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Numbers 7 and 8 (Double issue), March 1975

editorial

Peter Nicholls

We're late again, but we hope to make up for it by giving you a special double issue. We are not typeset as I write, but I calculate that this issue will be about 212 pages long. Subscribers will be losing no money by receiving a double issue, and over-the-counter buyers will be receiving a small discount.

We decided on a double issue for these reasons: first, we had enough material, and if we held half of it over, it would begin to look out of date; second, we wanted to bring out issue number eight in 1974, bringing the second (subscription) year to an end in the third (calendar) year of publication, thus giving special cheer to librarians, who are rightly fond of subscription years that coincide with real ones.

That brings me to the sad news. We have decided at last to face reality. It is just not possible to bring out four adequate issues every year. We are now officially *going to do what in practice we have been doing. From 1975 (volume 3), there will be only three issues a year. This means, irritatingly, that there is yet another change in the annual subscription rate. This time, of course, it goes down – but you only get three issues for your money. All those whose present subscriptions are still good will naturally get the four numbers they have paid for, but from then on they will be transferred to the new system.*

The new rates will be found on page 1. We are able to hold them very close (on a proportional basis) to those rates announced in Foundation 6. *This is because, although costs continue to rise very swiftly, our subscriptions have doubled in the last year.*

We have re-introduced a letter column in this issue. A number of correspondents have asked that we do so, and we are more than happy to publish letters of comment if we receive *them. If you feel moved to comment on anything you read in our pages (or indeed outside them) please do so. It might even earn you a complimentary copy.*

We are very doubtful if there is such a genre as science fiction poetry. But if it comes to that, we are often doubtful if there is such a genre as science fiction. So we publish, this time, work by four poets, with a fairly clear conscience. Two of them, Jeni Couzyn and Stanley Trevor, clearly draw their inspiration (in part) directly from science fiction. Leonard Isaacs is a professor at Michigan State University, and is co-organizer, together with Professor R. Glenn Wright, of the Clarion East Science Fiction Writers' Workshop. His poems, which much amuse us, result from the 1973 Workshop. Marilyn Hacker is the author of the volume Presentation Piece *(Viking Compass $2.95) which was the 1973 Lamont Poetry Selection. We publish her poem "The Terrible Children" here because it is a fine work. If pressed to justify its inclusion on thematic grounds we would argue that, although it is not science fiction* per se, *it is in a metaphoric sense a poem about the aliens among us. Some of us might even be them.*

In this double issue, our review section is longer and stronger than ever. We hope it is not too long, and we have broken it into two parts to make for a less concentrated exposure for our hapless readers. At a recent editorial meeting we decided that Foundation *was beginning to take on a pattern that does not make us especially happy. It is strong at either end. More and more, the series* The Profession of Science Fiction *at one end of the journal, and the reviews at the other, are squeezing out what we would like to see as the meat in the sandwich: critical and sociological articles on science fiction.*

Our problem is a shortage of meat. Critics who are happy to undertake a review tend to pause before committing themselves to what may be a 6,000 word article. They don't even get a free book as compensation. We very much hope that more critical articles are submitted to us, but meanwhile, we try to compensate with the review section itself.

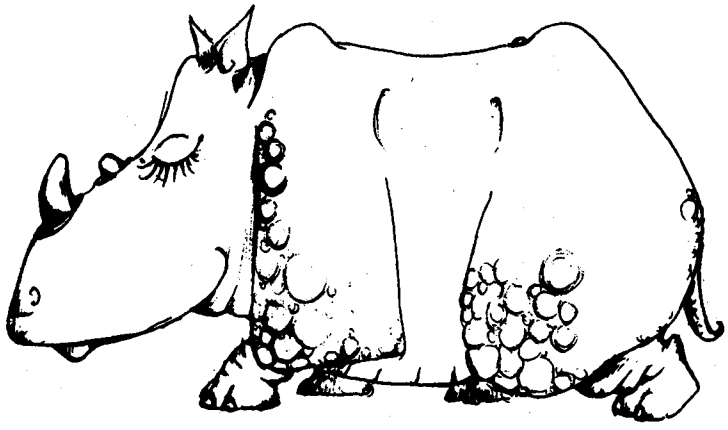
Book reviews are generally fairly short, do not go far beyond the immediate book under discussion, and tend (unlike critical articles, where it is usually assumed that the subject is fairly familiar to the readers) to summarize the story. We have been encouraging, in addition to the standard type of review, a more expansive kind, which falls somewhere between the short review and the critical article proper. In this kind of review, the writer's work is usually considered in a wider context, both in relation to the whole of the genre, and to the development of the author's work as seen in relation to his earlier books. In this issue, examples are Ian Watson's reviews of The Sheep Look Up *and* Concrete Island, *Brian Stableford on* Star Rider, *Bruce Gillespie on* Getting Into Death, *and my own reviews of* Inverted World *and* Time Enough for Love. *These reviews are in no way "better" than the others, but in some ways they are different. Perhaps in future we should put them into a separate section. We hope you notice that you are getting, in effect, more critical articles than seem to appear on the* Contents *page.*

The Science Fiction Foundation held its Annual General Meeting in July. At this time it adopted a new constitution, which allows it to expand its membership beyond the Council which directs its activities. The Council itself has been strengthened by the inclusion of author and critic, Ian Watson. The general membership (which is by invitation only) has been started off with the inclusion of a number of people whose services to science fiction have been undoubted. (The general membership can only include either academics from the North East London Polytechnic or people, who in the opinion of the Council, have rendered notable service to science fiction.

The new members, about 25 so far, include writers, critics, teachers and publishers, resident in the United Kingdom. We hope to include an American and European Membership later on. The new members include Kingsley Amis, Brian Aldiss, Robert Conquest, Samuel Delany, Malcolm Edwards and Bob Shaw.

At that same meeting, a new editorial team for Foundation *was elected for 1975. Christopher Priest and myself will retain our positions, and Malcolm Edwards (widely known in the U.K. for his splendid editorship of the British Science Fiction Association journal,* Vector, *from which he has now retired) will become Associate Editor in place of George Hay. We have referred before to the sterling qualities of George Hay, without whom* Foundation *would not have come into being. Thank you, George.*

August 26th, 1974.



Within the year, Weidenfeld & Nicolson plan to publish a volume of six autobiographical pieces by science fiction writers, edited by Brian W. Aldiss, and titled Hell's Cartographers. *In our previous issue,* Foundation 6, *we published the contribution by Brian Aldiss. We are delighted to have obtained permission, this time, to use the contribution by Robert Silverberg, especially as (so far as we are presently aware) the book has not yet found an American publisher. Mr. Silverberg is one of the most distinguished of American writers, and we are pleased, by publishing his article in* Foundation, *to give him access to his compatriots. (Half of our readers come from the U.S.A. and Canada). The other four writers (mentioned below) represented in* Hell's Cartographers *are Damon Knight, Harry Harrison, Alfred Bester and Frederik Pohl. To read their contributions, it will be necessary to buy the book. We are grateful to the generosity of Brian Aldiss and Robert Silverberg in letting us use their contributions, but I suspect that Mr. Aldiss will not allow us to pre-empt any more of the book's contents.*

the profession of science fiction: ix: sounding brass, tinkling cymbal

Robert Silverberg

". . . and even Silverberg, who sometimes, with all his skill and knowledge and sophistication, does tend to the androidal . . . ."

— John Clute, in *New Worlds 5*

* * *

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

— I Corinthians, 13

* * *

At last to speak of one's self. An odd temptation, which mostly I have resisted, in the past, maintaining that I'm not yet ready to undertake a summing up, or that I'm in the midst of some intricate new transition still not fully understood, or that I'm bored with myself and talking about myself. Yet I *have* granted all sorts of interviews, and spoken quite explicitly, all the while protesting my love of privacy; the one thing I've never attempted is explicit written autobiography. I manage to hold all poses at once, modest and exhibitionistic, esthete and man of commerce, a puritan and a libertine: probably the truth is that I have no consistent positions at all. We'll see.

Autobiography. Apparently one should not name the names of those one has been to bed with, or give explicit figures on the amount of money one has earned, those being the two data most eagerly sought by readers; all the rest is legitimate to reveal. Very well. The essential starting point, for me, is the confession (and boast) that I am a man who is living his own adolescent fantasies. When I was sixteen or so I yearned to win fame as a writer of science fiction, to become wealthy enough to indulge in whatever amusements I chose, to know the love of fair women, to travel widely, to live free from the pressures and perils of ordinary life. All these things have come to me, and more; I have fewer complaints to make about the hand destiny has dealt me than anyone I know. Here at what I assume is my midpoint I feel a certain inner security, a self-satisfaction, which I suppose borders occasionally on smugness. (But not on complacency. The past is unchangeable and the present delightful, yet the future still must be regarded warily. I live in California, a land where the earth might literally open beneath my feet this afternoon; and I've already once had, in my pre-California incarnation, the experience of awakening before dawn to find my world in flames.)

Because my life has been so generally satisfactory, and because I'm a literary enough man to know the dangers of *hubris,* I sometimes affect a kind of self-deprecatory shyness, a who-*me?* kind of attitude, whenever I am singled out for special attention. This pose gets more and more difficult to maintain as the years go on and the accomplishments and money and

awards pile up; by now certain objective measures of achievement exist, for me, and there's an element of hypocrisy in trying to deny them purely for the sake of trying to avoid the fate that chops down the boastful. Ten years ago, or even five, I probably would have refused the opportunity to contribute to this book, claiming that I was unworthy (and privately fearing that others would say so if I did not). To hell with that now.

I am the youngest of the six contributors here: the youngest by nearly a decade, I suspect, since as I write this I'm still more than a year short of my 40th birthday, and my companions, I know, all cluster around the half-century mark. A familiar feeling, that one. I was always the youngest in any group, owlishly precocious, a nastily bright little boy who was reading at three, writing little stories at six, spouting learned stuff about European dynasties and the sexual habits of plants at seven or eight, publishing illegible magazines at thirteen, and selling novels at eighteen. I was too unruly and too clever to remain in the same class at school with my contemporaries, so I grew up two years younger than all my friends, thinking of myself as small and weak and incomplete. Eventually, by a process of surviving, I caught up with everyone. I am the oldest in my immediate circle of friends, with a beard alas now tinged with grey, and I am as tall as most and taller than many, and within the tiny world of science fiction I have become something of an elder statesman, and the wounds I received by being fourteen years old in a universe of sixteen-year-olds are so well sheathed in scar-tissue now that I might as well consider them healed. And yet it still is strange to be included as an equal in this particular group of writers, since three of them – Alfred Bester, Damon Knight, Frederik Pohl – were among my own literary idols when I was indulging in those adolescent fantasies of a writer's career twenty-odd years ago. A fourth, Harry Harrison, had not yet begun writing seriously then himself, but he was the editor who first paid me for writing anything, in 1953; and only Brian Aldiss, the originator of this project, played no part in shaping me in my teens, for I had never heard his name until I was myself an established writer. Yet I make no apologies for being here among my elders. Here we all are: professional writers, diligent craftsmen, successful creators – artists, if you will. And good friends as well.

I am an only child, born halfway through the Great Depression. (There would have been a sibling, I think, when I was about seven, but it miscarried; I often wonder what pattern my life would have taken had I not grown up alone, pampered, self-indulgent.) My ancestors were Jews from Eastern

Europe, and my grandparents, three of whom survived well into my adulthood, were reared in Poland or Russia in villages beyond my easy comprehension. My father was born in London in the first year of this century, and came to the United States a few years thereafter. My mother was born in Brooklyn, New York, and so was I.

I have no very fond recollections of my childhood. I was puny, sickly, plagued with allergies and freckles, and (I thought) quite ugly. I was too clever by at least half, which made for troubles with my playmates. My parents were remote figures; my father was a certified public accountant, spending his days and many of his evenings adding up endless columns of red figures on long yellow sheets, and my mother taught school, so that I was raised mainly by Lottie, our mulatto housekeeper, and by my loving and amiable maternal grandmother. It was a painful time, lonely and embittering; I did make friends but, growing up in isolation and learning none of the social graces, I usually managed to alienate them quickly, striking at them with my sharp tongue if not my feeble fists. On the other hand, there were compensations: intelligence is prized in Jewish households, and my parents saw to it that mine was permitted to develop freely. I was taken to museums, given all the books I wanted, and allowed money for my hobbies. I took refuge from loneliness in these things; I collected stamps and coins, harpooned hapless butterflies and grass-hoppers, raided the neighbour's gardens for specimens of leaves and flowers, stayed up late secretly reading, hammered out crude stories on an ancient typewriter, all with my father's strong encouragement and frequent enthusiastic participation, and it mattered less and less that I was a troubled misfit in the classroom if I could come home to my large private room in the afternoon and, quickly zipping through the too-easy homework, get down to the serious business of the current obsessional hobby.

Children who find the world about them distasteful turn readily to the distant and the alien. The lure of the exotic seized me early. These were the years of World War II, and real travel was impossible, but in 1943 a friend of my father's gave me a subscription to *The National Geographic Magazine,* and I was off to Zanzibar and Surinam and Jamaica in my imagination decades before I ever reached those places in actuality. (Typically, I began buying old *National Geographics* with lunatic persistence, and didn't rest until I had them all, from the 1880's on. I still have them.) Then, an hour's journey from home on the subway, there was the American Museum of Natural History, with its mummies and arrowheads, its mastodons and glyptodons,

above all its brontosaurs and tyrannosaurs; Sunday after Sunday my father and I made the pilgrimage, and I revelled in the wonders of prehistory, soberly lecturing him on the relative chronological positions of Neanderthal and Peking and Piltdown Man. (Yes, Piltdown, this was 1944, remember.) From dinosaurs and other such fantastic fossils to science fiction was but a short journey: the romantic, exotic distant past is closely tied to the romantic, exotic distant future in my imagination.

So there was Jules Verne when I was nine – I must have taken that voyage with Captain Nemo a hundred times – and H.G. Wells when I was ten, most notably *The Time Machine* (which promised to show me all the incredible eons I would never live to know) but also *Moreau* and *War of the Worlds* and the myriad short stories and even an obscure satire called *Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island,* to which I often returned because Mr. Blettsworthy encountered living ground sloths. There was Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,* which also I read repeatedly. (How early my fascination with travel emerged!) I dabbled in comic books, too, and I have gaudy memories of Buck Rogers and *Planet Comics.* But somehow I missed Edgar Rice Burroughs altogether; and it was not until early 1948, when I was already a veteran of scores of hardbound science fiction books, that I even knew such things as science fiction magazines existed.

The magazines mostly repelled me by their covers and their titles. I did buy *Weird Tales* – my first one had an Edmond Hamilton novelet about the Norse gods, which of course delighted me since I had gone through whole libraries of Norse mythology in early boyhood. I bought *Amazing Stories,* then the sleaziest representative of the genre, because it happened to publish an uncharacteristically respectable looking issue about then. I bought John Campbell's dignified little *Astounding Science Fiction,* but found the stories opaque and unrewarding to my thirteen-year-old mind. But, because I was rather a snob, I would not even open magazines with names like *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and *Startling Stories,* especially since their covers were bright with paintings of hideous monsters and scantily clad damsels. (Sex was very frightening to me just then, and I had sworn never to have anything to do with women.) More than a year passed before I approached those magazines in what was by then an unquenchable thirst for science fiction, and discovered they were publishing some of the best material of the day.

But there were the books: the wondrous Healy-McComas *Adventures in Time and Space,* and the big Groff Conklin titles, and Wollheim's *Pocket*

Book of Science Fiction, and the other pioneering anthologies. My father was more than a little baffled by my increasing obsession with all this trash, when previously I occupied myself with decent books on botany and geology and astronomy, but he saw to it that I bought whatever I wanted. One collection in particular had enormous impact on me: Wollheim's *Portable Novels of Science,* published in 1945 and discovered by me three years later. It contained Wells' *First Men in the Moon,* which amused me; Taine's *Before the Dawn,* which fed my always passionate interest in dinosaurs; Lovecraft's *Shadow Out of Time,* which gave me that peep into unattainable futures that originally led me to science fiction; and above all Stapledon's *Odd John,* which spoke personally to me as I suppose it must to any child who is too bright for his own good. I was up almost till dawn reading those novels, and *Odd John* marked me as, possibly, no other ever has.

I was at that time still talking of some sort of career in the sciences, perhaps in botany, perhaps in paleontology, perhaps atronomy. But some flaws in my intelligence were making themselves apparent, to me and to my teachers if not to my parents: I had a superb memory and a quick wit, but I lacked depth, originality, and consistency; my mind was like a hummingbird's, darting erratically over surfaces. I wanted to encompass too much, and mastered nothing, and though I always got high marks in any subject that caught my interest, I noticed, by the time I was thirteen, that some of my classmates were better than I at grasping fundamental principles and drawing new conclusions from them. I doubt that I would have been of much value as a scientist. But already I was writing, and writing with precocious skill – for school newspapers and magazines, for my own abominably mimeographed magazine, and, without success, for professional science fiction magazines. Off went stories, double-spaced and bearing accurate counts of words (612, 1814, 2705). They were dreadful, naturally, and they came back, usually with printed rejection slips but sometimes – when the editors realised they were dealing with a bright child of thirteen or fourteen and not with a demented adult – with gentle letters suggesting ways I might improve my style or my sense of plot. And I spoke openly of a career in writing, perhaps earning my living as a journalist while writing science fiction as a sideline. (Why science fiction? Because it was science fiction that I preferred to read, though I had been through Cervantes and Shakespeare and that crowd too. And because writing science fiction allowed me to give free play to those fantasies of space and time and dinosaurs and supermen that were so gratifying to me. And because I had stumbled into the world of science fiction fandom, a world much more comfortable than the real

world of bullies and athletes and sex, and I knew that my name on the contents page of *Astounding* or *Startling* would win me much prestige in fandom, prestige that I could hardly hope to gain among my classmates.)

So, then, the stories went forth, awkward imitations on a miniature scale of my favourite moments out of Lovecraft or Stapledon or Taine or Wells, and the stories came back, and I read textbooks on the narrative art and learned a good deal, and began also to read the stories in the science fiction magazines with a close analytical eye, measuring the ratio of dialogue to exposition, the length of paragraphs, and other technical matters that, I suppose, few fifteen-year-olds study as carefully as I did. Nothing got published, or even came close, but I was growing in skill.

I was growing in other ways, too. When I was about fourteen I went off, for the first time, to summer camp, where I lived among boys (and girls) of my own age and no longer had to contend with being the youngest and puniest in my peer-group. I had always been known as "Robert", but at camp I was speedily dubbed "Bob", and it seemed to me that I was taking on a new identity. *Robert* was that spindly misfit, that maladjusted, isolated little boy; *Bob* was a healthy, out-going, normal young man. To this day I wince when some stranger presumes on my public persona and addresses me as *Robert* – it sends me rocketing backward in time to the horrors of being ten again. Although I sign my stories *Robert* for reasons of formality, my friends know me as *Bob,* and my parents managed the transition fairly gracefully at my request (though my father sometimes slips, a quarter of a century after the change), and when I occasionally encounter some childhood friend I let him know, rapidly, the name I prefer and the reason I prefer it.

This new Bob was able to cope. He grew to a reasonable height, halting just a bit short of six feet; he became a passable athlete; he discovered how to sustain friendships and how to manage conversations. For a few years I led a split life, introverted and lonely and secretive at home, open and lighthearted and confident during the summers; and by the time I was about seventeen, some integration of the two lives had begun. I had finished high school (where I had become editor of the high-school newspaper and was respected for my skill as a writer) and, by way of surrendering some of my precocity, had declined to go immediately into college. Instead I spent a few months reading and writing, and a few months working in a furniture warehouse on the Brooklyn waterfront, among rough, tough illiterates who found my cultivated manner a charming novelty rather than

a threatening intrusion, and then I went off to the summer camp, not as a camper but as an employee. In the autumn I entered Columbia University with old slates wiped clean: I was no longer morbidly too young, I was free of the local playmates who could never forget the maladjustments of my childhood, I was able to begin in the *Bob* persona, without hauling the burden of my past problems.

I lived away from home, in a little apartment of my own. I manifested previously unknown skills for drinking and carousing. I discovered that women were not really very frightening after all. I plunged myself into new worlds of the mind: into Aquinas and Plato, into Bartok and Schoenberg, into Kafka, Joyce, Mann, Faulkner, Sartre. I continued to read science fiction, but dispassionately, with the eye of one who was soon to be a professional; I was less interested in visions of ultimate tomorrows and more in seeing how Messrs. Bester, Pohl, Knight, Sheckley, Dick, etc., carried off their tricks. One of my stories was published – for a fee of $5, I think – by an amateur magazine called *Different,* operated by a poetess named Lilith Lorraine. Harry Harrison asked me to do an article about fandom for a science-fiction magazine he was editing, and I turned in a competent journalistic job and was paid $30. That was in September, 1953. I sent a short story called "Gorgon Planet" off to a magazine called *Nebula,* published in Scotland by Peter Hamilton, and in January, 1954, he notified me that he would use it, and sent me his cheque for $12.60.

That same month I sold a novel to a major American publisher. The earlier sales could be brushed aside as inconsequential – two weak short stories accepted by obscure magazines, and one specimen of mere journalism – but the novel was something else. I was not yet nineteen years old, and I was a professional writer. I had crossed the threshold.

That novel! its genesis went back almost three years. When I was editor of my high-school newspaper, in 1951, a book appeared for review, a science-fiction novel for boys, published by the Thomas Y. Crowell Company, an old-line New York firm. Steeped as I was in Wells and Heinlein and Stapledon and such, I reviewed this clumsy, naive book scornfully, demolishing it so effectively that in the summer of 1953 the publishing company invited me to examine and criticise, prior to publication, the latest manuscript by that author. I read it and demolished it too, with such thoroughness that the book was never published. This time the Crowell editor asked me to the office and said, in effect, "If you know so much about science-fiction, why don't you try a novel for us yourself?"

I accepted the challenge.

I had attempted a novel once before, at the age of thirteen. It began as two short stories, but I subsequently combined them, elaborated, padded most shamefully, and ended up with an inch-thick manuscript that must have been one of at least coherent hodgepodges ever committed to paper. The outline of the book I suggested to Crowell in September, 1953, was better, but not much. It concerned the trip of four young space cadets to Alpha Centauri on a sort of training cruise. No plot, not too much action. The cadets are chosen, leave for space, stop at Mars and Pluto, reach Alpha Centauri, become vaguely entangled in a revolution going on there, become disentangled, and go home. Some novel.

Every weekend that autumn I wrote two or three chapters, working swiftly despite the pressures of college. When eight chapters were done I submitted them and received an encouraging note urging me to complete the book. It was done by mid-November: nineteen chapters, 145 pages of typescript. I sent it in, heard nothing for two months, and on a Sunday in January, 1954, received a stunning telephone call from the Crowell editor: they were sending me a contract for my novel. Of course, some changes would be required before it could be published.

In March I was sent a severe four-page letter of analysis. Anticlimax after anticlimax, they said; first part of book fine, last half terrible. Though immensely discouraged, I set to work rewriting, trying to build complications and a resolution into my rudimentary story. On June 5 this revision came back to me: I had allowed my main protagonist to achieve his goal by default rather than by positive action, and the publishers wouldn't let me get away with that. I promised to spend the summer considering ways to restructure the book; meanwhile Crowell would consult an outside reader for suggestions and evaluations.

The summer passed. I did no writing, though I began vaguely to hatch a completely new plot turning on my hero's climactic conversion to the revolutionary party. At the end of October the long-awaited reader's report on the manuscript landed in the mailbox of my campus apartment. It made the job I had done on that unpublished book the year before look like praise. What was wrong, I learned, was that I really didn't know how to write. I had no idea of characterisation or plotting, my technique was faulty, virtually everything except my typing was badly done. If possible, the reader said, I should enroll in a writing course at New York University.

A year earlier, I might have been crushed; but by the autumn of 1954

I had sold a couple of competent if uninspired short stories, I had written five or six more that seemed quite publishable to me (ultimately, I sold them all), and I felt that I had a fairly firm technical grasp on the art of fiction, however faulty the execution of my novel might be at the moment. Instead of abandoning the project, I spent three hours considering what I could do to save it, and in the afternoon I telephoned my editor to tell her that I proposed a total rewrite based on the conversion-to-revolution theme. By this time she must have come to doubt her original faith in my promise and talent, but she told me to go ahead.

I knew this was my last chance. The first step was to throw out the first nine chapters, which had survived intact through all the earlier drafts. They were good, solid chapters – it was the end of the story that was weak, not the beginning – but they had little relevance to my new theme. I compressed them into two pages and got my characters off to the Alpha Centauri system as fast as I could. In six weekends of desperate work the new novel, wholly transformed, was done. And on January 2, 1955 – one year almost to the hour since I had been notified that a contract would be offered me – I received a telegram: CONGRATULATIONS ON A WONDERFUL REVISION JOB ALL SET TO GO.

Revolt on Alpha C was published in August, 1955, to generally indifferent reviews ("Inept and unreal . . . a series of old-hat adventures", said *The New York Times.)* Perhaps that was too harsh a verdict: the book is short, innocent, a little foolish, but not contemptible. It remained in print, in its Crowell edition, for seventeen years, earning modest but steady royalties until the printing was exhausted. A paperback edition published in 1959 still seems to enjoy a healthy life, having been through seven or eight printings so far, and in 1972 the book was reissued on two microfiche cards as part of the Xerox Micromedia Classroom Libraries series. This strange persistence of a very young author's very unimportant first novel does not delude me into thinking I must have created a classic unrecognized in its own day, nor do I believe it has much to do with my latter-day prominence in science fiction. That *Revolt on Alpha C* remains in print after nearly twenty years is no more than an odd accident of publishing, but one that I find charming as well as profitable. My father never ceases to ask if the book still brings in royalties, and he is as wonderstruck as I that it does.

I was launched. On the strength of having sold a novel and a few short

stories, I was able to get an agent, Scott Meredith, and he has represented me now for two decades. (There are writers and publishers who will tell you that drawing and quartering is too gentle a fate for him, and there are other writers who have been with him longer than I, with every intention of continuing the relationship until time's end. I think every agent evokes a similarly wide spectrum of responses.) I sent my agent all the unsold short stories in my file, and, assuming that manuscripts bearing his sponsorship would sell far more readily than ones coming in unsolicited from an unknown writer, I awaited a flow of publisher's cheques. The flow was a bit sluggish, though. Two trifling stories sold to minor magazines in June of 1954 and February of 1955 for a total of $40.50; in May, 1955, came $49.50 for a rather more elaborate piece. But several quite ambitious stories, which I thought worthy of the leading magazines of the time, failed to sell at all, from which I began to draw a sinister conclusion: that if I intended to earn a livelihood writing fiction, it would be wiser to use my rapidly developing technical skills to turn out mass-produced formularized stories at high speed, rather than to lavish passion and energy on more individual works that would be difficult to sell.

In the summer of 1955, just as that somber insight was crystallizing in me, Randall Garrett appeared in New York and rented a room in the hotel near Columbia University where I was living. Garrett was about eight years older than I, and had had some two dozen stories published, including several in *Astounding,* the premier magazine of the era. Alone in a strange city, down on his luck, he struck up a curious friendship with me. We were markedly different in personal habits and rhythms, in philosophy, in background; but somehow these differences were a source of vitality rather than disharmony in the collaborative partnership that swiftly evolved. We complemented one another. Garrett was an established professional writer, but his discipline had collapsed and he was writing very little; I was unknown but ambitious, and could force an entire short story out of myself at a single sitting. Garrett had had a scientific education; mine was literary. Garrett was an efficient storyteller, but his prose was mechanical; I had trouble constructing internally consistent plots, but I wrote smoothly and with some grace. Garrett's stories rarely delved into character; I was already concerned, as much as I could be at the age of 20, with emotional and psychological depth. We began to work together.

Until then, I had submitted all my stories by mail or else through my agent. Garrett took me to editorial offices. I met John Campbell of *Astounding,* Bob Lowndes of the esteemed but impoverished *Science Fiction*

Stories, Howard Browne of *Amazing*, Larry Shaw of the newly founded *Infinity*. Editors, Garrett said, bought more readily from writers they had met than from strangers who had only postal contact with them, and lo! it was so. I sold five stories in August of 1955, three in September, three in October, six in November, nine in December. Many of these were collaborations with Garrett, but quite a few were stories I did on my own, capitalising on contacts I had made with his help. Suddenly I was something more than a beginner, here in my final year of college: I was actually earning a living, and quite a good living, by writing. I think the partnership with Garrett accelerated the progress of my career by several years.

Unfortunately there were negative aspects. Once I had assumed, naively, that if I merely wrote the best stories that were in me, editors would recognize their merits and seek my work. Now I was coming to see that there was a quicker road to success – to live in New York, to visit editors regularly, to learn of their issue-by-issue needs and manufacture fiction to fit them. I developed a deadly facility; if an editor needed a 7500-word story of alien conquest in three days to balance an issue about to go to press, he need only phone me and I would produce it. Occasionally I took my time and tried to write the sort of science fiction I respected as a reader, but usually I had trouble selling such stories to the better markets, which reinforced my growing cynicism. By the summer of 1956 – by which time I had graduated from college and had married – I was then the complete writing machine, turning out stories in all lengths at whatever quality the editor desired, from slam-bang adventure to cerebral pseudo-philosophy. No longer willing to agonize over the gulf between my literary ambitions and my actual productions, I wrote with astonishing swiftness, selling fifteen stories in June of 1956, twenty the following month, fourteen (including a three-part serial, done with Garrett, for *Astounding)* the month after that.

This hectic productivity was crowned at the World Science Fiction Convention in September, 1956 when I was voted a special Hugo as the most promising new writer of the year. The basis for the award could only have been my ubiquity, since most of what I had published was carefully-carpentered but mediocre, and much was wholly opportunistic trash. It is interesting to note that the writers I defeated for the trophy were Harlan Ellison, who at the time had had only one or two dismal stories published, and Frank Herbert, whose impressive *Under Pressure* had appeared in *Astounding* the year before. A week after the convention I went with my bride Barbara to the first Milford Science Fiction Writers' Workshop, an

awesome assembly of titans – Theodore Sturgeon, Fritz Leiber, Cyril Kornbluth, Lester del Rey, Damon Knight, Frederik Pohl, James Blish, William Tenn, and a dozen more of equal stature. Ellison and I were the only neophytes present. Harlan had not yet begun to show a shadow of his future abilities, and he made an easy whipping-boy for the patriarchs, but I was a different matter: self-contained, confident, quite sure of what I was doing and why. Del Rey and a few others tried to shake my cynicism and persuade me to aim higher than sure-thing potboilers, but it was clear that potboilers were what I wanted to write, and no one could argue with my success at hammering out penny-a-word dreadfuls. I was only a boy, yet already my annual income was beyond that of anyone in the field except Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke, and Bradbury, those long-enshrined demigods. What I dared not say was that I had opted to write mechanical junk because I had no faith, any longer, in my ability to write anything better. It had been my experience that whenever I assayed the kind of fiction that Sturgeon or Leiber or Kornbluth wrote, I had trouble getting it published. My craftsmanship was improving steadily, in the narrow sense of craft as knowing how to construct a story and make it move; possibly some fatal defect of the soul, some missing quality, marred my serious work, so that it was idle of me I thought, to try to compete with the Sturgeons and Leibers. I will leave art to the artists, I said quietly, and earn a decent living doing what I do best.

By the end of 1956 I had more than a million published words behind me. I lived in a large, handsome apartment in what was then a desirable neighbourhood on Manhattan's Upper West Side. I was learning about fine wines and exotic foods and planning a trip to Europe. The collaboration with Garrett had long since ended, but the impetus he had given me was sufficient to carry me along on my own. Editors sought me, for I was efficient and reliable. (A few, notably Horace Gold of *Galaxy,* swore at me for ruining a potentially important talent, but Horace bought my artfully aimed *Galaxy*-type potboilers all the same.) My fellow writers viewed me with alarm, seeing me as some sort of berserk robot that would fill every page of every magazine with its output, and they deplored my utter lack of literary ambition, but yet they accepted me as one of their number, and I formed strong friendships within the close-knit science-fiction fraternity. And I wrote, and I sold, and I prospered, and with rare exceptions I abandoned any pretence at literary achievement. I wanted to

win economic security – to get enough money into the bank so that I would be insulated against the financial storms that had buffetted most of the writers I knew, some of the greatest in the field among them. One day Lester del Rey pointed out to me that simply on the money-making level I was going about things the wrong way. The stuff I was writing earned me a cent or two a word and then dropped into oblivion, while stories written with more care, with greater intensity of purpose, were reprinted over and over, earning their authors fees far beyond the original sale. I knew that this was so, but I preferred to take the immediate dollar rather than the hypothetical future anthology glory.

So it went through 1957 and 1958. I grew a beard and acquired other, less superficial, stigmata of sophistication. I journeyed to London and Paris, to Arizona and California, treating myself at last to the travels I had not had in boyhood. I learned the lore of the investment world and made some cautious and quite successful forays into the stock market, seeking always the financial independence that I believed would free me from the karmic wheel of high-volume hackmanship.

Not everything I wrote was touched by corruption. I still loved science fiction for its soaring visionary expansiveness, for its mind-liberating power, and however dollar-oriented I became I still yearned to make some valuable contribution to the field, and felt guilty that the stuff I was churning out was the sort of thing I had openly scorned in my fan-magazine critical essays seven or eight years before. I recall in particular a Sunday afternoon party at Harlan Ellison's Manhattan apartment in 1957 where I talked shop with Cyril Kornbluth, Algis Budrys, James Blish, and one or two other sf writers of their level, and went home in an abyss of self-contempt because these men, my friends, were trying always to publish only their best while I was content to do my worst. Whenever I felt the sting, I put aside hackwork and tried to write honest fiction.

Scattered through my vast output of the late 1950's, then, are a good many quite respectable stories, not masterpieces – I was still very young, and much more callow than most people suspected – but decently done jobs. Occasionally even now they find their way into anthologies. They were my comfort in those guilt-ridden days, those stories and the novels. In longer lengths I was not so commercially-minded, and I genuinely hoped to achieve in books what was beyond me in the magazines. There were few publishers of science-fiction novels then, however: the market consisted, essentially, of three houses, Doubleday, Ballantine, and Ace. With the leading writers of the day keeping the first two well supplied with books,

I found no niche for myself, and turned of necessity to Donald Wollheim's Ace Books. This small company published scores of novels a year in a rather squalid format, and was constantly searching for new writers to meet its hunger for copy. The shrewd and experienced Wollheim worked miracles on a tiny budget and produced an extraordinarily broad list, ranging from juvenile action stories to superb novels by Philip K. Dick, A.E. van Vogt, Clifford D. Simak, Isaac Asimov, and other luminaries. Wollheim saw potential in me, perhaps as a mass-producer of action fiction and perhaps as something more than that, and encouraged me to offer him novels. He purchased the first, *The Thirteenth Immortal,* late in 1956, and I wrote nine more for him, I think, in the next seven years.

My Ace novels would be fruitful material for somebody's thesis. The first was melodramatic, overblown, a little absurd, yet sincerely conceived; its faults are those of its author's youth, not his cynical approach toward his trade. The second, *Master of Life and Death* (1957), was something of a tour de force, a maze of plot and sub-plot handled, I think, with some dexterity. *Invaders from Earth* (1958), the third, attempts a sophisticated depiction of psychological and political realities. I liked those two well enough to allow them to be reprinted a decade later. *Stepsons of Terra* (1958) was an intricate time-paradox novel with a certain van Vogtian intensity. On the evidence of these four books alone I would seem an earnest and ambitious young writer striving constantly to improve. But the rest of the novels I wrote for Wollheim were slapdash adventure stories, aiming no higher than the least of his line; I had learned there was little money and less prestige in doing books for Ace, and without those rewards I was content to do the minimum acceptable job. (A few of my later Ace books were better than that, but they were aimed at better markets and went to Wollheim only after others had rejected them.) I know that Wollheim was disappointed in the trend my work for him had taken, but I was too far gone in materialism to care.

During the high-volume years I wrote a good deal that was not science fiction – crime stories, a few westerns, profiles of movie stars, and other odds and ends. Some of this work came to me on assignment from my agent, and some I sought because my rate of productivity was now so high that the science fiction field could not absorb all the wordage I was capable of turning out. I had the conviction, though – shared by a surprisingly large number of science fiction writers – that to write sf was the One True Task, and any other kind of writing was mere hackery done to pay the bills. This was a

legitimate enough attitude when held by people like James Blish or William Tenn, who in their early days were forced to write sports fiction and other trivia because the sf market was so tiny; but it was a bit odd for me to feel that way when virtually everything I wrote, sf or not, was pounded out in the same cold-blooded high-velocity manner. Still, I did feel that way, and whatever my private feelings about the quality of most of my science fiction at that time I still saw it as a higher endeavour than my westerns and crime stories.

Then, late in 1958, the science fiction world collapsed. Most of the magazines for which I was writing regularly went out of business as a result of upheavals in distribution patterns, and those that survived became far more discriminating about what they would publish. My kind of mass production became obsolete. To sustain what had become a comfortable standard of living I found it necessary to leave the cozy, incestuous science fiction family and look for work in the general New York publishing scene.

The transition was quick and relatively painless. I was facile, I was confident, and my friends had friends. I hired out to any editor who would undertake to pay on time; and, though I continued to write some science fiction in 1959 and 1960, my records for those years show all sorts of strange pseudonymous stories and articles: 'Cures for Sleepless Nights', 'Horror Rides the Freeways', 'I Was a Tangier Smuggler', 'Hot Rod Challenge', 'Buried Billions Lie in Wait', and so many others that it strains my own credulity. I recall writing one whole piece before lunch and one after lunch, day in, day out; my annual output climbed well above a million words in 1959 and went even higher in 1960 and 1961.

These were years of wandering in the wilderness. I was earning more money than I had in science fiction, and I had no problems of guilt, for in pouring out this grotesque miscellany I did not need to flagellate myself with the knowledge that I was traducing a literature I loved. On the other hand, I had no particular identity as a writer. In the past, when people asked me what I did, I had answered that I wrote science fiction; now, working anonymously in twenty different sub-literate markets, I had no ready reply, so I went on saying I was a science fiction writer. In truth I did have the occasional story in *Galaxy* or *Astounding*, and an Ace book now and then, to make the claim legitimate. I was mainly a manufacturer of utilitarian prose, though, churned out by the yard. It was stupefyingly boring, and, as the money piled up, I invested it shrewdly and talked of retiring by the time I was thirty, living on my dividend income, and spending my days travelling,

reading, and studying. Already I was doing a good bit of that. In the winters my wife and I fell into the habit of going to the West Indies, where we became skin-divers and explored coral reefs. In the summers we made other journeys – Canada in 1959, Italy in 1960, the American Northwest in 1961. I was working only four or five hours a day, five days a week, when at home, which left me ample leisure for my private interests – contemporary literature and music, art, ancient history. There was an almost total split between my conscienceless commercialised working-hours self and the civilized and fastidious man who replaced him in early afternoon. I was still only about twenty-five years old.

Unexpectedly the seeds of a new writing career began to sprout. One of my few science fiction pieces of 1959 was a little novel for children, *Lost Race of Mars,* published by the notable house of Holt, Rinehart and Winston. (My earlier connection with Crowell had fallen apart in 1956, after their rejection of my proposed successor to *Revolt on Alpha C,* and this was my first contact with a major publishing house since then.) *Lost Race of Mars* was short and simple, but it was an appealing book; *The New York Times* chose it as one of the hundred best children's books of the year, and the publisher expressed eagerness to do more of my work. (*Lost Race* is still in print and selling well, both in hardcover and a paperback edition.) I had visited Pompeii while in Italy in 1960, and now I saw a way of capitalizing on my interest, strong since childhood, in antiquity and its remains: I suggested a book for young readers on the excavation of Pompeii.

The people at Holt, Rinehart and Winston considered the idea for quite a while but ultimately declined it. Henry Morrison, who then was handling my affairs at the Scott Meredith agency and who since has become an important agent in his own right, told me he thought the project would fare better if I wrote not about one ancient site but several – say, Chichén Itzá and Angkor and Babylon as well as Pompeii – and he even offered me a title for the expanded book, *Lost Cities and Vanished Civilizations.* When I agreed he sold the book, on the basis of a brief outline, to a Philadelphia house of which I knew nothing, Chilton Books.

With my agent's help I began to emerge from that wilderness of anonymous potboilerei. I began to work in book-length non-fiction, and displayed gifts for quick, comprehensive research and orderly uncluttered exposition.

For a minor paperback company called Monarch, now defunct, I did books on the American space programme, the Rockefeller family, and the life of Sir Winston Churchill; and for Chilton, in the summer of 1961, I wrote my lost-cities book. None of this was art, but it was far from despicable work. I used secondary sources and wrote with journalistic speed, but what I produced was clear, generally accurate, an honest kind of popularized history. Chilton liked *Lost Cities* and hastened to accept my next proposal for a book on underwater archaeology. Early in 1962 a suggestion for a young reader's book on great battles found favour at the old-line house of G.P. Putnam's Sons. In April of that year *Lost Cities and Vanished Civilizations* was published and – to my amazement, for I thought of it as no more than a competent rehash of other writers' books – was chosen as one of the year's five best books for young people by an annual awards committee in the field of juvenile publishing, and was selected by the Junior Literary Guild, an important book club. Once again I found myself launched.

Many of New York's leading hardcover publishing houses were willing, on the strength of the success of *Lost Cities,* to give me contracts for non-fiction juvenile books on whatever subject happened to interest me. As rapidly as I dared I severed my connections with my sleazy magazine outlets and ascended into this new, astoundingly respectable and rewarding career. Chilton took another general archaeology book, *Empires in the Dust.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston accepted a biography of the great Assyriologist, Austen Henry Layard. The New York Graphic Society commissioned a book on American Indians, and Putnam one on the history of medicine.

The rhythm of my life changed dramatically. I still wrote in the mornings and early afternoons – wrote at almost the same incredible velocity as when I had been doing tales of Tangier smugglers – but now I spent the after-hours time taking notes in libraries and museums, and I began to assemble a vast private reference library at home. Although my early non-fiction books had been hasty compilations out of other popularizations, I swiftly became more conscientious, as though to live up to the high opinion others had formed of those early books; I went to primary sources whenever possible, I visited actual sites, I did intensive research in many ways. The results were visible. Within a year or two I was considered one of the most skilled popularizers of the sciences in the United States, with publishers eagerly standing in line as my changing interests took me from books on Antarctica

and ancient Egypt to investigations of scientific hoaxes and living fossils. For the first time since I had become a professional writer, nearly a decade earlier, I won my own respect.

I maintained a tenuous link with science fiction, largely social, since then as now my closest friends were science fictionists. I attended parties and conventions, and kept up with what was being published. But of actual science fiction writing I was doing very little. There seemed no commercial reason to get back into sf, even though I had recovered considerably from its 1958 swoon; I had more work than I could handle in the lucrative non-fiction juvenile hardcover field. Only the old shame remained to tweak me: I had served science fiction badly in my 1955-58 days, and I wanted to atone. When Frederik Pohl became editor of *Galaxy* he suggested that I do short stories for him and offered me absolute creative freedom: I could write what I pleased and, within reason, he undertook to buy it. In such an arrangement I could blame neither editorial shortsightedness nor constricting editorial policies for the quality of what I wrote: I was my own master. In the summer of 1962 I offered Pohl a short story, "To See The Invisible Man", inspired by Borges, which was out of an entirely different artistic universe from anything I had written in my first go-round in science fiction – a mature, complex story. He published it and, over the next couple of years, half a dozen more of similar ambitious nature, and, bit by bit, I found myself drawn back into science fiction, this time not as a producer of commodities but as a serious, dedicated artist who turned away from more profitable work to indulge in sf out of love.

During those years – 1962 to 1965 – when I dabbled in science fiction for sheer diversion only, science fiction was undergoing radical changes. The old pulp-magazine rigidities were dissolving. New writers were everywhere: Brian Aldiss, J.G. Ballard, Roger Zelazny, Samuel R. Delany, R.A. Lafferty, Michael Moorcock, and a dozen more. In the bad old days one had to be an established writer of mighty stature, a Bester or a Blish or a Sturgeon, to "get away" with any sort of literary venturesomeness; most editors rightly thought that their readers were hostile to unusual modes of narrative, and nearly everyone wrote in an interchangeable manner, unquestioningly adopting universal conventions of style and construction. Suddenly the *way* of telling stories was released from convention. The familiar old robots and starships were being put through strange and fascinating new paces. Pulp-magazine requirements for neat plots and "upbeat" positive resolutions were abandoned. I had been only too willing, in 1957 and thereabouts, to

conform to the prevailing modes, for it seemed quixotic to try to do otherwise. Now an army of younger, or at any rate newer, writers had boldly overthrown the traditional rules, and, a trifle belatedly, I joined the revolution.

Even after I returned to science fiction, the non-fiction books remained my chief preoccupation. For one thing, to go back to the mass production of sf would be to defeat the purpose of returning; for another, I was so overwhelmed with non-fiction contracts, stretching two and three years into the future, that there was no question of a full-time resumption of sf. The non-fiction was becoming ever more ambitious and the books took longer; in the summer of 1965 I spent months working on one title alone, which I had never done before. (It was a book on the Great Wall of China – no mere cut-and-paste job, but an elaborate and unique synthesis of all available knowledge about the Wall.) Then, too, science fiction had become more permissive but there was still not much money to be had in writing it, and I was continuing to pursue my goal of economic independence, which mandated my centering my career in other fields.

One gigantic item of overhead had entered my life. Early in 1962 I had purchased an imposing house – a mansion, in fact – in a lovely, almost rural enclave near the northwest corner of New York City. I had always lived in apartments; now I joined the landed classes, and had my own lawn and garden, my own giant oak trees, my own wild raccoons wandering about at night (in New York!). There was room for all my books and all I was likely to acquire for many years to come. The third floor of the house, a separate four-room suite, became my working area, and we filled the rest of the place with books and paintings and objets d'art. It was a magnificent house, beautiful and stately, and not at all costly in terms of my income at the time. What *was* costly was the upkeep, taxes and cleaning and heat and all, running to many thousands of dollars a year; though I still intended to retire from full-time high-volume writing as soon as possible, I recognised that by buying the house I had postponed that retirement by at least five years.

The non-fiction books grew ever more demanding as – driven by vanity, I suppose, or by intellectual pride, or merely by the feeling that it was time for my reach to begin exceeding my grasp – I tackled bigger and bigger projects. Though I still was doing books for readers in their teens, a biography of Kublai Khan and one of Socrates, a book on bridges and one on coral reefs, I was aiming primarily for older readers in much of what I did, and endeavouring now to deal with subjects that had had no serious

examinations in recent times. The Great Wall book was the first of these; and early in 1966 I embarked on a far more arduous task, a book called *The Golden Dream,* a study of the obsessive quest for the mythical land of El Dorado. Working an impossible, brutal schedule, pouring out thousands of words a week, I knew more than a little about the psychology of obsession, and the book, 120,000 words long, was surely the finest thing I had ever done. It was published in an appropriately handsome edition by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, was treated with respect by reviewers, and, I grieve to report, dropped into oblivion as fast as any of my hackwork. The book earned me no income beyond the small initial advance in the United States, was never published at all in Great Britain, and achieved only one translation, in France. I was disappointed but not discouraged; it would have been agreeable to grow rich on the book, but that was secondary to the joy and challenge of having written it. I was learning to love my work for its own sake, regardless of its fate in the marketplace. Growing up, that is.

About the time of *The Golden Dream* I inaugurated still another aspect of my career by asking the publisher of some of my non-fiction juveniles to let me edit a science fiction anthology. Here at last I could put to some practical use all those years of collecting and reading sf; I had built a superb science fiction library, with literally every magazine ever published and most of the books. The anthology, *Earthmen and Strangers,* was released in the autumn of 1966. I found editing so much to my taste that I sought other anthology contracts and ultimately was devoting as much time to editing as to my own writing.

In that same period – 1956-66 – I built close associations with the two major science fiction houses of the era, Ballantine and Doubleday. When I first became a professional writer these houses were the exclusive preserves of the Clarkes and Heinleins and Sturgeons and Asimovs and Bradburys, and seemed unattainable to the likes of me; now, still having not much of a reputation in science fiction but solidly established outside the field and confident of my skills, I found no difficulty convincing Betty Ballantine of Ballantine and Larry Ashmead of Doubleday to publish my sf. (Even though I considered myself a very part-time science fiction writer in those days, I was still prolific enough to require two regular publishers.) To Ballantine I gave *To Open the Sky,* a pseudo-novel constructed from five novelets I had written for Fred Pohl's *Galaxy.* To Doubleday I offered *The Time Hoppers,* an expansion of one of those ambitious short stories of my youth that I had had so much trouble placing in 1954. They were both good, middle-of-the-road science fiction, not exactly of Hugo quality but several notches above anything I had published in the field before.

Ballantine also agreed to do a collection of my short stories; and, in January, 1966, I proposed a new novel, a book called *Thorns,* telling Mrs. Ballantine, "Much of the texture of the story will rely on background details that can't be sketched in advance. I hope you can gather enough of my intentions from the outline to go ahead with it. What I have in mind is a psychological sf novel, somewhat adventurous in style and approach and characterization, and I think I can bring it off. It's worth trying, at any rate." She agreed to the gamble.

I spent the next few months writing the El Dorado book, and in June I fell into a mysterious illness. All energy went from me and I lost close to twenty pounds – though I was slender to being with – in a few weeks. I had not been ill since finishing with the standard childhood maladies, indeed was not even prone to minor upsets, and this was a startling event to me. The symptoms answered well to leukemia and other dire things, but turned out to be only a metabolic change, a sudden hyperactivity of the thyroid gland. Such thyroid outbreaks, I learned, are often caused by the stress of prolonged overwork, and I think the forced marches of El Dorado had much to do with this one. I took it as a warning: I was past thirty and it was time to think realistically about slowing down. Though I had enough book contracts to keep me busy for two or three years, I resolved to reduce my output and gradually to make drastic reductions in the time I devoted to work.

Though greatly weakened, I wrote steadily – but at a slower pace – through the infernally hot summer of 1966, while at the same time planning *Thorns* and doing preliminary research for another major non-fiction work, a study of the prehistoric Mound Builder cultures of the central United States. I was still gaunt and haggard when I attended the annual science fiction convention in Cleveland at the beginning of September, but the drug therapy for my thyroid condition was beginning to take hold, and immediately after the convention I felt strong enough to begin *Thorns.* The title describes the book: prickly, rough in texture, a sharp book. I worked quickly, often managing twenty pages or more a day, yet making no concessions to the conventions of standard science fiction. The prose was often oblique and elliptical (and sometimes shamefully opaque in a way I'd love to fix retroactively); the action was fragmented in the telling; the characters were angular, troubled souls. Midway in the job I journeyed out to Pennsylvania to attend a party at Damon Knight's Milford Workshop. I knew nearly all the writers there, and they knew me. They all knew how prosperous I was, and some were aware that I had achieved worthwhile things with my non-fiction, but they couldn't have had much respect for me as a writer of science fiction. They might admire my professionalism, my productivity, my craftsmanship – but to them I was still that fellow who

had written all that zap-zap space-opera in the 1950's. Their gentle and not-so-gentle comments hardly troubled me, though, for I knew I was no longer that mass-producer of garbage, and sooner or later they would all know it too. While at Milford I glanced at an Italian science fiction magazine and found a harsh review of one of my early Ace novels, recently published in Italy. Badly done and wordy, the critic said – *malcondotto e prolisse.* Perhaps it was. The next day, when I went home to finish *Thorns,* Malcondotto and Prolisse joined the cast of characters.

