Vector (vektɔ:r). 1704. (– L. vector carrier, traveller, rider, f. vect –, pa. ppl. stem of vehere carry; see –OR 2.) 1. Astr. An imaginary straight line joining a planet moving round a centre, or the focus of an ellipse, to that centre or focus. Also V. radius = radius v. (RADIUS 3d) — 1796. 2. Math. A quantity having direction as well as magnitude, denoted by a line drawn from its original to its final position 1865. 3. A carrier of disease 1926. Hence Vectorial a. of, pertaining to, or connected with a v. or radius vector.
EDITORIAL
David V. Barrett

DANGEROUS DIVISIONS
Readers' letters, on Mary Gentle in Narnia and other recent topics.

STURGEON REMEMBERED
Following the death in May of Theodore Sturgeon, appreciations by Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison and John Clute of one of the great names in science fiction.

THE BALDEMAN INTERVIEW
Part two of an interview with Joe Baldeman conducted by Ken Lake with Geoff Rippington.

ALBION WRIT
Leave The Forgotten To The Night
Christopher Priest, author of The Affirmation and The Glamour, writes on writing and science fiction and other perspectives in our continuing series.

BOOKS
Reviews edited by Paul Kincaid
Including Joseph Nicholas on Helliconia Winter by Brian Aldiss; Chris Bailey on The Man In The Tree by Damon Knight, and Keith Freeman on The Science Fiction of Mark Twain, amongst many others.

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With this issue we welcome Hussain R. Mohamed as Production Editor, and Ann Morris, Production Assistant. By working closely together as an editorial team we hope to make Vector consistently better than ever before. Our thanks to Alan Dorey for stepping in to produce the last two issues.

Mary Gentle's first Albion Writ in Vector 126 has prompted a number of letters: Chris Priest's contribution is in this issue 282. We hope to raise even more response. An earlier writer of psychological (as opposed to hard science) SF was Theodore Sturgeon, who died in May. My own contribution to Vector's tribute is simply this: if you haven't read him, do so; he was one of the greats.
EDITORIAL

DAVID V BARRETT

Just a roll, just a roll,
Just a roll on your drum.
And the War has begun.  

THIS IS THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF THE Vietnam War, the 40th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and the 40th anniversary of Hiroshima. These quotations come from a number of sources, none of them science-fictional. Much of SF does not deal with War - but of those books that do, take the first ten that come to mind, and consider their attitudes. As the ‘Literature of Ideas’, can we really say that SF is showing sufficient responsibility?

I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of their way and let them have it.

- Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1959 (2)

In 1983 there were 40 separate conflicts; 8 countries had troops fighting on foreign soil; a total of 15 million troops fighting in 75 countries. Armed conflicts have taken up to 2 million lives since the Second World War. In conflicts where it is possible to make a meaningful distribution between casualties and civilians, 3 out of every 4 fatalities were civilians.  

- U.N. Report (3)

The average age of a combat soldier in the Second World War was 26. In Vietnam it was 19... None of them received a hero’s welcome.  

- Paul Hardcastle

Now come on mothers throughout the land, Pack your boys off to Vietnam. Come on fathers don’t hesitate. Send your boys off before it’s too late. Be the first one on your block to have your boy come home in a box.  

- song (4)

Suddenly a glaring whiteness, pinkish light appeared in the sky accompanyed by an unnatural tremor which was followed almost immediately by a slicing pain and a wind which swept away everything in its path. Within a few seconds the thousands of people in the streets in the centre of the town were sucked into a wave of searing heat. Many were killed instantly, others lay writhing on the ground screaming in agony from the intolerable pain of their burns. Everything standing upright in the way of the blast - walls, houses, factories and other buildings, was annihilated...Hiroshima had ceased to exist.

- contemporary Japanese journalist (5)

The current argument for the ultimate deterrent: that has kept the peace. The threat to that peace would come if the balance was upset... The certainty that any nation which starts such a war will be committing suicide is the most powerful motive for preserving the peace.

- Daily Mirror 6/11/80

But the idea is not new:

We are quite sure that if any man could invent a means of destruction, by which two nations going to war with each other would see large armies destroyed, and immense treasure wasted on both sides, in a single campaign, they would both hesitate at entering upon another. In this sense the greatest destroyer is the greatest philanthropist.

A History of Wonderful Inventions, 1892 (6)

If any question why we died,
Tell them, because our fathers lied.

- Rudyard Kipling

If in some another dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil’s sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gurgling from the froth-ruptured lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the out
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues.

My friend, you would not tell with such high jest.

To children ardent for some desperate glory
The old lie Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

- Wilfred Owen

In 1943 I became Supreme Allied Commander in SE Asia, and saw death and destruction on an even greater scale. But that was all conventional warfare and, horrible as it was, we all felt we had a ‘fighting’ chance of survival. In the event of a nuclear war there will be no chances, there will be no survivors...

- Mountbatten (5)

Both East and West have the ability to devastate each other, wherever the arguments may be regarding the total number of warheads. Effective parity therefore exists already: once a human being is killed once, the ability to kill him twenty times over becomes irrelevant.

- (2)

My quicken the pace?
Why does it seem that you choose to lose reason before losing face?
Russians and Americans driven by the past
The Third World moves in the shadows you cast.

Russians and Americans could turn the world to dust.

- Al Stewart

In 1967 it was estimated that 10 million people suffered from smallpox, of whom 2 million died. It took twelve years of international cooperation before the World Health Organisation could declare that in 1980 smallpox had been eradicated. The achievement cost 300 million dollars, the equivalent of the cost of 2.5 days of the nuclear arms race.

- (2)

Now come on Wall Street don’t be slow, Why won’t this war go go go Go there’s plenty good money to be made, Supplying the Army with the tools of the trade
Just hope and pray that if they drop the Bomb, They drop it on the Vietcong.

- (4)

These highly accurate weapon systems seem to provide the best rationale for fighting a nuclear war but useless for deterring one...in times of crisis there would inevitably be great pressure on both sides to fire the systems first - for no West could be confident in the other’s attitude. The development of the Pershing and Cruise missiles will increase European security by making nuclear war more, and not less likely.

- (2)

I repeat in all sincerity as a military man that I can see no use for nuclear weapons which would not end in escalation, with consequences that no-one can conceive. How can we stand by and do nothing to prevent the destruction of our world?

- Mountbatten (5)

‘Star Wars’
The prospects for developing an effective, total defense against Soviet ballistic missiles are very poor. Of all the proposed space weapons systems now under consideration one appears to have many technical hurdles and is highly vulnerable to devastating Soviet countermeasures. A move by the United States to implement a ballistic missile defense would be highly provocative and could precipitate an unconstrained Soviet response.

- Union of Concerned Scientists (7)

And it’s One Two Three, What’re we fighting for?
Don’t ask me I give a damn, Next stop is Vietnam
And it’s Five Six Seven, Open up the Pearly Gates
Well there ain’t no time to wonder why, Whoopee we’re all gonna die.

- (4)

In 1952 Charlie Chaplin was expelled from the USA after being investigated by the Commission on Un-American Activities. But Chaplin was not anti-American or pro-Russian: Jew, Gentile - black men, white...we are all the same. Who, then, is the enemy? The enemy chooses to dress in a different uniform, so you’ll be able to recognise him and kill him. Russia is not the enemy - in the last war she was your friend. ‘It seems to me that where
A few comments on Elizabeth Sorett's article in Vector 126. I wonder if she is right in her opinion that faith in science, itself, has vanished. I wonder if pessimistic and gloom-laden SF stories are responsible for a loss of faith in the scientific method in the politics of science and the developments in technology which stem from this. Such a gloomy future vision does not necessarily reflect the writer's own outlook on the future, but it may reflect the writer's concerns on the possibility how easily things can go wrong. Science can still find cures for diseases, but it's the political pressure applied to that leads to the destruction. The major advantage of the science-fiction community is the present pessimism is in sympathy with our present, gloomy, and real predicament. There are other factors, with some writers even of extreme violence and secular deprecationism as cults, but the majority write responsibly, if not competently. In any case, the present situation may offer writers and readers a sense of release from the responsibility for the future by controlling the present reality of what doesn't seem so bad. And at its best, SF is a cautionary as well as entertaining medium. Such caution stems from knowing ourselves too well. We still commit atrocities, we still make irresponsible acts and decisions. None of us really wants a utopia - we are too fascinated with our darker sides. We watch and read about death with our tongue hanging out, our eyes betraying the reality we lip it up. It's called adventure. This is symptomatic of our times. In a bureaucracy, with no outlets for a true and whole release of our emotions, no room large enough in which to become truly individual, feeling cramped, strangled and stifled, we hunger after anything that offers an artificial version. The frustration of not being able to slow down because it is plastic goes much deeper than we admit to ourselves, and this is the case with so many aspects of our "modern" life. Our frustrated and suppressed feelings and desires are at the root of many of our difficulties, and when times get better, when writers are more in touch with their hearts, then we can look forward to that heart-warming optimism we, paradoxically, seek.

Mary Gentle's article was very illuminating. When I found out the Vernian books were religious in content, I was put off reading them - this was some four or five years ago. I still can't let myself to buy the books. It isn't any picture of stained-glass either, but a dislike of the Christian doctrine. Mary Gentle's comments have convinced me the books aren't as religious as they have seemed - as far as Christianity goes anyway, but the stigmas there and I can't shake it off. It's funny, in that religion fascinates me. Religious fanaticism, though, does not.

You may like to apply my way of viewing things to the comments of the American spirit, in his last paragraph of part one of the interview, and so it should come as no surprise the Americans were in favour of the invasion. How much of that favour was in support of their belief they were doing the right thing, or because it offered a distraction from the stigma of life. The same question can be applied to any war, any army, any nation. That while the American could see through the dressing-rooms words "American spirit" and be impervious, but it's a shame he still harbours a contradictory faith. Saying that, I admire his perception and will start hunting for his books.

