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AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (Second Series)
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DICEBAMUS HESTERNA DIE

One of the things I enjoyed most about the old ASFR was the letters of comment - the short, publishable letters, mainly, but I didn't mind the 20-page letters I got regularly. All of them told me that ASFR was being read and appreciated, and that's what it was about - the 'continuing conversation' (as Jack Speer, I think, called it). I didn't publish the 20-page letters.

John Foyster has more or less conned me into writing a letter of comment on each issue, more or less in the form of an editorial. That's not the way he put it, but I have known him for some time. Also, he has offered me a look at what will be in this issue, so I can make it a bit more of an editorial, but I have politely declined that. It was good of him to offer, but I learnt about 20 years ago, the hard way, not to comment on what the innocent reader is about to encounter. John knows that, too, but he's a bit excited about this new fanzine. And rightly so. Right up to the last moment, when I was handed my copy of the new ASFR. I'd contained my excitement, but then ... well, it all came flooding back. I'll spare you my general feelings just now, because mainly I want to talk about Wynne Whiteford.

I was utterly fascinated by Russell Blackford's article about Wynne's writing, delighted that Russell 'took Wynne Whiteford seriously' (because however else you may take Wynne, you must take him seriously) and humbled that I had not read Wynne with the care Russell has.

In the 20 years I have known Wynne Whiteford I have known him almost entirely as a friend - and you couldn't ask for a better. In 1969 he found me a job when I desperately needed one (and what fun we had together, proofreading the Northcote Leader! - then was days!). In our lunch and tea breaks he regularly beat me at chess - except when he resigned, to my puzzlement, and then genially pointed out that I had him in five or six moves. Wynne and Laurel did their best to save my first marriage, as did other friends, and I was particularly touched when they came to St Kilda to talk it out with me; then they came to see my second in progress, in Canberra, and Laurel was too weak to move from their car, but she had come, and at least Sally met her; and when Wynne told us, so quietly, at a convention in Adelaide, that Laurel had died, we weren't sure for a while we'd heard right. When it sank in, we knew again that Wynne was exactly the man we always thought he was: a friend, who (bless him) didn't want us fussing on his account. And that's the sort of man he is, among other things.

Among other things, Wynne is one of the most extraordinarily enthusiastic, inventive and fun-loving people I have ever met. And he is consistent to the point of doggedness in his enthusiasm, invention and love of fun. His enthusiasm for Jules Verne, for example, has remained joyously constant as long as I have known him. His powers of invention seem boundless - we

wasted a lot of the Leader's time talking about his ideas for stories, articles, things NASA or someone should be trying - and I'm delighted to see Wynne getting these inventions in print, and people like Russell discussing them, because it's the discussion that Wynne is after, the continuing conversation, the sharing, the fun.

JB 2/6.4.86

OUR COLLECTIVE WAYS

ASFR (Second Series) was safely launched at Swancon XI in Perth over Easter, amidst the popping of champagne corks and the munching of chips, cheezels and cornchips. The inimitable Grant Stone recorded it for posterity and the Faster-Than-Light Radio Show. Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown joined in the festivities, celebrating the first birthday of the solid newszine The Notional and the second issue of the charmingly-named Fuck the Tories. The more highly spiritual amongst us knew that John Foyster and Yvonne Rousseau, though seemingly absent in their physical manifestation, were clearly visible to the Third Eye. The most refined souls may even have claimed to apprehend the subtle psychic emanations of John Bangsund, but it was probably just the champagne.

This issue is largely devoted to an exceedingly solid piece of work, the Rousseau-Turner correspondence. This friendly but acrimonious debate springs from Yvonne's paper at Adventon Five held in Adelaide in Easter 1985, revealing several Dreadful Suspicions she has about George's writing. The Notional printed the paper; George was moved to write a lengthy letter to defend his honour; and the debate was on. We are printing the whole of the correspondence; we hope that it will be instructive about George's work in particular and about criticism in general...

Now, when I say 'solid', I mean SOLID. Solider than we had really anticipated when we wrote our very first 'In the Next Issue'. Sneja Gunew's article about Australian science fiction just won't fit. Sorry about that - but we promise, it is coming, really. After all, we HAVE typed it into the PC.

You might also notice that the promised 'Sf and the Dirty Little Virgin' isn't actually quite in this issue. What with the dreaded Correspondence and Yvonne's other work, we decided to let her off the hook until the July issue. However, we did persuade the Foyster that we couldn't wait another two months for more of 'The Long View', especially because it was just getting exciting.

There aren't any LOCs because none of you mangy bastards have sent in any. Admittedly, there were lovely reviews in The Notional and Thyme, and Grant Stone claims to have written, demanding more white space. Well, Grant, I hope you're satisfied (yes, when we saw issue one, we decided something had to be done, even before we save up for a decent printer). And, thanks to the review in Thyme, a person from Essex has sent us a one-pound coin for the first issue. Ah, well, it's the thought that counts.

JB1 12.4.86

THE LONG VIEW 2

John Foyster

In the first instalment of this article I introduced the notion - to sample the development of magazine science fiction at ten year intervals, and so to trace its evolution - and also some of the techniques I will be using. Starting with Astounding for 1943, I dealt with the appearance of the magazine, and went on to introduce - or re-introduce for most readers, I hope - the methods suggested by Bainbridge for handling story ratings across issues, as well as two indices (for participation and agreement, both having value 0 at minimum and 1 at maximum), which provide a guide as to the interpretation of story ratings. The January 1943 Astounding was then considered. Jack Williamson's serial 'Opposites - React!', as the highest-rating story, was taken as a representative of the issue and discussion of its contents begun. Some quotations were cited to indicate how the author described his characters, finally reaching members of the protagonist's crew. And so, as has been written so often in similar situations, NOW READ ON:)

These characters, all of them, are suspect, although the Ukrainian somewhat less so. Here is how Williamson describes them:

Protopopov: 'huge, shambling, bearlike', 'broad, puttylike face seemed...both sly and stupid', 'peculiar, blubbery, moronic-sounding laugh', 'small, opaque, stupid-seeming eyes', 'heavy, clumsy shamble', 'flat, cunning eyes', 'his puttylike face held a moronic stare, and he made an awkward, shambling salute.' (I should point out, by the way, that these words and phrases are used to describe Commander Protopopov.)

Muratori: 'shifty, black, embittered eyes', 'a silent limp'.
Suzuki: 'toothy, spectacled, efficient', 'smiling and over-polite', 'in a hissing, conspiratorial whisper, he pledged the support of his ambitious but unfortunate race.'

One suspects that Protopopov rates the lengthy characterization because he is, after all, a representative of the friendly Jovian Soviet.

Anders himself is a character for whom the words 'bluff' and 'direct' might have been invented. He is often in conflict with others, but there is no subtlety in him: open misère is the only bidding gambit he knows. Yet he seems to have few if any human responses himself. For example, when he is outwitted by Karen Hood and Rob McGee, the following is the report of his reaction:

Her blue-eyed wonderment turned suspicion into certainty. Choking he found no words.
Bright boy, Paul! Her head nodded approvingly. 'Knew you'd catch on, well, it's the thing you'd catch on to.'

He gripped the edges of the little table, trembling with wrath. The girl merely smiled gayly up at him. Slowly he became aware of the uneasy waiter and the staring diners across the long room. His brown face flushed.

Still he found nothing to say, for the most of his anger was directed at his own stupidity. The trap had been so simple and transparent, and he had fallen so completely. Savagely, he thought he should have arrested McGee on the field.

'Be a sport, Paul!' Karen was laughing at him. 'Sit down and eat your lunch. Cap'n Rob must be fifty thousand kilometers at space by now, and there's nothing much that you can do about it.'

Grinning, he let the relieved waiter set up his chair.

This passage reflects many of the points about the story which have already been made. But the essence here is the illustration of the role of characters and conversation - only to carry the plot forward. Who, in the real world, would recover so quickly from the kind of anger which leads to a chair crashing over (just before the quotation begins)? Surely a cortico-thalamic pause, at least, is needed?

By the time this episode has ended, Anders has moved a little closer to his goal - though scarcely through his own efforts. And the reader has a lurking suspicion that he may have begun to understand why Karen Hood chose Rick Drake.

Characters aside, how does Williamson's imagined world differ from our own? There are some of the standard trappings of science fiction - uranium-powered spaceships, interplanetary travel, terraforming of planets or asteroids, hand-sized viewers. The CT content may be all that is new, but the problem of how to handle CT matter has not been, as it were, successfully grappled with. Politically, of course, the then-current world situation has been stereotyped. It isn't clear why this should have been necessary, but perhaps it helped sell the story.

Of this novel, Alva Rogers wrote, on page 113 of A Requiem for Astounding: 'This was a very good story, in which Stewart combines the sociological theme with high space adventure and more or less down-to-Earth engineering problems.'

Yet in this instalment the scientific/engineering problems appear to be handled rather indirectly. It is certainly true that there is the almost obligatory lecture to the reader on page 24, but otherwise the problems relate to one character understanding a situation (from an engineering point of view) while the other does not - and this is where the tension lies.

The illustrations don't fit well with the story. The first appears to make reference to Paul Anders' thoughts, while the second, an accurate reflection of what is going on in the story, is printed on the page following the action it represents. The third illustration, intended to show the technological might of CT systems, is printed some four pages after the scene it illustrates, but in this case the scene is illustrated poorly; there

are precise descriptions of the CT machine in the text, and the illustration does not match the description.

This was an issue with a low index of agreement, so a second story will be discussed. 'Time Locker' by 'Lewis Padgett' (Henry Kuttner in this case) was a short story which finished fifth in the ratings, with a point score of 3.71 and an absolute rank of 458, yet was the first of a famous series.

'Time Locker' is set in 1970. There has been no significant technological development apart from the inventions of the tale's hero, Galloway (later Gallegher), which are produced only when Galloway is drunk. By using such an inventor Kuttner is able to avoid providing rational explanations for the devices invented, which must have been handy when working to a deadline - Kuttner had another story, 'Nothing But Gingerbread Left', in the same issue.

The protagonist is Horace Vanning, a crooked lawyer who is Galloway's self-proclaimed friend. Vanning is introduced to the reader through a recitation of his criminal methods, including advice to other criminals on how to carry out undetectable murders using Galloway's inventions. On the second page of the story, with almost heavy-handed irony, Vanning thinks of Galloway as 'amoral'.

This story deals with one of Galloway's inventions - the eponymous time locker - and the way in which it is used to save and then kill Vanning: Galloway may be amoral, but the universe does not tolerate immorality...

Vanning is constantly in need of devices to help his criminal friends, and so hangs about in Galloway's laboratory, a room filled with the inventor's peculiar brainchildren - such as the liquor organ which provides for all of Galloway's basic needs. On the first visit described in the story Vanning uncovers a locker which, as Galloway believes, makes things small and distorted: when you take them out they get big again. Vanning buys it because it will provide for him the perfect safe.

