easier to take correction in those areas where I may need it had either letter admitted more than one single fault Edwards blames himself for as editor. In what follows, my silence about any charge in particular levelled against me is not to be taken as mute admission of guilt, but as a reference back to what I said on that point in my review, and which I regard as adequate defense. If this seems like arrogance, so be it.

In my second paragraph, I do indeed acknowledge the extent to which material from *Billion Year Spree* has been revised for its inclusion in *Trillion Year Spree,* and quite specifically praise some of the revisions. When, later in the review, I object to the imposition of 1973 as a caesura in the careers of a number of the writers covered at length in both books, I refer to "the original being allowed to stand and a second instalment being placed later". I am guilty of a lack of clarity here, in that I should have made it clear for a second time that, as Wingrove shows in exhaustive detail in his letter, some of those original passages have been tinkered with extensively, though not, I have to point out, to an extent that significantly affects the essence of the judgements of 1973 in the light of what followed. Perhaps I should have said "the original being allowed to stand in essence". But this is in any case beside the main point of my paragraph; Wingrove makes no serious or coherent attempt to justify the fact of the caesura. 1973 was not a year significant for anything in particular save the publication of *Billion Year Spree*; the imposition of that date as a caesura is a particular example of a general tendency insufficiently to rethink the original version, a tendency to revise by tacking on annexes.

Wingrove raises, only largely to dismiss, the question of influence. I would not "presume" to consider him or Aldiss "wholly ignorant of such matters", but it is certainly clear that they regard the matter as less important than I do. A disagreement about methodology is not necessarily one about competence, nor would I wish to pour out my scorn over a disagreement about what constitutes systematic study of the sf field. My job in the review was not necessarily to make definitive statements; it was to suggest examples of lines of enquiry which scholarship might pursue and which Aldiss and Wingrove did not. Nor is my curiosity satisfied by David Wingrove's ex cathedra statement in his letter that, say, the writers at the Navy Yard did not influence each other, especially when he

makes it clear that he believes that to be discernible such influence would have to be more or less immediate. Further, while accusing me of misrepresentation, he talks as if my definition of influence extends, as his seems to, to the process of influence by reading alone, when the paragraph to which he refers makes quite explicitly clear that I consider as equally important the desire of writers for approval by such peer groups as writing schools or the SCA. It is that insight I accuse him and Aldiss of neglecting, and the charge holds.

If Wingrove affirms that his last chapter groups authors in terms of influences, I suppose we have to accept his statement, and remark merely that he has done so with an ill-advised subtlety that certainly makes it look like a catalogue to the untutored eye. What I will not accept is Wingrove's claim that I regard terms like "cyberpunk" or "Labor Day Group" as being more than shorthand, occasionally useful in specific contexts. Further, such terms can never be regarded as wholly false when applied by authors, as these terms often are, to themselves and linked to manifestos. It is not for David Wingrove to tell me what I think, or authors who they really are.

He tries to muddy the waters over my complaint of the neglect of these writings by sf authors which fall over the cooky-cutter divide into fantasy, but which are directly linked in themes and discourse to their sf work. True, the authors do indeed describe Leiber's *The Big Time* as "theatrical", but to mention is not to discuss, nor do they make clear what they mean; I have to reiterate that much of Leiber's important work is theatrical in structure and feel, and that this fact cannot be adequately discussed without mentioning work which falls outside the sf genre. Wingrove does not address the omission of discussion of the autobiographical elements which dominate Leiber's later sf and fantasy alike. Crowley's *Little, Big* is primarily a fantasy, though one with sf elements, just like *The Anubis Gates* in fact, but it links so closely with the material of Crowley's other novels, to which he turned from work on it to produce, that it is ludicrous not to discuss it. Much modern fantasy has learned from sf how to present its visions in quasi-realistic terms; Stephen King is interested in showing us how things would feel were one to have psychokinetic powers or be chased by a car possessed by demons: to separate one part of his work from another is a mistake. I am not asking that Aldiss and Wingrove discuss sf writers' every work in every genre, but I am asking that they not be inhibited by narrow definitions from dealing with material which is, as in the three examples I give, clearly relevant to the discussion.

Wingrove fails to answer my point about *Double Star*; Smythe's abject poverty at the start of the novel demonstrates incompetence in career management, does not make him a failure as an actor, and we have the testimony to his skill of both the Emperor Willem and of the plot itself. Time travel in *The Anubis Gates* is managed by "scientific" exploitation of holes torn in the space-time fabric by a magic spell, which is not what either I or Larry Niven would call sf logic; Tim Powers's best-known earlier work is *The Drawing of the Dark* which is entirely a fantasy and, if out of print at the moment of Wingrove's letter, will be reissued shortly. I take Wingrove's point about his defense of Anderson's argument about militarism, though I happen to think he is defending the indefensible, but the point I made in my review was about the way a casual sneer at Anderson's style obscured a serious point about his much more interesting views about, and portrayal of, the rise and fall of civilisations. And yes, I do consider one and a half pages on Joanna Russ, much of it taken up with an extended quotation, as too brief a discussion of one of the most influential writers, critics and thinkers in the field.

As far as the question of prejudice goes, I believe my review made clear what I think prejudice is, without descending to sophomoric techniques like the consultation of dictionaries, and how the authors are guilty of it. They have views about what sf is, and what it should be, and neglect authors who do not fit their Procrustean thesis. Prejudice and error persisted in, through a process of consideration, discussion, the application of professional standards and sheer hard work are nonetheless prejudice and error.

To turn to Malcolm Edwards, he is entitled to regard Aldiss and Wingrove's rebuke to publishers as more important than what I described as sneering and listing, but my point still stands, though perhaps I might have made it more precisely had I said "sneering by listing". If you only mention an author's work in a list, and imply by doing so that it is an example of mere product, you may intend only to rebuke the publisher, but the effect is to sneer at the author and her work. When an author I regard as having real talent, like Barbara Hambly, is only mentioned in such a list, without reference to her qualities or even to her faults, I regard there as being a prima facie case that she has not been read, a case which the mere assertion that Aldiss or Wingrove read every book does not answer.

In a work of non-fiction, an appendix may serve many purposes. In a work of fiction, if a final section is denominated an appendix, this is a metafictional device. A device which is usually meant to authenticate the previous parts of the work by presenting an "objective" view. To view the events of a realistic novel from a future perspective, and to add to them their sequelae, is to add to the book a constructed sense of otherness which, far more than the mere fact of a future date, places a novel in the sf category. This is a point I might have made at the time, rather than simplifying and referring to the "appendix" to *The Four-Gated City* as its final chapters, but I was trying not to go off at tangents. Malcolm Edwards is indulging here in a purely semantic pedantry which darkens counsel. And if David Wingrove knows all about the importance of this "appendix" to Lessing's later work, why on earth did he not mention it in *Trillion Year Spree?*

By what authority, Edwards asks, do I attribute passages to one or other co-author when they and their editor find them no longer possible to distinguish it? It is tempting to say merely "By that of one whose entire business is the reading of texts and the noting of style", but there is no need here for me to be arrogant. I have hardly met another reader of the book who has not been aware much of the time of two voices, quite notable in, say, the section on Wolfe, where a sentence of Aldiss interpolates very clearly to a passage that is clearly someone else. Edwards accuses me of asserting rather than demonstrating, but I do not think my editors would be grateful were I to demonstrate with quotations from David Wingrove's *Apertures* my reasons for regarding passages that are clearly not Aldiss, and clearly by an individual rather than a committee, as being by the man credited as his co-author.

Edwards accuses me of inaccuracies. Of these, four are spelling mistakes for which I take responsibility and apologise, even if they are in fact, as I am assured they are, proof-reader's errors. I am also guilty of an error neither he nor Wingrove has noticed in that I assumed without rereading the book that the Boers in Niven and Pournelle's *Footfall* join up with the good guys rather than, because of their persecution by Western liberals, signing up with the aliens. But none of these errors affect the points that I was making at the time.

More regrettable is the actual factual error in which Edwards catches me out in the

matter of Davidson, Lafferty and their awards. I said "Hugos and Nebulas" when I should have said "Hugos and Hugo and Nebula nominations"; I should also have checked the month of publication of *Billion Year Spree* and the date of the 1973 World Convention before blandly thinking of Lafferty's Hugo as something of which Aldiss could have known. But, at the end of the day, this error is of little substance compared with the point I was making and whose validity it does not affect, which was that both Davidson and Lafferty were in 1973 and are now important authors in the sf field whom, along with several others, both recensions of the text neglect unwarrantably because of the author and author's prejudices about what sf should do and be.

It is generous of Malcolm Edwards to take responsibility for the decision to omit any discussion of Aldiss from the text and to admit the possibility he was wrong. We are none of us perfect, I least of all.