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I thought Vector 126 was a good issue with a nice balance of material. It is a pity, though, that Mary Gentle couldn't extend her scholarship from the various works on Lewis to the Bible. "I may be wrong, but I think the resurrection got tucked onto the Jesus legend fairly late in the day." Yes, Mary's angle at Matthew Chapter 16 Verses 21 would show - "From that time forth Jesus began to shew unto his disciples, that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and of the chief priests, and of the scribes, and be killed, and be raised again on the third day." Or Mark Chapter 8 Verses 31 - "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be received into glory, after the destruction, and be raised again on the third day." Or Luke Chapter 9 Verses 22 and 23 - "And he strictly charged them to tell no man that thing: Saying, The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be received into glory, after the destruction, in the hands of the elders, and of the chief priests, and of the scribes, and be slain, and be raised again on the third day." The similarity of the wording - in stories which far more often than I can describe are so different and very differently, if at all, is remarkable and typical of those occasions when the Gospel writers - at different times and spread throughout the Mediterranean - were retelling the actual words of Christ. No, the resurrection.

EDITORIAL/Continued

friendship means so little, governments are so out of control, America suffers from alcoholism, drug abuse or mental illness... In 1970, 1300 nuclear servicemen were discharged from the service because of drugs abuse - including 250 taking heroin and LSD - and a further 1300 because of mental disturbance. Dr. James Teplitz of Massachusetts General Hospital and a member of the 18th Congress of the American Psychiatric Association, said: 'A man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis. If we had a man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis, we would have a man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis. If we had a man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis, we would have a man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis. If we had a man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis, we would have a man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis. If we had a man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis, we would have a man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis. If we had a man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis, we would have a man who could make 1300 people take drugs on a daily basis.'

- Daily Telegraph, 20/1/1963

...and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the moon were darkened by a smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the locusts of the plague. And when the days were seven days they were to die and will not find: they will long to die, and death will fly from them.

- Revelation 9: 2-6

The explosion of a single nuclear bomb of the American variety in the UK is likely to produce so many cases of trauma and burns requiring hospital treatment that the existing medical services in the UK would be completely overwhelmed.

- RMA Report (9)

Einstein was asked to predict what weapons we would be using in war. He is said to have replied to the following effect: 'On the assumption that a Third World War will be fought with bows and arrows.'

- Mountbatten (5)

The stone age may return on the gleaming wings of science, and what might now shower upon the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, be slain, and be raised again on the third day.

- Churchill (10)

SOURCE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Particular thanks to the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons, Dr. Crispin Phillips, Dr. Stephen Nadel and Mel Calman for permission to use copyright material.

- 1. Miss Lonelyhearts - The Nuclear Casebook - Polygon 1983

- 2. Dr. C. Phillips & Dr. I. Ross - The Nuclear Casebook - Polygon 1983

- 3. The Guardian 16/6/85

- 4. Country Joe MacDonald - 'I Feel I'm Picking To Die Right' from 'The Nuclear Casebook'.

- 5. Earl Mountbatten of Burma - 'On Nuclear Arms and War' (Speech at Strasbourg 11/5/79)

- 6. Carl Morgan - 'The Shape of Futures Past' - Pluto Press 1984


- 9. British Medical Association - The Medical Effects of Nuclear War

is not a late addition to the myth, but one of the earliest and most definite elements of Christianity (without it there is no Christianity, as Mary so rightly remarks in her dismissal of Adam and Eve in the risen Christ), and indeed a very powerful piece of work and reflects many of the dissolving moments I had when, as a strongly convinced Christian, I adapted 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' for the stage, once upon a time. There is a lot in it that I do not like: the face value churchiness which does not bear much examination.

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MARY GENTLE'S AUTHORITATIVE RAMBLES AROUND NARNIA (VECTOR 126) embodies a stimulating assessment of C.S. Lewis's purposes and achievements in those books - stimulating because she is constantly prompting his readers to question further, and in doing so to refer back to the texts. In doing just this, I found myself, along with her, with the trend of her argument, I would like either to voice reservations or offer further comment.

Eight, the opinion of Aslan's martyrdom to save Narnia. It isn't, as she follows Walter Hooper suggests, simply a case of sacrifice for a single boy - although even that, on "the last straw" (torture) is not so simple in Christian terms. But a sacrifice made in order that a prophecy should be fulfilled, viz. that Narnia would only be rescued from the frosty power of the White Witch when four humans come to occupy the four thrones and "companions of the council". I believe, with Head Monograph, The Witch proposes to sacrifice Aslan's life so that the fourth throne can never be filled. There is, in fact, a strong resemblance of the "false" story to Plato's Gorgias, a fixed view of the Gorgias having a fixed and invariable structure, and a story of the Narnia Theological Clauses and I suspect there is a loose but real mythopoetic correspondence between the fullfillment of that prophecy and the four angels of Revelation (7.1) and those set upon the throne - Revelation (20.4) - to reign for a thousand years, while the Devil is bound and cast into the abyss (after which he is loosed for a little while). Variations on this motif not only recur in the Narnia books but also form a main strand in the Perelandra trilogy.

This brings me to my second reservation, which arises out of Mary Gentle's contention that Lewis "just plain side-steps" the issue of the entry of evil into Narnia. This is a key text here in the "Magician's Nephew", much of which is taken up with the creation of Narnia by Aslan. Aslan, like Malekidd in the SF novels, is fictionally surrogate for God and in so doing, and Mary Gentle needn't really have worried about the apparent dichotomy, or about the orthodoxy of such dual identity. Narnia, as Aslan creates it, is an illusion - as is the planet Venus in Perelandra - evil comes into it as a result of Digory's violence and wilfulness in ringing the golden bell in Charn, thus awakening and bringing to Narnia the evil Queen/Witch. This event, and the ensuing life, is not simply a metaphor but is metaphor contained within a metaphor, and that men, also created with free wills, joined in the revolt. It seems to think their revolt a contingent circumstance, for in Perelandra Adam and Eve remain in their paradise avoiding a "Fall", and in a straight up-theological way (Beyond Personality) Lewis wrote: "I don't know how things would have worked out if the human race had not rebelled against God and joined the enemy." One may be disinclined to accept Lewis's supernatural premise but, if you all him that, he is neither illogical nor side-stepping.

A further reservation: I can't quite agree that The Last Battle is not a "proper" Narnian book. I do agree that perhaps the Celtic/Mythic/Classical foundations may be more apparent in some of the earlier books, but the platonic and eschatological values are present strongly in The Last Battle and absent from its predecessors. They are there, for example, in the transformations of life and landscape at the end of The Silver Chair; in the mode of creation of Narnia through the music of Aslan's song in The Magician's Nephew; in the transpositions by which the apple-seed brought by Digory from the paradisal garden becomes (in The Lion) the Wardrobe of passage between Earth and Narnia; and most patently in Aslan's validation in The Silver Chair.

There is a way into my country from all the worlds...the very reason why you were brought to Narnia (was) that by knowing for a while, you could know the real. Although Lewis denied any initial planning of his stories as Christian allegories, saying, I'm sure with accurate recall that they all started with pictures in the mind, he also said (in Of Other Worlds) that he chose the genre that he called "Fairy Tale" because it "seemed the ideal form for the stuff I had to say"...and certainly that "stuff" is continuous thought the Chronicles of which The Last Battle is the natural culmination.

Finally, not a reservation, but an observation. In the autobiographical Surprised by Joy, Lewis wrote that with his mother's death (she was a deeply religious and "sentimental" lady) "all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life...it was sea and islands now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis." It is remarkable how regularly, both in the Narnia books and in the FF/fantasy novel, this image occurs; in the floating paradise islands of Perelandra; in the perilously haunted seas and in the "island heaven" of Neldoreath in Out of the Silent Planet; in the saving return of Atlantis in the person of Merlin in That Hideous Strength. Obvious parallels and resonances occur throughout the Narnian Chronicles: the great flat plain which was cut into countless little islands by countless channels of water of The Silver Chair; in Dean Tread who: "In the sea, the deeper you go, the darker and colder it gets, and it is down there, in the dark and cold, that dreadful things lie...it is on the heights (or as we would say 'in the shallows') that there is warmth and peace..."; in Prince Caspian, where the archetypal island of entry is a launching pad for the redeeming of Narnia; and above all in The Last Battle where the sea comes in until "all was level water from where they stood to where the water met the sky", and where, as they made there way ever farther up to the "real Narnia", Tiran kept foretelling the passing of the Narnia he had known, saying: "I have a sort of mother's death." In leaving an apocalyptic landscape, reminiscent both of Revelation and of the furthest reaches of the Time Machine, they have passed through the ice-encrusted doorway, "to find themselves in warm daylight, the blue sky above them, flowers at their feet, and laughter in Aslan's eyes." This is not unlike Wells's Traveller's experience while escaping the dying earth and sun in his machine, "I immediately found that the sun got golden again, the sky blue.

In a recent TLS review (216) of Humphrey Carpenter's Secret Gardens, he comments on what he calls the "genre" created by the Narnia and the attempt to create a new generation of children's writers and fantasists, but also that of Tolkien and Lewis. Isabel Quigly asks: "...was the whole flight into the walled garden of perfect fantasy (or fantastic perfection) an escape from unliveable reality?" I doubt whether this judgement should be applied to Lewis in any sweeping dismissive sense - his formidable intellect was constantly on the defensive, and while he was probably more aware of the Narnia's and the SF's and the "transpositions" between the different states of experience and being, and in a layman's sermon delivered in Oxford (at Mansfield College) he said: "In varying degrees the lower reality can actually be drawn into the higher and become part of it." That expresses the essentials of Narnia. He certainly regarded "pagan" elements and their origins in this light, and Mary Gentle's article is of great value in opening up thought about the validity of such a concept.

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AND IN THE MORNING,
THE STEIN HAS THE
HANGOVER!
Reprinted from the newsletter of the Birmingham SF Group, with
the author's permission.

