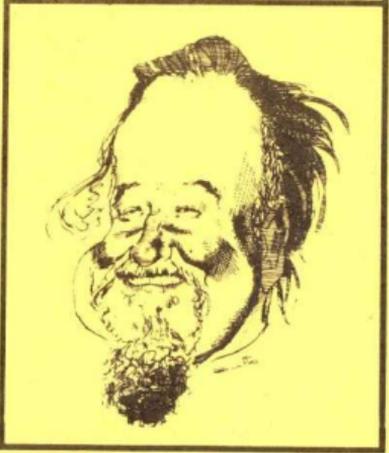
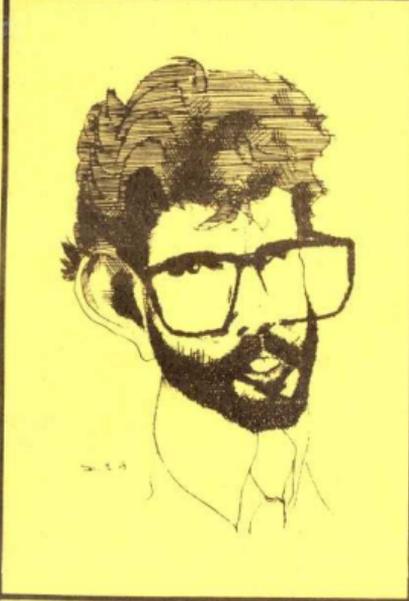
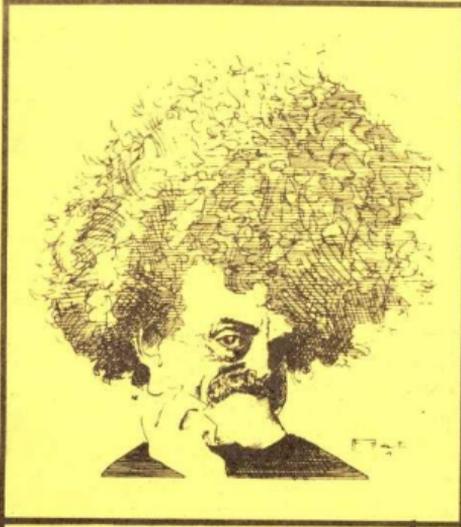


# VECTOR 75p 119



The Critical Journal Of The BSFA

VECTOR EDITOR

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# EDITORIAL



G.D. Rippington

I expect we have all been in the situation of believing a task is very easy to accomplish, until we actually try and do it. Such was the case with the Vector - Book Marketing Council competition. All I had to do was write a set of rules, think of a competition idea, and find some prizes. Simple! The hardest bit, I thought, would be to find the prizes. In fact, the reverse was true, the prizes being given by courtesy of the publishers via the BMC, the rules virtually wrote themselves, which left me with the major problem: what would the actual competition be about? Obviously, it had to be about the BMC SF Venture but it also, I felt, had to be of some benefit to Vector. I considered options like a crossword, 40 questions, and numerous other trivial ideas. In the end I decided on a format that is, in many ways, rather obvious but was probably the most difficult for both contributors and judges; as Paul Kincaid points out in his introduction to the winners, it was also based on highly dubious ground!

Before announcing the winners, let me re-state the competition requirements: "To enter the competition you must submit a short article (1000-3000 words) on one or more of the books featured in the BMC SF promotion. The judges will

be evaluating all the factors that make an excellent article but they will place particular emphasis on originality." The judges were the Chairman of the BSFA (Alan Dorey), Paul Kincaid and myself. Due to the number of multiple entries, the judges decided to award the prizes to the author rather than the article concerned. This way, we avoided the possibility of one author winning all the prizes..The winners then:

1st Prize goes to K.V. BAILEY for his two articles; 'Evolution and Revolution: Theme-Origins in The War of the Worlds' and 'There are no Nightmares at the Ritz': An Exploration of The Drowned World' The first of his articles is published this issue, the second I hope to publish next issue.

The place for 2nd was rather more hotly contended and the judges could not distinguish between three very good article. So in the true spirit of compromise we decided to amalgamate the remaining positions and issue a joint second place:

2nd Prize goes to SUE THOMASON for her article 'Living Water: Archetypal Power in Dune and The Drowned World', L.J. HURSI for 'The Material World' and Chris Barker for 'The Citadel of the Autarch, and the New Sun'.

All there is left for me to do, is to thank all the contributors to the competition for their entries. It has been an exercise which I know the judges found very interesting and I hope that the same is true for the contributors. Having read the entries, if you the readers think it has been worthwhile, I will try and organize them on a regular basis. I might even up the ante of the prizes!

# Is There A Technological Fix For The Human Condition ?

Gregory Benford

People don't read science fiction to learn science any more than others read historical novels to learn history. There are easier ways to go about it.

Yet the most simon pure breed of sf, that based on the physical sciences, somehow seems to be the core of the field. Its practitioners commands sf's share of the bestseller markets. The gritty detail and devices of the "hard" brand form the background reality of many sf films. To many it seems more true, less wishful, and more hard-nosed than works based primarily on the social sciences. Certainly it seems to many more probable than that broad area of sf which copies jargon or emblems from the sciences without understanding them.

Why? What makes hard sf the centre of the field? Answering this goes beyond literary criticism into realms of sociology, Zeitgeistry and political theory. I shall attempt a bit of all those in the process of mapping hard sf - detailing what I think it does, what its primary modes are, some voices it naturally adopts, and what personalities are drawn to read or write it. My bias is that of a scientist, so I shall first classify and later on attempt some theorizing. First comes botany, then genetics. I shall tell you how this remarkable region of sf looks to me, as one who has worked and socialized in it for decades.

My minimum definition of hard sf demands that it highly prize fidelity to the physical facts of the universe, while constructing a new objective "reality" within a fictional matrix. It is not enough merely to use science as integral to the narrative; thus I rule out the works of C.P. Snow, Sinclair Lewis' Arrowsmith, etc. SF must use science in a speculative fashion. The physical sciences are the most capable of detailed prediction (and thus falsification by experiment), so they are perceived in fiction as more reliable indicators of future possibilities, or stable grounds for orderly speculation.

## Science and Its Roles

Using science in fiction introduces tools not generally available to ordinary fiction. The most relevant of these is constraint - defining what is possible or plausible. H.G. Wells admonished us to make one assumption and explore it; a world of infinite possibilities is uninteresting because there can be no suspense. In the same way that the iron rules of the sonnet can force excellence within a narrow framework, paying attention to scientific accuracy can force coherence on fiction.

This rigour creates a fundamental tension between dramatic needs and the demands of accuracy and honesty. It is this which underlies the pleasures many seek in hard sf. Those rewards occur even when hard sf types write what is by strict definition fantasy. Consider, for example, Niven's stories about the era before magic (mana) was used up on Earth (When the Magic Went Away, etc.). These regard magic as piece of technology we have lost, and the plot logic

follows rules as strict as a chess game. Heinlein wrote early stories ("Magic, Inc.") celebrating this same sense, rationalizing territory previously thought to be beyond the realm of "hard" method.

The fidelity to an external standard of truth makes hard sf resemble the realistic narrative, in that it becomes a realism of possibilities, guided by our current scientific worldview. Variations are allowed, since the same facts can be explained by new theories. Thus time travel and faster than light journeys slip by, since they are probably impossible but difficult to disprove. Indeed, various notions of both spring from the speculative end of physics - Wheeler's "wormholes" which allow tunneling "through" the geometry of spacetime, or an intriguing result from black hole dynamics, which allows rapid travel forward in time by tangential trajectories in highly curved spacetime.

Rigour can have drawbacks, of course. Stories can turn on as trivial a point as whether a match will stay lit in zero gravity. This is the danger of overdoing the constraint imperative, while ignoring the dramatic requirements of all powerful fiction. In the hands of a writer sensitive to the tension between drama and fidelity, epics such as Herbert's Dune can move the reader while retaining the internal cohesiveness imposed by building the planetary ecology correctly.

Hard sf authors call this fidelity "playing the game" - by the rules, of course. Veering from the facts of science runs the grave danger of losing the audience. As Robert Frost said of free verse, much sf is playing tennis with the net down. At first a netless game has an exciting freedom to it, a quick zest, but soon you find that no one wants to watch you play.

A reasonable standard, generally shared by hard sf writers, is that one should not make errors which are visible to the lay reader - keeping in mind that the usual hard sf reader is sophisticated and not easily fooled. (Hard sf types love to catch each other in oversights; Heinlein once snagged me on a matter of the freezing point of methane at low pressures, and I was mortified.) More important than the factwork, though, is an understanding of science, its methods and worldview. Hard sf types will deride fiction which misrepresents how scientists think, too. A novel such as Fred Hoyle's The Black Cloud, which realistically depicts scientists as they grapple with problems, revealing their styles and quirks, will be forgiven its sometimes stiff characters and clumsy prose.

This demand for imaginative realism imposed by scientific constraint provides a foundation for a second major function of science in sf: verisimilitude. SF must imbue fantastic events with a convincing reality, aided by a reader's willing suspension of disbelief. The piling on of well-worked-out details, derived from firm science, is a valuable tool. One can pursue C.S. Lewis's "realism of presentation" by working out names, geography, maps, titles of nobility or government, etc., as in Out of the Silent Planet. This is a well known technique in both fantasy and sf, used by authors as diverse as Tolkien and C.J. Cherryh.

A method strongly identified with hard sf, pioneered by Heinlein, is to fix upon a few surprising but logical consequences of a society or technology. The more unexpected the implications, the better. The surprise of an unanticipated facet of the future, implicit in the author's assumptions, instills wonder and convinces the reader of an imaginary world's "truth." Often the best effects come from noticing how human beings will use physical laws in delightful ways. The moon colonists of Heinlein's "The Menace from Earth" notice that low gravity doesn't merely mean you can carry more on your back - you can fly. In his The Rolling Stone the basic fact that Mars is sandy and has light gravity is used to make the Stones a nifty profit, because they realise that bicycles would be a logical, cheap, but overlooked method of transport. They set about importing them, their ingenuity reaffirming the self-sufficiency of so many hard science heroes.

In employing science's third role, as symbol, sf distinguishes itself

from fantasy most clearly. In roughly the 19th century science became widely perceived as a better way to understand our world than either religion or myth - two elements which, used at face value in fantastic fiction, typically yield fantasy. In sf, science appears as impersonal, not man-centered. Tom Godwin's "The Cold Equations," for all its wordiness and melodrama, still retains its effectiveness because it so clearly states this case. Science in hard sf is often a reality deeper than humanity's concerns, remorselessly deterministic, uncaring of our personal preoccupations, and yet capable of revealing wondrous perspectives. It can either encase us in the indifference of the universe, or liberate us.

These two reactions to external reality are called forth in Poul Anderson's Iau Zero. A runaway starship cannot brake itself and has no choice but to go on, leaving our galaxy. Boosting ever closer to the speed of light, relativistic effects cause time to slow on board. The ship witnesses the entire outward expansion of our universe, during which whole species rise and fall. Here the science of cosmology paints for the crew a majestic vision outside the ship, including the cyclic collapse inward of all matter and the universe's rebirth into the next expansion. In direct contrast, inside the craft the crew breaks under the strain of their isolation from any enduring human context. They retreat into endless rounds of sexual misadventures and self pity. Science is the infinite here, and man falters before it. Yet some of the crew persists, retains its values and wins through to a fresh start on a new planet, in a new phase of cosmic evolution. Hard sf is particularly good at revealing the stark contrast of these two attitudes; I cannot recall a non-sf work which so clearly dramatizes this.

#### VOICES FROM ABOVE

There are several narrative tones often adopted by hard sf writers, giving part of the "hard feel". They contribute to the reading protocols Delany has pointed out, providing the reader with immediate hints about possible postures toward the material.

1. Cool, Analytical Tone This is commonly used by Clarke, Blish, Clement, Niven, etc. (In Clarke the narrator is often an historian-chronicler, deliberately removed from the action by time.) It mirrors the scientific literature, where precision and clarity are paramount. The true language of the hardest sciences is mathematics; some narratives seek to reflect this pure, dispassionate statement of facts and relationships, without placing an overt human bias on them. [1] This is also the origin of introductory quotations from histories written in the far future, the "Britannica Galactica", etc. James Gunn used this voice in a novel way in his most scientifically "hard" novel, The Listeners, by inserting lengthy quotations from the scientific literature, wherein radio astronomers debated the philosophy of listening for extraterrestrial intelligence. Of course, there is an esthetic content to science which is also conveyed by this tone. I used this effect myself in a chapter of Iimescape, in which a physicist keeps on working on the mathematical structure of a theory, rapt in intellectual beauties ...not noticing that the airplane in which he is a passenger is about to crash.

2. Cosmic Mysticism (Examples: Clarke again in Childhood's End and the 2001 novels; Blish's 'Cities in Flight' series; Zebrowski's Macrolife; Anderson in Iau Zero and elsewhere; Stabledon in Star Maker especially, where the disembodied point of view explores and exhausts myriad sub-universes.) This tone is an amplified form of the cool voice and dispassionate overview science affords. Here the objectivity is the viewpoint of a (usually unnamed) higher entity, often Godlike. The progress of physical law, often on a cosmological scale, is seen as the exemplar of a higher logic and scheme, to which humans would be well advised to respond with mingling of scientific interest and mystical devotion. The emotional impact comes from the search for order (and perhaps meaning) in the universe, and confirmation of the role of

reason in doing so. I suspect such vast perspectives fight feelings of powerlessness by putting the reader at one with a universal scheme. We might describe this voice as appropriate for a problem story in which the "problem" the reader needs resolved is, What is the underlying meaning to the apparent indifference of the universe? Is there some purpose to intelligence, to tenacity and curiosity?

3. The Wisequy Insider This tone appears in Heinlein, Pohl (Gateway, "Day Million"), Haldeman (The Forever War and rather more coolly elsewhere), Varley, and Pournelle. It provides a way for initiates to recognise each other, with kind of boot-camp tone suitable for instructing the raw recruit. There is a conspicuous ease with large matters - the aphorism expanded into social wisdom, a wisecrack relegating whole political views to oblivion, kernels of truth blown into a kind of intellectual puffed rice. I believe this tone appeals to adolescents particularly, who need to extend their sense of personal power - often gained by their knowledge of science and technology - into larger areas, where they may be more uncertain. This tone often carries an air of the newly arrived, and is beloved by those whose first introduction to sf was through the Heinlein 'juveniles' (variant forms of which have since been written by Alexei Panshin, Joe Haldeman, John Varley and myself).

### Mainlining the Sci/Tech Fix

Martin Bridgstock [2] has applied the existing analysis of psychologist Laim Hudson [3] to the notions of Brian Stableford [4] and others that fiction, including sf, serves for its readers a maintenance function - not to instruct, but to reinforce existing assumptions and ideas. People who become addicted to a particular genre or subgenre, then, read to get their "fix."

Bridgstock uses two basic categories of reader:

The Convergent Personality, committed to order and rationality in understanding and controlling the world. This type must still deal with irrationality and chaos both from outside (other people) and from his inner, subconscious self. We might say in the context of this paper that he seeks a rational or 'technological' fix for the human condition.

The Divergent Personality, according to Bridgstock, "...specializes in the arts and humanities, is verbally fluent, good at 'creativity' tests, and perfectly at ease with a world - and a self - that is not fully rational or controllable." Hudson [3] suggests that in the divergent personality, "The alien is not eluded, or slain at the boundary wall, but assimilated and - more or less effectively - defused."

This leads immediately to the suspicion that perhaps we can usefully relate the hard sf reader to the convergent personality. This would mean that the primary signature of hard sf is an attitude. Perhaps so; I suspect Godwin's "The Cold Equations" became so popular precisely because it articulated an attitude many felt but were unable to express so clearly. I personally resist relying solely on such an easy classification, though it does have a partial validity, a ring of truth. Yet hard sf does not always take such simplistic views of the alien, for example - and as I shall argue later, the alien may be a core issue in hard sf. I myself have argued before [4] that fusing with the alien is literarily possible, yet I am clearly regarded as a hard sf author.

We must be careful to note that convergent does not imply authoritarian, and divergent is not necessarily more "creative" than convergent. These arts graduates simplifications ignore that scientific creativity is of a different sort than artistic creation, but no less difficult or original. In nineteenth century literature a romantic equation of arts with science was common, and some sf retains this odd shibboleth.

Such habits are probably based on both unconscious motivation and ignorance. Scientists have become collaborators, even team players, in this century. After all, for writers it is difficult to deal with figures who do

not dominate the foreground, as would the lone investigator, without slipping automatically into the reverse - the cliché scientist who is narrow, specialized, alienated, a cog in the machine (a New Wave staple). Literature has few depictions which do not lapse into these ritual roles. Authors who are perhaps wary but basically supportive of science usually unconsciously choose the first posture, the scientist as noble pseudo-artist.

Thus romanticizing typically seizes on the few figures who stand outside this trend - notably Einstein - and ring the same changes upon this character as did the conventional fictions. At basis this is a failure of imagination or even of simple observation; few scientists work that way. Attitudes, craft, intuition, sociology - in these and other ways art differs from science profoundly. Fiction has so far had little to say about this. Further, by equating the moral issues of science with those of art we lose the special, powerful role science plays in society. Thus in LeGuin's The Dispossessed, Shevek did not need to be a scientist at all, and indeed the novel itself is marginally science fiction.

There are prevalent glib generalities about hard sf and the divergent personality - that readers prefer little characterization or stylistic sense - which have obvious exceptions. Although Tom Disch's brilliant essay in Science Fiction at Large anticipated much of Bridgstocks's argument, I think Disch overgeneralizes with his assessment that hard sf disbars "...irony, aesthetic novelty, any assumption that the reader shares in, or knows about, the civilization he is riding along in, or even a tone of voice suggesting mature thoughtfulness." [6] An obvious counterexample is Clarke, who is often reflective. There is also Lem, who commonly writes not true hard sf, but something closely allied - narratives about the structure of science and its limitations as a man-centered activity - reflecting a familiar, ritual Eastern European skepticism which owes more to Hume, I suspect, than Godel. Typically, those who have widely used irony or aesthetic novelty are the occasional writers of hard sf, such as Pohl, Gunn, James Tiptree, Jr., Greg Bear, Algis Budrys or Brian Aldiss in the Helliconia trilogy. An odd variant of this is Barry Malzberg's Galaxies, a commentary on Campbell and hard sf itself. Its science is dead wrong, but its heavily ironic points are interesting.

