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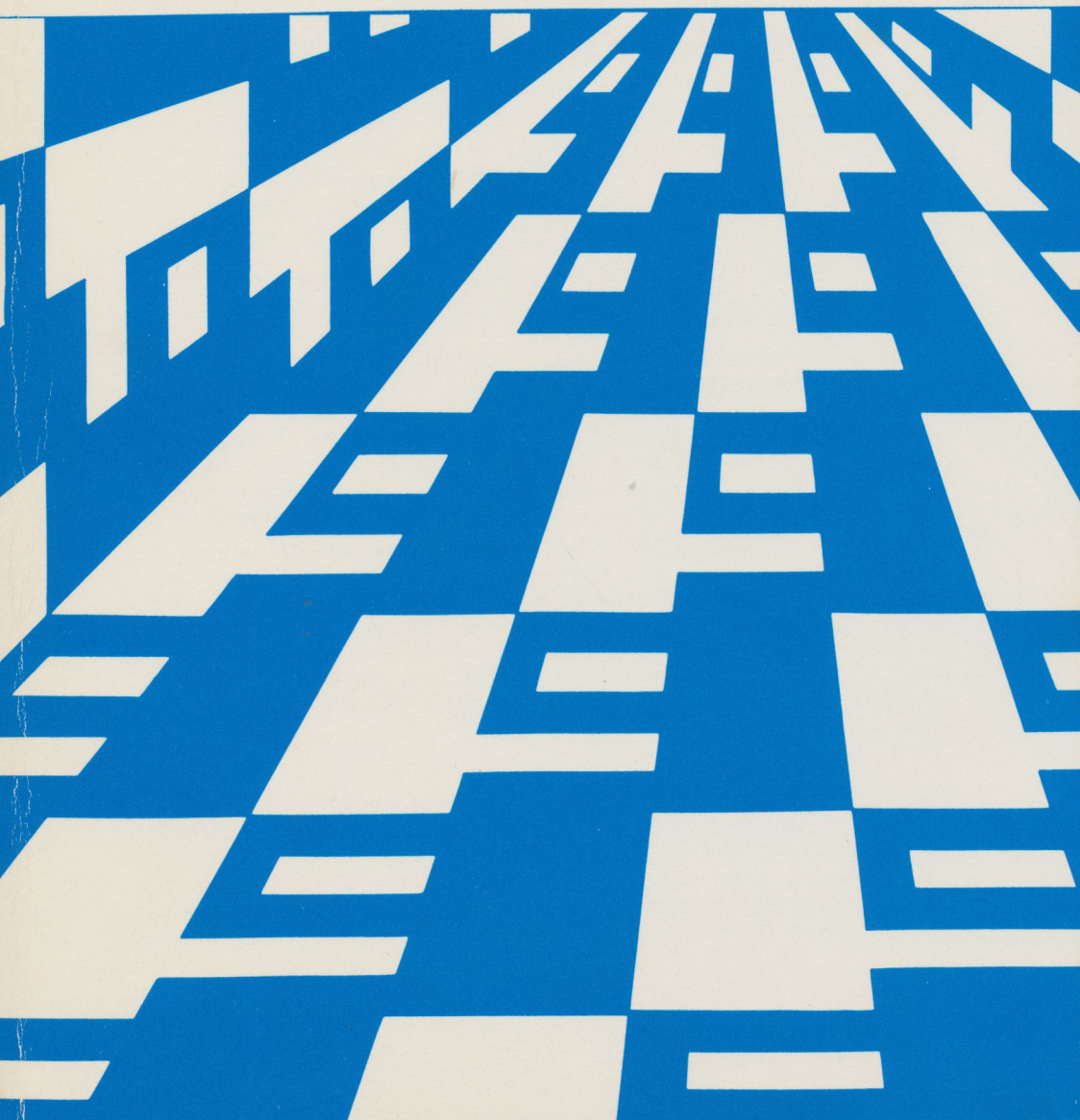
EXTRAPOLATION



EXTRAPOLATION

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Contributors

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James Gunn, well-known author of more than seventy-five stories and seventeen science-fiction books, is also a Professor of English and Journalism at the University of Kansas. A national award winner for his work in editing and public relations, he also won the Pilgrim Award in 1976 and a special award by the 1976 World Science Fiction Convention for *Alternate Worlds.* He has been a member of the Executive Committee of the Science Fiction Research Association; president of the Science Fiction Writers of America in 1971-72; and has served as chairman of the 1979-80 Campbell Award Jury. The Asimov article published here is the first chapter of a projected seven-chapter book to be published by Oxford University Press next year. Other chapters of the book have appeared in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine.*

Hal W. Hall is Special Formats Librarian at Texas A&M University. He has edited and published the annual *Science Fiction Book Review Index* since 1970, and he edited the *Science Fiction Book Review Index 1923-1973* for Gale Research of Detroit in 1975.

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THE LAUNCHING PAD

■ The August 1980 issue of *Essays in Arts and Sciences*, published by the University of New Haven, was devoted to "Symposium: Science Fiction Today." Its table of contents includes "Technophobia in the Arts and Humanities" by Eric S. Rabkin; "Lest We Forget: A Reminder of Some Good Reasons and Real Reasons for Teaching SF" by Elizabeth Anne Hull; "New Worlds Through Old Forms: Some Traditional Critical Tools for Science Fiction" by Donald Watt; "Whose Castle? Speculations as to the Parameters of Science Fiction" by Thomas D. Clareson; "Reciprocity and Exchange in Science Fiction" by Jeanne Murray Walker; "Books on Science-Fiction, 1953–1973: A Critical Evaluation" by A. Langley Searles; "Science Fiction and the American Dream" by William H. Hardesty, III; "Reader Vivisection in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*" by Mark M. Hennelly, Jr.; "A Hopeful Art or an Artful Hope?: Darko Suvin's Aesthetics for Science Fiction" by Elizabeth Cummins Cogell; and "A Case of Conscience: The Literary Criticism of James Blish" by Robert Edward Colbert.

Although I had the pleasure of being a guest editor, the individual who deserves credit for originating the idea and carrying out the plan of the "Symposium" is Professor Douglas Robillard of the Department of English at the University of New Haven. A veritable "Dinosaur" eligible for First Fandom because he began reading science fiction in the pulp magazines before World War Two, Doug is contributing an essay on Damon Knight to the third volume of *Voices for the Future*, soon to be ready to send to Bowling Green Popular Press. He has suggested that an issue of *Extrapolation* be devoted exclusively to articles dealing with Edmond Hamilton, Murray Leinster, John Wyndham, Eric Frank Russell, P. Schuyler Miller, and in general those writers

for the Munsey magazines and the pulps of the 1930s who gave early form to the field. I'd certainly like to see such an issue in order to give us a historical perspective which I think too many of us do not have—or simply fail to take into account when we write or teach. I'd much like to hear from those of you willing to undertake such articles—completion date *not* earlier than next summer since our next several numbers are pretty well planned.

Back to *Essay in Arts and Sciences*. The University subsidizes the journal so that it can be circulated free to individuals and libraries wishing it. Thus, anyone who wants a copy of the August 1980 issue should write directly to Professor Robillard at the University, West Haven, CN 06516.

Some of you will notice that for the first time *Extrapolation* has reviewed fiction. Now that it has become a quarterly and has the room to do it, I think that *Extrapolation* should call attention to what is new, as well as to valuable reprints, such as Gregg Press's collection, *The Worlds of Frank Herbert*. Since I believe that no one person should do all of the reviewing, especially of fiction, again I'd like volunteers.