STURGEON? THE NAME WAS MAGNETIC. THERE IT WAS, PERPETUALLY
cropping up attached to the stories I most admired. Sturgeon's
quintessential Anglo-American word among eccentrics like A.E. Van
Voigt, Isaac Asimov, Heinlein, Simak, and Kuttner. Yet — spiky,
finny, odd. And it was not his original name. Theodore Hamilton
Sturgeon was born Edward Hamilton Waldo. To the usual boring,
undeserving parents. That was on Staten Island, in the year the
First World War ended.

So there were two of him, as there are of many a good
writer. His mother died of Mercury, remember, so much more interesting than banal
reality. He had a mercurial temperament.

The bright side was the side everybody loved. There was
something so damned nice, charming, open, empathic, and elusive
about Ted that women flocked to him. Men too. Maybe he was at
the mercy of his own fey sexuality. If so, he was quizzical about it,
as always everything. One of his more curious titles put it
admirably: If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your
Sister? Not if it was Sturgeon, said a too-witty friend.

He played his guitar. He sang. He shone. He spoke of his
philosophy of love.

Ted honestly brought people happiness. If he was funny, it
was a genuine humor which sprang from seeing the world askant. A
true, rare talent. Everyone recognized it. His style quality —
“funny-like”, some nut dubbed it; familiar, it certainly looked.

Inexplicable, really.

Ted had a sympathetic stepfather, unsatisfactory adolescence. Furry
jobs, and Ether Breather out in Astounding in 1939. So to an even
funnier job, science fiction writer. It’s a thrilling disaster.

Ted did not believe those early stories; curious subject
matter, bizarre resolutions, glowering style. And about sexuality.
You could hardly believe your luck when one of Ted’s stories went
singing through your head.

It, with Garter Illustrations, in Unknown. Terrifying. Dem
Poo. Madness. The magnificent Microcosmic God, read and re-read.

Killedoom, appearing after a long silence. There were to be other
silences. But in 1950, a new set of SF Better than Venus Plus X
incredibility with complete conviction, zinging across a reader’s
synapses. By a miracle, the blown-up version, More Than Human,
was no disappointment either. This was Sturgeon’s caviar dish.

But even then, the unique world Venus Plus X with its outer sexuality
in a hermaphrodite utopia.

As for those silences. Something rank Sturgeon. His amazing
early experience, his popularity with fans and stardom at
conventions - they told against the writer. Success is a vampire.

In the midst of life we are in difficulties. They tell
Sturgeon was the first author in the field ever to sign a six
book contract. A six-book contract was a rare mark of
distinction, like being crucified. A mark of extinction. Ted was
no stakhanovite and the deal did him: he was reduced to
writing a novelization of a schlock TV series, Voyage to
the Bottom of the Sea, to fulfill his norms.

At one time, he was reduced further to writing TV pilot
scripts for Hollywood. He lived in motels or trailers, between
marriages, between lives. Those who read The Dreaming Jewels
or Venus Plus X or the story collections forget that writing
is secretly a heavy load, an endless battle against the
disappointments which come from within as well as without - and
reputation a heavier load. Ted was fighting his way back to
the light when night came on.

About Ted, there are many.

Well, he wrote that memorable novel, Some of Your Blood,
about this crazy psychotic who goes for drinking menstrual
discharge. Actually, it does not taste as bad as Ted made out.

That was his bid to escape the inescapable solitude.

One small human thing he did. He and I, with James Gunn,
were conducting the writers’ workshop at the Conference of
the Fantastic at Boca Raton, Florida. This was perhaps three
years ago.

Our would-be writers circulated those around the table
for everyone’s comment. One would be was a plump, pallid,
unhappy lady. Her story was a fantasy about a guy who tried
times to commit suicide, only to be blocked each time by a green
monster from Hell who wanted him to keep on suffering. Sounds
promising, but the treatment was hopeless.

Dumb comments around the table. I grew impatient with
their unreality. When the story reached me, I asked the lady right out.

“Have you ever tried to commit suicide?”

Unexpected response. She stared at me in shock. Then she
burst into a paroxysm of tears, collapsing onto the
table. “Three times”, she cried. Everyone looked fit to
tape. “It’s nothing to be ashamed of”, I said. “I’ve tried it
too.”

“So have I”, said Sturgeon calmly.

He needn’t have come in like that. He just did it bravely,
unconditionally, to support me, to support her, to support
everyone. And I would guess there was a lot of misery and
disappointment in Ted’s life, for all the affection he
generated. Yet he remained kind, loving, giving. (The lady is improving by
the way. We’re still in touch. That’s another story.)

If that does not strike you as a positive story, I’m not.
I’m not knocking suicide, either. Everyone should try it at least
once.

Ted was a real guy, not an idol, an effigy, as some try to
paint him. He was brilliant, so he suffered. I know beyond doubt
that he would be pleased to see me set down some of the bad times
he had. He was not one to edit things out. Otherwise he would
have been a less powerful writer.

There are troves of lovely Sturgeon tales (as in the
collection labelled K Pluribus Unicorn), like Bianca’s Hands,
which a new generation would delight in. He wrote well, even
sometimes over-wistfully. In many ways, Ted was the direct opposite
of the big technochic names of his generation, like Doc Smith,
Poul Anderson, Robert Heinlein, et al. His game was more closely
fixed on people, for that he honoured him, and still honour him.
Good for him that he never ended up in that prick’s junkyard
where they pay you a million dollars favor forge of some crud
that no sane man wants to read.

Ted died early in May in Oregon, of pneumonia and other
complications. How he consorts with Sophocles, Dick, and the
author of the Kama Sutra. He had returned from a holiday in
Hawaii, taken in the hopes he might recover his health there.
That holiday, incidentally, was paid for by another SF writer —
one who often gets publicity for the wrong things. Thank God,
there are still some good guys left. We are all duly grateful
for the one just departed.

BRIAN ALDISS
STURGEON REMEMBERED

Theodore Sturgeon was born Edward Hamilton Waldo in New York City. Sturgeon was his stepfather’s name. His career as an SF writer began in 1939, with the publication of “Ether Breather” in Astounding. In about three years of active writing he produced more than 25 stories, all in Astounding and Unknown, including It (1940) and Microcosmic God (1941).

Along with Van Vogt, Heinlein and Asimov, Sturgeon was a central contributor to and one of John W. Campbell’s so-called Golden Age of SF, though perhaps less comfortably than his colleagues, as even in these early years he was less interested in technological or hard SF than in attempting to use SF frameworks to illustrate psychological tales, often romantic.

The decade following the Second World War saw Sturgeon at his most prolific and assured. He was increasingly free to write stories expressive of his own history in various manifestations of love, and though his explorations of sexual diversity seem unquestionable nowadays, stories like “The World Well Lost” (1950), about aliens exiled from their own culture because they are homosexual, created considerable stir on publication.

Sturgeon’s most famous single volume is More Than Human (1953), winner of the 1954 International Fantasy Award, which consists of Three connected stories, two new sections built around Baby in Three (Galaxy, 1953) which is perhaps his most famous single story; it depicts with considerable intensity the coming together of six ‘strong’ into a pie-powered Gestalt, and of its eventual achievement of true maturity.

A later tale, Claustraphile (1956) illustrates Sturgeon’s acrobats with themes of frustrated adolescence. The young protagonist, chagrined by his expressive family, is a sensitive oddball (like many young SF readers), and discovers himself to be not an emasculating at all but a lost member of a spacefaring race;

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I THINK THAT EVERYTHING HAS BEEN SAID BY NOW. IF YOU READ LOCAL OR ARE A MEMBER OF THE SFWA, YOU WILL HAVE READ ALL ABOUT T

There is little that I can add — other than my feeling of personal loss. Ted was a good and close friend for over forty years. We had a lot of fun together, got very drunk from time to time, and I shall miss him. He was a man of peace and the last time he stayed with us his calmness prevented my wife from throwing another guest off our balcony. Even though she was perfectly justified. But our friendship was ours and that is that. I just wish I could have seen more of him these last years. That is my personal loss. His loss is much greater so this chapter is closed.

The loss that we must all feel in SF is the death of a giant in our field. For Ted was one of the tiny band of first generation magazine writers who shaped science fiction as we now know it today. Led by Campbell, he — and Van Vogt, Heinlein, Doc Smith, you know all the names as well as I do — took those garish, crappy pulp magazines and created a new form of literature. That can never be taken away from them. Ted had a writing style as big as Mount Everest, Van’s current writing seems to bear no relation to the old. Heinlein self-indulgently ignores his readers. It doesn’t matter. What they did can never be diminished. I read them as they were being published — and it was a glorious time to be an SF fan.

This is the reason we readers miss him. He was one of the first — and one of the best. There will never be another like him because the universe is only created once.

So — goodbye Ted. It was a pleasure to know you.

And it was an unforgettable, mind-blowing, career-shaping, highly emotional experience to read what you wrote.

Thank you very much.

Harry Harrison

In the past three years FOUNDATION has published articles and reviews by:

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VIETNAM VETERAN — UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

He’s 5 foot 2 and he’s 6 foot 4
He fights with missiles and with spears
He’s all of 31 and he’s only 17
Been a soldier for a thousand years

— Buzzy Saint Marie

Joe Haldeman interviewed at the 1984 Eurocon/Amestcon, Brighton, by Ken Lake with Geoff Rippington. (Part one appeared in Vector 126, June/July 1985)

LAKES: Just before we started our interview, you spotted the cover on Infinite Dreams, and you had one or two things to say about it. Would you like to say something about the concept of cover design?

HALDEMAN: That’s a sore point with me right now. I just saw my latest cover for Worlds Apart in America, and it’s awful. It’s a woman with huge breasts, really exaggerated — she would be tipping over all the time! — and she’s standing, looking intrepid, she has a face like Brooke Shields, she has a logos in her hand, obviously in a space ship of some sort or a space station, with this huge space structure in the background, which isn’t bad, it is actually in the book — but oh, such a pulpish cover! If I could understand if this was a book that they had sought for peanuts, but it’s probably one of the most expensive books they’ve bought this year, and they give it a cheap junk cover like that.