Vanning places some valuable but dangerous merchandise in the locker. A small creature appears and tries to move it, so Vanning reaches in and crushes the creature. Somewhat later Vanning notices that the suitcase has vanished.

He desperately seeks Galloway's advice, but Galloway says that it will take some time. While Galloway is working on the problem, Vanning is confronted with his concerned and somewhat violent client, who want the suitcase and its contents back. Vanning stalls and, with some unemphasized irony, explains that he has put it in a safe with a time lock.

Galloway's advice, when it is finally produced, is unwelcome: the locker does in fact transport things into the future - or so Galloway believes. Using the kind of muddled argument such a character can get away with, Galloway explains that the universe is getting both larger and smaller at the same time: it is because of this that objects appear to shrink when placed in the time locker.

The resolution is that objects are not transported quite so far into the future as Galloway thinks - just a few days - and the creature Vanning crushed when he saw it trying to move the suitcase is Vanning himself, about a week in the future. Hearing what has happened, Galloway works out what has gone on. And gets drunk.

The only character who emerges from the page to achieve substance is Vanning. Unlikeable, he has no satisfactory relationship with anyone - except perhaps the parasitic one with Galloway, from which he has derived considerable benefit in the past. One can almost understand why the story should have received a low rating from readers since there is barely time for anything to grasp our attention other than the plot gimmick. Yet as the first of Kuttner's Gallegher stories it probably has historical significance. (In passing we might note that the illustration on page 101 is drawn on a scale which does not match the story.)

February 1943

This issue of Astounding is difficult to deal with. The index of agreement, 0.93, is sufficiently high that discussing the highest-ranking story would be dealing with what the readers generally agreed was the 'best' science fiction in that issue.

But the reaction to Padgett's 'Mimsy Were The Borogoves' was so strong that Campbell felt he had to adjust the operation of the AnLab for that month. As he explained it in the April 1943 Astounding, many readers wrote in only about the Padgett story, so that the normal AnLab procedure would have resulted in the Padgett story being rated (usually '1') by many more readers than the other stories in the issue. Campbell's solution was to put the Padgett story at the top of the list, without a point-score, and then treat the remaining stories in the normal way, renumbering the ratings to exclude 'Mimsy Were The Borogoves'. So the first episode of van Vogt's 'The Weapon Makers' emerges at the top with a point score of 1.2, followed by the concluding half of 'Opposites - React!' with a point score of 2.1. The absolute ranks are -40 and 238 respectively.

But what to do about 'Mimsy Were The Borogoves' here? Rather than deal with it now, in the hurly-burly of issue-by-issue analysis, I will consider it at the end of the treatment of 1943, in a short reflection on the whole of the year. But now, in treating the February 1943 edition of Astounding, after some brief notes on the concluding half of the serial, the focus will be upon 'The Weapon Makers'.

There is little that is new in the second half of 'Opposites - React!'. The nature of the fictive world has already been described. The puttyfaced Protopopov turns out to be von Falkenberg, but it proves to be easy to dispose of him.

But surprisingly little is resolved, although there is a great deal of handwaving to make the plot work. Admittedly some of this is pretty fast stuff. Halfway down the left-hand column of page 127 Anders expects to hear 'the hoarse moronic croak of von Falkenberg', but by a similar point in the right-hand column

everything has turned out quite otherwise, yet Anders 'planned it that way'.

We never learn why Anders keeps thinking of McGee as 'little Rob McGee' or 'poor little McGee' when McGee appears to have been, throughout the story, the one person in control of his environment. Indeed, early in the story McGee has manifested some quite unearthly mental powers, and throughout the story always seems to be able to work out what the CT aliens had been up to: it is surprising that McGee is not unveiled as an alien superman before the end of 'Opposites - React!'

The relationship between Ann O'Banion and Paul Anders is resolved, along the lines we might have suspected. We don't find out about Karen Hood, or where all the money for the fancy office at Pallasport came from. And, to add to the confusion about illustrations and their placement which has already been noted, there's an illustration on page 114 which refers to a plot incident on page 125 - by which time it is quite possible to have forgotten the illustration.

The novel Seetea Ship, which is a fix-up of this story, 'Collision Orbit' and 'Minus Sign', is substantially revised, with the World War II references omitted and a bit of time-travel - and much, much more - mixed in.

'The Weapon Makers' is another kettle of fish. It is scarcely fashionable to praise A. E. van Vogt nowadays, but to read this work in the context of its original appearance is a shock. With 'Mimsy Were The Borogoves' in the same issue, it would have been good to have had access to an expanded letter column with reactions from readers, but unfortunately readers' comments were quite short.

(And Chan Davis, in his letter, prefers 'Opposites - React!' to both 'Mimsy Were The Borogoves' and 'The Weapon Makers'.)

But to this modern reader this first episode of 'The Weapon Makers' is incomparably superior to the other fiction read for this year. (This is, after all, one of the major reasons for writing this work: to make it possible to see works of science fiction in the context in which they were produced, and so to observe them not only on their own terms but in an appropriate, time-bound, sense. Looking at isolated novels or collections of stories does not allow this. At the same time, by looking at the opinions of contemporary readers about the quality of a story, we can get some feel for the state of science fiction at the time.)

The first point to be made is that the novel serialized in Astounding is not much like the revised version published in hardcover. This is not the place to enter into a consideration of the later version, but the passing remark should perhaps be made that it is by no means so confusing as the magazine version.

What kind of world is it that the players of 'The Weapon Makers' inhabit? It is - despite some superficial resemblance to monarchies which has been noted, to some extent erroneously, by Damon Knight - a world very different from our own. Now, the worlds found in the January Astounding stories were easily

recognizable as our own, albeit distorted by the requirements of pulp fiction. These distortions we recognize most readily in the vast oversimplification of characters, to the extent that if they exist at all they can be said to be determined in a few trite catchphrases (amply illustrated for 'Opposites - React!'). The world of 'The Weapon Makers', perhaps because of the chaotic approach followed by the author, is alien to us. That's an important point. Van Vogt has been clever enough to see that what one experiences in an alien environment is surprise and an inability to understand what is going on: he ensures that we know we are undergoing an alien encounter by throwing information at us in a deliberately chaotic way.

This is not done in the 'oh, I remember, the hero has a knife to cut himself free' way which was used by Williamson in 'Opposites - React!'. Van Vogt has described his method - from the technical point of view - several times; my task is to report the reader's reaction.

TO BE CONTINUED

Sn SnOFFICIAL FILLER

An amazing number of Indo-European words which have anything at all to do with noses start with 'sn'. Think about it for a minute - snuff, snot, snooty ...

Even 'nose' is an altered version of this - the 's' and the 'n' are reversed, and there is an 'o' in the middle, but it is recognisably similar.

A free one-year subscription to ASFR goes to the inventive person who comes up with the longest list of 'sn' nose words. The judges' decision will be final - no cheating with plurals etc. Remember, we're just as sneaky, snide, snivelling and snippish as you are.

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ETHICAL CULTURE GT

DREADFUL SUSPICIONS
ON THE 'ETHICAL CULTURE' TRILOGY OF GEORGE TURNER

Beloved Son, Vaneqlogy, and Yesterday's Men

Yvonne Rousseau

Anyone who reads George Turner's 'Ethical Culture' trilogy is likely to be impressed by its mixture of technology, intrigue and adventure - thriller-type plot and counterplot; the personal-identity dramas of clones and amnesiacs; the double-cross and the hidden meaning. Memorable scenes include the British Isles (in Vaneqlogy) getting radioactive dust wafted over them; then Glasgow revisited forty-five years later, all dry bones and mutant tapeworms. The Niugini jungle of Yesterday's Men is extolled, so far as I know, in every review of the book; while Beloved Son (written before the Melbourne Arts Centre was completed) calls up from the future the wry and wistful ghost of a Melbourne that never was, with the copper and verdigris ruthlessly stripped off what actually turned out to be the small white plastic skeleton spire of the Arts Centre.

Nevertheless - and especially in Beloved Son - there are distractions which make me entertain (as I read) five Dreadful Suspicions; and these are my subject.

Dreadful Suspicion Number 1: that George Turner is out of sympathy with pacifism and with Doctor Benjamin Spock - so far out of sympathy with them that the only satisfactory way for him to present the Ethical Culture would have been in the mode of Jonathan Swift or Robert Sheckley.

In Beloved Son the suspicion is that one is not really reading about conditioned people who have grown up in a society almost unimaginably different from ours; instead, whenever there is interaction, one seems to be getting a dim view of adolescent Moratorium-marchers from a 1970 background, and of the Doctor-Spock-trained parents who brought them up.

The Ethical Culture, as it is found in 21st-century Australia, is full of conditioned people. Throughout the world, Security members are inducted in childhood - brought up in groups - and conditioned to be ethical idealists. Ordinary Australian citizens are conditioned too; this is because the Australian government has a philosophy similar to Security's. So, if you are growing up in 21st-century Australia, people will interfere with your mind for your own good, or for society's good. Using sometimes surgery and sometimes a combination of drugs and mind-bending optical effects with a psychoanalyst's line of questioning - followed (perhaps) by (in technical terms) 'suppression of selected synaptic pathways and some drug-magnified hypno-suggestion' - they will alter tendencies in you that they

consider to be criminal; or wipe out all memory of events that you would be much happier never to have known about. You will never find out what was done, or what you revealed, during this 'deep question' process; but Security will preserve a complete record for themselves - sometimes even after you are dead. (As it happens, little does Security know that 'deep question' sessions are being bugged, in Beloved Son, both by the Australian police and by the Gancoil secret laboratories.) Some doubt is felt, even in the psychoclinics, about exactly how good for you deep questioning and memory erasure are; but at least they are not like 'limit question', where your whole personality gets re-structured, and where Albert Raft is changed from an aggressive, idiosyncratic, paranoid maniac into something resembling a 'friendly doll'.

The events in Beloved Son are seen from the perspectives of different characters at different times; so there would have been no jarring if we had been given the inner experience of just one ordinary young person: to know what their aspirations are; what they are feeling when they go out and beat one another up fairly severely (as they sometimes do); whether they have rationalizations for the fact that it is almost impossible for someone in the late teens to contemplate physical violence against anyone outside his or her own age-group - either younger or older (even how they define the boundaries between the age-groups); and what it feels like to have physical mementoes of an experience and no memory of it - whether the psychclinicians are really able to destroy all traces of the more bodily emotional impact of traumatic events. The nearest thing to such an account is the experience of Lindley and Alice White being manipulated - not by Security but by the methods of the Gancoil laboratories, which are admitted to be much more crude and crass, and which (as Doctor David of Gancoil says) do not include 'question techniques'.