And since the attention to fiction takes the place this time of reviews of scholarly studies in the field, may I call attention here to the new edition of *A History of the Hugo Nebula and International Fantasy Awards*? It has been updated through 1979 and includes an index. Orders should be directed to Howard DeVore, 4705 Weddel Street, Dearborn, MI 48125. Cost is $4.00 a copy.

I had hoped by this time to have news of the results of the SFRA election. However, I learn now that the actual voting will not take place until late in October—at the earliest. We will let you know the outcome in the March issue.

Although it may be somewhat late, let me remind you that this year's meeting of MLA at Houston will feature a discussion between Professor Patrick G. Hogan, Jr. of the University of Houston and Dr. Hal W. Hall of the Texas A&M Library dealing with library collections available for research. I have not yet learned the specific time and place.

This may be the last year that the Popular Culture Section of MLA will sponsor a session on science fiction. Those of you who wrote to me supporting a continuing Science Fiction Discussion Section at MLA will want to know that your letters and the proper petition will be submitted to the Executive Committee either at Houston or immediately after. The Committee will make its decision by the end of May, I am told, so that we could plan the first session for 1982. Meanwhile, it may be necessary to file a special petition—as we used to do yearly—in order to have a session in New York in 1981. Should this be required, I'll write to those of you who submitted letters

(*continued on page 385*)

I, Asimov

JAMES GUNN

■ Writing about the life of Isaac Asimov is like pouring water into the ocean. Asimov has written more about himself than any living author, and generally with frankness and insight. His autobiographical output began in 1962 with the first of his anthologies entitled *The Hugo Winners*, with references to his own life inserted into the introductions. Like many of the events of his life, this happened by accident: in his autobiography he mentions that he had never edited an anthology, thought it would be fun to try, but was not sure of his judgment in choosing the stories. In *The Hugo Winners* the stories already were chosen (they were the less-than-novel-length stories awarded Hugos by the World Science Fiction Conventions, beginning in 1955), and even the order was evident; all he had to do was to write introductions. Since there was no question about the reason for the stories' inclusion, he decided to deal with the authors, and in a humorous way. The general introduction would be funny, too, and would deal with the fact that the editor had never won a Hugo. *The Hugo Winners*, indeed, became a highly personal book, as much about Asimov as about the Hugos or their winners.

Since then Asimov has gone on to edit more than a baker's dozen of other anthologies and added comfortably to his more than two hundred volumes. *The Hugo Winners* was a breakthrough in other areas as well. Up to that point, Asimov says, his attempts at humor had been well-received in person but poorly in print. Now many readers of *The Hugo Winners* wrote to tell him that the introductions were the best part of the book.

After that the collections of his own stories began appearing with introductions, at first (*The Rest of the Robots*, 1964) with notes about the stories salted with a few personal comments but later with full-blown autobiographical detail. This reached its grandest expression in *Opus 100* (1969), which was the story of how Asimov came to write one hundred books, with excerpts by category: *The Early Asimov* (1972), a kind of autobiography with illustrations from his early writing; and *Before the Golden Age* (1974), which carried Asimov back to his earliest memories

and brought his life story up to *The Early Asimov*, illustrated with his favorite science-fiction stories read between 1931 and 1938.

All of these were limbering-up exercises for the massive autobiography in two volumes, the first of which came out in 1979 as his two hundredth book (along with *Opus 200*, which he put together in fairness to Houghton Mifflin, since it had published *Opus 100*). The autobiography offers 1,560 pages of Asimov's life story, complete with photographs, lists of his two hundred books, and indexes (which, he informs us, he does not trust anyone else to do).

There have been a great many words about the life of a man who, confessedly, has "never done anything." They have largely progressed from "and then I read" to "and then I wrote," because Asimov's life has been woven from the warp and woof of reading and writing. The triumph of his writing skill is that he makes it all so readable.

This kind of obsession with self, nevertheless, might be insufferable in a person who was not at the same time openly amazed at the good fortune, success, plaudits, renown, and wealth that have come his way. He has been greatly honored and richly rewarded for remarkable achievements. Even so, to interpret everything, including World War II, in terms of one's own reaction to it may seem excessively egotistical, but his attitude of "cheerful self-appreciation," which sometimes breaks over into "charming Asimovian immodesties" (a phrase coined by a Doubleday editor in response to a *Time* magazine article quoting some of Asimov's self-praise), is balanced by disarming Asimovian self-denigrations.

In his autobiographical writings and comments, Asimov continually invites the reader to share his triumphs, to laugh at his blunders and lack of sophistication, and to wonder, with him, at the rise to prominence of a bright Jewish boy brought to this country from Russia at the age of three and raised in a succession of Brooklyn candy stores. Asimov is aided, too, by the fact that his readers are predisposed to enjoy his success with him: some are admirers of his science popularizations and other nonfiction books and are curious about his earlier life; others are science-fiction readers and fans, and the science-fiction community still retains much of the solidarity and lack of envy of its early ghetto days.

The problem remains: what more can a critic say about Asimov's life and work than Asimov himself has already said in nearly a million well-chosen words? Asimov's autobiographical writings are both an asset and an intimidation, revealing priceless information about the circumstances of creation and publication but also rendering redundant the critic's job of digging out little known facts about life and work. Asimov's life is an open book—in fact, two hundred and more open books. Well, what the critic can do is to tell the Asimov story more selectively and send the still-curious on

to fuller accounts elsewhere, to bring the details of the life into focus in illuminating the work, and to explain the work in terms of a thesis that may be too close to Asimov for him to perceive.

The critic also has an opportunity to comment on the state of criticism as well as the work and the author at hand. One reason I accepted the task of writing a book about Asimov's science fiction was the conviction that much criticism of science fiction was misguided and particularly that the critics of Asimov's work were heading up false trails, that they were trying to bring to the analysis of Asimov's fiction traditional methods and traditional criteria that were unproductive when applied to Asimov and to much other science fiction. What I found myself doing as I began writing, then, was to blend biographical, sociological, publishing, and critical considerations into what I later perceived (perhaps without sufficient perspective) was something a bit unusual in criticism, perhaps unnatural in normal circumstances, that I eventually thought of calling "criticism in context."

Within the book, for instance, I included a number of plot summaries. I found these desirable for several reasons: first, because the reader might be familiar with many Asimov works but certainly not all; second, because the reader might remember the general outlines of stories and novels but not the revealing details; and third (and most important), because what happens is the most important aspect of Asimov's fiction (and most other science fiction), and what happens is revealed in plot.

Other matters that I found important as I got into my consideration of Asimov's work were the conditions under which the fiction was written and the way in which the works were published. Asimov himself pays considerable attention to these matters in his autobiographical writings; he thinks they were important in what he did and did not write, and so do I. In one footnote in his autobiography, he writes:

> In this book I am going to pay considerable attention to the details of the money I received for stories and other things. Perhaps I should be noble enough to rise above such sordid things as money, but the fact is I couldn't and didn't. The money I earned—or didn't earn—has influenced my pathway through life, and I must go into the financial details if the pathway is to make sense.

For this reason the book includes considerable mention of why the fiction was written and how it got into print. In the science-fiction magazines and the later book-publishing business, the goal of the science-fiction writer was to get published, and the writing done was shaped by what was read in the magazines, what was said by an editor, what was paid for a story, and sometimes how readers responded. More traditional critics may feel that such considerations disqualify writing from serious literary consideration. They are wrong: scholars have been trying for centuries to ferret out the same kind of information about Shakespeare's plays.