Consider the flip side of this argument. Do these sf writers concerned with "soft" sciences, "inner space," stylistic experiments, or even outright fantasy all fit into a single divergent personality category? Here the polarity of the argument is obviously simplistic. With an eye toward keeping the essential argument intact, I suggest we split the divergents into two subgroups: First, the moderate middle who are not threatened by rationality, though they may be disrespectful toward science, thinking it has too many unanticipated side effects, that its mind set leads to rigidity in real-world problem-solving, etc. Second, the far wing - those genuinely fearful of sci/tech, unable to cope with a society demanding more rationality and the expertise it implies. These people flee to the glades of fantasy, where human will can command powers, bending the universe to our will. The emotional refuge sought by such readers harkens back to an earlier time, when the perceived world was smaller, more cozy. (Little fantasy deals with events outside the earth, for example, though the existence of other planets has been apparent throughout modern times.)

The qualities which distinguish the convergent-personality hard sf writers, enable them usefully to contemplate "...a future which is urban, diverse, technology-driven, and packed with ambiguities." [7] Recently, sf has seen a fusing of the values in this convergent vs. divergent spectrum. I think that blending the two, results in inferior literature, for the most part [7,8]. The convergent/divergent dichotomy can be fruitfully explored further, though our task here is to use its broad concept to map the territory of hard sf, and particularly its readership.

## Fixing a Whole: Hard SF as a Class Expression

In an outline of his general overview of sf, as seen from a French Marxist perspective, Gerald Klein stated: "The great characteristic of recent sf is a distrust of science and technology, and of scientists, especially in the exact or "hard" sciences of physics, chemistry, biology and genetics." [9] He maintains that sf mirrors a social class - the "sci/techs," I shall call them - which sees itself as losing power from the 1960s on, thus confirming the pessimistic writers of the 1950s (Vonnegut in Player Piano, Wolfe in Limbo). For them "...the appearance of imperialism was no longer so benevolent. For sf there followed a period of skepticism, illustrated by the appearance of a new kind of magazine such as F&SF and Galaxy..."

If Klein were correct, we would expect hard sf to show increasing pessimism. Overall, I think it has not. Hard sf is replete with the evocation of the ever-outward movement of mankind, of the majestic image of the frontier, of disasters averted by knowledge and hard work. As individuals, I have not found hard sf writers to be more pessimistic about the future than the norm. Quite the opposite, as their strong support for the L-5 Society and scientific research in general attests. Indeed, even when considering such intractable problems as American urban decay, Niven and Pournelle offered a high tech fix with genuine thought behind it in Oath of Fealty [10]. Even Ian Watson's occasional hard sf works shows a transcending of the barriers of language, and technical means for communicating with the alien, overcoming our own cultural and specist biases.

Klein holds that "...literary works are attempts to resolve through the use of the imagination and in the aesthetic mode, a problem which is not soluble in reality." The problem here is who is expressing the worldviews of the sci/techs? Increasingly, outside hard sf, the influx of humanists and arts graduates, Clarion writing school types, etc. has altered the tone of sf. I fear many of the people are largely antisience from ignorance. (Though the most prominent Clarion graduate, Ed Bryant, wrote the remarkable hard sf story, "Particle Theory.")

There is also a basic rule about sf: It is always easier to see problems than propose solutions. This makes the unforeseen-side-effects story the easiest to write, and the ingenious problem-solving ones much harder. We should expect to see more of the former as arts graduates enter the field, particularly if we ignore that citadel of hard sf, Analog.

Hard sf's central mode is the problem story. These appeal to convergent personalities, the true class that fits Klein's description. His error lies in assuming all sf readers are members of his newly oppresses sci/tech class. His examples of writers who have "recognized the advent of tyranny based on monopolies" are Zelazny (The Isle of the Dead) and Spinrad (The Men in the Jungle, Bug Jack Barron). Yet these are not hard sf writers. (Though Spinrad's atypical Riding the Torch is an eloquent hard sf work.) Indeed, I suspect the alienation besetting some regions of sf arises from the usual sources - not the familiar whipping boy of capitalism, but the same forces that operate on all technological societies: the onslaught of fast communications, economies of scale, demographic shifts, and the multinational homogenizing that follows.

## Politics In Two Dimensions

Many hard sf writers are described as politically conservative - on the face of it, a surprising classification for people writing the "literature of the future." To study this, I propose a different way of plotting the political spectrum. Keep Right and Left on the horizontal scale (though I feel they are virtually useless terms), perhaps denoting by the Right a desire to retain or return to traditional values, while the Left desires to bring into being new values (Socialist Man, for example). Perpendicular to this, add a scale with Statist at the top (believing in concentration of power in the hands of a

STATIST

Stalin

Fascists

Mao

Mitterand

HH

Trotsky

LEFT

RIGHT

RR

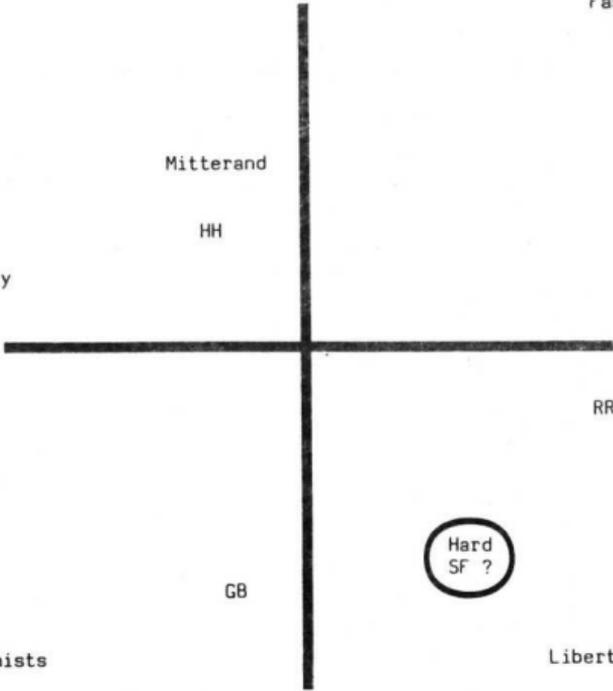
Hard  
SF ?

GB

Anarchists

Libertarians

ANTI-STATIST



state), in opposition to the Anti-Statist.

I prefer such a two-dimensional scheme to the usual one-dimensional view, because it separates people who otherwise get lumped together. Thus the Fascists are Rightist Statists, while Stalin was a Leftist Statist. The striking similarity of Soviet and Nazi architecture, for example, is then not surprising. The Leftist Anti-Statists are Anarchists, while their Rightish brethren are the Libertarians. I have also placed Mao, Hubert Humphrey (HH), Ronald Reagan (RR) and Mitterand where I think they fall. I've also included myself, GB, in the spirit of full disclosure. Of course, this choice of axes may not be the best for clarity; after I advanced this diagram Jerry Pournelle showed me a two-dimensional scheme he had proposed, with Left-Right replaced by "attitude toward planned social progress." [11] Other choices are possible.

Still, my sketch, aside from its possible utility in political theory, does bring up a striking fact, indicated by the circle in the Rightist, Anti-Statist quadrant. This circle, I submit, contains a great majority of hard sf writers. I believe Pournelle, Heinlein, Anderson, Niven, Clement, Harry Stine, James Hogan, Spider Robinson, Charles Sheffield, Dean Ing and several others fit in. Why, then, should so many hard sf writers end up near the Right Wing Libertarians?

I have no clean answer to this. Writers are lonely types, individualist by nature; this alone may draw them toward the Anti-Statist end. But why should they gravitate to the Right? Ursula LeGuin, not a hard sf writer, occupies a position I would take to be that of Leftist, Anti-Statist. Ian Watson - mostly a soft science fiction writer - is, he tells me, A Trotskyite. Clarke betrays little clear political orientation, other than a desire for cooperation, regarding politics as transient and not what the human race is basically "about."

Hard sf types may reflect the innate conservatism of science itself, building on an edifice of accumulated facts and the provisionally accepted theories which explain them. The scientist's habit of mind - painstaking accuracy, constant rechecking, carefully proceeding from what's proven true, individual verification vs. authority, wariness of ungrounded speculation - may militate against the "leaps of faith" often required by revolutionary social doctrines. But these are only guesses. I submit that, in the spirit of doing botany, this is a curious grouping which a socio-literary theory of hard sf should explain.

It is worth noting that if we include the Stapledon of Star Maker as a hard sf writer, then to my knowledge he and Ian Watson are the only left wing statists on the chart. Star Maker is notable in that it attempted to span the physical sciences and the social. He invoked a Marxist dialectical evolution, even on worlds inhabited by insects and sea-creatures, depicting such diverse creatures undergoing schematic evolution, through the rise of a proletariat to the eventual triumphant communism. Despite the vast changes in cosmology and cosmogony since, this strikes me today as the most dated and naive feature of Star Maker. The impulse to be "hard" and mechanistically scientific can merely make one seem naive.

### Hard Scientists

"The great simplicity of science will only be seen when we understand its strangeness" - John Wheeler.

Though he lurks in hard sf from the beginning, the scientist has gotten rather unfair, two-dimensional presentation. Discounting the earlier mad scientist cliché, present since Mary Shelley, we confront the lab-smocked card-board figures who thronged sf stories and films of the 1930-50s.

Yet many hard sf authors were scientifically trained to some degree (Asimov, Clarke, "Ralph Richardson," Pournelle, Hoyle, Anderson, Hogan, Brin, Sheffield, Forward, Stanley Schmidt, Vernor Vinge, Rudy Rucker, Harry Stine,

Clement, myself). They have direct experience, yet seldom give us deep portraits of scientists. Most of them have been concerned more with problems than with style or character, and so chose as handy conveniences the spaceship captain or savvy lab administrator as natural pivots of their fictions. They subscribe to the conventional wisdom that in hard sf things were more important than people, intellect dominates over the heart, and that ideas, rather than experience, will play the leading role in setting, character and plot [1]. This view is still common, but fading, as more sophisticated authors seek to use the traditional territory of hard sf.

Scientists actually doing science are boring unless the narrator can get deeply inside them. Conventional literature seldom depicts them [12]. Only devotees, such as the Analog readership, will sit still for extended technical discussions between pieces of decorated cardboard. There are some examples of solid sf characterization of scientists - Richardson's stories, some works of Poul Anderson, Poul Preuss's Broken Symmetries, others - but not many. A major hurdle in depicting scientists is the lack of science education in our society as a whole. I feel that by showing scientists dealing with a new problem - not simply showing a historically validated study under way, as in Eleazar Lipsky's The Scientists - we see them most realistically. When the reader can understand the problem he is more involved. What's more, in fiction the reader can know more than the scientists, via narrative devices such as the two points of view at different times which I used in Timescape.

My own instinct is that the problems confronting hard sf as it attains a larger audience lie not merely in better characterization or smoother prose, but in integrating all the facets of narrative. The constraint of scientific truth must be balanced against aesthetic imperatives. The scientific world view, its methods and unfolding discoveries, calls into question many of the assumptions of conventional fiction. E.L. Doctorow has remarked that for him, "the great root discovery of narrative literature" is that "every life has a theme, and there is human freedom to find it, to create it, to make it victorious." He wonders whether "the very assumption that makes fiction possible, the moral immensity of the single soul, is under derisive question because of The Bomb." By merely substituting the larger canvas of science for The Bomb, we can state the problem sf presents. Though science is a human creation, it casts doubts upon the primacy of humankind in the larger perspectives of time and space. Inevitably, then, sf's goal are sometimes at odds with traditional methods and aims. We cannot expect that a major work of hard sf will read more or less like a conventional novel, but with dollops of science stuck in for reasons of background, plot or atmosphere. That would be a subversion of the potential of the field. Sf, by bringing to literature the elements of science, inevitably creates fresh tensions between content and form, character and ground. The resolution of these tensions must be evaluated by critical standards which simply do not yet exist, because the problems are new.

We occasionally hear calls for higher standards in sf which hark back to the bourgeois novel of characterization (LeGuin, in SF At Large, [6]). This oversimplifies the difficulties, because one of the prime tasks of sf is conveying strangeness. Portraying people living in a different future is harder than, say, getting into the mind of a nineteenth century mayor of Casterbridge. Sf presents genuinely new challenges. Should the reader even be sympathetic towards such people? Does making a character "real" for our readers subvert the very strangeness sf strives to convey? How much of what we "know" about character is in fact conventional wisdom of the times, and when is it necessary to destroy these preconceptions before proceeding?

Surely we can say that the use of aliens who live in outré environments but talk like twentieth century middle-class Americans undercuts the elements of strangeness in Clement's Mission of Gravity and Forward's Dragon Egg. In contrast, Terry Carr's deceptively simple short story, "The Dance of the Changer and the Three," attains an eerie sense of alien character without

sacrificing its sense of a different perspective. In non-sf, William Golding's The Inheritors and Richard Adams' The Plague Dogs strive in this direction. There are a variety of strategies possible; I myself have used some of the techniques of modernism to imply outré perspectives, perhaps best illustrated by portions of In the Ocean of Night and in a novella, "Starswarmer." Though of course we know that we cannot escape human categories wholly - a point Lem makes repeatedly, often with elephantine humour - the depiction of people or aliens outside our culture represents an aesthetic challenge central to hard sf. Regrettably, it is a challenge seldom met. Although science can give us strange vistas, merely reciting this is not enough; the Cool, Analytical Tone is a limited method. Different, perhaps totally new literary techniques must be developed.

There are tensions between the known and unknown, as Gary Wolfe has discussed, that present unique problems in sf characterization. We must face the fact that our notions of character are themselves ethnocentric, and indeed, so is the assumption that character is central. The perspectives science allows will not always assume that human values or human interactions reign supreme. Characters will be moulded by the universe in ways which will not pay even lip service to "humanistic values" - which are often simply the prejudices of Western Europeans inherited from the last few centuries, and sometimes merely those of people working in English departments. Hard sf attempts to face this fact squarely, though not always adroitly or even consciously.

One of the charms of Pohl's short "Day Million" is its street-wise expression of human values shifted by advanced technology. He makes a bizarre technical future appear more understandable, and far less ridiculous, than our own times. Of course, some hard sf authors prefer to stress our continuity with the future, probably because this is a safer narrative strategy. Poul Anderson's moody, reflective and historically knowledgeable hard sf tales often show how certain elements of human behaviour will continue into distant, bizarre settings.

Pursuit of the technically complex and aesthetically unfamiliar limits the hard sf audience. We might ask ourselves: what maintenance function does the mainstream provide for its readers? In part, I think, it reinforces their perception of humanistic values. Doctorow's assumed "immensity of the single soul" is personally reassuring, and its comfortable, human-centred world far less threatening.

Sf, on the other hand, cannot guarantee to support these. It cannot limit itself to the cozy confines of humanism. Thus, its message is unwelcome in some quarters. (Often, people who cannot abide sf do respond to books or shows like The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, which poke fun at sf clichés, undermining the unsettling strangeness of it all. An alternative, highly successful strategy, is to use the props of sf to retell a sentimental, human-centred story, a la Star Wars. These are all evasions of the core of the field.) Given its close association with the sciences which yield the largest vistas in space and time, hard sf will remain inherently difficult - indeed, almost opaque - to many.

This is unfortunate. For I do agree with Gerald Klein that hard sf, at least, is the underground literature of a usually silent class - not merely technology hounds, but men and women who have seen the genuinely strange territory that lies beyond the slick finish of popularized science. It is an underswell of our remorselessly complex age, often fixated by futuristic technology and drawn forward by unfolding vast perspectives.

These people are not mere facile technophiles, as some critics (divergent types themselves, no doubt) imagine. They have a certain ingroupishness, I suppose, and within the small garden of hard sf sometimes loyally mistake a rutabaga for a rose. A minority may seem to propose technological fixes for genuinely irreducible features of life - note, for example, the repeated avoidance or death in Heinlein's work, and the frequent

treatment of preservation through cryonics by several hard sf writers (including me). But overall the writers and their natural audience, the scientists themselves, know that science is not a mere stack of facts to be memorized, or an authoritarian structure, or the province of Strangelovian fanatics.

High quality scientists are remarkably diverse, broadly educated, and by no means narrow victims of Snow's polarized two cultures. They usually have read hard sf; sometimes, despite a crammed schedule, they still do. SF uniquely displays the tension between realism and imagination, using fresh materials. And hard sf, they know plays with the net up. Indeed, this creative constraint is so apparent in hard sf that, like a sonnet, it can bring fresh angles and surprises, intriguing new ways of looking at our consensus reality.

This is, I think, the primary pleasure scientists themselves get from hard sf. They see it not as a literature of hardnosed technophiles and adolescents - though of course there are some - but as an expression of the bittersweet truths emerging in our century, an echo of man's progressive displacement from a God-given centre of creation, so that mankind's perspective is now forever, like science, provisional and ambiguous and evolving.

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# Science And Fiction

By Paul Kincaid

With the current televisation of Strangers and Brothers, is it perhaps time to hail C.P. Snow as the first writer of science fiction?

Snow was not really a very good writer, his characterization - particularly of women - was abysmal. His shortcomings, perhaps significantly, have been shared by the vast majority of sf authors. Yet Snow was the first person to think it worthwhile to put scientists and their work centre stage in his fiction. This is something that the genre of science fiction has notably failed to do throughout much of its history.

From the very beginning - from Victor Frankenstein to Wells' Time Traveller to the creations fostered by Hugo Gernsback and John W. Campbell and their ilk - 'scientists' have loomed large as characters in sf stories. They have been the mad scientist who sets off a chain of catastrophe; or the hero who, just in time, emerges dishevelled from his laboratory with the formula that will save mankind. You only have to flip through a back issue of Amazing or Analog to find any number of examples of the type.