The point is that one's experience in such a world (where, also, 'nobody shames a youngster except in necessity and love') would be almost unimaginably different from experience now, or in the 1970s. Characters who grew up in our own culture - and whom technology has allowed to become anachronistic observers of the 21st century (characters like Lindley, Albert Raft, and Donald Baird) - judge these teenagers (from the outside) as 'bloody savages' or 'mindless young thugs'; they judge Security as if it consisted of the kind of parents who followed Doctor Spock's advice (that is to say, discipline by psychological warfare, not by corporal punishment) and thereby produced a bunch of brats for their trouble; and they judge the elderly Ombudsmen as if they were Doctor Spock giving his advice. The Dreadful Suspicion is that it is not just the Lindleys and Rafts who (as they are told, and as they sometimes realize on their own account) fail to understand this culture; one suspects that the author, while purporting to give the innermost thoughts and visions of Security men, is really mounting an attack on pacifism as it manifests itself in our own world. But in our world pacifism is not the dominant philosophy.

We certainly would not care to live in a world where our minds are tampered with for what other-people-conceive-to-be our own good; but our impression that we really are reading about such a society gets obscured, because (so the Dreadful Suspicion has it) the author is attempting to attack too many disparate aspects of

our own society, all at the same time. So the so-called 'brats' look just like 20th-century brats, and we are not encouraged to take into account the fact that the violence we actually read about is fomented by secret agents from Gangoil (or, in Vaneolory, by 20th-century Lindley), and is performed under the influence of hypno-drugs and other manipulation. It is supposedly enough for us to know that hypnotism can only arouse instincts that are already present - therefore, these kids have been raised to be 'really' hooligans. Yet (in relation to soldiers) Yesterday's Men points out quite correctly that what you can reduce a human being to, in demoralizing circumstances, is by no means an index of what that human being 'really' is - or of what other human beings 'really' are. How the 'kids' have actually turned out, in a society where their elders are devoted to their welfare, is very important, if we are to understand the 21st century; but the kids are dismissed as just disliked; as what Lindley calls 'the sacred cows, the beautiful generation'.

The Jonathan Swift approach would be more appropriate here, because it seems a case of looking at a class of people (Security in particular) and thinking how misguided they are, but without feeling any answering chord in oneself. If a viewpoint is seen only from the outside - if the people expressing it seem to the author to be parroting airy-fairy nonsense about things they have no experience of - if the author recognizes in himself no temptation to the kind of thought or feeling that has its extreme in their position - then it is impossible for him to understand how they will actually respond when they are confronted with difficulties, in unfamiliar circumstances. The only honest method is to be blatantly dishonest, in a Swiftian manner; not to pretend to be doing anything more sympathetic than setting up these characters as Aunt Sallies, and aiming large lumps of ridicule at them.

In Beloved Son, pacifists are being attacked by the 20th-century types as 'self-righteous'; yet it is the 20th-century types themselves - Lindley and Albert Raft and the sheltered Gangoil people - who are actually self-righteous; the pacifist Security people are in fact conditioned to question what they are doing, and are the only ones to express doubt. Yet, although it is not reasonable on the face of it to agree with Doctor Lindley's opinion (which is based on his knowledge of pacifism's tendencies in a militaristic world), the Dreadful Suspicion is that we are to see Security's pacifism as he sees it: as having only negative elements - as being just a 'contemptuous repugnance' for militarism; a contempt even for the police, who do the dirty work which allows Security to shudder delicately at the very idea of dirty work.

On pacifism, I agree with George Orwell's position (and presumably George Turner's) that, in our society (and especially in wartime) 'those who abjure "violence" can only do so because others are committing violence on their behalf'. This is not to say that one ought not to abjure violence, but just that one ought to be aware of the conditions in which one does so. An argument of Beloved Son is that Security has blinded itself by refusing to acknowledge that there are still bullies in the world; thus (in countries other than Australia) organized rough-and-tumble is allowed to go on (in the Christian Kremlin, in

Communist New York, in the Mediterranean Vendetta States) because of Security's ethic of Non-Interference, which rests on the idea that nations ought to be allowed to experiment, and find out what kind of organization suit them best - with the underlying assumption of sophisticated utilitarianism: that a bad, violent system will eventually fail, because badness is self-destructive. On an individual basis, in Australia (on the other hand), Security is being criticized for not allowing natural rough-and-tumble - for not allowing teenagers to learn from their experience (although, at the same time, it is also criticized for bringing up teenagers who engage in more physical rough-and-tumble than the 20th century is accustomed to). Here, pacifism is being criticized as naive, blind and confused. But it is from the 20th-century world that the element of truly hypocritical pacifism comes; from Gangoil, where the 83-strong Albert Raft clone - the one that the homosexual Raft clone refers to as 'the simultaneous dancers' - has been indoctrinated by 20th-century survivors to believe that if one orders a killing (and applies hypno-drugs to get it done), then one's hands are clean, because somebody else did the killing, and what others do is their own affair. This is, of course, a parody of some pacifists' position - only a bunch of simultaneous dancers could hold it - but the effect of Beloved Son. I think, is to suggest that this is effectively the same position as Security's. Thus, Dreadful Suspicion Number 1 is that the author unfairly presents pacifism (but not militarism) as exactly equal to the worst manifestations you can reduce it to.

Dreadful Suspicion Number 2: that these books belong to the 'private men's club' type of thriller, and therefore look very thin without a conventional world to posture against.

The 'thriller' world usually appears as the 'inside truth' about our own world. Characteristic trademarks appear in the Ethical Culture trilogy. The people who do things are all men, and they adopt the attitude of thriller-heroes, who know that the women they meet are likely to have ulterior motives; that sex-appeal is a deadly weapon; that allowing any private sentiment or vulnerability to appear is a weakness you should sneer at yourself, before anyone else gets the chance to - and which you should come down on heavily in others. It would be fascinating to know exactly what happened to women in the Collapse. There are no Ombudswomen; there are two female youthful parroters-of-dogma (one in Beloved Son and one in Vaneglory), both of whom are seen by 20th-century men as 'a familiar type'; we find out incidentally that there are still marriages and nuclear families, that women do not wear stockings, and that men do not rise to their feet when women enter a room; but the only worker we see (apart from the actress, Anna-Lisa, and some lab-assistants at 20th-century-like Gangoil) is Alice White - and a horrid sub-suspicion is that she works for Security only because this is useful for the plot. Controller Parker, of the police, dislikes women working in the service because they 'distract good men' - which is also, of course, one of the Church's arguments against the ordination of women. The attitude of these books - as in many thrillers - is that women's true identity is their sexual one; women cannot be relied upon, because they become 'sex-silly', whereas a man never does: he takes these things in his stride (as it were). On the other hand, there is the thriller-paranoia about sex, induced by the fact that fluttering eyelashes are often

accompanied by a microdot in the navel, and a firearm in the stocking-top. In Vaneqlory this has its ultimate expression in Jeanie Dean, who is one of the quasi-immortals who call themselves 'Children of Time'; she is also (like Angus) one of the 'face-changers' who can manipulate your mind after they have flashed their facial tics at you a few times to establish control. They need to catch your eye and then, in Angus's case, there comes a twitch of the eyelid - in Jeanie's, a baring of the teeth. So Controller Parker responds to Jeanie Dean as if she were the archetypal woman that the Dominican monks wrote about in their witch-hunter's manual, Malleus Maleficarum: she flashes her eyes at you, she smiles (bares her teeth) at you; let her do that a few times, and you are hooked and helpless (her sexual slave); the only escape is to smash her face first, and run - or she has you. (So Controller Parker breaks Jeanie's jaw - apparently to universal applause.)

Stylized interactions of this sort may be acceptable when the reader can assume that they are carried on within the wider world of everyday experience - which is both humbler and more various. In the Ethical Culture trilogy, where a complete future society has to be imagined, the 'thriller' world tends to appear like all the world - a role in which it is miscast, and insufficient.

Dreadful Suspicion Number 3: that if you are aged 40, then 'the old and useless' means absolutely everybody younger than you, down to the age of 17.

Anyone trying to make sense of the Ethical Culture's world has to decide why there is such a gap between the Ombudsmen and the oldest members of the rest of the population. In 2032, apart from the Ombudsmen (who are 68 or older), there is nobody around older than 45. (Albert Raft notices this, in Beloved Son.) It is left a little vague exactly when the Ombudsmen advised the 'kids' that the old and useless would have to go: Ombudsman Jackson, in Beloved Son, points to 'the nineties, the famine years' when (so he says) 'they died like flies' - but Vaneqlory mentions 'the killing of the old and useless in the famine years of the new century'. In any case, Jackson agrees with Albert Raft's suggestion that Security was created after that killing: Albert describes the Security set-up as 'creating a paradise to justify what you had caused [the world] to do'. Thus, simple adding-up shows that the weeding was done by the year 2004 - Security had definitely been set up by then, because Ian Campion said that he and other orphans were inducted into Security when they were five or six; and we know that Campion turned six in 2004, because he was 34 in the year 2032. These 'children who became Security' were selected and trained by - among others - Commissioner Ferendija, of Vaneqlory. Ferendija ('fairly old for anyone of this day') is described as belonging to the generation that the Ombudsmen persuaded to commit 'demi-genocide' when they were 'kids'. In the year 2037 Ferendija was 'in his forties' - which means 49 at most - so that he was 16 years old, at most, in 2004.

The population's age-distribution shows that, whatever year it was when they did it, 'the kids' made a clean sweep of everyone born between 1964 and 1987. If we choose 2004 as the latest year possible, with everyone as old as they can possibly be, we have Ombudsman Jackson, at 40 years of age, acting as 'Old Man of the

Tribe' and advising the under-17s to get rid of all the old and useless ... a definition which they interpret with great latitude, since they spare the lives of other Ombudsmen - people older than Jackson (who is the youngest Ombudsman we hear of) - but they spare nobody in the age group between 1 and 23 years younger than Jackson.

The point of working out these sums is that 'old and useless' or 'the old and unfit' gives the reader quite another impression of the type and age of people who were wiped out - so that the reader is likely to feel somewhat confused about the society he or she is attempting to imagine. Thus, Dreadful Suspicion Number 3 could lead to an even more dreadful suspicion (which I do not really entertain): that readers are not intended to be able to imagine this society, but instead are to have a sense of personal inferiority induced by a sense of personal unimaginativeness or inattentiveness, and so are to feel defeated, and to allow the author to prance all over them for the rest of the book.

Dreadful Suspicion Number 4: that Australia is not the whole world.

The only reason the Ethical Culture appears viable at all is that Australia is the only country seen in detail, and the Australian government just happens to have the same ideals as Security. It is difficult to believe that basically evangelistic ideologies, like Communism and Christianity, would sacrifice some of their children by allowing them to be inducted into the Security force in their area. (This force apparently exists with independent technology in each country, and operates quite independently of the society around it - except in Australia.) People of the Mediterranean Vendetta States would be even less likely to give up good fighting children in this way. Moreover, the evangelistic cultures (from the brief glimpses we receive of them in Beloved Son, when they take back their astronauts) seem unlikely to content themselves with confining their doctrine to their own area (however great their world-war trauma). Meanwhile, returning to the very basis of the Ethical Culture, it is hard enough to believe that Ombudsmen all over Australia persuaded kids all over the country to agree that the 'old and useless' should be killed off; my credulity balks completely at the proposition that such an agreement was considered and accomplished worldwide.