Asimov's early ambition, for instance, was to sell stories to *Astounding Science Fiction.* Two of his stories were published in *Amazing Stories* before one appeared in *Astounding*; only the *Astounding* story really mattered to him. The relationship between Asimov and John W. Campbell, editor of *Astounding* beginning in 1937, was influential in Asimov's development; Asimov gives Campbell most of the credit for his early science fiction and even his later writing career.

In the analysis of Asimov's fiction that makes up most of the completed book, then, I mixed in with the critical comments considerable details of Asimov's life as it relates to his writing. This is more of his life than one might think: as Asimov himself recognizes, his life was his writing, and his other relationships were either detractions from or contributions to his writing.

Asimov provides a couple of illustrative anecdotes. When he received copies of his forty-first book from Houghton Mifflin, he mentioned to his wife the possibility of reaching a hundred books before he died. She shook her head and said, "What good will it be if you then regret having spent your life writing books while all the essence of life passes you by?" And Asimov replied, "But for me the essence of life *is* writing. In fact, if I do manage to publish a hundred books, and if I then die, my last words are likely to be, 'Only a hundred!' "

And when his daughter Robyn asked him to suppose he had to choose between her and—writing. Asimov recalls that he said hollowly, "Why, I would choose you, dear." And adds, "*But I hesitated*—and she noticed that, too."

Asimov was born Jan. 2, 1920 (as nearly as his parents could calculate; it might have been as early as Oct. 4, 1919) in Petrovichi, U.S.S.R. Petrovichi is a small town about fifty-five miles south of Smolensk and about two hundred fifty miles southwest of Moscow. When Asimov was three, his parents emigrated with him to the United States at the invitation and sponsorship of his mother's older half-brother. They settled in Brooklyn, where Asimov's father, handicapped by his lack of English and lack of job experience, bought a candy store in 1926. The candy store and its successors became a major fact of Asimov's existence. "It was open seven days a week and eighteen hours a day," he reports in his autobiography, "so my father and mother had to take turns running it, and I had to pitch in, too."

The other important fact of Asimov's youth was his precocity. He had an unusual ability to learn and, as he would discover later, an unusually retentive memory. They would be major assets in his life and career. He taught himself to read at the age of five, entered the first grade before he was six (his mother lied about his age), and became the brightest student in

his class early and continuously, even though he changed schools a couple of times and skipped half a year of kindergarten, half a year of first grade, and half a year of third grade.

Asimov's schoolboy practice was to read all his schoolbooks the first couple of days after he got them and then not refer to them again. From all of this he got a reputation as a child prodigy and a sense of his own superiority that he did not mind letting other people see. It did not add to his popularity—he was considered a smart-alecky kid—but he did not have much association with others anyway. His work in the candy store kept him busy after school, and the seven-day week meant that he and his parents never visited anyone or had anyone visit them.

He recalls that he was both orphaned by the candy store (since he was deprived of his parents' companionship) as well as protected by it (since he knew where his parents were at all times). The candy store constricted and shaped his life until he left home. It also meant that he grew up largely in the company of adults when he was in the store, or in the company of books when he was not; no doubt both contributed to his precocity.

He completed junior high school in two years instead of three and entered Boys High School of Brooklyn, a selective high school that had an excellent reputation in mathematics. He was twelve and a half, two-and-a-half years younger than the normal fifteen. Here he continued to be sheltered from part of existence: he had almost no contact with girls, as he might have had at a coeducational school. But in the world encapsulated in his autobiography almost everything happened for the best—how could it not have happened for the best when he rose so far from such humble beginnings?—and he reasons in his autobiography that being segregated from girls may have kept him naïve far into his adolescence but also may have protected him from more severe symptoms of rejection, since he would have been two-and-a-half-years younger than his female classmates. Moreover, he had a bad case of acne from twelve to twenty.

High school, however, was the beginning of a series of disillusionments. He discovered limits to his intellectual ability. He was not as good a mathematician as some boys who may not have been as intelligent but who had a special feeling for math. Asimov never made the math team. He discovered, as well, that other students could study harder and accomplish more; Asimov stuck by his "understanding-at-once-and-remembering-forever" pattern. He had to abandon his illusion of universal brilliance when he discovered, for instance, that he disliked and could never understand economics. And even his attempts at creative writing were ridiculed in a high school writing class; this bothered him more than anything else, because his ambition to write fiction had been growing since the age of eleven, when he began writing a series book for boys, copying it

out in longhand in nickel copybooks, called *The Greenville Chums at College*. And when Asimov was fifteen his father somehow had found $10 to buy his son a much-longed-for typewriter, an office-sized model.

More disappointments awaited him. His father wanted his elder son to become a physician, and the fifteen-year-old Asimov had come to share this ambition. But getting into medical school was not easy; medical schools had quotas (negative, not positive) on the number of Jewish applicants they would accept. For a variety of reasons Asimov would never be admitted to the study of medicine; by then, however, his goals had changed. He applied for his undergraduate work to Columbia College, but was rejected—possibly, he speculates, because he did not make a good showing in interviews. He was asked to change his application to a Brooklyn branch of Columbia University called Seth Low Junior College, whose enrollment was heavily Jewish.

Asimov also applied to the tuition-free City College of New York, which had to accept him because his grades were excellent. He actually spent three days there before receiving a letter from Seth Low asking why he had not showed up. When his father explained to Seth Low authorities that the Asimovs could not afford the tuition, the Seth Low people came up with a hundred-dollar scholarship and a National Youth Administration job for $15 a month. Asimov switched colleges. His second year, after a summer spent in manual labor to earn enough money, was at the Morningside Heights campus because Seth Low had closed at the end of its tenth year; but he was enrolled in Columbia University, not its more prestigious undergraduate college. Asimov was a second-class citizen throughout his undergraduate education, and he never forgot it. In addition, when he was graduated, he received a bachelor of science degree in chemistry instead of the bachelor of arts degree, for which University undergraduates were not eligible, he says.

By his second year his distaste for zoology (he killed a cat and dissected it, but he never forgave himself) and embryology (he was not good at picking out details through a microscope and even worse at drawing them) led him to drop the biological sciences and switch to chemistry as a major; he liked chemistry and did well at it. After graduation from Columbia he applied (somewhat halfheartedly because of his distaste for biological courses and dissection and so forth) to a number of medical schools and was rejected by all of them. He went on with the study of chemistry in Columbia's graduate school, but only after some difficulty over the fact that he had not taken physical chemistry and he had to spend a troublesome year on probation. As usual, his problem was not his grades or test scores but his "wise-guy personality."

He obtained his M.A. in 1941 and was working toward his doctorate when the United States entered World War II. A few months later he

suspended his studies in order to work as a chemist at the U.S. Navy Yard in Philadelphia, where for the first time he was free of his duties at the candy store and where the steady income gave him the opportunity to marry the woman with whom he had fallen in love, Gertrude Blugerman.

Asimov's autobiography suggests that he was good at the theory of chemistry but not at the practice. He refers to his poor laboratory technique and his difficulties getting the correct results; probably his talents were not those of a research chemist, nor those of a practicing scientist of any kind. In any case, at the end of the war he returned to his doctoral program at Columbia, earned his degree in 1948, did a year of post-doctoral research at Columbia, and finally was offered a position as instructor in biochemistry at the Boston University School of Medicine.