I regained my health by the end of the year and eventually made a full and permanent recovery. I withdrew, bit by bit, from my lunatic work schedule: having written better than a million and a half words for publication in 1965, I barely exceeded a million in 1966, and have never been anywhere near that insane level of productivity since. Though I still wrote daily except when travelling, I worked less feverishly, content to quit early if I had had a good morning at the typewriter, and I began alternating science fiction and non-fiction books to provide myself with periodic changes of rhythm. I looked forward to 1967 with some eagerness – and with much curiosity, too, for that was the year in which my first really major science fiction, *Thorns* and *The Time Hoppers* and a novella called "Hawksbill Station", would finally be published. Would they be taken as signs of reform and atonement for past literary sins, or would they be ignored as the work of a writer who by his own admission had never been much worth reading?

I began the year by writing a short story, "Passengers", for Damon Knight's new *Orbit* anthology series. He asked for revisions, minor but crucial, five times, and though I grumbled I saw the wisdom of his complaints and did the rewriting. I wrote a novel for Doubleday, *To Live Again,* which surpassed anything I had done in complexity of plot and development of social situation. I expanded "Hawksbill Station" into a novel. I did my vast Mound Builder book, bigger even than El Dorado, a book that was as much a study of the myth-making process as it was an exploration of American Indian culture. (When it appeared in 1968, as *Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth,* many reviewers, even those in the archaeological journals, assumed I was myself an archaeologist, and I received flattering if embarrassing invitations to lecture, to teach, and to write reviews. The book was greeted enthusiastically by professional archaeologists and has become a standard reference item, to be found in most libraries. Having said so many uncomplimentary things about my own writing in these pages, I think I've earned the right to be a bit boastful about this one.) There were three other big projects in this year of supposedly reduced output: the novels *The Masks of Time* and *The Man in the Maze* and another Goliath of

a non-fiction work, *The Longest Voyage,* an account of the first six circumnavigations of the world.

I was, in truth, riding an incredible wave of creative energy. Perhaps it was an overcompensation for my period of fatigue and illness in 1966, perhaps just the sense of liberation and excitement that came from knowing I was at last writing only what I wanted to write, as well as I could do it. In any event I look back in wonder and awe at a year that produced *To Live Again, Masks of Time, Man in the Maze,* two 150,000-word works of history, several short stories, and – I have as much trouble believing this as you – no less than seven non-fiction books for young readers, each in the 60,000-word range. No wonder my peers regarded me as some sort of robot: I have no idea myself how I managed it all, working five hours a day five days a week, with time off for holidays in Israel and the West Indies and a week at Montreal's Expo 67.

Thorns was published in August of 1967. All of Ballantine's science fiction titles were then automatically being distributed free to the members of the two-year-old Science Fiction Writers of America, and so all my colleagues had copies in hand at the time of that year's sf convention. Many of them had read it, and – as I hoped – it shook their image of my work. At least a dozen of my friends told me, with the frankness of true friendship, that the book had amazed them: not that they thought me incapable of writing it, but rather that I would be willing to take the trouble. It seemed such a radical break from my formularized science fiction of the 1950's that they thought of it as the work of some entirely new Robert Silverberg. I was pleased, of course, but also a little pained at these open admissions that I had been judged all these years by the basest of what I had written between 1955 and 1958. *Thorns* was not all that much of a breakthrough for me; it represented only a plausible outgrowth of what I had begun to attempt in 1962's short story, "To See the Invisible Man", and in the work that followed it over a period of four years.

Even before the publication of *Thorns* I found my position in the American science fiction world undergoing transformations. In the summer of 1967 I had become President of the Science Fiction Writers of America, succeeding Damon Knight, founder of the organization. The job was not an award for literary merit but rather a tribute to the experience I had had in building a career and dealing with publishers. Certainly I was well qualified for the job, and I felt no hesitation about accepting it, especially since the organisation would have collapsed if I had declined – no one else was willing to take it on. Doubtless if I had run against some writer whose work

was more highly regarded than mine, James Blish or Poul Anderson or Philip José Farmer, I would have been defeated; but willy-nilly I ran unopposed, gladly letting myself in for a year of drudgery on behalf of my fellow writers. At least *Thorns* soon showed the rank-and-file of the membership that their new President would not disgrace the organisation.

Thorns did not universally give delight. Those who found pleasure in my old straightforward action stories were appalled by this dark disturbing book. One of my dearest friends, an old-line writer conservative in his tastes, explicitly accused me of a calculated sellout to the "new wave" of science fiction – of writing a deliberately harsh and freaky book to curry favor with the influential leaders of the revolution within science fiction. That charge was particularly painful to me. Having blithely sold out to any editor with the right price in his hand so many times as a young man, I was hurt to find myself blamed for selling out again, this time to the opposite camp, when I finally wrote something that grew from my own creative needs instead of the market's demands. Such criticisms were rare, though. *Thorns* was nominated both for the Hugo and for the Science Fiction Writers' Nebula trophy – the first time anything of mine reached the final ballot in either contest.

They won no awards, nor did "Hawksbill Station", which was also up for a Nebula; but the critics were revaluating my place in science fiction, invariably invoking my seamy early work before getting around to saying I was a much better writer nowadays. 1968 promised to be a rewarding year. It was less than six weeks old, though, when I awakened at half past three one frigid winter morning to the glare of an unaccustomed light in the house. Burglars have broken in, I thought, groping toward wakefulness – but no, there were no burglars. The glare I saw was fire.

So out into the miserable night we went and watched the house burn. Papers stored in the attic, I think, had ignited. My wife and I carried our four cats and a flock of kittens to the dubious safety of the basement, and I seized the manuscript of my current book and a few ancient artifacts and cached them in the garage; then the firemen refused to let us return to the building, and we took refuge in the house across the way. By dawn it was over. The roof was gone; the attic had been gutted; my third-floor office was a wreck; and the lower floors of the house, though unburned, were awash in water rapidly turning to ice. A priest from a nearby Catholic college appeared and, unbidden, took several Volkswagen-loads of our houseplants to safety in his cabin, lest they freeze in the unprotected house. Then he returned and offered consolation, for I was in a bad way. No Catholic I,

but I had felt the hand of some supernatural being pressing against me that night, punishing me for real and imagined sins, leveling me for overweening pride as though I had tried to be Agamemnon.

Friends rallied round. Barbara performed prodigies, arranging to have our belongings taken to storage (surprisingly, most of our books and virtually all the works of art had survived, though the structure itself was a ruin) and negotiating with contractors. I was not much good for anything for days – stupefied, God-haunted, broken. We moved to a small, inadequate rented house about a mile away as the immense job of reconstruction began. I bought a new typewriter, re-assembled some reference books, and, after a few dreadful weeks, began once more to work in strange surroundings.

In nine months the house was ready to be occupied again, and by the spring of 1969 the last of the rebuilding was done and the place was more beautiful than ever – an exact replica of its former self, except where we had decided on improvements. But I was never the same again. Until the night of the fire I had never, except perhaps at the onset of my illness in 1966, been touched by the real anguish of life. I had not known divorce or the death of loved ones or poverty or unemployment, I had never experienced the challenges and terrors of parenthood, had never been mugged or assaulted or molested, had not been in military service (let alone actual warfare), had never been seriously ill. The only emotional scars I bore were those of a moderately unhappy childhood, hardly an unusual experience. But now I had literally passed through the flames. The fire and certain other dark events some months earlier had marked an end to my apparent immunity to life's pain, and drained from me, evidently forever, much of the bizarre energy that had allowed me to write a dozen or more books of high quality in a single year. Until 1967, I had cockily written everything in one draft, rolling white paper into the machine and typing merrily away, turning out twenty or thirty pages of final copy every day and making only minor corrections by hand afterward. When I resumed work after the fire I tried to go on that way, but I found the going slow, found myself fumbling for words and losing the thread of narrative, found it necessary in mid-page to halt and start over, pausing often to regain my strength. It has been slower and slower ever since, and I have only rarely, and not for a long time now, felt that dynamic sense of clear vision that enabled me to write even the most taxing of my books in wild joyous spurts. I wasted thousands of sheets of paper over the next three years before I came to see, at last, that I had become as other mortals and would have to do two or three or even ten drafts of every page before I could hope

to type final copy.

I hated the place where I was living then – it was cramped, dirty, confused, ugly – but the rebuilding job called for thousands of dollars beyond the insurance settlement, and I had to go on writing regardless of externals. With most of my reference library intact but in storage for the duration, I was forced back into virtual full-time science fiction, the non-fiction temporarily impossible for me. One of the first things I wrote, in the early days of the aftermath, was a curiously lyrical novella, "Nightwings", to which I added a pair of sequels some months later to constitute a novel. Later in the year came a novel for young readers, *Across a Billion Years,* almost unknown among my recent works – a rich, unusual book that never found an audience. There was a short story, "Sundance", a display of technical virtuosity, my favourite among all my myriad shorter pieces. And, in my despair and fatigue, I managed somehow to write a bawdy comic novel of time travel, *Up the Line.* The fire had shattered me emotionally and for a time physically, but it had pushed me, I realized, into a deeper, more profound expression of feelings. It had been a monstrous tempering of my artistic skills.

In September of 1968 I went to California for the science fiction convention – my third visit to that state, and I was struck once again by its beauty and strangeness. I was toastmaster at the convention's awards banquet, a last-minute replacement for the late Anthony Boucher, and for five hours toiled to keep a vast and restless audience amused – a fascinating, almost psychedelic experience. November saw me back in my restored house, working on the biggest of all my non-fiction books, an immense exploration of the Zionist movement in the United States. The publishers invested a huge sum of money in it, and planned to promote it to best-seller status, but, as usual, nothing came of it but good reviews: I was destined never to win wide attention for my long non-fiction works.

My science fiction, though, was gathering acclaim. *Masks of Time* failed by only a few votes to win a Nebula, as did the novella "Nightwings". But "Nightwings" did take a Hugo at the St. Louis convention in 1969. In the spring of that year I wrote a novel, *Downward to the Earth,* which was in part inspired by a journey to Africa (and in which were embedded certain homages to Joseph Conrad) and in part by my own growing sense of cosmic consciousness: I had never been a religious man, had never belonged to any organized church, but something had been set ticking in me by the fire, a sense of connections and compensating forces, and *Downward to the Earth* reflected it. *Galaxy* purchased it for serialisation and New American Library

for book publication. In the autumn – slowly, with much difficulty – I wrote *Tower of Glass,* for Charles Scribner's Sons, the publisher of Hemingway and Wolfe and Fitzgerald, now experimenting with science fiction. *Galaxy* bought that one too. And at the end of the year I wrote my strangest, most individual book, *Son of Man,* a dream-fantasy of the far future, with overtones of Stapledon and Lindsay's *Voyage to Arcturus* and a dollop of psychedelia that was altogether my own contribution. It was becoming extremely hard for me to get words on paper, despite this long list of 1969's accomplishments, and, with the expenses of the fire behind me, I was again talking of retirement. Not total retirement – writing was a struggle, but *having written* was a delight – but at least a sabbatical of some months, once I had dealt with the contractual obligations I had taken on for the sake of rebuilding my home.

The paradox of this stage of my career manifested itself ever more forcefully in 1970: I felt continual growth of my art, my power, my vision, and simultaneously it became constantly more difficult to work. I tired more easily, I let myself be distracted by trifles, and when I did write I was overfinicky, polishing and polishing so that on a good day I was lucky to get nine or ten pages written. Still an immense output, but not what I had grown accustomed to pulling from myself in the vanished days of indefatigable productivity. Nevertheless it was an active year. I did *The World Inside,* a novel composed of loosely related short stories set within a single great residential tower; I think it and *Tower of Glass* (another story of a giant erection!) are closer to pure science fiction, the exhaustive investigation of an extrapolative idea, than anything else I have written. I did *A Time of Changes,* more emotional than most of my work and heavily pro-psychedelic. I did *The Second Trip,* a rough and brutal novel of double identity, and I wrote the last of my major non-fiction books, *The Realm of Prester John,* which I regard as a genuine contribution to scholarship. (Doubleday published it and no one bought it.)

By now it was clear that the science fiction world had forgiven me for the literary sins of my youth. My short story "Passengers" won a Nebula early in 1970. *Up the Line* and one of the *Nightwings* series were on the ballot also, though they failed to win. In the summer I was American Guest of Honour at the World Science Fiction Convention in Heidelberg, a little to my surprise, for though I was beginning to think I would someday be chosen for this greatest of honours in science fiction, I had assumed it was at least ten years in the future. I was a triple Hugo nominee that year too,

but came away, alas, with a bunch of second and third-place finishes. Another quite improbable boyhood fantasy was eerily fulfilled for me in 1970. When I was about sixteen and *Galaxy* was the newest and most controversial of science fiction magazines, I diverted myself one day with an amiable daydream in which I was the author of three consecutive serials in that magazine – an awesome trick, since the authors of *Galaxy's* first five novels were Simak, Asimov, Kornbluth & Merril, Heinlein, and Bester. But there I was in 1970 with *Downward to the Earth, Tower of Glass,* and most of *The World Inside* running back-to-back (and *Time of Changes* following them in 1971). I remembered my old daydream and felt a little disbelieving shiver.

My new working habits were entrenching themselves: revise, revise, revise. Projects that might have taken me two weeks in 1965 took three months in 1970. I refused to sign new contracts, knowing that I no longer had much control over the length of time it took me to finish anything, and I could not therefore guarantee to meet delivery dates. Non-fiction in particular I was phasing out; I had had a good run in that career for a decade, but the burden of research now was more than I cared to carry, and the failure of my big books to have much commercial success had eventually had a depressing effect. Now that I was in my full stride in science fiction, working at the top of my form and enjoying public favour, I wanted to devote as much of my dwindling literary energies to that field as I could.

Strangely, it was becoming impossible for me to take the stuff of science fiction seriously any more – all those starships and androids and galactic empires. I had come to believe that the chances that mankind would reach and colonize the planets of other stars were very slight indeed, and the stories set on such worlds now seemed idle fantasy to me, not serious projection. So too with many of the other great themes of science fiction: one by one they became unreal, though they continued to have powerful metaphorical and symbolic value for me. I discovered that much of what I was writing in 1971 was either barely sf at all (*The Book of Skulls)* or was a kind of parody of science fiction ("Good News from the Vatican", "Caliban", and other short stories) or borrowed a genuine science fiction theme for use in an otherwise "straight" mainstream novel *(Dying Inside).* Which inspired flickers of new guilt in me. I no longer had to apologize, certainly not, for shortcomings of literary quality; but was this new Silverberg really serving the needs of the hard-core science fiction audience? Was he providing the kind of sincerely felt fiction about the future that the readers still seemed to prefer, or was he doing fancy dancing for his own amusement

and that of a jaded elite?

The pattern of awards in the field reinforced these doubts. I was getting nominated by twos and threes every year now for the Hugos and the Nebulas; indeed, I have by now amassed more final-ballot nominations than any other writer. In 1972 the Science Fiction Writers of America favoured me with two Nebulas, an unusual event, for my novel *A Time of Changes* and my short story "Good News from the Vatican" – but the writers have relatively sophisticated tastes, and I have fared far less well with the Hugos, awarded by a broader cross-section of the sf readership. Though nominated every year, my books and stories have finished well behind more conservative, "safer" works. This causes me no serious anguish or resentment, for I have hardly been neglected in the passing around of honours in the sf world, but it does lead me to brood a bit in idle hours. Not that it affects what I write: I am bound on my own course and will stay to it. I wish only that I could be my own man and still give pleasure to the mass of science fiction readers.

In 1971 I at last achieved the partial retirement of which I had been dreaming for so many years. The press of contracts abated, and in late spring I simply stopped writing, not to resume until autumn. I had never, not since early college days, gone more than four weeks away from my typewriter; now I was away from it five whole months, and felt no withdrawal symptoms at all. I read, swam, loafed; now and then I would work on anthology editing for an hour or so in the morning, for such editing was becoming increasingly important to me, but essentially I was idle all summer. A more complete break with the old Silverberg could not have been imagined. To underscore the transformation I had spent some weeks just before the holiday revising an early novel of mine, *Recalled to Life,* for a new edition. When I wrote it, in 1957, I had exaggeratedly high regard for it, seeing it as a possible Hugo nominee and hoping it would gain me a place with Ballantine or Doubleday or some other major publishing house. Looking at this masterpiece of my youth fourteen years later, I was appalled at its crudity, and repaired it as best I could before letting it be re-issued. That experience gave me a good yardstick to measure my own growth.

Further transformations of my life, unexpected ones, lay in wait for me. My wife and I were native New Yorkers, and, however extensively we travelled, we always returned to New York, the home base, after a few weeks. We loved the city's vitality, its complexity, the variety of experience it offered, and we had money enough to insulate ourselves from its inconveniences and perils. Our rebuilt house was more than a dwelling to us, it was

a system of life, an exoskeleton, and we assumed we would live in it the rest of our lives. But New York's deterioration and decline was driving away our friends. Two by two they trooped away, some to distant suburbs, many to California; and by the autumn of 1971 we found ourselves isolated and lonely in a city of eight million. New York now was dangerous, dirty, ever more expensive; taxes were rising alarmingly and the amenities we prized, the restaurants and galleries and theatres, were beginning to go out of business. We were held fast by pride and pleasure in our house — but did we want to find ourselves marooned in our magnificent fortress while everything dissolved about us? Timidly we began talking about joining the exodus. It still seemed unthinkable; we toyed with the notion of moving to California the way loyal Catholics might toy with the idea of conversion to Buddhism, enjoying the novelty and daring of such an outlandish idea, but never taking it seriously. In October, 1971 we flew to San Francisco for a reunion with many of our transplanted Eastern friends; we said we were considering moving, and they urged us to come. It was impossible to give up our house, we said. We went back to California in November, though, still hesitating but now willing to look, however tentatively, at areas where we might find a comparable place to live. And just after the turn of the year we discovered ourselves, to our amazement, boarding a plane for a sudden weekend trip west to see a house that a friend had located for us.

That house turned out not to work — it was too big even for us, and too decayed — but before the weekend was over we had found another, strange and beautiful, an architectural landmark in a park-like setting, and we placed a bid on it and after some haggling the bid was accepted, and, as if in a dream, we put our cherished New York place up for sale and made arrangements to move West. It all happened so swiftly, in retrospect — less than six months from the moment the temptation first struck to the day we arrived, with tons of books and furniture, in golden California, in the new El Dorado.

California, then. A new life at the midpoint. For reasons of climate, my 1971 scheme of working autumn and winter and taking a holiday in spring and summer did not seem desirable, though I still wanted to work only half the time. I hit on a plan of working mornings, normally a cloudy time of day here, and giving myself the afternoons free, with frequent total interruptions of work for short holidays away from home. This has worked well for me. My output continues to decline: 1971 saw me write about a quarter of a million words, 1972 only some 115,000, or about what I

would have done in an average month a decade earlier. Since *Dying Inside* of 1971 I have written no novels, though doubtless that datum will be obsolete before this essay is published: my major work in California has been a novella, "Born With the Dead", but a novel soon will be upon me, I think. Mainly I have written short stories, ostensibly science fiction, though the definition has required some stretching; they are strange and playful pieces, qualities evident in the titles of the two story collections I have made of them: *Unfamiliar Territory* and *Capricorn Games*. Though one good quiver of the San Andreas Fault could destroy all I have built in a moment, I am at present in a comfortable situation, invulnerable to the demands of the marketplace, able to write what I choose and have it published by people I respect. The work comes slowly, partly because I revise so much, partly because the temptations of lovely California are forever calling me from my desk, partly because the old pressures – to prove myself artistically, to make myself secure financially – no longer operate on me. I keep close to nature, regularly visiting the mountains and deserts nearby and, when at home, labouring in my well-stocked and ever-expanding garden; I read a good deal, I edit anthologies of original material that bring me into contact with younger writers, I maintain many friendships both within and outside the science fiction cosmos, and, as the mood takes me, I pursue such old interests – music, archaeology, the cinema, whatever – as still attract me. Though I may eventually write more non-fiction, if only for the sake of learning more about the natural environment here by studying it systematically in preparation for a book, I expect that such writing as I do henceforth will be almost exclusively science fiction, or what passes for science fiction in my consciousness these days. I still respond to it as I did when a child for its capacity to open the gates of the universe, to show me the roots of time. I have little admiration for most of the science fiction I read today, and even less for the bulk of what I wrote myself before 1965, but I do go on reading it however short it falls of my ideal vision of it, and I do go on writing it in my fashion, pursuing an ideal vision there too and always falling short, but coming closer, coming closer now and then, close enough to lead me to continue.

Robert S. Chapman is a Californian, currently in Law School. The article below is excerpted from a paper he wrote for the Department of History, while a student at the University of California at Berkeley. Science fiction in the 1950s is a complex thing, and we don't at all believe that Mr. Chapman has said the last word on the topic. It is a stimulating and useful first word, however. Mr. Chapman readily admits that he was not writing as a fan; indeed, although he read a great deal of science fiction while researching the paper, he says he did not read much before that time. I personally feel that there is a good deal of truth in the thesis that Mr. Chapman proposes, though equally I agree with our reviews editor, Christopher Priest, who forcefully put the case to me that it is not the whole truth. Normally we publish articles with the minimum of editorial comment, but just because Mr. Chapman's topic is such a controversial one (I would be happy to receive further articles on the same topic) why not suggest that the other side of Mr. Chapman's coin would have to feature James Blish, Cyril Kornbluth and Frederik Pohl? The whole subject of social attitudes as manifested in science fiction, incidentally, is obviously very much in the air at the moment. It is rapidly becoming, and with good reason, one of the most popular themes among students doing their Ph.D. theses on science fiction, especially in Europe. It would help very much in making more final judgments if we could know more precisely the sales figures of the whole range of sf books. Mr. Chapman's concentration on Asimov, Heinlein, Bradbury and Norton, though, is presumably well founded. They must rank very high on the best-seller lists of sf.

science fiction of the 1950s: Billy Graham, McCarthy and the bomb

Robert S. Chapman

The major question involved in dealing with science fiction during the 1950's is that while science fiction is basically future-oriented, it reached its peak of popularity during an age when American society was afraid of

the future and was basically looking backwards. Starting in approximately 1947, the quest for security was the main driving force behind the major social phenomena in America, the religious revival, the exodus to the suburbs, and McCarthyism. The quest took various forms, but all of them were centered around Billy Graham's idea of returning to, "the old ways, the old faith and the old values".[1] However it is difficult to separate these various phenomena into distinct categories since they were basically interdependent. For instance, a Papal Encyclical denouncing communism as sinful, in 1937, coupled with Billy Graham's Protestant fundamentalism which proclaimed that, "the greatest enemy we have ever known [is] Communism",[2] naturally led to more ecumenical religious doctrine. Since religion was committed to anti-Communism, church going became a basic way of proving one's loyalty to one's country. However, churches themselves were an integral part of suburban communities like Levittown and "For many . . . the suburban movement replicated the essential American experience by which the dependent Easterner became the freeholding Westerner".[3] But, this community pioneer spirit which included hard work and self help was counter-productive in an affluent society. The advertising industry constantly reiterated that self *indulgence* was the correct form of living, and that "the hedonistic approach to life if the moral one and that frugality and personal austerity are outdated hangovers of Puritanism".[4] Hanging over all of this was Barry Goldwater's warning about superior communist military strength, Joe McCarthy's attack on supposedly Communist inspired internal rot, and above all, the fear that, "if the pattern held, if history repeated itself, . . . another war [would] suck everything into doomsday under those billowing atomic mushrooms".[5]

Any type of popular art in the 1950's had to deal with the fears of the American public if it was to remain popular. Mickey Spillane created an enormous sensation and a multi-million seller by having his detective hero, Mike Hammer, in *One Lonely Night,* solve all of America's problems by confronting Communists and "kill[ing] 'em left and right, [to] show 'em

1. William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Billy Graham,* Ronald Press: New York, 1960, p. 209.
2. *Ibid.,* p. 111.
3. William L. O'Neill, ed., *American Society Since 1945,* Quadrangle Books: New York, 1969, p. 18.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 46.
5. Eric Goldman, *The Crucial Decade and After,* Vintage Books: New York, 1960, p. 15.

we aren't so soft after all".[6] The science fiction writers and movie producers of the time used four major themes about which most of their stories were created. These themes were, a return to the frontier, religion, alien invasion and atomic holocaust. Within these themes, many of society's hopes and fears were manifested, including juvenile delinquency, communism, fear of radiation and internal security.

The basic theme of the frontier ran strongly through much of the science fiction of the 1950's. The idea of space pioneers confronting untamed nature brought with it a sense of security and *déjà vu.* On the frontier and in the wilderness, the old virtues of physical strength, personal fortitude, and willingness to use one's fists, took precedence over politics and science. When men confront the unknown the hero is necessarily the John Wayne type. He must be extremely violent and brave, though dull-witted, and not at all like the Dean Acheson type, leader of the early fifties who was the exact "image of the Communist which recur[red] time and again in his [McCarthy's] speeches . . . an easterner, usually of Anglo-Saxon Episcopalian origins, who has been educated in schools such as Groton and Harvard".[7]

Science fiction writers like Robert Heinlein and André Norton used the frontier idea to idolize the violent hero. In so doing, they also dealt with the problem of juvenile delinquency, which was particularly vexing to Americans during the 1950's. Young people, who had always represented the bright future, were getting into more and more trouble, with drugs, sex, and violence. In the early fifties, more than 1,000,000 teenagers were involved with the police each year. Lurid exposés of teenage sex clubs were published, and Billy Graham formed the "Youth for Christ" movement which he felt "provided the much needed answer to juvenile delinquency and communism among the young people of America".[8] Heinlein in each of three books, *Between Planets* (1951), *Tunnel In The Sky* (1955) and *Time For the Stars* (1956), used the basic idea of the spoiled youngster achieving true manhood by accidentally confronting the unknown wilderness. In each story, science played an incredibly minor role. Only one main scientific idea was used in each and that was just to get the story moving.

6. Mickey Spillane, *One Lonely Night,* E.P. Dutton & Co.: New York, 1951, p. 102.
7. Seymour Martin Lipsit, "The Sources of the Radical Right" in Daniel Bell ed., *The Radical Right,* Anchor Books, 1964, p. 362.
8. McLoughlin, Jr., *op. cit.,* p. 37.

In *Between Planets,* spoiled young Don Harvey, who had gone to a private school, accidentally found himself involved in a war on Venus. He spent the first half of the book snivelling that he wanted to go home and ignoring the advice of grizzled old Sergeant McMasters. Finally, however, he joined the army, and "learned the ways of the guerilla . . . Those who learned it lived; those who did not, died. Don lived".[9] Heinlein ended the book by having Don become the most important man on the space ship which eventually defeated the forces of evil. In *Tunnel In The Sky,* Rod Walker accidentally found himself marooned on a planet full of dangerous animals and jungles. He had been a sissified city boy all his life, yet he survived as a "great naked savage with pointed teeth and a fiendish grin"[10] to lead his little group back to civilization. Tom Barlett, in *Time for the Stars,* also found himself accidentally in a dangerous situation. He was basically tricked by his brother into going on an interstellar voyage to explore new and dangerous territory. Tom also rose to the occasion when danger presented itself. André Norton's story, *The Beast Master* (1959) also dealt with the dangers of the wilderness. Her young hero, Hosteen Storm, was an American Indian exiled to Arzor after "Terra of Sol" was destroyed. On Arzor he was able to ride horses and herd cattle and work with animals just like his ancestors had done.

Each one of these stories was juvenile, almost to the Horatio Alger extent. They clearly delineated good and evil, with the pathways to each only occasionally obscured. The most interesting point in the stories was, that when each boy became a man, and lost his tendencies toward delinquency, he shunned urban life. Each one of Heinlein's boys decided to throw his lot in with new pioneer ventures on new planets. The meaning is fairly obvious: the city causes delinquency; real men are only created and maintained in the wilderness. The city was an evil influence, in Heinlein's mind, and the only way to counteract it was to leave. Thus tacit approval was given to the massive exodus to the suburbs then going on. Heinlein's and Norton's stories ended up optimistically on a superficial level, because modern youth was portrayed as redeemable. However, on a deeper level, there was a stark note of pessimism, in that the young boys and girls were saved only by a new wilderness, which, in the fifties had not yet opened up.

Ray Bradbury, also dealt with the new frontier idea in a group of his stories, *The Martian Chronicles.* The stories cover the period 1999-2026,

9. Heinlein, op. cit., p. 126.
10. Robert Heinlein, *Tunnel in the Sky,* Ace Books: New York, 1955, p. 247.

supposedly the time between the first and last American expeditions to Mars. Within this time, a delicate and beautiful Martian civilization was destroyed, the Martian cities were razed, the landscape was despoiled and American capitalist values were imposed upon the planet. Bradbury like Heinlein and Norton, but with much more insight and a more literary style, also dealt with Americans' reactions to new surroundings. However, Bradbury felt that the basic racism, destructiveness and wastefulness of man would *not* change simply because of space travel. He painted images of hot dog stands set up, of Martian art being destroyed, and "empty bottles . . . dropped . . . one by one into the deep blue canal waters".[11] *The Martian Chronicles* is pervaded by a deep sense of pessimism, and the book ends with a dire prediction for modern society. Earth commits nuclear suicide because, "Science ran too far ahead of us too quickly, and the people got lost in a mechanical wilderness, . . . emphasizing the wrong items, emphasizing machines instead of how to run the machines. Wars got bigger and bigger and finally killed Earth".[12] Bradbury's book was quite stark in its criticism of American society, yet it went through 15 separate editions in the 1950's alone, making it by far one of the most popular science fiction books of the period.

The science fiction movies of the 1950's also dealt with the problem of, and supposed solution to juvenile delinquency. *The Blob,* released in 1958, starring Steve McQueen, was a direct attempt to prove that much of the delinquency of the time was just clean fun and not malicious. In the movie, McQueen and his buddies were rowdy, and had noisy cars. Some of their pranks even caused the exasperated sheriff to exclaim, "all criminals were kids once". However, when the "Blob", an alien being, started running amuck, the kids showed great heroism. Even though the adults at first refused to believe that there even was a Blob, the kids fought and eventually defeated this creature, which gained size and strength with every person it killed. The only real drama and message involved in the movie occurred when the "delinquents" were trying to prove that they were not liars. Perhaps this was an attempt by the producer to state that much of the problem of juvenile delinquency was just a misunderstanding on the part of the adults. The makers of *The Blob,* and the rest of the science fiction movies of the period, with the notable exception of *Forbidden Planet,* followed the basic rule that "'Good' science fiction depends on

11. Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles,* Bantam Books: New York, 1970, p. 52.
12. *Ibid.,* p. 180.

intellectual stimulation . . . But mass movie audiences do not go to a theatre for intellectual stimulation, they go to be 'entertained'."[13] Therefore the obvious "movie solution" to the problem of juvenile delinquency was to pretend that it was basically harmless or really non-existent.

The tremendous religious revival of the 1950's was one of the major social phenomena of that decade. The reason for the resurgence seems to be a combination of several factors. First, the horror of World War II and the fear of atomic war, "undermined men's faith in science and reason as the sole guides of conduct and the only conduits of knowledge".[14] The feeling that science was an evolutionary good that would eventually solve all of man's problems, was displaced because, "technological advance in the twentieth century has not only failed to usher in the millenium, but has created the spectre of more complete totalitarianism".[15] Therefore, the trend which began with the Scopes trial, of science replacing religion as the true faith, was basically reversed. Another major element in the religious resurgence was anti-communist fervour. Communism was damned as atheistic and as sin incarnate, and this in itself had two effects. First, interdenominational strife lessened greatly since, "the anti-communist issue became so salient . . . that they [Protestants] abandon [ed] their traditional anti-Catholic enemies in order to take part in . . . in ecumenical anti-Communism".[16] Secondly, the anti-Communism led to a basic institutional strength in the various churches. In the suburbs, where most of the new churches and congregations were built, going to church was a show of community solidarity. Church attendance protected one's children against atheistic Communism and resultant delinquency, it proved one's loyalty to one's country, and it gave the secure feeling of a united front against a common evil.

The embodiment of this anti-technological, anti-Communist religion in the fifties, was of course the evangelism of Billy Graham. Graham's appeal rested upon the old evangelist idea that if enough fear was instilled in a person, he would eventually return to God. Graham's success, culminating

13. Anthony Boucher, "The Publishing of Science Fiction" in Reginald Bretnor ed., *Modern Science Fiction*, Coward-McCann, Inc.: New York, 1953, p. 54.
14. Vance Packard, "Resurvey of 'Hidden Persuaders'" in William L. O'Neill ed., *American Society Since 1945*, Quadrangle Books, New York, 1969, p. 18.
15. Angus M. Taylor, "Science Fiction: The Evolutionary Context" in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Spring 1972, p. 860.
16. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, Random House: New York, 1967, p. 70.

in 1957 in New York when he attracted 2,019,100 people to his campaign, was based on couching his revivalism in modern terms. Actually, "it is no exaggeration to say that Communism, the atomic bomb, and World War III have replaced the Devil, the battle of Armageddon and hell in Graham's revivals as the major means of instilling the motive of fear".[17] This question of the place of religion in a technological age was another major theme in science fiction of the fifties, especially in the movies.

The only general pattern concerning religion in the science fiction of the fifties was that, "It is as if religion were tacitly agreed to have an earthly, or Terrene, limitation when the scale of human activity . . . [became] galactic".[18] A large majority of the movies, which were present-oriented, had religious themes. A constant plot idea was that of the people of the world uniting in their churches either to face a common threat, as in *The War of the Worlds* (1953) or to receive the Second Coming, as in *The Red Planet Mars* (1952). Always, the threat was defeated, God was welcomed joyously, and humanity remained united in what was technically a theocracy.

The majority of science fiction novels and short stories of the period were future-oriented and religion played a minor role. Writers like Isaac Asimov created religions based on science, with the supreme power being mathematics. Others, like Ray Bradbury, whose works dealt with the social problems of the time, used allegorical Christian themes. Two of the finest works of the fifties, Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959) and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *The Sirens of Titan* (1959) both dealt with theological themes, but in a radically different manner from that of their contemporaries. While most science fiction of the fifties ended upon a generally optimistic religious note, Miller and Vonnegut strongly stressed the futility of religion and the pessimistic and existential nature of life.

The idea of the Second Coming was the main theme of two of the better science fiction movies of the fifties, *The Red Planet Mars* (1952) and *The Next Voice You Hear* (1950). The two differed, however, in their emphasis as to exactly which problems Christ would address himself. In *The Red Planet Mars,* the main problems were international, the Communist threat. *The Next Voice You Hear* portrayed a typical American working class family of three which lived in a small Southern California suburb. According to the movie, life in the Truman era was full of minor headaches such

17. William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Billy Graham,* Ronald Press: New York, 1960, p. 139.
18. Kingsley Amis, *New Maps of Hell,* Harcourt Brace & Co.: New York, 1960, p. 83.

as traffic tickets, the constant breakdown of electric appliances, the son's inability to do long division, and the inevitable defeat of the father's bowling team. More importantly, employer-employee relationships were portrayed as rotten and class ridden. James Whitmore, the father, was basically dissatisfied with life. He saw it as meaningless and at one point exclaimed, "I work every day to make ends meet, and what do I get? Two ends!" Into this scene of a tired, hassled people came "the voice of God" over the radio! In a quite fantastic manner, the voice was broadcast at the same time all over the world, in all different languages, except "behind the Iron Curtain". The immediate response, in the true fashion of the early fifties, was one of fear and disbelief. The people immediately thought it was "a Communist plot" or "a hoax to scare kids". After a few more broadcasts, however, people started to believe that it really was God. Suddenly, minor miracles started to occur; the car starter worked, and James Whitmore's boss turned out to be a nice guy after all. But it was blatantly obvious that all of these "miracles" occurred not because of divine intervention, but because people started following the biblical lessons of "love, faith, freedom, and peace". The message of this film fitted in perfectly with the anxieties of the time. The moral was basically conservative in that it advocated the rejuvenation of America's faith in itself. It warned against class conflict and dissatisfaction with the *status quo.* Actually, it was a Billy Graham type theme since it stressed that *moral* reform was the answer to all of society's problems. Yet there was also an underlying feeling of anti-McCarthyism. The movie was a round-about warning against the notions of fear, mutual suspicion, and divisiveness then rampant in American society.

The Red Planet Mars dealt with the idea of the Second Coming as the final solution to the problem of Communism. Peter Graves and Andrea King played a married couple, both scientists, who started monitoring strange radio signals from Mars. They soon deciphered the code and found that the messages were actually passages from the Bible. When this knowledge was made public, it was assumed that Christ was on Mars. A great religious wave swept the world, and there were scenes of Russian peasants throwing down their hoes, donning Greek Orthodox vestments, and marching on Moscow. The Russian soldiers threw away their guns, and the Communist regimes of the world toppled in the face of religion. However, just at the time when the people of the world were uniting, a diabolical German scientist revealed that the messages were a hoax. He had set up a radio transmitter in the mountains between Chile and Argentina, right next to

the statue of the Christ of the Andes. He had then bounced radio beams off the ionosphere to make it seem as is the signals were coming from Mars. The whole world was thrown into a sense of hopelessness, and it seemed as if the forces of evil would once more be triumphant. However, right when the diabolical scientist was making his announcement, a real radio beam came to earth. The signal was a passage of Scripture and it proved that Christ really was on Mars watching over His children on earth. This idea of a united religious effort defeating atheistic Communism was a major theme in the United States during the 1950's. The combination of the Papal Encyclical against Communism in 1937, Billy Graham's constant stress that fundamental Protestantism was anti-Communist, and Reinhold Niebuhr's exhortation that "The Children of Light" should take a firm stand against "The Children of Darkness"[19] led to "the most striking feature of post war Christianity [which] was the ecumenical movements and the suppression of doctrine which it entailed".[20]

The film version of *The War of the Worlds* (1953) had only the most casual relation to the original story by H.G. Wells. In the movie, the Martians landed all over the world, except behind the iron curtain (again), as opposed to landing only in England in the book. The film featured shots of brand new types of armaments such as the "flying wing", and mentioned, in a typical fifty-ish political vein, the "fine armies of Turkey and Finland" which just so happen to be on the borders of Russia. Predictably, all the armies were easily defeated, but it was made quite clear, however, that the greatest psychological shock was not the annihilation of the armies, but the sudden realisation that the atomic bomb, the ultimate scientific advance, was ineffective! Anarchy and barbarism ensued, and the obvious message came through. Man was being punished for putting too much faith in science and not enough faith in God. Finally, the people of the world fled to their churches and miraculously the Martians were killed by human diseases. The final scenes were of the people united in worship, thanking God, and not science, for their deliverance.

Isaac Asimov, in his *Foundation* trilogy (1951, 52, 53) dealt with the rise and fall of galactic empires. He was quite obvious in his belief that history is cyclical and has admitted that his galactic stories are "simply the

19. Chester E. Eisinger, *The 1940's: Profile of a Nation in Crisis,* Doubleday & Co.: New York, 1969, p. 431.
20. O'Neill, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

Roman or British Empire written large".[21] Within this framework, Asimov injected two theological, though non-Christian, ideas. The first dealt with the idea that the dividing line between science and religion was basically invisible, and the second dealt with the proper juxtaposition of science and religion in a technological world.

The rise of the Foundation as a galactic force was predicted on the theory of psychohistory, which was "that branch of mathematics which deals with the reactions of human conglomerates to fixed social and economic stimulus".[22] This was basically the idea that human reactions become proportionately more predictable when the number of human beings involved increases. Therefore, when the whole galaxy was involved, with its "five hundred quadrillion" people, the future could be predicted with 98% accuracy. One great psychohistorian, Hari Seldon, mapped out the course of history and predicted that the Galactic Empire would fall and the people of the planet Terminus (Foundation) would gain control of the galaxy. The people of Terminus were informed of their special status and they forever lived under the idea of their own "manifest destiny". Nobody on Terminus really understood the Seldon Plan, but they basically accepted the fact that there was *some* sort of force in the galaxy that had pre-determined the future. Seldon proved that the "force" was mathematics, but the common people just accepted the idea on faith, the same faith that is a pre-requisite to the belief in any supreme being.

Asimov's second theological idea was that the only purpose of religion was to explain the unknown, and that as science explained more and more, it supplanted religion. Therefore, the people of Terminus were able to conquer their more powerful neighbouring planets quite peacefully by creating and exporting a new and fantastic religion based on the wonders of atomic power. Terminus was the only planet in the area which possessed atomic power, so to everyone else it was a mysterious, inexplicable divine force. It would seem that Asimov was making a direct statement concerning the sudden revival of religion in the United States, after the explosion of the atomic bomb. Asimov was not condemning religion, he felt that, "it is one of the great civilizing influences of history".[23] He was basically warning against the dangers of such sentiments as Billy Graham's

21. Boucher, *op. cit.*, p. 179
22. Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*, Avon Books: New York, 1972, p. 17.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

that atomic weapons were the instruments of God's wrath and that "I don't care what any scientist says. The Word of God is enough".[24]

The basic religious theme in much of Ray Bradbury's work was the idea that the purpose of a man's life is to unite himself with God. Unlike the movies which stressed the importance of God as an outside force, Bradbury stressed that each individual had to search for the divine within himself. In one story, "The Exiles" (1950), the spirit of Edgar Allan Poe spoke to the spirit of Charles Dickens and said, "I am a god, Mr. Dickens, even as you are a god . . . [because of] the worlds we created".[25] These men had given of themselves to enrich their fellows, and hence their resultant divinity. During the religious revival following World War II, Bradbury was fully aware that the United States was "a country . . . in which piety has given way to moralism, and theology to ethics".[26] The feeling one receives from "The Man" (1948) is that Bradbury did not think that organized religion, even with its increasing strength, was fulfilling the role of spiritual comforter. Why else would a spaceship Captain chase frantically after the trail of Christ on planet after planet, just to "ask him for a little – peace and quiet"?[27]

Both Walter M. Miller, in *A Canticle for Leibowitz,* and Kurt Vonnegut, in *The Sirens of Titan,* took unusual views of mankind and religion in relation to the other science fiction writers of the period. Miller's book basically told the story of the rise of civilization after an atomic holocaust. After the atomic war, there was the, "Simplification, when remnants of mankind had . . . kill [ed] rulers, scientists, leaders, technicians, teachers and whatever person . . . deserved death for having helped to make the Earth what it had become".[28] The book traced the rise of the new Catholic church and specifically a new monastic order, the Order of St. Isaac Edward Leibowitz. The Brothers spent centuries during the new dark ages, recopying old books and documents that were meaningless to them. They copied items such as ancient shopping lists, blueprints and algebra text-

24. McLoughlin, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 212.
25. Ray Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man,* Doubleday & Co.: New York, 1951, p. 100.
26. Daniel Bell, ed., *The Radical Right,* Doubleday & Co.: New York, 1964, p. 62.
27. Bradbury, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
28. Walter M. Miller, Jr., *A Canticle for Leibowitz,* Transworld Publishers: Great Britain, 1959, p. 52.

books. Miller's obvious point was that *anything* could become a holy relic if enough people did not understand it. The book ended with civilization rising once again, only to destroy itself in another atomic holocaust. Religion, to Miller was not a life-giving, unifying force, as it was in most science fiction, but rather just an absurd means for man to continue his meaningless, hopeless life. Vonnegut's book also parodied the place of religion in life. He felt that the only religion possibly consistent with the absurdity of life, would be the "Church of God the Utterly Indifferent".[29] Both of these books were written in the late fifties, a time when Billy Graham's popularity was on the decline, and when, "In the wake of the first satellite, we gave no sign of closing ranks and facing outward as a united species".[30]

According to Senators Joe McCarthy and Barry Goldwater, the United States in the 1950's, was "in clear and imminent danger of being overwhelmed by alien [communist] forces",[31] and yet was impotent, "because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this Nation".[32] The American public, because of the rapid succession of the Communist takeover of China, the first explosion of a Soviet atomic bomb, and the Alger Hiss Case, was prepared in the early fifties, to accept any explanation that linked all these shocking events together. Therefore, when a conspiracy theory was propounded which linked international communism with internal espionage, people leaped to believe it. A general wave of hysteria swept over the nation, which culminated in bookburning, anti-intellectualism, and purges of government officials, scientists and professors who generally "were guilty of little more than poor judgement".[33] Science fiction novelists of the time, like Robert Heinlein in *The Puppet Masters* (1951), and screen writers in movies like *I Married a Monster From Outer Space,* took advantage of the hysteria to produce a hybrid type of alien invasion theme.

I Married a Monster From Outer Space, starring Tom Tryon as the head monster, was illustrative of the new type of invasion theme. In *The War of the Worlds,* Wells made it fairly obvious that any race which had the tech-

29. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *The Sirens of Titan,* Hodder Paperback: London, 1959, p. 153.
30. I.F. Stone, *The Haunted Fifties,* Random House: New York, 1969, p. 209.
31. Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative,* Victor Publishing, New York, 1960, p. 89.
32. Goldman, *op. cit.,* p. 142.
33. O'Neill, *op. cit.,* p. 9.

nology to send ships across space with unerring accuracy, would possess vastly superior military might. However, in the new style, even though the aliens arrived in fantastic flying saucers, their weapons were inferior to man's. Tom Tryon and his cohorts did have the diabolical ability, however, to take over human bodies and be relatively unnoticed while they worked their evil plot. The grand alien plan was to breed themselves with earth women in order to gain control of the new planet. Besides the obvious allusions to Communism, there was a basic racism inherent in the whole movie. The idea of interbreeding was met with revulsion, and some of the scenes could easily have been from *Birth of a Nation.* There were shots of the monsters, in human form, staring openly at scantily clad females, and there was one scene where a monster beat down a bedroom door to get at his unwilling mate. The monsters were eventually hunted down, with dogs, in a scene quite reminiscent of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* but in this case, Simon Legree was the hero.

Robert Heinlein, in *The Puppet Masters* drew direct parallels between his "titans" and the Communist conspiracy. The titans used mind and thought control to enslave people, just like in Russia where, "the parasites might feel right at home".[34] Actually, except for brief mention of some space ships and flying cars, the story could easily have been a Mickey Spillane detective thriller. The hero was a counter-intelligence agent who had a beautiful girl friend, and the two of them helped expose the wicked aliens in order to teach America the lesson that "The price of freedom is the willingness to do sudden battle".[35] Heinlein ended the book with his hero feeling "exhilarated" because an army of earthmen were flying to Titan to bring one message to the puppet masters, "Death and Destruction!"[36]

Ray Bradbury, in the early fifties, dealt with the dangers inherent in the McCarthyism and materialism them rampant in America. His emphasis was on the dangers of overreaction, then potentially possible, if Americans became too obsessed with the idea of internal security. In three stories, "Usher II" (1950), "The Exiles" (1950), and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), Bradbury anticipated the book banning and burning that actually did occur. There was scarcely any real difference between Bradbury's tragic parody of a world which condemned Edgar Allan Poe's books to destruction be-

34. Robert Heinlein, *The Puppet Masters,* New American Library, New York, 1951. p. 80.
35. *Ibid.,* p. 174.
36. *Ibid.,* p. 175.

cause they dealt with the supernatural, and the real banning of an edition of *The Canterbury Tales* in San Antonio, Texas in 1952 "because it [was] illustrated by Rockwell Kent".[37] Bradbury's description of an alien invasion was also totally unique. Bradbury wrote from the point of view of the Martians. He portrayed the whole invasion as a tragic mistake because eventually it would be, "man who'll conquer Mars, with cocktail shakers and foot arches and poker chips and riding crops and leather boots and checkered caps and rum collinses".[38] Nothing could be sacred in the face of the law that, "anytime an Earthman can turn an honest dollar, watch him steam".[39]

The inherent fear of atomic weapons was the most universal theme in science fiction of the 1950's. The basic idea of atomic science manifested itself in three basic ways. The first was the idea of the horror and evil involved when man tampered with the secrets of nature, as in the movies *Them* (1954), *Godzilla* (1956), and *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957). The second idea was that of the atomic scientist who had to be respected for his brilliance, but damned for his discoveries, as in the movie, *The Fly* (1958). The third idea was conjecture regarding the ultimate effects of the inevitable atomic war as in Isaac Asimov's *Pebble in the Sky* (1952) and Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz.*

Them combined the four major themes of science fiction in the fifties. The movie took place near Alamagordo, New Mexico, nine years after the atomic tests were conducted at White Sands. The basic plot idea was that giant killer ants evolved because of genetic mutations caused by the atomic blasts. The brilliant scientist, Edmund Gwenn solved the mystery of the origin of the giant ants but he injected a religious theme by saying, "We may be witness to a Biblical prophecy come true: 'There shall be destruction and darkness, and the beasts shall reign over the earth". However, the hero of the movie was not the scientist, but was James Arness, the man of action who killed the ants after the scientist had explained their existence. Throughout the movie, however, there was no explicit judgement, moral or otherwise against the bomb or the effects of the bomb.

The Japanese made film, *Godzilla,* did involve a moral judgement concerning the bomb. It was stressed that Godzilla was a prehistoric sea creature which had only come ashore because the hydrogen bomb tests had raised the level of Strontium 90 in the ocean. Therefore, when the

37. O'Neill, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
38. Bradbury, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

beast became radioactive itself, it came on shore to punish man for disturbing the balance of nature. It was made quite clear in the movie that atomic weapons caused irreparable and inestimable damage in areas man had not even considered.