LAKES: Is it possibly because they figure that is how to treat an expensive book, to sell more? It doesn’t matter what people buy it for — if it’s got books it will sell?

HALDEMAN: Well, that’s what my editor said when I called her. She’s a woman for Christ’s sake! How can you perpetrate something like this? — and she said, ‘Well, I didn’t like it either, but believe me, it’ll sell books.’ I guess I’ll believe it when the royalties come in. The book is, to my mind, a dignified book, and that’s a very undignified cover.

LAKES: So you have absolutely no control over this at all, no way you can stop it?

HALDEMAN: No. In fact, by the time I saw the cover it had been printed on a poster, and it hadn’t gone all over the place. No, some authors get control over covers, but the thing is, you have to trade off. If I absolutely required control of the covers I’d pay for it in terms of the advance money, because they’re doing me a favour. And in fact they have a whole room full of people whose job it is to come up with good cover art, and they’re experts, supposedly, so normally I let them.

LAKES: What about the content of Infinite Dreams? You made the selection; have all the stories appeared previously?

HALDEMAN: Yes, in some form they have. Of course, one reason why you want to get magazine stories out in book form is so that you can correct all the terrible things that magazine editors did to your stories, like changing titles. There are no connecting links between the stories; the introductions talk about the circumstances under which each story was written and where the idea might have come from; other than that, they are just the first couple of dozen magazine stories I had out that I liked. I did not include any stories that I no longer cared for. It’s still one of my favourite books; I like the variety. It’s the book that I hand people who aren’t science fiction readers because there is a lot of different stuff in it, and none of it’s so long that it would put you to sleep. I left one story out; that is in my next collection, which will be called Strange Seasons. I think I may have just overlocked it, but it’s 25 or 26 thousand words long, a very huge story. It was part of The Forever War, and maybe I didn’t include it because it was too soon after The Forever War had come out. It was the middle section of the novel — “You can never go back” — it was going to be the middle section, but I sent it to Ben Goldberg at Analog, and he sent it back saying, “It’s too depressing, in the first place, and in the second place, most of it takes place on Earth, and your story is really out in space, you’re just slowing things down.” I agreed with him, and reluctantly wrote another novelette, and that other novelette wound up in the book. Now I’m rather sorry it did; I think that the original should have stayed, so this is a way of getting straight.

LAKES: Would you consider rewriting part of The Forever War to make the novel that you wish it were, or having a new edition published which was a variorum edition offering both the middles?

HALDEMAN: How wouldn’t that be interesting. If I could find a small press that would be interested in doing that I’d certainly like to do it. I don’t know whether the book is too specifically 1970s, too much about Vietnam, to have sufficient interest in a variorum edition. But it is a Hugo winner, so possibly...

RIPPINGTON: You say the book is about Vietnam, for American
readers, but to us, without you actually saying it, we
didn't have thought about it in those terms.

HALDeman: Well, yes, but wars are wars, and the structure
of writing the structure of a typical war, though of
course it isn't

LARK: But we don't see these parallels, that you and maybe many
American readers see automatically in reading your books;
they don't exist for us. That brings us, still on the
subject of war, to your anthology Study War No More, in
which you contributed a story. Uh.

HALDeman: Let me tell you how I put that together, I never
advertised for stories. I took writers whose work I admired,
and who it seemed to me were pretty much on my side of the
fence, that is, fairly left, most of them: I wrote to them
individually and asked, have you ever written, or would you
like to write an anti-war story? And it turned out that all
of them had one in the closest somewhere and they sent them
along. It's an uneven collection, I suppose; I liked all the
stories - there were some I liked more than others.

LARK: It's uneven for one reason, in that Damon Knight's piece
dates from 1954 and Poul Anderson's from 1959 - surely this
has to enter into it, that they're written from a different
viewpoint, so obviously they don't present a united picture
of war, or a united picture of science fiction, for that
matter. What therefore do you feel is the function of the
book, and do those stories adequately, in retrospect, do
what you wanted them to do?

HALDeman: Even from the immediate retrospective of writing the
introduction to it I had to admit that it did not fulfill
what I had hoped it would. I wanted science fiction
alternatives to war, and most of the stories instead treated
war metaphorically, or the solutions were not practical
solutions, they were things that pointed out one aspect or
another of warlike behaviour, and also in retrospect, I
shouldn't have been surprised at that, because if anybody
ever has come up with a simple solution to war, one that
can be put in a short story, nobody's ever heard of it!

RIPPINGTON: Do you enjoy editing as much as writing?
HALDeman: No, not as much. There's an awful lot of red tape
involved, and you have convinced yourself to a lifetime of
book-keeping as soon as you've done one of these things:
every time a little royalty cheque comes in you have to
split it ten ways. That's not part of an agent's job,
normally, partly because the money's not great. I have
two anthologies; the other one is called Cosmic Laughter
- that was my second book. That still brings in a little
money every now and then, which I send out in little five
dollar packets to various people. I think there was never a British
edition of that per se; however, a box of them got over here
for reminders, and I see it more often in Britain than I
do in America, at signing sessions and that sort of thing. It's
a competent little little collection of science fiction
stories. The contract was offered to me as an apology by my
publishers for screwing up so badly on my first novel. He
said, 'Here, you can have $5000; put this together.' You

see, my first novel, War Year, was critically quite well
received; I had the largest and most positive review I've
ever had in the New York Times, which is of course the
touchstone of commercial criticism in America, until that
book. But they didn't print enough copies, and they didn't
send them to the book stores. It was a book that was fated
ever to be sold. Probably one of the most aggravating
that can ever happen to a first author: two weeks after
the book came out I went to the American Booksellers
Association meeting in Washington DC. I didn't have enough money for a
taxi, but an editor I knew and her husband paid for it. And I went in,
and I went straight to my publisher's display, and they must
have had 150 titles there, and they didn't have mine. So I
asked the salesman, you know, little collection of all the books
by Joe Haldeman?" he says, 'By George, you know, I read
that one myself, and it's a really good book but it's about
Vietnam, and nobody's going to buy it, so I didn't bother to
bring it along.' I gave him a slap, and I cost him his job
too, when I got the word back.

LARK: Now, we've talked about the genesis of Study War No More,
and the selection. What was the reaction of the contributors
to their contingency to each other, once they came
to read the completed book?

HALDeman: I got very little reaction from them, which is normally
the case with anthologies. When I've been in anthologies I
readily read through my story to make sure they didn't
take the themes upside down, and then I set it aside, and it may be
years before I read the other stories in it.

LARK: Oh, you don't see it as a connected concept at all, saying
'This is a pity you didn't put me in front of so-and-so and
after so-and-so?'

HALDeman: No, there are commercial considerations: you like to be
either the first or the last story and it's nice to be in a
book with recognisably good writers. I would complain if
I were in a book full of unknowns and schlock writers.

LARK: On the grounds that you were there to sell to them.
HALDeman: Yeah. It's happened once. Well no, not only me; Ray
Lafferty was in it. It was one of those strange Roger Elwood
collaborations. I think I tried to do an outline, and I
couldn't do it. My story in it was absolutely incomprehensible.
He had to buy it because he'd been advertising the various
science fiction writers he's bought stories from all along
including my name, and I got really annoyed about this, and
I said, 'Roger, you're going to have to buy a story from me
now that you've done that.' I got really annoyed because
he'd commissioned a story and then refused it on the
grounds that it had too-adult language in it - 'Why didn't
you ask for childish writers?' I had this story that had
become a little different, different, different, and I said,
'Can't you even understand it, so I sent it to him and dared him not
to print it. And he did.' It's called John's Other Life: it's
got a few paragraphs there are pretty good, but I defy
anybody to tell me what it's about.

LARK: Talking about writing for a child audience, it seems to me
that - at least for a teen audience - that is what you've
done with There Is No Darkness, which you've written
with your brother. I gather that one of you would write one
chapter, the other would then rewrite as he felt like it and
write the next, then the first would come back and rewrite
the second chapter and write the third.

HALDeman: There was a sort of sending back and forth of ideas,
and in fact we rewrote little of each other's prose. My
brother's a very good pastoral artist, and so he came about
ninety per cent toward my style and I came about ten per
cent toward his natural style. You see the book originally
was the first science fiction I'd ever written. After War
Year came out I started writing There Is No Darkness under
the name Martin H. Green. I wrote about five stories. I sent
it to my editor who had done my mainstream novel, and
she said, 'No young adult audience will like this; it's too
violent... so I just put it in a drawer for another twelve
years. My brother finally reminded me that it was sitting
there mouldering, or moulder, in my files, and he asked
whether he might take a look at it and we could do a
co-writing situation, because he had done it. So I said,
'Why not. And so we got it out and did write
the book over a space of about eighteen months while we
were both involved in other projects. We both have
word processors, that have completed all the stories
now. I don't want to do another collaboration. They want us
to do a sequel for it: it's a tremendously successful book, There Is No Darkness.

RIPPINGTON: Do you find it difficult collaborating? I know when
I write anything, I hate any body altering a word of it.
HALDEMAN: That's the thing. My brother is just as sensitive in that area as I am, so we didn't just go through and read, pencil and change each other's sentences. What we normally did was add interlineations and paragraphs and so forth; we wouldn't change a line of his, or he of mine, without sending it back. I'd sit by the typewriter while I read it, and make little corrections and additions, and then I'd send them to him, and he would put in the ones that he agreed with. We talked a lot about Strugatsky about a year ago, and asked him how he collaborated with his brother, since we had both done this. And he said they had tried everything, you know, alternating chapters, you write the book and I'll rewrite it, every possibility, and now what they do is, either Boris goes over to Arkady's house, or Arkady goes over to Boris's house, and one of them sits at a typewriter, and they argue line by line until they get the right thing out. Very Russian, in a way.

LANCE: And maybe it shows in some of the stories. I must say that There Is No Darkness reads very, very smoothly. It doesn't read in any sense as disjointedly as one expects occasionally to find in a collaboration.

HALDEMAN: Well, that's great. We both spent a lot of work on it. We didn't want it to be a thriller, and we did pursue it as a young adult book.