More important to his final career as an author than his studies was his discovery of science fiction and his attempts to write it. He had come upon *Amazing Stories* in 1928, in its second year of publication, when he was eight years old. His father's candy store carried magazines, but the young Asimov was not allowed to read them because his father considered them a waste of time and a corrupting influence. They would turn him into "a bum," his father said. The boy had been reading library books of all kinds, but he longed for the brightly colored pulp magazines with their cover paintings of futuristic machines and planets and alien menaces. Finally, when Hugo Gernsback lost control of *Amazing* and brought out a competitor, *Science Wonder Stories*, the then nine-year-old boy brought the magazine to his father, pointed out the word "Science" in the title, and won his battle, possibly because his mother was just about to give birth and his father did not have the spirit to fight.

The science-fiction magazines filled Asimov's imagination with ideas and dreams. They did not consume all his reading time, because there were not enough of them (only two a month at first, and only three a month in 1930) and he had to return the magazines, looking untouched, to his father's newsstand. He kept up his omnivorous reading of other books (walking home from the library with one book under each arm while reading a third), but science fiction became what he lived for. Oddly enough, his early writing efforts did not focus on science fiction. "I had the most exalted notion of the intense skills and vast scientific knowledge required of authors in the field, and I dared not aspire to such things," he remembers.

On his new typewriter, however, he ventured into fantasy and then into science fiction. Like almost every aspiring author, he started many stories and finished none of them, and what he wrote was derived mostly from what he liked to read. His derivative writing would persist through several years of his career as a published writer until he finally rid himself of what he called his "pulpishness." He got his inspiration, his plots, even his

vocabulary from other science-fiction writers. From them came the blasters and needle guns and force beams that litter his stories and early novels, and even, by an analogous process of inventions, such concepts as neuronic whips and psychoprobes, hyperspace and Jumps. When he turned to more unique concepts such as psychohistory and the Foundations, the logical development of robots, a radioactive Earth and the lost origin of Man—and particularly human reactions to overcrowded Cities—his fiction began to glow with its own fire.

Not long after he got his typewriter, he wrote a letter to *Astounding Stories* that was published in 1935. Two years later, when Campbell had become editor of the magazine and had changed its named to *Astounding Science Fiction*, Asimov began writing letters again, "commenting on the stories, rating them, and, in general, taking on the airs of a critic." Such letters became a monthly event; usually Campbell published them in a letters-to-the-editor section called then, as now, "Brass Tacks."

One Tuesday in May when the new *Astounding* was scheduled to arrive in his father's package of new magazines, it did not show up. The eighteen-year-old Asimov was terrified that it might have ceased publication. He called the publisher, Street & Smith, and was assured that the magazine still was being published. But when the new issue had not arrived by the following Tuesday, he ventured off on the subway to the Street & Smith offices in Manhattan, where an executive told him that the publication date had been changed from the second Wednesday to the third Friday. Two days later the magazine arrived.

His panic at the thought that *Astounding* might vanish sent him to the typewriter to finish a story he had been working at for some months entitled "Cosmic Corkscrew." He finished it on June 19, 1938, and took it personally to the editor. Campbell was familiar with Asimov's name from his frequent letters and talked for more than an hour with the aspiring author, read the story overnight, and mailed it back two days later with a polite letter of rejection. That sent Asimov back to his typewriter to work on a story entitled "Stowaway." He finished it in eighteen days and took this in person to Campbell. That story came back with a rejection in four days.

A pattern had been established. A rejection would come from Campbell, but phrased in ways that would encourage Asimov to turn immediately to a new story. "It didn't matter that he rejected you," Asimov recalled. "There was an enthusiasm about him and an all-encompassing friendliness that was contagious. I always left him eager to write further." "Stowaway," however, was not lost for all time with "Cosmic Corkscrew." "Stowaway" eventually found its way into print as "The Callistan Menace" in the April, 1940 *Astonishing Stories* edited by Frederik Pohl (as youthful an editor as

Asimov was a writer), though Asimov's third story, "Marooned off Vesta," appeared first, in the March 1939 *Amazing Stories*.

Meanwhile Asimov had discovered other science fiction readers, and not just readers but fans, fanatics like himself. This led progressively to fanzines, club meetings, and the organizing of the Futurians, a fan group that included many of the later writers and shapers of science fiction, including Pohl, Donald A. Wollheim, Cyril Kornbluth, Robert W. Lowndes, Richard Wilson, and later Damon Knight and James Blish. Asimov attended monthly meetings, became involved in the debates and schisms to which fandom was so susceptible, began meeting other authors, and talked about his writing ambitions and finally got published, all culminating in the first World Science Fiction Convention held in Manhattan on July 2, 1939. All Futurians but Asimov were excluded by the organizer, Sam Moskowitz, as disruptive influences; Asimov entered as an author and has felt guilty about it ever since. But as he became more and more an author, he became less and less a fan.

By the time of the World Convention he was a bona fide author in his own eyes because *Astounding* had published his tenth story, "Trends," in its issue of July 1939. Almost two years later it published the second of his robot stories; the first, "Robbie," was published in the September 1940 *Super Science Stories* as "Strange Playfellow." Within the next fourteen months two more robot stories, plus "Nightfall," and "Foundation" and its sequel also appeared in *Astounding*. "Nightfall" alone, though he did not know it at the time, made him, in his own words, "a major figure in the field." His stories did not earn that much money, but what they brought in was put to good use, paying for his tuition, accumulating in a bank account. He had three stories published in 1939, seven in 1940, eight in 1941, ten in 1942, only one in 1943, three in 1944, four in 1945, one in 1946, one in 1947, three in 1948, three in 1949, and three in 1950.

It was not a remarkable record of productivity or success, though all part-time while he worked full time at other things; it brought Asimov a total of $7,821.75, which amounted to little more than $700 a year. It was not enough to encourage him to consider a career as a full-time writer, but it did provide a growing feeling of economic security. Finally Doubleday published his first novel, *Pebble in the Sky*, in 1950; a specialty house named Gnome Press began publishing his robot stories and then his Foundation stories as books; his income from writing slowly began to equal and then to exceed his income from teaching at Boston University School of Medicine; and, after a disagreement with his superior, he turned to the career that had seemed impossible all these years.

The impression even the casual reader may obtain from Asimov's autobiography is Asimov's belief that he has been shaped by his childhood.

He refers continually to the way in which the candy store controlled his early life and the way the habits of his early years have carried over into his later ways. His industry—he still writes seven days a week and ten hours a day, turning out six thousand to ten thousand words on an average day—he traces to the long hours of the candy store, for instance, and to his father's accusations—when he was found in a corner reading—that he was lazy.

In a similar way, he traces his ability to eat anything to his mother's hearty, indigestible cuisine, and his habit of eating swiftly to the fact that he and his mother and sister had to eat in a hurry so that his father could be relieved of his duties in the candy store and eat his supper in a more leisurely fashion. He reads while he eats because he loved to read, his father was not present, his mother was busy cooking and serving, and in any case reading was a sign of studiousness.

His uneasiness with strangers Asimov traces to the fact that during his childhood his family visited no one and no one visited them. He believes that his habit of reading newspapers and magazines so carefully that no one can tell they have been read started when he had to return magazines to his father's rack looking unopened. As a boy he had to awaken at 6 a.m. to deliver newspapers before school; if he was not downstairs his father would yell at his window from the street below, and later would lecture him about the "deadly spiritual dangers of being a *fulyack* (sluggard)." To this day, Asimov reports, he awakens, without an alarm clock, at 6 a.m. as if to prove to his late father that he is not a *fulyack*.