With every book on the Ethical Culture, more detail about the world is given, producing correspondingly greater implausibility. Both the 20th- and the 21st-century characters in these books are so exceptionally aggressive that we can only reverence their supposedly 'bankrupt' Ethic if, as Yesterday's Men reports, it has really continued to prevent international war for the entire fifty years that have elapsed since (at Vaneglorv's end) the Security police were disbanded, and the world left to its own devices.

Dreadful Suspicion Number 5: the last and perhaps most dreadful - that George Turner agrees with Norman Mailer.

I am speaking of Norman Mailer here in his character as cancer-phobe - when he explained that he had to stab his wife and get rid of his built-up anger, because if he had repressed it he

would have gotten cancer and been dead himself within a year. This idea is that anger is special and absolute. If you have one of the more amiable emotions - a feeling of pity, an impulse of affection - you can modify that; but anger can never be modified: if you are angry you have to act out your anger with violence or else repress it and fester. The message of the trilogy is that people are refusing to admit their anger and their violent impulses; that they pretend to themselves that only their nice impulses exist, and censor their memories accordingly. This is certainly true of some people; but I think that they rather stand out among our acquaintances. The problem here concerns pacifism as it relates to the individual: whether it is possible to alter violent impulses within one's own personality - a different question from whether there will always be violent individuals elsewhere in the world, against whom force will be necessary. The trilogy appears to make no distinction between these questions. Its message seems a simpler one: that most people are no more complicated and self-aware than they might seem upon superficial observation.

In Yesterday's Men 'most people' is narrowed to mean civilians. Cast in the 'thriller' mould, these civilians (as elsewhere in the trilogy) are uncommonly aggressive - constantly angry. By comparison, the soldiers in Yesterday's Men seem unnaturally meek, especially when contrasted with the more varied collection of soldiers in George Turner's earlier book A Young Man of Talent. Yesterday's Men is portraying soldiers sympathetically, and at the farthest remove from puerile misconceptions a civilian might form of them. Yet this sympathetic treatment is sabotaged when civilians are portrayed as hypocritical monsters who project on to soldiers every unclean aspect of themselves; the reader is likely to diagnose in this image a paranoid projection that originates in the soldiers.

The target characters in Yesterday's Men perceive both courtesan and soldier as being outside the bounds of humanity - beyond insult. This is because they take money for what a sub-text designates as the natural roles of woman and man: to love, if you are a woman; to kill if you are a man. The courtesan Anna-Lisa takes money for 'sex' (which is one translation of love); she is contemptuously told that, therefore, she will not object to sex in any circumstances (even rape). The soldier Sergeant Bailey takes money for killing; therefore (it is wrongly assumed) he will never object to killing someone, no matter what the circumstances. This is a curious type of insult, fairly common in everyday life: in order for it to be hurtful, its victim needs to have precisely the sensibilities whose presumed absence is the only justification for the insult. My overall Dreadful Suspicion is that the Ethical Culture trilogy is meant as exactly this kind of insult, with its readers as the target. But if its readers were really as shallow, brittle and hypocritical as the people being berated in these books, then I doubt they could read.

MORALS, ETHICS AND VIEWPOINTS
- George Turner

Yvonne Rousseau's 'Dreadful Suspicions' about what others (but not the author) call my 'Ethical Culture Trilogy' were first aired at the 1985 Adelaide SF Convention and more recently at a Nova Mob meeting in Melbourne. In neither case was I able to pin down her 'suspicions' with any precision; I needed The Notional text to study.

The difficulties in listening to the paper were these:

1. The references and (alas) generalizations cross and re-cross in such density that there was difficulty in separating one statement from another.

2. Yvonne's reliance on general impression is daunting. I quote: '... one seems to be getting a dim view of adolescent Moratorium marchers from a 1970 background, and of the Doctor-Spock-trained parents who brought them up.' This is not good enough in close criticism. What 'one seems to be getting' should be borne out by direct reference and, if practicable, quotation; what 'seems' may seem otherwise to a reader with a different mental orientation. This kind of generalization leads to quite a few errors.

3. In Dreadful Suspicion Number 1 ('that George Turner is out of sympathy with pacifism and Doctor Benjamin Spock') the critic implies that what certain characters say and do represents the author's feelings on what they express. This may say something for the force of the characterizations but is a well-known critical trap-for-beginners which Yvonne should have learned to sidestep years ago. In fact I approve of pacifism and don't know enough about Doctor Spock to give him a thought.

4. She persistently looks at the 21st-century culture through 20th-century eyes (so, unfortunately, do too many readers and critics), thereby aligning herself with the viewpoint of the returning astronauts whose problem is their inability to shake off the 20th-century point of view. Yet she writes herself: 'one's experience in such a world ... would be almost unimaginably different from experience now...' Of course. And that is precisely why both Raft and Lindley end up as nuisances to be got rid of. If you can't look at a society from its own point of view you have no hope of understanding it. Sf readers should be good at it after a lifetime of practice - but they aren't. Yvonne tacitly assumes that our critical attitudes are valid, whereas they are valid only in the society which framed them. Does she recognize the 20th century in those passages wherein it is seen from the 21st-century perspective? She shouldn't, because the 21st-century folk inevitably have it badly wrong in some essentials. Yet their view is as valid as ours of them - not all that valid. You have no right, for instance, to condemn cannibals as barbaric unless you know the rationale of their cannibalism (it was usually mystical); if you don't know, your attitudes are irrelevant.

These failures of perceptual stance lead Yvonne to postulate moral dilemmas which do not exist in the orientation she gives them. I choose a few for brief examination:

She writes: 'We certainly would not care to live in a world where our minds are tampered with for what other people conceive to be our own good'. But we do live and always have lived in such a world. The development of chemical, biological, sociological and psychological techniques has merely emphasized and publicized what every demagogue, tyrant and parent has practised since human history began. The point about my 21st-century people is that they realize that what began as kindly adjuncts to good intentions are rapidly becoming opportunity weapons. It is the build-up of this cultural uneasiness which eventually results in the grotesque experiment of Yesterday's Men.

She seems bothered by my treatment of the teenagers and quotes Lindley as calling them 'the sacred cows, the beautiful generation', again making the mistake of accepting a character's view as the one you should adopt. But his is a 20th-century view, and not a well-informed one at that. Small Japanese boys were brought up for centuries with a supremely macho freedom of action which western parents would regard with horror, a freedom precluding more than a mild reprimand for beating up his smaller sister, who would be ritually blamed as deserving it. Yet, at the onset of manhood, he was expected to adopt a fully adult outlook and concern himself with ritual and restraint - and he made the change, or else. The 21st-century kids were the same - they knew their years of freedom and they knew that the end was conformity. Many past cultures emphasized this with rite-of-passage ceremonies. Where Yvonne sees paradox there is none.

Her idea that I would have done better to adopt a Jonathan Swift approach I find shocking. The Swift approach was raging contempt; I have made my feeling about contempt plain in other venues. Briefly, it is an attitude that none of us can afford to take. It blinds. Many of the Beloved Son characters come to grief simply because they adopt a contemptuous attitude to cover their failures of understanding.

All this is called forth by 'Dreadful Suspicion Number 1'. To deal adequately with the other four would take an entire issue of The Notional. Still, there is one matter which should not go unnoticed: it is crucial to understanding of Yesterday's Men. On page [16] Yvonne propagates a totally erroneous view of my soldiers and civilians. A lengthy quote here: 'Yesterday's Men is portraying soldiers sympathetically, and at the farthest remove from puerile conceptions a civilian might form of them.' (Why 'puerile' when the word surely should be 'incorrect'? A dreadful suspicion of emotional loading of the text here.) 'Yet this sympathetic treatment is sabotaged when civilians are portrayed as hypocritical monsters who project on to soldiers every unclean aspect of themselves.'

'Unclean'? Did the civilians see it so?

For someone who has read all three books as closely as Yvonne must have done (albeit through slightly astigmatic lenses) this is misapprehension on the grand scale. As so often, she is here

confusing her epochs; the 21st century does not respond to the viewpoints of the 20th. The civilians are not portrayed as hypocritical monsters but as people who have been raised from birth to regard militarism as an abomination and are mentally incapable of seeing it any other way. Lord knows the point is hammered often enough in the three books.

The 21st-century civilians are in a transition period - surely that is at all times obvious - and one of the characteristics of transition mentality is an inability to wholly relinquish the ideas it is beginning to suspect are wrong. Young critics who have grown up with 'generation gap' as part of the jargon should recognize it when they see it in action. It is incidentally concerned with parent/child and age/youth relationships, being mainly a matter of resistance versus impatience, and it is as old as the narrowness of minds. In these books I have used it (and one English critic even noticed the fact) as one of the symbols of cultural change.

What negates Yvonne's dreadful suspicion is that her 'hypocrites' are in fact hag-ridden by cultural attitudes. This is brought out in a scene which no one has ever, to my knowledge, remarked on but which is critical to the ideas underlying Yesterday's Men - Bailey's refusal to kill prisoners and Caselli's inability to understand why. Could anything better point up the problem inherent in fixed moral points of view? Judged by 21st-century standards, which are the only ones that matter in a 21st-century tale, is Bailey's humanitarianism (so attractive to 20th-century mores) any more justifiable than Caselli's urge to protect his people by having the enemy killed?

The problems of the Ethical Culture are not simple and should not be simplified by redesigning them to fit one's own moral preconceptions.

Since it arouses argument every time these books are discussed (and it is nice to feel that they are still being discussed) I must make plain my position on pacifism.

1. I thoroughly approve of pacifism. (All except idiots do.) The alternative is to continue slaughtering each other until the sun collapses into a red dwarf.

2. I also approve of pacifists, but I would approve of them much more if I could find even one who had a single constructive idea of what comes after protest. Pacific protest is an excellent thing - it keeps consciences awake and makes the belligerent think twice. But it stops no wars. It is not enough. So what next?

3. 'Will you fight if your country is invaded?' is not an idle question because you almost certainly will, sooner or later. If your government doesn't propagandize you into it (and don't fool yourself that you can resist for ever the kind of psychological persuasions that can be arrayed against you), then the invading army will either force you to fight, kill you or enslave you. You may have noticed that the day of the 'negotiated peace', leaving everybody to have a good wash and change back into

civvies, is about over; if you haven't noticed, study what has happened to the losers in the last forty years.

4. Forget about universal peace. So long as there are coloured skins, self-aggrandizing religions, antagonistic philosophies, jealous poor, selfish rich, inequalities, unchecked population growth, flood, famine, plague, self-love, paranoia and national boundaries, there will be no peace.

5. The only way to peace is to remove anger, lust and greed from the human psyche. Unfortunately, they are all survival traits and whether the remaining thing would be human is a moot point.