Roz Kaveney *London*

Dear *Foundation,* May 1987

Whatever the other arguments for and against illustrated covers, until now it has always seemed to me *Foundation* looked duller than it was, and that had to be an unwise policy. Congratulations on managing the step to a brighter-looking journal. I do hope publishers will continue to be ready to supply suitable artwork. I must say, though, I think you're being unnecessarily generous in offering a special feature article on each book. The guarantee of a review, of unspecified length, would surely be sufficient, and avoid wasting time and energy squeezing articles out of books whose covers are their only interesting point.

While you're reshaping the journal, could I also put in a request for the routine identification of contributors to the review section as well as the features? Whatever George Turner and others may think, *Foundation* reviewers are not a unanimous clique but an extraordinary diverse bunch: British fans; American academics; writers from Finland and Denmark . . . It would be nice to know who's who.

David Lake's article on the poetics of imaginary names (*F* # 38) may be strong on comparative linguistics but its assumptions appal me. His notion that "the confusions of English should be banished from sf/fantasy" is particularly wrong-headed. Does Lake really believe we can leave the cultural complexities of our own language behind when we construct fictions with it? For a writer of English to say it "is not a good model" for the operations of imaginary languages is an astonishing piece of self-deception about the nature of the work he is actually engaged in. Fiction is only "tidier than reality" because texts have boundaries and reality does not; but I'm left feeling uneasily that what Lake prescribes is a genre of meticulously-detailed model villages where we can shelter from the smelly streets full of traffic and foreigners behind hedges of pruned nomenclature. Well, we can, I suppose, but we won't find Lewis Carroll or Mervyn Peake or M. John Harrison in there with us.

With every good wish for the future of *Foundation.*

Colin Greenland *Chadwell Heath, Essex*

(Rather than Dear Edward or Dear *Foundation* Editor it's irresistible to say:)

Dear Ed

Foundation 39 has been received and thrilled to, as ever. There is a terrible satisfaction in watching John Clute go to work again on Curtis Smith, and I'd make some comment if not suffering from a sense of inadequacy in being unable to trace his new catchword 'poshlosty' in any of my English dictionaries. (Do we have to go and buy Russian dictionaries too, to follow the Cluteian nuances?) [*No—you could read Nabokov . . . My Russian dictionary defines "poshlosty" as "commonplace", "vulgar"—Ed*]

I meant to write a clarifying note after *F*38. I forgot but assumed somebody would point out the moderately obvious. Since no one did, may I add a quick word to Paul Kincaid's review of *The Ragged Astronauts*?

He says: "The idea of twin planets so close that they share the same atmosphere is so startling yet so obvious that one ends up wondering why no one else had been there before."

Later he adds: "I am always a little uneasy where the laws of nature are casually bent to suggest strangeness but with no other obvious plot purpose, and here, we are informed in passing, pi equals exactly 3."

The point is of course that Paul's second bit of puzzlement "explains" the first. Sf writers have steered off such celestial configurations because (except in weirdly pathological cases as envisaged in Robert L. Forward's otherwise strangely boring *The Flight of the Dragonfly* they don't work. Bob Shaw, by making his point about pi, grandly indicates to nitpicking physicists that he is not playing by their rules: this here is a different universe where twin planets work *his* way.

Which is legitimate enough: yet several readers (and not merely the diehards who say time travel can't possibly be "hard" sf, while seeming not to mind faster-than-light spacecraft) have expressed a strange unease in swallowing an assumption so fundamental as to allow the author *carte blanche* in rewriting the laws of physics. Hordes of other writers have been doing this all along. Bob Shaw has merely stuck his neck out by admitting it openly. Brave man!

David Langford *Reading*

Cover Feature
Other Edens

JOHN CLUTE

A review of *Other Edens* edited by Christopher Evans and Robert Holdstock (*Unwin Paperbacks, 1987, 237pp, £2.95)*

There's something odd about that title. The editors of *Other Edens,* which is a collection of original science fiction and fantasy stories from authors based in Great Britain, must have thought it up on their own, and they have certainly come to some pretty odd thoughts about their choice. The first odd thing they think about it is that it derives from William Shakespeare's *King Richard III.* "A horse!" (one imagines Mr Evans musing to Mr Holdstock) "A horse! a horse! my other Eden for a horse!" "Hang about" (says the latter to the former, shaken by a wild surmise) "I somehow think we've got our title!" Another odd thing Messrs Holdstock and Evans think about their title is that, despite proclaiming on page viii its irrelevance to the contents of the anthology they have put together, it is worth retaining on the cover of this solid book. At some point, however, doubts began to assail the two editors, for they clearly came to the eventual decision that enough was enough, and that, as they state unequivocally at the beginning of their introduction, no more anthologies of this sort should ever be published: "Welcome" (they say) "to a rare phenomenon these days—a collection of original science fiction and fantasy stories from Britain. It's a rarity we hope will not last."

All the same, for those readers who remained unswayed by this stark pessimism, a treat was in store. Beginning (one trusts) with the assumption that the title was 1) as irrelevant as most anthology titles turn out to be and 2) derived in any case from *King Richard II* ("This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,/This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,/This other Eden" et cetera), they will have plowed on into the contents, and will have found something of a feast there. They will have also found out why Evans and Holdstock necessarily failed to create in *Other Edens* anything like the theme anthology their title portends. Very simply, they couldn't do so because there weren't enough active writers to trawl for original stories that fit their presumed remit. Of sf/fantasy writers in this country currently active as short story writers, most are represented in this book. Only a few of them (none, actually, in the event) could logically be expected to have Other Eden stories to hand, *whatever* an Other Eden story is: Messrs Holdstock and Evans do no more than "hint at pastoral idylls". (How different it must be in America, where an anthologist can trawl hundreds of active writers for tales that fit a particular theme.) So we are left with a bunch of stories sharing little more than a sense of betrayed landscape, and framed by a Jim Burns cover more ostensibly "edenic" than anything inside the book.

Some of these stories are perhaps a touch feeble, several are very strong indeed. Many give off the slightly baggy odour of the excerpt. Even though M. John Harrison typically writes tales whose implications flood mercilessly through the tollgates of the form, in

"Small Heirlooms" that flood is less meticulously timed than usual—one could almost say of his best stories that they were flood-dances in amber (a phrase amenable of much contrite explanation, which it will one day receive), and of "Small Heirlooms" what a certain telegram once said of Venice: "Streets filled with water. Please advise." In any case, internal evidence makes it clear that the tale comes from a forthcoming novel whose projected title is *The Course of the Heart*. Robert Holdstock's heightened "Scarrowfell" also floods the frail tale it ostensibly relates with a jumble of moods, too many characters, too much music, an expiation/initiation too complex to be explained in the pages it takes, and bevies of mummers: if not from the forthcoming *Lavondyss,* it must inhabit the same universe. If Brian Aldiss's "The Price of Cabbages" does not herald a gamy picaresque, then it is slightly too long for the well-telegraphed punchline that merely terminates what one feels to be an episode. Michael Moorcock's "The Frozen Cardinal" has a polished insinuating grace, and a neat hook, but reads as a minute tessera in the large mosaic of his work.

The Aldiss and the Moorcock are both set on other planets. Moorcock's is a metaphysic of ice, Aldiss's a factory farm. It is entirely typical of British sf/fantasy that of the remaining tales almost all take place on Earth, most in an identifiable Britain, though David Langford's "In a Land of Sand and Ruin and Gold" is set at the end of time, where a point about terminal boredom is made with lackadaisical grace, and Garry Kilworth's stunning "Triptych" could be set anywhere. A cheap description of "Triptych" is that it's a set of three interlocked parables, each a mirror for the others, each facet illustrating some cul-de-sac extremity of the human condition; to try to say more with any concision would be foolish. Ian Watson's "The Emir's Clock" boasts an extremely neat bit of clockwork metaphysic, but embedded within an extremely offhand narrative—something Mr Watson may have had lying around the house, and now it's lying around *mine*. R.M. Lamming's "Sanctity" is deft and drear in its rendering of a British dystopian tyranny (details on application).

The best remaining stories are sexual. Lisa Tuttle's "The Wound" may be the most excellently executed tale in the anthology. It is no more—and therefore no less—than itself; it is not a bit from a book, a bight from a fleuve. There is a feminist argument within the cruel professional turns of this tale of metamorphosis, but in no way does that argument leak into meta-textual rhetoric. At story's end, there is nothing left to dispute. This reviewer's agreement with the premises he feels are embodied within "The Wound" has nothing to do with his sense that these premises are unanswerable, everything to do with his sense that a story which exhausts its premises gains an unassailable being. Tanith Lee's "Crying in the Rain", set in a dystopian Britain corroded by radioactive pollution, also achieves itself fully within its own terms, with a complex economy not always found in her voluminous novels; the human muscle exposed in this story of family survival is both wrenching and heartening. Christopher Evans's savage little fable of hysterical patriarchy —set very inconspicuously on another planet, and potentially expandable novelwards —carries a raft of well-differentiated characters in the direction of a calamity of sexual initiation, and stops sagely short. The saddest—indeed the most anguished—story in the book is Keith Roberts' "Piper's Wait", which unfolds its layers of pain unendingly, for its antiqued tragedy of sexual nausea is related by a modern narrator who seems mystically to share, to have privy access to, the Piper's trauma. Long ago a wordless prescient wandering Piper falls in love with a young girl, who begins to sleep around in his absence.