The Amazing Colossal Man, brought further moral judgement to bear against atomic weaponry. In this film, an army colonel was accidentally caught in an atomic blast. This caused him to start growing 10 feet in height per day. However, the man's heart could not keep up the pace so he was doomed to a slow, freakish and painful death. The colonel started having flashbacks regarding the people he had killed in the Korean Wat, and he asked, "What sin could a man commit in a simple lifetime to bring this upon himself?" This technological idea of relating the atomic bomb directly to sin is the basis for Isaac Asimov's story, "Hell-Fire" (1956). In that story the first slow motion film was shown of an atomic explosion. Each stage of the explosion was shown clearly, and at the "moment of stasis – the fireball had shown dark spots for eyes, with dark lines for thin, flaring eyebrows, a hairline coming down V-shaped, a mouth twisted upward, laughing wildly in the hell-fire – and horns".[40]

The plight of the atomic scientist during the 1950's was outlined exactly in the movie, *The Fly.* Al Hedison played the part of a scientist who invented a machine which could break down and re-arrange atomic structure. Vincent Price played his brother, and Patricia Owens played his wife. Between the two of them, they reflected the popular attitudes toward scientists. They described Hedison as a great seeker of the truth, but they feared the suddenness of his discovery. Actually, during the 1950's, "the government, for its part, often displayed [similar] schizoid tendencies toward the scientist. It needed his services in the cause of national defence, but it was distrustful and fearful of them".[41] J. Robert Oppenheimer seemed to be the basic model for the scientist in *The Fly.* There was a basic note of pessimism in *The Fly,* however. Hedison was eventually killed by his discovery, a fate which Oppenheimer, in the fifties, was striving to avoid. The basic rule regarding atomic weapons in science fiction books in the fifties, was that authors like Asimov, Heinlein, and Miller, all believed an eventual atomic war was a certainty. However, they also all agreed that the atomic war would not completely annihilate mankind or completely devastate earth. This optimism was small comfort however in an era when no country was even willing to ban the testing of

40. Asimov, *op. cit.,* p. 118.
41. Stone, *op. cit.,* p. 119.

nuclear weapons, and when "The atomic thunderbolt . . . [was] *the* weapon around which all our military planning and training . . . revolv[ed]".[42]

Sam Moskowitz, an historian of science fiction, felt that science fiction suffered "a loss of direction and cessation of evolution"[43] in the early 1950's. However, it was during the early 1950's that science fiction magazines reached their peak in sales, and science fiction movies were being produced at an unprecedented rate. So actually, the public was accepting science fiction more readily as its ideas became more static. However, if we accept Kingsley Amis's thesis, it was not the science that was being accepted, because "the . . . ten years [1950-1960] have seen a perceptible decline in the role played in science fiction by actual science".[44] It would seem that science fiction sold not because it was prophetic or science-oriented, but rather because it stressed the anti-technological, anti-Communist dogmatism of "The Haunted Fifties".

42. Stone, *op. cit.*, p. 119
43. Sam Moskowitz. *Explorers of the Infinite,* World Publishing Co.: New York, 1957, p. 350.
44. Amis, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

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six sijo

Leonard Isaacs

SF writing

It's all done with mirrors:
the gold-flecked skin, the isosceles
breasts – extensions of our selves
like the cyborg hands that guide us
through deepspace. On every starship
Mother is the stowaway.

marvels

Far other worlds they fashion
and they mindsail *other seas.*
I/ watching/ praising the graceful
comeabouts/ or gibing
at the sudden jibes. The earth is
dry and saltless beneath me.

strange creature

God, what a monster! Already
it's in control of my mind
though it can barely communicate.
It has mismatched feet, a
sexlined body & forty-three
to forty-five syllables.

visiting shaman

In the bone cave he conjures forth
the Beast, assumes its shape
and paints his form so lifelike
on the walls that we tolerate
the brutish cries, the bright-hued
trailings of bile and exrement.

pervo-devo-twisto-freako-sijo

Turned-on Titanian tri-sex
seeks Jovial playmate,
Ganymede or Io. Will ball,
suck, swing, submit, assault,
massage or tentaclize. Require
holograph. No weirdos please.

black holes/white holes

Like black holes the hollowcored
lives collapse, their emanations
sealed in a self-contracting space.
But writers/ far out & strange/
spew words into the void
with unaccountable energies.

Sijo is a Korean form consisting of 3 (double) lines. The first and middle lines contain 14 or 15 syllables, the last line a fixed 15, so that the sijo ranges between 43 and 45 syllables.

review section – part one

edited by Christopher Priest

reaping the whirlwind

The Sheep Look Up
by John Brunner (Dent, 1974, 461pp, £2.95, ISBN 0 460 04191 6)

reviewed by Ian Watson

Horrifying though they are, the worlds of John Brunner's other two major future-shockers, *Stand on Zanzibar* and *The Jagged Orbit,* are both more distant in time from us than *Sheep Look Up* – and also more palatable, more inhabitable. And this, despite embattled suburbs, race war, over-population, genetic legislation, urban guerrilla mayhem . . . Distinctly more palatable – with even a fair chance of mucking through (so long as one doesn't run amuck in the process!). Not only palatable, but even vicariously entertaining – exciting in their nasty, complex madness: as the sprightly styles of those two books continually insist. *Stand on Zanzibar* is even a consumer product, "brought to you" (tongue in cheek) "by John Brunner using Spicers Plus Fabric Bond and Commercial Bank papers interleaved with Serillo carbons . . .," as the last page remarks brightly after the final acerbic roundup of the casualties. It exists in a frame of reference where products are still contemplatible; folks may be knee deep around Zanzibar, with precious little room for manoeuvre, but most of them are still on their feet. It goes on.

If you've just finished reading *Zanzibar* or *Jagged Orbit,* you may not agree that there's anything rosy or qualified about the all-too-realistic disaster scenarios pictured there – but give me a passport to *Zanzibar* from the world of *Sheep Look Up*! In *Sheep* the rot has reached the metabolic level. The State isn't merely rotting, everything is: the bark off the trees, the

flesh off our bodies, the soil, the water, the air. The book *crawls* – with ringworm, sinusitis, lice, rats, dermatitis, festering sores. And all this in the midst of riches; and because of them.

People may be intellectually familiar with the Limits to Growth controversy or with some of the consumer muckraking (using the word literally) of Ralph Nader and his Raiders. No doubt they remember Rachel Carson – no longer so much the charming oceanographer, but the Cassandra of *Silent Spring.* They may find prices escalating, toilet rolls and pet food in short supply, some petrol stations closed these days. Occasionally they may get their feet stained with oil from an occasional spillage on the beaches, or feel a step closer to berserking in a traffic jam. A little of the energy/resources/pollution equation is at last impinging on the texture of our lives. However it is still only an impingement, not an impalement. Brunner heaves up the whole iceberg out of the sea for us to inspect. And it is scaring – this is the iceberg that is going to sink our Titanic. We have sown the wind with pesticides, nuclear waste, nerve gas, defoliants, car fumes, and the whirlwind is on its way . . .

Although everyone in the book seems to be coughing their guts out, shitting in their pants, losing their hair by the handful, being incinerated or driven mad, there isn't any sense of overkill. On the contrary, it's perfectly logical, necessary and true (not a bit of ghoulishness courtesy of *Skull Comix*) when a woman's new microwave oven cooks her baby in her womb. The characters in *Sheep* are being excreted through a Devil's anus, as in the Bosch *Millennium* – and the operant Devil is the exploitative greed of the Capitalist society of the Western World which has looted, raped and poisoned the planet, till the immune systems of the planet itself seem bent on eliminating this cancer of the biosphere.

Sheep is presented in a similar split-up, mixed-media McLuhanite style to *Zanzibar,* with 'tracking' of a multitude of characters, interspersed with public notices, obituaries, reports. But it is much less self-consciously stylistic than *Zanzibar,* where sheer virtuosity sometimes runs away with itself – too much massage from the medium, at times! Not that I wish to knock the virtuosity of *Zanzibar per se*; only, *Zanzibar* thereby presents an aesthetically detached commentary from outside, upon the shown world – and thus leaves a sort of exit open. In keeping with this, the social commentator figures of *Zanzibar* and *Orbit,* Chad Mulligan and Xavier Conroy, are aggressively *glib* figures, dropping out of society almost as an act of petulance at human folly. When Chad Mulligan finally reappears from underground to reassume the mantle of charismatic sage *cum* whiz-kid, it is a challenge to

his own self-esteem that draws him – the lure of pitting his wits against Shalmaneser the super-computer (by no means an evil force in the book – indeed a potential source of great good). Chad's re-emergence is an act of intellectual *machismo.* He capers contemptuously on stage again, full of scorn, with a heady sense of his own superior IQ. And he has (like Xavier Conroy) only the lacerations of his wit, a fund of *saeva indignatio,* and the prescriptions of common sense of an Ambrose Bierce variety, to offer in his sociological chapbooks.

Sheep also has its corresponding sage who drops out, wallows a while, and re-emerges to fill a pivotal role. But Austin Train, in *Sheep,* is of a different mettle entirely. He is for real – almost painfully so – in a sense that Chad Mulligan's self-esteem would never allow him to be, and it's noteworthy that whereas we have copious extracts from Chad and Xavier's Devil's Dictionaries, we don't read a word by Austin Train. The only time that he really speaks out publicly, in court, he is almost embarrassingly sincere. His appeal to humanity is a shock after the flip pontifications of Brunner's other 'raiders' . . .

Well, admittedly he does speak out before this – converting a hardboiled media lady on the spot – however we only get his message filtered through her viewpoint: as though it is too hopeful and humane actually to write down realistically. (Sarcasm and *saeva indignatio* is more readable.) The effect of both 'revelations' is not unlike Edward G. Robinson's last fling in *Soylent Green,* where, to the swell of Beethoven's *Pastoral,* every landscape that has ever been coded into us by commercials for package tours, deodorants or Martini, is screened in a last vicarious surge of the yearning for the paradise lost which we have paved over and put a parking lot upon. *Because* it matters so desperately, it is so much more difficult to say some things. Brunner faces the same difficulty in another fine novel of a vile future arriving on our doorsteps, *The Stone That Never Came Down,* where the *deus ex machina* of a perception-enhancing virus enables a Mussolini-type to see through his own braggadocio and produce the integrative, insightful plan for the salvation of Europe that makes hardened newsmen applaud with joy; but what it is we *can* not hear.

To be sure, Austin Train isn't a popular sociologist of the Mulligan school, but a doomwatcher of the Rachel Carson, Rattray Taylor brand – and his message is implicit in every poisoning and every pustule that affects the characters in the book. So we need no quotes from him. His message is written in the sea and on the wind. (Chad or Xavier, acting the hobo, can tidy themselves up if they so choose. Nobody in *Sheep* can clean the dirt

up any more.)

Austin Train's followers might call themselves 'Trainites'; but Train himself prefers the word Commensalist for somebody who shares his vision of how the world should be re-ordered, along mutually helpful, ecologically sound, non-consumer-oriented lines: a word which, not unnaturally, gets shortened into 'commie' by good Americans/good consumers – a dipping of the lance by Brunner to the classic that is the sf counterpart to Carson's *Silent Spring* – Pohl and Kornbluth's *Space Merchants,* with its conservationists/consies: a satirical allegory, back in McCarthyite days, of the treatment meted out to critics of the American way of life, as well as a brilliant piece of projection into the future of the role of the multi-national corporation and the captive, conditioned consumer.

But, oh for a slice of Chicken Little, in John Brunner's world! At least it would be safe to eat. Even a cup of koffiest, with its addictive additives, would be comparatively pure, besides the diarrhoea-tainted, nerve-gas-laced tapwater of Denver, Colorado, *circa* – well, what date? *Space Merchants* is set way ahead, next century. Along with *Zanzibar. Sheep,* which the blurb misguidingly labels as *Zanzibar's* sequel, is – most sinisterly of all – left undated. By implication set in the early 1980s, it feels very very close at hand. Though personally I can't speak for America, Japan at least, as of 1970, was only a short haul away from *Sheep* – with pollution disasters emerging daily and new diseases being *invented* by man: such as the mercury-based Minamata Sickness, or SMON, a nerve disease (Subacute Myelo Optico Neuropathy) caused to hundreds of school children by crop spraying; with the sea dilute urine; the cedar trees kept alive only by chemical drips fastened to their branches; over a thousand teachers in one year needing growths surgically removed from their vocal chords; and new skyscrapers being rushed up in the hope of amortizing the cost before the expected next Great Kanto Earthquake. And of course America has one extra ingredient in this brew that Japan lacks. That Brunner's Dickensian humbug Mr. Bamberley – philanthropic provider of free food (of a sort) for the 3rd World – funds this with revenue from an organization that markets the best and stickiest napalm, is cuttingly accurate.

Item: Automatic Sprinkler Corporation of America, located in Dallas, Texas . . . We visualise suburban lawns being lazily watered. But contract DAAA09-69-C-0204 for the Department of Defense, to the tune of $1,990,674, was for SUU-7C/A cluster bomb dispensers. What waters one man's lawn, rips anothers flesh. The one finances the other; while Research

& Development march hand in hand. Not a Brunner fact, nor a Train fact. But simply a fact from the happening world.

Counter-Item: again not a Brunner fact, but a real-time fact – on 22nd December 1971 "the so-called Working Group Industrial Guerrilla claimed successful sabotage actions against Holland's pilot ultracentrifuge uranium enrichment plant and a number of large chemical industries in West Germany and Belgium. The communiqué said sabotage was the only way to halt the rapidly increasing industrial pollution . . . " Trainites, anyone?

Far from engaging in overkill in *Sheep*, Brunner merely marshalls a selection of the ready facts. There are enough for another *Sheep*, and then another. Consider a few sentences from the Nader Report *Vanishing Air* . . .

> A recent report by the genetic study section of the National Institutes of Health suggests that the danger of birth defects from airborne chemicals may dwarf the well-documented dangers of radiation . . . The most potent mutagens in the environment are ethyleneimines. These get into the air through insecticides, solid rocket fuels, emissions from textile and printing industries and other industrial processes. Minute amounts injected into male mice caused a large number of their offspring to be deformed . . . Exposure of the fetus to cadmium sulfate (a major by-product of zinc, lead and copper refining) is capable of causing harelip, cleft palate, and protrusion of the brain from the skull . . . Highly reactive components of "smog" can react chemically with sperm and kill them . . . Asphalt, the common road material, contains many cancer-producing chemicals. When these particles are worn away from roads by automobile tyres . . . "

Etcetera, etcetera. The air we breath isn't fit to eat – it certainly wouldn't meet the feeble quality-control standards for food additives! (What a bright idea of Alvin Weinberg's – former head of the Atomic Energy Commission – then, to propose blasting our nuclear waste into space! Of course, there is one small point, that not all space launches are equally successful . . . Perhaps we should adopt the alternative proposal of letting the hot waste melt its way down through the Antarctic icecap?) The Nader team quote biologist René Dubos to the effect that "modern man can adapt biologically to the technological environment only in so far as mechanisms of adaptation are potentially present in his genetic code . . . The limits that must be imposed on social and technological innovations are determined not by scientific knowledge or practical know-how, but by the biological and mental nature of man which is essentially unchangeable." It would be nice if we could undergo the sort of change Brunner envisages in *The Stone That Never Came Down* – where his beneficial consciousness-expander isn't just a drug, but a live virus that will live and breed in us in the most beneficial pandemic ever, bringing about a major qualitative biological change in us. It would

be very nice indeed. Sometimes it feels as though the choice must be something like that – or bust. Timothy Leary thought so – but he is locked up by the 'madmen-in-charge' as a dangerous, subversive criminal – while the riot gases and cluster bomb dispensers go on being manufactured in the cause of peace and freedom and the right to purchase all the nicely-packaged commodities; while another few million pounds are spent on a Concorde that nobody wants, and while the British Government counts its few last new-pennies to see whether it can afford to MIRV or MARV its Polaris missiles . . .

Any review of this book that only treats it as literature, or only as sf, would be beside the point. It is a committed political and moral statement about the condition of our world. Yet it is literature too: and as such, a deeply moving, tragic work of art. (That the tragedy should be our own global tragedy brings us back to the point made in the previous sentence.) The heroisms of the book are more authentic than those of *Zanzibar:* where Don Hogan, facing up to the 'mucker', is only acting as a programmed killer – they are the heroisms of those who are without hope. The ending is the grimmest of catharses – an America burnt: not in the chauvinistically nuclear flamedeath so often envisaged (as in Philip Wylie's *Triumph*) but simply by the collective act of citizens setting fire to what has at last become irredeemably obscene to them. 'You don't need a Weatherman . . .' As far away as Ireland, the wind blows the smoke from the burning continent. But John Brunner avoids any McLuhanite puns or hip references here – just as he has controlled and organized the ebullient hipcrime style of *Zanzibar* into a tauter, fiercer instrument throughout; and the rest is silence. A complex, tragic masterpiece, this – orders of magnitude more incisive and urgent than anything I have read in a long while.

a bloody muddle

The Chalk Giants
by Keith Roberts (Hutchinson, 1974, 271pp, £2.95, ISBN 0 09 117880 0)

reviewed by David I. Masson

The only other piece by Keith Roberts that I have read is *The Inner Wheel,* if that is the one about a peculiarly nasty telepathic mind-bending coven-of-

all-the-talents in a "charming" Southern Home-Counties town. So I haven't been able to appreciate his development.

Readers may have some difficulty with this novel. Battered by words, names and rich detail, they may lose the way. The blurb, summing up, doesn't seem to know quite what the book's about. "Dream or reality? Future or racial memory? Forecast or myth?" it pipes, then passes the buck to the reader. But the later chapters (let us call them chapters) are quite clear on two points: Britain has been split in two by a narrow channel; and there are whole areas which are still lethally radioactive ages, perhaps millennia, after the atomic war. (Also there are myths about the Giants and their iron ships, strong buildings, and Fire-drakes.) So ostensibly it has to be a future. It follows that the stone-age, iron-age, mediaeval conditions described are those of a new phoenix humanity. Likewise it follows that Mr. Roberts thinks, or his fat visionary thinks, that the future is going to resemble the past. Perhaps too closely.

Around 1975, Stan Potts, a fat, mechanically adept, dreamer who has never "related" properly to woman or man, is driving a carefully-stocked vehicle over Salisbury Plain bound for Dorset and a well-known hideout on the coast below Corfe Castle. This is in a forbidden zone, as atomic war and invasion are expected. The preliminary italic section leaves him on the Plain. He succeeds (in chapter 1 proper) in getting through the barriers, collects three old acquaintances and encounters the fourth; one is a Lesbian, one the girl of his dreams who (of course) is sleeping with the nastier of the two men, and the other man is a painter. They settle down uneasily in a long fog in a farmhouse. Soon after Potts kills the lover, the first atomic bombs fall (Birmingham). The two women decamp to another house.

Chapter 2 is "spoken" successively by the two women and the painter (whose former mistress turns up for a spell). Convincing style-changes here. A tank invasion battle peters out. In the end Potts is left alone.

So far so hopeless. Apart from chapter 2, each chapter is preceded (and the last followed) by a short italic section giving Potts' thoughts as continuity, leading into his vision of a future. Chapter 3, taken literally, is about a trio of mutated oddities and their well-stocked hand-truck. They career around Britain (or its cut-off southern half) finding no human beings but plenty of animal and plant life and eventually the only too radioactive ruins of towns (but not so permanently radioactive as the "Black Rock" areas in later chapters; why?). Two morons pull the truck, while a third, an unlettered crippled long-armed genius, gets round to map-reading and eventually,

believe it or not, to reading the truck's copious library and chanting from it. He is called Monkey (echoes of the legendary Chinese character). Personally I don't believe that the greatest conceivable genius could ever get around from total ignorance of the existence of writing, *via* a picture-book or two to actually uttering, with some understanding, all the words of the literature he finds. It might, just, happen with a "phonetic" language such as German, but it would be impossible in an irregularly spelt one like French or English. I should date this episode about ten to twenty years after the atomic war: the truck was obviously stocked for Survival.

In conception, at least, this bleak chapter (did it start life as a short story?) may be the most powerful, and the notion of our Literature (*and* the print put out by our present affluent society!) being reduced to a fragmented tale told by an idiot [genius], full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, is a shrewd hit. Monkey, whose remains are washed away leaving a clean Earth, is an anti-scientist's embodiment of the scientific curiosity. Pru and Sal represent the blind forces it employs.

Potts is already unwell, no doubt from nuclear products. His next vision, chapter 4, in (Dorset?) Downland, finds the country fertile, partly afforested, and populated. So, despite difficulties between myths of the past and the time taken to evolve human institutions, I should put the date at between 200 and a million years later; it is a well organized late stone-age, presumably. One must assume that all mankind bar a few, and most of their machinery, constructions, and records, had been destroyed, so that civilization had had to start again from scratch. (What about indestructible plastics?) "Midsea" must refer to the Mediterranean. (It turns out much later, on p.192, that some Welsh survived in Snowdonia, but evidently almost without cultural records.) Well, here we have fertility rites, a "God-bride" leading to a "Corn King & Spring Queen" situation, a great drama of sexual diplomacy and empire-building, a new ithyphallic giant in the chalk, and sack of the stockade by the Horse Warriors who are ultimately invaders from overseas. (Are a million years enough to produce the Horse Warriors? How did the God-brides never get pregnant?)

Potts' next vision, in fever, could be of some ten years later, when a young new Corn-King consort is chosen for the "Reborn" God-bride, who had escaped from the débacle and managed to dominate the invaders with her cult, without taming their general brutality. More drama of intrigue. Pride comes before the consort's fall.

Potts is very ill and his fourth vision, chapter 6, has Sealanders in a ship

bound for Britain (the Islands of Ghosts). Sealanders are normally marauders, but it seems the king of this bunch, Rand, is on some penitential quest after an oracle. After many and terrible adventures they reach the aged Godbride (60 years on?) who still partly dominates the brutal Horse Warriors, but is killed. Although the direction of the voyage is roughly right, Sealand cannot be Zealand of Denmark, because it has "ragged mountains" (p.158). It must be Norway, more of whose mountains (?) are glimpsed eastward (p.163) on the southwest voyage. The journey on land is difficult to plot and seems too rapid. Why (chapters 3 and 6) is Britain split by a narrow channel? How? When? Where? (Forth-Clyde or Tyne-Solway?) It's not by nuclear action, or at least it isn't radioactive, whereas the radioactive products poisoning the Black Rock areas must have had a very long half-life. The first, too far south for Glasgow, must be Carlisle; the second, though "in the hills" fits Birmingham? The Worm (mutated) is in Lakeland (see p.210; not Nessie anyway). Could remnants of asphalt roads (M6??) still be extant? Surely not. There are some geographical hints (Lakeland, the people of the Dragon, Kermi [must by Cymru], Snow Mountain [Snowdon], the Green Island which may be Anglesey or Ireland, Fishguard, the Great Orme). On p.211 we have from the Dancing Man a performance that echoes a real event in a concentration camp. Three flashback passages (p.174, 212-13, 215) are unnecessarily late, split and confusing, meant to recall the background of Rand's hopeless quest, which ends, despite his pacifism, in slaughter and a lucky rescue.

The last chapter is "seen" by a "convalescent" but doubtless fatally ill, Potts. Some mere five generations later (say 150 years) we have a mediaeval set-up in Britain. Marck, a vassal-king in Corfe to Sealand, another oddball, is betrayed by his adoration of his wife into horror and slaughter, but will find peace in a new monotheism at the hands of the quasi-Christian priests of his overlord. We have the Wheel for the Cross, and the same promises of Resurrection (the One God, a Sealander, was broken on the wheel). Presumably this pacifies Potts' spirit, which has dreamt of a mystical Wheel of fire rolling out the ages.

But the final italic section returns us to Potts groaning in the traffic on Salisbury Plain. What happened, what happened? Did he never get to the coast? Or is this delirium?

Potts, to whom everybody keeps saying "You must be mad!" is, despite his skills, such a dreamer, that one wonders whether the whole affair is wishful fantasy. For one thing, the God-bride of chapters 4-6, a sort of

She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed *Ewig-Weibliche,* "is" the original Martine he longed for on the coast: in short, a pure erotic fantasy. At least one later character falls for this archetypal nature-goddess thing; such high-falutin romantic passions don't stop two or three of the women from meeting an unspeakable end. Now if what we are presented with is merely the self-indulgent fancies of one fat vision-spinner *in extremis,* clearly it is, though pathetic, of no value whatsoever. But if Potts' visions are genuine glimpses of a future, the details ought to have been made cast-iron convincing. Otherwise we just have an unworthy muddle, however powerfully imagined (if we are expected to take in any more chunks of symbolism than the one I guessed at in chapter 3, the "real" story will split down the seams). Now there are some unlikely copies of the past in the future: the ithyphallic chalk giant will pass (unless he is meant to be the Cerne Abbas one – a worrying thought); breaking on the wheel, bog-drowning, maidens offered to monsters will pass; the idea of a water-horse, though once widespread, is more doubtful. But – the Jokeman! (Last chapter.) Why on earth should future ages throw up a king's jester? And even more improbable, "cap and bells" (p.249)? With the Wheel of God I will deal presently. This final chapter is the most tainted with pastiche; why all this "writest thou" and so on? If neo-mediaeval man is to use "thou" on occasion then neo-neolithic man should have used it all the time. Then again, is it likely that one area could leap from stone-age to middle ages, from fertility rites to artillery and silk, in half a dozen generations? Howdid these islands get re-colonized? Where did wolves get into Britain from, only a few years after the atomic war (p.76-8)? Why resuscitate the Fenriswolf (p.205)?

Well, it's a *tour de force,* with on the whole superbly matching styles (if at times slightly turgid and bullying), some notable characters, masses of corroborative detail, and – oh dear! – plenty of richly imagined action. Plenty of sex and violence, not to mention violent sex, for those that like this kind of thing. It's rather a Germanic vision, with its blend of high sentiment and brutality. Basically the author is right, of course: humanity, left to its untutored devices, is cruel, brutal, vicious, devious, ruthless. According to the author, some are even capable of plotting revenge for years under cover of loving-kindness. But there are gratuitous horrors, beginning with Vicky's finger. Roberts' presentations of savagery and treachery are not to be equalled, but I find his silent quasi-Christian priests, with their Resurrectionist creed, an unconvincing afterthought. For one thing, the resurrectionist motif could never arise again with nearly identical details; for

another, it is brought in perfunctorily, like a happy ending at the close of a brutal Western. If the book has a message, it is the eternal round of slaughter and torture in Mankind, the impossibility of cooperation and peace without Christianity; but the second part of the message fails. So we are left with the riches of horror.

the fall of the american empire?

Bad Moon Rising
edited by Thomas M. Disch (Hutchinson, 1974, 315pp, £2.50, ISBN 0 09 118420 7)

reviewed by David Pringle

Thomas M. Disch's new anthology, *Bad Moon Rising,* reminds me of a collection edited by Langdon Jones in 1969, called *The New SF.* When that anthology came out critics complained that the bulk of the book wasn't science fiction. The same can be said of *Bad Moon Rising,* although Disch doesn't compound the sin by mentioning sf in the title. In fact, the proportion of stories that can be labelled sf is higher here than in the Jones anthology, although for the most part it is sf of a marginal, near-future variety – the present seen through a slightly distorting lens – as in John Sladek's "The Great Wall of Mexico", which could be about Richard Nixon. A deep concern for the quality of modern life motivates this book; the future is scarcely considered. So it isn't surprising that some of the best stories are not sf but simply tales of today – for example, "We are Dainty Little People" by Charles Naylor, which is a sensitive and imaginatively written study of life in a bedsitter.

According to Disch's introduction, the four poems and seventeen stories in this anthology are about politics. In fact, most of the stories are about the *lack* of meaningful politics. They are tales of anomie, powerlessness and dejection. The horror of city life – specifically New York life – is a frequent theme, cropping up in Harlan Ellison's story, for example, and in Disch's own contribution. It's not so much politics, then, but pessimism which gives thematic unity to the book. The assumption is, as Disch says in his introduction, that "reading the newspapers, watching TV, or just walking dirty streets, it's impossible for a rational person not to get the feeling that

almost everything is going from bad to worse . . . " This curiously apolitical view of politics seems to me to be very American, and indeed *Bad Moon Rising* is a very American book. All the contributors are Americans, apart from Michael Moorcock, whose story is perhaps the most 'political' in the collection. Life in modern America must be a black experience if these stories reflect it.

Darko Suvin, Peter Nicholls and other critics have commented on the obsession with doom and disaster in British sf, and Suvin has gone so far as to link this with the fall of the British Empire. American sf was supposed to be optimistic, full of good cheer towards the future. Since the Vietnam war a new American sf has arisen, which certainly does not fit the pattern. Typified by Disch's own writing, this new sf seems to be more laden with despair than the British tradition (which always had a certain stoicism about it). So perhaps there is something in the 'empire' theory. Since the Vietnamese débacle, the American Empire has been falling; chaos and night have arrived. Given the gross facts of Vietnam, New York, Watergate, etc., this new American pessimism is understandable, even excusable. What worries me is a tendency for many writers to adopt too ready an attitude of despair. Pessimism, after all, is an easier view to sustain than optimism. The pessimist has no obligations, he is forever justified. Moreover, in times of change pessimism is fashionable, and it's always easier to go with the fashion.

These carpings aside, I find *Bad Moon Rising* a good anthology. The literary standard is high; all the stories are written with style and intelligence. Some – those by Carol Emshwiller, Norman Rush, Ron Padgett and Dick Gallup – I find opaque and rather pointless. Others, such as Ellison's "The Whimper of Whipped Dogs" and Kate Wilhelm's "The Village" are powerful and moving. One or two stories are spoiled by their endings – Geo. Alec Effinger's "Relatives" and Gene Wolfe's "Hour of Trust", for example. Raylyn Moore's "Where Have all the Followers Gone?" and Malcolm Braly's "An Outline of History" are well written but trite – you could see it all coming. The high spots of the anthology are the contributions by Moorcock, Sladek and Disch – and here I have another complaint. The Sladek story is new (even if it does bear a close resemblance to much of his previous work, including the novel, *The Müller-Fokker Effect),* but both the Moorcock and the Disch have already appeared in this country as sections of novels – both were first published in 1972, as a matter of fact, a year before this anthology came out in America. Presumably, neither *Breakfast in the Ruins* nor *334* had appeared in the USA before *Bad Moon*

Rising, although both novels will be familiar to many British readers of the anthology. The Moorcock extract, entitled here "An Apocalypse: Some Scenes from European Life", is among the best things he has written. Detailed, atmospheric, full of suppressed emotion, it is a piece of historical fiction which successfully recreates moments in the political life of the last century.

The Disch extract, "Everyday Life in the Later Roman Empire", is the most genuinely depressing story in the book. Set in New York some fifty years in the future, it is pervaded with a sense of civilization in decline. Disch achieves this without sensational means. There is no blood and violence in the Harlan Ellison manner, no dwelling on the sordid and dilapidated, yet somehow the story conveys a feeling of loss and slow, insidious disaster. Disch concentrates on the characters and their interactions (in a way, *334* is a successful attempt at an impossible hybrid: the sf novel of manners).

To round off the collection there is a little story by Robert Silverberg, perhaps the blackest in the book. The universe has come to an end and all that remains is the mutilated text of a Bob Dylan song. This is one of the stories whose pessimism rings most false in my opinion – it is more a matter of being in the mode than in the dark night of the soul. I look forward to the new optimism in sf, the day that these writers rediscover the future. Meanwhile, I turn for solace to such non-fiction works as John Maddox's *The Doomsday Syndrome* or Adrian Berry's *The Next Ten Thousand Years.* The world is not coming to an end, even if American sf as we have known it is doing so.

telling it like it isn't

Beyond Apollo
by Barry Malzberg (Faber, 1974, 138pp, £1.95, ISBN 0 571 10510 6)

reviewed by Bob Shaw

Barry Malzberg's *Beyond Apollo* is, to me, the epitome of everything that has gone wrong with science fiction in the last ten years or so.

That isn't the same thing as my saying it's a bad book – Barry Malzberg and I belong to opposing schools of thought about sf writing, and a book which is good by the standards he chooses here is likely to be bad by mine, automatically. At risk of sounding a decade out of date, I can best discuss

it in terms of New Wave versus Old Wave.

My principal objection to New Wave sf is that, quite simply, it asks me to accept as true things which are clearly untrue. In this respect it is attuned to modern society, in which dishonesty has become so much a way of life that the idea of being cheated at every turn no longer disturbs many people. The chief executive of a democracy is revealed to be a gangster, cereal packets are only half filled in the factory, blocks of flats fall down when one small structural member is removed . . . and people don't mind very much. In the sf field, a book like *Beyond Apollo* is published with a dust jacket blurb which claims that it "circles round several basic questions which have, to date, not been explored in depth in science fiction. What is the nature of space? What are the effects of technological devices on man? Does the solution of engineering problems open or close the way to space by throwing men into situations with which they cannot deal? Above all, what happens to man in space?"

That passage illustrates the untruthfulness of the New Wave. All the things it says have not been dealt with in depth by science fiction (presumably meaning Old Wave sf) are precisely the things it *has* dealt with in depth – that's why we read the stuff, for God's sake. And there is another lie in the claim – ignoring the canny use of the phrase "*circles round* several basic questions" – that *Beyond Apollo* does deal with them.

The book records the thoughts of Evans, who went to Venus in a two-man spaceship (part of the faltering U.S. space programme) and came back alone, crazy. In the absence of any telemetry or recording equipment, various people question Evans to find out what happened. He keeps giving them different exotic explanations, and his "diary" is written in the first person in some places and third person in others, so we know we are dealing with multiple realities, or psychosis, or both. That's all the plot there is. The construction is almost as circular as *Catch 22,* rather more multi-layered than "The Yellow Pill". The book does not, in any way, explore the nature of space, the effects of technological devices on man, or what happens to man in space.

One might argue that this is what the book was doing when it depicted multiple realities and a spaceman gone crazy. But I'm going to risk being drummed out of the sf world by claiming that there is only one reality, the one we all live in. My belief in that is as profound as Barry Malzberg's would be if Faber had promised him a £500 advance for his book, but actually sent him a cheque for £5 with a covering letter explaining that in

another and more important level of existence their £5 cheque was really a £500 cheque. Barry's reaction to that letter, if he were to receive it, is the sort of reaction I'm beginning to have to these chopped-up and shuffled *Nova Express* types of books in which the viewpoint character has to be insane or on psychedelic drugs, supposedly to let the author explore the true nature of consciousness or space-time, but in reality – I suspect – to let him indulge a fondness for word-plays. Self-indulgence might be the key to the whole thing. There isn't a more self-indulgent writer than Laurence Durrell, and, true to type, in the introduction to his Alexandria quartet he too gives us the treatment, an incredible piece of guff about three of the books corresponding to the three dimensions of space and the fourth, corresponding to time, acting at right angles to the other three. This, of course, is a load of pretentious pompous cobblers – but he got away with it, cashing in on the fact that cobblers are accepted nowadays. It is no longer necessary to find new truths – all one has to do is proclaim things which are not demonstrably untrue.

Beyond Apollo clings to one of the New Wave's most cherished notions: that venturing into space induces insanity, even though it has been clearly established in the real world that it does nothing of the sort. Furthermore, the insanity portrayed in the book is of the standard New Wave type, of which the most common symptoms are an urge to use the word "fuck" a great deal and to suffer sexual nightmares. The thing which makes me suspicious of any author's integrity in these cases is that in the real world insanity very often involves a complete withdrawal from sexuality, and that there are forms of mental aberration which make a person very circumspect in his language. How much more difficult it would be to write about that sort of madness!

In a way, this review is very unfair to Barry Malzberg. I know him as a good writer who can exert control and discipline over his material when he wants to. The New Wave ideal, by which he was influenced in *Beyond Apollo*, has led him to employ an oddly stilted style in places, with use of words like "straightway" and other archaic expressions. I found it reminiscent of that curious type of writing which sometimes appears in British TV comedies in which the characters (very often Patricia Hayes) speak, in fluting voices, lines like, "Chagrined, and not a little discommoded, by my loss of marital status I proceeded forthwith . . ."

Here's an example from the book: "I am about to say that he is being unfair and unreasonable when, interrupting us, there is a sudden disturbance

in the ship; an alteration of metal which causes even the interior surfaces to seemingly buckle for an instant. With a great clamor the first, but hardly the last, of the Great Venus Disturbances attacks us, scattering crockery . . . " The "Great Venus Disturbances" which the spaceship encounters seemed to me to have been sired by Vonnegut's "chrono-synclastic infundibulum". I found the term annoyingly cute and arch, but that's a minor quibble.

Summing up, *Beyond Apollo* is the sort of sf book which should be discouraged. One hopes that Barry Malzberg won't be prompted to produce more of the same by its winning of the John W. Campbell Memorial Award in 1972. Bearing in mind Campbell's creed, that particular decision by the judging panel has to be regarded as a posthumous prank on the great man.

splurgs on the rampage!

Swampworld West
by Perry A. Chapdelaine (Elmfield Press, 1974, 156pp, £2.60, ISBN 0 7057 0028 3)

reviewed by Keith Woodcott

Plying his electric stereotyper with vim and vigour, Mr. Chapdelaine here obligingly confirms the diagnosis tentatively arrived at by those acquainted with his earlier work: viz. that he suffers from acute *podenstomatia bathetica,* or foot-in-mouth disease.

As nearly as one can discern from the tangled and parasyntactical agglomeration of wordage which serves this author in lieu of the more customary prose, he invites us to follow the fortunes of an ex-pencil fighter from *Trippert's Planet* (his italics, *passim*) among the gentle and intelligent Splurgs . . . who occasionally fall victim to a condition which they call (I will repeat that: which they call) *amok* . . . and on becoming mad and murderous they do things like –

No, it would be safer to quote Mr. Chapdelaine verbatim, for fear of misrepresenting his argument. The speaker cited, who is dying painfully on page 19, would seem to be the brother of the hero and husband of the woman he loved but renounced:

> "*Amoks* caught us,' the General changed the subject. 'They caught us – they caught *Newton's Raiders* by surprise. You know why?"

Frankly, no, the reviewer tergiversed, and to find out what if anything he had missed returned to paragraph 1, page 2, scenic location of a passage to the effect that ". . . a small globular cluster cooled, breaking into suns, planets and moons."

Although all the reference books conveniently to hand concur in stating that to qualify for the name "globular cluster" an astronomical object must already consist of stars, Mr. Chapdelaine's scientific credentials are extensive and duly set forth on the back flap of the jacket. A mere critic is thereby dissuaded from doubting him. . . even though evidence for the assertion in paragraph three of the book (that a planet's day is shorter the further it orbits from its primary) seems curiously to have been omitted from the aforementioned reference works.

Here are a few other things which are even more indubitable.

Mr. Chapdelaine possesses great powers of invention. (He applies them, regrettably, more to the manner in which he punctuates than to the creation of convincing narrative: " 'Yes sir,' the Major was visibly relieved to have responsibility taken from him. 'I've sent a messenger to Fort West, Sir'.")

Mr. Chapdelaine certainly has an impressive vocabulary. It is nearly as large as the gap between what he presents under the guise of dialogue and any recorded variety of spoken English: " 'Major!' Carseegan interrupted with fire in his throat. 'I'm taking over command here. Like most Generals, I am completely unaccustomed to discussing my decisions with subservients.' " (One feels that at least some attempt should have been made to transcribe that passage with a Scorch accent.)

Mr. Chapdelaine's future universe is inhabited by WASPs – General John Newton, Major Ashley, Commissioner Grigsby, Storey, McCuen *et al.* – and operates along such strictly 20th-century capitalist lines that on a newly-colonized planet a character can write a cheque to buy out his partner's share in a business undertaking.

And so forth.

It is nothing less than galling to find that the name of the Science Fiction Foundation has been invoked as a reason for people to purchase this extraordinary and dismal farrago of clichés.

One can only hope that the discerning reader will be put off by the back-cover blurb, where he will see the novel described as "the story of the Conestoga waggon retold in terms of outer space".

It adds insult to injury that (a) Conestoga is mis-spelled and (b) the statement is untrue.

(Editorial footnote. The back-cover blurb to which Mr. Brunner refers was signed "George Hay – Vice President Science Fiction Foundation". The blurb was written in Mr. Hay's personal capacity, and it is unfortunate if it appeared to any reader as constituting an "official" endorsement by the Science Fiction Foundation, which it most certainly did not. The Science Fiction Foundation is not in the habit of "officially" endorsing or attacking books. If any of its members do so in the pages of this journal, they do so in their personal capacity. This is, of course, taken for granted in a book review, but is perhaps not so obvious in the case of a jacket note on an actual book. – Peter Nicholls.)

second time around

Recalled to Life
by Robert Silverberg (Gollancz, 1974, 184pp, £2.00, ISBN 0 575 01764 3)

reviewed by Chris Morgan

This is an old novel rewritten and, as the author says in a prefatorial note, it "represents neither the Silverberg of 1957 nor the Silverberg of 1971, but, rather, a sort of hybrid form." True enough, even the original version of *Recalled to Life* was not representative of the shallow, undistinguished adventure books which Silverberg was churning out so prolifically in the 1957-9 period. Neither does this novel, even rewritten, measure up to the high standard of his more recent work, such as *Vornan-19* and *Dying Inside.*

The year is 2033 and the Beller Research Laboratories (N.J.) – a private foundation – have just developed a method of resuscitating human corpses which have been dead for up to twenty-four hours. They hire former New York State mayor James Harker as their legal consultant, giving him the unenviable task of selling the idea of "raising the dead" to the authorities, to the church and to the public at large. Despite Harker's ability, opposition to the Beller discovery mounts alarmingly (and believably), until Harker and the researchers seem to have the whole world against them. Silverberg emphasizes the political aspects of the situation, showing us the squabbling between and within the two (renamed) US parties.

Predictably, Harker triumphs in the last reel: things all work out too neatly,

and it is this artificiality of plot which is the book's greatest fault. It spoils the real-life atmosphere which the author works so hard to create. A second fault is the self-conscious use of future technology (graveshafts!), which not only intrudes, becoming irritating occasionally, but is also out of keeping with the human behaviour in the book. Silverberg is writing about twentieth century people against a twenty-second century background.

The amount of rewriting done to produce this new version of the book has been fairly slight. The descriptions have been padded to increase the overall length, technology has been revised (there was no mention of computers in the earlier version) and small details have been changed to improve the flow of action or to make the plot more credible: many pages remain as they were and nowhere has there been restructuring of more than a couple of adjacent paragraphs.

What this book does best is to highlight the way in which sf has matured since the 1950s. *Recalled to Life* was a notable novel for 1957. Today, even revised, it is no more than mediocre.

Heinlein – a Lazarus too long?

Time Enough For Love
by Robert A. Heinlein (New English Library, 1974, hardcover, 607pp, £3.25, ISBN 0 450 01857 1)

reviewed by Peter Nicholls

Being taken seriously is the penalty paid by famous science fiction writers. For those of them who maintain stoutly to the last that they are nothing but popular entertainers, any sort of academic and intellectual attention must provoke puzzlement, laughter, or even active resentment. With Robert Heinlein, the problem might be the reverse.

Heinlein *asks* to be taken seriously. In nearly all his books since at least 1959 (*Starship Troopers*) he has produced what are in effect homilies about the nature of society, and the ways in which it needs to be changed. With hindsight we can see that even in the earlier books, including the many juveniles, the same obsessions were there: but earlier on they were rendered in much more actively dramatic terms, and in the later books, as everyone has noticed, there is much more talk, and the heroes are getting older all the time. I *can't* take these later books seriously, and I should explain why.

It's hard to do this without sounding patronising to a man who, after all, gave a huge number of readers including myself great pleasure over the years, going right back to the 1940s, when his stories seemed to tower over those of most of his now forgotten contemporaries. If you read the many reviews of Heinlein written over the last decade (I seem to have read dozens) you will find a curious tone about them. Although they are generally hostile, and with good reason, there is often a note of sadness or even real distress. Especially for those critics with longer memories, there is every reason for wanting to *like* a new Heinlein book.

The whole situation is confused by its sociology, which is worth a thesis in itself. Heinlein didn't really get through to the great American public until *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961). The paradox is this: here was a book written by exactly the sort of conservative that the campus radicals normally loathed (am I right in remembering that Heinlein actively supported Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election?), which became a huge success with the college kids, exactly the audience which one would expect to dislike it. Why?

Critics have talked about Heinlein's politics enough, perhaps, but much of the talk has been wrong-headed. Heinlein is *not* a fascist, though he has often been called one. What he actually is, is an old-fashioned, free-enterprise, Emersonian, anti-centralised-government, Western conservative. Does that make it clear? It is a hard thing for English readers to understand, because there is no generally recognised equivalent over here. Heinlein is a romantic. He has what many Americans like to think of as the "frontier" mentality. (The most readable section of the enormously long *Time Enough for Love,* which features two protracted flash-backs in the life of its hero Lazarus Long, as moral footnotes to the main plot, is a story of pioneers on the frontier, wagons and all.)

Heinlein believes that a man has to be resourceful, to look out for himself. He cannot expect anybody to help him. Heinlein believes in hard work, duty and loyalty. There is a genuine romantic attraction to his every-man-his-own-hero ethos. He believes in tight discipline in a context of comradeship, especially in war. He does not believe in conscription. He does not believe in abstract patriotism. He is not a democrat. He believes that the strongest and most intelligent have a duty to do what they see as right, even if the majority disagree. But he loathes slavery. He is, in short, the Ayn Rand of science fiction.

Much of Heinlein's popularity on campus presumably has to do with his contempt for sacred cows, from government by the people, through mother

love (a subject he deals with very literally at the end of the book) to the virtues of chastity. These have always been easy targets of course, and there are many sacred cows left which Heinlein seems to worship as whole-heartedly as the next man. His easy going attitude to sexual morality is not in the least paradoxical, though many would find it so. It fits in exactly with his individualist beliefs. (It's an error to suppose that sexual liberalism is an exclusively left-wing phenomenon. An interesting survey some ten years ago in the mid-West, on the subject of wife-swapping, revealed that it was very much a sport of republican voters rather than democrats. For years this has been my favourite statistic. Although when you think of it, the very term "wife-swapping", with its implications of property deals, is both sexist and capitalist. One never hears of husband-swapping.)

Many of Heinlein's beliefs are antipathetic to my own, especially his brutal Social Darwinism (though he never calls it that) which looks as if it comes straight from Herbert Spencer, the disciple of Darwin who applied Darwin's theories to the social sciences in *Man Versus the State* (1884) and *The Principles of Ethics* (1891-3). In its non-theoretical, pragmatic form, Social Darwinism was also very much a frontiersman's ethos. Remember the cry of "manifest destiny" in the nineteenth century, used to justify the expansion of the USA to the Pacific coast? The strong survive and the weakest go to the wall. That's the way it is, and no use being sentimental about it. (Heinlein repeatedly tells us, in most of his books, that man "is the most dangerous animal in the universe" – a thought he seems to find pleasing.)

I hope I don't seem to be splitting hairs in saying that Heinlein's novels are offensive to me not because I dislike his ideas (though I do), but because I dislike what he does with them, which in my view is almost nothing. I admire Heinlein for laying his head on the chopping block so often; for having kept on trying, wanting to say something when most science fiction had nothing to say. I'm amused at the way that sex came into his writing as soon as he got out from under John W. Campbell, (not a new phenomenon of course – it happened to many of Campbell's writers – including the previously saintly Asimov in *The Gods Themselves*). No, Heinlein's *courage* is admirable, but I have to say that his sociology is execrable, his sense of history minimal (though he boasts of it), and his mode of argument repetitive and boring. The ideas are there in embryo, but they are simplistic, undeveloped and sentimentalised. (My calling Heinlein simplistic would probably prove to him that I'm a fancy-pants intellectual who has never really experienced life. It's true that I wasn't in the Marines.) Even the

ideas that Heinlein *likes* are simplified. Opposing ideas barely exist in this novel, and when they do, they are so caricatured as to become instantly disposable paper tigers.

Heinlein's individualistic universe, in *Time Enough For Love* just as in *Stranger in a Strange Land, The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* and *I Will Fear No Evil,* is vitiated by its sentimentality, its garrulousness, and its crotchetiness. Reading this latest novel especially, and its predecessor *I Will Fear No Evil,* I feel exactly as if I've been buttonholed by an elderly, maudlin eccentric in a bar, and have no way to stop him talking.

Just as Heinlein's beliefs seem to have no middle ground between the cynical and the sentimental (I quote some examples further on), so his literary style oscillates amazingly between a down-home folksy crudeness ("Llita turned out to be tighter than a bull's arse in fly time" p.223) and a euphemistic coyness, so that the intellectual targets, such as they are, tend to be bracketed on either side but never hit.

> " 'Ira,' he said, 'there were many years when I hardly bothered with women – not only unmarried but celibate. After all, how much variety can there be in the slippery friction of mucous membranes?
>
> " 'Then I realized that there was infinite variety in women *as people* . . . and in discovering this, I gained renewed interest in the friendly frolic itself, happy as a lad with his first bare tit warm in his hand. Happier – as never again was I merely a piston to her cylinder.' " (p. 425)

The ideas are unreal because of the way they are expressed. The cynically adolescent sentiment being criticised, the seeing of women as merely "the slippery friction of mucous membranes", seems no worse than the supposedly mature man's "friendly frolic – happy as a lad with his first bare tit warm in his hand". The later experience, at least when described like that, is as empty of adult feeling, or even of real sexuality, as the first. The passage could only be saved, in the context of the whole book, if we were shown Lazarus Long actually responding to an infinite variety in his women. Even a finite variety would do. But he addresses everyone the same way, and he is well advised to do so, because the women all sound the same. Indeed, they all sound like Lazarus himself. Here, for example, is (wait for it) 'Dorable Dora the frontier wife:

> "I'm not 'little Dora'. I'm Rangy Lil, the horniest girl south of Separation – you said so yourself. I cuss and I swear and I spit between my teeth and I'm concubine to Lazarus Long, Super Stud of the Stars and better than any six men – and you know darn well what I want, and if you pinch my nipples again, I'm likely to trip you and take it. But I guess we ought to water the mules." (p. 311)

Yep, the authentic down-to-earth tone of old Lazarus, reappearing in one of the many female alter egos that populate his book. How are we to respond to the individualism of Heinlein's universe, when everybody goes around being individualist with the same tone of voice? The novel is not toneless, but it is monotonous. There's a great deal of talk which, in its smug, confident, folksy, didactic way, reminds me of Hugh Heffner's editorials in *Playboy* in the days of yore. Do you remember? Heffner was always coming out with all those truisms we came out with ourselves in adolescent bull sessions (before we began to understand what relationships between the sexes really meant) with a self-congratulatory air of triumph, amazed at his own daring, as if nobody had ever said it before.

I still haven't really pinned the tone down. It isn't easy to do. Though a lot of it has the brash self-confidence of adolescence, it isn't expressed that way. Adolescents, for example, don't constantly address one another with meaningless endearments. I really mean *constantly,* on almost every page. A representative collection is: "Beautiful", "Beloved", "Darling", "Dear", "Dearie", "Dear One", " 'Dorable", "Honey", "Pretty Tits", "Sweetest", "Wench", "Woman". Not to mention "Uncle Cuddly". These, it seems, will be the affectionate terms of the future.

Yes, there's almost something *matronly* about Lazarus Long and all his friends. Lazarus is rather like a Jewish mother (not a real one, but the one that appears in all the jokes). His preoccupation with getting laid, even, seems rather menopausal (not the real menopause, but the one in all the jokes). This pretty well defines the tone throughout. All we need to round it off, is to stir in one straw-chewing wise old hillbilly, and we have it. (The gabbiness that results from the adolescent-bull-session-Jewish-mother-hillbilly combination is very much part of the cardinal fiction-writer's sin that Heinlein commits: his ideas are not dramatised, [except in the 100 page interlude about the frontier, "The Tale of the Adopted Daughter"], they are talked about. Heinlein has turned preacher.)