He attributes his infatuation with baseball when he was in junior high school to imprinting. Oddly he became a Giant fan even though Brooklyn had the Dodgers. "By the time I found out there was a Brooklyn team, it was too late; I was imprinted." He describes being imprinted in other ways as well. He blames his fear of flying on his mother's over-solicitude about his health. "My parents . . . trembled over my well-being so extremely, especially after my babyhood experience with pneumonia, that I couldn't help but absorb the fact and gain an exaggerated caution for myself. (That may be why I won't fly, for instance, and why I do very little else that would involve my knowingly putting myself into peril.)"

His mother's insistence that he keep her informed of his whereabouts meant that when he was out he had to report in at frequent intervals by telephone. "I've kept that habit all my life," he reports. "It is a bad habit. It ties me to the phone, and if forgetfulness or circumstances get in the way, everyone is sure something terrible has happened." He traces his avoidance of how-to-write books and college-level courses on writing to "the ever-present memory of that horrible course in creative writing in the sixth term of high school."

It may not be surprising that one who can find so many habits of the man in the experience of the boy would imagine a science of predicting human behavior, called "psychohistory," in his Foundation stories. On the other hand, Asimov can relate anecdotes that seem to demonstrate just the opposite principle of behavior. He recalls his father struggling to balance the books of the candy store every evening, being a dollar over or a dollar under, and staying until he had straightened it out. Later in his life, when money was more plentiful, Asimov recalls handing his father five dollars to make up the difference, and his father commenting, "If you gave me a million dollars, that dollar would still have to be found. The books must balance." Asimov never could understand why the books had to balance. Rather than carrying over that trait into his own life, he says, "In later life, when I had occasion to balance accounts, I never bothered over trifling discrepancies. I just made arbitrary corrections and let it go. My father did enough searching for both of us in his lifetime."

At the same time, Asimov is capable of seeing his explanations for behavior as "probably simple rationalizations designed to resign me to things as they are." After all, what is an autobiography? It is not so much the finding of the truths in a person's existence but a rationalization of how that person got from one place to another when there were so many different places at which he or she could have arrived. Asimov has much to explain, and his autobiography is a search for explanations.

Asimov also is a supreme rationalist, a searcher for explanations in his fiction as well as in his life. The explanation for his faith in rationalism and his distrust of emotions may be no easier to come by, however, than any other speculation about his life. Asimov does not rely totally on environment to rationalize his life; some traits are implicit, or genetic, and Asimov simply does not mention them: his intelligence, for instance, and his ability to learn and remember must have been inherited. His habit of counting objects (light bulbs, repeated decorations, holes in sound-proofed ceilings) whenever he is in a public place and bored he traces to his counting automobiles as they passed on Van Siclen Avenue when he was three. He finds no reason for his idiosyncratic fondness for enclosed places: for instance, he liked the candy store on Decatur Street because it had a kitchen in the back that had no windows."Why it should be, I don't know, and psychiatrists may make what they like of it (for I will not ask them, and I will not listen if they try to tell me), but I have always liked enclosed places." He remembers that he thought display rooms in department stores looked better than real rooms, and finally realized that they had no windows. And he envied the people who ran newsstands in subway stations, "for I imagined that they could board it up whenever they wanted to, put the light on, lie on a cot at the bottom, and read magazines. I used to

fantasize doing so, with the warm rumble of the subway trains intermittently passing." Asimov's claustrophilia and agoraphobia played a part in the creation of *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun*.

A psychiatrist (one of that group to whom Asimov will not listen) might suggest that Asimov's distrust of emotions and faith in rationalism were his responses to his "being orphaned" by the candy store at the age of six. Being deprived of his parents' companionship ("never again, after I was six, could I be with him on a Sunday morning, while he told me stories") came at a difficult time: he was in the middle of second grade. Moreover, his father had admired his son's abilities from an early age. When Asimov taught himself to read at the age of five, his father asked him how he had done it, and Asimov replied that he just figured it out. "That gave my father the idea that there was something strange and remarkable about me; something he clung to for the rest of his life." But the high regard in which Asimov's father held his abilities meant that when the schoolboy brought home less than perfect marks from school, he could expect his father's disapproval for not living up to his potential. In his autobiography Asimov recalls many instances of his father's disapproval, few of his approval.

His mother, also, spent much of her time in the candy store with customers, or with her two younger children. She had a terrible temper, Asimov recalls, and unlike his father "raised her hand to me any time she felt she needed a little exercise. . . ." He also recalls, seemingly without rancor, being beaten with a rope his mother kept in her closet; when he mentioned it to his mother in later life she did not remember it. His parents, though a devoted couple, were not demonstrative; there were few if any expressions of affection between them, and Asimov presents the birth of three children as the only proof that there was. Certainly Asimov had reason to distrust emotion and to seek rational explanations for why he was deprived of parental closeness, perhaps even love.

Asimov, nevertheless, always knew that he was his parents' favorite, and his brother knew it as well, apparently without resentment. Asimov speaks bitterly about the series of candy stores, but he remembers his father and mother with great fondness, and the family was always in close touch until the death first of his father (in 1969, at the age of 72) and then his mother (in 1973, at the age of nearly 78), even though Asimov did not go to see them (because of his fear of flying) after his parents moved to Florida a year before his father's death.

In his typical rational way, he looks back upon his childhood as a generally happy period: "I know perfectly well it was a deprived one in many ways, but the thing was, you see, I never knew it at the time. No one is deprived unless and until he thinks he is."

Another mystery of longer standing and more general concern than why Asimov turned out the way he did, is why certain young people turn to

reading, and sometimes writing, science fiction. Asimov is a case study of that kind of youngster. When Asimov began reading science fiction, the number of readers was small—Damon Knight has called science fiction the mass medium for the few—but intensely involved; most of them turned to science fiction out of some kind of youthful frustration with their lives. A profile of such readers would have revealed them to be mostly boys; mostly brighter than their schoolmates; mostly social misfits because of personality, appearance, lack of social graces, or inability to find intellectual companionship; unsophisticated about girls (the study of women readers and writers still is in its infancy) and ill-at-ease in their company. These readers turned in compensation to science fiction, which was a kind of literature of the outcast that praised the intellectual aspects of life that they enjoyed and in which they excelled, and offered more hope for the future than the present. When that kind of person discovers others like him, fan clubs spring up, sometimes fanzines are published, conventions are organized, and writing science fiction becomes a virtually universal ambition. When that kind of person begins to write, he writes science fiction.

Asimov was like that. The Futurians were like that. Damon Knight says that, as children, "all we science-fiction writers began as toads." When he read the first volume of Asimov's autobiography, Robert Silverberg, according to Asimov, wrote and requested the galley proofs of the second volume because he could not wait: there was so much in Asimov's life that paralleled his own that it gave Silverberg a sense of *déjà vu*. There are certain curious resemblances between the characters and careers of Asimov and H. G. Wells, who is often called the father of modern science fiction. Both spent their early lives in unsuccessful shops, were precocious students, quick studies with good memories, and both began by writing science fiction but turned to popularizations (Wells's biggest success was his *Outline of History*); both were selective in what they liked, Wells with biology and evolution, Asimov with chemistry, but both were fond of history. Both became known as pundits, experts in almost everything, and both were attentive to the ladies. The analogy can be carried too far—Wells, for instance, became a serious novelist of contemporary life; Asimov varied his science fiction and nonfiction with detective stories and novels. Science-fiction writers as a class share many characteristics.

Asimov, in spite of his success at other kinds of writing and public speaking, has never thought of himself as anything but a science-fiction writer who was writing other, often easier things. He introduces himself as a science-fiction writer. Some writers of science fiction have gone on to other kinds of writing and some, like Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., have denied that they ever wrote science fiction. Not Asimov, who always has remained true to his boyhood love and everything else that he was as a boy. In his

autobiography he describes a fancy *World Book* sales meeting at which the board members were introduced with orchestral motifs: to his chagrin, Asimov was introduced as a science writer by "How deep is the ocean?/ How high is the sky?" "No matter how various the subject matter I write on," he adds, "I was a science-fiction writer first and it is as a science-fiction writer that I want to be identified."