He returns to save her by piping the Devil out of her suddenly post-pubertal limbs, but at the climax of his rite, when she awards him a vertical grin, he sees that she is the Devil's utterly. The story ties itself in knots, but remains naked.

So it is an anthology with a name to remember but not to think about very hard. There are some sloppy efforts of the sort that creep into most original anthologies, but also there are three or four stories in *Other Edens* than anyone interested in the condition of British writing must read. A second volume would be welcome. *A Horse in Eden*. It has a ring to it.

Reviews

The Shore of Women
by Pamela Sargent *(Chatto & Windus, 1987, 469 pp, £10.95)*

reviewed by Lisa Tuttle

It's the story of the Garden of Eden, it's the story of all our lives. Once we were in a safe and cosy place where the Mother gave us the blessings of her body; then something happened. We were bad—or She thought we were—and we were cast out, forced to make do with the second-rate, grown-up version of primal bliss, which is sexual love.

Men are the outcasts in Pamela Sargent's novel—rejected by the women they once oppressed, forced to live without the blessings of a female-run civilization, they survive in small, fierce bands, hunting and scavenging, killing or bonding with each other, and worshipping the Lady. Although they know nothing of real women, they worship the all-powerful Woman who blesses them with erotic dreams when they lie on a couch in one of Her temples, and who allows the race of man to be perpetuated by sending boy-children out of the cities.

As for women, they live generally unexamined, self-sufficient, yet somehow rather bleak lives within their comfortable, walled cities. They have to keep an eye on the men outside, exterminating them if they develop large, permanent settlements or show other signs of re-approaching civilization. After all, the last time men got uppity they nearly destroyed the whole planet in a nuclear holocaust, so they obviously can't be trusted with technology. Let them kill each other with fists, knives and arrows if they want.

Violence is not to be tolerated among women. Yet the potential for violence is human, not merely male, because even in their peaceful, civilized cities, with all material needs met, one woman will occasionally attack another. The response to such maladjustment is exile. The threat to one life is a threat to the shared life—the violent woman must be expelled. Outside, it is presumed, she will quickly die.

But we all know from legend what eventually happens to the child sent into the wilderness, to the baby exposed on the hillside—she survives, probably to topple her society, or at least to destroy those who would have destroyed her.

Birana and her mother Yvara are banished from the city. Yvara, who had tried to kill her lover, dies violently at the hands of men, but Birana—whose only crime was loyalty to a mother who never really cared for her—survives. Revealing her womanhood to men, she is worshipped as the Goddess. Inevitably, the impossible, the forbidden happens: she comes to love a man. He is Arvil, twin brother of Laissa, Birana's girlhood chum. Arvil stops worshipping Birana when he realizes her human nature, but he continues to long for her love. Gradually, as they share hardships and good times and explain the workings of the world to each other, Birana's natural repugnance is overcome, and together they discover the joys of heterosexual union. They even make a baby together, and live as lonely but happy outcasts. They don't fit in anywhere, but there is a sense in which it seems they don't wish to. Rather than attempting to form their own band and establish a new way of life, a foothold on the future, Birana and Arvil keep to themselves. They even send their infant daughter away to the city before she is a year old. No one is allowed to break up this cosy two-some.

The setting of Sargent's book is an odd reversal of Suzy McKee Charnas's *Walk to the End of the World*: a distant, post-nuclear holocaust era in which half the human race is seen as little better than animals, blamed for the catastrophe and kept around only for reproductive purposes. In Sargent's book it is women who are on top, and, as anyone could guess, we are lots nicer in our triumph than men. (The question of how women managed at last to "take the toys from the boys" is never answered; a fairly major suspension of disbelief is called for here.) In Charnas's world men need women for reproduction, so women are kept like cows, or pigs, or battery hens. Women need men for their seed in Sargent's world, but this need doesn't make women vicious; if anything, they are rather soppy about the critters, letting them run free and ensuring they won't go too far from the cities by the dangerous expedient of giving them direct brain stimulation with futuristic pornography. Thus, while generations of women were raised to consider men as wild animals, they were conditioning those same wild animals to respond to women as the ultimate in desirable erotic objects. You wouldn't do it to a doberman, would you? You'd think some woman would have seen the folly of this. For that matter, you'd think that a society which had managed to get rid of genetic defects and ensure that every baby born was healthy and beautiful; a society in which rejuvenation treatments were common and which had thought-reading machines, might also be a society which had managed, over the centuries, to lick the relatively minor problems of parthenogenesis. The need for genetic diversity (mentioned more than once as the reason for allowing so many different men to exist) could surely be overcome with techniques of ova-merging. But no. Women need men. Never mind why, they just do. They'd rather go on giving birth to and raising boy children to be sent outside after four years, than follow the more sensible plan of allowing men to die off as unnecessary anachronisms.

This woman-only society is a pretty dull place, although preferable to the alternatives, being much safer, cleaner and more comfortable than life among the wild men. We are told that the women's is a rigid society, frightened of changes and therefore no longer able to grow or progress, but in this I detect no deep truth, but only the heavy hand of the author. Towards the end, Laissa reads us the moral, reflecting that life stagnates "when it holds to a pattern that is no longer needed . . . It may be time for us and for those outside to begin to reshape ourselves and become another kind of being." The implication is strong that women by themselves cannot change; that perhaps the conflict of differences

between the sexes is what is needed for growth.

One wonders how they managed so well for so long on their own. A book which supposes that women as a group were able to build an advanced, peaceful society while their "other halves" were still rooting around in the mess they had made should offer a slightly more sophisticated, thought-out argument to explain why two sexes are needed for an improved future. "Because they're there" may be an acceptable reply today, but Sargent has changed the ground rules, giving new urgency to questions about what *are* the basic, biological differences between the sexes, if we really need gender or could live without it. Science fiction, even when not explicitly feminist, is very good for exploring other ways of living, other ways of being, and how society constructs gendered humanity. What is natural? How different would a matriarchal society be? Can women and men live together on truly equal terms? These are important, and emotive, issues, yet they are treated only glancingly in this book. Sargent seems to pick them up and set them down again nervously. It is not simply that there are no answers here (too much to ask of a novel, anyway) but that even the questions are somehow short-circuited.

The reason, I think, is that this book is not really science fiction at all—let alone feminist science fiction. It's not a novel of ideas, and it's not about social issues. What it is is a romance, the sort of classic love story that is harder and harder to write convincingly these days. How does one write about two people who are forbidden to one another yet seemingly fated to love? What obstacles can keep potential lovers apart in an age when Iseult can simply break her engagement or get a divorce, when Tristan can leave his family, change his religion, his country, or even his sex in order to be with his true love? The simplest solution might be to set it in the past, but another alternative, becoming more widely acceptable these days, is to create a fantasy world. This is such a fantasy. The science fiction here is simply scaffolding to hold up a tale of love conquering all, and in the most simplistic way.

This kind of romance could hardly be further from the concerns of science fiction. It's not about change. It's about reassurance. It's about what are supposed to be the eternal verities. It's about two individuals making a separate peace, while the rest of the world can go hang. It's still the same old story. It's that seductive, female myth—the myth of the special man. Oh, yes, Arvil is special. He may have grown up among uncivilized men, but he's not like the rest of them. Romantic heroes never are, of course. Only Arvil isn't your standard romantic hero, either. He's intelligent, gentle, sensitive, and patient enough to wait for Birana to realize how special he is, instead of just jumping her like your old-fashioned, unreconstructed romantic hero. He's the New Man we've heard so much about, helping his woman in childbirth, teaching her to hunt, changing his daughter's rabbit-skin nappies, appreciating the joys of equal companionship quite as much as those of heterosexual intercourse (at which he is quite implausibly skilled). All that's missing is the muesli.

No, that's not true. What's missing is *everything*—not simply depth and originality, but also passion, conflict, excitement, suspense, humour, romance. In short, this is a singularly dull and unromantic romance. The blandness is unrelenting, the whole story told at one constant, unemphatic pitch, with no clear difference even when the narrators change. I may find this particular kind of story politically suspect these days, I may be looking for something more than happily ever after into the sunset, but I'm still attracted to the myth—I can still be seduced by it. And I just wasn't. Not by this. No way.