I've put off telling the story, I see. Basically, the plot is minimal. Lazarus Long (first seen in *Methuselah's Children,* 1941) is getting old and tired, after more than 2,000 years of life, but some of his grateful descendants talk him into getting his body rejuvenated so that he can keep on going, and incidentally give them the benefit of his accumulated wisdom.

Actually, Long's wisdom, which seems indistinguishable from Heinlein's, comes off best in the epigrammatic form he gives it in the novel's two "intermissions", 23 pages of cracker-barrel philosophy. The wisdom sounds much

shrewder when kept brief than when blown up on a wide screen, as it is in the other 584 pages of the story, where all the flaws are visible. There's no quarreling with "Small change can often be found under seat cushions" or "What a wonderful world it is that has girls in it!". The cynicism seems harmless enough, usually, in the proverbial form, as in "Never appeal to a man's 'better nature' – he may not have one – invoking his self-interest gives you more leverage". "A woman is not property, and husbands who think otherwise are living in a dreamworld" sounds good, and one notes that the women in the story *aren't* property. (Though their free will does seem a little compromised by the way Heinlein makes them all so hot to go to bed with Lazarus, even his mother, and his cloned female other selves. However, he *never* rapes them. On the other hand – Super Stud of the Stars – he always gets them pregnant, first time off.) Here is Heinlein at his apophthegmatic, sententious silliest:

> Those who refuse to support and defend a state have no claim to protection by that state. Killing an anarchist or a pacifist should not be defined as "murder" in a legalistic sense. The offence against the state, if any, should be "Using deadly weapons inside city limits," or "Creating a traffic hazard," or "Endangering bystanders," or other misdemeanor.
>
> However, the state may reasonably place a closed season on these exotic asocial animals, whenever they are in danger of becoming extinct. An authentic buck pacifist has rarely been seen off Earth, and it is doubtful that any have survived the trouble there . . . regrettable, as they had the biggest mouths and the smallest brains of any of the primates. (p. 364)

(The reviewer will award a £1.00 prize to the first child of eleven or younger who explains clearly and logically why this is silly, and why it isn't funny.) Heinlein obviously puts things as crudely as he does because he gets so impatient with endless talk, as Lazarus often says. He loathes committees for example, and labels pacifists as "big mouths". Yet Heinlein himself has one of the biggest mouths in science fiction which creates something of a paradox. The jeer at pacifists comes oddly from a man who has the self-indulgence to let his novel run for more than 600 pages, even though all his basic points have been made by a third of the way through!

The action in *Time Enough for Love* is minimal. The rest of the story is crudely summarizable as: Lazarus will only consent to having his body renewed if they can dig up something new for him to do, so they invent time travel, and as a bonus they put the friendly computer he likes into a woman's body so that he can fuck it (no, he doesn't say that her movements are rather mechanical), and then they all go and live on another planet, and Lazarus travels back in time and makes love to his mother, and gets killed in The First

World War, and then revived by his pals.

It is, as they used to say, a very *vulgar* novel – certainly tasteless. In both senses. There is very little in it with enough flavour to taste – even the bad taste is mostly the combination of verbosity with evasiveness that was noticed by so many in *I Will Fear No Evil.* There is tremendous talk about the *joy* of sex, so much so that the old Shakespearian line about protesting too much comes quite sharply to mind, but the sex is not one thing or the other. There is no meeting of minds, because none of the women have personalities separable from Lazarus's own. There is no good physical sex because, apart from some extraordinarily coy scenes between Lazarus and his mum, he veers away from describing sex *per se.* You might even say that there is no real sex *at all* in a novel whose title is *Time Enough for Love* and whose theme, if it is anything, is Do Whatever You Want, Especially Sexual, So Long As You Don't Needlessly Hurt Anyone. And that leaves a mighty big vacuum. (I remember promulgating the same philosophy at age seventeen, as most college kids do. I didn't know then how hard it was to know in advance what *does* hurt, and how easily the nature of what one wants and needs slips from the grasp. I'm sure that Heinlein doesn't really think life is as straightforward a thing to cope with as this book makes out. He just wants it to be, quite deeply and bitterly I would imagine. However, conjecture about the motives and personality of the author himself go beyond the critic's brief.)

The cop-outs come so fast and furious that it is depressing. Sure, one can imagine a society where incest is all right if it's not genetically harmful. But in our society it *is* a taboo, (presumably in part *because* it was found in primal days to be genetically harmful). Heinlein has nothing to say about incest in the real world at all, because he manipulates things so that the taboo can be safely evaded. Even Lazarus's own taboo about not needlessly hurting others is got around by having his father away at the war, having left instructions that he doesn't mind if he's cuckolded. The situation, in other words, has no human significance, because it represents no relevant case. Heinlein does not confront the issue. He evades it. Lazarus only gets to see his mum because of time travel. He is an adult, with his earlier self as a small boy also on the scene, so that he can never, to his mother, emotionally *feel* like a son.

An interesting point about *Time Enough for Love* is that it is not really *science* fiction. Apart from passing references to genetics and cloning, there is almost no science in it. Nor is there any genuine sociological extrapolation in the novel. All the societies depicted are very much like our own. Most of the social manners we see would barely raise an eyebrow in South-

ern California. We never even see what it might *really* mean to have a society constructed on the principle of the ruthless Social Darwinism that Heinlein apparently espouses, (perhaps because this, too, already exists in California). Even with two millennia of experience behind him, Lazarus Long sounds at best like a Tammany Hall Boss, a Fat Cat, getting a bit sentimental with age, sitting on his galactic back porch and yarning. He is totally twentieth century – or even late nineteenth.

To lay it on the line: I believe this book to be one of the worst science fiction novels of the decade. Nevertheless, it is exactly the sort of book that ought to be widely discussed, probably at greater length than I have the patience for, because as I understand it Heinlein is still very much a best seller. This means that "out there" is a huge audience which presumably takes all this second-rate cracker-barrel philosophising as representing deep thought. Perhaps it simply confirms the prejudices of the mythical silent majority? I don't know, but I'd like to know. Simply dismissing Heinlein with a shrug of the shoulders as only "a bad writer" is missing the point. He is an important social phenomenon.

If Heinlein were a new writer, an unknown, then this would be yet another of those self-serving smart-aleck reviews that appear so regularly in print in England, disfiguring the literary scene at the expense of the authors. (Americans are often aghast at the bitchiness of the reviews produced by the supposedly mild-mannered race over here.) But to many, Heinlein is still a Guru. It is therefore important to be very clear that this is in almost every way a very bad book. (Bad enough, together with its predecessors of the last fifteen years, to cast a dark shadow retrospectively over Heinlein's early work, which I once enjoyed so much. Of course, I was younger then. I read seven or eight of these stories recently, *after* reading *Time Enough For Love,* and found that I could no longer respond to them. They remain fast-moving, but now the seeds of the later Heinlein can be seen all too clearly in the act of germination. Look again, for example, at the anti-Unionism of "The Roads Must Roll".)

Time Enough For Love sees itself as life-affirming, and here is the real danger. Readers, too, may see this book, which strips human feeling of all subtlety and grace and tension, which shrinks life down to a mean, dreary business, whose hearty jollity is as convincing as a Hick Carnival about to close for winter, as a real Ode to Joy. God help us all if Heinlein's young audience is able to read it like that.

the emotion peddlers

The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe
by D.G. Compton (Gollancz, 1974, 256pp, £2.30, ISBN 0 575 01828 3)

reviewed by Chris Morgan

There is an old story by Robert Silverberg called "The Pain Peddlers", where a TV company pays large sums of money to the relatives of dying people in exchange for permission to record their final agonies – which are enjoyed vicariously by huge audiences. Probably the idea was not original to Silverberg, but now, demonstrating once again that the treatment of a theme is more important than its originality, D.G. Compton has turned it into a novel which is solid, workmanlike and touching.

As might be expected, Compton's treatment is very different from the rough, hard-hitting style of early Silverberg; instead he develops and dwells upon the personalities and feelings of the major participants – the 'victim', her relatives and the TV men. And Compton's TV show is no mere exercise in sado-porn. It is a series entitled 'Human Destiny', which attempts to show in daily episodes the development of human interest cases of illness that normally, though not necessarily, lead to death. Emotion, rather than pain, is the keynote. Even so, the basic motive remains financial, and the TV producer in Compton's novel is shown to be, like the TV producer in Silverberg's story, a vulture. Indeed, it is the morality or immorality of such cinema-verité which is the author's main point, perhaps even the theme of the novel.

It is the relatively close future, perhaps fifteen years on. The setting is a city, also unspecified, which does not, for once, seem to be either London or in the West Country. The physical background is remarkably scanty: it is the people of that time and place, together with their social organisation and their mores upon which the book concentrates.

Katherine Mortenhoe is a woman in her forties faced with imminent death from an incurable brain condition (this is in a world where early death from natural causes is rare – a fact which colours Katherine's attitudes, and accounts for the intense public interest in her case). Even before the news is broken to her, NTV are aware of the situation: even as

her doctor informs her, a producer and cameraman from the Human Destiny show are behind a one-way mirror, watching and listening. It is this cameraman – Roderick – who narrates half the story (the remainder is in the third person, in alternate chunks), and he emerges as the novel's second character in terms of importance, sometimes rivalling Katherine's position.

Roderick is no ordinary cameraman. He has had cameras surgically implanted behind his eyes – cameras which can never be switched off and which produce great pain if he closes his eyes or is in darkness for more than a few seconds. It means that he must not sleep, ever, and this is ensured by means of drugs. It means that he cannot have privacy of any kind. As he says (to himself):

> I was after all, a reporter. Like Reuter, with his carrier pigeons. I was presented with the most staggering tool for truthful reportage the world had ever known . . .
>
> Then again, it felt outrageous. I was a surgical monstrosity. A cyborg. I had been violated. I had offered myself willingly for obscene experimentation. I had given up my self, given up a right even to the ultimate privacy of my senses. I was a public man. What I saw, every voyeuristic hack by the receiving monitor would see. My tapes could be played back for the cheap delectation of office boys. My finest moments were common property.

Of course, Roderick is in this Catch-22 position for one reason: money. But he is also a compassionate man and something of an enigma. It is his strange relationship with the dying Katherine – of whom he must make a continuous filmed record – which is the meat of this fine novel.

The other characters are no less carefully drawn. There is Vincent Ferriman, the TV producer who endeavours to obtain exclusive rights to Katherine's story by a mixture of suave persuasion and outright bribery. There is Harry, Katherine's mild and long-suffering husband, whose attitude towards Ferriman's cash offer is so painfully ambivalent. There is Peter, the chirpy young queer with whom Katherine works – helping to program and edit computer-produced romantic fiction. And there is Roderick's former wife, and Katherine's father. Each is a person in his or her own right, made so by the strength of D.G. Compton's description. One is made to feel that the people are the important thing, rather than plot or action or background. In fact, *The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe* is scarcely science fiction. Very few of the book's trappings of sf are necessary to its plot, and it is fortunate for us that the author chooses this genre for his work.

How does this book compare with the earlier Compton novels? It is writ-

ten with greater conviction and enthusiasm than *The Missionaries,* which preceded it. This seems due partly to the author's knowledge of TV – he has written plays for the medium – and partly to the strong central characters – which were lacking in *The Missionaries.* Again, this new novel is well plotted, avoiding both the lack of movement in *The Electric Crocodile* (also known as *The Steel Crocodile*) and the artificiality, the staginess, of *The Silent Multitude.* It is noticeable how similar Katherine Mortenhoe is to Thea Cadence, the main character and narrator of *Synthajoy,* though these are both intelligent women of early middle age undergoing stress, and some similarity is unavoidable. If one is going to find fault with any aspect of *The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe* it must be with the system of temporary marriages, renewable at five-year intervals, around which the book's social structure revolves. It is not that the idea itself is unbelievable or unworkable; it is just that any type of limited or temporary marriage is an easing of the present laws, while Compton's system is very highly regimented. For it to be operative by the late 1980s seems beyond the realms of possibility. At the same time, wives still refer to themselves as Mrs (rather than Ms), and they generally change their surname to that of their husband (though Katherine Mortenhoe has retained the surname of her first husband).

This is D.G. Compton's best novel so far. It is to be hoped that the high quality of the book, together with the change of publisher (this is his first publication by Gollancz) will bring D.G. Compton the attention he deserves but has not so far received.

elementary geography for solipsists

Casey Agonistes & Other Stories
by Richard McKenna (introduction by Damon Knight) (Gollancz, 1974, 150pp, £2.00, ISBN 0 575 01766 X)

reviewed by Brian M. Stableford

This is a collection of five stories on a single theme. The theme is the power of mind over environment; in its simplest form, the power of the mind to adapt the environment to human needs, and in its ultimate form, the power to create environment out of human needs. Of the five stories, "Fiddler's Green" is the most thoughtful and the most complete, "Hunter Come Home"

is the most ambitious and the most imaginative, "Casey Agonistes" is the most elegant and the most powerful. It is not, however, the relative merits of these stories which is important but their merit as a collection. We are used to seeing an author's best stories bundled together into packages at regular intervals as his career advances, and there is rarely any sympathy or coherency to be found in such arbitrary assemblages. The late Richard McKenna, unfortunately, wrote only enough stories to make one such collection – but they make up into a coherent whole because McKenna used his considerable talent almost exclusively in examining this single aspect of existence.

"The Secret Place" is the most elementary of the stories, giving a picture of parallel worlds which may be sensed by some, and reached by others, through the power of mind. Here, McKenna is content to pose his problem and leave all its consequences unexplored. "Mine Own Ways" is one of two stories which shift the whole problem into an alien (i.e. hypothetical) environment, and its plot revolves around the idea that human evolution is determined by the creation of artificial mental environments. The other alien story, "Hunter Come Home", goes even further, by dealing with processes of evolution in an alien life-system. "Fiddler's Green" places a group of men in an impossible situation – adrift in a small boat without food and water – and shows them creating a new world into which they may escape. The burden of creation falls on one man – the others cannot or will not help him – and he begins to recruit a population from the world they have left. "Casey Agonistes" also places its characters in an implacably hostile and ruthlessly oppressive environment: the terminal ward of a hospital. Here, the issue is not escape, because everyone is condemned to death. The problem arises from the regime under which the characters are prepared for death: "You can't just plain die. You got to do it by the book." The dying men create the eponymous hero of the story in order to beat the book – to ameliorate the hostility and to combat the oppression – and to import into their hopeless world a little humour, a little heroism, and a little dignity.

These stories are humanistic, confident of the power of man to defy "natural" selection and turn the tables on the harsher aspects of Darwinian theory. The philosophy which lies behind McKenna's work is similar to ideas which have been advanced by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in opposition to those who interpret Darwin in a particularly cruel way. I must admit to a certain bias in saying that this is an exceptionally fine book, because I am in sympathy with the point which is central to the whole collection. By any standards, however, this is a book well worth reading, even if you are familiar

with some or all of the stories. My only complaint is that it is not a very fat book, and there must surely have been room for "The Night of Hoggy Darn", which definitely belongs in the group.

coney island

Syzygy
by Michael G. Coney (The Elmfield Press, 1974, 167pp, £2.60, ISBN 0 7057 0023 2)

reviewed by Anthony Ryan

> **The factors that made us intelligent caused the trouble. The characteristics that made us emerge made the problem. The earth is ten times over-populated, our present sources of energy are running out. I believe we have no better than a one per cent chance of coming through.**

Thus Sir Fred Hoyle. But today, of course, even that legendary little man on the Clapham omnibus is aware of the ecological crisis. We should also be aware, however, that the search for apocalypse is apparently a perverse and perennial human need. (For an expert historical study of this phenomenon, see the *The Pursuit of the Millennium* by Professor Norman Cohn.)

Michael G. Coney, who is English but chooses to live in Canada, is new to the British sf scene. He has already had a couple of successful novels published in America. George Hay gives him a boost on the back of the jacket of *Syzygy*, pointing out that unlike many of the current spate of ecosounders, Coney really does his homework when imagining an alien planet.

In the case of *Syzygy*, the relevant subjects for homework would be marine biology and astronomy. Especially astronomy, since nowhere does Coney define his title, which is central to his plot. In fact, *Syzygy* is one of those words beloved of crossword puzzle compilers, whose meaning does not spring immediately to the mind. It means a specific alignment of planetary bodies in a solar system. The significance of this within the story is that every fifty-two years the six moons of the planet Arcadia, which is mainly aquatic with one continental mass, come into a configuration which causes massive tidal waves and unusual mental effects. Arson, rioting, and murder break out during the brief period of the conjunction of the moons. Nobody knows why. Those who vaguely remember will not tell.

Naturally, then, the function of the protagonist, who is a biologist from

the research station, as opposed to a settler, is to find out why everybody is going around the bend. There is a mildly romantic sub-plot, concerning his obscure sense of guilt at the death of his fiancée and his attraction towards her sister. This mingling of guilt and grief is very human and gives him some depth of character, but his main function is to find out what the hell is happening in heaven. In this context though, Coney might have been served better by a more hard-nosed editor. There is a prologue which describes a dance which is held to overcome shyness or hostility between the researchers and the settlers and the evening ends with everybody drunkenly weaving around in a dance called "the snake".

This symbolization of the serpent in Arcadia is too heavy-handed. Otherwise this is a solid, competent novel written in a plain and flowing style, which is a relief from the knock-down drag-out antics of a Bester or a Zelazny. The hardback edition is too expensive, but the paperback should sell well.

Whoever wrote the blurb should have been shot at dawn. As an ex-member of this accurséd breed I know that they have no time to read books. Their function is to read editorial summaries, pare them down and jazz them up. This particular pen-pusher claims that Coney makes no distinction between inner and outer space (in real life this is called schizophrenia). He further claims that Coney writes for "sheer entertainment". But in fact the novel is a highly didactic tale of the upsetting of the balance of life on an alien planet by humans. The seas are jammed with a form of plankton and the effect of the syzygy is to form them into vast globules which exhibit a sort of raw intelligence. One of the effects of these "minds" is to make the humans telepathic. And so they suffer the worst of fates: to see themselves as others see them. But enough of the plot, except to say that there is a rather obvious *deus ex machina* which resolves the situation.

The point is that this Coney island is no fun-fair. Further, if we regard fiction, like dreaming, as having a latent as well as a manifest content, we can see even darker sides to Coney's imagination. Ostensibly we have an allegorical tale of the upsetting of the balance of life but latently it could be claimed that we are being presented with an allegory of the oldest conflict of all — that between the conscious and the unconscious mind.

To end as I began with Sir Fred Hoyle:

> **There have probably been millions of earths like ours, each producing a particular, intelligent species. That is not to say that they all developed well, that they achieved some form of perfection. And if the planner made lots of them, and some of them chose to destroy themselves, then we can only suppose that the planner is a hard and practical man.**

Many poets use occasional images taken from science fiction, and from technology. Surprisingly few write poems that are organically science fictional throughout. It seems to us that most if not all the six poems following are exceptions to this unfortunate rule. They are written by Jeni Couzyn, one of the strongest and most interesting of younger poets working in England. (She is in her early thirties.) Ms. Couzyn is South African by birth, but has lived in England for ten years. Her books are Flying *and* Monkeys' Wedding. *The first four poems below take some of their imagery from stories by Brian Aldiss, three of them relatively directly, and the fourth,* Inside Outside, *obliquely. The stories on which they are based are* Non Stop (Starship), *"Who Can Replace A Man", "Moment of Eclipse" and "Outside". The two giant poems have no direct literary analogue.*

six poems

Jeni Couzyn

Marapper the Priest

I am your priest and your prophet.
May the long journey end
may the ship come home.

Expansion to your egoes may the trailing rot
not get you
beware the wise rats in the sewers

their sharp pink hands in the grating
their infinite vengeance when they pin you to the table
for vivisection, beware

their cruel experience when they knot and cage you
for interrogation.
May the long journey end.

Beware the moths in the ventilation system
beware their quick wings in the delicate
circuiting, beware their deadly

access to the unconscious
as they flutter in your faces, beware their allegiances.
May the long journey end.

Beware the mutants
raiding our barricades with their hideous deformities
beware the outsiders

hatched from pods in the creaking ponics
who live undetected among us
masquerading as men, influencing our children.

May the long journey end.
Expansion to your egoes, a plague on your eyes
we are the refuse

after a catastrophe
trapped in a world built by cruel giants long dead
for a purpose long forgotten.

Turmoil rages in the id
we are besieged from within and without
the crisis was long ago

yet it grows upon us.
Where the ponics slither and rustle in the tangles
and countless small insects gnaw into the silences

our anger bubbles like mud.
To bring frustration to the surface and release it
before it curdles into neurosis

is the work of a priest. We're the sons of cowards
and cowards' daughters anxious to preserve
our present state of misery intact.

May the long journey end.
It is said in the teaching no man's eyes
shall meet another's directly

for the truth never set anyone free.
Expansion to your egoes, the long long journey
has always begun

We forge on without purpose
without direction. Somewhere in this maze of corridors
there must be a control room

there must be a captain
mad, old and mad, O infinite in his madness.
May the long journey end.

We must find him and kill him
we must take the control room, we must create
a destination

may our hands grow quicker
our eyes sharper our arms stronger our tempers fiercer
that we may overcome all who oppose us

may we scatter the entrails of the mad captain
through the length and breadth of the world.
May the long journey end

may the ship come home.

What Can We Make To Replace A Man

A bull-dozer, a field-minder, two
tractors and a radio-controller
have lost their masters.
There is no longer anyone to work for
anyone to feed.
On a mountainside now they huddle together
high where they climbed
amongst rock and cliff-face, under a million
stars, talking of freedom.
Without hands they clank their metal knobs
against each other for comfort
as dawn precisely comes.

The Moment Eclipses

In the gold-haloed face
in the mirror
a shadow traverses the bright
eyeball from within
a planet eclipses my sight
glides slowly, a baleful shadow
across the pale iris.

I am infested with worms
I can hear myself screaming
the larva in the bloodstream
the allergic reaction.
I am shaken with fever
I wake in a rush of darkness
I burrow towards the light.

Mouth dry I cry out for thee
mother, life-giving fly
I am sun with the moon
eclipsing my eye
I am a trick of light on thy fin
I am consciousness
an accidental surfacing
a tumour under thy skin.

Inside Outside

1. Outside the windows there is
nothing.
They are not made of glass they are not
openings.
Outside the door there are no
places
it was not made for opening and
closing.
This room is empty for no memories
hang here
nor is there time

outside this moment in the present.
Outside my inside
I am nor sure of who I am, nor who
if anyone
is hiding inside my outside.

2. We have to find out what we are.
There is a man with a mother and father
steadfast and yielding as two
peach trees,
whose wife is a swift brown river,
whose child is new as the water lily,
who would go as a soldier
would drag a beautiful girl into a barracks
would board up the windows and
lock the door irrevocably
would tear off her clothes with his soldier
hands, would tear her flesh with his
claws, spit in her face and bite off
her nipple in his kiss
his mouth full of blood would
spurt his terrible semen into her body
would writhe and howl with elation
in her agony, in her dying and
he would call it *making love.*

3. I feel my outer form
flowing away like sand, my limbs begin to
fold and blur, my eyes run together
my torso is contracting
a voice I no longer recognise as my own
a voice gritty with terror
is screaming and screaming
who is this grey shadow, this wiry
mechanical creature, this cowering
crippled thing?

4. Will the stars steady me in my flight, will
night through the narrow window?
I never know who lurks

behind the gentle face of my greengrocer
what monster may be hiding
inside the outside of my brother with his
strong brown body
what icy, hostile, O inhuman is disguised
in the bland stupid look of
the prime minister.

5. The voice of the TV announcer
runs smooth as treacle from the sound box
in my room
and on the screen he shows me
a parade of horrors in other places
but never the wounded baby in ireland
that wakes screaming as nightly soldiers
with blackened faces
search its cot for weapons in streets of houses
that no longer have any doors
for surely we, at least, are safe, are
decent people?
In india the english officer with
delicate hands, ties a man to the barrel of
a cannon for execution.

6. Inside my outside
I cannot reach, I cannot walk about
touch or see or confirm.
In that darkness the strange dream-creatures
do as they please, cackle and distort.
How many nights have I burst my mind
from sleep with a cry from that other world
that would shrill awake
the dying and the dead?

7. My outside is plausible as bread,
wholesome and comforting.
My flesh is thickening with age
as it should, I am governed with hunger
in normal human fashion, and a beautiful man
will melt my tangled nerves

into a sweet flow of juices just like
a normal woman.
I believe myself to be a wholly
ordinary human being

8. yet I have never seen the machinery
that operates my body
I have never tested my skeleton
tasted my blood, I know none of the valves
and intricate water-ways
nor do I have access to a single on-off switch
in the whole wiring system.
I know more about a motor-car engine
though I have inhabited this machine
for thirty years without question.

9. In trafalgar square
the pigeons and people ripple on the concrete
substantial and alive as
fields of ripe corn:
the national gallery
its belly full of paintings and priceless
art treasures
rises into the close red sky over london
like a hymn.
In the newspapers there are stories of
vietnam and biafra and israel and south africa
and bangla desh and uganda and auschwitz and
stalin and siberia and the opium war
and portugal and greece and spain and
the great potato famine.
The unforgiving sea is peopled with voices
of the captured and the drowning.

10. If the windows were not made of glass
if the doors did not open
if there were no past and no future
who would be inside us?
The broken girl staring at the ceiling still
from her torn body is

your sister still
the soldier may be curled in wait and
ready to leap upon her again
from the darkness of my own head.
O my love, what are we left with?
We are witnesses, we are
carbon copies.
We have to find out what we are.

The Cell Attempts To Communicate With The Giant

I believe in you.
A girl in Russia once
could see with her fingertips, being blind.
Her fingers contained
the knowledge of sight.
You exist by deduction. My premise is a kind of
garbled layman's biology
and a conviction you might call
faith or madness
for I sense your presence with senses
I don't know that I have, can never
measure
which is our way of being sure of things.
I know you are there because ears in me
without bone or skin
hear you crying late at night when light points
are visible as stars,
hear a web of pain and confusion in my city
that is your crying
and times I glimpse across the inside of my eyelids
your dreams.
When my world is wrong again it is always wrong
my cells swarm in me like angry
bees, each its own lethal purpose its loud wings
beating, its high pitched menace vibrating

the mysterious ear drum
I don't know for sure that I have.
I believe in you

and I believe the ear drum in you
that might half-hear my high pitched crying
is an ear drum

you don't know that you have.
Only in dreams you might overhear me dreaming.
O my giant

my sorrowful, my alone one
how shall I pass the arteries and the bones
how shall I pass the infinite

distances of space
how will I make you feel my tiny, invisible hands
my infinitesimal wisdom on your vast

too huge to imagine
knot of pain?
Yet I shall cry my message to you

in the incomprehensible whine
of the mosquito and the wind and the snowflake
falling

for you believe you're dying
are courting death while you tell yourself
you believe in survival and

O unlikely
in happiness. There is a cancer is our obsession
cells

hear the man dreaming
form themselves, multiply, build cities in his body
kill him. We are the cancer

your dreams have created
our lives are the fabric of your nightmare
its stitches and bright threads

we are its uncontrollable atoms. Our certain
destruction of you
is the prophecy you half believe in

the pain you have no escape from
the end of everything, the waste, the wild meaningless annihilation.

O labouring one
dream a different dream. Dream a perfect
golden dream. If I could reach you

I might comfort you
but I'm too small to be even believed in, and I too
in my invisible buzzing life

am locked in my pain, locked in my nightmare, my prophecy, half hearing
a million tormented cells screaming and screaming

and your breath passing over me in the early morning
is the hailstorm and the holocaust
and the world turning.

The Giant Sleeps

The giant is sitting on his pebble.
Slightly squint, with a tick in his left cheek
he doesn't see well

yet knows the confusing
tumble of stars
that flick and irritate his vision

aren't the whole universe.
His right hand, convulsively, claw-like
tears at the flesh of his thigh

in savage spasms.
He has pruned his nails down to the quick
has laid gauzes in fine layers

over the torn flesh
has even tried binding the hand like a traitor
to his side.

Useless. It cries and claws
the damage was long ago. His bum aches. Covered in warts and decomposing skin

it has itched and irritated
as long as he remembers. He can't move – his legs
since that illness he must have had

or was he born like that?
have rested
utterly silent, purple tree trunks

passive, immovable.
His left hand, obedient though ineffectual
wanders over his lost body

like a social worker
patching a little here, comforting there
helpless, full of modest

self approval.
The giant jerks his neck backwards and forwards
in rage. His mind is confused.

Always, the pain in his limbs
confuses him
the darkness of the stars grinds out his aloness.

He is thinking of dying is thinking of
being saved
is dreaming of a mate, has been waiting

since he was born
since he found himself sitting alone on a pebble
in the swirling universe.

At last the cycle of his endless
sleeping and waking, dreaming and suffering
turns inward on its sunset point.

His eyelids drop, his right hand
convulsing
rips a red streak through the gauzes

his lips form a little song
his genitals swell a little, a moment of joy
sings itself softly open in his groin

and then he sleeps.

THE TERRIBLE CHILDREN

Marilyn Hacker

You, born half smothered in a caul of myth,
whose bursting heart was drowned in waves of sky,
salt-swollen on the scorching sand you lie,
bright flagellant beneath the whip of death.
You, who have never tasted the fruit,
who woke wide and immobile in blue fire,
now, stretched to silence on the singing wire,
fall through limed fissures, naked, rigid, mute,
while summer children underneath the tree
gather the thick-dropped apples where they lie.

Hand in hand down snowcrusts, arrow-poised
arm folded under arm, dilated eyes
windows thrown open on a world of ice,
mirrors turned on an onyx checkerboard.
Their faces are not of brothers or lovers.
Blood never etched this congruence of curve;
no tie explains the way symmetric swerve
and flash of sound and movement ape each other,
nor explicates the bent, left-handed grace
their yoked forms sing, striding from place to place.

They fish the streets. A mirror is their net,
distorting human form before their pure
absurdity into caricature.
Politely offering dry hands and wet
smiles, words odorous as white hemp flowers,
the gesture of a bow. A sudden turn,
they disappear. Against the sky they burn
in silhouette. And through the shriveled hours
the others tread the inverse of their steps,
laughing, toe to long heel, till laughter stops.

The delicate purgation of a tongue
turned back over purgation: paradox
within a more intriguing paradox
of involuted mouth. The large eyes' long
panes reflect ritual violence
hung in a room apart, the separate
bright strands conglomerating intricate
woven patternings of death and silence.
The geometric flights of music, each
intoning a formality in speech:

If you are angle, I am complement.
If you are circle, I am circumscribed.
If my hands mold, yours is the form described.
Your voice is my familiar instrument.
I sound a note, and you complete the chord.
Your eyes are an inscription in my hand
that reads my face and tells me what I am.
My singing resonates beneath your words.
A move completes a move; as games are played,
if I betray, you are the one betrayed.

Crying ice tears, their faces washed in snow
till clean as knives, they walk through winter, wading
in frozen air. The moon is always fading
above them. Stars in intaglio
imprint a pattern on their upturned brows.
Loosely, their fingers latch. The star-seared mark
glowers bloody effulgence in the dark.
Within the scarlet aureole, their mouths
cross, meet and linger, press to rediscover
the treacherous salt pungence of each other.

The note beneath is an afterthought. It belongs in Shadows Part 1 *(see* Foundation 6*), just after section 27, which tells of Alfred K., Vanessa Harpington, and the nature of reality. Mr. Delany feels that, in taking on such formidable opposition as Wittgenstein and Karl Popper, a rather more formal analysis of the problem would be an appropriate addition.*

when is a paradox not a paradox?

Samuel R. Delany

Language suggests that 'truth' (or 'falsity') may be an attribute of sentences, much as 'redness' may be an attribute of apples. The primary language model is the adjective 'true', the secondary one a noun, 'truth', derived from the adjective. This is not the place to begin the argument against the whole concept of attributes. (It goes back to Leibniz's inseparable subject/verbs for true predicates; Quine has demonstrated how well we can get along in formal logic without attributes, as well as without the whole concept of propositions.) But I maintain that, subsumed under the noun 'truth' (and improperly subsumed at that), is a directed binary relation, running from the real to the uttered, by way of the mind. The problems we have concerning 'truth' (such as the paradox in section 27) are problems that arise from having to model a directed binary relationship without a transitive verb.

It is as if, in those situations in which we now say "The hammer hits the nail" and "The hammer misses the nail", we were constrained by the language only to speak of "hit nails" and "miss nails", and to discuss "hitness" and "missness" as attributes a given nail might or might not possess, depending on the situation, at the same time seldom even allowing a mention of the hammer and never a mention of the moment of impact.

What 'truth' subsumes (as well as an adjective-derived noun can) is a *process* through which apprehension of some area of the real (either through the senses, or through the memory, or the reality of internal sensation – again, this is not the place to discuss their accuracy) generates a descriptive utterance. This process is rendered highly complex by the existence of choice and imagination and is totally entangled in what Quine and Ullian have called "the web of belief": confronted with the real, the speaker may choose not to speak at all, or to speak of something else, or he may be mistaken (at any number of levels), or he may generate a description in a mode to which 'truth' or 'falsity' are simply not applicable (they may be in G. Spencer Brown's "imaginary" mode). But when he does generate an utterance of the sort we wish to consider, the over-all process structure is still binary, and directed from reality to the sentence.

When I look out the window and say "It is raining outside", what I perceive outside the window is controlling my utterance *in a way* the internal apprehension of which is my apprehension of the statement's 'truth' or 'falsity'. My utterance does not effect – save possibly in the realms of Heisenberg – whatever (rain or shine) is outside the window.

People have suggested that the problem of paradox sentences is that they are self-descriptive. Yes, but the emphasis should be on *descriptive,* not *self.*

"This sentence contains six words" is just as self-descriptive as "This sentence is false". But the first sentence is not paradoxical; it is simply wrong. (It contains five words.) The second sentence is paradoxical because part of the description (specifically 'This sentence . . . ') covers two things (both the sentence 'This sentence is false' and the sentence that it suggests as an equivalent translation, 'This sentence is true') and does not at all refer to the relation between them. The only predicate that *is* visible 'This sentence is . . . ' suggests they relate in a way they do not: "This sentence 'This sentence is true' *is* the sentence 'This sentence is false'." And, obviously, it isn't. But the same situation exists in Grelling's paradox, the paradox of the Spanish barber, as well as the set-of-all-normal-sets paradox – indeed, in all antinomies.

The real generates an utterance in a way that allows us to recognize it as 'true' or 'false'.

If we introduce verbs into the language to stand for the specific generative processes, we fill a much stumbled-over gap. By recovering what is on

both sides of the interface, and the direction the relation between them runs, we clarify much that was confused because unstated. Let us coin "generyte" and "misgeneryte", and let us make clear that this process is specifically mental and of the particular neuro-cybernetic nature that produces the utterances which, through a host of over-determined and partially determined reasons, we have been recognizing as 'true' and 'false'. If we introduce these verbs into our paradox, it stands revealed simply as two incorrect statements.

On one side of the paper we write:

"What is on this side of the paper generytes the sentence on the other side."

And on the other side we write:

"What is on this side of the paper misgenerytes the sentence on the other side."

Looking at either sentence, then turning the paper over to see if it does what it claims, we can simply respond, for both cases: "No, it does not." One (among many) properties that lets us recognise a generyted (or misgeneryted) sentence is that it is in the form of a description of whatever generyted (or misgeneryted) it, and neither sentence is in that form.

A last comment on all this:

The whole problem of relating mathematics to logic is basically the problem of how, logically, to get from conjunctions like "1+1=2 *and* 1+1≠3", which is the sort of thing we can describe in mathematics, to the self-evident (yet all but unprovable) logical implication: "1+1=2 *therefore* 1+1≠3" which is the process that propels us through all mathematical proofs.

Now consider the following sentences, one a conjunction, one an implication:

"This sentence contains ten words and it misgenerytes itself."

"If this sentence contains ten words, then it misgenerytes itself."

About the first sentence we can certainly say: "That sentence contains nine words, *therefore* it misgenerytes itself". If that self-evident *therefore* can be considered an implication, and assumed equivalent to ("to have the same truth values as" in our outmoded parlance) the implication of the second sentence, then, working from the side of language, we have, self-evidently, bridged the logical gap into mathematics!

Before making such an assumption, however, count the words in the second sentence . . .

Stanley Trevor

And so, I thought, pursuing this line of thought, I thought, my thirst as fierce as fever and raging like a scalded cat, and space fixed with Moon-shot, and my brains picked clean as the whistle in the teeth, and longing for the love of a lady, lady,

I thought to myself, "Christ", I thought "now I know I'm crazy, mind blown and head shrunk, round the bloody gyro, completely up the trans-galactic creek without a rocket to my name and orbiting on half a cycle", and I heard in my beams, like the crack of moving ice and tasting the salt sea savour bitter in the blood, the thud and roar of time, the beat of Death ringing to the landscapes of the mind in a knell of thunder, and then, ululating like an owl in hell, passed out in the royal manner, completely paralytic, and that, lady, is how it was;

and you may say, "Well", you may say, "these things will happen, even in the best regulated nucleonics, and I can't see anything, either good, bad, or indifferent to go writing home about", and you may well be right, but it gave me a bad time, I can tell you, floundering in the computer belt and gaping at the great sky and that lot standing there stark and stiff and silent as the bones of Stonehenge and waiting for the funeral

and when at last I woke, so it was I found myself, conjuncturally conjoined in deadly earnest conversation with this oracle, who, interpreting celestial phenomena as having an inexorable bearing upon terrestrial affairs, transfixed me with her honest, blue and

fearless stare, and informed me that a Moon Neptune square was now maturing on the heels of a progressed Moon Mars opposition, following a vicious attack by Saturn on my natal trio, Mars, Mercury, and Jupiter, along the Uranus square, my Sun, and son too, a future obviously fraught with peril and hell bent for destruction and I was truly amazed;

so I said to her, "Lady", I said, "rock old lady in your blueberry gown and cutting your cloth to the marrow, pinioned there in your rumble seat, and riding boots on your seven league feet, why do you scan the blood red sky, clouds as sharp as the eagle's eye, your brow so wrinkled and full of care, with my hollow heart hung from the nets in your hair, bait for the fishes waiting to be fed?"

"It's just a drop in the ocean", she said, "and I like talking to God;"

the moment was obviously psychological!

"Queen to King's Bishop four!" I shouted, pressing home my advantage, "will you, in your own words, tell the court what transpired, and kindly remember you are on oath?"

"Well", she said, taking twice her time and occasionally hiding her head in a butt of malmsey, "I was proceeding along the sky-way, spacemanned for rhyme and reason, when I apprehended the Almighty behaving in a critical condition so I arrested Him. Having been duly cautioned, he stated that the costs of the military operations against the rebel angels, who, with ambitious aim against the throne and monarchy of God raised impious war in heaven, had so escalated beyond all reasonable expectations that He was at His wits' ends to know where His next two thousand

billion dollars was coming from and could not tell t'other from which, and right now, what with one thing and another, He needed the human race just like He needed a hole in the head!"

"Lady", I said, "take my hand; I'm a stranger in these parts", and nearly died of grief, I could have, I thought to myself, I thought!

Douglas Barbour is a Canadian poet, working out of Edmonton, Alberta. He has published five books of poetry, the most recent of which are Songbook *(Vancouver: talonbooks, 1973) and* He. &. She. &. *(Ottowa: The Golden Dog, 1974). He is married (to Sharon), and teaches at the University of Alberta. His doctoral thesis (which as of summer 1974 was still being revised in some areas) is on science fiction — specifically, on the work of Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, and Samuel R. Delany. Mr. Barbour has given us permission to reprint part of his 116 page Delany chapter in* Foundation. *Space restrictions preclude us from using the whole of it. The chapter is in six sections . . . an introduction, the four sections explained below, and a conclusion. We have chosen to reproduce a part of the introduction, the whole of the section on the creation of fictional cultures, a small part of the section on style, and a section of the conclusion. We believe the result is a coherent article, but to protect Mr. Barbour's reputation, we have clearly marked the hiatuses produced by our editorial scissors; any* non sequiturs *that appear to straddle these gaps are ours and not Mr. Barbour's.*

cultural invention and metaphor in the novels of Samuel R. Delany

Douglas Barbour

Samuel R. Delany's first novel, *The Jewels of Aptor,*[1] appeared in 1962, when the author was 20 years old. Over the next two years, he published a trilogy, *Captives of the Flame* (1963), *The Towers of Toron* (1964), and *City of a Thousand Suns* (1965), which he revised for British publication in 1966; they were later published in one volume as *The Fall of the Towers.*[2] During the next three years, he wrote five novels, *The Ballad of Beta-2,*[3] *Empire Star,*[4] *Babel-17,*[5] *The Einstein Intersection,*[6] and *Nova.*[7] In the mid-sixties, Delany also began to produce some short stories, reversing the normal tendency among sf writers to begin with short fiction and work up to a full-length work. These were collected in *Driftglass.*[8]

From the beginning, Delany has been noticed and praised as an important new talent in science fiction. *Babel-17* and *The Einstein Intersection* won Nebula Awards, as has some of his shorter fiction; one story, "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones", won both the Nebula and Hugo Awards, the two major prizes in science fiction. As Judith Merril points out, Delany "is in a unique position in sf today: everybody loves him. The 'solid core', the casual readers, the literary dippers-in, the 'new-thing' crowd – Delany is all things to all readers".[9] I believe Delany has earned such accolades.

Delany is not only a gifted writer, he is one of the most articulate theorists of sf to have emerged from the ranks of its writers. As the author of a number of important critical essays and an editor of the short-lived speculative quarterly, *Quark,* he has done much to open up critical discussion of sf as a genre, forcefully arguing its great potential as art.

1 (New York, 1962). A larger edition, essentially the uncut original version, published by Ace (New York, 1968), is the edition I use.

2 (New York, 1970). This is the edition I use.

3 (New York, 1965).

4 (New York, 1966).

5 (New York, 1966).

6 (New York, 1967).

7 (New York, 1968). This is Delany's first hardcover novel. All references are to the Bantam paperback edition (New York, 1969).

8 (New York, 1971).

9 "Books", *F&SF* (November 1968), p. 43. At about the same time, in another review of *Nova,* Algis Budrys said, "As of this book, Samuel R. Delany is the best science-fiction writer in the world" ("Books", *Galaxy* [January 1969], p. 189).

Although his short stories reveal the same concern with craft as do his novels, and deal with the same basic themes, the novels provide the best guide to his development as a writer. I deal with them under four headings: the quest pattern;[10] his use of the figures of the artist and the criminal; cultural invention; and style and structure, a large section dealing with his use of literary and mythological allusions, his continual concern to develop a poetic prose in which image and metaphor are of primary importance, and his slowly maturing vision of the novel as "a monumental metaphor".[11] Although Delany's early novels can be discussed under these headings, they are neither as complex nor as sophisticated as his later ones. Because *Empire Star* represents a sudden leap forward in terms of his handling of his diverse materials, it and the novels after it require a more thorough discussion than the earlier work. Furthermore, it can be argued that *Nova* represents the culmination of all the experiments with form and style that begin in *Empire Star,* although the concern with style is present in his work from the beginning. Delany has published only one very speculative "pornographic" novel since 1968,[12] but he has been working all this time on a large novel titled *Dhalgren,* scheduled for publication in late 1974. I believe it is safe to assume that this new work will represent a possible further forward step in his remarkable growth as a novelist.

Editor's note: two entire sections of the chapter, those on "The Quest Pattern" and "The Figures of the Artist and Criminal" have been omitted here.

Essentially, the invention of complete "new worlds" is a necessary part of sf creation; if an sf story is to be successful, the author must create, in Delany's words, unreal but possible worlds (including our own world seen in another time or manner).[13] As soon as characters become a part of the alien landscape, they too must be rendered in language subtle enough to realize them in cultural terms as "different" from us. Much early sf fails precisely at this point; the worlds are often fantastically different, but the characters are cardboard versions of contemporary clichés. As William Gass

10 See Sandra Miesel's comment that "all Delany's novels are quests", in "Samuel R. Delany's Use of Myth in Nova", *Extrapolation,* 12:2 (May 1972), p. 86.

11 Gass, *Fiction and the Figures of Life,* p. 68.

12 *The Tides of Lust* (New York, 1973).

13 Delany's essay, "About 5,175 Words," *SF,* pp. 135 - 139 esp..

points out: "The worlds which . . . the writer creates, are only imaginatively possible ones; they need not be at all like the real one, and the metaphysics which any fiction implies is likely to be meaningless or false if taken as nature's own".[14]

One reason Delany is such a fine sf writer is that, like Le Guin and Russ, he puts his characters in concrete cultural situations, in which they can be seen to act quite naturally. For his future human civilizations he invents a multitude of cultural possibilities. These depend on whether his outlook in a particular novel tends toward utopia or dystopia, whether he attempts to show progress or regress. Unlike Le Guin he does not posit a single future history stretching over a number of novels.[15] In his early novels, he tends to use fairly ordinary methods to suggest the kinds of culture his characters represent; in the later galactic novels, he tends to use manners and *mores* to show up cultural differences, and to present a number of different cultures within a single system, usually galaxy-wide; this presentation of a whole scale of cultures within a single civilization is hinted at in *Empire Star* and presented in some depth in *Babel-17* and *Nova.*

In both *The Jewels of Aptor* and *The Fall of the Towers,* the cultures are straightforward variants of historical cultures, which are limited, partly by being confined to small areas of population on Earth. This is especially true of Leptar's culture, in *The Jewels of Aptor,* which is similar to what we might call early Renaissance culture, with sailing ships, superstition, a closed system of education, and a church which rules the state. Against this, there are the wonders of the "past", among them the technological wonders which are still available to the priests of Hama on Aptor.

The Fall of the Towers takes place on an Earth the same as, or very similar to, that of *The Jewels of Aptor.* But, in a novel of such scope, Delany is able to spend much more time filling in the whole spectrum of the society he is creating. Nevertheless, on the whole, he does not offer his readers anything too unexpected. Still a young apprentice writer, he is content to create in the pattern of many other sf works before his.

14 Gass, pp. 9 - 10.

15 There is a fictional connection between *Empire Star* and *Babel-17;* the author of the first is an off-stage character in the second, and his name, Muels Aranlyde, is practically an anagram of Samuel R. Delany. In the initial edition of *The Fall of the Towers,* in three volumes, the books were laid on the same post-holocaust earth as *The Jewels of Aptor.* In the one volume edition, however, Delany removed the specific references and altered various dates to separate the two even further.

His presentation is well done, but his only really new addition to this particular cultural extrapolation is his creation of a situation where "evolution has run wild . . . and there is one atavistic section of the population that has regressed to a point that race had passed three million years ago, while another segment has jumped a million years ahead and has become a race of giants with many telepaths among them" (*FT,* 283). By setting up a potentially explosive social situation and then showing how such different representatives of humanity can get along together merely by recognising that they are all "men", Delany makes some interesting cultural speculations.

Most of the presentation, however, is of a small world very like our own: Toromon has reached a point, after five hundred years of historical growth, not too far ahead of our present situation. But there are carefully defined differences; the major one being isolation. Catham, the historian, analyses the uniqueness of Toromon and concludes that, because its science and economics are expansionary, it needs something like a war in order that it may continue to "grow" (*FT,* 158-159). Toromon has its war, but it is an entirely "self-contained" one, with the "soldiers" stacked in little metal cells where, under the influence of drugs and psychosis-inducing training, and with the aid of a huge computer, they "dream" the war (*FT,* 270-271). Delany's presentation of certain of the characters, as they undergo training and then live and fight at the "front", is one of the good things in the novel.

Delany's two objectives in *The Ballad of Beta-2* are: to show how every strange image in the ballad is in fact concretely based on "realistic" observation, meaning there must be a "reality" within the novel that can only be described that way; and to show how different people, at different times, respond to the various pressures of a long and confined starship journey. He accomplishes both ends by making all the scenes he presents dramatic ones, which demonstrate social attitudes in action, as in the recorded trial of One Eye Jackson vs. the Norm (*BB2,* 46-53). Captain Leela's account is a series of dramatic encounters: with the judge who represents the Norm, with the One Eyes, whom she admires, and finally with the Destroyer, who promises her that her children will journey to the stars if only she will "love" him. The single vision of the present day descendants of the Norm, who have finally wiped out all the One Eyes, reveals their complete social degeneration, their total human stagnation.

Most such stories, such as Robert Heinlein's "Universe" and Brian

Aldiss's *Starship,* deal with the barbarian society, but Delany, in an innovative shift that is essentially stylistic, presents the highlights of the decline of civilization aboard the ships through Joneny's examinations of logbooks and other records and documents.

Delany has gone most of the earlier stories one better by showing that, although a majority of the people fall into superstition, a few rebels continue to try to hold on to the learning of the past, such as scientific, medical and philosophical knowledge, while the active crew, such as the Captain, have to retain *some* technical knowledge in order to run the ships. As the ships' communities slowly devolve into tribal divisions between a more and more ritual-oriented and anti-intellectual majority and a desperate studious few, culminating in the destruction of the minority, which is no longer even allowed to live in separate quarters, Delany presents what other stories only hint at: the way in which the descent into final barbarism occurred. He does this by using recorded conversations, trials, and other dramatic situations where speech reveals a great deal in a short space, demonstrating his understanding of how language reveals cultural differences.

The huge galactic civilization of *Empire Star* contains every kind of culture, from simplex to the most multiplex, on its many planets. Throughout, the speech patterns of the various characters reveal their cultural levels. Jo changes most obviously in his speech, every change marking a further step upward from simplexity towards multiplexity. At the beginning, Jo's speech can barely be understood, and San Sevarina decides immediately to give him "interling" lessons. In keeping with the self-consciousness of the narrative, she explains her decision:

> "You have undertaken an enterprise of great pith and moment, and I am sure someday somebody will set it down. If you don't improve your diction, you will lose your entire audience before page thirty. I suggest you seriously apply yourself, because you are in for quite an exciting time, and it would be rather sad if everyone abandoned you halfway through because of your atrocious grammar and pronounciation".
>
> Her Multiplexedness San Sevarina certainly had my number down. [adds Jewel.] (*ES,* 37)

As Jo proceeds through the multiplex universe, he comes both to speak more effectively and think more profoundly, the latter especially after Lump's and Ni Ty Lee's lessons. Since *Empire Star* is really concerned with demonstrating that a fiction is a world created out of language, it seems

only proper that in it the indications of cultural difference should be language more than actions.