LANCE: Did you hear Chris Priest's GOH speech? It seemed to me that he was arguing that science fiction has been improperly and unfairly delimited and restricted in its definition by editors and publishers. He and his own, much more relaxed definition of science fiction, or speculative fiction, should be the one that applies. Now your writing is very mainstream, in fact entirely, I would say, in the tradition of mainstream hard SF. Do you find that that is a restriction, or do your thoughts automatically run within traditional parameters?

HALDEMAN: Without completely disagreeing with Chris, or with you, I do choose as the symbolic means to tell my stories a lot of the trappings of hard SF. I am trained as a scientist, and a lot of the way that I look at the universe is coloured by having a scientific training in physics and astronomy. And so even if I were writing a straight mainstream novel, that kind of sensibility would colour it.

LANCE: You tend to have things happening to people rather than people influencing things.

HALDEMAN: Well, that's my perception of fate.

LANCE: It's my belief that the people who set the tone of what one can regard as acceptable science fiction are not the editors, and not the publishers, but are the general public. Which takes an awfully long time to change its perceptions of what is acceptable SF. Now you have hit that basic mainstream, have caught the attention of the average science fiction reader.

HALDEMAN: One reason is that the key writers of my generation are hard science writers. My readers — a lot of them are twenty or thirty years older than I am, and a lot of them are teenagers, so there's the people who grew up on hard science, and the people who like the gadgetry and so forth. This seems to be a natural way for me to write. I don't disagree with Chris in his historical interpretation, that is. I see the ghettoization, or even the balkanisation of science fiction as being something that was the direct result of the personalities of men like Gernsback and Campbell, and the marketing strategies that grew out of the rather narrow perceptions that they had of what made a good story. I can't disagree with that, and I can't disagree that I am influenced by it, because that's what I read when I was a kid, and that's what I grew up wanting to write.

LANCE: But you don't write with the shortcomings of the SF of the fifties and sixties.

HALDEMAN: Well no, but I've also got a Master's degree in English.

LANCE: My point is that Gernsback didn't publish crud, he published what he could get to fulfill a specific market, but when he published HS Wells he was publishing stuff that was simply crafted.

HALDEMAN: Oh certainly — but did he publish Stapledon? It's odd, because obviously he could tell the difference between a good story and asshole crap. But I suppose I would agree, now as a writer of fifteen years standing, that there had never happened, that we had kept the notion, like HS Wells, of being able to write science fiction within the mainstream of literature; but this is what we have.

LANCE: Everybody keeps trotting Stapledon out as an example, but Olaf Stapledon never read SF, he didn't know there was the genre in the world; he didn't submit his stuff to Gernsback; how can you criticize Gernsback for not publishing it?

HALDEMAN: He's one of the most enduring writers so far as I'm concerned. But I can see why the particular virtues that Stapledon has wouldn't be virtues that, ah —

LANCE: His visionary writings were a little too airy-fairy for that sort of market.

RIPPINGTON: I wouldn't write him off, though, because although the style is pretty awful, at least it had a vision, which is more than British SF even today has; it's very in-looking. But I've yet to see a British novel set in, say, in a world like... in that sort of environment.

LANCE: Oh, I don't know. I mean, how about Arthur Clarke?

ALL: He's not British...!

LANCE: No, but he was the major product of the B.I.S. in the pre-war and immediately post-war years when I entered SF. If Arthur can do it, surely other British people should be able to.

RIPPINGTON: But I think we become too cliquish, we all like to feel that we're avant-garde writers, and that there is some special kudos for being innovative, instead of producing a bloody good readable book.

HALDEMAN: Well... there's something to that, I'm sure.

RIPPINGTON: Do you actually live your books, while you're writing them?

HALDEMAN: Oh you do, you really fall into them. When I was writing Mindbridge, the women all have shaved heads when they go on expeditions, and I was writing and imagining and so forth, and I went down to the grocery store, still thinking furiously about this book, and I walked into the store, and there were all those women with long hair — it was a culture shock, because all the women I'd seen for the past eight hours didn't have any hair! My cat almost killed me when I was writing one of my spy novels. I was just typing along, this battle between a white shark and a killer whale, and I have them snapping jaws and fighting, and oh, isn't this awful gory — and my whole nervous system was geared up about sharks and teeth and everything. I almost dove over the typewriter and through the window! But yeah, even the easy ones, even the simple novel, you have to get geared up on the action. Or even the most intellectualized ones; it has to be real.

LANCE: It's got to be real, otherwise it doesn't sound real. I must say that you've convinced me in each of the milieus about which you've written.
All through my life I feel as if I have been backing down and walking away from the argument. This is not a virtue (quite the opposite, possibly). It does not signify a passive approach to the rest of life. What it does mean is that by nature I am neither a leader of men nor a follower of others. I am a true "outsider" because, by nature, I am revolutionary, and entrepreneur, a pop singer or a criminal, while the natural "insider" is one who runs a small business, raises a family, saves with the Post Office and spends the weekends wallpapering the spare room. I have never been either of these, but I feel I fit awkwardly. When I heard John Fowles' remarks I considered it to be a true definition as any of the peculiar, difficult psychology that marks many writers, myself among them.

How the trait manifests itself, at least in my own case, is in a form of individualism, but not the rugged variety that went out and built the empire. Mine is of an altogether more inward type: stubborn, egotistical, grumpy.

The first time I was aware of its effect on my attitude to writing was soon after I got going. The "New Wave" was all the rage. New Worlds was for a time the centre of everything, or seemed to be, and there was much heady idealism drifting in the air. With the idealism came a sort of consensus, formed by both major and minor personalities in the movement. It was hard to pin down, but it concerned the kind of issues young writers ought to stand for, the kinds of attitudes they should have, what they should be interested in, and — although this was routinely denied at the time — what they should be writing.

Something came into existence in which I later dubbed the "Invinc Syndrome". Young writers of some promise but only moderate talent haplessly gave up their individualism to be taken in by some else's dream for a decade or so. A type of writing was emerging, and the type of writer who did it best was one who was prepared to relinquish something he was not. For a time I had been caught up in it all, but one day I somehow realized what was at stake. I backed away inarticulately, rephrasing the argument. In doing so I fell out with almost everyone. There were no sensational rows to intrigue the gossip; there was just muted resentment on all sides.

It reminded me of being at school, when I had decided neither sport nor swotting was in my line of business, and went my own way, getting interested in girls, smoking behind the gym, etc., and having the shit kicked out of me for doing so. Bullies are basically forces of authoritarianism and conformism, in literature as in school, and their hangers-on are their militia.

More recently I have been experiencing a similar feeling about the whole of the science fiction field. What once seemed to me an attractively adventurous place to be a writer now appears very conformist indeed...to the point where the old maxims, that science fiction was not as terrible as it appeared to be, has actually become the reassurance that science fiction is and has no point unless it is, as terrible as it appears. In other words, if other forces are needed, dare to write a piece of fiction that might stretch the definition of the genre a little, and you will have produced something that is no longer "real" science fiction. (Or, in the U.S.A., it will be something they are quick to call "British" science fiction...which is just as bad.) It was not always thus.

My instinct again is to go it alone.

Yet to do so is to create an irony for myself. Putting it as plainly as possible, the sort of books I want to write obviously have something in common with science fiction, even if no longer "real", and what I write is most intelligently perceived by science fiction readers.

Like many writers (but not all) I don't especially like writing about my own work...nor, for that matter, talking about it. Instead, I prefer the safety of generalizations, and tend to talk about the generalities of others, and leave me alone. This is actually a way of putting my own work at a remove, because in generalizing about "the field" or about literature or about "science fiction" a writer can talk in metaphor about his own work.

For instance, over the last few years I have sometimes spoken or written about the need for autobiographical content in science fiction...but this is only since my own books have been more overtly autobiographical in tone and subject, and thus it has become a subject of interest to me. Now I have conveniently raised the subject, let me talk more directly about it.

Towards the end of the 1960s I started attending a class in writing that was being taught by the novelist Maureen Duffy. Her interest in autobiographical fiction was what you might call comprehensive (her own first novel was called That's How It Was, which is about as frank an admission of source as you will find.) Most of the other people in the class were writing novels, and every week there would be readings from some of them. What struck me forcibly was that almost all of these works in progress had broadly similar stories: they dealt with young people moving to London in the immediate post-war years, finding out about love, having their first sexual experiences, working in boring jobs, and so on. Most of the people in the class were of a similar age (mid-to late forties) and it seemed self-evident to me that the books they were writing were drawn if not from literal memories then certainly from ideas generated by experience.

I often felt uncomfortable listening to these passages. This was partly because some of them were acutely personal, but also because of the more principled feeling I had that fiction should be fiction that it should spring from the imagination and not be a thinly fictionalized version of reality.
My early individualism moved to the fore. I had been planning to write it soon anyway, but spurred on by my feelings about the class I started work on Indocriinaire, a novel that is wholly imaginary, conceived and executed in the abstract. (One would think that it all started in the conversation during which I was received politely but without enthusiasm. Eighteen months after this the reviewers gave it the same kind of reception.)

Fugue For A Darkening Island, which followed a year or so later, was also an abstract novel.

My interest in exploring personal images only really began (and then in an extremely tentative way) when I was writing Inverted World, and although the result is the closest thing I have ever written to "real" science fiction it is actually a small, hidden engine of autobiography.

I now see Inverted World as a turning point in my approach to writing. It was a way of reaching a conclusion, or an end point, but they would have become increasingly acid and arbitrary as the years went by. Inverted World, which was based on all things mathematical equations, started life as perhaps the ultimate abstract novel, but it changed as it grew. My first two novels closed down possibilities for me when I had finished working on them; the third actually opened possibilities afterwards. Since then, I have been exploring narratives with increasing interest.

So I had come by an individualistic route to a version of the Maureen Duffy approach. Yet I was not wholly there. I still had (and still have) no truck with fiction that draws on thinly disguised personal experiences. All of this stuff is just a slice of experience. The understanding of the imagination is greater than the force of accurate journalism. After all, although life is reasonably long the variety of experience is restricted for most people, my own no less than anyone else's. But I do find that the further I get from the past the more it presents itself as fruitful imaginative material.