Of them all, Frankenstein was the only one who came close to being a scientist. The rest were employed to produce convenient theories that would allow the author to use any lunacy - like faster than light travel - that he needed for his story; or they were technologists pure and simple. Science has had no part to play in science fiction. Research, if any, has been carried out off stage; experimentation has been nothing more than a colourful and rather gothic collection of stinks and bangs; theory is something that emerges fully grown from the mind of the genius who just happens to be the hero of the story. Science fiction is the fiction of technology. It is the fiction of rocket ships and alien beings, not the theory of space flight, of planetary motion, of ecology. It is the fiction of wondrous inventions, not the development of new ways of seeing our world. It is about the hardware that surrounds us rather than the understanding that led to the hardware.

In time some sociologist or historian might consider the development of our technology-related fiction in relationship to a science that was less and less concerned with the things we can see and touch, more and more a mathematical abstraction most of us cannot comprehend. Quantum theory, Einsteinian relativity, non-Euclidean geometry, quarks and other sub-atomic particles - over the last century science has opened doorways into worlds that go beyond common sense. If we can understand them at all it is only by way of analogy and blackboards full of abstruse equations. Planck or Bohr or Einstein or Hawking might be opening windows on our world; but they are not windows that most of us can see through.

In the wake of theory comes practice, and the welter of technological advance that this theoretical advance seems to generate. And it is this we grasp, a second-hand glimpse of what is going on. We may not understand the ideas that led to them, but we can at least appreciate the residue of these ideas in the form of atom bombs, moon landings and non-stick frying pans. Thus by inevitable osmosis science becomes technology, the invention. And that's where science fiction comes in.

Leaving aside such precursors as Frankenstein, science fiction since the

end of the last century has developed as a response to the accelerating rate of change in the world around us. As a starting point it was probably inevitable that science fiction should take the clearest signs of that change. If nothing else, a time machine allows a more dramatic storyline than the discovery of the quark. The patience that is such a vital part of the scientific process, the failure that is as important in experimentation as success, do not make for exciting adventures.

Or do they? Outside the realms of sf, writers like Nigel Balchin in The Small Back Room showed that the processes of discovery can be as exciting as any inter-galactic battle. Then, in the wake of the atomic bomb, the post war spy scandals involving scientists like Klaus Fuchs, and other signs that the scientific establishment was to play an increasingly important role in the modern world, Snow wrote The New Men. The Strangers and Brothers sequence is essentially a study of power play and decision making, and science sits neatly beside the legal profession, academia and government in this context. The scientist was no longer an ivory tower intellectual discoursing on a level so high that it had no contact with the ordinary, everyday world the rest of us inhabit. Nor was he any longer the technologist, for his theory could evidently have an overwhelming impact.

Not that Snow's work had any immediate impact in the role of the scientist within literature. Science fiction was, by this time, abandoning its heavy emphasis on technology, but in favour, first, of the literary experimentation of the New Wave, then of the softer, human sciences of sociology, psychology and biology. Outside sf the technological mantle was being taken up by spy thrillers of the sort that claim to be taken straight 'from tomorrow's headlines'.

Within science fiction the only major writer to have made a serious attempt to use science fiction to explore the work and the character of a scientist is Gregory Benford with Timescape. Otherwise it must be said that science and science fiction are still strangers to each other.

It is interesting, though, that outside the realm of sf a number of writers have started to take science and scientists as their subject. Perhaps the best of these are the two novels by John Banville, Doctor Copernicus and Kepler. As the titles suggest, these are historical novels that retell the stories of the lives of these scientists. But inescapably, their scientific endeavour plays a very large part in those lives, set within the context of the scientific knowledge of the age and with due consideration for the wide-ranging effects of their discoveries. Banville is a writer of considerable skill, his characterization of Kepler, for instance, is one of the most vivid and memorable of any I have encountered. The actual nature of science plays no small part in the effectiveness of these books. Kepler, for instance, is continually producing new theories, whose incorrectness spurs him on to the discoveries he does eventually make. Copernicus, meanwhile, hides himself away with his earth-shattering theories, while his reputation grows and is undermined by strangers.

For myself, as a non-scientist, however, the greatest pleasure of the books is that the theorizing and discoveries of the scientists are made crystal clear by setting them within the context of their time. I learned from the books, I understood what I had not understood before, and the science within the novels enhanced rather than slowed the drama of the books.

The latest in what I shall term the new field of real science fiction (which, sadly seems to bear the same relationship to sf that real tennis does to Wimbledon) is an odd and fascinating little novella by Russell McCormmach called the Night Thoughts of a Classical Physicist. McCormmach is Professor of History of Science at Johns Hopkins University; and it is interesting that among the people he thanks for their help in the creation of the book is Thomas S. Kuhn, one of the foremost contemporary philosophers of science whose The Structure of Scientific Revolutions should be read by anyone who wants to find out about modern scientific thought.

Benville's novels are reputedly the first two parts of a quartet, with further books anticipated on Newton and Einstein. If so, then Night Thoughts of a Classical Physicist provides an ideal curtain-raiser to that fourth volume. It is set in the last months of the First World War, though its subject matter ranges over the previous fifty years. At the centre of the story is Victor Jakob, an aging theoretical physicist in a small technical institute in Germany. Though no great innovator himself, he is naturally aware of the great scientific breakthroughs that were made in Germany in the period between 1870 and the First World War. This, remember, was the time of Max Planck and Quantum Theory, of Einstein and Relativity. Jakob is a physicist of the old school, the last defender of the idea of a world ether and a mechanistic approach to physics. In the face of the mathematical and abstract leaps that science was taking at the time he finds himself lost, uncomprehending.

In this I find Jakob representative of the way ordinary people find themselves divorced from the increasingly arcane theoretical flights of physics and, to a lesser degree, the other sciences. The concern of physics is, as the name says, the physical world, the world we all see and touch and react with every day of our lives. Until the middle years of the last century the informed amateur was well able to keep up with current theory and new advances. But from the time of the Quantum onwards, this was not so. Indeed I would suggest that it is only in recent years that some understanding of the meaning and import of Relativity has become in any sense widespread - it has taken us the best part of a century to catch up. And as for what has been happening since Einstein....

The years of change chronicled in Night Thoughts of a Classical Physicist took science beyond the grasp of ordinary people, so that they had to turn to the more accessible offshoots of technology. McCormach makes a related point when he has Jakob complain about technologists' claims to be more important than scientists:

'Jakob was annoyed when technologists boasted that they had given physics and other natural sciences so many stimuli lately that the center of gravity had shifted from science to technology, that technology and not science determined the course of the modern age, that scientists like everyone else now thought technologically. [Night Thoughts of a Classical Physicist, King Penguin, p83]

At the same time the acceleration of advance, and the wider shores opened up by the new theories, even if imperfectly understood, were intellectually and imaginatively stimulating. It cannot be mere coincidence that these same years saw the true beginning of technology-related science fiction from the pens of Wells, Verne, Rosny and others.

One cannot help wondering if the making of the scientist into a popular action-adventure hero, so demystifying him; and then the more recent development of science and scientists as a suitable subject for fiction; have helped pave the way for the slightly more widespread popular comprehension of science. Or is it the other way round, with the growth of popular science programmes on television allowing us more readily to accept the scientist as the centrepiece of our fiction? Whichever, it can only be a good thing. The more we comprehend of what science is and is doing to our world, the more prepared we will be for the constant changes around us. And in so far as science fiction is supposed to be the fiction of tomorrow, the fiction of change, one can only hope that more sf authors will follow the lead and make science their subject for once.

# CHRIS EVANS

## Interviewed By

## DAVID BARRETT



BARRETT: Your bio in The Insider says that you gave up your work as research chemist to write Capella's Golden Eyes. Have you been writing full time since then?

EVANS: Yes, since 1978.

BARRETT: How do you organize your writing day?

EVANS: It's generally notable for its lack of organization. I find the prospect of writing very daunting, and each working morning I do everything I can to delay the awful moment when I have to sit down at my typewriter. I wash the cat, prune the carpet, Hoover the potted plants - boring domestic stuff like that. But if I'm working on a novel I try to force myself to my desk between ten and eleven o'clock in the morning. If I leave it much later than that, I often don't get moving at all; any earlier and my brain simply won't function. I work through until about six o'clock - later if it's been a slow day.

I tend to set myself a fixed number of pages to complete in a day since I find this more productive than writing to set hours. My daily quota will depend on what I'm working on. If it's one of my own novels I'll try to do four or five pages a day; if it's a commissioned work under a pseudonym I'll usually aim for ten pages a day. More often than not I fall short of these quotas, but with-

out them I'd probably never get anything done.

BARRETT: I have exactly the same difficulty in sitting my backside on the chair in front of the typewriter - I gather it's quite common! Why do you think this is? If writers are so reluctant to write, why do they do it?

EVANS: I should imagine that there are as many reasons as there are writers. But most writers I've met agree that there's no better feeling than Having Written - the hard part is to go through the grinding business of actually churning out the words. I suspect that ultimately the urge to write is an irrational one for most people - irrational in the sense of not being amenable to logical explanation. To me writing is like a cross between pregnancy and drug addiction.

BARRETT: Do you pre-plan your novels, or do you sit down at the typewriter and see what flows out?

EVANS: Commissioned novels are always preplanned to some degree, since by their very nature they are books written to some kind of formula which have been sold on the basis of an outline. But my own novels are not preplanned at all. I'll have a beginning, a few crucial scenes and some vague idea of how the

story might end, but most of the story will be invented and fleshed out as I go along. I try to rely on a judicious mixture of instinct and conscious control over my raw material, though it's always difficult to get the balance right. The finished product is invariably quite different from what I originally imagined it would be, but I've come to see this as inevitable. Part of the fun of writing is discovering what you really want to say.

BARRETT: And being surprised at what characters get up to.

EVANS: Being surprised by practically everything. The hard part is knowing when the story is getting out of hand and when some conscious shaping of the material is needed.

BARRETT: Do you tend to revise as you're going along, or do you plough right through the first draft and then go back?

EVANS: I find that I have no fixed pattern really. When I'm starting something I usually have to tinker a lot with the beginning until it seems vaguely right. Only then can I go on to build on that. In general I think it's a good idea to try to get through the first draft as quickly as possible because then you at least have some sort of framework. But sometimes the story can start to go so badly wrong that it's necessary to stop and start all over again. First drafts are always the most painful for me, like squeezing blood out of a stone. There's rarely much craft in them, merely the crude material out of which I hope to fashion something with a proper imaginative life.

BARRETT: Capella and The Insider are two very different types of story, in different writing styles. Which (if either!) did you find easier to write?

EVANS: Every novel presents different problems and

challenges in my experience. Capella is very much an apprentice novel, and its completion was more a triumph of blind determination than anything else. It began with the scene which opens the book and which I wrote without having any idea of how the story might progress from there. As I wrote more I gradually came to realize that the story would have to be novel-length if I was to attempt to do justice to some of the themes and ideas in it. The biggest problem I had with this novel was trying to tie up all the various threads of the narrative in a way which would leave the reader satisfied without necessarily giving cut-and-dried resolutions to everything; I don't think I was entirely successful on that score. A related problem was the fact that I was writing science fiction set on another planet and had to remember that the planet had a thirty-six hour day and so on; these kind of skiffy details should be unobtrusive to the reader, but for me they tended to get in the way of my chief concern, which was to tell a story about human beings. This was one of the reasons why I decided to set my second novel much closer to home.

The Insider was quite a different experience to write from Capella. It's a more introspective and sombre novel, and it was a depressing experience to have to enter its world day after day while I was writing it. It also has a fairly domestic plot in which nothing obviously action-packed happens. The drama is primarily psychological, and because of this I was at pains to ensure that the narrative did not become bogged down with kitchen-sink trivia (though you will in fact find a kitchen sink in the story). I also had a technical problem with this novel which involved the use of a personal pronoun but which I won't go into here.

Though it's far from being a fully-realized novel, I'm much happier with The Insider than Capella because I feel that it's a more direct and concentrated exploration of its underlying theme.

BARRETT: Despite what you say about

Capella, it does hang together quite well, though I found it a bit disconcerting to discover all the political changes that had happened 'off-stage' while the main characters were sunning themselves on a island.

EVANS: This was done partly because I wanted to avoid the cliché of having the narrator being constantly in the thick of important events - after all, this rarely happens in real life. But Capella is the sort of book which creates certain preconceptions in the reader's mind because it deals with some standard SF themes; and I wasn't experienced enough to thwart the reader's expectations successfully. I was also limited by the fact that I was writing in the first person and therefore had to filter the whole story through the narrator's perceptions.

BARRETTI: The domestic scenes in The Insider, though they were obviously necessary to increase the psychological stress on the main character, seemed somewhat irrelevant in themselves. Did I detect a comment on the intrinsic pointlessness of daily life?

EVANS: I couldn't agree with you less, actually. The domestic scenes are the meat and the heart of the book for me because The Insider is about a character coming to terms with his humanity - that is, with his relationships with other people. The question of whether or not he is an alien becomes problematical and is in the end irrelevant. And the political problems in the background of the story were intended as a counterpoint to the private struggles of the protagonist rather than being the main theme itself.

No, I don't think life is pointless - it's the only point there is. One of the things I was trying to illustrate in the novel is that people's private problems are, in fact, the most important things in their lives and that political events of larger significance take second place unless they directly intrude on an individual. I have a feeling that

your response to the novel is conditioned by approaching it in very science-fictional terms.

BARRETTI: I stand rebuked! - but I'd blame some of my approach to the book on the blurbwriter: 'The most chilling story of alien possession since 'Invasion of the Bodysnatchers.' Which is probably why I found it difficult to accept the eventual irrelevance of whether or not he is an alien. This is what he's struggling with the whole way through the book - the ultimate 'private problem': "Have I taken over Stephen Marsh's body and mind, or am I, Stephen Marsh, cuckoo?" At what point in writing it did you decide to leave the problem unresolved?

EVANS: As you doubtless know, I had no control over the packaging of The Insider in paperback, and I agree that the blurb is misleading. In the early drafts of the novel the alien entity was unequivocally that - an alien. Then Chris Priest read the novel in draft and suggested to me that I hadn't made enough of the ambiguity which was implicit in the situation. I immediately knew that he was right; the central idea of an alien consciousness invading a human mind was a metaphor for the kind of personal alienation which most of us experience to varying degrees from time to time; but the metaphor wouldn't be so effective if it was a clear case of alien possession. So I rewrote it in such a way that the question was not resolved.

Of course that's only one interpretation of the metaphor. It could also be regarded as symbolizing the creative imagination, which would make the novel an oblique commentary on writers and writing. I enjoy ambiguity and I often feel that SF readers are too conditioned to expect cut-and-dried answers to the issues raised in a work of fiction. It does people no harm to have to make up their own minds about what really happened - that's audience participation, and it often allows a reader a better personal relationship with a text. Or else it annoys the

hell out of them!

BARRETT: Can you say anything about what you're working on at the moment?

EVANS: I've recently completed my third novel, which is called In Limbo. I'd say that this novel is as different from The Insider as The Insider is from Capella, though I think it marks a logical progression in my concerns to date. It's a non-sf novel set in an enclosed environment which I hope that readers will also find amusing. If it ever gets published, that is: it's been rejected by Faber and two other publishers so far. I can't pretend I'm not disappointed by this since it took me three years to write and I like to think that it's the best thing I've produced so far. But then writers are notorious for being deluded about the merits of their fiction.

BARRETT: Do you find humour more difficult to sustain?

EVANS: Humour is difficult to contrive in the first place, let alone sustain. The hardest part is actually to succeed in raising a smile or a laugh; there's nothing worse than producing something which is intended to be amusing but isn't.

BARRETT: Are you deliberately moving away from SF?

EVANS: The trend of my first three novels does tend to indicate that, though I doubt that I'll ever abandon it completely. Once you're hooked, science fiction never quite relaxes its grip on you! But I do have increasingly ambiguous feelings towards SF, partly because it so rarely lives up to its tremendous potential. I have this feeling that science fiction has finally reached a decadent stage. Nowadays the field is filled with a plethora of novels about telepathic dragons and their ilk, plus wide-canvas blockbusters by writers who have done better work at shorter length. Very little of it now has the keen-edged social satire or the freshness of imagination which

used to be its distinctive features. There are very few writers currently producing challenging work in the solid middle ground of SF these days; most serious writers have either migrated to the fringes of the field or have sunk into the mire of sequels and trilogies written very much with an eye on the market. I miss the old sense of wonder I used to get out of the stuff.

So much for the general climate of the field. But my own disillusionment with SF stems only partly from this. It also arises from some fundamental problems with SF itself which were brought out in a review of The Insider by John Sutherland in The London Review of Books. I can do no better than quote the relevant bit:

'SF formulae permit too easy solutions. How to create a man without qualities? Import him from another galaxy. How to deal with current tension between indigenous and 'alien' populations? Invent a pessimistic dystopia. It is this dangerous facility that Raymond Williams refers to when he terms SF 'liberated and promiscuous.' Its profundities are too painlessly arrived at.'

This is a pretty neat summary of the difficulties I have with trying to write SF at the moment. The more SF trappings you use in your fiction, the easier it is to load the dice in your favour. How much harder it is to try to deal directly with the real world, which is far more intractable than any exotic planet or imagined future and is consequently in some senses a far more challenging subject for fiction.

BARRETT: Do you have any interaction with other writers, and do you find this helps in your own writing?

EVANS: Since I live directly above Chris Priest and Lisa Tuttle, I could hardly fail to have interaction with other authors. Contact with other writers is useful, if only because writing can be a

solitary job; it's good to talk shop sometimes, to compare notes and seek advice from more experienced hands. But you have to be careful not to do too much of this if you want to remain true to your own fictional interests. Like most writers, I want to be thought of as an individual and am determined to go my own way. Usually when writers get together they complain about money, publishers, their sex lives, the Inland Revenue, but there's comparatively little talk about the actual business of writing. This is as it should be, since the only way to write is to sit down and get on with it.