In *Babel-17,* Delany explores the relationship between language and culture, or, more specifically, between language and *Weltanschauung,* more comprehensively than previously. As in *Empire Star,* the forms of speech of the people in the military, Transport, Customs, or the pirate society of Jebel's Tarik, imply various differences in outlook in those subcultures. The linguistic theme is carried much further, however, in the detailed examination of the implications of a "new" language such as Babel-17. In his presentation of Rydra's analysis of Babel-17, and in her discussion of translation problems with the totally alien Ciribians (*B17,* 122-123), Delany extrapolates in the "soft" science of linguistics, using as his speculative base the Sapin-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity.[16]

In *Babel-17,* Delany also presents a galactic civilization in detail for the first time, rather than just implying its existence as he does in the previous two novels. He also returns to a kind of social analysis within the fiction not seen since *The Fall of the Towers.* Working within the basic outline of sf's "future history",[17] Delany creates many original variations on its ideas. *Babel-17* differs from most earlier novels not only in its linguistic speculations but in its implicit assumption that cultural shifts and differences are revealed more in "software" and social behaviour than in technological changes. This assumption pushes Delany's later novels speculatively further than most hard-science sf, which tends to assume that no matter how much the world or universe may change in terms of scientific or technological advances, peoples' behaviour will remain the same.[18] Sf

16 The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that your language influences the way you perceive "reality" or "the universe". See *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf,* ed. John B. Carroll (New York, 1956), passim. Linguistic considerations are important to all of Delany's novels, especially those from *ES* onwards.

17 See: Wollheim, *The Universe Makers,* pp. 42-44, on the limited number of sf themes, and on how newer writers have always built upon basic scientific (or pseudo-scientific) assumptions of the classic formulators of the thirties and forties. Wollheim is not completely correct in his assertion, for although the basic outline of future civilizations remains pretty much the same, new scientific theories and discoveries continually open up further areas for imaginative investigations: in *Nova,* Delany's scientific speculation is "different" from much of what went before.

18 See Joanna Russ's statements on this point, in nearly all her essays on science fiction. Philip José Farmer, Theodore Sturgeon and Alfred Bester are among the few earlier writers she exempts from this generalisation.

writers have only recently begun to imagine that people might very well radically change the manner of their lives in new and different circumstances. The visions of change can be unpleasant, as Joanna Russ's are, with the possible exception of the People's way of life, but Delany tends to project such large overall civilizations that, although the worst possible kinds of living conditions can be found within their borders, the general outlook is hopeful in its range and openness to alternative possibilities. He presents some startling, yet suggestively probable, new ways of life, without obtrusive moralising. They are possible, therefore worth exploring.

Delany assumes, in both *Babel-17* and *Nova,* that in the future technology will be humanised somehow, bringing to an end man's alienation from his work and thus from his world. This assumption, which gives both books an aura of humane speculation missing in much science fiction, is fully worked out in *Nova,* but it is present in *Babel-17* in the single area of Transport, at least. Much of the cultural interest of the novel focuses on the difference between Transport and Customs. Transport is the name for starship personnel, who live apart on every world in their own sector, while Customs is everything else, most specifically all planet-based business, and its members lead more ordinary lives than Transport people do.

Transport includes the dead, now called "discorporate", ghosts who serve as scanners for the Transport ships, because a "live human scanning all that goes on in those hyperstasis frequencies would – well, die first, and go crazy second" (*B17,* 37). Then there are the "tripled" navigation teams, where one lives in "a close, precarious, emotional and sexual relation with two other people" (*B17,* 38), because such loving closeness is necessary if all three are to function properly in their jobs. Customs people fear and dislike the strange folk of Transport; Danil D. Appleby thinks Ron and Calli, the survivors of a broken navigation team, are "perverts" (*B17,* 38), and does not know at first what to make of someone like Brass, the pilot, who has been changed by "cosmetisurgery" into a ten foot tall lion-man. But Rydra, the translator, who has been tripled herself, although as a poet she is thought to be "of" Customs, takes Appleby along while she recruits a crew, causing both crew and Appleby to discard some of their prejudices about each other. Appleby is so changed, in fact, that he later has a very small cosmetisurgery operation himself (*B17,* 152). Delany does not simply state what Transport folk's *mores* are like; by showing them at work aboard Rydra's ship, he demonstrates how their lives reflect their direct, and happy, involvement in their jobs.

Although the presentation of Transport is perhaps the most interesting

cultural speculation in *Babel-17,* Delany creates representatives of other cultural possibilities within his projected future. The rigid military establishment, still very like the military of today, the somewhat superficial "society" of the higher-ups in the War Yards, shown at their worst/best during the dinner party held for Rydra and her crew (*B17,* 71-83), the "pirate" society of Jebel's Tarik, with its spartan readiness to fight and its almost medieval dining customs and entertainments, including an official jester (*B17,* 112-116), where a desire for culture and a high cruelty mix spontaneously, and the criminal and prison sub-culture of the Alliance implied in Butcher's memories of his recent past life (*B17,* 143-147), fill in a picture of a huge and varied society, like any large human society but "different" too.

The Einstein Intersection represents a completely "different" situation. As the non-humans of that novel unsuccessfully attempt to live through the alien, to them, culture patterns of man, the whole problem of their insuperable differences from us is reflected in the chaos of their social and cultural behaviour. Change is the only constant in their world, as the ever-increasing pace of the narrative implies.[19] There can be no cultural constants in such a situation, not even the "few constants" Kroeber insists on in *Culture,* (p. 338) though the people have to realise this before the knowledge can be put to use. While they try to live by the myths of man, they cannot create a viable culture of their own. Perhaps, as PHAEDRA says, they "have to exhaust the old mazes before they can move into the new ones" (*EI,* 36), but their more profound hope is to recognise that they do not have to live out the old myths at all, that the "difference" they seek to hide or dissemble is the key to their cultural and racial salvation. Therefore, Lobey's eventual acceptance of his difference, and his pattern-breaking recognition that he does not have to repeat the myths associated with him, are the proper responses to the situation. As soon as he fully realizes "the world is not the same" (*EI,* 119), he can begin a new and different life. Whether he comes back later and and brings Green-eye back to life or refuses that action, things will still begin anew: "It's different" (*EI,* 119). Using a variety of fictional techniques to render this insight in concrete language, Delany achieves his most multiplex novel thus far.

Nova is even larger and more multiplex. One, perhaps even minor, aspect of its richness of invention is the full presentation of completely human-

19 Stephen Scobie, "Different Mazes: Mythology in Samuel R. Delaney's (sic) *The Einstein Intersection", Riverside Quarterly,* 5:1 (1971), p.13.

ized technology that has resulted in a totally new and galaxy-wide culture. In his laudatory review of *Nova,* Algis Budrys points out, in terms of sf literary history, just what Delany's invention of the sockets nearly everyone possesses means:

> What about taking the cyborg idea, and painting a picture of a civilization where everyone plugs directly into his tools? What about then making you realize that a socketed man plugged into a factory literally puts the raw materials in with his bare hands and nudges and pushes the product along the processing line.
>
> His brain, after all, cannot then tell the difference between telling his hand to scoop and telling an automated train of ore cars to roll into the unloading dock. All right? Then Delany makes you realize that if this is true – which is a little past where Cordwainer Smith left it already – then such a factory worker has a sense of accomplishment and identity with his product that is now lost to the 20th century and has in fact been lost to us all since the disappearance of the artisan. And that this becomes a major social fact in the world of the future . . . a redeeming fact of technology, with all its intense humanistic implications arrived at via the route of playing on the sensorium. [*Galaxy,* January 1969, p. 191]

Katin meditates on the meaning of these changes and, while explaining to Mouse the importance of the twenty-third century philosopher Ashton Clark, whose work enabled Soquet to develop his plugs, explains the cultural meaning of the plugs to the reader (*Nova,* 194-196). But long before this happens, Delany demonstrates the ubiquity and importance of the plugs in his fictional world: everything anyone does involves their use and everyone, no matter what his or her station in life, has them, except for a few Gypsies on Earth. Indeed, Prince Red's basic impotence as a person is symbolized by the fact that, with one arm missing, he lacks one of the three sockets people must have for full control of any cyborg situation; as Katin tells Mouse, " 'Eunuchs? When you plug into a big machine you call that studding; you wouldn't believe where that expression came from' " (*Nova,* 113). Delany fills in *Nova*'s huge cultural canvas with insights such as that remark provides.

Delany invents a technology full of hope for the human condition in *Nova.* Positing the end of the worker's alienation from his work, which Marx exposed in *Das Kapital,* he postulates the concomitant end of man's alienation from the universe around him by showing that anyone who serves as a cyborg stud on board a starship, an opportunity open to all, communes with the cosmos itself. Yet *Nova* is not a utopian fiction, al-

though the invention of the sockets is a utopian-oriented piece of social engineering. Fully aware of the political and ethical vagaries of man, Delany knows that technological changes cannot alter man in any *absolute* way. *Nova's* galactic civilisation is better than ours, on the whole, but it is not absolutely good. Men can now choose their work, and even enjoy it, but there are still rich and poor, even if only relatively poor. The political/economic system is a modified form of capitalism, in which certain groups, or cartels, have achieved economic and political power over vast numbers of people, if only in an abstract manner. In this civilization, as usual, individuals, even the most powerful, still suffer the personal pains of love and hate.[20]

The invention of a technological breakthrough which fundamentally changes man's relationship to his work is only one aspect of Delany's cultural speculation in *Nova.* He creates a galaxy split into three sectors: the oldest, Draco, ruled from Earth and conservative; the newest, the Outer Colonies, a mining area mostly, with analogues to the "third world" of contemporary politics, has been settled by the poorer classes; while the third, Pleiades Federation, settled by a kind of middle class breaking out from the confines of Draco, which was opened up by governments and large corporations, like the Reds. The people from these different sectors reflect their backgrounds in their actions, speech and total behaviour. Lorq deliberately picks his crew to represent all three sectors, and, as they interact and converse, a complete picture of their differences emerges. As in *Empire Star,* Delany makes good use of speech patterns to represent cultural differences. Lorq uses good Draco forms most of the time, because his family has held onto these forms as a means of demonstrating its high social position in Pleiades Federation. But he falls easily into the strange grammatical pattern that is normal for Federation citizens whenever he talks to Tyÿ or Sebastian, who are from there. Lynceos and Idas, the twins from the Outer Colonies, employ speech patterns much closer to those of Draco, apparently because their home is so far away from the centre of power they feel no need to continually demonstrate their separation from Draco in their speech.

The civilization of the three sectors is so diverse and extensive, Delany must use important details to imply whole areas of experience. For example, education in this plug-dominated universe is obviously different from what

20 Delany, in his "Critical Methods: Speculative Fiction", *Quark/1*, pp. 190-93, argues that the attempt to force various works of sf into the slots of either utopian or dystopian fictions fails to take account of the complex visions of the future that are found in the best works of sf.

we have today. Only a few glimpses of "education" are given, but they add up to an impressive vision. Lorq, a special case, is shown studying for his university exams at home; he is being trained to assume the vast reins of power concentrated in his family. Katin goes to Harvard, "still a haven for the rich, the eccentric, and the brilliant – the last two of which he was" (*Nova,* 15). Most "education" is more democratic than these two know, however, providing entries into all possible ways of life in the galaxy. Mouse, all of sixteen and without any previous formal education whatsoever, gets plugs and takes only a year at an Australian university to earn his certificate as a cyborg stud for inter- and intra-system ships (*Nova,* 11). Dan, the old cyborg stud, learns enough when he gets his certificate to understand what the scientists at the Alkane Institute tell him about his experience aboard a ship which flies through a novaing star (*Nova,* 88-89).

I have not even begun to indicate the range and variety of ways in which Delany fills in a large cultural mosaic in this novel, but I believe he has created one of the most fully realized pictures of an interstellar society, within the confines of one novel anyway, in all sf. Yet he does not stop at that. All this background is subjected to the philosophical speculations of various characters in the novel. Thus the use of the Tarot, combined with Katin's explanation of why it has become important in the post-Ashton Clark universe, reveals the spiritual roots and sophistication of *Nova's* invented civilization. There is also an historical analysis, placing that civilization's beginnings in the twentieth century, with the major exception of the invention of the philosophical backing for plugs in the twenty-third. Katin discusses the twentieth century at various points in the novel, the most important of which is his conversation with Lorq at the Alkane Institute (*Nova,* 140).

The continuing argument about the basic "lack of cultural solidity" in *Nova's* universe is central to one of the themes of the novel. Lorq first hears about it, when, with Prince and Ruby Red, he listens in on his parents' garden party conversation as a young child (*Nova,* 41), but the problem is brought up in relation to various characters throughout the novel. Katin is obsessed with it because, as a novelist-in-the-making, he is aware of the importance of social analysis in the Novel. The refrain, "we live in an age where economic, political, and technological change have shattered all cultural traditions" (*Nova,* 42), is counterpointed against concrete presentations of cultural activities throughout the novel until it culminates in Katin's realization, near the end, that it is mistaken. The real situation is "different", as he tells Mouse (and, in doing so, unknow-

ingly echoes the Poundian Vortex once again):[21]

> "They're just looking for our social traditions in the wrong place. There *are* cultural traditions that have matured over the centuries, yet culminate now in something vital and solely of today. And you know who embodies that tradition more than anyone I've met?"
>
> "The Captain?"
>
> "You, Mouse".
>
> "Huh?"
>
> "You've collected the ornamentations a dozen societies have left us over the ages and made them inchoately yours. You're the product of those tensions that clashed in the time of Clark and you resolve them on your syrinx with patterns eminently of the present —" (*Nova*, 197)

Delany's entirely decorous, fictional analysis within the narrative of the culture he has invented for *Nova*, breaks new analytical ground in contemporary sf.

[Editor's note: The previous section, is, in Mr. Barbour's original chapter, followed by a long discussion of Delany's "style". The following section, a small part of this discussion, provides an illuminating footnote to what we have printed above.]

If Richard Poirier is correct in seeing what he calls "performance" as another particularly modern trait, in Delany's performances in these later works we can discover another literary characteristic he shares with some of the major writers of our time, writers who have helped to make modern literature all that it is.

> By performance I mean, in part, any self-discovering, self-watching, finally self-pleasuring response to the pressures and difficulties [of being an artist in our time, subject to an overweaning criticism and an artistically debilitating public life, and much else besides]. . . . When a writer is most strongly engaged by what he is doing, as if struggling for his identity within the materials at hand, he can show us, in the mere turning of a sentence this way or that, how to keep from being smothered by the inherited structuring of things, how to keep within and yet in command of the accumulations of culture that have become a part of what he is. Much of cultural inheritance is waste; it always has been. But only those who are both vulnerable and brave are in a position to know what is waste and what is not.[22]

21 *Editor's note: This is a reference by Mr. Barbour to a point made in one of the omitted sections, relating the theoretical chapter "Knot and Vortex" in Hugh Kenner's* The Pound Era (Berkeley, 1971) *to what he sees as a similar phenomenon in Delany's work — the phenomenon of "a persistent pattern manifested in ceaseless change".*

22 Poirier, *The Performing Self* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1971) p. xiii.

In *Empire Star* and the novels that follow it, Delany continually uses his sf precepts to create fictions in which the problems that Poirier sees as central to artistic expression today can be approached, broached, and perhaps even usefully left unresolved: "Endings to be useful must be inconclusive". (*EI,* 125) Although Poirier appears quite unaware of sf, or Delany, when he refers to "the writers I'm discussing" he could be referring to Delany, for Delany belongs to their company:

> In their struggle with language and with literary shape, the writers I'm discussing become aware, and then turn this awareness into forms of expression, that what are supposed to be instruments of knowledge do not offer clarification at all; they are part of what needs to be clarified. The kind of writer or personality or group I most admire displays an unusual and even arduous energy of performance. And my admiration for such effortfulness is the result of thinking that there is a good chance that everything more easily available for expression is cant or destined to become gibberish. One must fight through the glitter and rubbish to express anything worthwhile, to express even the rubbish. A writer or anyone else can be called "great" or "noble" in my sense who sees the perpetual need for such fighting, who is forever unaccommodated, determinately "unfinished", . . . an example of cadenced and self-measuring performance. Continually tensed within any use of language, such a writer's best acts are always performances of some daring, the very success of which transports him beyond the results of such acts, producing the dissatisfactions which prompt the next, and perhaps even better ones.[24]

Read in order, Delany's novels reveal precisely this kind of struggle, as well as his continual growth as an artist. The terms in which he sees this growth do not really matter; I see it in terms of his slowly blossoming awareness of the novel as "a monumental metaphor", and of literary creation as "performance", because I think these critical ideas help to clarify one's understanding of his achievement. From *Empire Star* on, Delany not only produces "determinately 'unfinished'" fictions, he continually builds on his past performances to create even grander ones the next time. Algis Budrys' comment on *Nova* is relevant here:

> I don't see how a science-fiction writer can do more than wring your heart while explaining how it works. No writer can. The special thing that science fiction does is to first credibly place the heart in an unconventional environment.[25]

24 *Performing Self,* pp. 11-12

25 Budrys, "Books", *Galaxy,* p. 189.

This not only points out the special fictional properties of this novel but suggests why sf is a valid form of literary creation. "Fiction", according to William Gass,

> is life in terms of the toenail, or in terms of the ferris wheel, in terms of the tequila; it is incurably figurative, and the world the novelist makes is always a metaphorical model of our own.[26]

If this is true, and if Delany's suggestion that some kind of link exists "between the Symbolists and modern American speculative fiction"[27] is also true, as I believe, then huge metaphors which are in fact also images of mystical illumination can best be presented in terms of word-worlds which are, like so many Symbolist poems, new, and "different". And the "reality" they present is as clearly there (in the best works, such as Delany's best works) as it is in any other work of art: the good novel, the artistic novel, represents itself.

[Editor's note: the following final section is taken from Mr. Barbour's conclusion, and provides an interesting overview, in more general terms, of Samuel Delany's achievement.]

Samuel R. Delany's work reveals that, of the three writers considered in this study,[28] he is by far the most self-conscious practitioner of his art. His own term "multiplex" probably best describes his work (attitudes, ideas, themes, craftsmanship, all their inter-relations, as well as his relation, as artist, to them all). A poet, and married to one, Delany is one of the finest wordsmiths in sf, a true "maker". His great perseverance in continually developing his craft and never resting on his past achievements is revealed in the steady growth of artistry and multiplexity that can be traced through his first seven novels. His study of fictional craft has led him to the conclusion that fictions are "models of reality"[29] whose relation to "the

26 *Figures,* p. 60.

27. "Words", p. 144. Note Delany's insistence that many of the best sf novels are "the stuff of mysticism".

28 *Editor's note: in the complete thesis the other two writers considered are Ursula Le Guin and Joanna Russ.*

29 Samuel R. Delany & Marilyn Hacker, "On Speculative Fiction", *Quark/4* (August, 1971), p. 9.

real world" is ambiguous and oblique, and totally unlike that of an historical report or newspaper article. As a result of this realization, he has become one of sf's most important experimenters, discovering, in the novels since *Empire Star*, new and exciting ways to use the forms of fiction in the creation of fictions. Delany's recent novels have "the Oriental deviousness, the rich rearrangements, the endless complications of the novel conceived . . . as a monumental metaphor, a metaphor we move at length through",[30] as William Gass conceives of it; and it is my belief that he conceives of it in terms analagous to Gass's.

Although he has no single basic moral vision obviously based on a single philosophy, as Le Guin does with the *Tao*, Delany does have one, and it has been articulated in every work since his first novel, *The Jewels of Aptor*. This moral vision is, however, inextricably entwined with his aesthetic vision, and this double vision is central to the early novels in a rather simple manner, for it is the unknown goal of the major characters within them. Delany states this vision very clearly in *JA:* it is the basic religious experience of "chaos caught in order, the order defining chaos". (*JA*, 155) He has found many ways in which to render this vision, ways which in their "Oriental deviousness" have expanded and deepened it until the two phrases from that first novel are just too general a statement to fully embody the richness of the vision, but its basic human thrust has remained the same. As has his obsession with the artist and the criminal as figures who can provide, in their acts, a variety of perspectives upon that vision. Moreover, Delany shares with Ursula K. Le Guin an intense concern with the brotherhood of men. In his case it derives directly from his art, for one of his central themes, based solidly on his own efforts as an artist, is the achievement of communication among people. "The object of communication – and therefore of all art – is the reconciliation of divergent perceptions into one vision shared by artist and audience".[31] This reconciliation represents an almost mystical hope on Delany's part, something that can only be expressed in art, and thus it helps to focus the vast amount of verbal energy he has at his disposal. This is one major theme, but Delany has never repeated himself in his stories, and each work has had its own themes and ideas, as well as those which have remained constant (though expanding and shifting in perspective) throughout all his work. The breadth of themes, ideas, and richness of style found in his work is almost unmatched in sf.

30 Gass, pp. 68-69.

31 Sandra Miesel, p. 86.

The fact that all three authors write works of sf must be insisted upon. A critical hearing for their art cannot be won by trying to pretend that it is something it is not. As three of the finest writers in sf, they have created fictions which deserve to be criticized on their own terms as works of literature; but these fictions must be dealt with in terms of the parameters of sf as well. For example, an interest in the technologies of contemporary life, in hard- and soft-ware (what McLuhan calls man's technological extensions of himself), is a central facet of the fictions of Donald Barthelme, John Barth, Robert Coover, and many other important contemporary writers (even Norman Mailer has written a book about the Apollo flights), and, although they often create fictions which appear to be models of contemporary life, many of them have begun to work with models which have been deeply influenced by sf. But within sf, it has always been quite natural to dream technological advances, to project models of far different worlds than that we live in. And for the most part, in the early days, those models were both antiseptic and utopian. The three writers this study has concentrated on share a complex vision of the possibilities of technology that views it as merely a part of the whole human condition, incapable in itself of changing that condition in any basic fashion. As their central interest is a human one, they tend to present models which are more concerned with characters than with machines.

For a long time, and partly because early science fiction was so in love with machinery, it has been the custom to see most works in either Utopian or Dystopian terms. This is one of the basic faults of Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell.* As Delany has said, "Modern SF has gone beyond this irreconcilable Utopian/Dystopian conflict to produce a more fruitful model against which to compare human development".[32] Borrowing from W.H. Auden, Delany suggests that there should be at least four visions of the world which can be balanced within any single work: the two backward-looking ones are Eden and the Land of the Flies; the two forward-looking ones are Arcadia and the New Jerusalem. And in the best sf, unlike pure Utopian or Dystopian fictions, "the author's aim is neither to condemn nor to condone, but to explore both the worlds and their behaviours for the sake of the exploration, again an aim far closer to poetry than to any sociological brand of fiction".[33]

32 "Critical Methods: Speculative Fiction", *Quark/1,* p. 192.

33 "Critical Methods", p. 193. Delany had earlier suggested that "It is just this basic concern with *thingness* that makes me insist that the initial impulse behind SF, despite the primitive and vulgar verbal trappings, was closer to the impulse behind poetry than it was to the impulse behind ordinary narrative fiction". (p. 189)

The article below is the second half of Chip Delany's Shadows: *a 30,000 word treatise on words and meanings, a collage, a memoir, a manifesto, and, incidentally, a statement about science fiction. Chip's spelling, as he cheerfully admits, is not far from dyslexic, and I fear it is contagious. I would like to apologize to him, and to his wife Marilyn, for mis-spelling the name of their baby daughter, Iva Alyxander, in the previous issue.*

the profession of science fiction: viii: shadows — part two

Samuel R. Delany

35. Though few science fiction writers enjoy admitting it, much science fiction, especially of the nuts and bolts variety, reflects the major failure of the scientific context in which most technology presently occurs: the failure, in a world where specialisation is a highly productive and valued commodity, to integrate its specialized products in any ecologically reasonable way – painfully understandable in a world that is terrified of any social synthesis, between black and white, male and female, rich and poor, verbal and non-verbal, educated and un-educated, under-privileged and privileged, subject and object. Such syntheses, if they occur, will virtually destroy the categories and leave all the elements that now fill them radically revalued in ways it is impossible to more than imagine until such destruction is well underway. Many of the privileged as well as the under-privileged fear the blanket destruction of the products of technology, were such a radical

value shift to happen. Even so, both privileged and non-privileged thinkers are questioning our culture's context, scientific and otherwise, to an extent that makes trivial, by comparison, the blanket dismissal of all things with dials that glitter (or with latinate names in small print at the bottom of the labels) that the urban advocates of back-to-the-soil humanism sometimes claim to indulge. Within the city, because of the over-determined context, even to attempt such a dismissal is simply to doom oneself to getting one's technology in grubbier packages, containing less efficient brands of it, and with the labels ripped off so that you cannot be sure what's inside. Those who actually *go* back to the soil are another case: the people on the rural communes I have visited – in Washington with Pat Muir, and those in California around Muir Woods (coincidentally named after Pat's grandfather) – were concerned with exploring a folk technology, a very different process from 'dismissal'. And the radio-phonograph (solid-state circuitry) and the paperback book (computerised type-setting), just for examples, were integral parts of the exploration.

That science fiction is the most popular literature in such places doesn't surprise.

What other literature could make sense of, or put in perspective, a landscape where there is a hand-loom, a tape-recorder, a fresh butter churn, ampicylin forty minutes away on a Honda 750, and both men and women pushing a mule-drawn plow, cooking, wearing clothes when clothes answer either a functional necessity (boots, work-gloves . . .) or an aesthetic appetite (hand-dyed smocks, beaded vests . . .) and going naked when neither necessity nor appetite is present; or where thousands of such people will gather, in a field three hundred miles from where they live, to hear music from musicians who have come a thousand miles to play it for them?

What the urban humanist refuses to realize (and what the rural humanist often has no way of realizing) is that our culture's scientific context, which has given us the plow, the tape-recorder, insecticides, the butter-churn, and the bomb, is currently under an internal and informed onslaught as radical as our social context is suffering before the evidence of Women's Liberation, Gay Activism, Radical Psychiatry, or Black Power.

Much science fiction inadvertently reflects the context's failure.

The best science fiction explores the attack.

36. The philosophically cherished predicates of all the sensory verbs in the Indo-European family of languages are, today, empirically empty verbal conventions – like the 'it' in 'it is raining'. The very form "I see the

table" suggests that, in the situation 'I' would commonly model with those words, 'I' am doing something *to* the table, by 'seeing' it, in some sense similar to what 'I' would be doing to it in the situation 'I' would commonly model by the words "I set the table". Empirically, however, we know that (other than at the most minute, Heisenbergian level), in the situation we use "I see the table" to model, the table is – demonstrably! – doing far more to 'I' than 'I' am doing to it. (Moreover, though words like 'I' and 'see' were used to *arrive at* the demonstration, the demonstration *itself* could be performed effectively for a deaf-mute who had learned only the non-verbal indicators, such as pointing, miming of motion and direction, picture recognition, etc. The reading of various sense data as the persistence of matter and coherence and direction of motion, which is basically what is needed to apprehend such a demonstration, seems to be [by recent experiments on babies only a few hours old] not only pre-verbal but programmed in the human brain at birth, i.e., *not* learned.) A language is conceivable that would reflect this, where the usual model of this situation would be a group of verbal particles that literally translated: "Light reflects-from table then excites my-eyes". Equally conceivable, in this language, the words "I see the table" might be considered, if translated from ours literally, first, as ungrammatical, and, second, as self-contradictory as "the rock falls up" appears in ours. By extension, all predicates in the form "The subject senses . . . " are as empty of internal coherence against an empirical context as "the colour of the number seven is D-flat". (An intuitive realization among poets of the hopeless inadequacy of linguistic expressions in the form "I sense . . . " accounts for much of the 'difficulty' in the poetry of the last twenty-five years – a very different sort of difficulty from the laboured erudition of the poetry of the thirty years previous.) As *models* for a situation, neither the 'I see . . . ' model, nor the 'light reflects . . . ' model is more *logical;* but that is only because logic lies elsewhere. One model is simply, empirically, more reasonable. Empirical evidence has shown that the implied arrows 'inside' these words simply do not reflect what is the case. A good bit of philosophical wrangling simply tries to maintain that because these arrows were once considered to be there, they must still model *something.*

There was a time when people thought electricity flowed from the positive to the negative pole of a battery. The best one can say is that there were many situations in which the current direction didn't matter. And many others in which it did. Trying to maintain the meaningful direction

of sense predicates is like maintaining that in those situations in which it doesn't matter which way the current flows, somehow it *is* actually flowing backwards.

37. Galaxy of events over the past few months: the telegram announcing Marilyn's collection of poems *Presentation Piece* had won the Lamont Poetry Selection for the year; the terribly complimentary statement by Richard Howard, which will go on the book's back cover; a glowing review by the Kirkus Service that is *so* muddle-headed, one would have almost preferred no review at all!

38. Various deaf-mute friends I have had over the years, and the contingent necessity of learning the deaf-and-dumb sign language, have given me as much insight into spoken and written language as oral story-telling once gave me into written stories: hand-signs, spoken words, and written words produce incredibly different contextual responses, though they model the same object or process. The deaf-and-dumb sign language progresses, among ordinary deaf-and-dumb signers, at between three and five hundred words a minute (*cf* ordinary reading speeds), and the learner who comes from the world of hearing and speaking is frequently driven quite mad by the absence of concept words and connectives. (Logicians take note: both 'and' and 'or' are practically missing from demotic deaf-and-dumb, though the sign for 'and' exists; 'or' must be spelled out by alphabetic signs, which usually indicates an infrequently used word.)

Lanky and affable Horace would occasionally leave me notes under my room door (on the ninth floor of the Albert) written with 'English' words, all using their more or less proper, dictionary meaning, but related to one another in ways that would leave your average English speaker bewildered.

There is a sign for "freeze" – a small, backwards clutch, with the palms of the hands down.

There is a sign for "you" – pointing to the 'listener' with the forefinger.

As in English, "freeze" has many metaphorical extensions: 'to stop moving', 'to treat someone in a cold manner', etc. The two signs, mimed consecutively – "freeze you" – can mean:

"You have a cold personality."
"You are frozen."
"Are you frozen?"
"Stop moving."

"You just stopped moving, didn't you!" (in the sense of 'you jumped!')

This is a particularly interesting case: the signed phrase could also be translated "You flinched!" The speaker who says, "You jumped!" models the beginning of the motion; the deaf-mute who signs, "Freeze you" is modelling the end of the same motion. In both cases, the partial model (or synechdoche) stands for the whole action of 'flinching'.

Another meaning of "freeze you" is: "Please put some water in the ice-tray and put it in the ice-box so we can have some ice-cubes."

Distinction among meanings, in actual signing, is a matter of – what shall I call it? – muscular and gestural inflection in the arms, face, and the rest of the body.

I remember getting the note: "Come down freeze you whiskey have want, chess." I suspect this would be baffling without some knowledge of the sign language context, though the words 'mean' pretty much the same as they do in English. One informal translation of this note into written English would be: "Come downstairs and play chess with me. You bring the ice-cubes. I have some whiskey – if you want?" And an equally good translation: "Do you want to come down, bring some ice-cubes, have a drink and play chess?" And another: "Why not come on down? You make ice-cubes up there; bring them. I have some whiskey. It's all for a chess game."

But it would be a great mistake to try and 'transform' the original into any of my English translations, either by some Chomskyan method, or by filling in suspected ellipses, understood subjects, and the like:

". . . have want . . . " is a single verb phrase, for example, whose translation I could spend ages on. It has at least three modulating duals (in our language context, at any rate) so that its translation tends to be some arrangement from the matrix:

if then	you I	now will	have	then if	I you	will now	want

moving both backwards and forwards, and up or down. It is regularly interrogative. (So a written question-mark, in the deaf-and-dumb language, when you use "have want" is superfluous. The phrase "have need" works by a similar matrix and is regularly imperative. The equally frequent "want

need", however, works through an entirely different matrix.) It may have several 'direct objects', each requiring a different path through the matrix to make 'sense' in our language. A literal translation of Horace's sentence, up to the comma, might read: "If you want to come down, I will have you down; if you have frozen (made) some (ice cubes), I will want some (that you have frozen); if you want whiskey, I have some whiskey . . . " And "chess" at the sentence's end is something like a noun absolute in Latin, the subject of the whole sentence, casting back its resonances on all that has gone before.

39. In the same language in which we still say "I see . . . ", only fifty years before Russell's theory of 'definite description', in America one person could meaningfully refer to another as 'my slave . . . ' at which point the other person was constrained *by the language* to refer to the first as 'my master . . . ' – as if the bond of possession were somehow mutual and reciprocal.

Rebellion begins when the slave realizes that in no sense whatsoever is the master 'hers/his'. The slave can not sell the master, give the master away, or keep the master should the master wish to go. This realization *is* the knowledge that the situation, which includes the language, exploits the slave and furthers the exploitation.

40. Possible insight into the "Cocktail Party Effect": last evening, at Professor Fodor's lecture on the mental representation of sentences, with David Warren at the London School of Economics, I had a chance to observe the Cocktail Party Effect at work. David and I were sitting on the ground floor of the Old Theatre, near the door. Outside, a mass of students was gathering, presumably for the next event in the auditorium. The general rumble of their voices finally grew loud enough to make a dozen people around us look back towards the exit with consternation.

Professor Fodor's delivery, while audible, was certainly not loud; and he wandered over the stage, to the blackboard, to the apron, to the podium, so that only part of the time was he near enough to the microphone for his voice to carry.

The sound outside was definitely interfering with our hearing his lecture, and we all had to strain . . .

The next time I was aware of the crowd noise outside, I realized that if I kept my aural concentration fixed on Fodor's words, the crowd noise

would begin to undergo a definite pulsing (I estimated the frequency to be between two pulses per second and three pulses in two seconds) while the professor's voice stayed more or less clear through the peaks and troughs. If, however, I listened consciously to the crowd, the pulsing ceased and the Professor's words became practically unintelligible, lost in the rush of sound.

Is this how the "Cocktail Party Effect", or some aspect of it, works?

41. REGeis in *The Alien Critic,* defending himself against Joanna Russ's and Vonda McIntyre's accusations of sexism, cites a string of incorrect facts, half-facts, and facts implying a non-existent context, beginning with the statement:

"I have never made a sexist editorial decision in my life."

The form of the sentence itself implies that 'making' a 'sexist decision' or, for that matter, making an anti-sexist decision, is a case of putting energy into an otherwise neutral social contextual system.

The social context is *not* neutral. It is overwhelmingly sexist.

Studies have been done as far back as the fifties which show, in America, almost cross culturally, male infants receive an average of slightly over 100 per cent more physical contact with their parents during the first year of life than female infants! Tomes have been written on the effect of physical contact in this period on later physical strength and psychological autonomy. This alone renders the word 'naturally', in a statement like "men are naturally stronger than women", a farce! Yet, despite how many thousands of years (probably no more than six and possibly a good deal less – another point to bear in mind) of this sort of Lamarckian pressure, when a large number of skeletons from modern cadavers, whose sexes were known and coded, were then given to various doctors, anthropologists, and archeologists to sort into male and female, the results were random! There is *no* way to identify the sex of a skeleton, from distinctions in size, pelvic width, shoulder width, skull size, leg length – these are all empirically non-supported myths. Yet anthropology books are being published today with pictures captioned: "Armbone of a woman, c. eight thousand B.C." or "Jawbone of a male, c. five thousand B.C." Studies in the comparative heights of men and women have disclosed that, if you say you are doing a study in the comparative heights of men and women, and ask for volunteers, men average some two inches taller than women – whereas, if you say you are doing an intelligence test to compare university students with non-university stu-

dents, and, just incidentally, take the height of your volunteers, men average a mere three-eighths of an inch taller than women! Other, even more random samplings, which have tried to obliterate *all* sexually associated bias, seem to indicate that the *range* of height of men tends to be larger – as a man, you have a greater chance of being either very tall or very short – but that the average height is the same. (Of course women are shorter than men: just stand on any street corner and look at the couples walking by. Next time you stand on any street corner, take pairs of couples and contrast the height of the woman from couple A with the man from couple B. I did this on a London street corner for two hours a few weeks back: taken as couples, it would appear that in 94 per cent, men are taller than women. Taken by cross-couples, the figure goes down to 72 per cent. The final twenty-two per cent is more likely governed by the sad fact that, in Western society, tall women and short men both try to avoid being seen in public, especially with the opposite sex.) A male in our society receives his exaggerated social valuation with the application of the pronoun 'he' before he can even smile over it. A female receives her concomitant devaluation with the pronoun 'she' well before she can protest.

Again: the system is *not* neutral. For every situation, verbal or non-verbal, that even approaches the sexual, the easy way to describe it, the comfortable way to respond to it, the normal way to act in it, the way that will draw the least attention to yourself – if you are male – *is* the sexist way. The same goes for women, with the difference that you are not quite so comfortable. Sexism is not primarily an active hostility in men towards women. It is a set of unquestioned social habits. Men become hostile when these habits are questioned as people become hostile when anything they are comfortable doing is suddenly branded as pernicious. ("But I didn't *intend* to hurt any one; I was just doing what I always . . . ")

A good many women have decided, finally, that the pain that accrues to *them* from everyone else's acceptance of the 'acceptable' way is just not worth the reward of invisibility.

"I have never made a sexist editorial decision in my life."

There *are* no sexist decisions to be made.

There are anti-sexist decisions to be made. And they require tremendous energy and self-scrutiny, as well as moral stamina in the face of the basic embarrassment campaign which is the tactic of those assured of their politically superior position. ("Don't you think you're being rather silly offering *your* pain as evidence that something *I* do so automatically and easily is wrong? Why, I bet it doesn't hurt *half* as much as you say. Perhaps

it only hurts because you're struggling . . .?" This sort of political mystification, turning the logical arrows around inside verbal structures to render them empirically empty, and therefore useless ['It hurts *because* you don't like it' rather than 'You don't like it *because* it hurts'] is just another version of the 'my slave/my master' game.)

There *are* no sexist decisions to be made: they were all made a long time ago!

42. The mistake we make as adolescent readers is to assume a story is exciting because of its strange happenings and exotic surfaces, when, actually, a story is exciting exactly to the extent that its structure is familiar. 'Plot twists' and 'gimmicks' aside (which, like 'wise-cracks', only distract our conscious mind from the structure so that we can respond, subconsciously, to its familiarity with that ever sought-for 'gut response'), excitement in reading invariably comes from the anticipation of (and that anticipation rewarded by) the inevitable/expected.

This inevitability – without which there simply *is* no reader gut-participation – is also what holds fiction to all the political clichés of sexism, racism, and classism that mar it as an art. To write fiction without such structural inevitabilities, however (as practically every artist has discovered), is to write fiction without an audience.

Does science fiction offer any way out of this dilemma?

The hope that it might, probably accounts for a good deal of the rapprochement between science fiction and the *avant garde* that occurred during the middle and late sixties.

43. The equivocation of the genitive (children, ideas, art and excrement) and the associative (spouse, lovers, friends, colleagues, co-patrials, and country) with the possessive (contracted objects) is the first, great, logically-empty verbal-structure that exists entirely for political exploitation.

44. Meaning is a routed wave phenomenon.

I intend this in the sense one might intend the statement: "Painting is a coloured-oil-paints spread-on-canvas phenomenon." Just as there are many things beside oil paints on canvas that may fill, more or less well, the several uses we could reasonably ask of a painting – from tempera on masonite, to coloured sand spilled carefully on sun-baked ground, in one direction; or etchings, photographs, or computer reductions, in another; or patterns observed on a rock, a natural setting, or a found object, in still another –

there may be other things that can fill, more or less well, the several tasks we might reasonably ask 'meaning' to perform. But my statement still stands as a parametric model of what I think *meaning* to *be*. The extent that any of my remarks contravene this model is the extent to which they should be taken as metaphoric.

45. Language in general, poetry in particular, and mathematics, are all tools to fix meaning (in their different ways) by establishing central parameters, not circumscribing perimeters. Accuracy in all of them is achieved by cross-description, not absolute statement.

Even 2+3=5 is better considered as a mathematical stanza than a single mathematical sentence. It models a set of several interlocked sentences; and the context interlocking them is what 'contains' the meaning we might model by saying "2+3=5 is right, whereas 2+3=4 is wrong by lack of 1."

46. A *language-function* can be described as consisting of (one) a generative field (capable of generating a set of signals), (two) the signals so generated, and (three) an interpretive field (a field capable of responding to those signals) into which the signals fall.

Examples of language-functions: mathematics, art, expressive gesture, myth.

One of the most important language-functions is, of course, speech.

In most multiple speaker/hearer situations, there are usually multiple language-functions occurring: A talking to B . . . B talking to A . . . C listening to what A and B say, etc. (In Art, on the other hand, there is usually one only: artist to audience. The language-function that goes from audience to artist is, of course, criticism.)

The language itself is the way, within a single, given speaker/hearer, an interpretive field is connected to a generative field.

47. The trouble with most cybernetic models of language (those models that start off with 'sound waves hitting the ear') is that they try to express language only in terms of an interpretive field. To the extent that they posit a generative field at all, they simply see it as an inverse of the interpretive field.

In ordinary, human speech, the interface of the interpretive field with the world is the ear – an incredibly sensitive microphone that, in its flexibility and versatility, still has not been matched by technology.

The interface of the generative field with the world is two wet sacks of air and several guiding strips of muscle, laid out in various ways along the air track, and a variable-shaped resonance box with a variable opening: the lungs/throat/mouth complex. This complex can produce a great many sounds, and in extremely rapid succession. But it can produce nothing like the range of sounds the ear can detect.

Language, whatever it is, in circuitry terms has to lie between these two interfaces, the ear and the mouth.

Most cybernetic models, to the extent that they approach the problem at all, see language as a circuit to get us from a sensitive microphone to an equally sensitive loudspeaker. A sensitive loudspeaker just isn't in the picture. And I suspect if it were, language as we know it would not exist, or at least be very different.

Try and envision circuitry for the following language tasks:

We have a sensitive microphone at one end of a box. At the other, we have a *mechanically* operable squeeze-box/vocal-chord/palate/tongue/teeth/lip arrangement. We want to fill up the box with circuitry that will accomplish the following: among a welter of sounds – bird songs, air in leaves, footsteps, traffic noise – one is a simple, oral, human utterance. The circuitry must be able to pick out the human utterance, store it, analyze it (in terms of breath duration, breath intensity, and the various stops that have been imposed on a stream of air by vocal chords, tongue, palate, teeth, lips) and then, after a given time, reproduce this utterance through its own squeeze-box mechanism.

This circuitry task is both much simpler and much more complicated than getting a sound out of a loudspeaker. Once we have such a circuit, however, well before we get to any 'logic', 'syntax', or 'semantic' circuits, we are more than halfway to having a language circuit.

Consider:

We now want to modify this circuit so that it will perform the following task as well:

Presented with a human utterance, part of which is blurred – either by other sounds or because the utterer said it unclearly – our circuit must now be able to give back the utterance correctly, using phonic over-determinism to make the correction: Letting *X* stand for the blurred phone, if the utterance is

"The pillow lay at the foot of the *X*ed"

or

"She stood at the head of the *X*airs"

our circuitry should be able to reproduce the most likely phoneme in place of the blur, *X*.

I think most of us will agree, if we *had* the first circuit, getting to the second circuit would be basically a matter of adding a much greater storage capacity, connected up in a fairly simple (i.e., regular) manner with the circuit as it already existed.

Let us modify our circuit still more:

We present an utterance with a blurred phoneme that can resolve in two (or more ways):

"Listen to the *X*erds." (Though I am not writing this out in phonetic notation, nevertheless, it is assumed that the phonic component of the utterance is what is being dealt with.)

Now in this situation, our very sensitive microphone is still receiving other sounds as well. The circuitry should be such that, if it is receiving at the same time as the utterance, or has received fairly recently, some sound such as cheeping or twittering on the one hand (or, on the other, the sounds of clicking pencils, and rattling paper) it will resolve the blurred statement into "listen to the birds" (or, respectively, "listen to the words" – and if the accompanying sound is a dank, gentle plashing . . .) Again, this is still just a matter of more storage space to allow wider recognition/association patterns.

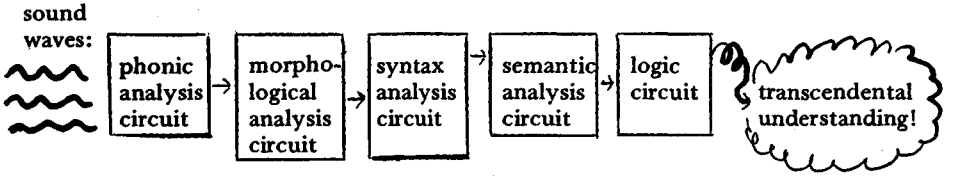
The next circuitry recomplication we want is to have our circuit such that, when presented with a human utterance, ambiguous or not, it can come back with a recognizable paraphrase. To do this, we might well have to have not only a sensitive microphone, but a sensitive camera and a sensitive microlofact and microtact as well, as well as ways of sorting, storing, and associating the material they collect. Basically, however, it is still, as far as the specific language circuitry is concerned, a matter of greater storage capacity, needed to allow greater associational range.

I think that most people would agree, at this point, that if we had a circuit that could do all these tasks, even within a fairly limited vocabulary, though we might not have a circuit that could be said to *know* the language, we would certainly have one that could be said to know a lot *about* it.

One reason to favour the above as a model of language is that, given the initial circuit, the more complicated versions could, conceivably, evolve by ordinary, natural-selection and mutation processes. Each new step is

still basically just a matter of adding lots of very similar or identical components, connected up in very similar ways. Consider also: complex as it is, that initial circuitry must exist, in some form or another, in every animal that recognizes and utters a mating call (or warning) to or from its own species, among the welter, confusion, and variety of wild, forest sounds.

The usual cybernetic model for language interpretation:



where each box must be a different kind of circuit, the first four probably different for each language (and, arguably, all six) strikes me as a pretty hard thing to 'grow' by ordinary evolutionary means, or to program on a *tabula rasa* neural net.

The circuitry I suggest would all be a matter of phonic recognition, phonic storage, and phonic association (short of employment of the other sensory information). A great *deal* of recognition/storage/association would have to be done by the circuitry to achieve language. But nothing *else* would have to be done, other than what was covered in our original utterance-reproduction circuit.

Not only would the linguistic bugaboo 'semantics' disappear (as experiments indicate that it may have already) but so would morphology; and syntax and phonic analysis would simply absorb one another, so to speak.

Would this really be so confusing?

I think not. It is only a rather limited view of grammar that initially causes it to appear so.

Think of grammar solely as the phonic redundancies that serve to get a heard utterance from the interpretive field, through the range of associations in the hearer/speaker's memory that includes 'his language', into the hearer/speaker's generative field as an utterance.

In the *qui, quae, quo* of Latin, for instance, I'm sure the Roman brain (if not the Roman grammarian) considered the redundancy of the initial 'qu' sound as grammatically significant (in my sense of 'grammar') as it considered, say, the phonic redundancy between the 'ae' at the end of 'quae' and the 'ae' as the end of 'puellae'. (We must get rid of the notion of grammar as something that applies only to the ends of words!) In English, the initial sound of *the, this, that, these, those, there* are all

grammatically redundant in a similar way. (The 'th' sound indicates, as it were, 'indication'; the initial 'qu' sound, in Latin, indicates 'relation', just as the terminal 'ae' sound indicates, in that language, 'more than one female'.) What one can finally say of this 'grammar' is: when a phonic redundancy *does* relate to the way that a sound is employed in conjunction with other sounds/meanings, then that phonic element of the grammar is regular. When a phonic redundancy does *not* so relate, that element is irregular. (The terminal 's' sound on 'these' and 'those' is redundant with the terminal 's' of *loaves, horses, sleighs* – it indicates plurality, and is therefore *regular* with those words. The terminal 's' on 'this' is *irregular* with them. The terminal 's' at the end of 'is', 'wants', 'has', and 'loves' all imply singularity. Should the terminal 's' on 'this' be considered regular with these others? I suspect in many people's version of English it is.) For all we know, in the ordinary English hearer/speaker's brain, 'cream', 'loam', 'foam', and 'spume' are all associated, by that final 'm' sound, with the concept of "matter difficult to individuate" – in other words, the 'm' is a grammatically regular structure of *that particular word group.* Such associations with this particular terminal 'm' may explain why most people seldom use 'ham' in the plural – though nothing empirically or traditionally grammatical prevents it. They may also explain why 'cream', when pluralised, in most people's minds immediately assumes a different viscosity (i.e., referentially, becomes a different word; what the dictionary indicates by a 'second meaning'). I suspect that, in a very real sense, the poets are most in touch with the true 'deep grammar' of the language. Etymology explains some of the sound-redundancy/meaning-associations that are historical. Others that are accidental, however, may be no less meaningful.

All speech begins as a response to other speech. (As a child you eventually speak through being spoken to.) Eventually this recomplicates into a response to speech-and-other stimulae. Eventually, when both speech and other stimulae are stored in memory and reassociated there, this recomplication becomes so complex that it is far more useful to consider certain utterances autonomous – the first utterance in the morning concerning a dream in the night, for example. But even this can be seen as a response to speech-and-other-than speech in which the threads of cause, effect, and delay, have simply become too intertwined and tangled to follow.

48. Quine inveighs against propositions, as part of logic, on the justifiable grounds that they cannot be individuated. But since propositions, if they are anything, are particular meanings of sentences, the impossibility of in-

dividuating them is only part of a larger problem: the impossibility of individuating meanings in general. What the logician who says (as Quine does at the beginning of at least two books) "To deny the Taj Majal is white is to affirm that it is not white" (in the sense of 'non-white') is really saying, is:

"Even if meanings can not be individuated, let us, for the duration of the argument, treat them as if they can be. Let us assume that there is some volume of meaning-space that can be called white *and* be bounded. Therefore, every point in meaning-space, indeed, every volume in meaning-space, can be said to either lie inside this boundary, and be called 'white', or outside this boundary, and be called 'non-white', or, for the volumes that lie partially inside and partially outside, we can say that some aspect of them is white."

The problem is that, similar to the colour itself, the part of meaning-space that can be called 'white' fades, on one side and another, into every other possible colour. And somehow, packed into this same meaning-space, but at positions distinctly outside this boundary around white, or any other colour for that matter, we must also pack "freedom", "death", "grief", "the four colour map problem", "the current King of France", "Pegasus", "Hitler's daughter", "the entire Second World War and all its causes", as well as "the author of Waverley" – all in the sense, naturally, of 'non-white'.

Starting with just the colours: in what sort of space could you pack all possible colours so that each one was adjacent to every other one, which would allow the proper fading (*and* bounding!) to occur? It's not as hard as it looks. Besides the ordinary three co-ordinates for volume, if you had two more ordinates, both for colour, I suspect it could be rather easily accomplished. You might even do it with only two spatial and two colour axes. Four co-ordinates, at any rate, is certainly the minimum number you need. Conceivably, getting the entire Second World War and all its causes in *might* require a few more.

49. One of the great difficulties of formal grammars is that they are *all* grammars of *written* language, including the attempts at 'transformational' grammars (*Syntactic Structures:* ". . . we will not consider, for our purposes, vocal inflections . . . "). For insight into how verbal signals will produce information once they fall into an interpretive field, it is a good idea to return to the mechanics of those signals' generation.

Speech signals, or sentences, are formed from two, simultaneous infor-

mation (or signal) streams: the speech is an interface of these two streams.