When I was about eleven years old I was pushed off my bicycle by another boy - the forces of conformity closing in, etc. I fell heavily, hit my head and suffered concussion. Although the worst physical injury I suffered was a badly grazed eye the incident left a much deeper scar. When I woke up in bed an hour or so later, not only had I no memory of the actual incident, but I was also suffering from what I now know is called retrograde amnesia. I could remember nothing at all of the four or five days leading up to the incident.

At first I didn't realize this, but when I returned to school I came across innumerable minor mysteries. I had written lessons in exercise books, homework I had handed in came back to me with marks on it, and so on. All was blank to me. I couldn't see how it was possible I could do something in full possession of my faculties, yet afterwards entirely forget having done it. All this played a part in what I think of as the darkling Trustees of my mind, in the back of my mind, but with the passage of time the experience seemed less important and I eventually forgot about it. (In this, incidentally, my memories of a few years ago I was reading a book about the effects of shell-shock on the men in the trenches during the First World War. During the war shell-shock had been called neurasthenia and was considered a sign of a weak mind and a lack of courage, or not even a "weakness" in the face of adversity.) One of the symptoms associated with neurasthenia was retrograde loss of memory. Again, this was misunderstood at the time, and was believed to be a form of malingering. Victims of shell-shock were given a short leave, then sent back to the trenches. When the war was long over, psychological research caught up with the case histories, and shell-shock was last understood for what it really was. It is now widely recognised that some forms of severe physical assault will cause amnesia, and the patient can be treated accordingly.

Because of my own minor encounter with the phenomenon I was fascinated to read of this, and it set me to thinking again about that enigmatic period during my tedious days at school, when I had done but could not afterwards remember doing. The whole experience would have been a lot stronger if there were a word which it relates to - how we perceive reality. So far, three novels - A Dream of Messers, The Affirmation and the Glamour - have grown from this phenomenon (the only word known is "amnesiology", a word which means a dreamlike altered state, associated with amnesia) can also be partly attributed to the same personal source.

This incident is by no means the total autobiographical content of the novels, because otherwise they would be abstracted as the first two, or, indeed, autobiography all through (although they are all interesting). Instead, although it was a lot stronger for me it is an increasingly important and interesting one.

In 1962 I was in Holland for a science fiction convention, and along with Jack Vance and a few other writers I was interviewed. I could have gone on, (obviously things like this happen to you when you're abroad). One of the questions we were all asked was about our interest in the autobiographical content of fiction. My answer was much the same as I have written here, although somewhat more brief. Vance, when his turn came, said: "Autobiography! I'm not an egotist!" Well... I am, and the only difference between me and Jack Vance is that I will admit it and he won't.

The longer I go on writing the more it seems to me that the work of a novelist is to try to make sense in public of private tumult (the tumult of everyday life and transitory experiences that is shared by us all), and is thus an essentially egotistical act.

Some go too far, and some will not go far enough. Witness the dichotomy which is so often mentioned, that there are "real" writers who write in the manner of someone like Brian Aldiss, and the (or the equally false) "imaginary" writer of someone like Philip José Farmer. I believe one of the most difficult tasks facing a writer is getting to grips with his subject matter, and so coming to terms with one's ego is a crucial step towards serious work. The more at ease a writer is with his ego, the better chance he has of dealing with it responsibly in his fiction. (This is so possibly why the ludicrous posturings of Ellison make him widely and erroneously perceived as a raw-nerved "artist" - which is how he likes to see himself - and why Vance's self-effacement gives rise to the belief that he is an honest, disinterested "craftsperson" - ditto. Both perceptions are wide of the mark, although for differing but related reasons).

What all this has to do with science fiction will seem to you (as increasingly it seems to me) rather remote.

I started this with a quotation from John Powles, and took my title from a passage of Graham Greene's. Neither is a writer often summoned as a witness in the science fiction world. At least, not in public: I am only one of many writers you know who has learned a lot from both, and drawn much inspiration. Both are deeply autobiographical writers concerned with human processes. B.G. Wells was another, more widely read in the science fiction world. As I get older, I have come to care less about how much a writer speaks directly to me about the stuff of fiction writing, whereas the utterances of science fiction writers seem increasingly self-servingly, misguidedly or abstract. Only a week or two ago I was reading a surprisingly written article by Isaac Asimov in which he earnestly explained why characterization was not and should not be the concern of science fiction writers. How can any writer, however propped up by visions of achieved worldly success, believe such nonsense for even a moment?

And I find the same sense of irrelevance in what little science fiction I read these days. It seems to me that most contemporary science fiction is an end product, it has become a derived, secondary form, drawing on itself and the most banal influences, rendering itself into the literary equivalent of biodegradable plastic bottles.

Science fiction at least the "best" in the sense writers use it, of providing the most creative input - is that which dares to chance, which cares nothing for genre or form or audience; and to care little about it. Such writers have let chance be beaten out of them by the bully-boys of conformity. In my own time as a writer these forces have included: the opportunists who cashed in on the New Wave (the pulps, slugs and the "daנדלons" etc.), Science Fiction Writers of America (which concentrates on the imperatives of marketing, and lumps only to suppress dissent and freedom of speech), the mass-market bestsellers (old men retreating the ground of their youth, and Milnes & Loon tear-jerkers done up fancy with dragons, swordsmen, and most of all the retreat of science fiction publishing, particularly in America, into specialized imprints (Cow, You and Blue Ford). All these impose conformism, worse still, pander to it.

My last three novels, and some of my stories, have dealt with various forms of delusion, and are about people who blind themselves to reality. These pieces of fiction grew from personal imagery and a private life, and were intended to be read as works of imaginary fiction. It would be spurious to declare that they were disguised messages about a form of writing that once greatly excited me, and find myself in the position of having been further from my mind while writing them. Afterwards, though, the parallels have not been lost on me, especially when those helpful books for young writers - the books for Vector and Foundation have pointed them out to me.

But in reality, however perceived, I still simply see myself in retreat, backing off, getting ready to rephrase the argument.
HELLICIONIA WINTER - Brian Aldiss
Origin of Name: 1985, 285pp, £2.95
Reviewed by Joseph Nicholas

THE GREAT WAY DRAWS TO ITS CLOSE. BAYLIS AND HELLICIONIA move away from the apes and a winter that will last five hundred of our years. A fractious humanity continues to squabble amongst itself. Despite the community's words of how important civilisation's very existence is, its fragility remains intact. The plague, known as the Plague, starts to ravage the inhabitants, and the phogons are once again coming into their own. What great leader, what all-embracing idea, can persuade the people to unite for their own sake against the winter that is soon to swallow them?

Such is what Hellliconia Winter, the concluding volume of the 'Hellliconia' trilogy, promises to do, at least to judge from the overall thrust of the first two volumes. Hellliconia Spring shows us humanity emerging from a period of ice and ignorance and embarking on a climb back to the glory that winter had erased. Hellliconia Summer shows us the moment of conceptual breakthrough as the people began to grasp the true history of their world and the power that lurked there. Hellliconia Winter doesn't quite live up to the expectations of the previous two, but it is an excellent conclusion to a trilogy that has been a joy to read.

Throughout the trilogy, the author maintains a strong sense of place and time, allowing the reader to fully immerse themselves in the world of Hellliconia. The characters are well-developed and their relationships add depth to the narrative. The plot unfolds in a way that keeps the reader engaged and invested in the outcome.

In summary, Hellliconia Winter is a fitting conclusion to a trilogy that has captured the imagination of readers. It is a story of survival, identity, and the struggle of humanity to overcome its limitations. Aldiss has created a world that is both familiar and foreign, one that will leave a lasting impression on the reader. Highly recommended for fans of science fiction and fantasy.
well-developed for his age - indeed, by the
time he reaches adulthood, he is over eight
feet tall. Why does Knight find this
necessary? Gene has an interesting
discussion with the Lizard Man about the
place of the freak in human society, but
the conclusions drawn are tangential to the
direction one shortly finds the book to
take. Knight has a messianic end in mind
for Gene (Michael Valentine Smith's
education also included a spell "on the
carnie") and I considered it interesting
that he should have to make Gene literally
loom large in his imagination before he
could tackle the character. Perhaps he
feels that the masses will only respond to
a physically outstanding figure.

As the consequence of another
friendlessly ingenious but futile murder
attempt by Cooley, Gene leaves the
comic, and at this point the narrative
fragments to such an extent that I will
need some convincing if told that Knight
did not put the book aside for a while
before returning to it in a different frame
of mind. Gene is now episodically seen
wandering the world, and one begins to fear
the worst when a scene in which he admires
an artist's Crucifixion, "hanging under the
weight of its pain, mouth open in a
scream and the sweat of death on its skin"
is followed immediately by a discussion of
the world's problems, notably
overpopulation.

We next meet Gene at any length once
he is installed in a customized Florida
manor - he has graduated beyond the
duplication of mere greenhouse - surrounded
by dotting camp followers and holding forth
to all and sundry, and irresistibly evoking
the spirit of bloody old Juba I Harshad and
his harem. Aware now of the full extent of
his powers, Gene embarks on a world-saving
programme, and almost the only scene of
interest in this latter half of the book
comes when he debates with himself his
fitness for this role. Which was worse, to
give humanity for the wrong reasons - or to
let it perish through cowardice? Sufice
to say that Cooley appears but summarily,
which is symptomatic of the nature of this
book. Knight, who was Gene's mentor, had
gave the story a narrative drive and
tension it now lacks. The final pages
are somewhat eddies (as it were) what has
gone immediately before, but the last impression
is that The Man in the Tree says little
that is not said by Stranger in a Strange
Land.