BARRETT: How much is it possible to learn from other writers? Surely every writer has to work out his own tricks of the trade the hard way?

EVANS: You start learning from other writers the moment you start reading books. I do agree, though, that the best way to develop your craft is to do as much writing as possible; other writers can offer helpful advice and criticism, but there's no substitute for hard-won practical experience. Writers who are serious about their work are their own sternest critics. It sometimes amazes me that people who've never written a word of fiction assume that they could sit down and knock off a novel with a minimum of fuss; no one would expect to be able to build a decent wall without having done some bricklaying.

BARRETT: I think they're the same people who assume you can come back from a day at the office and knock out a chapter or two in the evening. "Surely," they say, "it only takes 10 or 15 minutes to type out a page."

EVANS: They're probably the same people who wouldn't believe you if you told them that writing is bloody hard work. I find it positively knackered. And the financial rewards are seldom commensurate with the effort involved. In

Limbo took me three years to write and I'll be lucky if I sell it for £1000 - if I sell it at all!

BARRETT: Apart from the two novels, have you had anything else published, or had anything in any of the other media?

EVANS: I've published very little under my own name apart from my two novels. There's a short story, 'Fidelity,' which appeared in Extro magazine a couple of years back, another short story forthcoming in Maxim Jakubowski's Lands of Never, and a children's story which was published in Peter Davidsons's Book of Alien Monsters. I've written very few short stories in recent years, finding that my time is more profitably spent on novels - though they're not particularly profitable! I keep getting hankering to write more short stuff but I never seem to find the time because I'm lurching from one financial crisis to the next.

It would be nice to say that I've also scripted a fifteen-part historical drama for the BBC or composed an underwater opera - it would be nice but untrue. All my work to date has been for books or magazines, much of it pseudonymous work written to finance the stuff I really want to do and which I hope to publish under my own name. Though the financial rewards in writing for books and magazines are poor compared with TV or film scripting, there's far less interference with what you actually write and this is important to me.

BARRETT: Yet you say that your pseudonymous material is 'formula writing.' How do you reconcile this with not wanting interference with what you write?

EVANS: I didn't say I wanted NO interference in my work - sometimes editorial suggestions can be very useful. But I wouldn't rewrite any of my own stuff simply to give it more commercial appeal; I'd only do so if it would make it better on its own terms.

The work which appears under my own name is at least me trying my best. But I can't live off my writing, so I need some other sort of job. That job for me is writing books on commission - books which are produced to satisfy publishers' perceptions of what an audience wants rather than being something which I would write for the love of it. I could make a little more money out of this commercial work if I was prepared to have it published under my own name, but using a pseudonym is my way of insisting that it's a job of work I've undertaken for someone else rather than being a labour of love.

BARRETT: Are we likely to read any of your pseudonymous work?

EVANS: Not if you're lucky. Apart from a few children's stories, none of it had been SF.

BARRETT: Both of your published novels are concerned in some way with politics. Are you a political animal?

EVANS: I'm a political animal in the sense that I believe politics has a profound influence on people's lives in practically every respect; it's therefore important to me to try to embody something of this in my fiction. On a personal basis I have the same 'vaguely socialist leanings' as Stephen Marsh in The Insider, but as a writer I'm at the same time suspicious of groups or bodies which offer, as all political parties do, a particular set of prescriptions for society. There's a Thoreau quote 'Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes' which I'd paraphrase as 'Beware all enterprises that require the same clothes' - by which I mean that all political creeds make me uneasy because they encourage a uniformity of thought and have a tendency to substitute dogma for common sense, rhetoric for compassion, and so on. It's also quite dismaying to me that some of Mrs Thatcher's most ardent supporters are working-class people while the Labour Party is strongly influenced by radicals and

intellectuals whose ideology is impeccable but who have little understanding of the needs and aspirations of the great mass of ordinary people in this country.

BARRETT: But the Alf Garnetts and Anthony Wedgewood-Benns have always been with us! Would you say, then, that a writer who holds very strong political, moral, or religious views - say on abortion, capital punishment or The Bomb - is justified in using his fiction as a platform for these views? Does he even have an obligation to do so?

EVANS: The only obligation writers have is to write about what interests them and to do so with as much honesty and craft as possible. Those are the only criteria, really; I think it's wrong to set down prescriptions about what people should or shouldn't write. But in the end I believe that a writer who pays more attention to polemic than to literary or artistic values is making a big mistake. The granddaddy of SF, HG Wells, is a case in point. As his career progressed, Wells became more and more concerned with getting a message across at the expense of plot, character and the dramatic virtues which we associate with fiction. But it's his earlier novels which are still read today while the later ones are mostly forgotten. If your main purpose in writing is to convert people to a particular philosophy or cause, then you should be a journalist or a speechwriter to a politician. My own aim in writing is simply to present a view of the world which I don't pretend is the only view but which I hope will strike a chord in others.

BARRETT: Who, or what, have been the main influences on your writing to date?

EVANS: Tom Disch was the main influence on me at the start. It was reading a story of his called 'The Squirrel Cage' which suddenly convinced me that I wanted to be a writer. That particular story so crystallised everything I was



feeling at the time that I found it remarkable; someone I'd never met had spoken directly to me and I immediately thought 'I'd love to be able to do the same thing myself.' So I spent the next few years producing bad Tom Disch stories and bad stories after the fashion of any other writer who happened to impress me at the time. In later years Chris Priest was very helpful in giving me criticism and advice on my work which I sorely needed at the time, having spent several years writing in a vacuum, without any feedback whatsoever. Chris helped put me on the right tracks with my writing, and I owe him a great debt for that. But in the end you have to digest all your influences and transform them into something uniquely yours if you're going to be a writer of any consequence. Who wants to be a second-rate Tom Disch or a pale

imitation of Chris Priest? I'm still influenced by a variety of writers - it's a joy to discover a book which makes you think anew about what's possible in writing - but I like to think that I've grown up as a writer at least to the point where nothing impresses me so much that I want to try to imitate it.

**BARRETT:** I believe a lot of what you've said will be interesting - and helpful - especially to all the aspiring writers who read Vector. Thank you very much, Chris Evans.

#### POSTSCRIPT

Since this interview was conducted, In Limbo has sold to Granada and is scheduled for publication in B-Format paperback in Spring 1985

# Winners And Losers

By

Paul Kincaid

Let me say right at the start that to my mind the Book Marketing Council's SF promotion was ill-conceived and even worse executed. The BMC must be getting used to making idiots of themselves, their recent 'Best Novels since the War' promotion is, if anything, even more ludicrous. To get back to sf, I doubt if there isn't a single member of the BSFA who couldn't have come up with a better list of books. However, Geoff has told me in more detail than he would ever put into Vector of the problems he faced on that panel, so I won't go on about that any more.

Given this ridiculous list as a fait accompli, the competition associated with it seems even dafter. Think about it: people are asked to write serious articles about a selection of books, only in order to win those same books.

And that seemed to be the general opinion of the BSFA membership also, because with one week to go only one article had been received. Then, out of a clear blue sky - wallop. Nine more articles suddenly appeared.

When Geoff asked me to be one of the competition judge's I thought it was one more of the crazy things he gets me involved in, something I regret the moment I say yes. I felt this even more when Geoff, wearing an evil smile, presented me with the pile of manuscripts. I really did not want to have to read them.

But I did, and I was pleasantly surprised. There were one or two that weren't so good, and over which I'll draw a decent veil in this introduction. But in the main they were really very good - at least of a quality worthy of publication in Vector. Most were better than the sort of things I had to plough through as Features Editor, some considerably better.

First a few statistics:

10 articles were received by a total of 7 writers.

Of the books chosen as subject matter for these articles, the two most popular, perhaps predictably, were The Drowned World by J.G. Ballard and 1984 by George Orwell (the Ballard seeming to attract the more interesting articles), each featuring in three articles. The War of the Worlds by H.G. Wells and The Day of the Triffids by John Wyndham were the subject of two articles each. The books which featured in one article each were Timescape by Gregory Benford, Citadel of the Autarch by Gene Wolfe, Dune by Frank Herbert and Brave New World by Aldous Huxley.

In other words, eight books from a total of 20 (counting the Foundation trilogy as one). I find it particularly interesting that nobody took up the challenge of writing about 2001, Dancers at the End of Time and Helliconia Spring. And I would have been delighted if someone had attempted to say how, for example, The Crystal Singer, The Stainless Steel Rat for President and White Gold Wielder could possibly justify their places on the list.

Be that as it may, we now come to the important matter - the judgement.

Choosing the winner was easy, there was really no contest. The two articles by K.V. Bailey were far and away better than anything else. Bailey is a new name to me. I don't recall ever coming across an article by him, but on the evidence of these two pieces I can only hope that more from K.V. Bailey will be appearing in Vector in future.

The two articles - 'Evolution and Revolution: Theme Origins in The War of the Worlds' and "'There are no Nightmares at the Ritz": An Exploration of The Drowned World' - were both intelligently approached. I felt that the author had something fresh to say on each - they certainly opened up fresh perspectives on the books for me - and said it in a literate and well presented manner. In my notes, for instance, I find: "Marvellous beginning - it is immediately informative, authoritative and it actually states what the article is about - the only person to do so this clearly."

By the way, that is an important point about stating the purpose of the article right at the start. In several of the articles I was half way down the first page, or even onto the second page, before I had a clear idea of what the piece was about. I'm not thinking just of the novel or novels that form the subject of the article, but of what it is the author is trying to prove, what is the point of the article. There were even one or two articles which had no apparent point at all - they didn't do very well in my judgement.

The race for second place was much closer. In the end there were three very different articles that were so close as to be almost inseparable. One was 'Living Power' by Sue Thomason, someone who has produced some very interesting work already. This is a short article on the symbolic importance of water in Dune and The Drowned World. It is an interesting subject that is well handled; but the writing is occasionally uneven and the denseness of the prose shows that she is obviously trying a little too hard to be deep.

'The Citadel of the Autarch and the New Sun' by Chris Barker goes to the other extreme, and is basically a little too simple in its language. There are several infelicities and malapropisms, and it would have been nice if the article had been written with Sue Thomason's skill, or conversely if Sue's article had been written with Chris's clarity and straightforwardness. The article concerns the religious parallels in Gene Wolfe's tetralogy and I would have thought they were a little too obvious to warrant quite this level of excitement in discovery. Certainly I didn't feel it necessary to point them out in my review of the books, and neither did Mike Dickinson last issue - but Chris does fine more parallels than had been immediately obvious to me, and so produces an interesting perspective on the whole quartet.

L.J. Hurst, the last member of this triumvirate, is another name I'm not familiar with, but someone else who should be contributing to Vector more regularly. He also submitted two articles, both quite well written and well argued. Marginally the better of the two is 'The Material World' about the influence of Jungian views on The Drowned World. The article, I fear, is rather spoiled by poor construction. All these three pieces would, I feel, have needed some editorial change; and in this case I think I might have cut out the first page or so, which would have necessitated some rewriting later on. However, from the second manuscript page onwards it is quite tightly argued.

Not all were as good as these, but I was pleasantly surprised by the general standard, and I think Geoff should have a few more names to call on for future Vector articles.

At last I'd finished reading the articles and made my judgement. Now my job was over.

Until Geoff asked me to write this introduction.

# Evolution and Revolution: Some

## Theme-Origins In 'The War of the Worlds'

BY K. V. BAILEY

The War of the Worlds is familiar as an example of the British fin de siècle SF and proto-SF novels which, after a long post-Napoleonic peace, contemplated the threats of war, invasion, and social turmoil which loomed in the century ahead. It reflects also Wells's early and enduring fascination with "war-games" played in the field, or in the head, within a Home Counties arena. Rather less attention has been paid to the origins of evolutionary and revolutionary themes and images encountered in the story. It is with these that this article is concerned. Many of their roots can be traced to the formative years of Wells's education at the Normal School of Science (later Imperial College) in South Kensington.

Wells's first euphoric year there in biology, under the inspiring T.H. Huxley, laid the foundations of both the optimistic and the pessimistic strands in his "scientific romances". His disillusionment and lack of success during his second and third years, when he studied chemistry and geology, nurtured discontent and in various ways encouraged 'revolutionary' concepts in his socio-political attitudes, and subsequently in his writing.

To appreciate how contemporary evolutionary theory and ethics helped shape The War of the Worlds one must delve a little into Huxley's teachings. He was Darwin's great expositor and champion; he saw and represented biological 'progress' as dependent on the processes of natural selection; yet he differed from Darwin in that he did not see this progress as inevitably producing a higher humanity. In fact, as he made clear in his famous Romanes Lecture, ethical progress in mankind, he believed, involved individuals in acting counter to the dictates of nature, opposing the 'cosmic code', substituting for it the 'ethical code'. It is, then, not surprising to find an antithesis between evolutionary adaptation and human potential finding its way into Wells's fictions. The First Men In The Moon, for example, the Selenites are represented as a race in which those ends of adaptation to purpose and environment, achieved on earth by natural selection, are gained by a rigorous conditioning of individuals: "the elaborate discipline of training and education and surgery he undergoes fits him at last so completely to it (his place in the lunar economy) that he has neither ideas or organs for any purpose beyond it...each is a perfect unit in a world machine." And when Cavor sees the fore-limbs of young intended machine-minders protruding from jars in which they are undergoing induced specialized adaptation, while struck by its socio-biological efficiency, he comments: "That wretched-looking hand-tentacle sticking out of its jar seemed to have a sort of limp appeal for lost possibilities."

The controlling lunar aristocracy are the 'big heads', Selenites with an enormously developed brain: "rendered possible by the absence of any bony skull...that strange box of bone that clamps about the developing brain of man, imperiously insisting 'thus far and no farther to all his possibilities'" Wells's Martians in The War of the Worlds similarly have enormous brains; in

fact, are little more than enormous brains in symbiotic semi-organic relationship to the body-machines they control. He imagines their evolution, unlike the individual artificial shaping of the Selenites, to have come about by a selective development operating to produce large brains and extended and flexible hand-tentacles. The end result is something not unlike the lunar 'big heads' (whose atrophied bodies had to be carried round by specialized attendants); but in their case Wells is much less sure about the unfettered hypertrophic brain being the means of achieving greater possibilities. Of the evolution of the Martians he says: "Without the body the brain would, of course, become a mere selfish intelligence, without any of the emotional substratum of the human being". In so far as he is implying that the natural selection which had produced the Martians would not in itself give rise to a superior ethic, Wells is certainly here reflecting Huxley. Nevertheless, large brains were for him significant symbols; they were indicative of biological advance. True, the invading Martians were not immune to terrestrial bacilli; but at the very end of the story, the ever ambivalent Wells, makes his narrator say: "To them, and not to us, perhaps is the future ordained."

Huxley in one of his papers draws attention to the eleven ounce difference in weight between the minimum known for a human brain and the maximum for a gorilla brain, and adds: "This is a noteworthy circumstance and doubtless will one day help to furnish an explanation of the great gulf that exists between lowest man and highest ape." In the case of Wells's Martians, "The greater part of the structure was the brain, sending enormous nerves to the eyes, ears, and tactile tentacles" - a description which echoes in very condensed and simplified form the picture given in Huxley's lecture 'The Theory of the Vertebrate Skull.' In The War of the Worlds, however, Wells takes the concept of biological evolution one step further: he not only describes a "curious parallelism to animal motions" in the 'quasi-muscles' of the crab-like handling machines, but attributes the superiority of the Martians to men to a new evolutionary relationship between organism and artifact: "We men, with our bicycles and road-skates, our Lilienthal soaring machines, our guns and sticks and so forth, are just in the beginning of the evolution that the Martians have worked out. They have become practically mere brains, wearing different bodies according to their needs just as men wear suits of clothes and take a bicycle in a hurry or an umbrella in the wet."

What Wells did not foresee was the rather different possibility of men wearing not so much new bodies but linking with a variety of different brains. He does presciently foreshadow electronic possibilities when he writes of the pseudo-musculature of the Martian machines as being dependent on disks which "become polarized and drawn closely and powerfully together when traversed by a current of electricity" but he could not then foresee computer technology, and might have been surprised could he have learnt that miniaturisation would eventually be the name of the game; for to Wells bigness was the way forward - big brains, big machines, big men.

There are in fact some striking parallels between The War of the Worlds and a novel published six years later, The Food of the Gods. There is a sequence of chapters in the former in which the narrator and the curate, imprisoned in a ruined house, are able to spy on the Martian workshop pit, as the handling machines unpack newly arrived material and construct from it more machines. Wells's descriptions are graphic and big-scale e.g. "The heavy beating sound was evidently just behind us, and ever and again a bright green vapour drove up like a veil across our peephole...and on the farther edge of the pit, amid the smashed and gravel-heaped shrubbery, one of the great fighting machines...stood stiff and tall against the evening sky." In the closing chapter of The Food of the Gods as Redwood approaches "the great pit of shelter the giants had made" on the edge of the North Downs, the imagery is remarkably similar. He sees "a red glow that came and went from a distant corner where two giants worked together amidst a metallic clamour...All about the wide space below, the forms of great engines...were scattered.. The giants

appeared and vanished among these masses and in the uncertain light; great shapes, they were not disproportionate to the things amidst which they moved." The difference between Martians and giants is that, for the purposes of Wells's 'armageddon' scenario, the symbiotic Martians giants are 'nasties', the antagonists; whereas the mutated giants are 'goodies'; (though at points he is also ambivalent about their existence) who will replace pygmy mankind and his 'littleness'. "To grow and again - to grow" is the watchword of their spokesman; and the book ends with his huge figure "a great black outline against the starry sky.. that threatened with one mighty gesture the firmament of heaven and all its stars."

It must be added here that although Wells used evolutionary or pseudo-evolutionary, patterns of growth in creating alien or human gigantism, this gigantism was primarily symbolic. When he makes his young giant, Son of Cossar, say, in his exaltation of 'growth': "To grow out of these cracks and crannies, out of those shadows and darkneses, into greatness and light!", he is using exactly the kind of heightened metaphor and symbolic language that Huxley himself used when, attempting to differentiate between animal beginnings and human potential and achievement, he wrote of the difficulty of an Alpine traveller who can hardly discern where the deep crags and roseate peaks end and the clouds of heaven begin.