6. Peaceful humanity, without conflict, would be at the end of its tether. How many of the teeming millions would pursue knowledge or anything else for its own sake? Because only 'its own sake' would be left. Anger, lust and greed are more closely bound in with our ambitions and emotions than many of us care to admit. Without them we would still be in the caves. (The extremist could argue that that might be a good thing.)

7. I have left the best - or worst - till last. Yvonne writes: '... indoctrinated by 20th-century survivals to believe that if one orders a killing ... then one's hands are clean, because someone else did the killing, and what others do is their own affair. This is, of course, a parody of the pacifist's position...' It is nothing of the sort. It is instead exactly the kind of attitude epitomized by the Union boss who complains in the third month of the strike that 'it's all the government's fault for not giving us what we want.' The passage is a blunt statement of the hypocrisy endemic to any organized system - governmental, mercantile, military, even academic - which must preserve itself at all costs, all costs. It is the kind of 'responsibility diminished by distance' which created the disasters of Serveseo and Bhopal, which permits drug companies to offload on Asia and Africa the products banned in their own country, allows Russia to devastate Afghanistan on the ground that Kabul 'asked us to help', keeps the arms race spiralling because of what 'someone else' might do (It is our duty to our people!), keeps the poor in their poverty because only the existence of poverty can create wealth (work that one out - it's true) and makes it the fault of black Africans that they are killed rather than the fault of the righteous killers. It is one of the great basic hypocrisies, compared with the 'philosophic' justification of terrorism and no less deadly. Yvonne complains that the author 'unfairly presents pacifism (but not militarism) as exactly equal to the worst manifestations you can reduce it to.' This is either a gross distortion of the meaning of the text or a non sequitur of baffling proportions. My attack is on hypocrisy and surely this is unmistakable. It is the growing recognition of inbuilt hypocrisy which is responsible for the self-distrust of the Ethical Culture. Eventually it all comes down to that dreadful compromise with unreason: that some must suffer for the good of the majority. That remains true today because after millennia of idealist philosophies and good intentions we have not found any way of making them work; that old watchdog, self-preservation, makes nonsense of idealist pretences. My Ethical Culture tried to start afresh, abandoning the past, but

found itself tripping over human nature at every step. By the time Raft and his crew arrive the beautiful experiment was well on the way to becoming the thing it strove to replace. And pacifism is only one of the issues of the realities.

B. As an ideology or a practical protest, pacifism amounts to no more than a holding operation. It's a start in the right direction, but no more than that. It mustn't be abandoned but it needs a few generations of study. More likely, a few centuries.

If there is to be abolition of war, some alternatives must be found not only for the solution of irresistible force/immovable object problems, but to relieve the simple tensions of existence. Science fiction has occasionally suggested, not too brightly, international contests of some sort. The idea had its attractions, but what's the betting it wouldn't wind up as a series of gladiatorial contests with faction brawls among the spectators? Followed by a war when the visiting team cried, 'Foul!'

REPLY TO GEORGE TURNER'S COMMENTS

- Yvonne Rousseau

George Turner responds to my 'Dreadful Suspicions' by suggesting that I 'persistently look at the 21st century through 20th-century eyes'. This is precisely what I suggested George had been doing when I wrote that 'the suspicion is that one is not really reading about conditioned people, who have grown up in a society almost unimaginably different from ours'; and that George is 'really mounting an attack on pacifism as it manifests itself in our world. But in our world pacifism is not the dominant philosophy'. As I understand it, George replies that, when I suspect him of failing to cast aside 20th-century preconceptions in visualizing his future society, I am actually misreading him because of my own 'inability to shake off the 20th-century point of view'. Each of us accuses the other of inability to look at the 21st century 'from its own point of view'.

Evidence and Intention

George suggests that I naively assume 'that what certain characters say and do represents the author's feelings on what they express.' In fact, I have taken many things into account in deciding whether the author intends readers to see a particular character's viewpoint as reliable. No character in Beloved Son or Vaneclor is presented as authoritative on all subjects at all times. In Yesterday's Men, however, the author appears to endorse the commentaries of the quasi-immortal character, Dunbar, and of the Leonard clone. As the clone sees it: 'The Leonards had long ago noted that Earth and Lagrange saw each other through personal astigmatism; to see clearly one had to stand outside the cultures - to be a Gangoil-bred exotic without roots or reverence, or a Dunbar-style pretender to humanness examining man as he might mark the points of a show dog' (p. 180). The clone and the immortal are never contradicted by the book's events, and they sway others to their viewpoint rather than being swayed themselves. (Dunbar's intellectual analysis is unaltered by the emotional moment (p. 160) in which he judges men - 'these terrible meek' - as possibly more deserving than his own kind.)

An author afflicted with hilarity or despair may arrange a book's events to corroborate some viewpoint, and may have every character converted to it; yet the viewpoint will be plainly repudiated by the author. George, on the other hand (as he says himself), has 'hammered' his point in these books. If events confirm a character's analysis, or if former antagonists acknowledge its justice, then we may assume that George intends us to consider the analysis at least partially appropriate. Raft and Lindley (the returning astronauts) are sometimes presented as reliable analysts, even of 21st-century conditions. For example, in Beloved Son, Security admits that Raft has a superior tactical grasp of developments: 'a man from a civilization we have been bred to despise is showing us what to do' (p. 173). Similarly, 21st-century Campion confesses to Raft (who is both his father and his maternal grandfather): 'We've been very innocent, haven't we, trusting to an ethic to overcome the savagery of men?' (p. 231). In Vaneclory, too, Angus - from the privileged perspective of an immortal - judges that, in contrast with 21st-century colleagues, 'Lindley might see reasonably straight' (p. 155).

Thus, George's 20th-century characters are not always portrayed as uncomprehending; but I have not carelessly assumed, whenever it suited me, that George was endorsing their views. When I wrote that George provided no adequate counter to Lindley's, Albert Raft's and Donald Baird's judgement of 21st-century 'kids' as having been 'raised to be "really" hooligans', I also pointed out the inadequacies of their 20th-century perspective; inadequacies which George now raises to rebut me. Thus, I wrote that Lindley and Raft 'are told and sometimes realize on their own account' that they 'fail to understand this culture'; George writes (as if to enlighten me) that Lindley's 'is a 20th-century view, and not a well-informed one at that'. George ought to consider here whether he is not himself the victim of a fallacy: that what the author intended to portray is necessarily what he succeeds in putting on the page. During Nova Mob discussion George revealed that Beloved Son originally included adventures within the 'kid' culture; had these been retained, thus providing an 'inside' view, it might not have seemed reasonable (as it does from the present text) to suppose that George as creator had failed to achieve a 21st-century understanding of the 'kids'.

Similarly, when George thinks it necessary to point out to me that the 21st-century impulse to tamper with minds is not new, I remember that he has more than once claimed, in discussion, that 21st-century people do not apply 'deep question' and memory clearance nearly as much as I suppose. I submit, however, that George's text fails to inform readers (as George apparently intended) that psychlinical intervention is mostly just talk. For example, in Beloved Son the psychlinicians - discussing why they ought not to be forced to rush their 'deep question' of Albert Raft - are drawing on accumulated case-histories and expertise. Colley mentions (p. 132) that teenagers diagnosed as 'criminal mentalities' have 'their drives re-directed' in the psychlinics. And if Campion's status had been lower, he plainly might (like the 'kids' who attacked him) have been forced to feel better by psychlinical 'dampings and erasures' (p. 94). George's text conveys that psychlinical intervention is common, and that people believe it may be applied to them; for example, in Vaneclory, Sanders believes that, after a 'psychlinical attitude test', he

'would be dememorized and reconditioned, and all his past would have been lived for nothing' (p. 286). Angus the immortal observes: 'Today they say "for preservation of culture" and mean "stop that or we'll throw you into the psychs"' (p. 191). In Yesterday's Men, 'under deep open-mind conditions', spies are 'implanted with psycho-biological triggers which would render them immediately speechless at any attempt to reveal the knowledge and, within minutes, agonizingly dead' (p. 32); the Leonard clone says (p. 105) 'what the psychlinicians do daily in the name of social therapy would have been outlawed in the Gone Time'; and Caselli calls it a 'popular fallacy' that subjecting people to memory clearance could 'risk the balance of their minds' (p. 213). In that world, on the evidence of the text, 'good intentions' have so many more teeth than they have in our world that for George to say, 'But we do live and have always lived in such a world' is like telling an insect that it will notice little difference between flying into a pumpkin flower and into a Venus's fly-trap.

Jonathan Swift and Robert Sheckley

George describes Jonathan Swift as blinded by 'raging contempt'. When I wrote of 'the only satisfactory way' for George to handle his 21st century, I added Robert Sheckley's name to Swift's so that no one could suppose that I was referring chiefly to Swift's chronic disgust and rancour. Swift possesses more than that. In A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Ireland from being a Burden to their Parents or Country (pointing out what excellent economic arguments there were for raising Irish children to be eaten), Swift is clearly not blind; and his satire proved effective in removing the blindfold from others. What Sheckley and Swift have in common is the ability to magnify and distort a facet of human personality or a disquieting bureaucratic tendency until one might expect it to be unrecognizably farcical: yet readers instantly recognize the application to themselves and their society. These writers never pretend to be giving a fair and balanced account.

My suspicion was that George only pretends to be fair and balanced in presenting his 21st-century people; that he 'recognizes in himself no temptation to the kind of thought or feeling that has its extreme in their position', so that he cannot 'understand how they will actually respond when they are confronted with difficulties, in unfamiliar circumstances'; therefore 'the only honest method is to be blatantly dishonest, in a Swiftian manner.'

George's beliefs about human nature include that 'peaceful humanity, without conflict, would be at the end of its tether', since 'the only way to peace is to remove anger, lust and greed from the human psyche'. This being so, the Ethical Culture, in George's hands, is doomed before it begins; the slightest strain causes its proponents to fall about, exclaiming 'How could we have been so naive?' - to which this reader replies, 'No way. I don't believe that you could have been - and if you were, then I don't believe that you could have lasted through the years before the astronauts returned'. There is almost no sense that these people have been meeting problems and learning from experience - in contrast with works like Eric Frank Russell's '...And Then

There Were None' or Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed, where there is a genuine attempt to imagine how non-militaristic societies might respond to difficulties.

It is relevant here that, in verbal discussion, George admitted the truth of my 3rd suspicion: that his 21st-century age-distribution could have been achieved only if everybody between 17 and 40 had been wiped out along with people more obviously in the 'old and useless' category. George appeared to consider this oversight insignificant (causing me to mutter uncharitably that he would not have considered it so insignificant if he had caught Pohl or Bester committing it); but it fuels my suspicion that George has given his society whatever characteristics are needed for making certain points about human nature, and he has not paid sufficient attention to how or whether such a society could exist at all. John McLaren, reviewing Vaneolory (Overland 89, 1982, p. 59), makes a similar point about George's technique: 'his arbitrary ending seems to state rather than demonstrate the hopelessness of the human condition'.