In an interview in 1979, I said to him that his autobiography revealed a great deal of loyalty to what he was, to the boy he was and to what science fiction meant to him when he discovered it. Asimov replied that not abandoning his origins was deliberate. He had made up his mind when he was quite young, and said it in print, that no matter what happened to him or where he went he would never deny his origins as a science-fiction writer and never break his connection to science fiction, and he never has.

He considers loyalty one of the prime virtues. When he started *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, he told publisher Joel Davis that he would not give up his *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* science articles:

> I probably bore everybody with my endless repetition of how much I owe to John Campbell, because I figure I would rather bore them than be disloyal in my own mind. It is the easiest thing in the world to forget the ladder you climb or to be embarrassed at the thought that there was a time when somebody had to help you. The tendency is to minimize this, minimize that, and I'm normal enough and human enough to do the same thing if it were left to itself, but this is a matter of having once made a vow and sticking to it.

He pointed out that it was inconvenient always to have to tell people that Campbell made up the three laws of robotics, and the more important the three laws became the more he wanted to be the originator and take the credit, but he could not. "Why this is so I never really thought about. I guess I like to think about it only as a matter of virtue. I don't consider myself a particularly virtuous person, but I like to think I have some virtues, of which loyalty is one."

Possibly, however, his loyalty could stem from the fact that he is not a very loyal Jew. He attends no Jewish religious functions, follows no Jewish rituals, obeys no Jewish dietary laws, and yet he never, under any circumstances, leaves any doubt that he is Jewish.

> I really dislike Judaism. . . . It's a form of particularly pernicious nationalism. I don't want humanity divided into these little groups that are firmly convinced, each one, that it is better than the others. Judaism is the prototype of the 'I'm better than you' group—we are the ones who invented this business of the only God. It's not just that we have our God and you have your God, but we have the only God. I feel a deep and abiding historic guilt about that. And every once in a while, when I'm not careful, I think that the reason

> Jews have been persecuted as much as they have has been to punish them for having invented this pernicious doctrine.

For this reason, he suggests, because he feels that in some ways he has been a traitor to Judaism ("which I try to make up for by making sure that everyone knows I'm a Jew, so while I'm deprived of the benefits of being part of a group, I make sure that I don't lose any of the disadvantages, because no one should think that I'm denying my Judaism in order to gain certain advantages"), he made up his mind that he was not going to be disloyal in any other way. "I'm not saying I believe this," he concluded, "but this is the sort of thing that people do work up for reasons, and, after all, I'm imaginative enough to think up such reasons, too. . . . I don't guarantee it's correct."

The characteristic that began to appear in his science fiction, that gave his writing its unique quality and made it so typically Campbellian as well as Asimovian, was its rationality. Asimov agrees with Randall Garrett's assessment that the relationship between Asimov and Campbell was symbiotic. In the interview he commented that he must have been the perfect foil for Campbell.

> On the one hand, I was close to him. I lived right in town and I could see him every week. And, for another, I could endure him. I imagine that a great many other writers found him too rich for their blood—at least to sit there and listen to him hour after hour. But I was fortunate in the sense that he was in some ways a lot like my father. I had grown up listening to my father pontificate in much the same way that John did, and so I was quite at home. I suppose if you took all the time that I sat there listening to John and put it all together, it was easily a week's worth—of just listening to him talk. Day and night, 168 hours. And I remember everything he said and how he thought and I did my best—because I desperately wanted to sell stories to him—to incorporate his method of thinking into my stories, which, of course, also had my method of thinking, with the result that somehow I caught the Campbell flavor.

The Campbell flavor was the solution of problems. Much of Asimov's early writing did not quite capture that quality of problem-solving that became characteristic of his later work; they were less successful, neither identifiably Asimovian nor distinguished science fiction. His first published story had it, "Marooned off Vesta," and later it would find its best expression in the robot stories and the Foundation stories, among his early science-fiction successes, and, of course, in the science-fiction mystery novels that came so naturally just before he switched to writing nonfiction, *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun*.

I made these suggestions to Asimov, and he agreed that they seemed right. "Certainly the stories that really satisfied me and made me feel good about my writing were my robot stories, and the robot stories, of course,

virtually every one of them, had a situation in which robots—which could not go wrong—did go wrong. And we had to find out what had gone wrong, how to correct it, within the absolute limits of the three laws. This was just the sort of thing I loved to do."

At its most typical, in "Nightfall" for example, Asimov's science fiction demonstrated the triumph of reason, or the struggle of reason to triumph, over various kinds of circumstances, including irrational or emotional responses to situations. If reason is going to prove superior as an approach to life, the mystery is the natural form in which that superiority will be demonstrated.

Asimov has said that his villains generally are as rational as his heroes. "In other words, it's not even a triumph of rationality over irrationality or over emotion, at least not in my favorite stories. It's generally a conflict between rationalities and the superior winning. If it were a western, where everything depends upon the draw of the gun, it would be very unsatisfactory if the hero shot down a person who didn't know how to shoot."

Growing up as he did, excelling at intellectual pursuits but uneasy in personal relationships in which he found himself ignorant of the proper thing to do or uncertain how the other person would respond, Asimov found himself coping in a variety of ways. One way, which he adopted when he was young, was to distance himself from the rest of the world with wit: he still delights in puns and wordplay that finds its most typical expression in personal banter with his friends but also enlivens his limericks and verse parodies and displays itself in the titles and occasional lines in articles and stories. Another way to cope was to demonstrate his greater knowledge or superior mind. Both together gave him a reputation as a smart-aleck and know-it-all with a mission to enlighten everyone around him.

He gives the example of the assignment of Leigh Hunt's "Abou Ben Adhem" in his high school English class. Anticipating the teacher's question about the last line ("And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest"), his hand shot up and he answered the inevitable question, "Why did Ben Adhem's name lead all the rest?" with "alphabetical order, sir?" It got him sent to the principal, but he did not care. Finally he gave it up, tracing his decision to a time when he was in the Army, in Hawaii, waiting to participate in the H-bomb tests at Bikini, and a couple of soldiers in the barracks were listening to a third explain, inaccurately, how the atom bomb worked.

> Wearily, I put down my book and began to get to my feet so I could go over and assume 'the smart man's burden' and educate them.
>
> Halfway to my feet, I thought: Who appointed you their educator? Is it going to hurt them to be wrong about the atom bomb?
>
> And I returned, contentedly, to my book.

> This does not mean I turned with knife-edge suddenness and became another man. It's just that I was a generally disliked know-it-all earlier in my life, and I am a generally liked person (I believe) who is genial and a nonpusher later in my life. . . .
>
> Why? I'm not sure I know. Perhaps it was my surrender of the child-prodigy status. Perhaps it was my feeling that I had grown up, I had proved myself, and I no longer had to give everyone a headache convincing them that I was, too, smart.