Additionally, it is worth recalling that Wells's leaning towards the gigantic had roots in a childhood and adolescent obsession with size. In Experiment in Autobiography he describes how his sexual feelings were first stirred by cartoonists' outsize female figures representing nations - Britannia, Marianne, etc; and there is a peculiar reverse side to this coin. The opposite of impressive-big is puny-small; and Wells, through the eyes of such characters as the Artilleryman, in the "Man on Putney Hill" chapter of The War of the Worlds, sees, and seems to take an odd psychological pleasure in seeing, mankind as feeble, fearful little creatures, mob-ruled and unable to save themselves. The Artilleryman likens them to ants or rabbits, panicked and at the mercy of the giant-brained invaders. Wells's adult games with miniature soldiers may also be symptomatic.

It is in such contexts that we encounter certain 'revolutionary' motifs in The War of the Worlds, and other early works. The Artilleryman is at first made a plausible, even a semi-heroic character, with some characteristics later developed by Wells in his concept of an elitist and mankind-saving 'Samurai'. Later he is discarded as a self-indulgent "strange undisciplined dreamer." His plan was to go, quite literally, underground, into the sewers, vaults, cellars, tunnels and subways, and from there launch a counter-attack of sabotage and guerilla activity. It remains theoretical, but, in a different form, it revives a theme already explored in The Time Machine. There the Morlocks are descendants of a proletariat conditioned by the locations of industry (as Wells saw these developing) to live underground. Eventually, segregated from the ruling class, while servicing the upper world's economy and technology, they come to keep their effete one-time rulers simply as a food-source. The Artilleryman's scheme of rebellion and revenge is to keep underground, to appear as "harmless vermin", until, by garnering scientific knowledge and developing new technologies, they are able to take over again. His exposition of his plans for underground revolt is laced with angry contempt for the complacently conventional middle-class, the idle and the submissive - particularly those who, to enjoy the fleshpots, might become the Martians' "pets" or collaborators.

In their book The Time Traveller, Jeanne and Norman Mackenzie, writing of The Time Machine, suggest that the shafts leading to the domain of the Morlocks echo the shafts and grills opening from the "below stairs" underworld of domestic servitude, where in a maze of basement storerooms, corridors and living accomodation - which later stirred his resentment - Wells had stayed as a boy with his head-servant mother at Up Park. If this is so, it is significant

that the Artillerymen had made his lair in the cellar of a house on Putney Hill. The tunnelling that went on from there, the raids for food and wine on the neighbouring pantry, and the Artilleryman's castigations of the worlds of the snugly comfortable, many well echo similarly 'revolutionary' strands in the experience of the young Wells. That house and the ruined house at Kew in which the narrator and the Curate are trapped are importantly symbolic locales, with their crumbling structures, lootable wines and cigars, shrubberies and laurel-bordered drives. The Kew semi-detached, with all its homely paraphernalia, teetered on the edge of a vast pit, cratered by an inter-planetary projectile, in which great engines were at work creating other engines to subdue and transform the earth - all highly symbolic of the kinds of capsizing revolutions Wells was then, half-consciously, contemplating.

Some of the scenes of social chaos depicted at the height of the Martian invasion, like many of the scenes in The Food of the Gods and in The Sleeper Awakes, may owe more to the literature of revolution than to revolutionary thinking. As in his realistic comedies, in his SF Wells shows a sensitive tenderness for individuals caught up in either the petty stresses or the large crises of life; but he seems half to endorse the Artilleryman's contempt for people in the mass, the 'mob'. In The War of the Worlds the former type of treatment is reserved for the milkman, the neighbouring gardener, the innkeeper, the doomed sappers; the latter for the equally doomed, but anonymous, drunken mob in Regent Street.

It was noted earlier in this article that Wells found the first year of his South Kensington studies exhilarating. He later became bored with both content and routine, particularly in his geology seminars. He used time for other studies in the Art Library and Dyce and Foster Reading Room. His autobiography mentions Blake and Carlyle as being compulsive; in fact he kept volumes of The French Revolution permanently reserved. It is interesting to compare the chapter (III 18) of The French Revolution titled 'Exeunt' with that in The War of the Worlds titled "The Exodus from London". Both are 'inserts'. Wells inserts the eye-witness account of the Narrator's younger brother's experience of the panic evacuation of London into the Narrator's own story; Carlyle inserts Goethe's eye-witness account of the Prussian northwards retreat from Verdun into his own narrative. Carlyle/Goethe: "We found ourselves at the outlet of the Town, in a tumult and turmoil without measure.. All sorts of vehicles, few horsemen, innumerable foot-people..on a limited highway with ditches at each side..Horse and foot endeavoured to escape from the narrow laborious highway into the meadows.."; Wells describes the exit from Chalk Farm as "a riotous tumult" of "a dense crowd of horses and of men and women on foot,.. vehicles of every description." It became a host which "has no character of its own..Along the margin came those who were on foot threatened by the wheels, stumbling in the ditches...The carts and carriages crowded close upon one another..sending the people scattering against the fences and gates of the villas." A particular detail in Goethe's account is his description of a carriage going over the body of a fallen horse and of the quivering of its legs. Wells gives an almost parallel description of the writhings of a dying man over whom the wheels of a cart have passed.

I am not suggesting that Wells turned to Carlyle's The French Revolution for inspiration or detail; simply that its content lay deep in his imagination, a reservoir from which apocalyptic imagery flowed. When Wells wishes to convey the sense of irrevocable change taking place, whether through the agency of cometary collision, slave uprising, giant mutations, or, as in this case, interplanetary invasion, he draws on such images. One more parallel may help to impress the point. In part I Book V of The French Revolution Carlyle describes Paris, as events move towards the fall of the Bastille; "What a Paris when darkness fell! A European metropolitan City hurled suddenly from its old combinations and arrangements...Seven hundred thousand individuals, on the sudden, find all their old paths, old ways of acting and deciding, vanish from under their feet. And so they go with clangour and terror..madness rules

the hour. Let Paris seek a little fever-sleep..On Monday the huge City has awoke, not to its week-day industry: to what a different one!" Wells writes his overture to London's Martian catastrophe as follows: "through all the vastness of London from Ealing to East Ham people were rubbing their eyes and opening windows to stare out and ask aimless questions, dressing hastily as the first breath of the coming storm of fear blew through the streets. It was the dawn of the great panic, London, which had gone to bed on Sunday night oblivious and inert, was awakened in the small hours of Monday morning, to a vivid sense of danger."

This article has aimed only to trace speculatively some of the origins of the motifs in The War of the Worlds, and stops well short of attempting to shape those speculations into any kind of outline of Wells's ideological development. It can be said in conclusion, however, that in one form or another the themes identified were with him, usually accompanied by the ambivalence we have noted, to the end. In one of his latest works, All Aboard for Ararat, the 'revolutionary' (i.e. turning around to start again) symbolic catastrophe is a new Flood. In his very last work, Mind at the End of its Lether, he sees Darwinianly evolved homo sapiens as destined to be superseded by some new race able, as seemingly mankind is not able, to succeed in what Huxley had believed to be necessary for enduring civilization - to work against nature in establishing and maintaining an ethical code. The War of the Worlds may thus be seen as both a point of concentration for some of Wells's early concepts and imaginings, and as a springboard for some of his later and lasting ones.

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# Living Water: Archetypal Power in 'Dune' and 'The Drowned World'

BY SUE THOMASON

Dune and The Drowned World are opposites; two sides of a single coin, two examinations of a single archetype, two pictures of a pendulum swinging in a single arc from past to future, inner landscape to outer, drought to drowning and back again. The archetype, the elemental motif and motivation which powers each book is Water. In The Drowned World, its presence is an adab, the demanding memory which cannot be denied. In Dune, its apparent absence rules all life, every conscious thought, every waking moment. In The Drowned World we witness the return to unconsciousness, the re-emergence of the Dreamtime. In Dune the collision of a people, a person and a terrible purpose produce hyperconscious awareness of the past and future as a continuous present. In The Drowned World, time becomes meaningless, past and future merge, Kerans dreams of "...striding about in a huge Dalinian landscape, planting immense dripping sundials like daggers in the fused sand." The pendulum swings without ticking, without measuring time, with the sound of one hand clapping that signifies enlightenment.

The landscape problem is confronted by a man, by men. There is Kerans, the dispossessed twentieth-century Everyman, that faceless brand-name consumer hero, and there is Duke Paul-Muad'Dib Atreides, who combines the charisma of Lawrence of Arabia with that of Bodhisattva. They betray timeless and unique individuality. There is Liet-Kynes, who patiently creates a world and the language to name it in, at His Imperial Majesty's Desert Botanical Testing Stations, and his counterpart Colonel Riggs who patiently charts the ecological regression at the biological testing station in The Drowned World.

Man implies Woman, and of course the women are there. The women are with the water. Both books might be read as accounts of Man's confrontation with the archetypal feminine. In Dune, Paul confronts the Triple Goddess in her incarnations as Chani (maiden), Jessica (mother), and the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam (crone). The Goddess is the Formless (water), the void (the womb of Space). The Bene Gesserit spread her gospel and perform the miracle of transubstantiation, turning the Water of Death into the intoxicating Water of Life. Paul brings monotheism, the jihad, all the trappings of masculine religion. As Mahdi (ie Messiah) he might almost quote the words of Jesus from the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas; "I am come to destroy the female and all her works", fully aware of the supreme irony of being the culmination of those works.

In The Drowned World, the feminine is also present, not so much in the heavy sexuality of Beatrice "I'm not a strip show" Dahl, as in an implication deliquescing into the landscape, "the fata morgana of the terminal lagoon." Kerans is drawn to penetrate "the amniotic corridor" to return to "the waters of his birthworld". Here the Mother is Death: the Lady of the Lake dwells in the Pool of Thanatos, the Grail contains hemlock or Lethe water. The Drowned World shows the completion of the cycle that Dune shows the beginning of.

Both books describe an attempt to bring "the archaepsycheic past" to consciousness. They are in-breath and out-breath, inspiration and expiration, the expansion and contraction of the Universe of Atman. In Dune to make the Adam-Kadmon, the single Man who hosts an infinity of souls, the dust must be

watered, to make it the clay of creation. The waterers are the Makers, some of the biggest living phallic symbols in anyone's universe. "Blessed is the water and its seed." Paul drinks, and receives the individualities of his genetic ancestors, the now-awareness of past-present-future, the shortening of the Way. Kerans, in order to become "a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn sun" must retreat to the rebirth of primal innocence. The hardened figurine of his individual selfhood must be sacrificed, thrown as a votive offering into the amniotic lagoon, dissolved in the pool that renews virginity. Kerans loses himself in his genetic heritage.

Dune shows the birth of a faith, a hope, a new Way: its first words are "A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct". The Drowned World shows the end, the oblivion of the longed-for Nirvana. Its first words: "Soon it would be too hot." Perhaps even the title of the first chapter, "On the Beach at the Ritz", is meant to resonate with one of the most famous end-of-the-world films (On The Beach).

There is Water, and there is Al-Lat, the burning sun. Here is an opposition. The Moon rules Water, and the Sun is the enemy, the destroyer of water. Traditional interpretations of the legends of the psyche name water as the unconscious, intuition, the storehouse of archetypal power, and the sun as Apollonian rationality, logic, consciousness. Apollo holds life in one hold and death in the other. The pulse of the sun beats in Kerans' blood. The heartbeats jan-jan-jan (go go go) of the dead Jamis are chanted over his water, the water recovered from his dead body. The water of life is the water of death. Dying, they live: living, they die. The Freman death-commandos are always and utterly on the side of life. Kerans seeks a certain death in the midst of burgeoning life, presides as mock- (or real?) god over the Feast of Skulls, the feast of the dead.

The sea becomes a burning desert in Kerans' dreams, and in Paul's, the desert becomes a watered Paradise. Variations on a theme. The distillation of the paradox is paradox. The Water of Life drips into the Pool of Thanatos. Both the books are cruelly accurate pictures of a man's psyche. Of course, that is by no means all they are. I am not saying that by understanding the power of water you will understand all there is to understand about Dune and The Drowned World. Quite the reverse. By understanding Dune and The Drowned World we will understand more about Water. The Lady Jessica is not primarily an incarnation of the Triple Goddess; she is primarily the Lady Jessica. The symbolism underlies the story, nevertheless, in each story, the symbolism is there.

There are many minor correspondences which may delight, amuse and instruct you; too many to name them all. The storm as an agent of impersonal, random destruction: coriolis storms in Dune, thermal storms in The Drowned World. How little faith we place in the weather! Two worlds inhabitable only at the poles (a heavy hint that both works are somewhat concerned with polarity). Of course there are vast panoramas of experience which cannot be matched, as there are in any two people's lives.

And there is a final warning. It is one thing to take archetypes seriously, and another to be taken over by them. It is one thing to write variations on the Single Story, that Platonic Idea of which all our physical manifestations of story are but imperfect copies, and another to write the same story again and again and again. Look on the works of Ballard and Herbert, ye mighty, and despair...

Dune and The Drowned World are opposites; two sides of a single coin, two examinations of a single arc from past to future, inner landscape to outer, drought to drowning and back again. The drowning of the Maker in the poison of pure water creates the lake of lime, total cellular consciousness. "If we let these buried phantoms master us as they re-appear we'll be swept back helplessly in the flood-tide like pieces of flotsam." The pendulum swings without ticking, without measuring time, with the sound of one hand clapping that signifies enlightenment.

# The Citadel of the Autarch, and The New Sun

## BY CHRIS BARKER

The Citadel of the Autarch is the final part of The Book of the New Sun. The New Sun, we would presume therefore has a central role to play in this epic novel - not least in its concluding volume - and yet the book is ostensibly about Severian, the exiled torturer, and his rise to the Autarchy. Then who, or what, is the New Sun? The answer to this question unlocks the riddle of The Citadel of the Autarch and hence The Book of the New Sun. Wolfe's quartet does not deceive us, it is indeed the Book of the New Sun.

Most books which form part of an interlocking whole, owe a great deal to their predecessors and these volumes have to be discussed in any study of the concluding novel. Unfortunately, because Wolfe has chosen to weave an incredibly complex tapestry - which is by no means chronological - a study of any theme in the Citadel of the Autarch involves rather more than a cursory glance at the first three volumes. The Citadel of the Autarch is the key to understanding the other books, but only as far as it permits us to unlock previously hidden treasure troves.

From a general overview of The Book of the New Sun, it becomes apparent that there are two main themes running through it. There is a 'science-fictional' one, Severian: his odyssey through a far future earth, and his eventual ascendancy to the Autarchy. There is also a more subtle religious thread which involves a religious artefact, the Claw of the Conciliator, miracles, and the return of the Conciliator in the person of the New Sun who will restore Urth's dying star. Throughout his many adventures, Severian is also travelling on a religious pilgrimage. The New Sun, until the last half of The Citadel of the Autarch, is therefore understood primarily in these religious terms: and I believe a closer inspection of the specifically Christian parallellism found in The Book of the New Sun will help us to reveal the New Sun himself.

Why, you may ask, single out one set of beliefs from a mish-mash of every religion, philosophy and myth know to man, as well as several products of Wolfe's own fertile imagination? The reason is partly the author's background. A man is always, to some extent, shaped by his culture; America is, at least superficially, Christian. Wolfe often uses quotes from Christian sources, indeed The Shadow of the Torturer is prefixed by a verse from the Christian hymn, 'O God our help in ages past'. He has also used the Christmas carol 'Good King Wenceslas' as the foundation of his young-adult novel The Devil in a Forest. But these are only hints which will be substantiated when we start to pick up the religious threads of the New Sun. Let me wet your appetite first.

Remember Dorcas, the frail heroine, raised from the dead by the power focused in the Claw of the Conciliator? How many of you though realise the significance of that name? Dorcas or Tabitha means 'gazelle' and while this is physically apt, there is a deeper significance. There is a Dorcas in the New Testament, she is a woman who is raised from the dead by the power of an older conciliator; Christ. [Acts 9 v36-41] Coincidence? Perhaps, but remember that above all things Wolfe is a subtle writer. Let us take this parallel further. There is a resemblance between the Conciliator worker of miracles, killed by the authorities, who is to return as the New Sun; and Jesus Christ, his life, death, resurrection and expected return. The Christ-

like image of the Conciliator is further reinforced by Severian's discovery of the true nature of the Claw in the Sand Garden chapter of the final volume. [The Claw of the Conciliator, pp 245] It had been a puzzle to him why the Conciliator, a deity in human form, should have talons. In this chapter he realizes that the Claw in fact is a rose thorn. It was a crown of thorns which was placed on Jesus's head, when he has on the cross. This point is further underlined in the quote at the beginning of The Claw of the Conciliator, which begins: "But strength still goes out from your thorns".

On a completely different level, there is a striking similarity between Severian's encounter with the Old Autarch, in The Sword of the Lictor and the temptation of Jesus, in Matthew: "Look see the robe of the world. Is it not beautiful?...It can be your robe...I will give this world to you to rule as my steward." [The Sword of the Lictor, pp 212] (Severian thinks the Autarch is after the Claw, but it is Severian himself who possesses the power the 'tempter' wants.) "Again the Devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them and said 'All these I give you, if you bow down and worship me.'" [Matthew 4 v8, RSV Bible] Both occur in a high place, are instituted by some ancient evil power, and are of the same type of temptation - power and wealth in return for enslavement to that power's will. This is actually a critical turning point in this book - a fact missed by many reviewers - and is the culmination of a growing sense of 'spiritual' conflict, first realized in Severian's encounter with the 'circle of Sorcerers in a preceding chapter. In Severian's words; "A snare was closing beside which Decuman's (sorcerer) net was a primitive first attempt." [The Sword of the Lictor, pp210] This whole incident is illuminated in the light of The Citadel of the Autarch, and takes on even greater significance when we realize who the New Sun is.