Evil Water and Other Stories
by Ian Watson *(Gollancz, 1987, 200 pp, £10.95)*

The Book of Ian Watson
by Ian Watson *(Mark V. Ziesing, 1985, 366 pp, £13.00, £23.00 deluxe signed edition postpaid, P.O. Box 806, Willimantic CT 06226 U.S.A.)*

Slow Birds and Other Stories
by Ian Watson *(Gollancz, 1985, 180 pp, £8.95)*

reviewed by Gregory Feeley

More than most sf novelists who continue to write short stories, Ian Watson comes off very much the same form in both forms. The near-ubiquitous belief among working writers that the short story is a bit of a *jeu,* if not simply uneconomical (Joe Haldeman, to name one of Watson's generation with few other points of resemblance, has acknowledged that he shares the conviction that short stories are less "serious" than novels, but writes them for the pleasures of finishing something quickly, of accepting an interesting assignment, or to experiment without investing a year's work) means little to Watson, however fancifully he distinguishes them from his novels in the introduction to *Slow Birds.* Watson's novels and stories alike show similar signatures: the creation of detailed, delimiting conceptual models and their eventual transcendence; imperfectly differentiated characters, but a strong sympathy for their invariable middle-class milieu; a willingness to have his characters break into metaphysical discussions like arias; a prose style that—at least until recently—could most favorably be described as shorthand for a succession of ideas. Watson has suggested (in *Foundation* 30) that "Those who are excited [by his thematic concerns] find the style exciting enough; those who aren't find it the opposite." This has not been true but can be amended: those who like Watson's novels will like his stories, and for identical reasons.

More so even than James Blish, Watson writes fiction shaped round the delineation of some closed system his protagonists create or find themselves living in, whether a Cage For Death, a Very Slow Time Machine, Rooms of Paradise, a Garden of Delight, or the chessboard universe of *Queenmagic, Kingmagic.* In all cases the constraining model is ultimately superseded, but whereas Blish obsessively foresaw new forces puncturing the system and attendant disaster, Watson keeps the walls intact, the protagonist vanishing through them with a conjurer's smile. The darkening tones of the early novels have given way to converts and windows, and when a story does end in failure (e.g. "Cold Light") it is likelier personal than global.

Evil Water, which begins and ends with strong novelettes set in sharply realized British locales, is denser and more immediate than Watson's earlier collections, and contains fewer stories (an exception is "When the Timegate Failed") set in disembodied futures where cursorily-drawn characters enact, puppet-like, a dramatized collision of concepts. The title story proposes the power of a water-witch as an agent, viral perhaps, that suffuses bodily fluids and can pass into the water table. The theory explains why witches are best burnt; and Watson's story of small village famous for its waters, its legend of a medieval witch boiled alive and fed to the pigs, a subplot concerning a possibly polluting

antibiotics manufacturer, and sundry speculation on perception and alternate events, all intersect nicely. The story ends with its protagonist dissolving down a prison loo, but we can believe in the prison and the passions that sent him there, rather than simply understanding, with an impatient nod, the metaphysics involved.

"Cold Light", which opens the collection, realizes some of Watson's characteristic themes concerning the afterlife (familiar from *Deathhunter*) through an unlikely conflation of radical theology and the history of artificial lighting. The story, although told almost entirely through dialogue, limns its characters sharply and maintains dramatic pacing, in happy contrast to earlier Watson stories compounded largely of excited discussion. The story's closing image, of grazing ewes contemplating protagonist and lifeless companion, anchors the metempsychosis that preceded it in a manner more satisfying than the corresponding point in "A Cage for Death" (forerunner of *Deathhunter*), which concludes with a character's hand clenched (literally) on a concept.

As late as the stories in *Slow Birds,* Watson was still littering the page with his notorious said-bookisms and mixed metaphors, sometimes compressed by his taut prose to a kind of essence ("He froze, ashen"). With *Evil Water* and *Queenmagic, Kingmagic* Watson, who in interview confesses that the structure of Herbert's thematic dialectics interests him in a manner separable from Herbert's stylistic shortcomings and has explicitly spurned the aestheticism of "Flaubert, Gautier, Firbank . . . something which I regard as a fascinating disease", seems at last to be resolving the style vs. content dichotomy that has long riven his work. This unlooked-for development was anticipated in the 1983 "Slow Birds", where the clockwork matrix of its imprisoning cosmology (another mindless war-game played with no way out) is only introduced late in the story, and does not obtrude upon the rich particularly of the keenly felt setting. It remains for me Watson's finest story, and the fact that the best in *Evil Water* are also novelettes suggests a range for Watson where the conceptual and the concrete most readily find balance.

The Book of Ian Watson is described in its Preface as "a kind of autobiography woven of fiction and non-fiction". About half its contents consists of informal articles, many on science fiction, several on various of Watson's abiding themes—Sufism, Japan, "inexplicable events"—and a few political. Watson's polemic seems more rigid than the rest of his thought—he calls Britain an "occupied country", but explicitly rejects the term for Poland—but remains impassioned and *particular,* informed by such occasions as a canal trip past U.S. and British airbases, or a Labour campaign in a County Council election.

The volume's fiction is similarly miscellaneous, and informs the book's sense of offering a peep into the author's workshop rather than a polished selection. Most interesting is "The Pharoah and the Mademoiselle", a novella told partly in blank verse that dances between Watson's familiar themes and Indiana Jones territory with droll camp. Its recounting of an ancient pharaoh's novel scheme for eventual rebirth is counterpointed to satisfying effect by the Coward-like banter of the 1936 expedition that opens his sarcophagus, although the verse is not distinguished.

Other stories (many, like "The Pharoah and the Mademoiselle", published here for the first time) are experiments, with a good proportion of mixed results. Several undertake linguistic themes, and a few venture into humour, most heavily in "The President's Not for Turning", in which a beleaguered research unit resolves to rotate the

President through a higher dimension, from which he will emerge *left*-wing and presumably funding-minded. The President of course emerges gay, and slapstick ensues (I thought the dénouement would reveal the characters had all been earlier rotated through a trans-Atlantic axis, as they're all plainly British, but no.)

The world of *Queenmagic, Kingmagic,* for all its chessboard superstructure, carries conviction as a world, closely imagined and visualized (although only visualized: Watson rarely offers the sounds, tastes, and smells of his imagery). The world of the River, for all its place-names and exotica, remains too plainly the sound stage for a drama of ideas. Watson has established a closed system of imaginative as well as metaphysical autonomy, and the fiction he has published since completing his trilogy largely shares that virtue.

O-Zone
by Paul Theroux *(Hamish Hamilton, 1986, 469 pp, £9.95)*

reviewed by M. John Harrison

Modern fiction likes to disguise its value judgements by interposing a metaphor—a world—between the reader and the subject. Science fiction is a highly metaphoric kind of fiction. (Generic science fiction, aficionado science fiction, is a kind of fiction whose audience has become addicted to the mediating metaphor—the details of the analogy rather than its subject and object, the *appearance* of the sign.) Science fiction is for strong Romantic writers like George Orwell or Bruce Sterling, wrestling with their daemonhood as they fall from Noon to dewy Eve. It is not for Paul Theroux, who, as we can easily tell from his dustwrapper photo, is a sweetie.

Theroux has previously been a fairly well-adjusted undaemonic writer dealing directly with the world, through travel books and through novels which appropriate their subject matter front-on in public. How he convinced himself he needed to write *O-Zone* is a mystery. His usefulness as a metonymic writer was clear. He was never going to be Robert Byron, he was never going to be Christopher Isherwood. He hadn't the energy to be a Peter Fleming, as *The Great Railway Bazaar* proved. But he went a fair way towards convincing us that the world existed, and that it was accessible to photography of the prose kind—in short, that it was the source of his ideas rather than a figment of them, which is a greener but more attractive approach than, say, the old Moorcockian one, in which reality is seen somehow not just as a cultural but a social contract, negotiated on a day-to-day basis by a group of good friends sitting round a train they have just burned.

Keynes says somewhere that people who claim to have no economic theory other than common sense can usually be found to be operating out of a mishmash of the economic theory popular forty years before. Something of the same principle is at work here, and much of the problem with *O-Zone* (other than the truly tacky metaphor which inhabits the pun in the title), certainly as far as those who have become addicted to the mediating metaphor will be concerned, is its outright staleness as an imaginative object.

Theroux hasn't schooled himself in the tropes: therefore he can neither turn them against themselves to advantage, bobbing gleefully about with all the other disintegrating potatoes and bits of chopped leek in the sf stockpot, nor—a better, or at least a more convincing trick if you can do it—break them and infold them to make something "genuinely" "new". Because of that, his mishmash of an America, scabbed and self-

irradiated, the cities nodes of greed which generate yet live off a terminally polluted—or at least continually unregenerated—wilderness outside them, is old hat: a recipe for a book which reads much of the time like *Deliverance* written into the milieu of *Escape from New York* or *Mad Max 3*. I suppose *The Mosquito Coast* pointed inevitably in this direction. Indeed *O-Zone* could be looked at profitably, by someone more interested than me, as a revision of the earlier novel.