One other way of coping with the world that is associated with Asimov is his flirtatious attitude toward women—all women—that some critics might call suggestive or Rabelaisian, others might call outrageous, but Asimov calls his "all-embracing suavity," by which he means that he is willing to embrace any female within range and often does. Asimov traces its beginning to the experimentation of the summer of 1941, when he learned how to "kid around" with girls—"that is, how to make playful sexual allusions." He relates, in his autobiography, several anecdotes concerning his "penchant for making gallant suggestions to the ladies," including one incident with Judith Merril that occurred when he was thirty-two and about which, characteristically, he allows Merril the last word in a footnote. Another involves his meeting with the woman who was to become his second wife, while autographing books at a science-fiction convention (a meeting he does not remember); upon learning that she was a psychiatrist, he remarked, characteristically, "let's get on the couch together." That almost ended their relationship there, for Dr. Janet Jeppson was furious. A similar remark made to a beautiful actress on the Dick Cavett show may have been the final blow to his first marriage.

Actually, it is widely believed that Asimov is not a tiger but a pussycat, and no woman is in any more danger from him than a kiss and a pat or two, unless she clearly invites more and the circumstances are propitious (in his autobiography he describes the circumstances of his first extramarital experience and indicates that it was not the last). Judy Merril's story, which she related on numerous occasions, "produced the general feeling expressed to me by many a nubile young woman," he says, " 'Oh listen, Isaac, if I said "Yes," you'd go right through that wall to get away.' "

A few pages later in his autobiography he writes about his visits to the Doubleday offices: "My attitude toward young women amused everyone generally, I think, and the amusement was intensified, I think, by the general impression (frequently expressed out loud) that I was harmless. I even suspect that new girls were warned of my feckless lechery in advance so that they wouldn't run screaming or, worse yet, bop me on the nose. At least none of them ever did either. Mostly they just kissed back."

Even a casual observer might wonder what turned the gauche, inexperienced, tentative young man into the dirty old man of "all-

embracing suavity." Partly, of course, it was experience, but partly, I suggest, it was a tactic to cover an uneasiness with women that he confesses to in many places, with which, for instance, he explains the infrequent appearance of women in his fiction and the even more infrequent romantic or sexual interludes in it. Asimov's "lechery" is not only compensatory behavior—the parents never displayed affection in public, the son never refrains from displaying it—but also may be something of a pose. If we are to believe Asimov's other theories about his behavior as an adult—"you don't really change much as you get older"—we must believe that the uncertain young man is still inside the suave older man. This is not to say that Asimov consciously adopts a position that is false to himself—he well may feel as lecherous as he behaves—but that he has discovered he is more comfortable in the role of a dirty old man than he was as an ingenuous young one.

He has denied striking a pose in relationship to his writing, and that denial well may apply to his personal life as well. Certainly he is open about his life, even to those matters that most people are most closed about—money and sex. And, more important than either to Asimov, his writing. I asked him in our interview if his disclaimer of knowledge about the craft of writing was not a pose. Clearly he had thought about it, I pointed out. He had criticized other people's stories in his teen-age letters-to-the-editor days; he had noticed Clifford Simak's way of leaving space to indicate a break between scenes and, after having had it explained, had adopted it himself; he had even attended the Breadloaf Writers Conference, a couple of times as a member of the faculty.

Asimov responded that he does not deliberately set up a pose. He really thinks he does not know much about writing, but, as he pointed out in different words in an afterword to the collection of essays about his work edited by Martin Greenberg and Joseph Olander entitled *Asimov* (1977), "without very much in the way of conscious thinking I manage to learn from what I read and what I hear."

And so, as the young Asimov became the older Asimov (still in his late youth, as he would say), what he was became what he is, either conditioned by his early experience or in reaction to it. Asimov would recognize both processes. In one sense he is a rational man in an irrational world, puzzled at humanity's responses to change, unable to understand its inability to see the clear necessity, if humanity is to survive, to control population and pollution and eliminate war, still assuming "the smart man's burden" to educate the bewilderingly uneducable, even taken aback at times by irrational elements in the people he deals with in the real world.

Joseph Patrouch comments in his *The Science Fiction of Isaac Asimov* (1974) that Asimov has not written in his fiction on the subjects about which he is most concerned, the ones he writes about in his non-fiction and speaks about in his public talks: pollution, over-population, and so forth. I

asked Asimov about this, saying that it seemed to me that in his talks and articles and books he exhibited a kind of alarm about our world situation that was not in his fiction—a kind of public despair contrasted to his fictional optimism—because in his science writing he tries to persuade by showing the terrible consequences of what will happen if people do not act and in his science fiction he tries to persuade by showing how the problems can be solved. Asimov agreed. "In my public statements I have to deal with the world as it is—which is the world in which irrationality is predominant; whereas in my fiction I create a world and in my world, my created worlds, things are rational. Even the villains, the supposed villains, are villainous for rational reasons."

He went on: "You can see for yourself in my autobiography that I had a great deal of difficulty adjusting to the world when I was young. To a large extent the world was an enemy world. . . . Science fiction in its very nature is intended to appeal a) to people who value reason and b) to people who form a small minority in a world that doesn't value reason. . . . I *am* trying to lead a life of reason in an emotional world."

No doubt, Asimov is still trying to please his stern, hard-to-please father by means of his industry and his productivity. Asimov would be the first to admit it. He also would say that it does not matter how the past has shaped him—he is satisfied to be what he is: a claustrophile, an acrophobe, a compulsive writer. When he was a teenager people complained about his eccentricities: his walking home from the library with three books, reading one and holding one under each arm; his love of cemeteries; his constant whistling. The complaints did not bother him, though he did, when asked, stop whistling in the cemetery. "I had gathered the notion somewhere that my eccentricities belonged to me and to nobody else and that I had every right to keep them." He added, "And I lived long enough to see these eccentricities and others that I have not mentioned come to be described as 'colorful' facets of my personality."

He has rationalized it all; he is a rational man who knows that the past cannot be changed—it can only be understood. Moreover, the things that he is have been rewarded by the world. He has had his many triumphs. Scientists have applauded his science books: Professor George G. Simpson of Harvard called him "one of our natural wonders and national resources." He has been guest-of-honor and toastmaster at World Science Fiction Conventions. He has won Hugos and Nebulas, and perhaps best of all John Campbell told him, "You are one of the greatest science-fiction writers in the world."

As a rational man, he knows that the present must be accepted, and as a rational man he knows that what he is, is an excellent thing to be. So the world has said, and so he agrees. That life of reason found its expression in his fiction as well as his nonfiction. How it developed and how it expressed itself may be found in the completed book.

Principles of the Imaginary Milieu: Argument and Idea in Fantasy Fiction

ROBERT J. BRANHAM

■ The imaginary world is the necessary and distinguishing feature of objective fantasy. The fantastic assumption of sustained and consistent impossibility cannot long remain in a primary world whose physical laws and accompanying mentality must dismiss nonconforming phenomena as being either rationally explicable or incomprehensible. Fantasy attempts to take a third and mediating path through the presentation of an alternative rationality—a new system of physical laws. To do so requires the abandonment of the primary world and the construction of, as Lin Carter has observed, an invented milieu.

> Since we have yet to find a place among the laws of physics for magic powers, such tales imply—in fact, such tales actually require—the construction of an invented milieu. To compose a fantasy, an author must construct a literary universe in which magic works . . . settings completely made up by the author, whether such settings consist of a single country or an entire world, or even an imaginary period of the remote past or the distant future.[1]

Regardless of its location, the imaginary world must be radically different in many respects from our own if the phenomena within are guided by alternative and "magical" precepts.[2] Thus considered, the task incumbent upon the prospective author of fantasy is staggering. He is faced with all the difficulties in plausibility faced by the writer of mainstream fiction and is further called upon to make plausible that which any "sane" man would call impossible. The mainstream author may create fictional characters, as must the author of fantasy. In addition, however, the author of fantasy must create a different mode of existence within which the fictional characters may operate.[3] Fantasy is environmental fiction.