Before you misinterpret me I must stress that what we have here is not allegory, but parallels which work at many different levels. I do not intend to turn this into a witch-hunt (sic) Wolfe is too subtle a writer to fall into such traps.

It is now time to follow these religious threads as they lead to The Citadel of the Autarch. Two-thirds of the way through this final volume we see the major 'science-fictional' thread of Severian's rise to the Autarchy reach its climax. To some reviewers this was a predictable, disappointing conclusion, with whiffs of Dune and SF cliché - but be of good cheer, there is more here than meets the eye. Let us examine it more closely.

Severian's religious pilgrimage has become progressively deeper. He has an increasing 'spiritual awareness' and this peaks with his prayer in the Chapel of the Pelerines [pp 111] where he surrenders the Claw. He is then sent by the Sister on a mission to rescue an anchorite. It is here that a thematic turning point is reached - subtly, of course. Here the science-fictional and religious threads merge. Listen carefully to the words of that anchorite as he comments on the distinction between religion and science, a distinction which he says; "...no longer holds, Religion and Science have always been matters of faith in something. It is the same something." [pp 134-35]. From this point onwards the religious aspects become increasingly explained in terms of highly advanced science, and here it seems appropriate to leave our thread of Christian parallels which have served us well. The New Sun is now explained (although not entirely) in terms of the sun (astronomical body), not a religious figure.

After this incident the narrative takes us through raging battles to Severian's final meeting with the Autarch whom he succeeds. The Autarch, the composite consciousness, who is in himself a democracy - the highest form of government. This is what the whole series has been leading up to - isn't it? Perhaps.

Let's pause awhile and think where this idea of democracy first arose. It's from a strange 'dream' Severian had right back in The Shadow of the Torturer: a meeting with the 'powers' represented this time by the dead Master

Malrubius and his (Severian's) dog, Triskele. An event which Severian remarked had future significance. Who, or what are they? In their own words - as they meet Severian for the third time, in the 'Corridors of Time' chapter; "...powers from above the stage. Not quite deities...supernatural force, personified and brought onto the stage in the last act in order that the play may end well." [pp 243] Their second appearance in Father Inire's mirrors is described by Severian thus: "It was neither a woman nor a butterfly, but it partook of both.. It opened it's wings that I might observe them. They were marked with eyes." [The Claw of the Conciliator, pp187-188] How else would you describe an angel without using the word? But lets also compare this image with one in Revelation: "...the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are filled with eyes all round and within." [Rev 4 V8] In appearance and function they are angels. The Christian parallels seem to have re-emerged on a different level again; although later rationalized in terms of alternative universes and creatures from outside time, the effect is still striking.

We are now beginning to see that as Severian has risen to the Autarchy, so, in the broader sweep of history, the Autarchy itself is ascending to a definite goal. The powers that are represented by Master Malrubius and Triskele are intervening as that goal draws near. In the 'Sand Garden' chapter they explain to Severian that the New Sun is the physical manifestation of a rejuvenated star, presented to humanity by the beings that have transcended time, only when humanity is seen to merit it. Is the New Sun literally just a new star formed by the 'White Fountain' which Severian will bring back, if successful, from the stars? Malrubius and Triskele make it plain that this is the important meaning - but it is not the only meaning. As I have said the Autarchy is evolving as each new consciousness is added to it. Some pertinent quotes will unfold this final mystery. Severian's comments as he looks at the fatally injured Autarch: "...I had sensed the complexity of thought, as we sense, even in a bad light, the complexity of a mosaic, the myriad, infinitesimal chips that combine to produce the illuminated face and staring eyes of the New Sun". [pp 208-9] In the Sand Garden chapter Severian presumes he is to go to the New Sun in order to bring peace and justice - the reply he receives is interesting, and Severian doesn't understand it at the time. "It is not he (the New Sun) who calls you. Those who call hope to summon the New Sun to them." Later on the same page Malrubius says; "...The old Autarch told you the truth - we will not go to the stars again until we go as a divinity, but that time may not be far off now." [pp 250]

The Autarchy is evolving into the person of the New Sun, and this person will bring the New Sun (star) to Urth. Is Severian's consciousness the final piece of the person of the New Sun? Does he succeed in his mission to the stars? There are a few pointers that suggests he does.

First, there is the entire summation of Severian's life before he becomes Autarch; the supernatural power he possesses, the specific temptations I've mentioned previously and his increased 'spiritual awareness'. (The reality of the Increate becomes greater to Severian rather than less, which goes against the grain of the increased rationalization of religion in terms of science which we see in The Citadel of the Autarch - see for example page 306 where he senses the presence of the Increate amongst the poor.) In this way Severian manifests some of the nature of the old Conciliator.

Second, there is the evidence from two characters. The Green man from the future is a testimony to a New Sun by his very appearance. The anchorite whom the Pelerines send Severian to 'aid' is from a future in which the sun dies, and he disappears when removed from the area of his 'timeless' home, indicating that his black future is not the same as Severians.

The best pointer, however, comes from Severian himself, when he is deciding on the title for his narrative he has just recorded. You see The Book of the New Sun could be a description of the era when the New Sun is brought to humankind - but rather is it not the account recorded by the New Sun of his life?

# The Material World

BY L.J. HURST

The combination of discussion of psychology, and the apparent experience of the world in the style of a previous age, in J.G. Ballard's The Drowned World, seems to identify Jungian psychology as the main strain of the novel. A question that the reader quickly asks is: Is the novel simply a vehicle for Jungian mysticism in its idea of depth to mind, and a collective unconscious?

The protagonist, Robert Kerans, and his associate, Alan Bodkin, seem to express this belief clearly. The dubious Strangman attributes the Jungian theory to Kerans, although it is only Bodkin who ever expounds it - "That wasn't a true dream, Robert, but an ancient organic memory millions of years old". However, Bodkin never mentions Jung's name, and instead seems to expound his ideas in ethological terms - the rising heat, new (or rather renewed) plants and animals, and the changing geomorphology are acting as Innate Releasing Mechanisms (IRM's), as the inhabitants of the flooding globe adapt to their new environment. Kerans identifies this change, in part, with death (and especially suicide), though authorial interpolations identify it with rebirth - the new Adam. The death and time references tie in with the IRMs to relate to other Ballard stories - "The Reptile Enclosure" and "The Voices of Time", but the references to the changing psychology send the reader back to Jung and the later work of Freud. But Ballard only uses Jung to ironically counterpoise the theme with another interpretation of events.

Such an opinion - that The Drowned World is not Jungian - is contrary to, say, Patrick Parrinder, who wrote "although the theory of evolution is used as an adjunct to Ballard's visions of present-day environmental disaster, it is clear that the main 'scientific' background for these stories (The Drowned World and "The Reptile Enclosure") is not biology, as it was for Wells, but Jungian psychology. The sea towards which life regresses stands for the womb.... Ballard's fiction is a progressive subjugation of every feature of external reality to the demands of the 'collective unconscious'".

For Parrinder the novel is about the power of the central character's mind to change his conception of the world ('determined' as it were, to destroy it, or only appreciate it in decay). If The Drowned World were Jungian, such an interpretation would not really be valid, but, in fact, in the final analysis the book is not Jungian, and part of its power lies in its denial of the Jungian interpretation before a material one - the experience of a future, changed world.

The heating of the earth by solar flares, and its subsequent submersion, causes the earth to pass into a state similar to that of the Carboniferous or Triassic Ages. Animals quickly appear as if they were of those periods - a pelycosaur manages to develop in only seventy years, alligators, iguanas and reptiles generally become the dominant species. This, Bodkin says, is the world in which many psychic traces were left, by fear, millions of years before in an earlier evolutionary stage; which can now appear - not as dreams but as a result of everyday life. If, as Bodkin says, it is fear that left the archetypal scars, it would be odd of Kerans to accept such a return of fright. And it is from this base that Ballard separates from Jung: what Bodkin says may not be the truth, or not the whole truth; what Kerans does, is what

Ballard has said explains the action - "Kerans is the only one to do anything meaningful. His decision to stay, to come to terms with the changes taking place within himself, to understand the logic of his relationship with the shifting biological kingdom, and his decision to finally go south and greet the sun, is a totally meaningful course of action. The behaviour of the other people, which superficially appears to be meaningful - getting the hell out, or draining the lagoons - is totally meaningless".

The point about Jung's collective unconscious, and its archetypes, is that ultimately it was used to explain the problems of Jung's patients (and sometimes himself) in their own time, millenia after the period in which the archetypes could have had any consequence. Jungians have argued that these archetypes are continually found, and looked for especially in mainstream literature. Ballard refers to this, and then turns away.

The central image of The Drowned World is necessarily water. This water world is directly associated with the womb, amniotic fluid etc both by psychologists, and by the novel's characters. Ballard includes the idea in other works - in "The Venus Hunters" Kandinski has written that "just as the sea was a universal image of the unconscious, so space was nothing less than an image of psychosis and death"; and David Pringle, in his study, Earth is the Alien Planet, has pointed many similar water references.

Now, in The Drowned World, Ballard mingles references to this image with Jungian references, ultimately for ironic purpose. The hero's surname, Kerans, was taken from the captain of HMS Amethyst, who ran the communist blockade on the Yellow River through Shanghai in 1949. Kerans, then, has associations with water in history, and possibly autobiographical associations with the flooded paddies of Ballard's Chinese boyhood. But the potentially mythic Captain Kerans' first name was John, not Robert. Although Robert is one of Ballard's stock list, it was also the first name of one of Jung's major influences - Robert Mayer - who developed his ideas (Jung tells us) during voyages as a ship's doctor in 1840-1841. Dr Bodkin has the same name as Dr Maud Bodkin, the author of the Jungian literary study Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, a large part of which deals with Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. One might think that the addition of Beatrice Dahl would clearly identify a Jungian anima (with more contemporary references in that her art collection seems suggested by Peggy Guggenheim, and thus returning to the psychologists through the surrealists) but it becomes clear that The Drowned World is not Jungian when we recognise the reality of Kerans, Bodkins, Hardman's experience. They respond to the material world in which their experiences have an immediate cause. There is no room for solar myth because the sun itself is central to their life - it blinds Hardman, it enervates them all, their blood pulses with the corona; the deep worlds to which Jung claimed he went in dreams to meet Dwarfs, phalli etc., here have a physical reality in the exploration of the immersed cities and cohabitation with the reptiles among the gyrosperms; the stress of the novel set in a future where events take place that have not occurred in our experience, is little different to that of Ballard's works set in the present or near-present, like The Atrocity Exhibition, Crash or "The Subliminal Man". The consciousness, such as it is, of Kerans arises from his material conditions, in the case where the world changes massively so that consciousness must also change. "The logic of (Kerans') relationship with the shifting biological kingdom" may be incapable of other exposition - in words or mathematical symbols - but it is real for him and has arisen from his experience and relationship with his surroundings. This is just as Trallis/Traven etc experiences the world in The Atrocity Exhibition where Traven cannot come to terms with it. The Drowned World represents a four dimensional habitation in space and time for Kerans; the a-chronous breakdown represents I's failure to inhabit The Atrocity Exhibition.

In a famous series of dreams, Jung before World War One saw Europe laying beneath his secure Switzerland flooded by blood. The dream interpretation of personal relevance completely failed him - "I drew the conclusion

that they had to do with my myself, and decided that I was menaced by a psychosis. The idea of war did not occur to me at all." Similarly, he says of the unconscious, "Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious condition and to experience itself as a whole" - how this came about is not clear, particularly as Jung sometimes used the archetypes to relieve a psychosis. The world in which these massive forces of millions of years exude themselves is nothing if one has to live them in a suit and tie and an office job; and that is what Jung ultimately supplied to his patients. Psycho-analysis was directly concerned with "Civilization and its discontents" and could attribute psychological disturbances to cultural and physical constraints, Jung could never do this. "We are in psychic process which we do not control, or only partly direct it. Consequently, we cannot have any final judgement about ourselves or our lives", he wrote, and in his Memories Dreams Reflections Jung described his experience of the archetypes, mythic figures etc. in a chapter called "Confrontation With the Unconscious" - a confrontation he resolved only by talking to fantasy figures in his head.

The ultimate reality for the characters of The Drowned World is a material one, in which they respond and relate to their world. Kerans may be a "new Adam" but he is without Eve; Kerans may move to the zone of stronger sunlight but he does not enter a solar myth, instead he responds to "the sun: pulse equation"; when Kerans meets the deranged Hardman in the jungle on "their common odyssey southwards", he feels "that-Hardman's real personality was now submerged deep within his mind, and that his external behaviour and responses were merely pallid reflections of this, overlaid by his delirium and exposure symptoms": there is no suggestion that Hardman, study of whom originally led Bodkin to his conclusions, is responding to archetypal drives or that Kerans is affected that way, either. Kerans watches "the contracting disc of the sun, its surface stirring rhythmically", and events about him seem to echo or mirror it. But these are all outside of him. Ballard describes personality as surviving; unlike Brian Aldiss' Hothouse, it does not disappear with the runts of the species.

Some critics have rejected The Drowned World and Ballard's other works for their isolated view of meaningful existence but to the characters involved their actions are given meaning by the circumstance; everything is done for a purpose. In The Drowned World the consciousness of the protagonist to experience the world alters as the world changes materially. Ballard does not suggest that mystical or psychic forces in the mind are at work. Given that this is so, the allegedly Marxist (ie materialist) criticism of someone like H Bruce Franklin is bizarre. The basis of Marxism is of human consciousness in the world shaped by its economic forces; that Franklin in "What are we to make of J.G. Ballard's Apocalypse?" writes otherwise, suggests that he is one of those Marxists who lead Marx to say "All that I know is that I am not a Marxist". Ballard is not either, but his vision is a material one, and he provides plenty of references to interpretations that could be made - like the Jungian - of events in The Drowned World, which ultimately are not justified. No matter what we feel about it now, "After a few nights you won't be frightened of the dreams, despite their superficial horror." The dreams end with the beginning of the journey south.

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# Dangerous Divisions

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I feel moved to reply to Paul Kincaid's article on Fantasy in Vector 117, as I've recently had a go at defining fantasy etc. myself for Paperback Inferno. Romantic and literary fantasy do seem to be at opposite ends of some kind of spectrum. I think, however, that Kincaid has missed out on an important

distinction, possibly the important distinction, between literary and romantic fantasy. Romantic fantasy is overtly didactic. It displays a set of moral values and says 'these are the standards you ought to be living by'. Often it makes us rather uncomfortable to be told that. 'The world is all grown strange,' says Eomer in LOTR, confronting a living legend. 'How shall a man judge what to do in such times?' 'As he ever has judged' Aragorn replies. 'Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men.' It is interesting to compare Tolkien's subcreation, devised to provide a background world for his invented languages, with the work of Delany, a literary fantasist by Kincaid's definition. Delany says that the primary 'hero' of SF is the landscape, and the secondary 'hero' the language....

The point about 'romantic' fantasy is that it sugars the pill, clothes the homily in a palatable ripping yarn. It is fun to read. Literary fantasy is almost a contradiction in terms, as fantasy should draw our attention through the surface of language to the archetypal power beneath. Being aware of the style is a distraction.

This does not mean that fantasy should have no style, but that it should not be a self-consciously arty one. Whimsy is right out, as is being clever for cleverness' sake, or for the sake of self-glorification, establishing a cult of the author as personality. Authors are couriers, not ambassadors.

And what about the roots of fantasy in allegory (magical naming) and dream-poetry, as well as orally transmitted hero-tales? And is Mandeville's Travels fantasy? The Voyage of St. Brendan?

Also: for years I was guilty and afraid because of my inability to like literary fantasy. As a university student I was supposed to prefer literary fantasy to cracking good stories that I actually enjoyed reading. If I didn't prefer literary fantasy to pulp, either I was stupid (intellectually incompetent) or my artistic sensibilities weren't sufficiently refined to appreciate the finer feelings inspired by such masterpieces. This is rubbish. D.M. Thomas has no imagination. I was almost unable to finish Lanark, which is a well-written and in places very imaginative book, because the main character was such a wimp; the sort of person I'd avoid like the plague in real life, a manipulative winger with no backbone. Yech.

I want literature that will fire my idealism a bit. There are enough wimps around in real life without letting them take over the fantasy cosmos as well. Pretension stinks, especially literary pretension. Let's hear it for the storytellers!!!

Barrington J Bayley's 'Thoughts on the Bomb' (Vector 116), a sane defense of the nuclear deterrent, came as an unexpected relief to one long-suffering reader of Vector and Matrix. I wonder, though, about his statement "As for war, it's as natural as rain..." What I wonder is this: can anyone tell me of a war fought this century between two open societies? Some people might say that World War One qualifies, as the Second Reich did contain a parliament with political parties; but I doubt whether there was much freedom of expression in that society as a whole.

The matter is not proven but I suggest that if Arthur C. Clarke is correct in his forecast ("Beyond the Global Village" in the October issue of the British Interplanetary Society magazine Space Education) that the communications revolution will make closed societies impossible, then we may witness the end not only of wars but even of the threat of wars.

In the meantime we could try to serve the cause of peace, not by getting rid of the Bomb which in its paradoxical way has so far prevented World War Three, but by insisting that freedom of thought and expression is everywhere relevant to all countries' security.

'Peace campaigners' might therefore do well to learn a different set of reactions: instead of lying awake shivering at the thought of the installation of Cruise Missiles, for instance, they could practise some shivers at the Labour Conference resolution in favour of press censorship.

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I'd like to place, momentarily, what little skill I possess as an academic philosopher at the disposal of your readers. In particular, I noted a very understandable tendency in Vector to worry that the recent discussion of politics,

CND, etc in Vector is a veering away from the target of SF criticism.

It seems to me that if the genre was purely literary any deviation towards the subjects mentioned and others like them would in fact be inimical to the critical areas of your journal. Aesthetic is the proper account of literature as such, where beauties of style, structure and so on are evaluated and debated.