THE GOD THOMSELOVE - Isaac Asimov
[Gollancz, 1985, 18pp, £1.95]
REACH FOR TOMORROW - Arthur C. Clarke
[Gollancz, 1985, 16pp, £1.95]
Reviewed by Mark Green

ASIMOV AND CLARKE HAVE COME TO REPRESENT SF
in the mind of the general public. However,
their reputation rests on work produced in the
"Golden Age" when critical standards were
lower and it is improbable that they would
retain such a reputation today.

These books are both reprints; the
Clarke reprinting short stories originally
published in the pages of the Forties and
Fifties, the Asimov a reissue of a novel
first published in 1972. What becomes
obvious from a comparison of the two
books is how little hard SF evolved in the
 intervening 30 years. It is possible to
exonerate Clarke on the grounds that he was
writing at a time when EP was the result of
different sociological forces than those in
operation in the early seventies. Asimov has
no such excuse. "Gods" was written after the
advent of the new wave and Asimov should
have appreciated the different
critical standards that availed as a result.

The stories in Reach For Tomorrow
range from the readable (The Fires
Within) to the original (Jupiter Five). What
becomes apparent is that the author is able to write better short stories than
novels as he has a greater understanding of
the limitations and conventions of short
story writing; the perfect illustration of
this being the transformation of The
Sentinel into 2001. Although few of the
stories raise any questions about the human
condition, they are on the whole readable
and it is quite possible to while away a
few enjoyable hours with this book.
However, I feel the nine pound price tag is
unjustified and the book would have been
better presented as a paperback.

On the other hand it would have been
better if Asimov's The Gods Themselves had
not been reissued at all. The story
concerns the construction of an "electron
pump" which proves to be the panacea for
Earth's energy crisis. The invention was
prompted by messages sent by aliens from
a parallel universe. Officially the pump
is considered to produce a symbiosis between
the two universes. However, it is soon
realised that the continued use of the pump
will lead to the destruction of our solar
system.

Asimov hints that social changes
accompanied the implementation of the pump,
but these are not examined in any depth. He
mentions the cultural differences between
the inhabitants of the Moontop and those of
Earth. However, these differences are
comparative and Asimov misses the
potential allegory for our present society.
The characterisation is weak, the
characters being the archetype stereotypes
of hard SF and the aliens, around which the
whole book revolves are neither convincing
nor alien, their society being analogous to
ours. Again the potential for allegory is

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the imaginative intensity of myth and fantasy.
missed. The prose is turgid and the plot has little going on since the story is not well developed. The ending was predictable and left me cold.

In the first chapter of the novel, the fact that the SF world involved is the same as the one described in previous SF novels. The author seems to believe that by creating a universe similar to those in previous books, he can achieve a successful novel. However, this approach may not be enough to create a unique and engaging story.

The plot relies on a lot of coincidences; the biggest, revealed near the end of the novel, is the cause of the conflict. I don't believe it, but I will not reveal the plot until the last page. There are too many coincidences and some are so outrageous that I couldn't believe it.

Characterisation is minimal. A pity, as the characters have been well-developed in the previous novels. The plot and the environment are the main focus of the story, and the characters are secondary.

The book is not a complete failure, but it is not a good read. I would not recommend it to anyone who enjoys SF, but I think it is a good example of how not to write a novel.

The Man in the Tree is by all means, and enjoy the first 130 pages as much as I did. Be warned however that it is a measure of its success that only 25% of the book is worth reading. I am sure that if you read the last 25%, you will find it a disappointment.

TORCH [H. G. Wells, 1955, 279pp, £1.95]

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ory Notes" (40 pages) and Selected Bibliography sandwiching nearly 340 pages of text. I suppose that's a feature; if the readers had begun to think I would not recommend that this book should be read.

The editor's avowed intention is to show that Mark Twain should be considered 'in the tradition leading to modern SF' (page xiii). Thus I see this book as having two purposes: firstly to entertain the reader of an earlier age, and, secondly, to show, with some examples, the proof of this statement.

Whilst reading this Introduction I was irritated by the fact that the footnotes were not footnotes but notes. These are also the style of the editor here. The Introduction, the short story (in one of the pages) and last page generate a full page of them. I do not intend to comment on each story, which as the editor, half page to ones of 90 odd pages and includes part of 'A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court'. It is perhaps significant that several stories have only been published posthumously and moreover published in 'academic' (as opposed to 'popular') books.

Any professional book writer, if they had to read a book that was a mixture of the main characters are already familiar to many of the readers although it stands indescribably enough as a story. Its strong points are an active thinking plot with the five teenage protagonists playing a suitably important but not wildly impressive part in saving the world. The children are all from different grades which have taken over parts of a hard-pressed for youth culture which is anti-Establishment which is a bit different and very non-Enid Blyton, although the Establishment is still strong in this burgherly society and it would be unfair to judge the book by this, but it appears that the children are asking questions and seeking answers to a question that the Establishment wants to keep quiet. The book is in some ways a great success since it is a book that almost anybody can read and almost everybody can understand it. It is a book that is readable, adventure, avoids boredom and most platitudeous although it doesn't have any extra sparkle either unfortunately.

COMET PALACE - Fred Hoyle
Reviewed by Edward Jones

PROFESSOR SIR FRED HOYLE HAS FOR A LONG FUTURE been fascinated by the possibility of intelligent life in space; actually in space, that is, not on planets. His first book on the subject was published in 1951, and his latest, published on his 70th birthday, are both about the problems and consequences of such life-forms. Indeed, in some cases the real life is a little. A British scientific team establishes radio contact with an alien, inorganic, intelligence; in space that alien comes from a planet. The team is involved in a legal and environmental crisis on Earth: the novel is about a town which is, if anything, more the centre of the universe than it was in 1957. It is a scientific hypothesis which, despite Copernicus, is still widely believed by Cambridge academicians.

But this ambiguity is perhaps partly to do with the strangely non-visual view of the world which Hoyle has. A few of the characters are described briefly, but only perfunctorily; some have verbal ticks to distinguish them, but none have physical characteristics. And few glimpses of a lively Cambridge, the landscape is just as unreal. There is very little sense of place at all; sadly for me, since Comet Palace shares the dashing and unimportant distinction with Penelope Lively's The House at Norham Gardens of having a protagonist who lives in a street in which I've lived myself - Adams Road, Cambridge.

Professor Sir Fred Hoyle's writing is much less wooden; his characters are less inclined to lecture; and he doesn't bother with mathematical calculations in footnotes, as in 1957. The action moves along at a cracking pace, and there is plenty of it. And to complain about the lack of realism is probably to miss the point. Despite all the science, this is a fantasy, in the same sense that the James Bond books were fantasies. Or a better comparison might be with the Michael Innes detective fantasies. Not just because of the high-table wit or the Oxfordian background, but because of the irony of a murder academic found in a moonlit Trinity College Chapel, his finger still deep in his nose, could be straight out of Inns, but because of the way in which Hoyle uses the novel as a vehicle for wry comment upon his own world. His miles, he has told us, are "not the same as my own life". It is always more an extension of something he has already done than a separate creation. His characters are more real than his science, as the ironies of it is, are more often than not more real than the story itself.
world’ (p.303); the Treasury mandarin Sir Harry Julian makes only one pertinent comment about the awful state of the public finances (p.297), presumably that Sir Fred's fault, not Sir Harry's. Fred's only a scientist, poor chap.) But elsewhere he seems rather more in control of himself, and the current state of science and society in this country, as shown by his enjoyable snippets at government cynicism, university administration, research councils (p. 32, 389), economics (p.236), cabinet leaks (p.299-300), or the House of Commons (p.200).

The metaphors evoked three times, comparing the late twentieth century to the late fifteenth, our modern society 'rotting national computer wasn't functioning properly, nor his luck was just too good to be true.'

Picture, if you will, a Britain not so very different to today. London and the gilded East Sussex under the benevolent gaze of a strong lady Prime Minister, more or less transformed from a incorrigibly naive one. Each time he had given them a different name, address and occupation. Either they were incompetent or the national computer wasn't functioning properly, or his luck was just too good to be true.

In Tune in for Fear, Peter Haining has collected stories from the golden age of radio, when a scary tale was a regular part of the family's entertainment. The most recent dates from 1951. Several have been extensively anthologised before; the savagely edited version of The War of the Worlds does no favours to Wells, or to the famous Orson Welles broadcast it is meant to represent; and few make anything like the imaginative leap that he tried to have. Poplar changes but, in being scarier in other things; but it must be said that they are much scarier and have the chill content by their more recent fellows in the other three collections.

THE BANDED KEEL — Nancy Springer

[William Kimber, 1985, £7.50 each] Review by Paul Kinnell

THE 41 HORROR STORIES IN THESE FOUR COLLECTIONS show how well the form suits the subject... in 20 pages or so there is just room to present characters within a situation, create a shiver of unease, and give a hint or a twist in the tail. There are the occasional attempts at fine writing — and the odd success — but as often as not these add nothing to the story and in no way detract from it. Those that work best are plain, journeyman prose.

It is one of the most interesting things about these stories, however, is their settings. Remote, bleak locations: windswept Cornwall, the hills of northern Sweden. But that country's visions of gaunt estates far from human ken as not simply traditional, creepy settings, but a landscape that often has a recognisable urban milieu, and those which do are the least successful.

More than ghosts linger from ages past, even in the most modern of these stories. The chill created by the youngest of the writers, seems more at ease in a Trollopean world of castles and sleuths, or in the enclosed, backwood-looking atmosphere of a public school. His second collection of stories, The Cock and the Crow, is perhaps more chillingly tales; though his attempt to find a dark signification beneath nursery rhymes may seem a little pedestrian.