It is the Near Future. The world is run by the Owners, a high-capital, high-tech group who live in paranoidally defended enclaves in paranoidally policed cities, and who for reasons of safety have outlawed to themselves vast tracts of territory:

> Today these places were off-limits and served merely as names and metaphors for hopelessness or terror. 'Africa', people said to scare each other; but she had been there . . . She had lived awhile in Europe—not always in a sealed city—and she had travelled to the various landing places in Asia. There were fewer Prohibited Areas then.

The Owners regard these Waste Lands with a deep ambivalence, seeing them as poisoned and poisoning, inhabited by dangerous animals, savages, mutants; and simultaneously as places "closer to nature", where satisfactions of a freer kind may be obtained. They organise tours and parties in the wilderness, camp, apparently shoot for fun the indigenes. To the most dangerous of all the Prohibited Areas, a section of the Ozark Plateau irradiated some unspecified time before by the escape of nuclear waste, comes a party which includes the boy Fisher, known as "Fizzy". (Get it? Fizzy = Energetic. Fizzy = Physicist = "Scientist". For "Fizzy", read "the energy of new ideas", etc.) They kill a squirrel and a couple of locals and then leave again. But Fizzy, fascinated, and by now addicted to the vertigo of new experience, returns. Because Fisher is "Fisher King" too, and this Waste Land is not just going to be revived; it is going, by its own energy ("Outer Zone" = "O-Zone" = "Ozone" = a sense of health, wellbeing and energy. Get it? Get it?) to fecundate the culture of the Owners. It is going to free the waters dammed up in their stagnant paranoid relationship with their old technologies and fucked-up cities. All this is at once blatant and tedious. If Theroux wanted to talk about the attitude of the Developed to the Undeveloped (sorry, Developing) Countries; if he wanted to talk about the interdependency of this pair of opposites, how they make a psychic whole we ignore at our own risk; and particularly if he wanted to talk about American foreign policy in this context, why didn't he do just that? Why the metaphor, muddy but transparent? Why the coy disguise?

His awkwardness with the genre is obvious in his sentence-level figures. When he says of a "jet rotor" crewman that he hangs in his safety harness "like a bundle of badly fitted software", no electricity flows, no image is made, there is only the sense that Theroux felt he'd better mention a bit of technology, to give the idea of futurity (or at least up-to-dateness). Neither is one convinced by salty future dialogue like, " 'You porker . . . You're freaking up my program.' " For a wild—an intense—moment there, I thought we were going to have a kind of Jerome Charyn future, of pimps, tapeworms and syphilitic New York Jews: no such luck, only evidence of the difference between Charyn and Theroux, an absolutely tin ear for the flow of dialect, idiom, jargon, and for how that flow controls and mediates the "world" you are "describing". (William Gibson, who doesn't know much about computers either but admits it, does so much better than this. To be street-wise is to know nothing useful, but it is at least to be in control of your idiom, especially at its hot lubricated interface with the idiom of your day. Gibson's "world" may be a

computer game, but at least he can play it.)

But Theroux seems to have given up on language anyway. If you hated the word "awhile" in the quote above, worse is on its way. Sf is a genre you can relax your standards in, obviously. ". . . and what was that glimmer?" Theroux is asking us as early as page 11, before we have even had time to give him the benefit of the doubt: "Was it the poisonous twinkle of radiation's foxfire?" God knows. But as the reader you can give up any hope of its being state of the art technoglitter.

If you are neither interested in the values nor attracted by the metaphor through which they are made naked, the real problem with *O-Zone* is that it is boring and slow. Theroux, whose novels normally move at a reasonable pace, retards his narrative with scenes too roomy for the amount of material they contain (as if he is still hunting about in them for the meaning he intends you to find, as in an untrimmed draft); and with sudden nubs of description, never over-long but somehow too dense—so that you run into them, bump, and totter about disoriented—and always a bit beside the point, as if his mind was elsewhere, which I think it might have been. There is too much dialogue, and too much of it is being used to convey information about the Society of the Future. In the end this suspension and diffusion of the narrative causes you to lose your patience. *O-Zone* is eminently putdownable and quite hard to pick up again.

As an observer, Theroux is excellent; he's taken his notebook around the world, showed us his snaps, and they aren't bad. As a writer of ideas, his stamina has always been in question. At the time of *Saint Jack* he seemed strong, but he has weakened steadily since. His honest self-portrayal in *The Great Railway Bazaar* may give us a model for what has happened. By the end of his journey, ambushed by the sudden vast spaces of Siberia, and by the discomforts and dirt of the Trans-Siberian itself, the chipper young yuppie, who enjoyed himself so much namedropping on the Orient Express, falls into a sulk, and, resourceless, reveals himself to be the homesick melancholic innocent we always expected. In *O-Zone* he talks of "the naïve trust of another age", meaning our own: "a kind of fatal innocence and incompetence". It's innocence he suffers from as an sf writer, innocence that makes him incompetent. Wide eyes are only good for seeing the world, not making or remaking it. He should write no more metaphors but stick to metonymy, a naïve figure but an honest one.

Consider Phlebas
by Iain M. Banks *(Macmillan, 1987, 471pp, £10.95)*

reviewed by Colin Greenland

John Brunner borrowed some from Shakespeare and Donne. Ray Bradbury preferred Whitman, while Alfred Bester chose Blake, or had Blake chosen for him. Stan Lee, for that matter, favoured Milton and Housman. So the conjunction of a big shiny red spaceship and a title from T.S. Eliot is not in itself incongruous. The incongruities are elsewhere on the cover of Iain Banks's fourth novel, and principally perhaps in the minds of his publishers, who seem nervous about the whole thing. "A Science Fiction Novel" they stress, in a subtitle, in bright blue, wanting no doubt about where books with spaceships on the front belong.

The front flyleaf copy amplifies. "*Consider Phlebas* is more than Space Opera, more

than just another sf novel." And the back flyleaf copy quantifies. "Iain M. Banks is the author of three novels . . . He is currently at work on a fourth."

But we thought this was the fourth?

Ah. No. "*Consider Phlebas* is his first science fiction novel, and will be followed by many more."

A riddle: What is a novel, and more than a novel, yet not a novel?

Answer: Iain Banks's new *science fiction* novel; which he has written "under the name of Iain M. Banks". Curiouser and curiouser. It is "a stunning new departure" for him, one which requires not only a red spaceship, a blue label, hyperbole in front and discounting behind, but actually a new *middle initial.*

What does it signify, this lone M? It's not much of a disguise, after all, so it can't be cowardice. And surely authorial vanity would have come up with something a bit more striking: Iain Z. Banks, or Iain Macmillan Banks, or whatever. No, the M is for mystification, for misdirection, for a false moustache that Iain Banks has to put on if he wants to write science fiction, so that we won't confuse him with the other Iain Banks, the one who writes real books, books that do count.

Banks's first novel, *The Wasp Factory,* was packaged austerely, undeclaratively, even in paperback, without (say) a big dead wasp embossed on the cover. This was an astute piece of marketing, to pitch it over the heads of the lowly genre reviewers and into the high court of New Fiction. The success of the device was that the book fell onto the desks of the unwary, who were duly shocked, impressed or disgusted, and made the requisite fuss. The *Punch* reviewer who claimed uniqueness for *The Wasp Factory* by saying "There is no label" was speaking more literally than he thought. Reviewers and, according to Banks, readers who could more readily assimilate it to the genre of horror fiction were less disturbed, less extreme in their approval or dismissal.

So there is something about *Consider Phlebas* which has shaken Macmillan's confidence, something which must be relegated as "a stunning new departure" for an author of three unpredictable books already. It can be claimed to transcend genre, but only from safely under cover of a big red spaceship.

Presumably, what actually discomfits its publisher so is that *Consider Phlebas* is not unpredictable; that it does not transcend genre, but conforms throughout. For readers hoping to see Banks's twisted humour and subversive intellect applied to space opera, expecting some sort of wild synthesis of *The Waste Land* and *The Skylark of Space, Consider Phlebas* offers little. For readers who want fat books of non-stop violent action with spaceship chases and raygun battles, and who don't much care *whose* name is on the front, it offers 471 pages.

There is no reason to suspect that Banks has written *Consider Phlebas* as an exercise in cynicism, or calculation, or anything other than pure love; indeed, there are better grounds for seeing it as a present to himself than as a crowd-pleaser. Has it, for instance, any resemblance or relationship to any of the sf novels he wrote but nobody would publish before *The Wasp Factory?* We may wonder that, and we may also wonder whether Iain Banks, with or without moustache, is quite the right author for generic space opera, or any kind of fiction whose virtues are straightforward and conventional.