Referring back to George's interpretation of Swift's approach as 'raging contempt', it is interesting to note that George adopts this mode himself in his presentation of Annie Raft as a female Yahoo; and that Michael Tolley singled out for notice, at Advention Five, the extraordinarily high incidence in Beloved Son of the word 'contempt' and its derivatives. George repudiates contempt, but does not allow his characters to equal him in wisdom.

Cross Purposes

George criticizes me for writing about 'puerile conceptions' of soldiers when he thinks 'incorrect conceptions' would be less emotionally loaded. In fact I wrote 'puerile misconceptions' - and I am sure that George would not recommend writing 'incorrect misconceptions'. I used 'puerile' not for emotional loading but because it means 'childish, immature or trivial', and I wanted to distinguish that kind of misconception from the straightforwardly factual kind - like the civilian's assumption that a soldier is in no danger from the weapons of his own side. Discussing Yesterday's Men (Age, 'Saturday Extra', 6 February 1982, p. 14), George spoke of the notion that soldiers are 'automata who go red in the face at the command to kill and rush into action'; the book itself refers (p. 78) to the idea that 'hysteria and blood lust' are common among soldiers. These misconceptions surely result from puerility - from a failure (whether through youth or insouciance) to learn about the realities of world war, for example.

Having also quoted my observation that 'civilians are portrayed as hypocritical monsters who project on to soldiers every unclean aspect of themselves', George then comments: "'Unclean'? Did the civilians see it so?' Certainly they did, from the evidence of the text. In Beloved Son the term 'soldier' is used 'only in contempt' (p. 193); in Vaneolory we are told that Alice White 'knew vaguely' that 'soldiers had been trained to alert observation, to make themselves more disgustingly dangerous' (p. 201), while Angus the immortal says 'You can lose your precious world again by being afraid to dirty your ethical hands in preserving

it' (p. 162). Yesterday's Men reports that 'the psychological conception of soldiering had been warped out of recognition by the contemptuous repugnance cultivated as "pacifism" in the terraverse' (p. 187); Bergerac sees combat (p. 22) as 'the human condition in its most repellent aspect'; and the authoritative Dunbar says that Corrigan, having acted like a soldier, believes that his 'ethical nature' is 'rotting under evil influences' (p. 162). He also says (p. 219) that 'ability to kill' is 'self-righteously despised'. Surely, if people think certain things are disgusting, contemptible, repellent, despicable, and will 'dirty your hands', it is reasonable to report that they think them 'unclean'. They are also aspects of themselves, as is hammered home in Yesterday's Men to the accompaniment of Dunbar's crowing (for example, his laughter (p. 173) when Corrigan admits that he wants to kill the Lagrangers responsible for killing the filming crew).

George also writes that 'the civilians are not portrayed as hypocritical monsters' because 'the 21st century does not respond to the viewpoints of the 20th'. But he himself credits the Ethical Culture with 'inbuilt hypocrisy'; and it is Dunbar (not any 20th-century character) who speaks of 'accepted glosses on hypocritical behaviour' in this 'world of official pacifism' (p. 14). Dunbar is, of course, acquainted with several centuries; and the homosexual Raft clone (endorsing Dunbar's views) belongs to the 21st century. Perhaps I should gently point out, however, that both are the creation of a 20th-century author, and that their advantage over 20th-century characters is therefore purely fictional.

Meanwhile, it may not count as the 'remark' George says that no one has made upon 'Bailey's refusal to kill prisoners and Caselli's inability to understand why', but I did refer to this scene when I said of Bailey: '(it is wrongly assumed) he will never object to killing someone, no matter what the circumstances'. I took George's point, that this was a conflict of conventions; but I also saw Caselli's attitude as a kind of insult that is independent of the century one belongs to.

Minor Misreading

George misquotes me as saying that the 'my-hands-are-clean' approach to getting others to kill on one's behalf is 'a parody of the pacifist's position'. There are many pacifist positions, and I actually wrote 'a parody of some pacifists' position' - which it is. George's description of what-else-it-is in no way affects this fact.

Doctor Spock, Lend Me Your Ears

George's response to my first suspicion includes the statement: 'I approve of pacifism and don't know enough about Doctor Spock to give him a thought'. I reply: 'Perhaps This Will Refresh Your Memory', as the lawyer in a Thurber cartoon remarks while producing a seven-foot kangaroo - to the very obvious discomposure of the witness. The events of the years when George was writing Beloved Son (between 1970 and 1975) are as relevant to the book as the industrial revolution is to Dickens's Hard Times, and as Stalinist Russia is to Orwell's Animal Farm. George was writing

when young people (among others) were protesting in great numbers against Australia's involvement in the Vietnamese war, and against conscription; a time that was looked back upon by Philip Ruthven (a market researcher the Age quoted in 1980) as a time of 'youth idolatry'. People superficially resembling the 'kids' of Beloved Son occupied the streets, chanting things like 'Hey, hey, LB: How many kids did you kill today?' The media credited Doctor Spock's teachings with responsibility for the way modern youth had turned out. In Melbourne, moratorium demonstrations were held in May and September of 1970 (the year in which Beloved Son was begun); Doctor Spock, attending one of these, was asked whether he was proud of these kids, brought up according to his methods (he said that he was). George cannot have been unconscious of these happenings; and Beloved Son still reads to me like an attempt to extrapolate from apparent trends in society at that time. What worries me is the similarity between youth-reactions in George's book and youth-reactions at the time he was writing - in a society where police were not conditioned against hurting young demonstrators, and where (I repeat) pacifism was not the dominant philosophy. I cannot help doubting that 'underground' newspapers would have emerged in the 21st-century society George describes; they occurred in the 1970s in reaction to a very different social order. Quotations from 1969 issues of a close relative of 'underground' newspapers will enlighten those who were not (as I was) getting themselves thrown into the City Watch-house at that time for demonstrating against Australian involvement in Vietnam. Struggle was the newsletter of the Melbourne University Campaign against Conscription (MUCAC). It was written by Ron Silverstein, but it always referred to him, instead, as 'Enver Hoxha', supposedly 'the greatest Marxist-Leninist in Australia. He has inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism creatively and with genius, bringing it to a higher and completely new stage.' Struggle was read with mirth and incredulity; yet - highly idiosyncratic as it is - it conveys messages very similar to those being shouted by young people in Beloved Son. Under the heading 'Cutler Clobbered' Comrade Hoxha writes (in Struggle): 'A revolutionary girl (Australian May) said, "I'm extremely glad I threw that tomato, I still feel it was a very worthwhile tomato, I threw two and hit Cutler twice." This is an excellent situation. You, Cutler, must realize one thing, your age group has made a mess of this world, you must step down. The world is ours and we youth are like the sun at eight or nine o'clock in the morning.' About Security, Hoxha writes: 'The chief source of immorality in our society is ASIO. The source of all filth and moral decay. On the charred remains of ASIO we will build a glorious new society.' Less relevant, but incontestable, are such propositions as that 'Cops are no match for napalm hurled by angry students' (from a purported letter to Struggle); similarly, it is suggested that police should be tied down on the tramtracks and trams should be driven over them: 'then we shall see who is the strongest'.

George is unlikely to have been reading Struggle itself; I quote it as recalling the prevailing mood (which was being discussed and reported around him), where young people loudly insisted that old ones were incapable of running the world. I still suspect George of transplanting youthful behaviour in the late 1960s and the 1970s to a 21st-century society where it is inappropriate. I also think that he would have been inspired somewhat (perhaps

unconsciously) by instances among demonstrators of hostility to soldiers themselves - whereas many of us were hostile rather to their being kept ignorant (especially the conscripts) of the kind of war they were being sent to. Meanwhile, the problems of pacifism seem at least as complicated to me as they do to George.

FINAL REMARKS

- George Turner

After this I propose to bow out of further discussion of Beloved Son and its sequels. Yvonne and I are, I think, talking only to each other instead of to an interested audience. Also, as John Foyster keeps pointing out, I have more urgent things to do.

Too much of this exchange has been reduced to 'You misread -', 'No, because on page 217 you wrote -', 'I realize that but in the previous chapter -'. That can go on until we reach the post-structuralist position wherein the text is regarded as meaningless. (I have wondered where post-structuralism goes from there. What is the reader reading, and is a text necessary? A breakaway group concedes that the text means only what the reader imposes upon it. All else becomes subsumed in the intentionalist fallacy, making a good reason for an overdue re-examination of that particular 'fallacy'.)

For farewell I content myself with a few final observations:

1. Jonathan Swift. If Yvonne meant the Modest Proposal she should have said so. Swift means Gulliver's Travels to the general reader and few know the other. I do, having read it years ago in the no longer obtainable Everyman edition abominably printed in the eighteenth-century typeface, and if it isn't an outcome of 'disgust and rancour', what is it? As for Sheckley, which of his various methods, from satirical to vapid, does she mean?

2. 'The Ethical Culture, in George's hands, is doomed before it begins.' Of course it is; the text says so. Any culture is doomed that seeks to 'start afresh' by throwing away the disadvantages of the old but retaining the goodies, not realizing them as aspects of the same thing.

3. Age-distribution. I conceded this rather than argue because it seemed unimportant. Now I perceive that Yvonne's arithmetic works only if the elimination of the old is thought of as a one-off operation, whereas it would certainly have continued over the time of a generation or so. The most I concede is that I should have allowed the existence of a few older people, up to say 55 years of age. Since this affects nothing in the way of plot or argument, I'm not about to lose sleep over it.

4. Being imperfect I make mistakes and usually admit them, but I'll not put up with being accused of arrogance towards the reader as implied in Yvonne's remarks about my attitude towards Frederik Pohl. In novels I try to cover the ground in the name of as much realism as can be managed in the creation of a fictional culture from nothing; Pohl doesn't bother. His revealing remark when accused of one peculiarly obtuse remissness was: 'I

just didn't happen to be talking about that.' Neither Yvonne nor anyone else can accuse me of taking the reader so cheaply. There will be errors but no snowblinding.

5. Why raise this 'contempt' business again? I've dealt with it already. A lot of it might be better recognized as irritation, hurried decision under pressure and other similar reactions. I pointed out (in Adelaide, I think) that each and every one of the characters pays for these attitudes by having them rebound on him.

6. '...civilians are hypocritical monsters.' Since the recognition of hypocrisy is fundamental to understanding, and since Yvonne and I obviously see the word differently, consider this: every person who submits to a system of which he or she does not believe in every requirement, but merely acquiesces, is fundamentally a hypocrite. Every person who tells a 'white lie', bending his morality to accommodate it, is a hypocrite. Every person who conforms because he/she dares not assert individuality ... and so on. These are commonplaces of living; the whole system of good manners was invented to contain and excuse them; a limited hypocrisy is our way of life. The real sins are these: (a) to fail to recognize that a recognized hypocrisy is essential to our living together and (b) to fail to differentiate between cultural convenience and hypocrisy as a deliberate tactic. We all do both; it's the only way we can excuse ourselves for being what we are. We invent whole philosophies - e.g. 'justified terrorism' - to hold the facts at bay. It had not occurred to me at the time of writing that open-eyed people did not recognize these things; if it had, Beloved Son would have had to be a different book. My 'ethicals' weren't 'hypocritical monsters', merely normal. The reader was expected to recognize himself in both 20th- and 21st-century groups. It seems that some did, some didn't.