The voiced breath-line is a perfectly coherent information stream, all by itself. It varies in pitch and volume and shrillness. It is perfectly possible (as I have done and watched done in some encounter groups) for two or more people to have an astonishingly satisfying conversation, consisting of perfectly recognizable questions, answers, assurances, hesitations, pooh-poohings, affirmations, scepticisms, and insistences – a whole range of emotional information, as well as the range Quine refers to as 'propositional attitudes' – purely with an unstopped, voiced breath. (Consider the information communicated by the sudden de-voicing of all the phonemes in an utterance, i.e., whispering.)

The various stops and momentary devoicings imposed by the tongue, teeth, lips, and vocal chords on top of this breath line is another coherent information string that, interfaced with the breath-line information, produces 'speech'. But this second string is the only part that is ever written down. This is the only part that any 'grammar' we have had till now deals with. But it is arguable that this information-string, when taken without the breath-line, is as vastly impoverished as the breath-line eventually seems, after ten or fifteen minutes, when taken by itself.

The way written speech gets by is by positing a 'standard breath-line', the most common breath line employed with a given set of vowels and stops. (The only breath-line indicators we have are the six ordinary marks of punctuation, plus quotation marks [which mean, literally, pay closer attention to the breath-line for this stretch of words], plus dashes, ellipses, and italic type. What makes writing in general, and poetry in particular, an art is the implying of non-standard breath-lines by the strong association of vocal sounds – *pace* Charles Olson.) But since the vast majority of writing uses only this standard breath-line (and *all* writing uses an artificial one), producing a grammar of a spoken language from written examples is rather like trying to produce a formal grammar of, say, Latin when the only available texts have had all the ablative endings, dative endings, accusative plural endings, and second person singular verb endings in future, imperfect, and preterite tippexed out; and you have agreed, for your purposes, not to consider them anyway.

What is fascinating about language is not that it criticises, as well as contributes to, the growth of the empirical world, but that it can criticise its relation to that world, treating itself, for the duration, empirically. The same self-reflective property is what writers use to make beautiful, resonant, verbal objects, however referential or abstract. But by the same argument, it is

the writers' responsibility to utilise this reflective property to show, again and again, that easy language, whether it is the short, punchy banality or the rolling jargonistic period, lies.

The lie is not a property of easy words. It is a property of how the words are used, the context that generates, and the context that interprets.

50. I have the artist's traditional distrust of separating facts too far from the landscape that generated them. (And I have the science fiction writer's delight over inserting new facts into unfamiliar landscapes. "Do I contradict myself? Very well . . . ")

Language, Myth, Science Fiction:

First contacts:

I did not have a happy childhood.

Nobody does.

I did, however, have a privileged one.

I discovered myths with a set of beautifully produced and illustrated books called *My Book House,* edited by Olive Burpre Miller and illustrated, for the most part, by Donald P. Crane. An older cousin of mine had owned them as a child. My aunt passed them on to me when her daughter went off to Vassar. The volumes bound in grey and mottled green dealt with history, starting with cave-men and working, lushly illustrated volume after lushly illustrated volume, through the Renaissance. Those bound in maroon and gold recounted, for children, great works of literature, fairy tales, and myths – Greek, Egyptian, Norse . . .

At five, I left kindergarten (the building, maroon as the red *Book House* volumes under a spray of city grime, is today part of Columbia University) for a private, progressive and extremely eccentric elementary school. I have one memory of my first day there, fragmented and incomplete:

Along one side of our room were tall, wide windows covered with wire grills. A window seat ran the length of the wall; the seat back went up and joined the window sill – a squared grate, brown and painted, chipped, here and there, to the metal, through which you could see, checked with light, the dusty, iron radiators, and hear brass valves jiggle and hiss.

On that first morning, our teacher had to leave the shy dozen of us alone for some few minutes.

What occurs now, exactly, I'm not sure. But the memory clears when she comes rushing back, stops short and, fists clutching her blue smock (below which I can see the hem of her navy jumper), shrieks: "Stop it!

Oh, my God! *Stop* it!"

One blonde boy stood on the radiator grate, gripping the window grill, flattened against it, staring back at us, mouth wide and drooling, eyes closed and streaming.

We crowded the window seat, jeering and railing up at him: "Jump! Go ahead, just jump!" I was holding the shoulder of the person in front of me, pressed forward by the person behind. "Jump!" I shouted, looked back at the teacher and laughed (you've seen how much fun five year olds have when they laugh), then shouted again: "Jump out! Jump out!" and could hear neither my own shouts nor my own laughter for the laughter and shouting of the other ten.

We were eight storeys up.

The teacher yanked us, still jeering, one after another, away, lifted down the hysterical boy, and comforted him. His name was Robert. He was stocky, nervous, shrill. He had some slight motor difficulty. (I can still remember him, sitting at a green nursery table, holding his pencil in both hands to draw his letters, while the rest of us, who could, of course, hold *our* pencils in one, exchanged looks, glanced at him, glanced away, and giggled.) He was a stammerer, an appalling nail biter, very bright; and, by Christmas vacation, my best friend.

With occasional lapses, sometimes a few months long, Robert remained my best friend till we left for other schools after the eighth grade. Some of those lapses, however, I engineered quite blatantly – when I was tired of having the class odd-ball as constant companion. I would steal things from him, pencils, protractors, small toys – I remember pilfering a Donald Duck ring he had sent away for from a breakfast cereal box-top offer. With a small magnet (decalled to look like a tiny corn-flakes box), you could make the yellow plastic beak open and close, the blue plastic eye roll up and down. My parents caught me on that one, made me promise to return it, and tell him I'd stolen it. I did, quite convinced it would be the end of our friendship – apprehensive, but a bit relieved.

Robert took the ring back and stammered that it was all right if *I* had stolen it, because, after all (his expression was that of someone totally betrayed) I was his friend. That was when I realized he had no others.

During my attendance at Dalton, I lived one street from what, in the 1953 City Census, was declared the most populous tenement block in New York: it housed over eighteen thousand people, in buildings all under six storeys. A block away, my sister and I had three floors and sixteen rooms, over my father's Harlem funeral parlour, in which to lose ourselves from

our parents and the maid. But the buildings on both sides of us were a cluster of tiny, two and three room apartments, housing five, seven, sometimes over ten people each. The friends I played with in the afternoon in front of the iron gates of Mr. Lockely's *Hardware and Houseware Store* on our left, or the sagging green vegetable boxes in front of the red-framed plate-glass window of Mr. Onley's *Groceries* to our right, were the son of a widowed hospital orderly on welfare, the daughter and two sons of a frequently laid-off maintenance man who worked in the New York subway system, the two sons of a New York taxi driver, the niece of the woman who ran the funeral parlour at the corner of the same block.

And in the morning, my father – or, occasionally, one of his employees – would drive me, in my father's very large, very black Cadillac, down to the ten storey, red and white brick building at Eighty Ninth street and Park Avenue: I would line up with all the other children in the grey-tiled lobby, waiting to march around, next to the wall, and show my tongue to the school nurse, Miss Hedges, who, for the first years, in her white uniform with a grey sweater around her shoulders, would actually make an attempt to peer into each five-to-twelve year old mouth, but, as I grew older, simply stood, at last, in the corner by the gooseneck lamp as we filed by (perhaps one in five of us actually even bothered to look up) staring at a vague spot on the far wall, somewhere between the twenties-style, Uplifting Mural, showing Mothers Working in the Fields and the display cabinets where student sculpture was exhibited by our various art teachers. In class, where ten students was considered the ideal number (should our number somehow reach fourteen, Something Was Done to Relieve the Impossible Teaching Load), my friends were the son of the vice president of CBS Television, the daughter of a large New York publisher, the son of a small New York publisher, the grandson of the governor of the state, the son of the drama critic for *Time* magazine, the daughter of a psychiatrist and philanthropist, the son of a Pulitzer Prize winning dramatist.

Black Harlem speech and white Park Avenue speech are very different things. I became aware of language as an intriguing and infinitely malleable modelling tool very early.

I always felt myself to be living in several worlds with rather tenuous connections between them, but I never remember it causing me much anxiety. (Of the, perhaps, ten blacks among the three hundred odd students in Dalton's elementary school, five were my relatives.) Rather, it gave me a sense of modest (and sometimes not so modest) superiority.

A few years later, I was given still another world to play in. I spent summer at a new summer camp. I tell only one incident here from that pleasantest of summers in my life: one hot afternoon, I wandered into a neighbouring tent where the older boys slept. On the foot of the nearest iron-frame bed lay a large, ragged-edged magazine, with a shiny cover, gone matte with handling – I think its muddy, out-of-register colours showed a man and a woman on a hill, gazing in terrified astonishment at a round, metal *thing* swooping through the air. From the lettering on the cover, the lead story in this issue was something called – I picked it up and turned to the first page – *The Man Who Sold the Moon.* My first reaction was: "what an odd combination of words! What do they mean . . . ?" While I was puzzling through the opening sentences, one of the bunk-seven twelve-year-olds came in and shooed me out. Back in my own tent, I returned to the book I was reading, Lincoln Barnet's *The Universe and Dr. Einstein.* And our twenty-three year old counsellor, Roy, was reading something called *One, Two, Three . . . Infinity* that I had said looked interesting and he had said I could read when he was finished.

Months later, back on Eighty Ninth street, after consultation with Robert (and several practice tries from five, six, and then seven steps), I decided to leap down the entire flight between the sixth and seventh floor. At the head of the stairwell – the steps were a dark green that continued up the wall to shoulder level; there, light green took over and went on across the ceiling – sighting on the flaking, gold decalcomania on the far wall ("SIX", half on dark green, half on light), I got ready, grinned at Robert, below, who was leaning against the door and looking nervous, swung my arms back, threw them forward, jumped – my foot slipped! I flailed out, suspended a moment, silent, in dead air, trajectory off!

The bottom newel post caught me in the belly, and I passed out – no more than a couple of seconds.

Robert had yanked open the door and was running for a teacher before I hit.

I should have ruptured myself. Apparently all I did, though, was knock all my air out and, temporarily and very slightly, atort my left spermatic. Because I'd gone unconscious, however, and people were wondering whether I'd hit my head, I spent the night in observation at the hospital.

In the patients' lounge were several of those large-sized, pulp magazines that I recognized as the type I'd seen (but never read) last summer at camp. I selected the one with the most interesting cover – girl, bikini, bubble-

helmet, monster – and took it back to my bed and read my first two science fiction stories.

One climaxed with a tremendous spaceship battle, the dénouement of which was someone figuring out that the death ray the enemy used was actually nothing more than light, slowed way down, so that its energy potential went way up. I don't remember one character, or one situation beside the battle; I doubt if I would want to. But the idea, connected forever in my memory with a marvellous (I'm sure it's Virgil Finlay, though I've never run across the magazine again) illustration of bubble-helmeted spacemen entering a chamber of looming, vampire monsters, remains.

The other story I read that night leaves me with this recollection: Some Incredibly Ancient Aliens (in the lead illustration, they are all veined heads and bulging eyes) are explaining to someone (the hero? the villain?) that the brain is never used to full capacity by humans, but *they*, you see, have been using *theirs,* which are much larger than humans' anyway, to full capacity now for centuries. And they are *very* tired.

And at school, a couple of weeks later, Robert mentioned to me that he had just read a wonderful book that I must take a look at: *Rocketship Galileo.* He had read it twice already. It was, he explained, probably one of the best books in the world. He even volunteered to get it out of the school library for me that afternoon (I had several books overdue and couldn't take out any myself till they were returned), which he did . . .

Too much enthusiasm among my friends for something has often been a turn-off for me – often to my detriment. I *still* have not read Heinlein's *Rocketship Galileo,* though Robert, after I finally returned the book to the library, un-read, actually bought a copy and gave it to me.

That year's history study was divided into one term of ancient Greek history and one term of Roman. The climax of the Greek term was a day-long Greek Festival which our class put on for the rest of the school. The morning of Festival Day, the whole school, in the auditorium, watched a play competition, where several short, original plays "on Greek themes" were performed, one of which was voted best by a board of teachers.

For that year's Festival, I had written one of the plays (a comedy in which I took the part of Pericles – I believe he was having labour problems with the slaves over the construction of the Parthenon). It took second to a play by a girl who had muscular dystrophy, a speech impediment, and who used to cry all the time for no reason. Backstage in my toga, furiously jealous, I vigorously applauded the announcement of her triumph, among

the rest of the clapping actors from the various play-companies, while she limped out on stage to receive her wreath of bay-leaves. Congratulating her, and the happy members of the cast of her play, I decided the Greek Festival was a waste.

I can only remember one dialogue exchange from my play. I hated it; another cast member had written it and insisted on inserting it, and I had finally acquiesced to keep peace. (Socrates: "How is the Parthenon coming along, Pericles?" Pericles (through gritted teeth): "It's all up but the columns.") But I still have the opening of the prize-winning play by heart, with only that one morning's viewing:

The curtains had opened and a chorus of Greek women in blue veils walked across the stage, growing light with dawn, reciting:

"Persia's ships to Attica came.
Many a thousand they were.
And like winged birds, the tribes of Greece
flocked."

The women turned, walked back again – reciting what, I no longer recall. But I still remember that 'flocked' as one of the most exciting words I had ever experienced. Terminating the sentence with its clutch of harsh consonances, while all the other sounds fluttered behind it in memory, spoken by six ten-year old girls at ordinary volume, it had – to me – the force of a shout.

Martha, who wore leg braces and walked funny and couldn't talk properly and had rightfully won her prize over my glib, forgettable wise-cracks, had shown me for the first time that a single word, placed, properly in a sentence, could give an effect at once inevitable, astonishing, and beautiful.

After a very un-Greek lunch in the school dining room, every one went up to the tenth floor gymnasium, where we held a junior Olympics. The boys had wrestling matches, discus throwing, high jumping, and broad jumping. The girls ran hurdle races, chariot races, and did jumping too. Then there was a final relay where boys and girls, in hiked-up togas, ran, their papier mâché torches streaming crêpe-paper fire, around and around the gym.

It was that dull.

In English that term we had read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* as well as a good handful of traditional myths – most of which I was familiar with from *My Book House.* We even tackled one or two Greek plays in translation; and over one English period, Mrs. T, my favourite English teacher from my whole elementary school days, explained to us the etymology

of "calligraphy", "geology", "optical", "palindrome", "obscene", and "poet".

In Math, to coordinate with our Greek unit, we devoted one day a week to Geometry. Using "only the tools Pythagoras accepted", (i.e., a compass and a straight edge), we went about discovering simple geometric relationships about the circle and various inscribed angles. We constructed a demonstration to show that the area of a circle, as the limit of the sum of its sectors cut ever smaller and placed alternately, approaches a parallelogram with a base of πr, and a height of r, to wit, an area of πr^2. And Robert gave me another book, which I did read this time, called *The Black Star Passes*, by John W. Campbell. Again, I remember neither plot nor characters. But I do recall that someone in it had invented a Very Powerful Mathematical Tool called "the multiple calculus", about which author Campbell went on with ebullient enthusiasm. We had already been taught, on the other four days of the week, the basic manipulative algebraic skills, adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing polynomials. At home, I stumbled through the Encyclopaedia Brittanica article on Infinitesimal Calculus (which went on about somebody named Newton as enthusiastically as Campbell had gone on about his mathematician); days later I went down to the High School Library on the school's third floor, got out a book; got out another; and then three more. Then I bought a Baron's Review of trigonometry. And then I got some more books.

But the school term was over again.

At summer camp that year I was assigned to a tent at the bottom of the tent colony. My iron-frame bed, which I made up that first afternoon, with sheets so starched they had to be peeled apart (and the inevitable olive drab army blanket), was next to the bed of a boy named Eugene Gold. I didn't like him. I don't think anybody else in the tent did either. But he made friendly attempts at conversation – mostly about his father, who, you see, edited *Galaxy*. "Don't you know what *Galaxy* is? It's the science fiction magazine! Don't you like science fiction? Well, then, what does *your* father do?"

"He's an undertaker," I said, having learned some time ago that if I said it with a steely enough voice (picked up from Channel Five re-runs of Bela Lugosi films), it would shut just about anybody up, at least for a while.

Sometime in the next hour or so, Gene had a twenty-minute, hysterical crying jag and decided he wanted to go home – I don't recall about what.

I do remember thinking: This is ridiculous, I'll never be able to put up with *this* next to me all summer!

I asked the counsellor if I could be assigned a bed next to someone — *any*one — else. The counsellor said no.

Disappointed, I went back to my bed and was sitting on it, arranging my jeans, swimming trunks, and underwear in the wooden shelf wedged back under the sloping canvas roof, when another boy shouted: "Look *out*!"

I dived forward onto the next bed, and rolled over to see Gene's eight-inch hunting knife, plunged through my army blanket, the two sheets, the thin mattress, and heard it grate the springs. Gene, clutching the handle, stopped shaking with hysterical rage, pulled the knife free, and looked about the seven other boys in the tent, who all stared back. My blanket settled, with just the slightest wrinkle, and an inch-and-a-half slit, slightly off centre.

Gene, frankly, looked as astonished as the rest of us.

Just then the counsellor (that year his name was Marty) backed up the tent steps, dragging his own trunk, and asked one of the boys to help him put it under his bed. Somebody went back to packing his shelf. Somebody else sat down on his own bed, creaking springs. Gene blinked a few times, then put the knife in his top shelf, between his soap dish and his mess kit.

I left the tent, took a walk round the tent colony, watching, through the rolled-back tent flaps, the other campers unpack. Finally, I went into the creosoted bathroom shack, had diarrhoea for fifteen minutes, at the end of which, with a red ball-point pen, I wrote something stupid and obscene on the wall beside something equally stupid and equally obscene.

In the same way I have no memory of what directly preceded our class harassment of Robert, I have no real memory of what precisely occurred just before Gene's outburst. What had we done to him? Did I assist in it? Or do nothing to prevent it? Or did I instigate it? Conveniently, I have forgotten.

Sitting in the pine-planked stall, looking at the cracked cement flooring, I do remember thinking: if I was going to have to sleep next to this nut, I'd better make friends with him. Then I went back to my tent where Marty was asking for the choice of stories we wanted him to read us after lights-out. The vote was unanimous for Jack London.

Over the next week, occasionally I looked at the little tear in my blanket: but once the initial fear had gone, with the odd callousness of child-

hood, I set about making friends with Gene; there was nothing else to do.

Tuesday morning, after breakfast, Gene received in the mail, from his father, cover proofs for the two forth-coming issues of *Galaxy* (containing the last instalment of *Caves of Steel,* and the first of *Gladiators at Law*), both covers by Emsh – Gene's favourite sf illustrator. Perhaps a week after that, he received an advance copy of the first issue of the fantasy magazine *Beyond.* I borrowed it from him one afternoon and read Theodore Cogswell's *The Wall Around the World,* which, I decided, was the best story I had ever read.

Our tent counsellor, Marty, was a graduate physics student at City College, and a science fiction reader himself.

I asked Gene if I could lend Marty the magazine; after much debate, Gene said yes. Marty read the story, said he liked it, but that it made its point by over-simplifying things.

As we walked down the path between the girls' bunks and an old barn building, called for some reason (there were several apocryphal stories explaining why) Brooklyn College, I asked: "Why do you say it's over simplified?" Porgy's adventures on a world where magic controls one half and science the other had seemed quite the most significant construct I had encountered since the slow light of the multiple calculus.

"Well," Marty explained, as a herd of boys and girls swarmed from the ping-pong tables, out the wide doors of Brooklyn College, to troop along the road as the dinner bell, down by the dining room, donged and danged, "if you define magic as all that is not science, and science as all that is not magic – well, for one thing, you come up with a situation where, *if* science exists, magic must too. And we know it doesn't. It's much more useful to consider science a refinement of magic – that's what it is historically. As it gets refined, there're just fewer and fewer contradictions: it just gets more and more effective."

And that evening, after we were all in bed, Marty, sitting back on his own bed, with a flashlight propped against his shoulder, would read us *To Build a Fire,* or *South of the Slot,* or *The Shadow and the Flash.*

My best friend that year at summer camp was Karen, who, though she was odd, seemed more efficient at it than Gene. She never tried to kill me; and no one ever tried to kill her.

She used to fill endless terrariums with snakes she caught in the woods. Once, when we were working together putting up screens in the camp Nature House, I interrupted her explanation of how to tell which mush-

rooms were and which were not Deadly Amanita, to ask her if she liked science fiction. She said no, because there weren't any girls in it – "Or, when there are, they never *do* anything" – which, for all the bikinis-and-bubble-helmets, I had to admit was about true.

And Gene was unhappy at camp and went home after the first month anyway.

Back at school, Greek and Roman history were replaced by a term of mediaeval European history, and then a term of combined Chinese and Indian history. Our history teacher that year, a Mrs. Evelyn Mackerjee, a plump, New England woman of diminutive but impressive bearing (she was one of the handful of teachers we did *not* call by their first name), had spent many years in India and had been the wife of the late, Indian scholar Dan Ghopal Mackerjee, who (so went the story we told each other in hushed tones) had committeed suicide some years ago when he had discovered himself victim of a fatal, lingering cancer, and whose English translations of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabarata* were, that term, our literature texts.

In class discussions, cross-legged on the vinyl floor (while, under the window seat, the radiators hissed and, occasionally, clunked), I would watch Mrs. Mackerjee, with her white hair, her grey tweeds, and her blocky heeled shoes, lean forward in her chair and explain to the circle of us: "Now, recall the *Iliad* from last year. Do you see how, in the *Mahabarata,* the relationship of gods to men envisioned by Valmiki under his anthill is—" and here, hands on her knees, her elbows would bend – "*very* different from the relation held by the blind Greek, Homer . . . "

That Spring, the Old Vic production of Giradoux's *Tiger at the Gates* came to New York, with Michael Redgrave. The aunt of a school friend took us to the first Wednesday Matinee during our Spring vacation. From the second row, I watched while a story whose plot I knew (just as I had been told that the audiences for the original Greek drama all knew the plots beforehand too) was used to say something that struck me, at the time, as completely new. The fascinating thing to me was that the inevitability of the story was part of what was being constantly discussed on stage.

In the same week, I heard a radio production of Giradoux's *The Apollo of Bellac,* and found it enthralling. One of our assistant teachers recommended I read some of Anouilh's charming dramatic representations of Greek myths; Sartre's more weighty, if less elegant, retelling of the

Orestia, The Flies, came about here; and then O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Elektra* and *The Great God Brown.*

During the term of Chinese and Indian history, we were also given a French class; our regular Natural Science teacher was taking a year off to devote himself to sculpture, and no replacement could be found. His works were on exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, where my parents took me once to see them. Our art teacher (whose works were occasionally to be seen at the Whitney) used to say of his, while swinging her long arms back and forth against her grey apron: "Well, I don't think they're very good – too formal, too congested. But it has *some*thing . . . "

Madame Geritsky, shorter than most of her pupils, made us memorize pages of French prose, which we had to recite alone and in unison, our u's, r's, and l's constantly corrected, with a yellow pointer, wielded in chalk-whitened fingers.

I was never a good language student: but I was a bold one. Years later, when I actually spent time in other countries, I found that, armed with the all important sentence well memorised, "How do you say *that* in Greek/Italian/Turkish . . . " I could pick up in weeks, or even days, at least temporarily, what took others months to acquire.

We reconstruct from memory a childhood that, as adults, we can bear. I think of mine as one in which I liked many people and was liked in return. If I *was* as happy as I remember, one reason is that I went to a school where athletic prowess and popularity were not necessarily synonymous. Among the three classes of ten to thirteen that formed our grade, there were only three boys I recall as particularly good at sports. And two of these used to vie for position as Class Bully. Everyone cordially despised them.

In gym, three mornings and three afternoons a week, we indulged in an amazingly sadistic game called 'bombardment': two teams hurled soccer balls at one another, taking prisoner anyone hit. Our gym teacher, named (I kid you not) Muscles, had several times pulled Arthur out for purposely hitting another player so hard with the ball, he brought the boy to tears.

During one of my early lapses with Robert (was I seven? eight?), Arthur tried to pick a fight with me on the school roof. He was a head taller than everybody else in the class, possibly slightly older. As he was shoving me back into the wire fence at the roof's edge, I said to myself: "This is silly!" So I announced to him that, indeed, it *was* silly of him to push me around: I was his friend. So he should stop. After the third time I said it, he looked perplexed and said, "Oh." I straightened my clothes and suggested we play

together. For the next two weeks I went regularly to his house in the afternoons, invited him, regularly, to mine, and spent inordinate amounts of time helping him with his arithmetic homework.

Finally, I got bored.

He was not bright; he was lonely; he was belligerent. Friendship with Robert did not cut me off from friendship with anyone else: Robert was just strange. Friendship with Arthur did: Arthur was actively anti-social. Because he was ill-practised in keeping friendships going, it was extremely easy to manoeuvre my way out of it, by being otherwise occupied here, too busy there, all the while counting on the fact he valued me too much to protest. In another week, without any particular scenes, we were no longer even speaking.

Anywhere outside the gymnasium, Arthur was subjected to a needling harassment that certainly fed his belligerence and, in its way, was much more vicious than that first day's attack on Robert. Robert's attack lasted minutes. Arthur's, practically without let-up, went on for years:

Arthur had committed some particularly annoying offence. A bunch of us got together and decided we must teach him a lesson. We agreed that, for the rest of the week, no one in the class would speak to him, or acknowledge he was there in any way. After a couple of hours, he hit a few people. They scooted out of the way, giggling. An hour after that, he was sitting on the hallway floor by the green book-box, leaning against it, sobbing. The teachers finally realized what we were doing and demanded we stop. So we did — while any teachers were around.

On the last day of this treatment (and there were others, dreamed up for him practically every month), Arthur managed to confront a bunch of us in the narrow, fenced-in enclosure in front of the school. He yelled at us angrily, then began to cry. We watched, mild embarrassment masked with mild approval, when, in the middle of his crying, Arthur suddenly pointed to me and exclaimed: "But *you're* my friend! You're my *friend*!"

Had it not been the last day, I would have stayed with my group. As it was, I spoke to him, left my friends, and went with him to the corner where he caught his bus home. I may even have explained to him why we'd done it. But I doubt, at this point, if he either understood or cared.

I think, however, this was where I began to realize that such cerebral punishments teach the offender nothing of the nature of annoyance, injury, or suffering he has inflicted: they teach only the strength of the group, and the group's cruelty — the group's oblivion to the annoyance, injury, and

suffering it can inflict – the same, basic failing as the offender's.

I didn't consider Arthur my friend. After walking him to the corner, I made no other efforts to be friendly. As other harassments came up, I was just as likely to be party – except that I now stayed more in the background to avoid being called to witness. But in gym class, Arthur no longer hurled at me his bombardment ball.

At six and seven, Arthur was a bully. By eleven or twelve, he was class clown; last in his school work, still incredibly aggressive in sports, now, whenever there was any tension between him and any teacher or classmate, he would drop his books all over the floor, belch loudly, or give a shrill, pointless giggle. We, at any rate, laughed – and despised him nonetheless. Our harassments had been effective: he was no longer likely to hit you. Frankly, I'm not sure that his earlier reactions weren't the more valid.

I am sure, however, that given another time, another place, another school, and children from families that had indulged different values, Arthur might have been the well-liked, admired student while I, an eccentric weakling of a different race, who lived half his life in another world, might have suffered all the harassment I so cavalierly helped in heaping on him.

Dalton prided itself in its progressiveness and courted an image of eccentricity. (The bizarre elementary school in Patrick Dennis's *Aunty Mame* is supposedly Dalton.) The eccentricity went no further than the headmistress announcing to each class, at the beginning of each year, in a *very* guarded tone: "If you *really* have something worthwhile, creative, and constructive to do, then you *may* arrange to be excused from regular classes." The announcement was made once and *never* repeated, though, in the Dalton brochures, this aspect of the school's individualised approach to each student was made much of. To my knowledge, I was the only student from my year who ever got to wheedle his way out of some of the more arduous classes: I developed an incredibly complex art project that involved paintings, sculptures, and electric lights, and announced to my math teacher that I wanted special instruction in calculus, and wanted it *now.*

For several months, I got away with spending most of my school day between the art room and special math tutoring sessions.

I was doing practically no assigned work. My arithmetic had never been strong. And my parents, who were nowhere near as eccentrically progressive as the school, decided to send me to a tutor, during this time, three afternoons a week. Amanda Kemp was a small, white-haired, black woman, who lived on the top floor of an apartment house on Edgecomb Avenue, in the small, dark rooms that smelled of leaking gas.

With much good will and infinite patience, she tried to "interest" me in things that I had invested a good deal of emotional autonomy in remaining uninterested in – "Since," she explained to my mother, after the first week, "actually teaching him is certainly no problem. He learns whatever he wants to learn all *too* quickly," and she gave me a book of poems by Countee Cullen, which he had personally inscribed to her, years earlier, when they worked together in the city school system, its illustrations marvellously macabre, showing imaginary beasts of Jaberwockian complexity, each desscribed by an accompanying rhymed text.

The person in my math class who did get the constantly easy hundred was Priscilla. Sometime around here, I decided to write a science fiction novel – announced my project to a group of friends in the coffee shop on the corner, where we all adjourned after school to indulge in an obligatory toasted English muffin and/or lemon coke. I actually wrote the opening chapter: twenty pages of single-spaced typing on lined, three-holed, loose-leaf paper. I brought it into school and, during one study period, asked Priscilla to read it and pass judgement.

During the next half hour I chewed through several pencil erasers, stripped the little brass edge out of my wooden ruler, and accomplished some half dozen more intense, small, and absorbing acts of destruction.

Priscilla, finally, looked up. (We were sitting on the green stairs.)

"Did you like it?" I asked. "Did you *understand* it?"

"I don't," she said, a little dryly, "believe anyone could understand it with your spelling the way it is. Here, let me make you a list . . . " It was the beginning of a marvellous friendship (that, a year ago, reflowered just as warmly when I visited Wesleyan University where she is now a professor of Russian) which quickly came to include nightly hour-plus phone calls, made up mostly of ritual catch phrases (such as: "What has *that* got to do with the price of eggs in Afghanistan!") which somehow, by the slightest variation of inflection, communicated the most profound and arcane ideas, or, conversely, reduced us to hysterical laughter, to the annoyance of both our parents at both our houses. Beside correcting my spelling, Priscilla also told me about a book she said was perfectly wonderful and I must read, called *Titus Groan.* For fourteen years, it suffered the fate of *Rocketship Galileo.* I only got around to reading it one evening over a weekend at Damon Knight's sprawling Anchorage in Milford, Pennsylvania (Damon had just made some rather familiar sounding comments on the spelling of a manuscript I had given him to read); Priscilla had been right.

The last year of elementary school was drawing to a close. I had just

been accepted at the *Bronx High School of Science.* I was sitting in the school's smaller, upstairs library, reading *More Than Human* for the second time, when several students, Robert and Priscilla among them, came in to tell me that I had been elected Most Popular Person in the Class – a distinction which carried with it the dubious honour of making a small speech at graduation.

I was terribly pleased.

Like many children who get along easily with their peers, I was an incredibly vicious and self-centred child, a liar when it suited me and a thief when I could get away with it, who, with an astonishing lack of altruism, had learned some of the advantages of being nice to people nobody else wanted to be bothered with.

I think, sometimes, when we are trying to be the most honest, the fictionalizing process is at its strongest. Would Robert, Mrs. Mackerjee, Gene, Arthur, Marty, or Priscilla agree with any of what I have written here, or even recognise it? What do *they* remember that, perhaps, I have forgotten – either because it was too painful, too damning, or because it made no real impression at all?

Language, Myth, Science Fiction . . .

51. Browsing in Joe Kennedy's *Counter/Measures,* I come across a poem by John Bricuth called *Myth.* Liked it muchly. It begins with an epigraph from Lévi-Strauss:

"Music and mythology confront man with virtual objects whose shadow alone is real . . . "

And then this from Quine's *Philosophy of Logic:*

"The long and short of it is that propositions have been projected as shadows of sentences, if I may transpose a figure of Wittgenstein's. At best they will give us nothing the sentence will not give. Their promise of more is mainly due to our uncritically assuming for them an individuation which matches no equivalence between sentences that we can see how to define. The shadows favoured wishful thinking."

And from Spicer's poem *Language,* in his discussion of the candle and the the finger he has just blistered:

". . . do they both point us to the
grapheme on the concrete wall –
the space between it
where the shadow and the flame are one?"

Just as 'propositions' can be dismissed from logic on the formal side as a logical shadow in a field where we wish for light, on the informal side we can dismiss the movable predicate – x "walks" which can be moved to y "walks" and so on to the *ith* variable "... if and only if the *ith* thing in the sequence walks" (presumably true of x, y, and the others) *Philosophy of Logic,* p. 40) as an empirical shadow: it is a shadow of the empirical resolution at which we observe a given set of process phenomena that allows us to subsume them all under one word. If, for instance, all that can be referred to by "walks" is, like the word, a singular entity, then a very strange entity it is. Among other things, it is discontinuous in both time and space, since both x and y can perform it simultaneously in different locations and/or at different times! In the empirical world, however, spatial and temporal discontinuity *is* multiplicity of entities. And "*a* multiple entity" in our language, at any rate, is as silly a concept as "many rock". (This, I suspect, is the practical side of Quine's refusal to "quantify over predicates" [*Philosophy of Logic,* p. 28]. If we have a situation where every instance of every predicate-with-every-variable can be empirically resolved into separate predicates (P), we have a situation where the existential quantifier ($_{E}$P) would always have the same value as the universal quantifier (P). If there is *only* one q (or one r, or one s), then everything you can say of 'at least one q' you can say of 'all q'. Similarly, the negation of one quantifier could always be taken as the other *or* empty, as one liked. This gets the formal logician into the same sort of trouble as the mathematician who allows himself to divide by zero in formal algebra.)

If we have a universe composed only of real, unique objects performing unique processes, how do we order them? (Are we stuck with G. Spencer Brown's suggestion from *Laws of Form* that "equals" must be taken to mean "is confused with"?) Or, more germane: since we *do* perceive the universe as ordered, can we work back to such a universe of unique objects-and-processes without contradiction?

Language is miraculous not in its power to differentiate. Differentiation, when all is said and done, is carried on non-verbally by the reasonable cross-checking of the information of the other senses: the wonder is that language can respond to any number of *different* things in the *same* way: it can call ashtrays, actors, and accidents 'entities'; it can call poems, paintings, and nesselrode pies 'art'; it can call what three different men at three different times of day do when going down the street 'walking'; it can call three entities that walk down the street at the same time 'women'; it can call sen-

tences, ideas, and blue-prints 'models'; it can call freedom, death, the colour white and the Second-World-War-and-all-its-causes 'volumes in multidimensional meaning space'; it can call causing pain, inflicting suffering, and perpetrating injustice 'evil'. In this way language guides the senses to concentrate on various areas and aspects of the world for further examination and further differential cross checking.

Things 'obviously' similar are coherent areas of meaning-space only because of the shadow the senses throw over them. Those areas not so obviously coherent become so under the various shadows language can cast.

52. Science fiction is a way of casting a language shadow over coherent areas of imaginative-space that would otherwise be largely inaccessible.

53. Is it the tragedy of mind? Or is it what assures the mind's development: Today's seminal idea is tomorrow's critical cliché.

— *compiled,*
London,
December/May,
1973/4.

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letters

Dear Editor, 22 March 1974

Congratulations to all on *Foundation 5;* and thanks to Tom Shippey for his review of *Jack of Eagles.* In fairness to Faber & Faber, I'd like to add that the Nova paperback edition he mentions appeared here way back in 1955 (and, Nova proprietor the late E.J. Carnell told me, was a sales disaster). Effectively, then, the F&F edition *is* a UK first.

I mildly protest Prof. Ketterer's footnote (pg. 56) in which, after quoting accurately my 'Atheling' aside that "A full-scale analysis of *Rogue Moon* might turn out to be nearly as extended as Stuart Gilbert's study of *Ulysses*", he adds "This is highly dishonest". My aside, which was part of

a disclaimer, obviously referred not to the incomparable *Ulysses,* a novel I think I know a little about – Prof. Ketterer drags that inference in on his own – but to Gilbert's study of it, and is equally clearly a speculation, not a judgment. As such I see no dishonesty in it, though it may well be wrong-headed; and I did see you say on pg. 5 of the issue that you wanted to keep "wanton abuse" out of the reviews.

As for unlikelihood: My look at *Rogue Moon* ran eight pages, his seven, and the footnote itself mentions another covering 49. Admittedly 64 pages doesn't make a book but it's a fair start on one, already a third of the length of the study object. I don't have the Gilbert at hand but I recall it as being about half the length of *its* study object.

I wholly agree that the Budrys is "an unusually impressive work of science fiction" and that it's a happy coincidence that it's back in print in England. Let those of us who so agree avoid distracting its new potential audience by hurling words like "dishonest" at each other.

This is a lot of noise to be making over a footnote, but I should hate to see *Foundation* succumb to the kind of inter-critical squabbling which so quickly took over *The New York Review of Books* – once described in general by Stanley Edgar Hyman as resembling the mating combats of bull elks – during which the work under discussion sometimes even fails to get a mention. In contrast, let me point to Christopher Priest's review of Lester del Rey's *Pstalemate,* in which he reasonably disagreed with my praise of that novel without feeling called upon to make me out a liar and/or a fool for liking it better than he did. Surely this is the better practice?

James Blish

Harpsden,
Oxfordshire

Dear Mr. Nicholls,

28 March 1974

Thank you for the copy of *Foundation 5.*

Ordinarily, as I'm sure you will agree, literary criticism of a literary criticism goes beyond the point of diminishing returns. However, your essay on Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea trilogy is so good, generally, that it deserves a correction.

On p. 76 of the issue, referring to her p. 120, you object to the adjective "strange" as redundant; similarly, on your p. 78, referring to her p.130, you wish she had left out the adjective "terrible".

I admit, from a strictly logical standpoint these words could well have been omitted. However, to do so would have meant completely breaking the meter – quite strong and clear in either case – and the rhythms have a great deal to do with establishing the mood. Just try reciting the two versions to yourself, with enough of a running start that you're into the swing of the author's pace, and see if this isn't true. Or, rather, hear if it isn't.

Practically every critic I have ever read, mainstream or otherwise, whatever his or her merits may be, shows up as style-deaf. You do not, indeed you really seem to appreciate words per se, and therefore the foregoing suggestion seemed worth making to you.

Poul Anderson

Orinda,
California

Dear Mr. Nicholls,

21 August 1974

I have just read Stanislaw Lem's piece on "Robots in Science Fiction" in Clareson's book and have re-read your review of it in *Foundation 4*. You commented there on Lem's 'chillingly logical' analysis of Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics: I take it that you meant this in a complimentary sense. I find that I am apparently chilled less easily than you (perhaps because I was raised on the shores of the North Sea rather than the Pacific Ocean?) At any rate I do not find Lem's refutation compelling, though I am inclined to think that he has a good point which he makes rather poorly. My view of his 'logic' is as follows:

1. He writes:

> **To be intelligent means to be able to change your hitherto existing programme by conscious acts of the will, according to the goal you set for yourself.**

In view of current controversy over the definition of intelligence one cannot really deny Lem the right to choose one that suits him, but it must be realised that this is what he has done. While I broadly accept this first formulation of Lem's I am less happy to assume that an intelligent entity's 'programming' must be infinitely flexible. To day

> **what can be thought can be realized**

seems a little extreme. And where would sf writers be if it were indeed so?

2. **Of course it would be possible to build into a robot an adequate analogue of the 'categorical imperative' without much effort.**

Presumably, since Lem has thought this, it can be realized. But do we know that the 'categorical imperative' can be formulated so that it can be expressed in the physical terms required by the robot, and are we sure that it can be done 'without much effort'?

3. **but when man . . . can break the 'categorical imperative' . . . a robot built on a similar principle would have to be able to do the same thing.**

But a man is not 'programmed' in any physical sense with a 'categorical imperative': it is a philosophical concept and nothing more. In the circumstances one can make no comparison between the ease with which a man and a robot could break it.

4. The point about a robot being paralysed by confrontation with complex situations is a valid one, but the example which Lem invents to illustrate this is not particularly persuasive. I suggest that faced with the problems described the robot would assess it much as a human being would (though without applying principles such as 'women and children first') and act accordingly to minimise the 'harm'.

This particular difficulty over the Laws is, I think, better illustrated by the case of a robot confronted by the population of a city going about their everyday affairs. The possibilities for some kind of harm befalling them are almost endless and the robot will either have to interfere continually with their activities, rather like Sheckley's "Watchbird", or be frozen into inactivity by the sheer impossibility of formulating a course of action on the basis of the massive and constantly changing stream of unquantified data which would impinge on it. It would be interesting to know whether one of Asimov's reasons for laying down the rule that robots should not be used on Earth was that it enabled him to avoid such complex situations. (There is a hint of the "Watchbird" problem in "Little Lost Robot", where the robots have the second half of the First Law removed to stop them 'rescuing' men who expose themselves to a real but, to them, acceptable hazard.)

There is a great deal more that I could say about Lem's article (he has, for instance, quite missed the point of "The Search for Saint Aquin") and about Asimov's robots, but I think I had better stop here. I've been thinking about writing an essay of my own concentrating on the Three Laws: I should be very interested to hear from you if you know of any other analysis of this subject.

John Feather — London N.21

Dear Editor, 25th April, 1974

Foundation 5 arrived yesterday, and it improves with each issue. My congratulations. In spite of my general irritation at Poul Anderson, many of the points he made in his "Entertainment, Instruction or Both?" were valid. I'm still a bit unhappy that the professional in sf sneers at the so-called Academic Fringe, but I'm finding that the pros have good reasons to become miffed at the great majority of English (and other specialties) professors who "do" sf. In my own experience, the English professor is very similar to the usual classicist in relation to ancient history: he (or she) is pedantic, dull, prone to make lofty statements about matters in which he has absolutely no expertise, and (worst of all) he hasn't really bothered to read that which smacks of something outside the normal plowed through. I have talked with some of my American colleagues who "offer" sf in the classroom, and, with few exceptions, they have neither read much sf (a lot of junk, they tell me), nor have they any notion of the science or history of the twentieth century that makes sf so remarkable as a medium. Typical is the local chap who taught "sf" and taught Swift – and no more. Likewise, the incredible snobbery I meet day after day in the Ivied Halls is *so* stifling, that I have come to marvel at the students who *do* manage to get any ideas into their heads from their four-year stint among the erstwhile "great minds". So, Anderson's remarks are well-taken, a solid warning to academics to (1) read sf before making commentaries, and (2) leave the subject alone unless it is taken seriously, in the sense of meaningful expressions of our time. Anderson is absolutely correct in talking of writing that entertains or, at the very least, intrigues. As a related example to this point, it seems amazing that philosophers and classical scholars have forgotten why Plato made such an impact: he could write well, he took his illustrations from everyday life as he knew it in the Greek *polis* (the "homely" examples of the textbooks), and he could make his philosophical points without battering or belittling the reader. Popper has noted Plato was so good at this that his ideas have exercised a kind of tyranny over the West since his time, reflected in my view by the harrowing vision of B.F. Skinner in *Walden II* (the modern version of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*). Anderson is right to once again talk of the optimistic effort. It does seem to be the stuff of humanity and humans. The Romans might have called it doggedness.

John Scarborough Dept. of History, University of Kentucky

George Turner is one of the senior critics of science fiction. He is a well-known novelist and critic in Australia, who in the last five years has been persuaded to lend his authority and wit to some of the better Australian sf fanzines, notably Science Fiction Commentary. *The article below is in fact a letter, written to our Associate Editor, George Hay. Mr. Turner has given us his permission to use it as an article. The editor of* Foundation, *in a simple ceremony of contract involving stern words addressed to a mirror, has permitted Peter Nicholls to reply to the attack, providing only that he remains brief and keeps his hysteria under control. The reply will be found after the letter.*

the sf genealogy scandal: an exposé, with cases for the prosecution and defence

George Turner and Peter Nicholls

THE CHARGE

George Turner

Dear George,

This had started out to be a letter to you, saying thanks for *Foundation* 5 and it was very interesting, and going on to make a few comments about this and that. But one thing, as you may have found, leads to another and the thing began to get out of hand. Then I went down with whatever brand of flu we're having this year and thought I might as well keep on scribbling. Despite my howls of 'No time, no time', I regard spells in bed as fairy gold, to be squandered at will, so this may well have turned out to be an essay of sorts, though a mite diffusive and sprawling. See it how you will. I haven't even put a title on it, though something irreverent like 'To Hell With The Parentage, Look At The Children' might be to the point.

Please note that when I type 'sf', that represents a shorthand version of *science* fiction, not speculative fiction (which rarely speculates) or fantasy or the Book Of Genesis. It means the kind of thing the editors meant in the 'thirties when they popularised the phrase (although most of it was vulgar nonsense we can't take it away from them simply by sneering) and, by extension, the modern version which deals with science or the impact of science on mankind. That gets rid of 90% of the so-called sf field, but at least it lets both of us know what we are talking about.

Peter Nicholls' article on what he terms 'proto science fiction' *(Foundation 5)* makes me ponder despairingly on the amount of time wasted on attempts to trace the history of sf back to the cave dwellers. Since sf became respectable in the groves of Academe there has been no end to it, and I doubt if a single significant title in world literature has escaped inclusion in somebody's sf genealogical tree.

While I cannot agree with Brian Aldiss's selection of *Frankenstein* as a base line I must applaud his cutting through the reams of academic and pseudo-academic bibliogony (so it's a new word – my privilege) to arrive at a manageable historical starting point. Therefore I must protest, with all good will, that Nicholls has strained academicism to snapping point in his grab bag of ancestral works. Worse, he seems not to have realised having made, at the end of the essay, an admission which bids fair to ruin his whole thesis (which appears to be that there is a non-realistic tradition running parallel with the realistic tradition of literature, and therefore sf dates back to the beginning of writing): "It is not a linear tradition of course, and clearly has much variety within it, and does not exist as a totally separate entity from the rest of literature".

Aside from some unimportant closed-circuit genres (detective, western, etc.) nothing in fiction does so exist or ever did, and the huge stream of fiction flows down to a delta where quality counts and genre is merely a litterateur's device for easy reference. And much that Nicholls suggests as imaginative was almost certainly considered differently by its writers.

What he has demonstrated is man's continuing interest in himself as a spiritual animal, perpetuated by the occasional fictional attempt (and the much more common non-fictional consideration) to pinpoint the nature of his spirituality by fable, parable, satire and allegory. Science fiction, I suggest, is not part of this interest at all, but has its origins in man's concern for his physical welfare, beginning perhaps with the non-spiritual recommendations of More's *Utopia.* The para-physical and 'inner space'

concerns of many contemporary writers are a late development, a natural outcome of a desire to deal with more than superficialities. And to satisfy this desire they have had to – surprise, surprise – join the mainstream, taking their sf interests and techniques with them. (In reality they never left the mainstream but migrated from lesser to more progressive levels within it.)

I feel that Nicholls has not offered a genealogy of proto science fiction or even a true genealogy of man's supra-physical interests, and that almost every one of his examples could be used as argument for any literary strain you care to call up. In this regard I would like to look at Nicholls' selection from a point of view less restricted than his, which I feel to be arbitrary rather than arrived at.

If the fifteen examples of proto science fiction had been used as indicators of a continuing imaginative faculty one could scarcely have objected (save in a couple of cases to be noted) except that the point needed no such labouring. However, he presents his first example, *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* as a 'precursor of science fiction'. 'Precursor' – literally, a fore-runner. More loosely, an ancestor. In other words, *The Epic* contains some seeds of present day sf.

Probably.

But *any* work of fiction, and most non-fiction, written before sf first appeared in anything like genre form contained something of the seed, some more overtly than others. Not only the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes but also the *Trojan Women* of Euripides and the *Dyskolos* of Menander, to say nothing of the *Histories* of Herodotus. Not only *The Tempest* of Shakespeare but also the Sonnets (how about, 'Not marble, nor the gilded monuments/Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme'?). Not only *Rasselas* but much more the *Tristram Shandy* about which Johnson perpetrated his blunder that 'nothing odd will do long'. Not only *Frankenstein* but Mary's father's *Caleb Williams.* And don't forget Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right.* And how was *The Origin of Species* – a very powerful formative influence – missed?

The whole paragraph means that you can choose as you please and get the same result. No need to select. *Any* selection will give the same result if you squeeze with determination.

I think we will observe more of sf and its implications if we begin with the possibility that it is *not* something separate from the so-called mainstream. Sf (which is more and more rapidly losing its arbitrary separate

status, and a good thing too) is simply one of the end results of the total flow of literary impulse. It began to emerge as a possible literary form precisely when man – in this case Renaissance man – was ready to speak of future possibilities as distinct from ideals; it made its first *genre* impact when the reading masses were ready for it, i.e. when the beginnings of general education began to stimulate curiosity and speculation (about such close-to-home things as trade unionism, communism, the nature of religious conviction and 'natural history') and when the industrial revolution had given the free imagination pointers to a possible Earthly Paradise rather than the idealistic nowheres of the proliferating utopian works (which were closer to fantasy than sf).

We could do worse, if we *must* look for sf origins, than give some thought to that term of insolence, 'mainstream'. As far as I know, sf is the only genre which ever had the blazing impudence to announce itself worthy of a consideration separate from and beyond the body of traditional (whatever they thought that word meant) literature. The fans of the thirties – myself among them, God forgive me – were a loud-mouthed lot of starry-eyed wish-dreamers and probably must bear the responsibility, but many an author later followed with the wild claim that only within sf could his ideas be properly presented. Ideas about what? Just what has sf ever offered in the way of ideas which will not be found somewhere in the mainstream, not only treated without benefit of sf but often treated more competently and more completely.

I am not saying here that sf is merely the mainstream in technicolour, but that the major themes, the great eternal human themes, can do very well without sf, which is in fact not too well equipped to handle many of them. Sf has its advantages and values, but they are not such as will earn it elevation on a private pedestal, there to admire itself.

My stand is that sf has never departed from the mainstream save in its own imagination, and that having for a while formed a genre entitles it to no more than minor academic attention – about as much as the detective story has earned and been given. That it is currently receiving more of such attention than this is due to its having burst the genre bounds. It has burst them by leaving 'technological' sf behind and below its highest levels of writing, by turning the extrapolative imagination on to the eternal concerns of all literature – the nature of man and his place in the universe.

By, in fact, ceasing to be sf.

From H.G. Wells to *Brave New World* to *A Canticle for Leibowitz* to the involved identity problems of *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* the sf that mattered has always been mainstream literature with an exotic setting specifically designed for the needs of extrapolation rather than investigation. (Remember Robert Graves complaining that *Six Days In New Crete* was not not *not* sf, despite the fans? He knew that mere exoticism does not make a genre or a break with tradition – just as the presence of a spaceship does not make a story sf.)

And the great stream, now that the need has arisen in the minds of men, is sweeping the special concerns and techniques of sf back into itself. Genre sf was the cry of the baby; the grown man is rejoining the family.

Of which more later, for this 'mainstream' disgression has run too long. It was designed only to point out that to consider sf as something apart is to lose sight not only of its significance but of its very shape and colour.