But science fiction, whilst it well may be science fiction, is inescapably science fiction too. There exists within Science, also, rather more elements than one sees fictionalised in SF. While it is usual to find nuts and bolts science fiction dealing with subjects like physics and engineering, there are, however, other sciences open to the SF writers: military, political, economic, social history. I do not mean these are never made elements of SF literature, they are often involved, but never, seemingly, as central, as thematic in their own right.

But my point is not to complain about the real or imagined paucity of the sciences named in science fiction writing. It is because they so frequently appear, albeit at an often subliminal level, that critics, reviewers and correspondents tend to get into argumentative hassels over contemporary issues, such as CND, whilst uncomfortably aware that somehow they have strayed off their imaginative patch into real life. This is a condition of the genre, not a degeneration from it.

Someone has defined a haiku poem as a finger pointing at the moon. Thus SF is an imaginative, informed finger pointing, not towards literary aesthetics, but at the contemporary 'real' scene.

I have quoted 'real' since it crops up in many discussions I have read taking place between SF fans. If shelves have been filled with books on the meaning of SF I can assure readers that whole libraries have been written on the meaning of the word 'real'. And if SF criticism is ever likely to go seriously wrong I predict it will do so by charging past this word as if its

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meaning was clear, in order to get to grips with the issues whose reality is being debated. Yet if this word is properly controlled in debate, many, if not most, of the issues would not even begin to arise.

I cannot, alas, end by giving a knockdown definition of 'real'. That honour is reserved for some future Galileo, or perhaps a Buddha. But the opposite of the word is not always, necessarily or even obviously 'unreal' in the sense of 'illusory'. It is often an exact synonym of 'unimportant'. Quite a different matter! [[[ I'm not too sure if I should thank you for this letter as I have enough trouble keeping people away from the perennial favourite hobby-horse of defining SF, let alone anything else.... ]]

In reply to Martyn Taylor's article, 'The Art of Good Movie Watching' (Vector 118):

I agree with a lot of what he says (the reasons for the title of Bladerunner for Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?; the point that thoughts have to be

conveyed differently on screen; and for dramatic effect, elements of the book have had to be substituted for more suitable one), however, there are some major flaws in his logic, I feel.

Martyn, at first, states that Do Androids...? with its Mercerism sub-plot transforms the story from pure detective fiction into a philosophical study and serious consideration of life and continues by explaining the philosophy behind the inclusion of Mercerism could not be conveyed on screen - that is perfectly reasonable; and then he gives the opinion that Bladerunner is better than the book, with the reasons that the film was great and the book not one of Dick's best. I would contend this on the grounds that the film failed, totally, to put forward or get across the central message of the book - that it IS concerned with the philosophy of life, what is real and what isn't, and does only come across as a futuristic detective story, despite the sfx and photography. It also fails to deliver another important message I believe Dick was delivering - that if we do continue the way we are going, there might not be many authentic living animals, other than man, remaining. The film, in fact, seems to regard the technological wizardry and siltmulacra that exists in this world, as an ideal, whereas in the book Dick bereted the disappearance of de facto animal life and the emergence of artificiality as a poor, sad substitute.

I also agree with his comments about halving the number of replicants for dramatic affect, but the dub-over of Harrison Ford's voice in typical Sam Spade style was a no-no: Admittedly Scott didn't want this included, but it was included nevertheless and it flaws the film to such an extent that the willingness to suspend disbelief is ruined - in fact, I didn't know whether to laugh or wince.

Television can convey the concepts and preoccupations of sf writers in science fiction stories. The Flipside of Dominick Hide, for example. I am, what Martyn might call 'a print addict', in that if denied the printed word for long, I'd crack! However, I feel no jealousy towards the temerity of the movie-maker, either as an amateur writer or reader; if I like the film, I'm not too bothered about it sticking closely to the book unless the central theme is overlooked or the film is flawed (as in Bladerunner) - I appreciate the fact that film-makers obviously only produce a film of the book as they see it. Thus I normally read a book first and draw my conclusions before seeing the film. Sometimes I don't see the film because I'm so satisfied with the book AS I SEE IT, that another's interpretation can only be inferior simply because it is another's interpretation.

As for the phrase 'herd of writers' I'd argue that writers don't go around in herds and meet only occasionally for each other's mutual benefit, unless they happen to be friends. As a collective term it is a fairly derogatory one and undeserving. I also doubt writers would have so much scorn for the trade

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world that they would refuse to become a organization (aka United Artists) because it make their craft into a trade. Writing is a craft and writers know it - they all want their names in print, all want to be read ( they do care for their audience), and they all want it to pay: To tailor too much to audience's tastes will only produce hack work and grand repetition, as if it were run off by computer. The paying side of the business makes it a trade, but surely they realise this? Books are often produced as trade paperbacks and the writer, therefore, is working for a trade: He does know it and is not bothered by it, and he does accept it gracefully. There is nothing degrading by accepting it. Snobbery writers can ill afford: and for that reason few would label themselves " 'artistes' of the written word".

Martyn's conclusion is commendable if not obvious, but I still believe writers aren't as conceded as he makes them out to be, and his opinion of the readers of sf are equally as valid as theirs. The only things that readers/movie-goers should be concerned with are: Did they enjoy the film? And if it was an adaptation from a book or story, did it remain true to the concerns of that story, the reasons why the author wrote it in the first place? THAT is the art of good movie watching.

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I am writing in response (rather than reply) to Martyn Taylor's article 'The Art of Good Movie Watching'. I feel most people who haven't read the article 'A Strange New Language' won't realise that the quote Martyn uses to head his article is taken out of context. I was trying to say that a book is a

book, a film is a film, and one should not be dismissively condemned in terms of the other - just as perhaps (probably?) a translation of a poem from one language into another actually involves writing a whole new poem. The quote is (in context) a rather rueful-humorous jab at myself (writing the article). Despite having studied audiovisual 'literacy' as part of a diploma course, and despite being fascinated by books like 'Ways of Seeing', I will cheerfully admit my vast ignorance of film 'language'. I would hate anyone to think I had a down on either film buffs or media fans.

I feel a proper reply to Martyn's article would concentrate on exploring the differences and links between print and film, rather than concentrating on their SF aspects, so perhaps Vector is not the place for it. However, a couple of points do seem relevant....

The myth of the writer as solitary creator is just that, a myth, perhaps particularly so in SF where collaborations are two (or three, or even four) a penny. It would be interesting to trace the privatisation of writing/reading from the time when writing was often the record of a collective oral tradition, and reading was inevitably done out loud, to the present (supposed) intimate, one-to-one relationship between writer and reader (forgetting the publisher, the printer, the book illustrator, the paper-maker, etc. etc.). Print used to be a performed (ie read aloud) art. It still is via radio. The line of division is not as clear-cut as Martyn suggests, in my opinion.

Perhaps because film is a newer medium than print, more of the people who do the work of getting the originator's conception across to us get creative credit.

Perhaps because visual performing arts have more immediate impact (is this because they involve more of the senses than reading?) they have an astonishing role to play in the subcreation of alternative realities. I will always be haunted by the 'faked' Martian scenes in Capricorn One, because although they were shown to be faked in the storyframe of the film, they still looked so damn convincing. After seeing the film, I can understand the Flat-Earther's claims that the Apollo Moon landings were faked.... I'm sure that it wouldn't be a hard job to produce a completely convincing set of pictures, and who can tell one anonymous lump of rock from another, anyway? What about that

archetypally resonant Moon/Earth/Sun rising sequence in 2001? I don't care that that's faked, it's true (if you see what I mean).

Back to the ideal of visual literacy. I see a trend in SF literature towards being more and more self-referential (I think this is what Hofstadter calls 'recursive' in 'Godel, Escher, Bach'). We can all pick up the parallels to Kipling and Greek myth in 'The Book of the New Sun', or even the more general references to sacred hero-kings now normally only accessible to us through literature (for why Severian is lame, see Robert Graves). But could I, for example, see recursive motifs in film? Probably not...

Finally (I promise) why, please, is Martyn being so belligerent when after reading over his and my articles, I can only come to the conclusion that he agrees with me, and in fact repeats much of what I said??? [[[ I believe it will soon be quicker to mention books that do not have parallels in 'The Book of the New Sun'. I do wonder why so many people are desperately trying to find these supposed parallels? ]]]

[[[ The following letters are in response to those letters published last issue on C. Pembleton's editorial/letter discussing how the BSFA can help prospective SF authors to get published. I've left typing this letter column as late as I can to try and get all the opinions in. My views, on the subjects that have been raised in the last two issues - for what they are worth - I will give at the end of the letter column. ]]]

The suggestions that the BSFA should set up some sort of publishing pressure group or raise the money to publish its own novels are...complete nonsense. As Dorothy Davies quite correctly points out, the BSFA exists for the benefit of fans - be they readers, editors, librarians, agents, artists, and writers - not exclusively for the benefit of the writers. Chris Evans, Rob Holdstock, Dave Langford, Christ Priest et al surely don't expect the BSFA to hype their unpublished manuscripts for them, so why should Chas Pembleton? He seems, however, to be labouring under the illusion that the BSFA is a writers' organization, and (whether he realises it or not) the slightly petulant tone of his letters, in both Vector and Matrix, imply that he's had novels rejected by various publishers and is simply unwilling to accept their verdict on his work - in which case no amount of shouting and pointing by a (relatively small) group of fans will induce them to change their minds. The plain truth, no matter how unpalatable it may be, is that the BSFA has had absolutely no effect on the direction of SF publishing in the UK, and never will have any such effect. Only if it could (a) sign up every SF reader in the country and (b) organize a 100 percent boycott of novels the editors of its magazines had deemed bad then (c) the publishers might start listening - but since (a) and (b) are vanishing unlikely, (c) is nothing more than a naive pipe-dream. [[[ While I agree that the BSFA is not "exclusively for the benefit of writers" you are totally incorrect when you say that the BSFA is not a writers' organization. Don't take my word for it read 'The Memorandum of Association of the British Science Fiction Association'. For instance, section 3. (A) (i) "To promote and encourage the reading, writing and publishing of science fiction." Also, Section 3. (A) (iii) "To provide, help and encourage science fiction writers by providing them with facilities or opportunities for learning or improving their knowledge of the nature of science fiction literature" and again, Section 3. (A). (iv) "to publish and print books, pamphlets and articles of science fiction" I would agree that upto now we have not fulfilled those objectives - but they still exist. ]]]

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Your proposed economics are also highly suspect, for both the pressure group and self-publishing ideas. In the first instance, you seem to have forgotten that the selection committee, to carry any weight, will have to be

composed of professionals, who won't work for free. [[[ That point I don't totally agree with, as I feel some professionals might. For instance, why do authors agree to be the Guest of Honour at a convention, most do not get paid for it? ]]] In the second, you're ignoring the cost of the jacket design (because without an attractive cover a new book from a new company will not sell at all) and, more importantly, the cost of advertising and distribution (which would more than double the quoted estimates). And would you really have a guaranteed sale to every member of the BSFA? I think not - it's unlikely that any book you published would be to the taste of every member, and what would you do if a sizeable proportion of the membership thought it was such a waste of money that they demanded their investment back? [[[ You don't make it clear with the jacket design if you are talking about production cost or artist fees. While I did include Cover production costs, I did not add on a fee for the artist as I took it for granted that we would find a BSFA artist who would do it for a nominal sum. I have to say that you don't seem to have read my editorial in Vector 116 as I do quote costs for distribution and advertising. But, I would make no claim for these costs; they are, as I said, "a quick guide" no more than that. Furthermore, I did point out in the letter column of issue 118 my doubts about relying upon BSFA sales. As to your last point, what happens now if you buy a book that turns out to be rubbish? You just make sure you don't buy another. But you are rather missing the point about the complete venture; it is not about the economics of publishing but rather a statement of faith of what science fiction is to the BSFA. ]]]

The whole scheme is quite ridiculous, a complete no-hoper from beginning to end, the product of naive and foolishness rather than a hard-headed grasp of the realities. To discuss it in the pages of the BSFA's official critical journal, and to pretend that enthusiasm alone will suffice to make the project viable, is to completely undermine Vector's hard-won credibility as a serious and responsible journal - and, one might add, the reputation of the BSFA itself. So for God's sake get rid of this nonsense about publishing pressure groups and whatnot before you do us all any more harm. [[[ Oh, my dear Joseph, if your comments weren't so ludicrous .....I do not see in any way how publishing letters by the members of the BSFA on this subject can harm either Vector or the BSFA. In fact, I see the reverse. I do not invent the letters Vector receives, nor do I edit them in such a fashion to push a certain point of view. To "get rid of this nonsense" would mean censoring the readers' letters, something which would indeed harm Vector and the BSFA. The editor of each BSFA magazine has a responsibility to reflect the opinions of the membership, whether he agrees with them or not. That, I'm sure, you will totally agree with. ]]]

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I was most interested in the letter column in Vector 118, especially with regard to the help that the BSFA can give to the poor, unpublished and potentially suicidal writer. All the talk about costings and distribution and marketing...and then, what do we find, but an expensive, colourful flyer

for Heretics of Dune. Gollancz tell us; "More fans than ever before are eagerly awaiting Heretics of Dune." By implication they say that it will follow God Emperor and become an immediate bestseller. The potentiality of suicide may be realised by our poor etc writer as he sees yet another megaseller hyped like this.

I can understand the constraints of supply and demand in any market place, but would question the end result of such attention to books in this 'league'. How much effect does publicity of this sort really have on the demand for the book? In this case there is already a guaranteed boost to sales when the film of the original work is released and everybody madly rushes out to buy the gold-plated box set, including maps, appendix, index and glossary. I think

that I can answer a part of that myself; the economies of scale in this case will be enormous and the actual unit cost will be far lower than, say, Micromania, and therefore the publishers have a little bit more to play with in respect of advertising and promotion. And at the end of the day the book will earn a lot of money for the company, which is what they are in business to do, after all.

What is the effect on the demand, though? Heretics of Dune will sell well, but it is not possible to gauge the different levels of demand both with and without advertising. It will be stocked in 'all the best bookshops', probably achieve a top 10 listing with WH Smith's, get in the Sunday Times and other newspaper lists for bestsellers, might get a plug from Hunter Davis, will get reviews in most, if not all, the proper places... and it would do all that without the hype. So what good is the glossy piece of paper that we all got? Unless the BSFA profit from distributing the leaflets... [[[ Well I won't say profit, but we do charge for the leaflets. Who can say what effect the leaflets will have, for instance they might not have many direct sales, but how do cost the spin-off benefits like this letter? ]]]

On the points raised about BSFA involvement with new writers. I have been thinking about this, and after much private enthusing about the possibility of the BSFA actually publishing novels I have had a change of mind. There are a couple of reasons. Firstly, I think that Dorothy Davies is right in much of her letter, especially when she talks about the fact that a good novel will eventually find a publisher. Why, then, should the BSFA provide a service that is already available? Can the market stand another SF publisher, even if it is only one book a year? If there was demand for it somebody would already be doing it. (By 'good' books I mean those which fill the criteria you lay down in response to Dorothy's letter - subject matter, marketability etc as well as the literary merit.)

The second, and more pressing problem, is who would do all the work? Who would, unpaid, plough through the thousands and thousands (I exaggerate) of marvellous pieces of work that drop through the BSFA letter box? Who would choose? What would the members who were rejected think, as they looked at their poor, unwanted masterpiece and ripped up the cheque for next years subscription.

The existing framework in the publishing industry may be a little suspect, perhaps, but it seems to stand the test of time. I wonder how long a new venture like the one suggest would last, how long the people would be bothered to carry it on. Apathy seems to be one of the main problems within the BSFA - with a few worthy exceptions - and would permeate sooner or later into the publishing venture. Wouldn't it? [[[ Without a doubt I would expect. But what criteria are you using for success? Number of books published, how many years the venture kept going, profit? As I said last issue - If one book was published then the venture could be judged as a success. ]]]

The thought that the original idea may have a suspect base also entered my mind (an uncommon experience!) and I wondered for a while about all we struggling masochists who will not accept that we cannot make the grade, churning out page after page of nonsense and expecting it to be published. We publish ourselves! Smacks of vanity press, doesn't it, and I wouldn't dare suggest that there was any hint of that in the idea that the BSFA publish novel length fiction, but it might be seen as that from outside.

To throw another idea into the melting pot, in addition to the publisher or agent ones, how about a more extensive service for prospective writers? It could be self-financing (I mention that before the idea, because I know that it is close to your heart). Say there was an expansion of the role of Focus, which would incorporate a workshop programme, run by the BSFA, a critical service available to members... It is all being done already, isn't it. Orbiter, Milford, Arvon, it's all there. Correspondence courses are available, even if not advisable, and there are books to read...

I think I have convinced myself, at least, that the existing market for

writers of SF is about as big as possible and offers all the necessary back up facilities that could be desired. It's a hard world where there are one-two hundred manuscripts for every published novel, but there we have it. We might not like it very much, but it may make us raise our standards so that we are the ones that get published and not left on the pile. Maybe there are areas for improvement (like not giving Heretics of Dune publicity that it does not require), and pressure should be put on to change the existing system, not turn away from it. [[[ I would have thought that publishing novels would be joining the system, not turning away from it.. Also, I would be interested to see how we are supposed to put 'pressure' on the publishers. ]]] We must convince Gollancz et al that good work is being written by unknowns, but we can only do that if they get to read it. If they don't accept it there must be a good reason, and who are the BSFA to disagree?

Am I missing some obvious point? I really cannot grasp why it should be bad for SF, for authors, or for anyone if some SF manages to achieve high sales.

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Show me a writer who would willingly turn away the royalties accruing from public recognition of his work, and perhaps I'll agree with you - or perhaps I'll call that one writer a quixotic fool.

Popularity need not equate with trash - for a start, very few ill-written, ill-plotted books achieve high sales, and surely SF could do with more of those sterling qualities? When Gene Wolfe deserves the main spot in V118 - and obtains the cachet of the Nicholas duo's interest and sympathy - it ill becomes anyone on the literary scene to denigrate success.

Why am I not trying to write commercial SF? Mainly because Pamela Buckmaster of the EJ Carnell Literary Agency (which acts for Ken Bulmer among others in our field) has written to me "There is always room for good fiction writers, but not much science fiction is being published at present so it is very difficult for new writers to get started. There is rather more scope in fantasy..."