One thing Banks's first three published novels all demonstrate is a determination to work in original and distinctive areas and shapes: *The Wasp Factory*'s endlessly recursive map of selfhood; the crazy three-ply yarn of *Walking on Glass; The Bridge,* structured

after a diagram of the side elevation of the Forth Bridge. *Consider Phlebas* is linear and familiar. It ploughs a well-trodden path through the dust of old pulps, across the cinematically floodlit arena of space adventure. This is the one about the undercover super-agent on a deadly mission in the interstellar war who gets captured by space pirates and has to kill the psychotic pirate captain, steal the ship, get off the space station before it's blown up, master the crew, deal with the enemy infiltrator and her booby trap, outwit a superhuman guardian, penetrate the caverns of the lifeless world where vicious alien warriors lie in ambush and bring back the sentient McGuffin, or McMuffin, really, for all the difference it makes. There are lots of sideshows en route, of course, including being tied to a stake by a mad coprophagous cult with a cannibal prophet, and a fist-fight at night, waist-deep in water, under a moving hovercraft. There are bits from the movies, like the prissy drone with the C3PO personality, and unstoppable combat-machine creatures out of *Alien* and *The Terminator*. There are the customary godawful names: the drone is called Unaha-Closp, and our hero is Bora Horza Gobuchul, if you please.

Some of it works, some of it doesn't. Some of it entails so much repetition of basic information for the inattentive reader that the vistas get lost. The climax involves a pile-up of subterranean nuclear steam trains, which go very fast and with terrific force but take a long time getting up speed—scarcely a fortuitous image. Banks is surely aware that the movement of his story is ponderous, with gradual acceleration to a final grand slam, along a single track. Four promising narrative interludes and a sudden late rash of italicized dreams and visions amount to nothing but a repressed authorial desire for the complex plot- and time-schemes he usually prefers. The only textual juggling is performed in a cascade of appendices after the bang, the narrator stepping back and back in receding perspective, reducing the whole story to a non-event in a war of doubtful importance to galactic history.

Perspective is the issue. The myth of space the final frontier, to be won by Horza's brand of macho grappling, light-inch by light-inch, through a "maelstrom of battering pain", is true to this extent: there is no space in a space opera but what the text generates. Space has to be built, built and evoked, not least because of the necessary foreshortening effect of the spacewarp drive, which makes the gulfs fixed between the stars look pretty silly, or else no plot. Space operators have to stretch and keep stretching, connoting more space, more plurality of worlds, than they denote, playing up the exoticism and the vertigo. Otherwise they end up like Phillip Mann in his recent Story of the Gardener sequence, which is as domestic as it sounds, a liberal pastoral whose imagined territory is a clean, well-appointed menagerie of one-trait characters and edentate curiosities.

Banks has a satisfying vision of hyperspace, but otherwise spends much time and many words walling off the exotic implications of his conceits. The sentience of the muffin, for example, is of absolutely no consequence. More significantly, Horza is a member of a threatened species, humanoid metamorphs who can resemble anyone at will. Such a being, even in the course of an adventure romp, might be supposed to have an interestingly different sense of identity, psychology, sexual attraction and social organization. Yet the part as written requires all the subtlety and versatility of Charles Bronson. Horza is in exile, serving a non-human alien force, yet he is not lost in space. He is everything at home, in control, triumphant over adversity.

Occupied galactic space, then, is not marked out here by radical diversity of lives and perceptions. What sort of space is there in *Consider Phlebas?*

It is a space full of big things. Banks supplies his scale by elaborate mechanical architecture.

> In the other direction, the one that the ship had appeared from, was a wall, seemingly blank. Horza looked closer and rubbed his eyes; he saw that the wall had an orderly speckle of lights in a grid across it: thousands and thousands of windows and lights and balconies. Smaller craft flitted about its face, and the dots of traveltube capsules flashed across and up and down.

"Orderly speckle" is surely a perfect description of the technique of space artist Chris Foss, to whom Richard Hopkinson's cover painting is greatly indebted. When the pirate spaceship Horza takes over is named after a painting Foss once did for an album by a heavy rock band, the reference is confirmed. All Banks's locations are Fossian colossi: all artifices, even the apparently natural ones. On a wheel-shaped space habitat fourteen thousand kilometres across, Horza can bail out of a crashing spacecraft and swim to a desert island because the island has been put there. So has the ocean. The giants' caves where the last battle is fought are the tunnels of an underground railway. "The lodge, the terrace, the mountains and the plain were on an Orbital. Humans had built this place, or at least built the machines that built the machines that . . . Well, you could go on and on."

The space of *Consider Phlebas* is one huge playroom. Some of the big things are toys, others are furniture. Some are fun, others a nuisance. Most break, spectacularly, which makes Horza grin.

People are killed when space machines and installations and whole environments are destroyed. This is inevitable, but killing individuals directly is wasteful and Horza always regrets the necessity. This, plus the capacity for a little blunt affection, is our hero's store of humanity. Fans of pyrotechnic mayhem will find it enough. The rest of us are not given much we can sympathize with, but much too much we have to indulge. Banks is to be congratulated for refusing to write to the expectations of Fay Weldon and anyone else who wants him to be "the great white hope of contemporary British literature". But who *has* he written this for, apart from himself? A younger audience than usual? A less critical one?

The reward for our patience comes at the very end, in the final narrative juggling. The last chapter before the appendices is barely two pages long; it too is called "Consider Phlebas", by way of ringing a bell to wake up the drowsy literati. All right, what about Phlebas?

Consider Phlebas is not especially a modern grail quest, no more so than any heroic stomp in search of a vaguely numinous thingy. But like Eliot's epitaph for the drowned Phoenician sailor, the whole novel may be construed as an act of commemoration, an epic moral exemplum delivered generations later by a machine to a pregnant young woman. If this is irony it is slight, a gesture discountenancing macho endurance after celebrating it at great length in great detail. This elegiac afterthought does not transform the preceding four hundred pages of blood and thunder so much as slide them deftly away to a distance from which they need trouble us no more.

The Jaguar Hunter
by Lucius Shepard *(Arkham House, 1987, 402 pp, $21.95)*

The Planet on the Table
by Kim Stanley Robinson *(Tor, hardback, 1986, 245 pp, $14.95; Orbit, paperback, 1987, 256 pp, £2.95)*

reviewed by Roz Kaveney

Perhaps it comes of too many late nights with smoke and shifting lights hurting the eyes in low-rent nightclubs, but there has never been, in the smoggy days of the urban sprawls, in the tales of people bruising their brains on computers and their hearts on rock singers and professional assassins, anything much that this reader at least could associate with notions of escape, or that recuperation of the sensibilities which jaded aristocratic ages found in pastoral. Cyberpunk has always meant the continuation of the business of urban realism by other means, sometimes rather melodramatic and glitzy ones. Which is a necessary job, but not the only job that needs doing. Part of the purpose of fiction, we may take it, has been to construct exemplary tales, from which we might learn to conduct ourselves more decorously, and fictions which remind us of the glittering tawdry complexity of the world in which we standardly make the wrong moral choice, for reasons that seemed quite good at the time are not equipped to do this. The ethical preoccupations of the two writers under consideration are often more than a little overt, and in both cases they generally make the issues more easy of resolution by placing them in contexts such that there are no flashing neons and sudden noises to confuse us. At the end of Robinson's "The Lucky Strike", the flier who has refused to drop the Hiroshima bomb and been condemned to death for it, quizzes the priest who has been sent to him about the way firing squads are allowed, by the presence of a blank charge in one rifle to delude themselves that they are not guilty of the condemned man's death; but, says January, "I *know*". Robinson is not saying that all moral choices are easy: merely that the fact that it is possible for an artist to construct one which is indicates the possibility that some such simple choices exist in the real world, and that even choices that are not simple need to be made. In the alternate world January inhabits, his dropping of the bomb on comparatively empty land induced the Japanese surrender that for us can only be a hypothesis. Part of the purpose of exemplary tales is at times to offer the consolation, unavailable in an open and realist universe, that a choice has in the long term been correct, objectively judged rather than merely in the fallible heart of the chooser—what an unsympathetic critic might term the moral equivalent of thimble-rigging.

A significant portion of Shepard's short works as included here have as a part of their purpose the portrayal of the generally retrogressive effect of the intervention of America and Americans in the outside world. Even when he is writing tales which bear some family relationship to the conventional horror story, there is often a sense that it is American minds, rather than simply human ones, which are not meant to know certain things: the one story in which his characters cope comparatively successfully with the supernatural and are not overwhelmed and coopted by it is "How the Wind Spoke at Madaket", where the menace to hand is more or less homegrown, and the final victor over it is a drunken old Maine fisherwoman rather than someone more American in the sense of urban and

affluent and in some degree corrupt. (Shepard has little sense of his own profession as especially praiseworthy: the failed hero of "How the Wind Spoke on Madaket" is a writer, as is the human villain of "A Spanish Lesson"—some have even claimed to know which writer the latter is; and the Caribbean milieu of "Black Coral" and "A Traveller's Tale" is sufficiently similar to that of Avram Davidson's Limekiller stories and sufficiently darker in its portrayal of poverty to act as an implied rebuke to the older writer.)