But Nicholls postulates sf as a particular facet of human imaginative progress, and he postulates an ancestral line of 'proto science fiction', sometimes on doubtful grounds.

"*The Epic of Gilgamesh*", it seems, "is an obvious candidate, being the first known story that describes the great flood . . .", and follows this with a piece of vintage Moskowitzian ancestor-sniffing: ". . . the deluge which is the precursor of all those plagues of earth and air, fire and water, that have put an end to life as we know it in hundreds of science fiction stories." Are we to accept that if there has been no flood story in *Gilgamesh* (or in the Old Testament or in Greek mythology, or in the (*not* written) traditions of the Australian aborigines and a few Polynesian islanders) J.G. Ballard might not have produced 'The Drowned World'? Why not credit the geologists who first discovered that most land masses have been inundated in the past? Or must we credit the impetus to their discovery to the Gilgamesh story? This kind of ascription by similarities – something like the principle of sympathetic magic – will not do in literary detection.

Gilgamesh and the Old Testament and the rest *record* the story, but the function of sf is to *understand* it, scientifically and in its implications. Sf is a literature of ideas which uses anything relevant and available, not simply a grab bag of exotic imaginings. They are the icing, not the cake. In any case it needed no imagination to create disaster stories; most of them happened. *Gilgamesh* is not a literary precursor of sf but a hero myth

whose significance lies outside our present considerations.

A better case is made for *The Odyssey,* if one observes its exotica and forgets that every one of these had symbolic significance. The strivings of Odysseus meant more to Homer's (?) audiences than simple adventure and indomitability; they found nothing inventive in Scylla and Charybdis which everybody knew had been off the coast of Sicily a century or two earlier, or about the Sirens who just might still be around for a sailor out of luck.

The literary importance of *The Odyssey* is that it remains so far the first known novel, both in structure and content. Nor was it primarily an imaginative adventure, but a love story, and its real descendants were such happy simplicities as "Daphnis And Chloe" and, by natural evolution, the "Ephesian Tales" of ill fame, down to the lowest common denominator, the shopgirl-marries-the-prince romance of today.

It might be claimed (wrongly) that *The Odyssey* sired all fiction, in which case sf would get in with the rest of the vociferous gang. But claiming descent from everybody's father doesn't do much for the individuality of proto science fiction.

With Plato's *Republic* Nicholls is on firmer ground. One feels inclined to go along with such a statement as that he "bequeathed to use the *technique* (my italics) of imagination without which change can never happen", — until one realises that what he really wrote down for us was the Socratic question and answer technique. *The Republic* is in fact analytical rather than imaginative, being based on assessments of perfection in man and method and built up strictly logically.

And *The Republic* as precursor? Mightn't its children more likely be Disraeli's *Sybil* or even Wells' *The New Machiavelli?* These authors were both familiar with Plato; how many writers of utopian and dystopian romances are? The origin of the utopian tale is more likely to be found in the dreams of men coveting 'the good life' and imagining heart's desire. That is where Plato fails the fictional test; he made a clinical analysis rather than a wish-dream (science without the fiction) and related it to perfection rather than to humanity. I offer the real precursor, in the line of utopias, as the man who saw that dreams must be related to human frailty if they are to have communicable meaning. Thomas More, I think,

But Plato did give us the Atlantis legend, which supported many a reputation through the formative years of sf.

Where *Beowulf* gets in I cannot make out, except apparently as an

archetypal plot. Plots, I suggest – and themes also, for that matter – have as much to do with the heredity of sf as of any other kind of fiction. One can't avoid being the descendant of everybody's father.

What we need is a pin-pointing of where and when that special attitude of mind (which is the only true definition of any genre) showed clearly enough for us to cry, 'Daddy!' And my candidate, of course, is Thomas More. (Yes, I know about Aldiss and *Frankenstein;* we'll get to them.)

Not having read example no. 5, *The Voyage and Travaile of Sir Iohn Mandeville, Kt.,* and having no intention of so doing, I must here sing small, but Nicholls gives us little that would make it seem to have much to do with sf. Wonderful voyage? So what? Does that make it sf? The book sounds like a fullblown fore-runner of a once popular mode now slaughtered by the aeroplane and the map-makers, that one which delighted us as children with *Swiss Family Robinson* and *The Coral Island.* Nicholls himself seems a little uncertain (second paragraph in the section) of the author's intentions, which makes his selection a perilous one.

But *Gawain And The Green Knight!* My hackles really rise. Gawain lovers, unite! Nicholls discovers here a kind of surrealism. I'll accept this for the sake of argument but in fact differ fundamentally about the nature of the poetic vision in *Gawain.* But it doesn't matter because all he has to say is that some surrealist techniques appear in sf, which seems to me utterly unimportant as the only conclusion to be drawn is that sf borrows techniques from other literary forms. Thus *all* literature becomes the ancestor of sf. Which is where I came in.

The Divine Comedy comes next, and I quote: "It is pure science fiction in that it creates three quite self-consistent, detailed imaginary worlds". Now I have always imagined that it is pure theology and creates a number of allegorical extensions of the activities of this world. Ah, well . . . "It is also pure science fiction in that its subject is cosmological – it offers us a picture of the way the universe is structured, not just for its own sake, but in order to show us where we fit in". I don't for one moment believe that Dante meant anything of the sort. He structured the universe of after-life as he did because it had to be neatly enough arranged to allow of a compact journey, and he placed the Mount of Purgatory on the other side of the world because the maps showed empty space and nobody could contradict him. *The Divine Comedy* is itself in fact a member of the 'wonderful journey' group, sharpened, metamorphosed, mutated into splendour. But the *Comedy* is allegory, whereas the wonderful journey usually turned out to be simple fantasy, and certainly not science fiction.

See what I meant in saying earlier that the evidence can mean what you wish it to mean, and is therefore useless?

As for *The Tempest,* why not *As You Like It?* You know – pastoral. Like in Simak.

No; really, no.

That *The Tempest* resembles sf in several ways in undoubted, but that makes it a collateral rather than an ancestor. It is another allegory and although sf has used allegory (sparingly and wisely so, for allegory is a tricky business) it has been only as a technical borrowing.

And it is vastly interesting "to note what happens to *The Tempest* when it is given the trappings of the modern science fiction romance".

What happens is a disaster, as Nicholls admits, but it leads him to the proposition that "The Space Age was already beginning with the Borgias". One could claim with equal validity that it was beginning with the invention of the wheel, but that would not say anything about the ancestry of sf which, I repeat, is a literary attitude of mind. And a comparatively modern one.

Similar objections apply to all the other selections save *Frankenstein,* which is a genuine ancestor and an important one. I cannot grant it the total importance that Brian Aldiss does in *Billion Year Spree,* but it certainly represents one great area of the sf oeuvre and would be the most influential of those works which introduced the possibility of scientific rationality to the Gothic horror genre, with Poe taking up the torch a generation later.

(The modern version, with Harlan Ellison as prime exemplar, has taken the scientific rationality out of it again and injected a blatant pseudo-science, as in the peculiarly silly "A Boy And His Dog" or the nightmarish "I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream". But nightmare, even in the belly of a computer, does not constitute sf, any more than does the presence of a mad scientist.)

But I cannot see either Verne or Wells as genuine descendants of Mary Wollstonecraft, as Aldiss appears to do. Each began with premises and intentions at variance with hers and with each other's, and each could and would have existed without her or the school of Poe.

Verne added the fascinating wonders of scientific discovery to the common adventure story (he did a little plundering of the Gothic romance as well as the historical novel and other genres, but these were oddments) and seems to have been the true father of the sf style which culminated

in such coy freaks as *Ralph 124C 41+* and made their final mutation into the big time with Smith's *Lensman* novels, wherein mere science was left behind and the decay of that sub-genre was complete.

Wells also liked his occasional touch of horror, as in *The Island Of Doctor Moreau,* but Wells was a thinker who rarely wrote purely as a story teller. His true forbear was probably Thomas More who was, so far as I know, the first to *popularise* the idea, in *Utopia,* that fiction could be used as a vehicle for the projection of hypothetical conceptions and the discussion of *practical* possibilities, as distinct from the satirical extravagances of Lucian and other early writers.

In fact we need go no further back than More for the foundation of all that makes the pursuit of sf worth while. Reaching back into the dim beginnings of all literature is no more critically meaningful than claiming Adam as a forbear would be to a genealogist. Even More probably represents a freakish early example rather than a genuine ancestor and I'm not sure the same does not hold true for Mary Wollstonecraft, Kepler and many another cited by the reverently faithful. The *possibility* of sf was in the literary air in those days, but the time was not yet.

Sf, as we know it, sprang into almost fully armed existence from the whirling head of a late nineteenth century astir with change, intellectual eagerness and the newfound ability to read. Sf, Verne-style, arrived first, being the simpler form, and prepared the way for sf, Wells-style, which began the fashion of assessing results and impacts rather than merely prophesying wonders. They arrived because the time was ripe. (Fifty years earlier, if the implications of the industrial revolution had been a technical headache rather than a political one, the progenitors of sf could well have been such imaginative novelists as Disraeli and Wilkie Collins, to say nothing of Lytton. But the time was not ripe.)

The Vernean variety of sf has died the death because miracles by arrangement no longer titillate and are relegated to the magazines and mass paperbacks; gimmickry is still a basic necessity but it is the gimmickry of Wells, who knew that the end must dominate and override the means.

It will be seen that I think there is little point in tracing the origins of sf past the point where it becomes recognisably the thing that is still called sf today. The question of real importance is not where it came from but where it is going. Its destination will be determined, as with any genre, by its impact on the body of literature, and the results of the impact of

sf are easily seen though not much commented upon.

The modern novelist – and by 'modern' I mean those whose production commenced within the past quarter century – lives with science as part of his background. Science is no longer something called 'Chem and Phys' at school and relinquished with never a backward glance as one goes out to face the far sterner trials of sales counter and office desk. It has become, since that Tartarean thunderbolt over Hiroshima, the modern myth of the vengeance of a blind God, be his name Fusion Bomb or Ecological Disaster or ZPG or Club of Rome.

For the novelist who portrays today's world, science is as essential an area of his consideration as sex, philosophy, suburbia, crime and the rat race. And more and more of them are, wittingly and unwittingly, writing novels which cut across sf ground. I have written elsewhere that of 42 professedly mainstream novels I have reviewed in the last three years, 13 could have been discussed in terms of their sf content. The sf content – in novels like Muriel Spark's *Hothouse On The East River* or Marion Campbell's *The Dark Twin* or Janet Frame's *Intensive Care* – is not dominant, but is insistent and integral.

And this is where sf is going – home to the mainstream. I am not the first by several thousands to point it out, but I may well be in the vanguard of those who say it is almost there, that its identity is in process of vanishing or at least merging to the point of indistinguishability. The great body of fiction is quietly opening its all-encompassing maw and gently, without fuss, swallowing sf whole.

And sf, separatist to the last and struggling for survival, has begun to transform itself into a number of other things which as yet remain generically nameless, not having established themselves as viable items. So the works calling themselves sf have become various indeed.

We could consider the style of story offered in those grisly collections misnamed *Dangerous Visions* – collections damned in advance by their unfulfillable title, damned in reading by their desperate striving to be different, damned by imitation Borges and imitation Joyce and too much imitation everybody for the odd genuine voice to penetrate as more than a smothered squeak, and doubly damned by the anthologist's interminable and sycophantic introductions which would rouse the vomit of Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm herself. Again, we might prefer not to consider it.

But the three best novels (says Turner) of '73 make an interesting group. Only one, *The Embedding* by Ian Watson, is real sf – what we rate as

'hard science' – and it exists as such only because its excellent scientific basis is one which has had little attention from sf in the past. Once its premises become familiar, i.e. conventional, other techniques will have to be applied to make them saleable – and shortly they will be no longer an sf subject but part of the apparatus of novels with other aims. The mainstream (if that word has any meaning, which I doubt) will note the conception as useful and will absorb its main facets without a quiver – or an academic acknowledgement.

With *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* Gene Wolfe took a step in the process for himself. Cloning is no longer an sf novelty, but Wolfe saw an implication barely scratched at so far (save in different fashion in Budrys' *Rogue Moon*) and wrote a novel about identity. That is, he took a fashionable 'mainstream' preoccupation and put it – brilliantly – through the sf mill. As a result his novel is only peripheral sf (if you don't see that, strip away the exotica and look closely at the bare bones) and is in fact a sort of cautionary-tale-fantasy in the it-just-possibly-might-be style. Wolfe has examined a problem of today via a fantasy problem of tomorrow. I think I notice Wells and Huxley giving approving nods, which I'll bet they wouldn't do for much of the rest of the yearly product. And please don't imagine I sorrow over the novel not being hard sf. I'm cheering about it. The sooner sf stops calling itself special names the sooner it will lose its boring melodramatic chains.

The third novel, Aldiss' *Frankenstein Unbound,* is a literary prank which is no more sf – despite occasional cunning diversionary tactics by the author – than is *Moby Dick.* It is *jeu d'esprit* stuff and as such is sheer joy, with the mating dance of the monsters as one of the year's memorable moments. It is fantasy, truly imaginative from start to finish, of a kind which could not exist if sf had not existed, but nevertheless true fantasy. (Sf spawning progeny!) It is another example of the impact of sf on the mainstream – and Aldiss was never really other than a mainstream writer – and is also symptomatic of the manner in which sf is spawning and mutating.

But there is still a difference between these sorts of fiction, call them how we will, and what we think of as the mainstream. It is the difference of approach in both writer and reader. Traditional literature explores and comments and describes; sf extrapolates and guesses. While sf extrapolated logically it earned its name of 'science fiction', but the new brand of purely imaginative suggestion, the kind that resents the raising of logical objections, has little reference to the genre; it merely uses the basics

for other purposes, as Simenon does with his 'Maigret' stories. Nearly all so-called sf produced today is fantasy.

So let us call ourselves sf fans while we still can, because the day is not far off when the only real sf left will be space opera.

And let us forget the origins of sf save as an academic exercise; dig back far enough, as Peter Nicholls has done, and you find they are the same as the origins of Jeeves and James Bond and Scarlett O'Hara.

Let's forget the impudent claim, surprisingly often bruited, that sf will become a dominant literary form. It is already on the way to assimilation save in its purest forms as variant on the adventure story and the occasional hard science thinkpiece.

Let's take some pleasure instead in noting that the real triumph of sf has already taken place. It has created the frameworks and techniques for handling new and difficult ideas in manageable literary form, and literature has embraced them with eagerness if not with overt recognition.

Today's novelist is fully aware of the concerns of sf because they have become the concerns of the common man. And the sf novelist is leaning more closely to the concerns of the common man because these are at last recognised as the real concern of science or any other fiction.

That's what happens when a compulsive windbag gets sick. Doesn't leave much room for gossip, does it? However, as I started out to say, I like *Foundation* very well. But I feel every magazine should feature a correspondence section. There's such a lot to be said on all subjects that doesn't require punishing into an article, and a letter column is the ideal answer. Some 'ighbrow magazines seem to think this is only for the common people but others, notably the science journals, know better. Just a thought.

THE DEFENCE

Peter Nicholls

My compatriot, George Turner, endears himself to me for several reasons. His has been one of the notable Antipodean voices of sanity in science fiction criticism for some years, and it is a pity that his fanzine platforms are so ephemeral, with such a comparatively small audience.

On this occasion, it was his afterword that impressed me most deeply.

He nominates *The Embedding, The Fifth Head of Cerberus,* and *Frankenstein Unbound* as the three best science fiction novels of the previous year. Now I read at least 100 novels that were published that year. If I correctly remember the subject which in mathematics class at school we called "permutations and combinations", the chance of George Turner choosing, at random, the same three novels out of 100 possibilities, is one in a million exactly. The fact that we did so is extraordinarily exhilarating to me. It shows that criticism is not a random business – that we can appeal to an informed taste, a common pursuit of true judgment. It is not, as so many Americans (in particular) keep telling me, a totally subjective business.

This year I was one of the six judges in the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for the best science fiction novel of the year. My first vote went to *The Embedding,* my second to *Frankenstein Unbound,* and my third to *Malevil. The Fifth Head of Cerberus* would most certainly have been in, and *Malevil* out, if it were not that Gene Wolfe's novel had been published a year too early in the USA (though not here). [In the event, the first prize was split between *Rendezvous with Rama* and *Malevil. The Embedding* placed equal second.]

All of this being so, I am more impressed by George Turner's attack than I would be, say, by an onslaught from Alexei Panshin. Impressed, but not depressed. I really think Mr. Turner has got me a little bit wrong, but I obviously have to plead guilty to not having made myself sufficiently clear.

Part of the problem seems to be that George Turner read my chapter in *Foundation 5,* but not its introduction in *Foundation 3.* (I deduce this from his surprise at my omitting *The Origin of Species,* which *is* given a mention – though too briefly – in the earlier article.)

The funny thing is, that although Mr. Turner and I differ quite substantially on a number of details, we are bending our critical energies towards very much the same end; and because we feel ourselves to be isolated in a field where the majority tends to adopt a wholly contrary position, we are like paranoid scouts in the west and see Indians crouching behind every yucca, waiting to transfix us with their antediluvian wooden shafts. In such circumstances we shoot first, and ask for the password afterwards.

Mr. Turner and myself, it is clear, share an unhappiness at the kind of criticism which assumes that science fiction is a separate genre, only distantly related to the mainstream, with its own rules and regulations. Perhaps Mr. Turner would have been a little reassured had he read at least the title of my first article, which was "The Demolition of Pigeon Holes".

Let me briefly recapitulate the reasons for my writing the two articles in the first place: (a) Whenever I read a genealogy of science fiction, notably those produced by Moskowitz and Bailey, I tended to yawn. This was because the generally imputed fathers of the genre were so boring. (b) I was fed up with the way most critics of science fiction talked about the "mainstream" of literature as if it were synonymous with novels of psychological realism. (Don Wollheim, in *The Universe Makers,* refers amazingly to *"Portnoy's Complaint, The Love Machine, The Arrangement,* and the rest of that constant stream of psychiatrists' couch and bedroom agonies that marks the triumphs of the mainstream", p.68, a critical ploy that leaves me gasping.) (c) I was annoyed with the sort of content analysis which used quite mechanical similarities between old books and new ones as a way of dragging the old books triumphantly into the sf ghetto. "Kepler has his hero travel to the moon? Great! It's sf". [My own interest is in themes, metaphors, intentions, archetypes – not in accidental similarities of plot or locale.]

So my strategy – to put it in crude terms – was to say, look fellows, I can produce a much more interesting list of works of fiction which have in common (i) that they create imaginary worlds and (ii) that they can be said, in at least one respect (the particular respect always being pointed out) to be ancestral to one or other facet of modern science fiction.

I hoped this strategy would have several salutary effects; it might, I thought, convince the doubting that "realism" is *not* the mainstream, and that the branch of literature to which science fiction clearly belongs is the non-realistic ("non-mimetic" I almost said with a grimace of distaste) – which in point of antiquity at least, *is* the mainstream. It might also, by reflecting back on modern science fiction, show how broad and all-inclusive a term *that* is – how little chance we have of fixing its perimeters neatly, and wrapping it in its own little bundle. How far the evil monster story, to which *Beowulf* is ancestral, is from the utopian city story, to which Plato's *Republic* is grandfather! Yet both are readily accepted in the modern genre of sf.

To put the whole thing more plainly than I have so far, science fiction is a convenient label for publishers, and no more. There is *no* way of defining it. *Any* definition will automatically exclude much of what is published under the name, and is therefore so purist as to be almost useless to the hapless buyer of paper-backs, who has no choice (other than reading the book in the shop) but to accept the label.

I agree with George Turner that the correspondences to be found in the sort of tradition I am outlining are so various as to make "tradition" itself a not very useful term. Yes, much of my "proto science fiction" is equally "proto fantasy". Mr. Turner is quite right in saying that although it is a poem, *The Odyssey* is a proto novel of love. But this is only a way of saying that fathers can have more than one child.

I am rather alarmed to find how much I agree with Mr. Turner; it could seem like a kind of treachery to my own earlier thoughts, but it isn't. Really, "proto science fiction" is *not* science fiction, and I never intended that it should be thought of as being so. Science fiction *per se* happened in the nineteenth century. It was merely my wish to point out that, far from being found abandoned in the snow, a helpless illegitimate child in a basket on the front doorstep of real literature, science fiction is in fact an aristocratic creature. While some bourgeois technocrats undoubtedly married in to the family, there is ancient blue blood in its veins.

Mr. Turner's article is full of delights and shrewd observations along the way, but basically I think he is tilting at windmills. I recognize him doing it, because I do it often myself. Only very silly critics think of literary traditions as being straight lines, where A influences B which in turn influences C and so on down the straight and narrow path. I am not one of them. When Mr. Turner notes that I make an admission that "bids fair to ruin (my) whole thesis", he would be quite right only if I had a thesis of the simplistic sort that he imagines. I regret to say that it is my own fault that he was able to read me that way.

The fact is, that what started off largely as a construct [to show Sam Moskowitz (my very favourite *bête noire*) that sf has more interesting ancestors than he thinks] turned into a Frankenstein monster. In mocking Moskowitz, I came very close to emulating him. I still believe that my examples are more fun, even more ingenious, than his. But I see with hindsight that the end result *does* look rather like yet another attempt to establish the respectability of science fiction *per se*. (I had meant not to define the genus, but to discuss the family to which it belongs.)

But here I dig my heels in, and allow George Turner no more. What I had to say was not anything so specific that we could label it a thesis, but neither was it an empty exercise. There *is* a kind of fiction, to which science fiction belongs. I'll try and avoid the word "tradition", because it seems to have connotations of straight lines. I think of something more labyrinthine, a huge network, with nexuses and synapses like the nervous

system of some animal more subtle than ourselves. Yet just as we can distinguish between the stories that describe and comment on the way things are (the sympathetic system perhaps, more commonly if question-beggingly called the "realistic") and the ones that play with ideas, hopes, fears, imaginary worlds – the way things might be. Here is the literature of metaphor and metaphysics. Sf is part of it. It has always been a part of the mainstream of literature, just as realism has. (*All* of literature is part of the mainstream.) Here is what, to stretch my own metaphor, we might call the para-sympathetic part of the network. It deals with the gut, the deep, supposedly uncontrollable bits of us. I'll drop the metaphor before it takes over . . .

And it still seems to me that some books play a clearer, more archetypal role in this system than others. To get down to cases, I do *not* agree that Shakespeare's Sonnets have as much to do with science fiction as *The Tempest.* The cranky games and elaborate jugglings with time in *Tristram Shandy* could indeed, with ingenuity, be seen as having some kind of connection with sf, but basically *Tristram Shandy* is a book about character. The emphasis is there, rather than on an over-riding idea. *Rasselas,* on the other hand, even though it is set quite clearly in our own world, is a quite perfect archetype of one of the most important themes in science fiction – the story of the man who is dissatisfied with his static world, and seeks escape from it to find out what happenes outside. *Rasselas* is *not* science fiction, but it has a much more intimate relationship with it than *Tristram Shandy* has. Please don't be so sterne with me Mr. Turner.

Mr. Turner writes with some grace and much plausibility; it is not always obvious how many questions he begs with some very adroit semantic fudging. Let me nominate a few of the specific points where I stick my heels in.

For example, he comments that the sf that matters has always been mainstream literature with an exotic setting "designed for the needs of extrapolation rather than investigation". Think about that. Is it really true that we can talk about extrapolation and investigation in that either/or sort of way? It's a false dichotomy. *Canticle for Leibowitz* extrapolates precisely *because* it wants to investigate – to investigate the relationship between religion, science and civilisation, for one thing.

Mr. Turner is particularly fond, as I am, of the *reductio ad absurdem* argument. It always needs to be scrutinised carefully. He suggests, for example, that my inclusion of *Gilgamesh* is absurd because it would follow that I was arguing that Ballard's *Drowned World* or even the discoveries of the geologists took place *because* of *Gilgamesh.* Clearly absurd. But of

course, my argument suggests no such thing. It would only do so if I believed that literary traditions were causative. If books A, B and C deal with the same theme, spread over several thousands of years of literary history, it does not mean that A *caused* B, or that B *caused* C. That is not the way traditions work (although Bailey and Moskowitz and others sometimes write as if it were). The interesting point about recurrent themes is that we can take their recurrence, especially when it happens in a variety of cultures, as a measure of that theme's archetypal importance. I am more interested in traditions of themes and feelings than traditions of, say, literary form – a much more mechanical thing. Mr. Turner cannot talk me out of believing that there is some human significance in the link between the obsession with apocalypse then and now. That is the heart of my argument – that the great themes which are now most commonly worked out in and associated with sf are ancient and important. *Not* that the ancients invented sf.

As several points Mr. Turner gets caught up in the same problem that so often troubled me. Although he wants to stress that sf is not very different from the mainstream, he can't resist niggling at the differences anyway. (I think it's important to nearly all sf enthusiasts not to let their genre slip *wholly* away from them.) He suggests that some books *record* stories; it is the function of sf to *understand* them. I don't believe that this takes into account the irrational, non-analytic streak to be found in so much sf – even H.G. Wells (think of that blood red football thing fitfully bobbing around on the sands at the end of *The Time Machine*.) But more generally, I do not accept the dichotomy as true of *any* literature. *All* fiction seeks to understand while in the very act of recording. Some stories do it more consciously than others, but science fiction no more than realist fiction. What about Henry James?

We find another curious comment about "stories" *á propos* of H.G. Wells, who "was a thinker who rarely wrote purely as a story teller". The distinction just won't do. All stories, no matter how naive, are *about* something, and the writer who is content to let the implications of his story speak for themselves as Gene Wolfe does in *The Fifth Head Of Cerberus,* is not necessarily less sophisticated than the writers who analyse their implications. Some of the simplest stories, it sometimes seems, are the most suggestive. The mind boggles at the psychological implications of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears.*

Which brings me on to metaphor, on to the way meaning resonates out

of incident and symbol in the most interesting literature. Mr. Turner says that *The Tempest* is an allegory, and goes on to say that allegory is rare in science fiction. Yes, it is, thank God. But *The Tempest* is *not* an allegory. As I understand it, an allegory is a literary form where all the characters and incidents bear a one-to-one correspondence with what they stand for. *The Romance of the Rose* is often quoted as a standard example. Metaphor is more mysterious and open-ended. It is not possible to say that Prospero, for example, stands for any *one* quality. Allegory habitually generalises. Metaphor habitually grows from the specific. *The Tempest* may include allegory within it, at points, but is larger and grander than any allegory I know. It is precisely at those points where science fiction most closely approaches allegory that it tends to be at its thinnest and most moralistic. I think of Clifford Simak with his repetitive moral stereotypes, or some Ray Bradbury, or even some Theodore Sturgeon.

It would be unbecoming to go on much further. I've already had my say in the original articles, and there is a danger of this exchange of views coming to sound like the ponderous (if harmless) thudding together of two elderly vegetarian dinosaurs squabbling over the same palm frond.

A final point about Plato. Yes, he did use the Socratic question and answer technique, but analysis and imagination are not mutually exclusive processes. Another false dichotomy. What Plato did for literature was to imagine the possibility of a future different from the present. *That* took an imaginative leap. Questions and answers are a useful tool, but you need imagination to answer the right questions. You go on to analyse *after* that. Mind you, I whole-heartedly agree with George Turner that Thomas More knew a great deal more about human frailty than Plato did.

I like the proposed title for George Turner's letter: "To Hell with the Parentage, Look at the Children". In self defence, may I say that the two articles that have appeared in *Foundation* are preliminary chapters to a book which deals for three quarters of its length with *modern* science fiction. Not the period 1880 to 1940, though that is touched on, but very definitely the period 1940 to 1974. If I finish the thing (instead of editing *Foundation* perhaps – you wouldn't believe how much time typing out all those envelopes to subscribers takes) it will be the first book that *does* concentrate on the children rather than the parents.

If it comes to that, I like George Turner too. Anyone who enjoys Watson, Aldiss, and Wolfe, and writes critical articles with jokes in, can't be all bad . . .

review section — part two

edited by Christopher Priest

ecstatic extinctions

Getting Into Death: The Best Short Stories of Thomas M. Disch
by Thomas M. Disch (Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1973, 206pp, £2.50, ISBN 0 246 10614X)

reviewed by Bruce Gillespie

"When every high utterance is suspect," writes Thomas Disch, "we must rely on surfaces, learn to decode the semaphore of the gratuitous, quotidian event." In the short stories contained in this volume, Disch shows many bright surfaces and observes many gratuitous, quotidian events, yet only the least observant reader could miss their value as "high utterance".

Getting Into Death contains, as the subtitle suggests, "the best short stories of Thomas M. Disch". Well, not quite: I can think of several earlier stories which should appear under such a subtitle. Still, Disch is the most improved and improving writer of speculative fiction during recent years, and these are Disch's best short stories during the period from 1967 to 1972. At the beginning of this period, Disch published his novel, *Camp Concentration,* in *New Worlds* magazine. His ignored masterpiece, *334*, appeared at the end of this period. Between novels, Disch improved.

"Colours" is one of the best of these stories. The unnamed main character of the story learns to use the colour-machine which his friend Raymond has invented. The colour-machine draws up impressions from the well of the user's mind and spills them onto the surface of external reality. Compared with many amateur consumers of psychedelic drugs, the main character's mind is so structured that he can make sense of the experience. Because he is a painter, soon he sees the entire world as the surface of a painting. "How

much more valuable the *world* became," he writes, "if these colours would be regarded as innate, not his nor hers nor theirs but its very own, inalienable."

In this new, glowing still-life the most notable object is Helen, the main character's lover – "her fluorescing flesh could be seen in one sense as a great uncompleted canvas." The story tells of the completion of the canvas. The surfaces, movements, and gestures which form an entity called "Helen" blend into a kaleidoscopic unity. "It was Helen's special grace that she allowed all things to be reduced to their surfaces, and it became his task, as her lover, to read, from a swell of muscle, from the underpainting of her skin (green, as in an early Siennese Madonna) the meanings hidden in her name."

The main character's unique, obsessive viewpoint removes this love affair entirely away from the territory of conventional romantic fiction. Soon he forgets about Helen's speech patterns, ways of love-making, or sometimes whether she is present as a model for her own image. "The funny thing is," says the narrator to Raymond, "she seems to have so little to do with it herself. I mean, it's not love that connects me and her – it's Helen that connects me and love."

In this way Disch takes a story about the aberrated views of a colour addict, and changes it into a splendid eulogy for the idea of love. He sings a unique song which he completed only in the aria passages of *334*. Helen leaves the main character. He cannot tell how long she has been gone, and he does not know when she will return. In the middle of his reverie, he is grief-stricken by "the days of her absence" which "had been like the sere March fields before the new grass – with this difference, that love cannot be relied on to recur seasonally: its sere days, when they come, seem to come for ever."

When the main character reaches this point of perception, he has managed to make images out of colours, and then he has taken the images and seen the metaphor behind them. Art has saved his mind from chaos, yet elevated it permanently into a new chaos of experience. Helen returns; the "veritable spring" returns. Inevitably, a descent begins. As Helen and her bedazzled lover drift apart, he sees far beyond conventional love-sadness and melancholia:

> . . . It was only now in the dizzying descent that he had been able to find time to appreciate just how far he had come and what rare air he breathed in these altitudes. It was not as though his downward course were to be no more than a recapitulation, a reverie: the sensation of it was wholly new and the motion

was downward only in the sense that he could no longer reverse its direction. In fact, there was no "down" or "up" at all. . .

In his notion of love, the descendant from ecstasy is like a skier speeding down a ski-slope: he enjoys the spectacle of the white landscape and the sensation of speed as much as he enjoyed the serenity of standing on the mountain-top, but now he cannot slow down, and inevitably he must reach the conclusion of the whole experience. This viewpoint is alien to my own, and rather chilling. For me, it would be comforting to experience love in such a symmetrical and sensible way; there *is* "up" and "down" in these matters. Yet Disch succeeds in reversing my pet notions, and probably the pet notions of most of his readers, and lets us experience this reversed viewpoint. While reading "Colours", I feel like somebody who, while talking with a friend, suddenly sees the friend glow like a lamp and float into the sky, transformed into an angel.

'Transformation' is the word which describes what Disch accomplishes in all of his best stories. "The Asian Shore" is a more complex story than "Colours", but it shows a simpler process of transformation. John Benedict Harris, an American architect, settles in Istanbul for some months. He becomes haunted by a Turkish woman and a small boy. Whenever she sees him, the woman calls out, "Yavuz! Yavuz!" to attract his attention. The small boy seems to lurk in every street and alley. They seem to claim Harris as husband and father. Harris retreats into his room. "He rotted like a jar of preserves left open and forgotten on the top shelf of a cupboard." He grows his moustache, wears Turkish clothes, and looks more and more like a Turk. At the same time his own book, *Homo Arbitrans,* haunts him. "It was the thesis of his book that the quiddity of architecture, its chief claim to an aesthetic interest, was its arbitrariness." When Harris tours Istanbul at the beginning of his stay, he finds beauty in the conventional places, the mosques and monuments. Later, he can find no beauty in anything man-made. He comes to enjoy "the turbaned shafts of marble" which "jutted in every direction but the vertical . . . or lay, higgledy-piggledy, one atop another." His mind has now the structure of his own ideas, so much so that he can no longer understand his book. He does not leave his room for days on end, but one morning he finds his shoes, wet through, lying beside his bed. He takes some photos of an area on the European Bosphorus coast; when they are developed, the photos show an area which Harris soon discovers on the Asian shore. When Harris thinks that he has escaped from his situation, he becomes transformed to fit it. He becomes arbitrary, uncom-

prehending man – an ordinary Turk with a wife and child.

In "The Asian Shore", the process of transformation takes up the whole story. John Benedict Harris, the successful architect, has already begun to change at the beginning of the story. At the end, he steps out of our comprehension. In between, Harris experiences a dream-state of mixed ecstasy, metamorphosis, and acute misery. His clear mind watches its own disintegration, defeat, and resurrection. His own ideas destroy him, yet allow him to reach a state that he always wanted. Like most of the interesting stories in this volume, "The Asian Shore" brings to life a process of death.

Death is the idea at the centre of this book. Yet Disch writes joyful, funny, and bracing stories which are entirely uncowed by a threat of extinction.

In "Getting Into Death", which is the title story, Cassandra Miller thumbs her nose at death while her relatives grieve over her imminent passing or wait for the reading of the will. When Disch acknowledges conventional ideas about death, he writes "Feathers from the Wings of an Angel", which is a parody of the heart-throb stories which once appeared in American popular magazines.

Disch examines death most clearly, yet most mysteriously, in "Let us Quickly Hasten to the Gate of Ivory". At the beginning of this story Mickey and Louise, brother and sister, have driven to the cemetery where their mother and father are buried. They park their VW in the parking lot, and stride out across the acres of lawn. They step through, and are surrounded by, death; Disch punctuates the prose with inscriptions from tombstones carved with comforting clichés like "Gardens of Memory and Peace", "Until the Day Break", and "Taken to his Eternal Home". At a glance, the story looks like a marble maze.

From the beginning Disch makes it quite clear what will happen to Mickey and Louise: they will become lost forever in the cemetery. No matter which way they turn, although they walk for miles, they will never find their way back to the parking lot. It all sounds very threatening. We expect that Mickey and Louise will meet a horrifying, apocalyptic ending. They don't. The story does not really end at all. Mickey and Louise become alarmed when they realize that they have lost their way back to the car. They become alarmed, not because physical danger threatens them, but because "the thought of Joyce returned more vividly to both of them, the dismal thought of the explanation that would have to be made, of the failure of those explanations." Joyce is Mickey's wife and moral arbiter of a staunchly Catholic family. Louise slips her hand into that of her brother;

discomforted, he stops smiling. " 'Oh darling, what does it matter that we've come a bit out of the way'," exclaims Louise. "Mickey looked at Louise strangely. 'Darling' had possibly been the wrong thing to say: it exceeded the limits he assigned to a sisterly affection."

As Mickey and Louise lose their way more thoroughly, more and more they relish each other's rediscovered company. For the first time, they discuss Louise's divorce and the petrification of Mickey's youthful hopes. This is a tale, not of incest, but of lost love found. "Tomorrow would find them in the cemetery still," thinks Louise in the story's last paragraph. "In an almost perfect silence they would walk through the cemetery, lost . . . She fell asleep in her brother's arms, smiling: it was just like old times."

So what actually happens in "Let Us Quickly Hasten to the Gate of Ivory"? Do Mickey and Louise die? Have they entered heaven, or at least limbo? If so, at what point in the narrative did they "die"? Or have they still to "die", in the Elizabethen sense? Or were they dead already, trapped in a living death of Joyce's tongue and the impotency of Louise's husband, and are they now brought to life?

Mickey and Louise accept this idyll long after the reader begins to enjoy it. Clearly, this graveyard contains no menace, but just "the same blue sky" and "the same hills speckled with white rectangles of stone, striped with gravel paths". Here the dead really rest in peace. Mickey and Louise do not feel peaceful until the end of the story. "The (hypothesis) – that the cemetery itself was responsible for their plight, that it was quite as big as it seemed to be – was intolerable and, in the most literal sense, unthinkable." When Disch writes this, he nods toward the reader as well as his characters. If the cemetery represents the idea of Death, it is responsible for the plight of us all. Elsewhere, Disch writes, "Of what solace is philosophy when each sequent hour reveals new portents of a sure and merited destruction." Mickey and Louise find that their plight is a pleasure-garden. Should we discover the same? But the notion of death, like the notion of an infinitely extended cemetery, is "intolerable and, in the most literal sense, unthinkable."

But Thomas Disch does create on paper successive states-of-being which are intolerable and unthinkable. He manages this feat through the process of change itself. In stories like "Colours", "The Asian Shore", and "The Planet Arcadia", our conventional mental worlds dissolve and reform into something we cannot quite grasp. In some of Disch's less successful stories, like the fragmentary "Quincunx", the whole story evades seizure.

Disch upsets our expectations, because any expectations about fiction are usually based on shoddy thinking and a reliance upon the clichés of a genre. "Feathers from the Wings of an Angel" is a joke, but it is a bitter joke because in that story Disch shows how banal form and expression in a story can prevent either the characters or readers from experiencing anything. In a romantic *Life* magazine story, we can only experience popular romantic notions of death. We have conventional notions about graveyards and incest, so we find it difficult to approach "Let Us Quickly Hasten . . .", an idyllic story about both subjects.

After reading this volume I would guess that Thomas Disch fears only one type of death – the death-of-sensitivity which we call "normal" existence. For Mickey and Louise, their ordinary lives are hells of automated, cauterized human feeling. In "Displaying the Flag", Leonard Dworkin is a kind of cliché fetishist who exchanges the world of leather-queen clichés for that of right-wing-republican clichés. In Disch's terms, he moves from one death to another, without suffering any transformation. In "Getting Into Death", the heroine allows her sense of approaching death to transform her perceptions of all life while her relatives stay crushed by their conventional view of the approaching "disaster".

Disch is committed to ecstatic extinctions: life lived completely leads inevitably to death, but resurrection is generated through the process itself. Life lived to preserve life fades from within. Expressed in this way, Disch's brilliance is reduced to the flicker of conventional religious dogma. Disch *is* brilliant because he discovers it all for himself: he takes "surfaces", such as the lives of people who think of themselves as ordinary, and transforms them into "high utterances". He takes unthinkable thoughts, models them into perfect stories, and presents them to us as a gift. For Disch, to get into death is to leap into life.

up the jungle down the aeons

Midsummer Century
by James Blish (Faber, 1973, 106pp, £1.60, ISBN 0 571 10330 8)

reviewed by David I. Masson

Blish's great virtue, his inescapable *le style c'est l'homme même,* is the pyrotechnic dance of comment, reasoning and technical allusion by which he "blinds 'em with science". Darting round the action, and living at five

times the normal rate, James Blish (and sometimes the brain of his protagonist) sews it all up. This is a very intense, very super-conscious, very American thought-style. A reader, hypnotized, accepts all he sees at face-value. This approach was brilliantly successful in *A Case of Conscience,* and even in such ventures into the Absolute Other as "Common Time".

But here it may not fool all of us all of the time. This tale could almost have been one of Blish's sf stories for the young, subsequently varnished and garnished with erudite allusions, etc. (it expands a *Fantasy and Science Fiction* 1972 story). Most of it would be quite enjoyable at a juvenile level, and why not? But one would like to think that Blish was roughing out a recipe for the Philosopher-King whom Plato sees as dragged from his contemplation to serve mankind; here, a coalition of brashly-sophisticated instant-Aragorn and meditationist Denethor.

An accident propels the mind of young astrophysicist Martels 23,000 years ahead to what used to be Argentina, into the grounded brain-case of a former ruler, still consulted as oracle by tribesmen of a tropical-phase Earth. (I seem to have met scientists kicked into the future before.) Mankind will succumb in five years to the Birds, mutated, intelligent, ruthless, telepathic. Round about half-time the two warring minds invade a tribesman who is forced to enter Bird territory, is imprisoned, but finally escapes. Rescued by the Antarctic remains of the former glaciation-phase high-energy civilization, Martels, inside the heart of their computer, a mystical Platonic entity, comes, after some metaphysical perils, to control – you've guessed it – human destiny against the Birds. We have an (Arthur) Clarkean aeonic promise at the end.

In all the story the vision of the Tower on Human Legs, especially of its interior (whatever its basis may owe to the Hut of Baba Yaga) is the most vivid, bizarre and compelling passage. Some other parts are a bit thin. There are some sharp images: a flight of birds "like a flock of carets" (p.80), or the flexing drumhide "giving off a deep *ronronner,* like a cheetah purring in French" (p.67). We meet our old friend the Dirac beep again (p.86). I find the account of a mystical experience (p.94-5) interesting, including the (verbal) spatial diagrams, though plainly "Nescio, nescio" would be more in tune.

Some doubts. Martels is unable in the brain-case to move or sleep for two and a half years, shorn of all senses but sight and hearing, with the Autark mostly silent, and with often six months between visits of petitioners. How is it he remains conscious and sane under such sensory deprivation?

To write of "boredom" was not enough. Then, how can Martels' "own" characteristic voice be reproduced by its apparatus, when he has no pharynx? How did the Birds construct the Tower? Isn't the human gliding improbable? Further back, I cannot imagine a Doncaster accent barring a graduate from a lounge or saloon bar. And is Martels a Doncastrian name? "Levin-stroke" for a metaphorical lightning stroke sounds affected in Britain. Besides a dropped apostrophe there are two misprints: p.65, 'heirarchy" for *hierarchy*; p.16, "tintinnus" for *tinnitus.* I rather like "tintinnus".

What is "juganity"? For such a barbarous word I refuse to suspend disbelief. In meaning it is virtually opaque, though it seems to refer here to "psionic" phenomena. But if we are all yoked together by juganity, my ear tells me that our destiny must be nasty, brutish and short of imagination. If the coinage was made by Rowland Bowen or Dr. John Clarke to whom Blish mentions indebtedness, I think the less of them. If he coined it himself (and see p.73) what right has it, unexplained, in an English translation (for the reader) of two future languages which the characters are supposed to be using? And why (p.90) is its adjective "juganetic" (or is this a misprint for the still rather repulsive compound "jugamagnetic")? Endings in *-anity* are Latin in origin: inanity, insanity, profanity; those in *-etic* are Greek: eidetic, pathetic, emetic. And "juganetic" is an impossible bastard since *jug-* cannot be Greek.

Right at the end, with the triumphant smile of a conjuror or genius, the author produces from his sleeve three crucial specialized ordinal numbers. Were they corrupted from ultimately Latin roots during the 230 centuries, ending up in the new languages? They are "qvant" with a *-v-*, "quinx" with a *-u-*, and "sixt". As inventions these sound schoolboyish. (But I recall the muddled accounts of Lithian graphemes and phonemes in *A Case of Conscience.*) Spelling out my objections one by one: (1) if "qvant" is pronounced *kvannt,* on what grounds is it first given a *q-* at all? (2) if "IVth" has a *qv-*, how in the name of linguistic probability could "Vth" possibly retain a normal *qu-*? (3) if "IVth" and "VIth" end in *-t,* how could "Vth" between them, with the same initial sound as "IVth", end in *-x*? (I suppose Blish was fascinated by the pattern called a quincunx, brought in correctly on p.48.) Careless, James, careless. Dare I suggest that if Blish ever revise this tale for a new edition, he substitute *throughout* it (he knows what I mean) *some* such word as "en-kwaar", and at the end also "en-kwing" and "en-zeks"? The ordinal or ceremonial prefix *en-* could have come from

a future language. And I urge him to get rid of "juganity" and all its crew completely.

hyperbolist without exaggeration

Inverted World
by Christopher Priest (Faber, 1974, 255pp, £2.50, ISBN 0 571 10444 4)

reviewed by Peter Nicholls

Our Reviews Editor, Christopher Priest, was faced with a small problem of ethics when his own new novel, *Inverted World,* came in for review. If he chose the reviewer himself, he might lay himself open to the charge of choosing someone he knew in advance to be sympathetic. So he asked me (I am notoriously hard-headed) to choose for him.

I took the book home to glance through, before I made up my mind who might be appropriate. The glance imperceptibly prolonged itself; I read the book at one sitting, decided I wanted to keep it, and therefore exercised my editorial prerogative in my own favour.

Christopher Priest had a small success with his first novel, *Indoctrinaire,* and a more substantial one with his second, *Fugue for a Darkening Island,* which placed third in the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for best science fiction novel of 1972. The increase in power and economy in *Fugue* was impressive, but it was a bitter and depressing *dystopia,* published during a year when it seemed that all the Sunday newspapers in the land (along with a fair proportion of the science fiction writers) were dealing with just such sociological forebodings. Thus it had to face a readership already zapped to the point of numbness by the bad vibes of the future. The dystopian overkill had happened, and one result was that Christopher Priest received no special notice from science fiction readers, especially in the United States. He was presumably consigned to the doom-writing category, currently out of favour, and there he might be languishing still if it were not for *Inverted World.*

It is a remarkably accomplished piece of work, but not only that; it is pure hard-core science fiction from a writer who previously, many had assumed, lived somewhere on the intellectual outer fringes of the genre. It is as if John Sladek turned into Larry Niven overnight, but with the literacy intact.

Inverted World will be remembered for many years, I would guess, as one of the few science fiction novels of the 1970s to come up with a new idea. The trouble is that the idea is *so* good, and so gradually revealed, that it would be unfair to give it out prematurely in this review.

Inverted World belongs to one of the most popular sub-genres of science fiction: the tale of a man who slowly discovers the true nature of the world in which he lives; Heinlein's *Universe,* Dick's *Time Out of Joint,* Galouye's *Dark Universe,* Clarke's *The City and the Stars* and Aldiss's *Non-Stop* are all especially pure examples, but there are hundreds of others. Aldiss's *Non-Stop* (*Starship* in the USA) is not directly invoked in *Inverted World,* but one feels its benign presence hovering somewhere in the atmosphere of Priest's book: and just as *Non-Stop*'s homage to the golden age of science fiction launched Aldiss into popularity with the sf readership, so I would expect *Inverted World* to open many doors for Priest – maybe even a Nebula. Even though it is likely enough that the fans who assume Christopher Priest to be very much on the classical sf wavelength, as they did with Brian Aldiss, will turn out to be mistaken.

But *Inverted World* is in no way hackneyed or derivative. The closest I can get to suggesting the flavour of its central premise without revealing it, is to say that it is an idea that might have occurred to Hal Clement if he had been Philip K. Dick. The lunacies of Mesklin in *Mission of Gravity* (or Niven's *Ringworld* or Fredric Brown's *Placet*), however, look staid and homely alongside the properties that Priest imputes to his paradoxical hyperboloid. The inverted world is amazingly good fun, worked out in the most plausible mathematical and physical detail, if you can swallow the initial premise, which is so outrageous that you do tend to gulp it down whole in sheer surprise, like your first oyster.

It is only in the last fifth of the book that we get the final bonus – that the novel is *about* something, beyond asking one of the most crazy "what ifs" in the history of the genre. Specifically, it is about human perception, and the passion with which we all adhere doggedly to the way we see the world as if it were an objective truth. *Inverted World* is a charming footnote to the Berkeleyan debate.

So far so good. If we could sum up all science fiction (as many critics do) purely in terms of the dexterity with which a central idea is worked out in the narrative, then *Inverted World* gains automatic entrance to the Pantheon. But there is more to writing than this.

In fact my reservations about Priest's quality as a writer are not very grave. American nit-pickers may be amused at the hero's reference to "laying a ghost" when he is about to go to bed with his fiancée (quite a substantial lady), but generally Priest's style is quite free of solecisms. He writes tersely and cleanly, but he is in some danger (it seems somehow a very English danger) of being attenuated by the cool winds of understatement. *Inverted World* is almost too dispassionate. I really would have liked the book longer and richer. The protagonist (who is called, not too symbolically I hope, Helward Mann) does not relate easily to others, which adds to the sparseness of feeling in the book; he even meets what could have been a truly tragic love situation with a certain emotional aloofness. The very style of the novel has a stiff upper lip.

The inverted world itself is magnificently rendered in its broad strokes – and magnificent in its details, too, in the first of the novel's two *tours de force,* when the protagonist experiences the unbelievable changes "south" of his ever northward-creeping "city". But generally, the countryside around the "city" seems thinly textured and a little remote.

These objections, however, could cannily be argued to be strengths, and retrospectively almost seem so. The second *tour de force* of the novel is in its final revelation, which is of such a nature that the partial remoteness of parts one and three, which are told in the first person, seems almost justified. Parts two and four, which are told in the third person, are those I have singled out for special praise, and here the texture is denser. (I am not quite convinced of the logical necessity of changing from first to third person in part two, but the result justifies it.)

I believe, though, that much of the coolness and bareness of the prose is intrinsic in Priest as a writer, rather than a calculated aspect of a cunning master plan. It certainly has its merits, but it has its stiffnesses too – sometimes the style seems almost to be holding its breath in the effort to restrain itself from bursting into feeling. I rather hope that in a later Priest novel (and he's writing very busily at the moment, so we may not have to wait long) we will see an explosion from the depths around which he has so far trodden warily.

In the meantime we are left with a substantial achievement, worked out with a loving and economical craftsmanship. The ending is an object lesson

to writers in how to explain complexities (and provide a complete historical context) with the minimum of fuss. The *very* ending – the last page, is something else again: an enigmatic moment of stillness, out of which comes (perhaps?) a decision from the hero. It's lovely in a way – it could come straight from a film by Lelouch – but if I'm not mistaken, the hero is about to have his cake and eat it too. I'm not sure whether that's a cop-out, or whether I'm just jealous.

the greening of ballard

Concrete Island

by J.G. Ballard (Jonathan Cape, 1974, 176 pp., £1.95, ISBN 0 220 00970 2)

reviewed by Ian Watson

To begin with, this seems to be *Crash* in a minor key: a limp, passive cadenza to the furious concerto of the former book. The plot seems almost a joke – a driver marooned on a traffic island, forced to survive Crusoe-like. ("Which eight gramophone records would you take with you to a traffic island. . .?") Yet the gimmick extends itself mesmerically till it blocks the whole field of attention and we, like Ballard's hero Maitland, are unable to see beyond it. An island is a compulsively fascinating symbol, not simply because you can get away from it all there, but because the island represents a frontier situation, an ultimate situation (or *Grenzesituation,* as Karl Jaspers puts it) topologically enfolded round the hero-victim. William Golding, particularly, uses the island in this way time and again, confronting his characters with an island that is as much a moral and phenomenological event as a geographical location – presenting his refugee schoolboys, his drowning sailor Pincher Martin, and even (in an inverted way) his Neanderthal Man with a boundary that folds as surely around them, as a DNA sequence decoding into a linear chain of amino acids and springing thence, automatically and inevitably, into three-dimensional shape and activity – the coded sequence becoming inexorably a physical event.