With Haunted Travellers, contains some effectively chilling tales; though his attempt to find a dark signification beneath nursery rhymes may seem a little pedestrian.
This is a *Quest* story — with a map, glossary, and references at the end. I would not gos far as Marlon Brando who says *in a class with Donaldson’s Chronicles of Thomasin* that he could not understand the prologue, which says "a shimmering tapestry of magic and song," but I will say that *The Sable Moon* is like the "curate’s egg" — good in part, but there is a lot of wrongheadedness. In essence, it is the story of Prince Trevyn of Isle — from the day he leaves home; from the day he is first brought to his father’s court; from the day he becomes King of Isle. Trevyn’s homeland is being attacked by hordes of wolves, which the followers of Wael, chief priest of the cult of the wolf, have set upon. Trevyn, first encounters them while saving the enigmatic maiden Meg and her cow Molly from a mire. He is unable to vanquish the wolves except temporarily and with Meg’s help. After forming an attachment with Meg, Trevyn leaves and returns to the home of Wael, Tokar. Here he is shipwrecked and made a slave. While pretending to be mute, Trevyn is bought by the magician Hurlt and the priestess Enfari, who are members of the wolf cult. A conflict with Wael results in temporary victory but Trevyn has to travel to the land of the wild men, who believe in growing in wisdom and strength. Returning to Isle he finally defeats Wael and his followers. As for Meg — Reader, she marries him.

Throughout the book there are references to characters and adventures presumably met in the previous two books. *The Sable Moon* can be read on its own but is really an integral part of the trilogy. However, as the author says in his附录, characters and places from previous books are referenced here.

From the facsimile of Huyll’s astyl, as translamed by Beorl Farthiryn: first thayal of the first cycle of the Last of the Treyns, Life. It is All. All that ever existed, that will exist and may exist, is a self. And each one is a self in its own right. Thus, it is perhaps strange tooleo of the first life and yeithelf the second, as though there are two eternals, but that is how my father named them in the Life of the Moon and he was the astalyth the earthly..." (p. xi)

So I journeyed forth, my quest to seek understanding, my heart burdened by unguessed ideas and untold words, to find the meaning of the characters, the magical beings, and the ultimate truth. Through their experiences, I was to learn the language of the ancient world, to understand the mysteries of the past, and to gain knowledge of the future. In a cold northern land with no stars in the sky — the significance of which escaped me — I attempted to reinterpret the ancient mythologies, and become enthralled with my own bonding with the last of the sages. Sometimes almost to the point of Death, with Evil, that, as I understood it, was the plot.

My pilgrimage was long and hard; I could travel no more than thirty leagues a day, struggle through the dense forests, and climb mountains of agonising self-reflection, until I arrived at the last of my journey’s end, and was in no way better than when I began.

The language is often poetic, and sometimes brave and inventive. I applaud "he tramped on through the grizzly dusk" (grey-purple), but could make nothing of "and stood before the yambi sky" (rock-like). But mostly it is heavy and slow, and repetitious: every other paragraph, and then every other sentence, could safely have been deleted. And of what use is the present tense? It is difficult to judge whether the "reader’s ear" is the same as the author’s, or the reader’s ear differs from the author’s.

The first book of the trilogy, while reading one section, I was listening to a particularly demonic fifteen minute live version of Curved Air’s ‘Ultra-Vivdai’, followed by the Blue Oyster Cult’s ‘Cyrstal Ball’. Fearing the Reaper: a tortured reach towards unscaleable peaks: a heavy, dark, docimer. When dealing with the text, there is a beauty in this book, but it is the beauty of flowers lying on an open coffin. The constant drifting between present and past has a death-like quality. The reader can be confused by the nightmarish confusion of the illuminatious books, misconceptions about the deep mystery of the Koldas, and written by an immature Dylan Thomas during a bad acid trip.

‘Arich picked out the sheets on which he had written...it disturbed him much of all that they were fragments laid down in metre — liness composed at times when he had felt a poetry come on him: a strong but unembarrassed and vegetable light, light and scent of the earth, of fire and the bale of hawks, of stars burning like eyes in their brains."

This is an admirable description of the literary style throughout Greensight. It encompasses the entire reader, and does not even seem to exist. However, in the second book, it would genuinely like to know what it was all about; I doubt that anyone but the author — and perhaps not even she — could enlighten me.


While the techniques of the historical Gilgamesh are factually correct as far as possible, and filled out with imagination where the records are missing. As Silverberg has a serious interest in history and archaeology, I am sure that he has taken pains to give the reader an accurate account of the life of this king. The novel is a work of art, and should be read by everyone interested in the ancient world.

**ALIEN** — a FAMOUS SP-AUTHOR, and issued by a Famous SP-Publisher, this book is not SF, nor is it intended to be read as such. However, it is a novel that has been fully researched and is based on the historical events of the year 1635. The novel is a work of art, and should be read by everyone interested in the ancient world.

**THE WORKS OF THOSE POPULAR CULT FIGURE** — R.H. Sebold, 1985, 220pp, £9.50 Reviewed by Chris & Pauline Morgan

The first notice is the difference in character between Thamus and Gilgamesh. Thamus is a tall, dark, and slender character, while Gilgamesh is a stout, strong man. The two men are vastly different in appearance, and this difference is reflected in their personalities. Thamus is a leader, while Gilgamesh is a warrior. Thamus is a man of the future, while Gilgamesh is a man of the past. Thamus is a man of the Enlightenment, while Gilgamesh is a man of the Middle Ages. Thamus is a man of the modern world, while Gilgamesh is a man of the ancient world. Thamus is a man of the future, while Gilgamesh is a man of the past. Thamus is a man of the Enlightenment, while Gilgamesh is a man of the Middle Ages. Thamus is a man of the modern world, while Gilgamesh is a man of the ancient world. Thamus is a man of the future, while Gilgamesh is a man of the past. Thamus is a man of the Enlightenment, while Gilgamesh is a man of the Middle Ages. Thamus is a man of the modern world, while Gilgamesh is a man of the ancient world.
Robert Silverberg

though he is, rather well.

Ogilameh, on the other hand, is definitely not the sort of person I want to get to know better. He's of heroic physique, and takes no time at all in letting us know this. He's the best fighter, he螺丝 the most women, works the hardest, doesn't understand women or Intrigue; he's a brainless bully who's

and to express its sicknessed outrage. It seemed to many then that here was a powerful, mean, subhuman voice whose time had come to be heard.

This first novel confirms that impression.

The vast majority of the book concerns a year in the life of a young woman, Cara. While still a child she has seen her mother die, and her father die, in brand new ruling house. He bearing an adult, Cara is inducted into Kazova, a powerful new ruling house. Having learnt the spells for starting fires and setting on air, she is taught the one

year, to mature her magic. The usual choice is something savage like a wolf; she chooses a cat, which is necessary to be a mature armed warrior, and thus begins a year dedicated to revenge.

All of this has occupied only the first sixteen pages of the book. Yet in that time we have already had her mother eaten by dogs; a horrifically detailed description of which is, incidentally, the keystone in all senses, Galu of her native village; and, perhaps more important, the psychological growth of Cara, with the remnants of her family and the remnant of herself. It is this fusion of terrific plotting, incident crowding remorselessly upon incident, with psychological values that demonstrates the hand of a master writer. No extraneous information is provided, so the reader is pushed on by action until the moment such information has maximum impact. And there is character; the characters are in little jigsaw pieces: "Sister", she called Latch and tried to smile, the aperture of her mouth kissing only slightly over skull-like teeth. Even Latch's character is lekka away. Cara's face had become a weapon. (p.13) Thus Cara deals with a former bodyguard of her family, now content to exploit their fall.

The background of the novel is almost classic; it suggests that the Hittite civilization; whereas the presence of books in many languages, old enough to be considered passe, indicates millennia. To sum up, there is a clear causal connection with the Epic of Gilgamesh, the first known heroic poem, surviving partially from the third millennium BC. There are several clear reasons for avoiding the label 'based on'. Principally, despite several exceptions such as the adult work of Henry Treece, Robert Nye's Merlin, The Bloody Chamber by Angela Carter, and Robert Holdstock's excellent Mythago Wood, most of these rewritings of ancient myth are parasitical, detracting from, rather than enhancing, the magic of the original story. Secondly, this link is being closer to 'inspired by' rather than any direct moulding. Certainly there are some similar characteristics in both Cara and Gilgamesh; there is a great deal of both Cara and Gilgamesh traditional symbols; both visit the Underworld and both have to contend with godlike creatures - implicitly both go in search of the key to immortality. However, in some sense the Warrior Who Carried Life is an antithesis to the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh is a despoiler of virgins and a lover of battle; in short, the sort of survive brute. The sometimes called

ironically saves Cara's life on at least one occasion, as she/ he turns out, at least at the saving of the innocence was, in fact, one of the subtexts is an exploration of male/female roles within imaginative fiction. The few humorous sections are Cara's surprise at the male body and fascination at managing its external genitalia.

The Warrior Who Carried Life
Geoff Ryman

However, imagination is the keynote of the book as Ryman hits the reader with continuous wonder, including the visit to the Land of the Dead, where Cara encounters the archetypal Adam and Eve (in the sanitized Old Testament version, this feels much more like the real thing); the mountain retreat of the original, still-powerful Wensenaar, and a journey with Ana Tweeter, the hope "what who talks to gods". Then there are other marvels, such as the strange nature of the Galu and the wonderful specializations of the warrior clans, especially the deadliest of them all, the 'Men who look like Angels', whom Cara joins. Finally, there is a climax of truly stunning proportions. To state it briefly, this is really creative mythologizing.

The original inspiration of this novel is more evident in mood and style. Both works are dominated by death. The earlier work changes with the hero's intimidation by his own mortality, having seen Bokadi die; the latter, reflecting less self-centred ends, deals with the potential slaughter of the whole population of Earth and the actual death of a fair proportion. Nevertheless, it is in style that Ryman is most spiritually in tune with the original - incident dominated with a sustained narrative drive, featuring a dispassionate, chronicle of horrific details (some of these are more truly horrific than any found in the horror genre) - characteristically macabre streak.

For those who know only the The Unconquered Country, this change of style must come as a great surprise, contrasting with the hypersensitive cerebral personal and dreamlike quality of that earlier work. At a time when too many writers of any type seem insensitive to mood and only capable of one stock style, the flexibility of Ryman shows a genuine blend of craftsman and artist - adventure on a magnificently heroic scale. Accomplished with economy.
An extraordinary blend of fantasy and sf, by the author of The Book of the New Sun.

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