Two stories have as their theme the eventual direct intervention of American troops in Central America. Shepard is sufficiently convinced, reasonably enough, of the utter abhorrence of participation in such a war, that he takes it as read that it is legitimate to assume the moral guilt of his protagonists and the fairness of what happens to them; such is the forcefulness of these stories that he makes the reader share that conviction as well. The reason why the tale of the supernatural has historically more often than not been reactionary or authoritarian in tone is that it is generally easier for reactionaries and authoritarians to operate the simple-minded mechanisms of grue and retribution that such tales need; the career of the passionate woolyminded liberal King, and here of the score-settling anti-imperialist Shepard, prove that this is not necessarily the case. In one of these two stories, "Salvador", Shepard takes a comparatively conventional plot, the burned-out soldier who will show the folk of his town precisely what the war is like, and makes it new and magical. The Central America of Shepard's tales is not a simple backdrop but the central America of magic realism, and perhaps also of dubious gurus like Castañeda. At the least, Shepard is capable of using a universe in which the claims made for the magic rituals of Central American men of power are correct; he wants the damned of the earth to have their ways of hitting back and if their revenges are those of dreams and fairy tales, well that is, he says as he gives them to them, better than nothing. The longer of the two Central American war stories, "R&R", is a complex text, but certainly a part of its appeal and its structure is that of the various Grimm *Märchen* in which three brothers set out and meet their several fates, the three brothers here being three American soldiers who have agreed to spend their leave together, and the intriguing variation being that it may be the shadowy Gilbey who deserts, rather than the protagonist Mingolla, who returns to the war zone with an ambiguous prophecy of a Blighty wound, who will prove to have been the fortunate younger third. It is the complexity of "R&R" with its other features including a tale within a tale, a heroine who may intend the hero's corruption or death and may be quite right to do so, and a fine episode where semiferal children on a bridge offer Mingolla an epiphany of the realities of sexism and power, that make it so satisfying a story; just as it is the sheer effort that has gone into his revivifying of the clichéd plots of "Salvador" and "The Jaguar Hunter" that make them a joy. If there is a weak story in this book it is the one which deals in prescription rather than punishment, "The End of Life as We Know It", in which an American couple wastrelling among the poor are conscripted into virtue, he as guerilla's medic and she as an adept's disciple. The answer to the question "What is to be done?" has rarely been especially palatable; equally rarely alas has it been answered in especially worthwhile fictions. Shepard as moralist is sufficiently stern, sufficiently capable in "A Spanish Lesson" of using *in propria persona* language like "for the sake of my soul" that he can make moral choice seem simple because the damnations he displays are so total; his paths to virtue seem artificial by comparison.

The dreamy side of Shepard is not there only as the servant of the moralist. We already know from the strange hierarchical world, creation of which instructs the zombie hero of *Green Eyes* in how to make voodoo work for him in the real world of the novel, just how adept Shepard is with a different sort of fable, and in this collection we have him telling us about the moral universe for once in an entirely different way. "The Man Who Painted the Dragon Griaule" does so partly as a joke, partly as a scam, partly as an experiment in a sort of conceptual art, partly because he has been manipulated by the ancient and paralytic Griaule into what amounts to a sort of euthanasia. It is only in a world that is totally an artefact that Shepard can relax enough to admit the possibility of moral complexity.

By comparison, Kim Stanley Robinson is altogether laxer; and some of the stories in *The Planet on the Table* have never a moral between them, though in general it is the weaker ones and the ones which have as their purpose the construction of universes of style and feel which he was to use later. In very different ways, "Mercurial" and "Coming Back to Dixieland" are studies for the novel *The Memory of Whiteness,* the former exploring in particular in a deliberately footling detective story some of the stylistic affectations which, to use so well in *Memory,* he had to use less well here, as well as sharing some of the preoccupations with authenticity of text that dominate *Icehenge*. "Coming Back to Dixieland" is an exercise of another kind, a story about a miners' jazzband competing for the grant that will take the players away from hopeless degradation for a while, in which no one ever actually talks of winning this one for the Gipper or of doing the show right here in the barn or of going on the stage as a dancer and having to come back as a star, but in which all of those tropes and many others are sufficiently present that one suspects Robinson was primarily involved in having a good time embarassing himself into writing an sf novel about music as competitive sport that would not, as *Memory* does not, smell of Hollywood. In the introduction, Robinson is mythically lectured by James Joyce's statue on the hard work owed by writer and reader alike; the inclusion of these two comparatively feeble stories is his allowing us to study his workroom and his working methods. With a congenial arrogance, he is making us do some of the work of appreciating him.

Much of the time, the morals in Robinson are less public than those in Shepard. At the culmination of "Venice Drowned" the boatman Carlo abandons the possibility of murderous wrath at the public issue of the despoliation of the art treasures of a finally sunken Venice for a private ethic of contracts honoured: "Let the Merchant's Law Be Just, His Weight True, and His Covenants Faithful." There are worse credos for an artist to express. The two old friends in "Ridge Running" make a hash of handling a trip in the mountains with a friend rehabilitated after extensive brain damage, but not a shameful hash since the important fact is that they have the commitment to try. January's choice in "The Lucky Strike" is a public one in its results, and is known by him to be one, but it is based on a private sense of fair play and on direct experience of the London Blitz rather than on more abstract principles. The boy Manuel in "Black Air" is saved from the wreck of the Armada not by his half-understood psychic powers but by an appeal in a Gaelic he does not understand but has overheard while nursing the sick: a universal appeal for mercy, which he is able to request because he has spontaneously shown it. In the work of both of these new writers, Kipling's Gods of the Copy Book Headings are congenially alive and well.

The real differences which produce the likenesses between these two writers come to the fore in the locations in which they set their tales and which they devote such intensity to making us see. Shepard cares about his places because he has been there and shared the lives of their inhabitants: Robinson cares about them because he has gone to the trouble of making them up. But what they share is a sense of those locations being in general personal and private property, not least when Shepard is rescuing "his" locations from other writers or when Robinson is claiming territory like Venice or the Invincible Armada which have not in general been touched on by writers in his chosen genre. It is because of this sense of place, and the vigorous proprietorship that both authors feel over their painted stages, that we are prepared to accept from both of them the homilies as pulpits for the preaching of which they have made these pocket universes their own. Much can be done with science fiction and the other fantasy genres as collective enterprises in which conceits and tropes and topoi are gradually refined, nor is either of these authors, even at their best, always entirely original. But their passions whether for their autonomous ownership of their creations, or for the anti-imperialist cause, or for the solitary pursuit of artistic excellence, make the finest of their stories vibrate like a string tautened and plucked.

Equal Rites
by Terry Pratchett *(Gollancz, 1987, 200 pp, £9.95)*

reviewed by David Langford

Humour and fantasy traditionally go well together, to the extent that those first three words form the title of a long-ago F. Anstey omnibus. Humour and today's fantasy genre . . . that's different, since the publishing category created by Tolkien's success seems distinctly short of indigenous humour with any real bite. The popular *Unknown* vein of fantasy (from the De Camp/Pratt "Harold Shea" stories, Heinlein's *Magic, Inc.* and Anderson's *Operation Chaos* to such latecomers as Niven's "Not Long Before the End") achieved its deadpan effects by applying engineering logic to the irrational, assimilating fairyland into hard sf. Most other attempts at funny genre fantasy tend to run out of jokes which emerge naturally (all right, "organically") from the actual material. Instead they beat the reader unmercifully with the imported bladder of anachronism: I'll just mention *Bored of the Rings,* which despite a few shrewd pokes at Tolkien founders under its authors' conviction that American brand names are inherently hilarious. I will not mention Robert Asprin, thanks, nor Piers Anthony's dismal puns.

What I like about Terry Pratchett is that he's whole-heartedly funny and can spoof the genre from inside—from an affectionate and informed standpoint, just as he did with Nivenesque hard-sf tropes in his earlier novel *Strata.* The *Equal Rites* blurb insists that he "is to fantasy what Douglas Adams is to science fiction". Fair enough as regards wit and to some extent popularity: misleading if you take it to mean that Pratchett is merely using a few easily picked-up genre elements as a flashy vehicle for nihilistic humour. The best parodies are written by those who know and love the original.

Pratchett knows his stuff. *The Colour of Magic,* his first book in this vein, gets in some sly digs at (amongst others) Fritz Leiber, Anne McCaffrey, H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, Jack Vance and Larry Niven, all within the framework of a plot so daft as to be

indescribable. The setting is the flat Discworld, which as you might expect is supported on the backs of four elephants standing on the shell of the colossal turtle A'Tuin, who plods through the void to some unknowable destiny while the world's inhabitants dangle low-tech space probes over the edge in hope of solving the ultimate riddle of A'Tuin's sex. Magic on Discworld is a dodgy business, with thaumatoactivity all too liable to leak through spell books' reinforced covers and contaminate the landscape (one tries hard not to remember the author's real-life occupation as PR man at a certain power station). The dottiness continues in a second novel, *The Light Fantastic,* which devotes more space to Pratchett's most popular character, the eternally grim, humourless and skeletal straight-man Death. *Equal Rites* is the third Discworld book, and spies inform me that at least two more are in preparation.