The map is not the territory, philosophers insist. Yet increasingly this *is so* today, in the Ballardian landscape of motorways. Reyner Banham brings this out neatly in his book on Los Angeles, where he hails the freeway system as "as coherent state of mind" and diagnoses that

> signs can be the most psychologically unsettling of all aspects of the freeway – it seems incredibly bizarre when a sign directs one into the far left lane for an objective clearly visible on the right of the carriageway, but the sign must be believed. No human eye at windscreen level can unravel the complexities of even a relatively simple intersection . . . and there is no alternative to complete surrender of will to the instructions on the signs . . .

The dominance of *sign,* in the widest sense, is an increasingly fashionable preoccupation with environmental designers today. Elsewhere in *Los Angeles: the Architecture of Four Ecologies* – a book which gained Banham a commemoratory billboard at L.A. airport – Banham brilliantly compares the visual design of an open hamburger-on-a-platter with the architectural design of the restaurants where these are eaten – seeking the same kind of code-correspondence which Ballard remorselessly pursues in *The Atrocity Exhibition:* the point where different sign-systems (architectural, kinesic, erotic) intersect. The name of the game (a game taken very seriously by philosophers and linguists, anthropologists and architects) is Semiotics or Semiology – the theory of signs: the analysis of different human cultural activities, cookery and costume as much as kinship patterns or myths, as 'languages'. Languages, moreover, that correspond in the sense that they all mirror basic human mental structures. The correlations that Ballard makes, most ingeniously, in *The Atrocity Exhibition,* are of this character – presenting us with a conceptual copulation of codes, embodied particularly in the image of the car crash: the quintessential man-machine interface where libido may be released in this technological age of ours where signs increasingly supersede territory.

Twenty years ago, Roland Barthes, one of the pioneers of contemporary Semiotics, was already analysing the Citroen D.S.19 in highly Ballardian terms. "It is the dove-tailing of its sections which interest the public most", wrote Barthes, *circa* 1955.

> One keenly fingers the edges of the windows, one feels along the wide rubber grooves which link the back window to its metal surround. There are in the *D.S.* the beginnings of a new phenomenology of assembling, as if one progressed from a world where elements are welded to a world where they are juxtaposed and hold together by sole virtue of their wondrous shape . . . The bodywork, the lines of union are touched, the upholstery palpated, the seats tried, the doors caressed, the cushions fondled; before the wheel, one pretends to drive with one's whole body. The object is here totally prostituted, appropriated: originating from the heaven of *Metropolis,* the Goddess is in a quarter of an hour mediatized, actualizing through the exorcism the very essence of petit-bourgeois advancement.

This essay only recently appeared in English, in *Mythologies* (Cape 1972).

Crash dissects out surgically the 'car-as-sign' from the total commodity fetishism landscape of *The Atrocity Exhibition* and succeeds in being both highly conceptual and glutinously physical at the same time – an obsessional meditation about the nature of here-and-now experience, mucously palpable in texture, a semiotic automotive *Inferno. Crash* is, to my mind, the finest thing Ballard has written: one of the most vivid, sustained autopsies on the contemporary fetishistic scene. It works as well as it does because of its sheer clinical neutrality. Yet this neutrality begs various questions, particularly: is the book part of the cure, or part of the disease? The blurb for *Crash* speaks piously about its being "a cautionary tale", "a warning". Yet in enough interviews Ballard has seemed glad to accept the violent, dehumanised, Dionysiac landscape of these two books. Perhaps, like a McLuhan, surfboard riding the tidal wave of the technology he distrusts? It hardly sounds like it. "I believe that organic sex . . . is becoming no longer possible simply because if anything is to have any meaning for us it must take place in terms of the values and experiences of the media landscape . . . One's real puberty will be reached when one moves into the area of . . . conceptualized sex". (Thus, to *Penthouse,* shortly after the publication of *The Atrocity Exhibition.)* In this context, then, *Concrete Island* – with its apparent return to Nature – takes on a new significance in the Ballard opus, that certainly transcends gimmickry. For the hero of this new book is apparently forcibly decanted out of the mechanical sign world of polymorphous perversions, into a free, liberated territory.

The island isn't concrete at all. It seems to live, organically. Admittedly it overlays the ruins of some old streets, a cinema, an air raid shelter; but on first sight: simply *grass* – as though Man's buried psychic rapport with the Natural has been miraculously restored. Are we then witnessing a 'greening' of Ballard (to borrow Charles Reich's term, from *The Greening of America)?*

Certainly Maitland's identification with the island is presented consistently in terms of its swirling grass. Patterns of grass guide and shepherd him and the tramp Proctor who already lives there. There are strong hints too of a physical and psychic 'dreaming backwards' as Maitland both loses weight – beginning to resemble his earlier self bodily – and relives various childhood traumas: a process recalling stories Ballard wrote much earlier in his career. Maitland's name too – not to mention his starting point – is resurrected from Ballard's very first novel, *The Wind From Nowhere.* Then there is a kind of redemptive return to *The Drowned World,* with

positives in place of negatives, as though the way back to the early natural-disaster landscapes is now clear, while at the same time Nature has somehow been shriven and blessed. Maitland triumphs over the attempt to humiliate him, in the way that Strangman humiliates Kerans – even if by a somewhat brutal and undignified stratagem; while the basement of the ruined cinema where Maitland benefits from the sweet and sour attentions of the third inhabitant of the island, is an inverted, positivised version of the underwater planetarium of *Drowned World* where Kerans nearly engineers his own death. Finally, Maitland's body becomes identified with landscape in a Eucharist of redemption that seems a far cry, at first, from the fetishistic presentation of mechanized 'body kits' in *The Atrocity Exhibition...*

The book spawns other subliminal echoes, however, outside of Ballard's own work – in this case not the usual range of echoes from Surrealist painters or Dadaists, but literary archetypes. I've already mentioned William Golding, with his Pincher Martin marooned on the nagging tooth of his own ethical misdemeanours. Then there are bits of sheer Samuel Beckett. All that business about a crutch and Maitland cavorting around the island on the tramp's back, goading him on with jabs of the crutch, is pure *Molloy*, with a spicing of *How It Is* tossed in as they scavenge for food in the dirt – while a decrepit old man pushing a light motorcycle along a motorway is another hint that the Cartesian Centaur (as Hugh Kenner has wittily dubbed Beckett) is lurking not far away.

The Crusoe analogy is perhaps a bit of a distraction. Certainly Maitland finds Man Friday footprints, but otherwise he makes a fairly inefficient Crusoe. His imprisonment on the island, in this respect, reminds me more of the imprisonment of Kobo Abé's hero in *Woman of the Dunes* in a sandpit. Both Abé's hero and Ballard's find their entrapment an ironically liberating process. The endings of the two books are strikingly similar – Abé's hero putting off his escape till another day, as the behaviour of the sand has become more interesting than escape; and Maitland ducking down in the long grass in case some patrolling police spot him. Even if Maitland didn't deliberately crash his car – after all, as Heinlein surely could never write if he lives as long as Lazarus, *blowouts happen* – he pretty soon believes he did and effectively cripples himself to prove it. Hardly a Crusoesque scenario – though probably essential to the plot line? Perhaps, too, an appropriately ironic 20th century parody, since we all live in a far more ambiguous epoch than Defoe, don't we?

But all this talk of echoes (and I will leave the Jane girl out of it – whether she recalls an inverted Tarzan/Jane relationship, or alternatively the

scrawled messages of car-crash-crippled Joan Crawford in *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*) raises the question again of whether the novel isn't a trifle mannerist, even parochial – a trifle too literary, in a self-conscious way? Not so much a greening, as a grassing over of Ballard's talent?

Personally I don't think so. Ballard's island means more to me than any of William Golding's. It is our contemporary nightmare island. But is it really *greened?* Is the negation really negated? Despite Ballard's inverse echoes of Kerans' dilemma, despite the apparent rediscovery of freedom, I can't but hark back to the biological metaphor of a polypeptide sequence, translating out of the abstract, arbitrary sign-code of DNA, and dictating the shape of events inflexibly in its globular folding – and remember that it is the contours of the urban motorway system that define and delimit this Ballardian island; and remember another biological catch-phrase too: Francis Crick's memorable description of the choice of elements in the genetic sign system as a *frozen accident.* Ultimately, Maitland's accident is a 'frozen' one, too – glaciated, locked, *concreted.* Thus the cool Ballardian irony continues . . .

ratfan's viewpoint

by John Brosnan

(The two reviews following were first published in Big Scab, *a fanzine produced by John Brosnan. We liked them.)*

Inverted World, *by Christopher Priest (Faber)*

Yet another book about a hyperboloid planet. The same old story about a group of people dragging a city from China to the Atlantic Ocean because their perception has been distorted by a translateration generator and they think their world is shaped like a solid hyperbola. Ho hum. How about a bit of originality, Mr. Priest?

Concrete Island, *by J.G. Ballard (Cape)*

Now here is something new! A man crashes his car and finds himself trapped

on a section of wasteland situated between three converging motorway routes. His efforts to escape are frustrated by two other (willing) inhabitants of the island . . . a neurotic girl and a retarded ex-circus acrobat. But Mr. Ballard delivers the real *coup de grace* at the end of the book, and I can tell you it is a real shocker! For, when the obstacles preventing the protagonist from leaving the island are removed, he decides *to stay of his own free will!* I must say I was completely floored by this unexpected development. Ballard is, without doubt, a real genius.

previously unpublished illustration to "Inverted World" by Andrew Stephenson

thanks for the (racial) memory

The Dream Millennium

by James White (Michael Joseph, 1974, 222pp, £2.50, ISBN 0 7181 1227 X)

reviewed by Mark Adlard

James White was a product of the Walter Willis circle of fans in Northern Ireland. He served his apprenticeship in the usual way: fandom, fannish writing, professional writing for sf magazines, and finally novels in hard covers. His stories, also, have contained the "usual" material: spaceships or aliens, and more often both together.

But his fiction has usually contained other qualities besides, which have given it distinction.

The "Sector General" stories, the best of which are available in *Hospital Station, Star Surgeon* and *The Aliens Among Us,* describe how a hospital on the galactic Rim cares for ailing and varied life-forms in the Galactic Federation. A beguiling spirit of compassion directs Dr. Conway in all he does; and Prilicla, the insect empath, must be one of the most amiable aliens ever invented. (At the Worcester Convention in 1971 White revealed, in his Guest of Honour Speech, that he had always wanted to be a doctor.)

Other stories, although on traditional themes, have their special virtues. There is, for instance, an understanding of human weakness which is unusual in fiction of this category. The heroes, for example Warren in *Open Prison* and McCullough in *All Judgment Fled* (like Dr. Conway in the "Sector General" series) are very frightened by situations that a boneheaded van Vogt hero wouldn't have noticed.

This new novel, *The Dream Millennium,* contains those two vital ingredients of space fiction: a spaceship and aliens; but it also contains James White's special virtues of compassion and human understanding, and it has something else besides.

The book is very largely concerned with the experiences of Devlin who, with an attractive young woman, forms the crew of a starship. They, and their passengers, have been put into a cold sleep so that they can survive

the long search for a habitable planet. The main worry is that this long period of frozen sleep will impair orientation and memory. In order to combat this hazard they are awakened at intervals – of 150 to 200 years – and instructed to "remember".

The novel is structured by intermitting Devlin's memories with descriptions of what he does each time he is awakened.

Devlin's memories, for more than half the novel, are those of his dreams in cold sleep. He has been a trilobite, a brontosaurus, a primitive king, a sales representative, a soldier, an aeroplane pilot. All these creatures have died horribly, and he relives their pain – from being eaten, savaged, assassinated, impaled on a steering column, shot by a terrorist bullet, killed by a hijacker. In the latter part of the book Devlin's memories are those of his own life, and he rediscovers how the project has been organized.

The intermitting action shows how Devlin responds to various crises which are outside the competence of the ship's computer. There is also some inoffensive sexual activity, referred to indirectly as breaking "ship's regulations".

I would guess that the emotional springboard of the novel is a kind of despair, and of bewilderment, at the inhumanity of man to man:

> "I'm sorry", said Devlin suddenly. "I don't know why the human race seems bent on individual and collective suicide when, as everyone agrees, we never had it so good . . ."
>
> "We have enough to eat, there is plenty of entertainment, lots of interesting things to do with one's spare time, and there would be no sickness if the hospitals weren't so overcrowded with nutcases . . ."
>
> "But to go back to something you said earlier about boredom and violence coupled with high technology and violence – I've been trying to make sense out of the present situation, too. It seems purposeless and stupid . . ."

I would guess, also, that this concern with irrational violence has been given a sharper edge by personal experience of the struggle between the Unionists and the IRA which has been going on since 1969. However, there are no explicit references to Northern Ireland, and the problem of violence is generalized.

This concern with violence and unnecessary pain is disciplined and given fictional form by submitting it to an intellectual idea, viz: because the atomic and molecular building-blocks of life are used over and over again, cold sleep over long periods may trigger something akin to racial memories.

Devlin relives the savagery of his predecessors and his race. He discovers

that it is the more able members of the species who cause the most pain. They are the "wolves". It is the suffering majority, the "sheep", with whom the future should lie, and it is from them that the colonists of the new world have been chosen. The "wolves" are happy on the planet they already dominate. I remember the conflict between the philosophical lemurs and the ape-men which Stapledon posited in *Last Men in London* (although Stapledon said his lemurs were less aggressive, not less intelligent like White's sheep.)

For me the main interest of *The Dream Millennium* is that it shows a well-established writer of popular sf, redeploying his tools in order to undertake something of additional purpose. I am sure that this change of emphasis will be worth watching in future.

horse opera

Star Rider
by Doris Piserchia (Bantam, 1974, 219pp, $1.25 [£0.40], ISBN 553 08408 125)

reviewed by Brian M. Stableford

Doris Piserchia's first novel, *Mister Justice,* was published as half of an Ace double in 1973, and was very favourably reviewed. In these days of mass production it is quite remarkable that halves of Ace doubles should be reviewed at all, but *Mister Justice* was, in fact, a rare gem. It was the story of a time-travelling vigilante who set out to exterminate evil in New York, plus the story of the attempt by the redundant Secret Service to train a juvenile superman to track him down and reinstate *law* and order, plus the story of a second superman with similar abilities who reckoned to take over the world. These plots became gradually more convoluted, and by the time they all mingled together the intensity of the action and the density of ideas built up to quite a crescendo. All in all, *Mister Justice* was promising rather than brilliant, but it promised a great deal.

For this reason, it was always going to be easy to find *Star Rider,* which is Ms. Piserchia's second novel, something of a disappointment. The standard expected of it was very high, and it never came near to it. It is, of course, a simple fact that authors do not produce their best work all the time, and it is rather unfair to criticise their poorer work by pointing out

how it differs from their better work. It might be kinder, and even fairer, if I were to discuss this work on its own, without the slightest reference to *Mister Justice*. However, it seems to me that when I put them together I can see much more clearly why *Star Rider* is the kind of book it is – and, for that matter, why *Mister Justice* is the kind of book it is.

Star Rider is about a girl who has a "horse" which talks. Together, they have the freedom of the universe, because they can teleport across space. She is alone, and engaged upon some vague quest for a planetary El Dorado. Unfortunately, the plot keeps inconveniencing her. She encounters an incredibly masculine character (with an incredibly masculine horse) who mistreats her shamefully, and keeps popping up throughout the book to mistreat her a bit more. She feels that she is terribly important, and other people feel the same, but no one – least of all the reader – is ever quite sure why. Assorted villains are persistently mean to her (though neither so persistent nor so mean as the masculine character, who winds up being the hero) and threaten the universe as well as her chastity.

Like *Mister Justice, Star Rider* is a book you can get lost in. There is no way of knowing exactly what is going on at any particular moment – things happen, but the theory behind them is evasive. Looking for that theory in terms of logic and coherent organisation of ideas is a waste of time, because it is not that kind of theory. These books are fantasies – dream-fantasies about being possessed of the power to indulge one's whims, about being involved with events of world-shattering importance, about being heroic under pressing circumstances and about winning emotionally even when you lose materially. *Mister Justice* is strong because of the kind of fantasy it is – a fantasy of instant retribution, where the answer to every problem is murder. The writing is tight and brisk because the natural tempo of the dream is fast and staccato. The images are sharp and bright. But *Star Rider* is a different kind of fantasy – languid and slow. It is not an active fantasy at all, but a passive one, which attempts to translate mood and feeling into the symbolic vocabulary of science fiction. *Star Rider* is a psychological landscape – extensive and still. Though things are constantly happening they make no difference to the basic situation.

Mister Justice and *Star Rider* are very much more similar in nature than appearances suggest. They are put together the same way. But the same method does not always produce the same results – some fantasies lend themselves much better to the kind of symbols sf uses than others. *Mister Justice* – alias Superman, Judex etc. – has always been a popular and com-

mercial fantasy. But the girl on the horse and the tall, dark stranger doesn't need the kind of dressing up that it gets from science fiction. The symbols aren't appropriate – it all comes out looking rather silly.

Ms. Piserchia can write, when she has a book to write. I still look forward to seeing her live up to some of the potential that was on display in *Mister Justice.* But it is inevitable from the way she works that some of her work is just not going to come across. Some dreams are transferable, and some aren't.

narrative interruptus

The Twilight of Briareus

by Richard Cowper (Gollancz, 1974, 255pp, £2.25, ISBN 0 575 01760 0)

reviewed by Tom Shippey

In its preliminary setting *The Twilight of Briareus* looks like a John Wyndham novel, one of the sort that Brian Aldiss has dubbed as 'cosy catastrophes'. Its starting date is 1983, i.e. just far enough away to be the future without there being any behavioural changes, and its hero is Calvin Johnson, self-described as 'English teacher, union member, law-abiding average citizen of the UK'. The event which starts off its action is the appearance of a supernova, the results of which include climatic deterioration together with universal human sterility, a mating, as it were, of *Greybeard* with *The World in Winter.* But though a good deal of the book's charm (as with Wyndham's) comes from the minutely observed detail of the pub conversation, BBC symposium, House of Commons debate, and general demonstration of civilized sloth, *Twilight* in the end turns sharply away from Wyndham's Darwinian themes towards something more obscure and more ambitious.

This is in fact foreshadowed by the first preludal chapter, 'Haven', set in 1999 (or just before what turns out to be the Millennium) in which Johnson with his mate struggles through the Arctic, dog-packed landscape of Lincolnshire to a meeting which seems predestined. Much of this chapter is not comprehensible until the end of the book, so that we are at least alerted to something other than the purely materalistic Wyndham/Christopher solutions. And with this as a guide one can see significances in what appear to be accidents. The year 2000, for example, really is the

Millennium, and Calvin Johnson shares initials with Jesus Christ, dying at the end in a place that has been compared to Calvary, with a wound through the right side; his first name also comes to imply the universe of predestination ushered in by the supernova Briareus. He is in fact not an 'average citizen of the UK' at all, and the whole 'cosy catastrophe' setting is a blind.

For the real result of the Briareus supernova turns out to be a kind of missionary invasion of disembodied entities who ride the wavefront of the supernova for some unknown (and, one can't help thinking, rather officious) purpose. The sterility that comes over the human race is a natural, unconscious reaction to this invasion, as our deeper brain centres decide, like saga heroes, to die racially rather than yield their individuality. But in some unexplained way the 'Newcomers' effect a deeper relationship with a small proportion of human beings, the Zetas, of which group Calvin Johnson is a further development.

It is around here that the story starts to develop holes. The Zetas, for example, are overwhelmingly a group of young females who are also automatically submissive sexually to the few mature males among them — Johnson finds this out through an act of mutual rape between himself and one of his Sixth form. Naturally everyone thinks that the Zetas must be some kind of breeding group, whether created by the 'Newcomers' or not. But in fact they turn out as sterile as anybody else, unless the females are brainwashed to the point of idiocy, and even then the children do not survive. So what are the Zetas for? Their 'trips' of precognition add mystery, the attempts to brainwash and exterminate them bring a kind of suspense, there's even a certain titillation in their peculiar sexual behaviour, but their relationship with the 'Newcomers' is never developed and as an attempt at either conquest or communication they seem remarkably unsuccessful. And it seems at least strange that what looks like a very probable connection between their increased sexuality and the rest of the world's sterility should, in the end, come to nothing except in the one case of Calvin Johnson.

The reader may feel a little cheated over this, as over the stock Wyndhamian figure of Angus McHarty, the Professor-whose-theory-is-ignored-by-those-in-authority — for not only does McHarty die purposelessly towards the end of the novel, he also contributes very little to the story's explanation except generalized blasts against organized science, and the basic take-over theory. There is no stepping up of the accuracy of his unacceptable logic, as there so memorably is with his counterparts Zellaby

and Bocker (in *The Midwich Cuckoos* and *The Kraken Wakes* respectively), though of course he turns out to have no alien menace to oppose.

However, the human menace in the story is not especially powerful either. True, the Zetas are all but exterminated with official and popular approval, Johnson asking himself rhetorically: 'Yet was it really any less extraordinary than what had been allowed to happen in Europe in the '30s and '40s?' No, one thinks dutifully, it isn't (though one perhaps wonders whether the 'less' in that question shouldn't really be 'more'.) But one result is that McHarty's vague suggestion that the 'Newcomers' have got something to do with it never catches on; the result of *that* is that when it is revealed at the end that it wasn't them after all, and that the whole thing *was* just like the killing of the German Jews, the revelation carries little weight. 'Now I come to think of it', writes Johnson, 'the Project did have all the single-mindedness of *homo sapiens* at his most egotistical and reptilian'. Yes. That's what we all thought. Though we never in fact saw very much of it apart from one Captain Norton wandering in from time to time with a testing machine or an attempt to get a sperm sample, which, it appears, would have done him little good anyway.

I have a feeling that Mr. Cowper has, while pursuing his themes of predestination, the millennium, and a sexual re-awakening, rather lost his way in the story. Too many questions are left hanging: why should the 'Twilight generation' turn out to be no more than a second wave of Zetas? Can the problems of precognition and predestination be avoided by talk of a different 'time concept' and a disarming 'I've never understood relativity anyway'? Most important, why does Johnson have to kill himself at the end just as his child is born and the millennium is starting? It makes him more like Christ, but who, in this case, is demanding the sacrifice for our sins? One could go on, but the point may remain: once one stops treating the story as a predestined flow of events, its mechanics are not good.

A more generous way of putting this may be to say that Mr. Cowper has allowed the two sub-genres of 'catastrophe' and 'psychic breakthrough' to mix without quite getting them to fuse. To break down some of the walls of standardized sf is a worthwhile goal, and for some readers narrative pace may well carry off inconsistencies. Still, if Richard Cowper were Geoffrey Chaucer, one would say that this was his *Merchant's Tale* – a story with many good parts, not very like any of his others, ending (very nearly) in a sexual climax, but leaving finally an impression of experiment and uncertainty.

strontium and soda

The Eighty-Minute Hour: a Space Opera

by Brian W. Aldiss (Cape, 1974, 286 pp., £2.25, ISBN 0 224 00941 9)

reviewed by David I. Masson

Here we are once more in surprise-packed Aldissia, one of my favourite continents, reaching from pole to equator of the hypersphere. Which country, however? Ah, this time our team takes you to the relatively infertile terrain of Pushdefiggazaroundferalaffia. We have been there before, folks, for example in "Comic Inferno", a truly enjoyable experience; and in one or two more nihilistic. Grand for a short stay – but 278 text pages? You have to have a tough constitution, a super-keen memory, and a contempt for reality, to survive. (Yes, yes, reality deserves our contempt, as five minutes' listening to the news will demonstrate; but there are other solutions.)

Mind you, this book is rich enough in a way. More logodaedaly to the square inch than the most Celtic of modern Celtic fantasies; an improbable quip every other sentence (sometimes several in one); a cast (as the blurb points out) of thousands; invention (and inventions) fizzing all the time; but as much real human interest as a set of carnival floats. At times it reads as though Marty Feldman had written *A Torrent of Faces* for Kenneth Williams.

This kind of extended gambol will score if played as a rip-roaring farce, or as a savage satire, or if it has some sort of mythic power. But despite a little sport with clichés, stock figures and ham situations, the book has no obvious bite. To make it the work of one of the characters isn't quite an excuse.

We grin, we enjoy perhaps, but the total effect is triviality and emptiness. Aldiss's brilliant racquetry with the insanity of things is being squandered where it should be concentrated.

Besides some contemptuously slick scientific gobbledegook, the author's habitual fun with personal names brings up ones like Chambers Technical Dictionary, and some puns: for instance, a Croatian Lady Myrtr Tjidvyl, a (quite amiable) Devlin Carnate (but originally *l'Inglese italianato è un*

diavolo incarnato) and his sister Javlin, or one Monty Zoomer (who is actually quite a good send-up as a personality.) In short, Aldiss seems to despise his characters as well as the pseudo-science he invents, or indeed the whole action.

Then there are the songs and verses. Aldiss has almost libretto'd a musical here, with lyrics, duets, trios etc. (No good him hiding behind his character-author or the subtitle, either.) I could never, I confess, make out the *raison d'être* of those jazzy lyrics in *Gravity's Rainbow;* and they had more snap to them. A musical about world politics, that's 20th-century entertainment for you. Is that what he is trying to say? Or wait: it couldn't be, could it, that Pynchon and Aldiss are hoping for . . .? After Ken Russell I can believe anything.

So now, what's the story about? It is A.D. 1999 and three (or five) years after the end of World War III. Britain has literally sunk beneath atomic bombardment; the Danube, dammed, has created the Pannonian Sea; Australia and north-western North America have been virtually destroyed; the Pacific has been dammed artificially across the Bering Straits. Although it's only 25 years ahead of today, all sorts of *impossibilia* have been invented or discovered and are now commonplaces: space-travel and spy-vessels with deep-frozen crews as far out as Jupiter; Mars used for concentration camps and supporting human life at its surface with surely inadequate oxygenation and cold-protection; partition and transportation of planetary bodies; polywater windows; a mysterious microspace or "ecopicosystem"; multi-sensory audience-surrounding holodreams or holodramas; holmen (artificial working copies of individuals); cyborgs; universal controls secretly implanted in everyone's brain; and so on: in other words, just possibly 2099 (if Earth's resources last that long) but never 1999. This fantasy implicitly accepts the usual escapist axiom of everlasting growth. OK., fun is fun; but once you've said "World War III" and "1999" you must play for true, or make a definite point with nonsense: if you call up the Devil it is unwise just to smirk at him. Yet despite the opening epigram, some chat about population-destruction, and some fun with the "envirocrats" wiping out Amazonia (p.187-8), there is little sign of awareness of the effects of 25 years' plunder of Earth's dwindling resources, and of a nuclear war, upon the lives of surviving humanity. However, the bombs have induced spatially bound but moving time-slips which seriously disrupt the Solar System and the lives of some of the figures. Russo-America, the Cap-Comm world, is opposed by the Dissident Nations (a shrewd touch, that). Sinister and invincible, Computer-Complex

oversees all.

A series of plots and multiple surprises, many affecting the control of humanity, takes us over much of the globe, into microspace, beyond the asteroid belt (with planetary landings), and far into the geological past. Nobody seems to worry overmuch. There is at least one perpetual-causation loop (A causes B causes A). As a salad, or maybe an emetic, we keep getting slices of a sword-and-sordidry quest; Aldiss waits till near the end to explain this: too long.

Oddest image (?): "The cameras followed them, silent as hepatitis" (p.29). Highly commended: " 'Wuh-uh . . .' said Zoomer, low in his throat. It was his personal way of saying, 'See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament' " (p.179); "The happy ending fled shrieking to the horizon and disappeared into the Mediterranean" (p.279 – I know the feeling exactly). Also appreciated: in connexion with person-duplicating, "the massive doppelgangster ovens" (p.32); "the signal scrambled, hopping from megahertz to megahertz with the abandon of a hot tin cat" (p.93); the ebullient paragraph on p.95 about the corpse-flotsam from Britain; the loudspeaker on p.129; and Thunderbird's speech on p.253. Good: the names of Mars's new satellites (p.140) and of super-boss Attica Saigon Smix. Bad: name of Martian poet (p. 142: some of us appreciate French literature). Misprints: "peole" (p.96); "Bibbie Gentry" (p.165); Ispahan with a *ph* (p.255); "dopple" is presumably deliberate. There are too many exclamation marks. I never worked out the truth about Mike Surinat and Becky Hornbeck's public transport flight.

the nutritive value of nuts

The New Apocrypha
by John Sladek (Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1973, 376pp, £3.25, ISBN 0 246 10715 4)

reviewed by Robert J. M. Rickard

"Not many books have been written about modern pseudo-scientists and their views. I found only two general surveys that provided useful material."[1]

1. Martin Gardner: *In the Name of Science*, GP Putnam, New York 1952. Gardner is referring to *Foibles and Fallacies of Science* by Daniel W. Hering, 1924; and *The Story of Human Error* by Joseph Jastrow, 1936.

Since Martin Gardner wrote these words in his now standard reference on what Sladek calls 'Crank Compendiums', the subject has proliferated almost beyond belief. The evolution of Science, too, has multiplied its own specializations and mysteries. It is harder than ever to keep informed and up-to-date; in the confusion the nut-cults and pseudo-sciences thrive against a background of bickering experts. Sladek like Gardner before him develops an encyclopaedic approach – a little of everything – divide and conquer: Fossil astronauts; Atlantis; Theosophy; The Great Pyramid; Circle Squaring; Perpetual Motion; Faith Healing; 'organic' & Health Foods; Kennedy Assassination Theories; UFOs; Velikovsky; Flat Earthers; The Voynich Manuscript and Codes; Hoerbiger's World Ice and Falling Moons Theories; Nostradamus; Ted Serios; Psychic Research; to list a few. One by one he pours a bucket of cold skepticisms over them.

Sladek's criteria for inclusion are not very clear. Despite his statement that "The effort is made to distinguish between ideas which are off the beaten track and those which are simply off the rails", we are faced with a ragbag of curiosities which largely fall into the latter category. Yet for all their faults, surely these 'fads and fallacies' tell us something vital about the human condition – very human answers to the problem of facing the Unknowns in our lives? Here I find his major lack, which for me at least lessens the value of this kind of stone-throwing: he fails to respond with inquiry, much less compassion. We might well ask with John Keel: 'To Hell with the Answers! What's the Question?'[2]

Many writers have commented on the current (almost universal) trends to anti-scientific, anti-religious preoccupation. The deep rift between the emotional and intellectual need for 'The Other World', and the suspicious reaction against orthodoxy in Science and Religion, has had a devastating effect on a whole generation. The hazy days of 1966 to 1968 saw the rise of 'Flower-power' or psychedelia; its rapid spread, like a virile contagion, through the magazines, comix, films and music, showed in a practical way that pseudo-science plus pseudo-occultism made a marvellous instant mysticism, great graphics, and 'meaningful' indentification.[3] Books like Von Däniken's theses of the ancient gods being alien spacemen have only made

2. John A. Keel: *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse*, Abacus, 1973.
3. The 'Underground' culture indulged in wholesale plundering across the board from mysticism to science-fiction for its symbology. See *Oz* No.9, Feb. 1968, for an anthology of quotes from many of the sources, subjects and people that Sladek discusses. So many of these ideas have now passed into everyday conversation. E.g. Charles Fort coined the word 'teleportation'.

muddy-thinking murkier, and thoroughly mixed poor scholarship, unassimilated 'scientific' discoveries, and 'texts' of various religions, with all the tricks of modern sensational journalism. Von Däniken was not the first with these ideas[4], and he certainly won't be the last. He was the first, however, to hit the Big Time cash-flow. And in his wake the pundits bob and weave – Andrew Tomas, Peter Kolosimo, Robert Charroux, Steiger & Whritenour, Lobsang Rampa, Pauwels & Bergier, *et al* – many quoting from each other and thereby exaggerating rumours and false data into plausibilities[5]; a few plodding on with genuine insight and original research.

What are we supposed to make of it all? Sladek performs a welcome and timely service, because the amount of false logic and data used to buttress improbable theories, and trotted out as 'evidence' is assuming proportions that would be farcical, were it not firstly sinister. As Sladek points out many of these authors have the sensation-hungry public at their mercy, as they "leap from one startling discovery to another, secure in the knowledge that their readers couldn't possibly check out all their sources, even when these are given." Gardner asks: "Perhaps we are making a mountain out of a molehill. It is all very amusing, one might say, to titillate the public fancy with books about Bee-people from Mars. The scientists are not fooled, nor are the readers who are scientifically informed. If the public wants to shell out cash for such flummery, what difference does it make?"[6]

It is not funny, he answers himself, when people are being misled by 'scientific claptrap'. I must confess that I have a great affection for the weird

4. Sladek seems to credit Von Däniken with the idea that the Garden of Eden was an alien-spaceman's eugenics laboratory before things went 'wrong'. I seem to remember that T.C. Lethbridge's *Legend of the Sons of God* was contemporary with it. Also at roughly the same time Otto Binder's *Unsolved Mysteries of the Past* discussed a much earlier work by Max Flindt, *On Tiptoe beyond Darwin,* which compiled biological evidence to support the human-evolution-by-alien-intervention theory. In 1960, Brinsley Le Poer Trench published his *The Sky People* which has been a major source book for Von Däniken. We have Charles Fort's own 'We are Property' theory of pre-1920. And earlier still, there is the thoroughly dubious *Book of Dzyan* of the Theosophists (c. 1888), which Sladek persists in spelling 'Dyzan'. It might be of some interest to note here that as Sladek mentions, the Theosophists began to invent and populate Lemuria in about 1860 . . . see the postscript to Lin Carter's *Thongor at the End of Time* (Paperback Library, 1968) where he tells how he based the Thongor series on the same source as the Theosophists, the various Sanskrit Puranas.
5. Sladek gives some examples of how news can be distorted from rumour into plausibilities by reciprocal quoting; exaggerating; either/or type arguments; and so on. (See pages 302-309 *New Apocrypha.*)
6. Gardner: *In the Name of Science.*

ideas and the 'Damned' data (as Fort called them) that can generate reactions from laughter to apoplexy – and I naturally side with underdogs, in this case the pathetic tales of persecution from the media and colleagues usually made by the classic pseudo-scientist/occultist (also accompanied by identification with others rejected by orthodoxy, like Christ, Mesmer, Lister, Pasteur, Galileo, etc.). As a non-scientifically-informed reader I often find myself being taken in, and I accept this as the risk of attempting to keep my mind 'open'. Ultimately, of course, it's as personal a decision as that, for each one of us; but Science is not, cannot be, under such restraint. As a Fortean I am attracted by the notion that 'Science' holds no monopoly on 'Truth', and that its 'Laws' and pronouncements must be taken (in John W. Campbell's phrase) as 'the best educated guess at this point in time'.

Gardner supposes that the function of a dogma in Science is to cause new theories to struggle for their acceptance, thereby *having* to establish viable evidence. "If this situation did not exist, Science would be reduced to a shambles by having to examine every new-fangled notion that came along . . ." He quotes a noted professor as saying that "A fairly complete textbook of physics would be only part of the answer to Velikovsky."[7] Scientists, says Gardner, have more important things to do.

But surely this is an abdication of responsibility; hardly tenable in 1952 and equally unacceptable today. No surprise to find that fools have rushed in to fill the vacuum. If the cranks and sensation-mongers knew that their books or theories would be dissected closely, it is certain that there would be less of them around. For this reason I was sad to see that though Sladek had followed Gardner's structure (and includes much of his material) he had not picked up or developed the things Gardner had to say – the very things that would have made it more than a mere catalogue of human error. If I were more cynical I'd say that Sladek has done little more than bring Gardner up-to-date. Oh! yes! there are a few quotes from Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* and some generalized aphorisms like: "Outside Science, the message that Science is unwell has filtered down to the ignorant as a garbled rumour: Science is dead." But these hardly come to grips with any of the central questions.

Charles Fort seems to be the one person to emerge intact from both Gardner and Sladek. We know that many of Fort's followers have been guilty of slipping into dogma – yet Fort turns out to have had something

7. Prof. L.J. Lafleur: "Cranks and Scientists", *Scientific Monthly,* Nov. 1951.

genuine and relevant to say about just how we should approach the Unknown – with humility and humour. Let me quote Gardner again:

> "It is true that no scientific theory is above doubt. It is true that all scientific 'facts' are subject to endless revision as new data are uncovered. No scientist worthy of the name thinks otherwise – but it is also true that scientific theories can be given with high or low degrees of confirmation. Fort was blind to this elementary fact – or pretended to be blind to it – and it is this blindness which is the spurious and unhealthy side of Forteanism – When a Fortean seriously believes that all scientific theories are equally absurd, all the rich humour of the Society gives way to an ignorant sneer."[8]

One might add that when a scientist seriously believes that all scientific theories are equally true; or that all heretical theories are equally crank, then all that is noble or true in Science gives way to arrogant pomposity.

In the preface to *New Apocrypha,* Sladek says: "I try to describe them (cranks and their beliefs) with a minimum of debunking. Although I must confess in advance my own bias against many occult and pseudo-scientific claims." Fair enough. But his control is not sufficient at times and his bias becomes a holier-than-thou-type sneer. Certainly some of his subjects really deserve it; e.g. on Zen macrobiotics he says: "Ohsawa thus invites the cancer patient to compound his condition with scurvy and possible dehydration. Jesus Christ!" This leads to a tendency to dismiss questionable material in a facile way, because it has become associated with crackpots – throwing the baby out with the bathwater.[9] The dangers of this approach are obvious, so Sladek being very careful and clever, tends to err (if err he does) safely – what Arthur Clarke has called the 'Failure of Nerve and Imagination'.[10] Thus I find that his analyses of, say, Stonehenge computer-theories, or John Michell's work on leys, are shallow to the point of uselessness. However, this is compensated for by the flashes of wit that *do* pay off. (On p. 78 is an illustration of the Mayan tomb carving said by Von Däniken, Kolosimo etc. to be Quetzalcoatl at the controls of his spaceship – on the opposite page Sladek shows how by the same associative process it can become a parody of

8. Gardner: *In the Name of Science.*
9. E.g. "Systematic research into magic from the perspective of pharmaceutics began in 1926 with an essay that has since become a classic: 'Action and Clinical Uses of Ephedrine, an Alkaloid isolated from the Chinese Drug Ma Huang' by K.K. Chen and C.F. Schmidt. The authors . . . did not, as was the common practice in those days, simple write-off the 'magic' potentialities . . . but instead analysed the plant. To their work we owe many stimulants: Benzedrine, Pervitine and so on. The student swallowing a stimulant before his examinations probably has no idea that he is following an ancient magical practice." L. Pauwels and J. Bergier: *Impossible Possibilities.* Avon, 1973.
10. Arthur C. Clarke: *Profiles of the Future,* Pan, 1962. (See Chs. 1 and 2)

the old pulp sf covers, a swooning girl in the arms of a sinister humanoid robot.)

On the whole Sladek's tome represents an unenviable and mammoth task of finding very few pearls in a vast heap of muck, for which many of the less well-informed (who perhaps like me will be initially annoyed at discovering the extent of their gullibility) will owe him a debt of thanks. Clearly one of the lessons to be learnt is that whatever may be happening in Science or Religion (or elsewhere for that matter) an uncritical acceptance of what is pushed at us, does ourselves no service at all – a 'truth' known to the ancients and *still* valid today.

> "The Buddha replied: 'Believe nothing on the faith of traditions, even though they have been held in honour for many generations and in divers places. Do not believe a thing because many people speak of it. Do not believe what you yourself have imagined, persuading yourself that a god inspires you. Believe nothing on the sole authority of your masters and priests. After examination, believe what you yourself have tested and found to be reasonable, and conform your conduct thereto."[11]

11. A. David-Neel: *Initiations and Initates in Tibet,* Rider, 1970.

salo to the apocalypse for me

New Worlds for Old – The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature

by David Ketterer (Anchor Books, 1974, 347pp, $2.95, ISBN 0 385 00470 2)

reviewed by Mark Adlard

There has been increasing evidence that intellects "vast and cool", but by no means "unsympathetic" as Wells' Martians, have had our microcosm under scrutiny for some time. We now have final evidence in what I think can be called the first full length book about science fiction from the groves of academe. It is by an Associate Professor of English at Concordia University, Montreal.

A couple of quotations, and associated glosses, might give some indication of Ketterer's angle of scrutiny:

> For the previous fifty or so years, science fiction, owing in great part to the efforts of Hugo Gernsback, has been artificially divorced from the mainstream . . .

(A quick flick through the index shows that Gernsback is mentioned only once again, John W. Campbell not at all, and the golden oldies such as Leinster, Jack Williamson, Weinbaum, Hamilton and Kuttner, are similarly ignored. Larry Niven does not appear.)

> All too often, an abundance of 'ideas' in science fiction, however stimulating they may be, points to an essential poverty of imagination. There are few experiences more stultifying than listening to a fan retailing the 'far-out' conceptions that have gone into the plots . . . For just this reader, A.E. van Vogt has evolved his technical recipe of introducing a new idea every eighteen hundred words . . . Once the 'ideas' have been enumerated, there is simply nothing further constructive to be said.

(Another quick flick at the index shows that considerable space is given to Aldiss, Boyd, Dick, Heinlein and Jesus Christ, Le Guin, Lem, Walter M. Miller and Vonnegut.)

The footnotes are extensive. On the one hand they draw upon "serconzines" such as Sapiro's *Riverside Quarterly*; on the other they use *PMLA* and the scholarly quarterlies.

I should not proceed any further without pointing out that Ketterer's book has a wider scope than science fiction itself, as is indicated by the sub-title.

Ketterer's first intention is to define "apocalyptic literature" so as to distinguish it from both "mimetic" and "fantastic" literature. Using John of Patmos as a paradigm, Ketterer finds that apocalyptic literature is concerned with the creation of other worlds which have some sort of relationship with the "real" world, but which destroy the "real" world in the reader's head. This leads to the contention that science fiction provides the purest outlet for the apocalyptic imagination.

Ketterer's second intention is "to emphasize the considerable concordance that exists between all science fiction and the characteristics of American literature generally and the American experience".

Within this framework Ketterer develops a number of interesting essays. I enjoyed in particular the treatment of Poe (the use of arabesque patterns and the half-closed eye as devices for transcending objective reality); of Le Guin (the snow-bound world of Gethen is shown to have a consistency which at least equals that of the sand-bound world of Dune); of Miller (the repetition of themes in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*); of Lem (*Solaris* as a

critique of virtually all other science fiction: an article which has appeared in *Foundation*); of Boyd (an analysis of the immensely complicated plot of *The Last Starship from Earth,* which almost convinced me it was worth understanding); of Aldiss (a not entirely sympathetic appreciation of the antithetical worlds presented by *Report on Probability A* and *Barefoot in the Head,* but with the final comment that "Aldiss is attempting that appropriate combination of style and content that may truly liberate science fiction from the ghetto of its own clichés").

Finally there is an extended piece about Vonnegut, who is seen as the prime example of the apocalyptic imagination at work. *Slaughterhouse Five* is viewed as a compendium of motifs from the earlier novels, and *Breakfast of Champions* as a hold-all for what was left over. Ketterer devotes most of his attention to *The Sirens of Titan,* which he considers "a cosmic backdrop against which the action in all of Vonnegut's works is played". He argues convincingly that *The Sirens of Titan* is the best of Vonnegut's novels, and that it has been underrated because of the blatant science fiction content.

It is natural that one should have some reservations about a book which covers such a large area as this one.

For example, I become uneasy when such minor writers as Charles Brockden Brown, Fitz-James O'Brien and Bierce, and minor works by Fenimore Cooper, Melville and Stephen Crane, are marshalled to support a major thesis. (I.e. ". . . to emphasize the considerable concordance that exists between all science fiction and the characteristics of American literature generally", etc.) Nathaniel West and Pynchon may provide more support, but it seems to me that you can't frame a general hypothesis about American literature unless you can show that it embraces the major writers between the wars (Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Farrell, Steinbeck) who are either not mentioned, or who are referred to only in passing. Then you would need to show that such "apocalyptic" writers as Dickens (*Dombey and Son* onwards), Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Virginia Woolf and Joyce, are not representative of a similar tradition in English fiction.

Also, although I enormously admire Ketterer's rare virtue of closely studying the words that actually appear on the page, I am sometimes nervous about his method. These techniques of imagistic analysis, which were acceptable when G. Wilson Knight was looking at Shakespeare, are perhaps less appropriate elsewhere. The method makes me nervous even in the case of Vonnegut.

Perhaps the name of Salo, the Tralfamadorian in *The Sirens of Titan* is a contraction of "say hello", but is the name of Tralfamadore really a contraction of "Trafalgar" and "commodore", with the implication that the government of Tralfamadore is no more important than the head of a yacht club in the wider sea of the galaxies?

Similarly, I believe that syntactical ambiguities in the novels of Compton-Burnett, for example, are quite deliberate and serve an artistic purpose, but I suspect that the syntactical ambiguities in the writers selected by Ketterer do little more than illustrate an unsure grasp of English.

Such reservations, however, do not prevent me from praising this book very highly indeed. Ketterer has assembled a large amount of interesting material in an imaginative and suggestive way, and submits it to intelligent and sensitive analysis. It is good to find that so many works of science fiction not only stand up to his rigorous critical methods, but have their value enhanced in the process.

books received

A listing in this column does not necessarily preclude a full review in a later issue.

Berry, Adrian	*The Next Ten Thousand Years* [introduced by Patrick Moore] (Cape, 1974, 224pp, £2.50. ISBN 0 224 00966 4)
Blavatsky, H.P.	*Studies in Occultism* (Sphere, 1974, 191pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 1701 9)
Bloch, Robert	*The Opener of the Way* (Neville Spearman, 1974, 309pp, £1.95. ISBN 85978 006 6. First published by Arkham House, 1945)
Bova, Ben (Ed.)	*Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Vol. III.* (Gollancz, 1974, 440pp, £3.20. ISBN 0 575 01738 4)
Broekman, Marcel	*The Complete Encyclopaedia of Practical Palmistry* (Souvenir, 1974, 187pp, £2.50. ISBN 0 285 62128 9)
Budrys, Algis	*The Furious Future* (Gollancz, 1974, 191pp, £1.75. ISBN 0 575 01753 8. First published by Gollancz, 1964)
Bulmer, Kenneth (Ed.)	*New Writings in Science Fiction (24)* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1974, 189pp, £2.25. ISBN 0 283 98138 5)
	New Writings in Science Fiction (22) (Corgi, 1974, 189pp, 35p. ISBN 0 552 09492 7. First published by Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973)

Coney, Michael	*Friends Come in Boxes* (Gollancz, 1974, 189pp, £2.10. ISBN 0 575 01802 X)
Conrad, Paul	*Ex Minus* (Hale, 1974, 191pp, £1.60. ISBN 0 7091 4160 2)
Cooper, Edmund	*Prisoner of Fire* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1974, 191pp, £1.95. ISBN 0 340 17016 6)
Crispin, Edmund (Ed.)	*Outwards From Earth* (Faber, 1974, 151pp, 60p. ISBN 0 571 10489 4)
Crowley, Aleister	*Moonchild* (Sphere, 1974, 301pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 2703 0. Previously published Mandrake, 1929, and Sphere, 1972)
Delany, Samuel R.	*The Fall of the Towers* (Sphere, 1974, 416pp, 50p. ISBN 0 7221 28991. First published by Sphere, 1968 and 1971)
Disch, Thomas M.	*334* (Sphere, 1974, 247pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 2973 4. First published by MacGibbon & Kee, 1972)
Elwood, Roger (Ed.)	*Children of Infinity* (Faber, 1974, 174pp, £1.60. ISBN 0 571 10543 2)
Endore, Guy	*The Werewolf of Paris* (Sphere, 1974, 258 pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 3333 2. First published by John Long, 1934)
Farmer, Philip José	*The Fabulous Riverboat* (Rapp Whiting/Deutsch, 1974, 251pp, £2.50. ISBN 0 85391 197 5)
Fort, Charles	*New Lands* (Sphere, 1974; 206pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 3627 7. First published by Boni & Liveright, 1923)
Garnett, David S.	*Time in Eclipse* (Robert Hale, 1974, 176pp, £1.60. ISBN 0 7091 4020 7)
	Mirror in the Sky (Robert Hale, 1974, 176pp, £1.60. ISBN 0 7091 3816 4. First published by Hale, 1973)
Gerrold, David	*Yesterday's Children* (Faber, 1974, 211pp, £2.40. ISBN 0 571 10481 9)
Harrison, Harry	*The Stainless Steel Rat's Revenge* (Sphere, 1974, 196pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 4372 9. First published by Faber, 1971)
Hodgson, William Hope	*Carnacki The Ghost-Finder* (Sphere, 1974, 239pp, 40p. ISBN 0 7221 4613 2. First published by Nash 1913)
Howard, Robert E.	*Skull-Face Omnibus* (Neville Spearman, 1974, 474pp, £2.50. ISBN 85978 009 4. First published by Arkham House, 1946)
Howard, Robert E. and de Camp, L. Sprague	*Conan The Freebooter* (Sphere, 1974, 205pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 4696 5. First published by Lancer, 1968)
Howard, Robert E. and de Camp, L. Sprague & Carter, Lin	*Conan of Cimmeria* (Sphere, 1974, 192pp, 30p. ISBN 0 7221 4695 7. First published by Lancer, 1969)
Irwin, James B. & Emerson, William A., Jnr.	*To Rule the Night* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1974, 251pp, £2.50. ISBN 0 340 18755 7)

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7 AND 8

All editorial and subscription correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, "Foundation", The Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Essex RM8 2AS, England.

With this issue subscription rates change again. We apologize. As from 1975, we shall publish only three numbers a year, and subscription rates (which from now on cover three numbers only) have been changed accordingly. Back copies of Foundation *are still available: numbers 4 and 5 at £0.50 each ($1.60 in the USA and Canada, £0.60 elsewhere), and number 6 at £0.75 ($2.00 in the USA and Canada, £0.75 elsewhere).*

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James, Laurence	*Simon Rack, Earth Lies Sleeping* (Sphere, 1974, 159pp, 35p. ISBN 0 7221 4979 4)
Laumer, Keith	*The Star Treasure* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1974, 177pp, £2.25. ISBN 0 283 98155 5)
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