7. Try reading The Dispossessed again to observe the difficulties Ursula failed to raise. (That's not a brickbat; there's only so much you can do in a limited operation.) There is a basic difference between Ursula and myself which accounts for our opposite approaches: she believes in the pacific perfectability of human culture at our present stage of intellectual evolution, while I do not. All history, ancient and modern, is ranged behind me. Useless to have brighteyed visions of what we might be while we refuse to recognize what we are.

I think the three books say all this pretty clearly.

At this point I bow out permanently. In future I will be harder to draw in. Life is short and I have too much planned.

FINAL REMARKS

- Yvonne Rousseau

George Turner suggests that our 'discussion of Beloved Son and its sequels' has no interest for other Sf readers. I find, however, that people are interested; partly because pacifism is a subject that arouses warm debate, and partly because some of my Suspicions are testing George's work against the criteria he established and used himself in the essay 'Frederik Pohl as a

Creator of Future Societies' (The Stellar Gauge. Norstrilia, Melbourne, 1980).

Writing about Pohl's Gateway, George said that the reader's

understanding of the activities of the characters in this novel depends on his understanding of the culture which fashioned them, so that the believability of their actions depends precisely on how well the culture is portrayed. (p. 118)

He also writes:

For a variant or suppositious society to impress as an intellectual experience, or even as a rational entertainment, the reader must be provided with sufficient information in the text to enable him to answer the fair question: 'How did this culture come into existence, and can its continued existence be rationalised?' (p. 111)

This is a question I have been applying to Beloved Son in particular, and have answered with a 'No'. The question of how 'this culture came into existence' makes the book's age-distribution important: 40 years after the Collapse, nobody - except for the Ombudsmen - is aged over 45. My arithmetic showed that this was explicable only if everybody aged between 17 and 40 had been wiped out as members of the 'old and unfit' during the famine years after the Collapse. George now says that 'Yvonne's arithmetic works only if the elimination of the old is thought of as a one-off operation, whereas it would certainly have continued over the time of a generation or so.' The evidence of the text is against this, however. There is no indication that, at the time of the astronauts' return, people are being dragged off and killed as 'old and unfit' as soon as they reach 45 (or even that the authorities had been killing people as soon as they reached 40, but gave this up 5 years ago). On the contrary, the killing is described as an action of the desperate past, which it is necessary to justify by the excellence of the society that the slaughtered made room for. Thus Ombudsman Jackson admits that it was his generation 'who carried out the Weeding' (p. 5), and he tells Raft that the killing took place 'in worldwide agreement' (p. 111). Francis, of the homosexual Raft clone, says that 'the way they chose was monstrous' but 'they had to secure themselves and their vision of the new world ... they weave and dodge when they are reminded of it' (p. 158). In the new world, 'even defensive killing was not lightly authorised' (p. 192)

Thus the problem of age-distribution seems to me undeniably the result of an oversight on George's part. This oversight has obviously contributed to my Dreadful Suspicions; yet I pointed it out also in the belief that George might then reconsider whether similar oversights in Pohl's and Bester's work are necessarily, as he had supposed, the results of 'arrogance towards the reader' and 'snowblinding'. Pohl's 'I just didn't happen to be talking about that' might represent humility rather than arrogance - recognizing the impossibility of encompassing in a single work all the complexities of human existence. In the heat of debate at the Nova Mob, George made responses very similar to Pohl's.

In The Stellar Gauge, George wrote that in constructing The Dispossessed Ursula Le Guin

wanted her parable played out in immediately recognisable terms. As a result she wrote a diagrammatic novel rather than a realistic narrative, something to one side of the realistic tradition - in the tradition of Jonathan Swift and Samuel Butler, perhaps, with the outrageous satire replaced by a cooler observation. (p. 115)

From George's reference here to Swift, I conclude that it is merely an elegant affectation that he has been unable to disentangle the method common to Swift and Sheckley from other aspects of these writers that he happens to dislike (or even be shocked by).

In Beloved Son George also adopts a diagrammatic mode, causing three groups with extremely limited experience to collide with one another: astronauts who have been locked away in a spaceship for over 40 years; scientists (and their laboratory experiments) who have hidden themselves away underground for about the same time; and revolutionary social experimenters, in post-holocaust isolation, who have 'nursemaided' an anti-militarist population (the Ethical Culture) into adulthood. The last group is the subject of George's parable - of the 'statement about man now or then' (p. 123) that George believes such a novel should make. This statement (so I continue to believe) is aimed at people like the youthful 'leading Melbourne fans' George met in the late 1960s. His In the Heart or in the Head (Norstrilia, Melbourne, 1984) characterizes 'that decade of cool rejection of the past of their parents' and admits that George was bored by these members of a younger generation because he was 'too socially careless to give a damn for their values and too out of touch to sympathize with their desire to change the direction of society' (p. 128).

I suspect a similar absence of information and understanding in George's presentation of Beloved Son's social engineers. It is as if, having diagnosed naivety and ignorance in certain young idealists around him, he tried to show what a mess they would make if they ever did gain control - but he failed to solve the contradiction that their fictional counterparts must remain ignoramuses and yet must also have built a society and governed it for decades by the time he introduces them.

It has not seemed relevant to give my own opinion about pacifism or hypocrisy in discussing whether George's presentation of them is tendentious. George's explanation of hypocrisy, however, does not support his supposition that we 'see the word differently'. I, too, recognize that the non-neatness of life makes hypocrisies inevitable. But I consider that Caselli's hypocrisy is monstrous when he employs people to kill on his behalf and at the same time despises them for being killers. (For my own part, I honour rather than despise the garbageman.)

Extrapolating the future is a daunting task, since it so often requires dogma about things that remain enigmatic: for example, 'human nature'. Beloved Son and its sequels seem unsatisfactory because the author extrapolates from 'other people', so that his characters are not so wise as the author (and their opposing

dogma gets confounded by the hoops he puts them through). On the other hand, the best work of George's that I have seen is his 'trial run' for The Sea and Summer (the novel he is working on now) which was published as 'The Fittest' in Urban Fantasies (Ebony, Melbourne, 1985). In this latest work there is no longer the sense that the author is emotionally estranged from his characters - and so, no Dreadful Suspicions.

REVIEWS

David R. Palmer, THRESHOLD, Bantam Books, 274 pp., US\$2.95

reviewed by Russell Blackford

If you're not sure what would happen if some bizarre Heinleinian progeny produced by mating Starship Troopers and Glory Road were then crossed with Aldiss's Hothouse. I can only suggest that the result would be Starship Roadhouse. Or it might be this little item under review: Threshold. by that astonishing Robert A.-for-the-80s, Mr Palmer. Like Palmer's first novel, Emergence - with its jazzed up super-Podkayne and all the trimmings - Threshold reads like what the old master would be doing now if he had not gone so completely over the edge into self-indulgence (of Heinlein's recent work, I exempt only Friday from this stricture, and Palmer's novels make Friday seem as blunt and stodgy as a McNasty 'burger without the meat or pickle).

Mind you, Palmer is capable of a bit in the self-indulgence line, too, even if he's still straddling it. Consider for example a hero who is the (self-made) richest man on Earth as well as a superb, nay champion, athlete, racing-car driver, all-round ornery cuss and master of survival, a hero known in Heinleinian terms as 'Boss', and possessing super powers which would give him a fairly exalted spot in the Marvel Comics universe. About the first thing that happens to this chap, hight 'Peter Cory', is that he's menaced by what appears to be a fabulously and impishly beautiful naked twelve-year-old girl, who rapes him before too many pages are turned (not that either he or the gentle adolescent male reader, for whom one presumes this is all intended, fails to enjoy it). By this point it has been established that the lass, hight 'Megonthalyä', is an alien wWyh'j whose fat cat is her fmMj'hr: she establishes this by conjuring a Daa'mn from Haa'l, one of the many feats available to a mMj'g-user, who manipulates ambient mMj'g by employing the gWw'r - except it's best to be equipped with a mMj'g wWn'dt.

The book is Part One of a trilogy (yes, one of them) which looks like being a tale of multiply-embedded quests. Peter Cory is the result of generations of breeding by Meg's people, the Isi, who are trying to create the perfect hero (a rich man's Kwisatz Haderach) to thwart the power of R'gGnrök - defined as 'a non-material, energy-consuming entity occupying a volume of space roughly equal to that of the Andromeda Galaxy, discovered by the Isi to have consumed numerous galaxies in the past, and now

approaching the Milky Way.' This monster makes poor old Lee-and-Kirby's Galactus (who only wanted to eat the planet Earth, not the whole Galaxy) look like a 98-pound weakling, and it's going to take one helluva super-hero to do the job. Accordingly, Cory's initial quests have been designed to increase his own powers. For starters, Palmer sends him off to Red China (a leaner and meaner place than you might imagine in Palmer's near-future scenario) to find a mM'i'g wWn'dt - not quite what you think, but rather a giant ruby through which the elementary mM'i'g particles flow into our universe, where they can be manipulated by those with the right ability and training. It's necessary for Cory to locate this power object in order to complete his next quest, to get to the city of La'ir on the planet Isis, the home of Meg's people. The further steps required before all this will lead into the ultimate aim of destroying, deflecting, domesticating or otherwise averting R'gGnrök are not yet clear, except that we are led to suspect they will take another two volumes of 250-300 pages each.

Dealing with the Red Chinese has its difficulties even for a tough bugger like Peter Cory, though in the process he refines his perfect control over his body cells into a power of shape-shifting (something which Meg and her kind, who all possess this sort of perfect control, had never thought of; decadent off-worlders!). Cory and Meg take the forms of streamlined mer-folk and, later, giant bat-a-dactyl types. In the latter guise they have to fight it out with awful communist helicopter gunships, at which point they develop the handy qnNaa'g of throwing bolts of lightning, assembled and directed by means of telekinetically constructed cyclotrons (blasted commies! Incidentally, the correct word for one of these mental particle-accelerators is t'lLiSs'mn ...).