This current offering has less overt parody and more of a conventional plot, inspired by observation of fantasy's recurring magical sexism. Even Ursula Le Guin subscribes to it in her Earthsea trilogy. Wizards get to ransack the ultimate secrets of heaven and hell, while witches give you warts. Enter, therefore, the wizard Drum Billet, knowing the hour of his death and fated to pass on his staff and power to the new-born wizard who by Discworld numerology must be the eighth son of an eighth son: and of course it emerges too late the baby is a girl, now landed with the destiny of following a profession which has about as many equal opportunities for women as the College of Cardinals.

Young Eskarina, or Esk, is taken in hand by the powerfully idiosyncratic and smelly Granny Weatherwax for partial education in witchery—most of which is merely smoke and mirrors ("headology", in Granny's phrase), although there's an interesting notion in "Borrowing", whereby witches can briefly sit as navigators in birds' or other creatures' minds. This first shows Pratchett in more serious mood with a Le Guinish little fable when Esk overdoes Borrowing and nearly loses her identity: later, in a characteristically manic development, the technique is extended to the "mind" of a vast university building, and "For the first time in [Esk's] life she knew what it was like to have balconies."

There's plenty of riotous incident as Granny escorts her protegée on a long journey, replete with jaundiced reappraisals of fantasy clichés, to storm the gates of all-male Unseen University. Here the wizardly academics take themselves very seriously indeed:

> "... He's an Eighth Level wizard and a 33° mage, actually. "
> "You mean he's bent?" said Granny ... "They all call themselves the Lord High This and the Imperial That, it's all part of the game. Even magicians do it, you'd think they'd be more sensible at least, but no, they call around saying they're the Amazing-Bonko-and-Doris."

Which indicates that Pratchett isn't averse to anachronistic humour (unwanted thoughts arrive in Esk's mind "like the unexpected limbo dancer under the lavatory door of Life"): but he doesn't let the one-liners wreck his story logic. This continues amusingly and semi-predictably within the portals of Unseen, where an innocent mathematical theoretician is meddling with barriers sealing off the very nasty Dungeon Dimensions, full of those hungry uglies described in the unspeakable *Necrotelecomnicon* or *Liber Paginarum Fulvarum:* "The whole thing had a self-assembled look, as if the author had heard about anatomy but couldn't quite get to grips with the idea."

The conclusion features an oddly chilling confrontation with such Things, a partly relevant duel of sorcery, and some final philosophizing about the use and non-use of magic which carries an Earthsea-like conviction. Naturally, Esk and Granny manage to save the day. Without being as continuously and unremittingly funny as the first two

Discworld episodes, *Equal Rites* is a pleasant read which steers a wobbly but successful course between anarchic breakdown (whereby the reader is reduced to waiting glumly for the next joke) and taking its plot too seriously. It's unsafe to analyse light humour any more deeply than this: Pratchett's ultimate secret lies in the fact that without betraying earth-shaking literary genius, his writing is unpretentious and likeable. With a firm grasp of realities, too: there's instant conviction in the labels Granny laboriously writes for her potions, typically running: "Dylewt in won pint warter and won droppe in hys tee and be shure to wear loose clowthing allso that no visitors exspected . . ."

The Net
by Loren J. MacGregor *(Ace, 1987, 225 pp)*

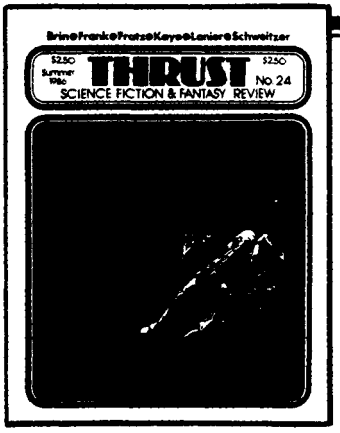
reviewed by Scott Bradfield

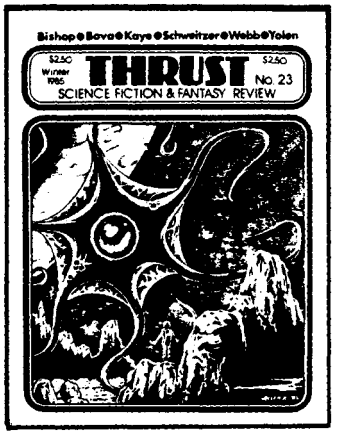
This is a novel obviously written by someone who has read Delany's *Nova* about twenty times, and Gibson's *Neuromancer* twice. Unfortunately it generates nothing new or even very readable on its own, and, like the later generations of video tape duplications, all the original lines and colors have grown rather muddy and incoherent. Nobody in this book, and especially not MacGregor himself, ever simply *says* something; rather they try to be "stylish". "Stylish" for MacGregor simply means to so twist and convolute the prediction of sentence that one's reader never realizes those sentences have nothing to say in the first place. Rather than say "Look like we're busy, or we'll be bothered," MacGregor's characters say things like "If you don't want to head a parade of gawkers, we'd best look purposeful for a moment." MacGregor emulates Delany's most affected and disingenuous prose without once realizing Delany's remarkable sense of pace, his wonderful disdain for exposition. There are only two or three scenes in this entire novel; the rest of the time, people just *talk* about how they *feel:* about being star pilots, politicos, aliens, etc. Nothing ever happens; rather everyone is described going about their interminable daily routines preparing for something to happen.

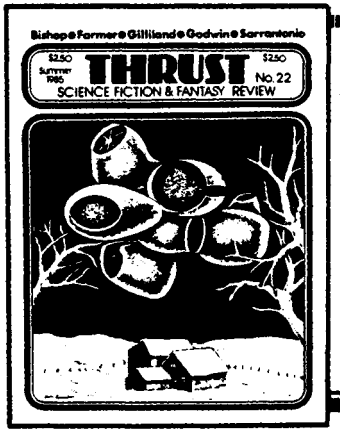
The "Net" is this sort of psychic network of communication which purportedly extends through space and time (though, like almost all of this novel's speculations, the most interesting complexities of the idea are never developed by, or serve to develop, scenes, characters or situations). Mainly this "net" allows space-crews to cybernetically plug into one another and so see, touch, taste etc. space travel. What's significant about the horrid pace of this book, however, is that MacGregor merely *tells* us about the importance of this "net" for nearly one hundred and *fifty* pages before an actual scene of space travel by means of it has occurred. What do occur are long eventless scenes in which Jason, a centenarian female space captain and scion of some vast interstellar corporation, bums around New Crete with her crew, and everybody *explains* how sensitive and emotionally attached and fun they all are. It's thoroughly exhausting. The actual plot is so relentlessly disregarded I'm tempted to call it a sub-plot; a rival corporate family, the Papandreaus, are trying to give Jason all sorts of trouble by hassling her crew (this happens in the space travel scene, about p.150), and, throughout the book's long preamble, tempting them into stealing some ruby from a museum.

MacGregor thinks one emotionally affects a reader by *telling* them how unequivocally sad things are. There's some character named the Rat, who never even appears onstage in

this novel until he's been jailed for trying to help his Captain. Subsequently he's flogged; he dies. Then, for twenty pages, everybody talks about what a nice guy he was. In twenty pages, Rat could have acted, spoken, *been* a person of interest. He never *is*. And while MacGregor's special expertise, Carr's introduction tells us, is law, the actual legal scenes in this book are impossibly mundane. In one, Jason visits her lawyer, who explains how important it is to be honest with your lawyer or else he can't help you; later, at the end, Jason conveniently evades the retribution of Dimitri Papandreau after murdering his son by means of the Net because she and her lawyers realize Dimitri has no *legal* evidence against her; this is after the entire novel has been preparing us to believe Dimitri's a really ruthless ruler of his planet, corrupt and *everything*. The Net, which presumably conditions much of this future culture, hasn't even created, after a few hundred years or so, an even negligible effect on interplanetary criminology. If the Net allows people to murder someone psychically, why hasn't interstellar society developed legal safeguards or regulations to control its use, particularly when its technology already allows all sorts of "high-tech" options, such as retinal replays of crimes? Why don't other "adapted" types "monitor" use of the Net? The writer of this book is not unintelligent; he's just so busy trying to affect hokey language, he never thinks. There is a fragment of a good novel buried here; about three-quarters of the way through, as Jason and her crew are lifting off (however incoherent and contrived their actual motives seem by now), their cybernetic fusion is psychically "attacked" by Alecko Papandreau; the scene moves quickly, the responses of the characters appear, for once, authoritative and convincing. Alecko, however, never convinces; he merely does bad things to justify Jason's retribution, her "no-nonsense" space-Captain hauteur. Worse: he is a boring, characterless villain. MacGregor should probably be given another chance, but not this book.







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