And that, Geoff, is the way it will remain if your attempts to dissuade SF writers from producing anything likely to sell well should succeed. It's just not good enough to write a book which pleases the author and his closest friends, or to exalt some aspect of writing over that of readability, credibility, solidity and polish. Orwell succeeded because he wrote well and caught the pulse of public interest both on first publication and now in the year he attempted to foresee. Don't knock it - poor SF never made converts! [[[ I have nothing against authors making money, in fact I have nothing against 'bestsellers' but, when authors move away from the literature of science fiction to books written on a Barbara Cartland formula basis - then I do start moaning because they are betraying literature, science fiction, the readers and themselves. ]]]

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Chas Pembleton's letter in Matrix seems better answered in Vector, as you have printed a number of letters on his subject.

I read his letter (and his earlier article in Vector) with a great deal of sympathy, but also a feeling that he is somewhere on the wrong track. It

had never occurred to me before, for instance, that people who join BSFA would see it as a source of "help", which Chas seems to be waiting for. I don't see that BSFA exists to help individual members, except in a very general way. Surely it would be wrong for BSFA to endorse the writing of one person just because he or she happens to be a member?

I also think Chas is wrong about Focus. Most of the material that has been printed there has been excellent, because it has been responsible and

authoritative. It's a mistake to criticize Focus for having had only seven issues in four years; the first few issues were published by two professional writers who put in countless hours of unpaid, and largely unacknowledged, work on it. The latter issues presumably took the same commitment from Bailey, Swinden and Sutherland, although I didn't happen to see them at work. (Rob Holdstock and Chris Evans pasted up at least one issue of Focus on my dining-room table, so I watched it happen.)

Malcolm Edwards has dealt expertly with the broader charge - that he and other British publishers prefer American writers to the Brits - so that need not be answered, but I'd like to add something which has been said before, but can never be said too often. There's no better way of getting a novel published than putting it in a jiffy-bag and sending it to a publisher. How often does this have to be said to make it sink in? Every sf editor I know is always looking for good new material, and when they find what they're looking for they brag about it. If the work's any good, it will find a publisher; this has been true for as long as I can remember, and continues to be so.

I think you were right, when you wrote in your editorial that BSFA should be more concerned with judging the quality of fiction after it has been published, than with actually getting it published. To do otherwise, at least in any direct or practical sense, would be either very expensive (such as BSFA starting to publish members' novels) or invidious (endorsing members' novels). It's always seemed to me that the great benefit of the BSFA, which I'm sure Chas also feels, is the more general climate it generates. You get out of BSFA only as much as you put in. Which brings me to my point: the editorship of Focus is now vacant. Can anyone suggest a better candidate for the job than Chas Pembleton?

So C. Pembleton must be insane to suggest that the BSFA take time off from pandering to fandom in order to actually attempt something constructive and worthwhile (The Gospel According to Dorothy Davies/Vector 118). Considering her ability to shove both feet in her mouth whilst sliding on her own well scattered banana skins, perhaps D.D. should abandon writing altogether and become a circus clown. At least she would get paid for making a fool of herself. Does she really think that Return of the Jedi is cramming the bookshelves on the grounds of literary merit, or Superman 3 because it is a classic of SF? Fool yourself if you must, Dorothy, but for God's sake don't insult the other readers of Vector by assuming that they are as incredibly naive as yourself.

Before churning out such simplistic drivel as "if it's good enough it will get published", she may do well to read her own contributions which so eloquently refute that very argument. In Vector 115 she complains that The Chromosome Game was a fine novel never given a chance by the publishers. To top it all, she finishes her letter by bemoaning the fact that her anthology of religious stories is getting nowhere. Why the surprise? If no publisher wants to know then it is, by definition, USELESS. It must be. Dorothy says so.

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This is my first letter to Vector, and I wish it was a more, uh, cheerful one! In the main it's rabid frothing over Dorothy Davies' remarks about the purpose of the BSFA - no doubt I won't be the only one to comment on those! Your editorial was food for thought - yes, genre boundaries put blinkers on writers as much as on publishers, and both as a result tend to reinforce those

barriers with whatever they write or publish - is that then an argument for trying to do away with the label SF altogether? The labelling of good SF books with a fiction label by publishers should perhaps be fostered, rather than

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grumbled about, so eventually we can forget about 'what' people write as a critical factor, and start to think about how they write within the limits they've set themselves. Says he ripping off precisely what you said, and what Martyn Taylor said in his article on the cinema - very good, that by the way. Anyway, on with the rabid bits....

"Don't, whatever you think the BSFA might do, complicate life by expecting the association to support writers too!"

In my naivete I had not imagined that Dorothy Davies belonged to the 'I've got something published so all's right with the world' school of arrogance. I had thought that, what with her involvements in Orbiter and Focus, she was a person of more sense and sympathy towards the principles of the BSFA.

Yes, Dorothy, Principles! Just because they aren't written on stone doesn't mean they don't exist. They are implicit in the words of Geoff Rippington, Roger Waddington, Nik Morton, J.E. Judd and Chas Pembleton (all in Vector 118) and countless others over recent months. The BSFA is here NOT as a purposeless bunch of sci-fi freaks indulging in knee-jerk 'fanishness'. It is her to promote SF. Why else do you think it publishes critical journals like PI and Vector and (re media and fanzine reviews) Matrix, and why else does it offer practical help to writers in Focus?

Sure, as Dorothy say: "The BSFA is there...for sf fans." But to say in the same sentence that the BSFA is "not there for the writers" (her emphasis) is stupid, wrong, and, no doubt, insulting to many members.

I say this because, from my own experience, it seems to me that the BSFA is full of writers - unpaid, enthusiastic, ambitious people who channel their enthusiasm for SF by writing stories, articles fanzines, or whatever. Since when was the term 'writer' reserved for those professionally published?

Next point: Dorothy Davies takes the failure of her novel as proof that writers who aren't published write drivel. Well, no doubt this is, a la Sturgeon Rule, 99% true.

But, that isn't the point - that in no way constitutes an argument against setting up a publishing concern! The point is that SF, as the BSFA knows it, is disappearing. In the eyes of established publishers, this genre we celebrate is a slush market, geared to produce pap. While really good SF authors may well be eventually published, as Dorothy Davies claims, even so they may well have to face the kind of stonewalling as, say Richards Adams did when he (in the manner of all good SF authors!) stretched the limits of his chosen genre in Watership Down. He received twenty-odd rejection slips before the book was finally accepted.

Now, SF novelists today know, before they put pen to paper, that it will be well nigh impossible to sell their novel, and, having sold it, to have that many people read it. Demoralized by that foreknowledge, there must be some potentially good writers out there who are unwilling to waste their time on a major project as a novel, after, say, their first or second attempt. Virtue wins out! Dorothy Davies claims, somewhat hysterically. Look at the figures, Dorothy, it doesn't....

One of the BSFA's aims is to channel fan enthusiasm into centralised projects such as the BSFA awards, mildly influential publications, and so on. If it wishes 'SF as we know it' to continue, it has to quit wallowing like some corporate Ms Davies in the mire of passive fandom, and add to those aforementioned activities, so that new authors may be encouraged. Little is being done at the moment. At present, the BSFA produces four pieces of fiction a year - in Focus - and through Orbiter it helps amateur writers get in contact with each other for mutual criticism. [[[ I do not think it is correct to say that Dorothy is part of 'passive fandom'. I can assure you that she is anything but that and helps the BSFA a considerable amount, not just by running Orbiter (just!) but also in many other ways as well. I only wish more people would be as 'passive' as Dorothy! ]]]

As a member of both Orbiter and the amateur SF publishing venture Cassandra, I can safely say that while Orbiter provides valuable feedback on

what one writes, it is the idea that someone is willing to print and distribute ones work that gives one the incentive to write more and to write better.

Being printed puts upon an author a sense of obligation to an unseen audience - as a result he will work more conscientiously. It doesn't make any difference whether the magazine which prints ones material is 'professional' or 'amateur'.

With respect to encouraging new writers, I suggest the BSFA sets up a fiction magazine. I believe it could be viable and valuable. We have a precedent for such a venture. Namely Cassandra. Cassandra accepts nearly all work offered - rarely does it refuse anything outright. In other words its a fan fiction magazine with the one difference that the 'fan club' it is based on is made up purely of would-be writers. Yet, cynics take note, its fiction standard, though uneven, is generally high, and its layout and artwork are highly professional, bettering anything the BSFA has to offer. [[[ You won't mind if a disagree on that, will you... ]]] Cassandra is small scale - very small scale, and will remain so until the demand for expansion increases - an economic policy slightly safer than that of certain other publications..

Using this set-up as a model, I suggest that the BSFA starts up its own fiction magazine - not necessarily issuing a thousand copies, one for each member, at first - but initially by offering it as an extra to current members, obtained upon payment of an independent subscription.

Why set up such a venture? Well, this magazine would serve to introduce BSFA members to the would-be writers in their midst and thus hopefully it would give new writers a sense of purpose, and hence a more positive attitude to their work than that bemoaned in Martyn Taylor's 'The Art of Good Movie Watching' (V118). Also, a fiction magazine would, if successful, incline its readers to consider more seriously investing in a larger venture such as, say, book publishing. At the moment, the BSFA hierarchy has misgivings about the book-publishing venture since they fear that the response/commitment of the membership is on average too low to support such a scheme. I suggest that the magazine could convince the Dorothy Davies of this world that good unpublished writers exist, hence building up support for larger ventures.

Three arguments exist against this magazine proposal. First - that this function is already being performed by Interzone. Untrue: Re Joseph Nicholas' analysis of Interzone's policy to, among other things, 'new writers' in PI Vol 16 No5. And of course I2 is a pro magazine with heavy financial commitments, not the small, flexible organization sketched out above. Second: The BSFA ran a fiction magazine before, but it fell through owing to lack of subscriptions. Strange that. I venture to suggest that things have changed. If Oxford (the revamped Sfinx), Portsmouth (Auguries) and Cassandra can produce high-standard SF, surely the massed creative talents of the BSFA can?! The last, and understandably familiar, argument against a new fiction magazine is cost. Well, excuse my optimism, but surely the cost would be fairly low, if we're talking about a magazine with a circulation covering only a section of the membership?

But if the BSFA feels that another scheme, such as book publishing, would be a worthy use of funds, that doesn't necessarily mean that a magazine need not be produced. Has affiliation with such a group as Cassandra, who've got the finances and resources for such a project, already established, occurred to the BSFA organizers?

Whatever is eventually decided, please God, let something be decided! Don't let this issue of new ventures drift off into the realm of purposeless speculation. These days, if the BSFA want to indulge their tastes in good SF, they'll have to damn-well so something about producing it!

It sounds very much as though J.E. Rudd (Vector 118) should be an Interzone subscriber. We're now publishing a lot of new writers as well as "established" ones (e.g. Aldiss, who will be in our

INTERZONE MAGAZINE,  
David Pringle,  
124 Osborne Road,  
Brighton.

issue 9). Issue 8, should be out in May, has a previously unpublished short story by Philip K. Dick as well as four good stories by new or newish writers. Moreover we pay our contributors (£30-35 per thousand words), something which it's hard to imagine any new, BSFA-sponsored publication doing.

Thanks for bringing Interzone to J.E. Rudd's attention in your editorial response. I'm a little bit miffed, though, when you say "admittedly it is outside the BSFA." Technically, yes, IZ does not "belong" to the BSFA, but the current Chairman of the BSFA, Alan Dorey, is a member of IZ's editorial team, and John Clute (who writes reviews for Vector) is another... Our links to the BSFA are intimate, and we're extremely grateful to the organization for helping us launch the magazine in the first place, two year ago. In my opinion, BSFA members should regard IZ as "their" magazine. After all it's the only paying sf and fantasy magazine in existence in Britain today. If you believe in encouraging new writers, support for Interzone is the most practical way of doing it. All BSFA members are potential IZ subscribers - perhaps one day even the editor of Vector will subscribe. [[ [ Not while you send me a free review copy. ] ] The magazine is changing and developing all the time, largely as a response to constructive criticism from readers, many of them BSFA members. For instance, we've been criticized for publishing insufficient book reviews. As a result we have now invited Mary Gentle to write a book-review column for us (another Vector contributor, you note, as well as a rising new writer).

In your response to J.E. Rudd you also refer to the "financial problems" Interzone has. Well of course we have financial problems on and off - who doesn't? -- but you might like to know that at the moment things are reasonably healthy. The Arts Council has been generous to us, as have been a couple of regional Arts Associations. Sir Clive Sinclair has sent us £100 donation. We have over 600 live subscriptions (but we need more!)...

[[ [ Since publishing C. Pembleton's article in September 83 (issue 116) the debate on his views has continued unabated through the last eight months. At times it has been rather rough for some of the contributors (and the editor!), but I feel that this is only a reflection of the interest and concern. The problem is that I am slightly cynical about the complete venture. Over the last two years while editing Vector I've noticed that a faction of the BSFA membership would be quite happy to forget that the organization is about science fiction, and would be contented, for at least the next 10 years, to talk about what the BSFA is doing or not doing at that moment in time. But very few people are actually interested in taking on any responsibility. They are happy to talk about other people providing a service, but few volunteered themselves. For instance, Simon Ings, puts forward a variety of ideas, one of which is to publish a SF fiction magazine. Apart from the fact that we already have a fiction magazine in Focus, (if the format is not what you want - you want more fiction - write and tell the editors, they will take notice of your comments) to suggest that we start another magazine is just totally impracticable, unless more people are willing to give up their time to assist in the mundane aspects of running the BSFA. At Seacon 84 there is the BSFA's AGM where there is an opportunity for the members to voice their opinions and get things changed. If, for instance, someone would like the BSFA to help new writers in a practical way (be that by book publishing, writers' workshops, or whatever) this is your opportunity to make sure things happen. The Council runs the BSFA only as far as the members wish it to be run. It is easy to suggest new ventures when you have no intention of being anything but a touch-line supporter. Why don't you try walking out onto the field of play? ] ] ]

[[ [ I hope that we can now close the book, as far as Vector is concerned, on the whole issue. The debate has given us a wide range of opinions and I feel that is has gone as far as it can without endlessly repeating the same arguments. This issue is full of other subjects, please give the contributors the feedback they deserve for their work. ] ] ]

# BOOK REVIEWS



FLAT WORLD -- EFFERVESCENT HUMOUR

KEN LAKE



[THE COLOUR OF MAGIC by TERRY PRATCHETT. Colin Smythe. Gerrards Cross.]  
[205pp., £7.95]

A disc world, supported on the backs of four giant elephants who are standing on the shell of the Great Turtle A'luiin who swims, slowly but endlessly, through the interstellar gulf.

But how do the inhabitants know of their existence? Simple - the rimward kingdom of Krull, which has mountains projecting over the rim, built a gantry and pulley arrangement and lowered pioneer astrozoologists to peer over and report back.

But observations can go no further; philosophy takes over here with the question: what is it all for? One theory is that A'luiin, with a myriad other Turtles each carrying his/her own world, is paddling slowly towards the Time of Mating, when all would procreate and thus produce new turtles carrying a whole new universe of worlds. This theory is of course known popularly as the Big Bang.

So much for background. A failed wizard, Rincewind, is involved with a naive actuary, Twoflower, who is his world's first tourist and who is accompanied by his Luggage - which merits a capital "L" as it is in a multilegged trunk made of sapient pearwood. The feckless Gods of the discworld are using them - and peripheral characters which include dragons, barbarians and princesses - as pawns in a celestial boardgame.

Had enough? Or does it sound fun to you? Like all Terry Pratchett's books, this one can be read on two levels - simple fun, or pleasant satire. At times it's hard to separate them, and on this occasion punning and general knockabout humour overbalance the cleverness of the plot.

Having sold his first science fiction writings at the age of 13, Terry Pratchett entered the world of hardcover publishing with The Carpet People, a children's book of considerable charm, in 1971; illustrated by the author, the book is eminently readable. With The Dark Side of the Sun (1976) he offered a well plotted yet still jokey SF novel based on probability math but leading us to the mythical world of the Jokers - the gods of the Universe; this book saw considerable success in its NEL paperback edition.

A success d'estime et de scandale, Strata (1981, also from both Colin Smythe Ltd. and NEL) gave us worldbuilders with a zany sense of humour, a tyrannosaurus with a wristwatch, mountains in the shape of their builder's initials and a buried plesiosaur bearing a placard inscribed "End Nuclear Testing Now."

Silly perhaps - but each book has a serious, sensible and ultimately gripping plot, while The Colour of Magic demands so much suspension of belief that the reader cannot really lose himself in the plot at all. Certainly you

are agog for the next atrocious pun, the next unbelievable but internally-logical and ingenious twist in the story of the unending stream of difficulties and dangers put in the way of the quivering wizard and his insouciant tourist companion.

I suppose there must be fantasy fans who will be upset - maybe even offended - at the cheerful way Terry Pratchett takes all their cherished traditions and turns them on their heads; equally there must be readers who cannot stomach such rich fare and long for a little common sense, a greater opportunity to foresee the way the plot will develop, a little more reassurance that the author will not undermine their beliefs even more as the book pursues its errant way through A'Tuin's world.

Yet there are some superb inventions here, of which perhaps octarine is the most welcome to our pantheon of simple yet previously unimagined ideas. Octarine is the eighth colour of the spectrum, the colour of magic, and it ties in with the discworld's eight-day week and the fact that the number eight must never be spoken by a wizard; as the author explains in a brief footnote which sketches in the world's geography, celestial motions and weather, all this explains why, on the disc, the Gods are not so much worshipped as blamed.

Despite its faults - mainly of excess - this is a most readable book with a host of enjoyable characters and a wealth of carefully invented detail. It would make an ideal antidote to an overdose of too-serious, too-clinical mainstream fantasy or science fiction reading, but will for all that remain in the reader's memory as something of a flawed tour de force by a young and promising writer.

K.V. Bailey's

Blanchard Books  
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