But the action really gets on the boil when Cory and Meg blast off for Isis (in a modified DC-9) on the book's larger quest, the return to La'ir, which occupies nearly two-thirds of Threshold. Before they can enter the atmosphere of Isis, Meg is spirited away by a rogue extrauniversal B'nN'as'hi, and the couple's improvised starship is damaged, leaving Cory to guide the thing through the planet's conglomerate hail of moons (coming in all shapes and sizes and from all directions) and then to make atmospheric entry without frying - before a pulverizing crash landing. The description of all this is a mighty 20-page set piece. On the surface of Isis, a giant planet with bearable gravity thanks only to extra-Galactic physics, Cory has to battle a plethora of wonderful monsters while trying to find his way to La'ir, and this is where the ancestry of Hothouse comes in. On Isis, Cory is only a little fellow, relatively speaking, and the least inimical monster he has to deal with is the stupid but dangerous holl'fing, defined in the handy Glossary as 'a van-sized exoskeletal predator resembling an Earthly stag beetle'. As Cory rides, blunders, falls and flies through the environments of Isis, Palmer visibly takes delight in the names, actions, and special properties of his monsters and in the sheer choreography of combat: even a lightning-wielding superman who has converted his body into that of an over-powered dragon with a poisonous sting and the ability to heal up any wounds less than fatal has his six legs full against the supersonic voor'flön, a cross between a pteranodon and a millipede growing to a length of two

hundred yards, or against the ten-thousand strong packs of daal'fon, each one of which resembles the offspring of a German shepherd and a Kodiak bear. The resulting encounters are detailed, vivid, imaginative - and suggest that written sf can still compete with Spielberg for special effects.

There's a bit more to the book than this - there are some ironies and counter-ironies which challenge but ultimately endorse the Heinleinian view of the human being as the toughest critter in the Universe. But read the book for its life and spectacle. Or, if that's not enough, don't say you weren't warned.

Richard A. Lupoff, LOVECRAFT'S BOOK, Arkham House, 260 + ix pp., US\$15.95

reviewed by John Foyster

There could not be a more fitting publisher for this latest novel by Dick Lupoff than the long-time publisher of Lovecraft. And yet this may lead to a smaller readership for Lovecraft's Book than it deserves, despite quite glowing reviews in Analog and The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, for readers may mistake the genre within which it lies.

Lovecraft's Book is written within what I think of as a folded universe - one which touches our own here and there, yet plainly has its wellspring elsewhere. We may guess at the osculating plane, but we do not know the exact locus of points along which the manifold of the false universe quits our own.

'Was Lya de Putti dead at 22?', Albert J. Guerard's struggle to identify the reality in his own past (available in The Touch of Time, 1980, Stanford Alumni Association), may provide a contrast from which we may learn something about the nature of science fiction; Guerard's long struggle to discover what is true is finally answered negatively, but in reading it we learn much about Guerard. Lupoff's fabrication about the truth of Howard Phillips Lovecraft's life carries all the trappings of verisimilitude - photographs, drawings, and so on - and even the genre trappings - the Noctovisor - of Gernsbackian fantasy.

Lupoff assembles here both a commemoration of an era - Lovecraft and his cronies, memorialized and embedded in a reality (much grander than that through which they lived in 'our' world) in which proto- and crypto-Nazis plan an assault on the United States which is to be augmented by Lovecraft's drafting of 'A sort of American Mein Kampf' - and a reconstruction of a way of living now remote from our own, a way of thinking about one another and the world through which, through the mind of Howard Lovecraft, we see the foundations of the world of fascist strongmen: 'You see, Theo? the man speaks my own mind! Here is a conservative of the truest and highest kind. A personage who clings to the finer things of the past not because they are old - per se - but because he is capable of detecting the fraudulence and pernicious quality of so-called modernism!' (p. 136)

The struggle against Lovecraft's conservatism, relying as it does upon the intervention of historical characters, takes place at the level of the pulp fiction genre - gangsters and magicians are

slotted into conventional roles within that genre yet maintain some of the 'real' characteristics. Finally Lovecraft's intervention wins the day for truth, justice, and the American Way.

And so Lovecraft, exhausted from struggles more physical than mental, sits back to reflect upon it; what may be gained from his experience? Why, it is back to business as usual - and here is an idea for The Shadow Over Innsmouth. Lupoff's management of this denouement is thoughtful, as he steps back for a postscript and the real world. But while Guerard finally reveals Lya de Putti's death in 1931 at the age of 34, Lupoff has Lovecraft unthinking of the reality but only of his imagined world.

Robert A. Heinlein, THE CAT WHO WALKS THROUGH WALLS: A COMEDY OF MANNERS, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1985, US\$17.95

reviewed by Yvonne Rousseau

Putnam's hardcover edition of The Cat Who Walks Through Walls has a misleading cover-illustration; the hero is the wrong colour (quite unBlack), and the cat behind him at that stage of his adventures (crashlanded on Luna in a clapped-out Budget Jets rent-a-sky-car) ought to be a human called Bill, and not the orange feline that the title describes.

Review-readers may wonder whether the hero's skin-colour has been hidden in the text so cleverly that the illustrator (or his advisers) missed seeing it; or whether the revelation of the hero's colour is so crucial a shock that the noble illustrator risked being misunderstood, rather than disclose it prematurely.

In fact, the Blackness is both well hidden and a surprise - but such a dubious one that its unveiling here is unlikely to affect anyone's enjoyment of the book. Moreover, its discussion enables other surprises to escape unmentioned, since it typifies the book's arbitrary way of giving characters secret histories which seem to have no deeper significance for them than different coloured hats.

In the 22nd century, the hero's skin-colour matters so little to anyone that the first unequivocal indication of it occurs on page 360, when he begins aiming 20th-century white racist epithets like 'boy' and 'Little Black Sambo' at another Black, and says, 'I'm mighty glad that your skin colour matches mine' because otherwise 'I would be called a racist for the way I despise you'. Given the completely unracist world around him, this outburst seems as anachronistic as having one 20th-century Australian-born person jeering at another for not having been born in England - that is, for being a colonial. Meanwhile, hardened readers of Heinlein will be resigned rather than shocked upon learning that the hero's father is Lazarus Long (after all, nearly everyone's father is Lazarus Long), but they will also be distracted by the problem of how many colours his mother's family had; his mother's brother (the hero's Uncle Jock) seems not to be Black - unless the Andrew Jackson he resembles is Michael Jackson's relative and not the 19th-century American President.

Thus, despite a scattering of ambiguous pointers earlier in the book (ranging from a racist sexual stereotype to the hero's choice of sobriquet), the 'Blackness surprise' seems most like a late sudden bright idea, which turns out to be self-contradictory (the outburst of insults suggests that Blackness is a festering wound within the hero, instead of something insignificant except to benighted 20th-century readers). And it is even possible that the Blackness simply gets erased again in the course of a more explicit erasure which the Author performs in full view of both reader and characters. For fictionality has extended itself since The Number of the Beast (1980), where Hazel Stone revealed that the Interuniversal Society for Eschatological Pantheistic Multiple-Ego Solipsism had asked her to speak 'as an author of popular fantasy. Is the Galactic Overlord of my series real or imaginary and is there a difference?' There is no longer any pretence that the characters' conjectures about their 'multiverse' can offer any insights into the nature of the reader's universe (unless the reader is an unorthodox Creationist).

In our universe, when authors speak of their characters as having a life of their own, they often confess an apprehension of danger; thus, Janette Turner Hospital refers to 'the risk that I'll be lynched by my own thoughtlings', while Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds includes unforgettable indignities heaped upon Mr Dermot Trellis (the psycho-eugenicist) when his characters gain the upper hand. But in The Cat Who Walks Through Walls, the Author is unreachable by his characters, and unknowable except through his plots - which sometimes arouse disbelieving contempt in characters who are authors themselves. These author-characters may have to battle their own fictional creations - such as the Galactic Overlord - but not because they are their authors; and Heinlein himself is never threatened. His characters have discovered that 'the World is Myth. We create it ourselves - and change it ourselves' - that 'there are no accidents, no coincidences' - that 'the universe is not logical but whimsical, its structure depending solely on the dreams and nightmares of non-logical dreamers' - but these discoveries apply only within the fictional multiverse. This is made plain when mythmakers from Homer to L. Frank Baum are described as having produced an 'immortal corpus of myth' which 'does not change' - because 'their bodies have died'. In a multiverse where rival groups of history-changers can intervene in any time and universe to prevent the birth of notable figures, the existence of those mythmakers (and hence of their creations) is unchangeable only because their bodies are dead in Heinlein's own experience, and Heinlein has whimsically laid down the conditions of the world. Thus, the characters' theories are about Heinlein's potentialities, and not about the nature of our own world.

The epigraph expresses a yearning to shatter the given world - 'this sorry Scheme of Things' - and 're-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire'; presumably, nearer to the book's multiverse, where an elite of likeminded competent combative individuals, all sexually attractive and available to one another, are the only people worth considering (although other types may prove obstructive). Readers wishing to form a distinct impression of the most influential characters in the multiverse are advised to have prior knowledge of works by Heinlein, E. E. Smith and Edgar Rice Burroughs. If familiar with Heinlein, they will also recognize a

familiar treatment of taboo desires, where technology supposedly removes all obstacles to their pleasant fulfilment.

Narcissism is assumed to be the norm, so that family members, resembling one another, will speed into one another's arms as soon as technology can assure them that offspring of their union will be genetically sound. The desire is to preserve and multiply oneself, rather than to meet and interact with beings different from oneself. A middle-aged man and a twelve-year-old girl experience mutual attraction; as in other works by Heinlein, time-manipulation moves the child into a non-taboo age-group, and the hero then has his way with her, apparently unperturbed by her change to maturity. Thus, technology is not the true solver of such problems; rather, the characters have such uncannily adaptable emotions that the apparent problem was purely superficial. In non-technological cases, other people have complementary desires which are held to make the hero's urges acceptable. If a girl adores being spanked, then it is all right for the hero to want to spank her; but this time Heinlein's hero is given the Freudian background of an aunt who used to whip him with a peach switch: she enjoyed it, and he is sure it was good for him. Father-son difficulties are eerily smoothed away, as they also were in Starship Troopers, by a military situation where the father is subordinate in rank to the son, and they are both delighted to have it so. Distinctions, difficulties and tragedies all prove to be illusory.

Other science fiction writers have attempted to imagine how different a computer's consciousness might be from human consciousness. In Heinlein's work, on the other hand, at least two conscious computers can hardly wait to put on human female flesh in order to get themselves impregnated by Lazarus Long. An earlier computer, with much greater powers, was Adam Selene, in The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress. This computer's fall into enigmatic silence, at the book's ending, is regarded by Heinlein's admirers as a triumph of tragic art. They may therefore be disconcerted to discover that the focus of The Cat Who Walks Through Walls is an attempt to recover communication with Adam Selene, as an ally in battles against other history-changing groups. In the end, the reader becomes the observer in a Schrodinger's Cat situation, with two possible outcomes. There are several clues that the outcome is favourable - Heinlein's endings are usually favourable - but the reader may remember that (as H. Bruce Franklin reports) Heinlein wrote Podkayne of Mars as a tragedy, which his editor refused to accept ('You can't kill off that sweet little girl').

The ending is determined by the reader's observation, which in turn depends on the reader's idea of Heinlein and probability. But since readers cannot believe that they are real to Heinlein, their observations lack any sense of finality. Thus, perhaps only the purest of Heinlein's devotees (redheaded, competent, narcissistic - lovers of Boy's Own badinage - enthusiastic about descriptions of washing) will feel truly rewarded by so many pages of a solipsist's private jokes.