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The nature of the fantastic world is limited only by the demands of an internally consistent reality and the author's own imagination. French anthologist Jean Palou has claimed that "the creator fantasy is a magician of the Dream and his strange creation, like himself, lies in the measure of his knowledge."[4] Like the dream, the imaginary world is sensually constructed; it is perceptual and objectified. Unlike the dream, it is a substantive reality. The vision must, however, be communicable, and the referent-bound limits of an earthly language must be overcome just as surely as those of physical law. Lord Dunsany lamented in *The King of Elfland's Daughter* (1924) that "if my reader through fault of mine fails to picture the peaks of Elfland my fancy had better have stayed in the fields we know."[5]

Critic Wayne Booth has suggested that all fiction may be initially addressed in terms of the manner in which it conveys ideas and the "persuasiveness" of the constructed vision. The fundamental persuasive interest of the fantasist, as that of any other author, is to convey his vision to an uninitiated reader. The means chosen by fantasy writers to establish this basic level of credibility will be reviewed at a later point. The concern of this discussion lies with those functions of literary persuasion that are directly affected by the institution of an imaginary and impossible world.

More specifically, fantasy consists of four procedural stages in the composition of an alternative reality: experiment; isolation; defamiliarization; and objective reconstruction. The contribution of each stage will be discussed independently with respect to the work's conduct of argument and idea and traditional positions of literary theory.

Fantasy as Experiment

The concept of the "experimental" novel was first popularized by the nineteenth-century realist Emile Zola. Zola rode on the crest of a rising wave of "scientification" which sought to apply scientifically objective methods to all disciplines of study. Zola conceived the novel to be a naturally mimetic maze through which the characterized rat might scurry and be measured in its response. The experimental environment, according to Zola, was to be taken directly from perceived social reality, the goal being to "modify nature, without departing from nature."[6]

If Zola's prescription is taken literally, fantasy represents the antithesis of the experimental novel. Although Zola's environment supposedly retains its objectivity through a complete and unfailing reliance upon the perceived laws of nature, fantasy by definition does not. Yet fantasy in both its objective and subjective forms is highly experimental in certain crucial respects.

The subjective fantasy-experiment, like Zola's, uses the accepted world of natural law as its objective field. Unlike Zola's experiment, the subjective

fantasy then introduces the element of the impossible so that the "normalcies and probabilities of our ordinary world, the natural laws that we assume to be fixed and unchangeable, are in fact unexpectedly and unpredictably changed, interrupted, reversed, twisted, suspended, distorted."[7] Subjective fantasy thus distorts the experimental method to achieve decidedly nonexperimental ends.

Objective fantasy employs nonexperimental methods to achieve experimental ends. In this genre, the typically human character is introduced to an impossible universe; the measurable rat is again confronted by the baffling maze. The demand for universality in characterization is thereby given substantive impetus, as essayist G. K. Chesterton quipped in "The Dragon's Grandmother" (1909):

> A lunatic is not startling to himself, because he is quite serious; that is what makes him a lunatic. A man who thinks he is a piece of glass is to himself as dull as a piece of glass. A man who thinks he is a chicken is to himself as common as a chicken. It is only sanity that can see even a wild poetry in insanity. Therefore, these wise old tales made the hero ordinary and the tale extraordinary.[8]

Chesterton's observation echoes what has long been a tenet of the literary mainstream: an inverse relationship must be maintained between strangeness of setting and of character. Above all, according to Thomas Hardy, "human nature must never be made abnormal, which is introducing incredibility. The uncommonness must be in the events, not the characters."[9]

Objective fantasy is therefore very close in some aspects to both the experimental ideal and the mainstream's postulate; far more so, in fact, than the realistic novel. Societal realism has come to imply a mimetic form in which are depicted the efforts of an abnormal character to deal with an all-too-sane environment.[10] Fantasy distorts the milieu but supplies the reader with a conscious and rational observer.

Fantasy provides a most extraordinary laboratory for analysis of the human condition. Its ability to offer an almost limitless range of circumstances for observation is matched only by the depth of understanding which it affords. The growth of the social sciences has encouraged the surveying of man in almost every conceivable circumstance, but "fantasy possesses the enormous ability to create the most improbable of situations. By this very fact it enables people to be revealed in most unexpected ways."[11]

Isolation and Focus

The initial task of any study of argumentation is the identification of the argument's relevant components and the analysis of their relationships. In the case of the literary moral argument, this task is made somewhat simpler

by the organizing and accentuating context in which the argument appears. Although Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca make little reference to the literary manifestations of argument, they do take notice of this uniquely advantageous feature:

> literary works—novels, plays, speeches—often have the advantage of presenting the arguments in a simplified, conventionalized, or exaggerated manner. Taken out of an actual context, in which all the elements of the rhetorical situation are blended they appear with greater clarity.[12]

Fantasy tends to isolate implicit argument because of its alien milieu. The observer bears little or no common reference to the strange environment of the imaginary world; instead, he is communicated with by means of human idea and action within that environment. The meaningful idea is latched upon by the "homesick" mind, which provides the sort of claim "as old pioneers must have felt, crossing new continents and claiming all they saw."[13]

Beyond mere identification of and with the implicit argument, fantasy promotes a heightening of objective consciousness. The fantastic genre forces the observer to "take it on its own terms";[14] he must accept the world as credible but his attention cannot be securely fastened upon it. Fantasy is a medium of idea, and unique in its provision. Any genre can utilize spectacle, and the reader who is pursuing the merely extraordinary would most likely find philosophy in fantasy too prominent for his liking.

The heightening of consciousness for moral argument in objective fantasy is primarily due to the secondary role played in that genre by action. In the quests of J. R. R. Tolkien and George MacDonald, the mortal struggles of C. S. Lewis and David Lindsay, and the sensual discoveries of William Morris, Lord Dunsany, and E. R. Eddison, there is considerable action, but it is of a nature that is not self-sustaining. Actions in fantasy are the outgrowths of characterized human motivation which, although not directly symbolic of earthly concerns, are universal in their applicability. The battle lines drawn within fantasy are indicative of philosophical division; represented material motivation is in itself a value-set which in fantasy must be recognized.

The mere physical makeup of the fantastic genre thus provides an isolation of moral argument represented therein and a perceptual focus upon it once identified. The attractiveness of the imaginary setting is tempting, but the structural limits of the genre stand always vigilant to seize the apple of submergence from the reader—Adam's hungered jaws. The alternative present of fantasy fulfills the need for physical removal without sacrificing moral commonality; "A setting in contemporary London or a London of the future couldn't provide one with the same isolation it engenders."[15]

Radical Defamiliarization

The term "defamiliarization," which denotes the third procedural effect of fantasy upon the conduct of ideas and argument, was first coined by the pre-Revolution circle of Russian Formalist criticism. Its meaning is reasonably self-explanatory: defamiliarization seeks to strip perceptual phenomena of their familiar contextual surroundings. Formalist Victor Shklovsky offers further procedural insight.

> The process of "algebrization," the over-automatization of an object, permits the greatest economy of perceptive effort. Either objects are assigned only one proper feature—a number, for example—or else they function as though by formula and do not even appear in cognition . . . Art removes objects from the automatism of perception in several ways.[16]

Defamiliarization is of earthly direction; the object is the item of perception concealed by the perceptual environment in which it resides. The application of such a notion to the artistic process was by no means initiated by the Formalists. The Romantics in particular viewed art as the "translation of the ordinary" into meaningful and recognizable contexts and the use of nonmimetic mode in doing so may be conceptually traced to the *Poetics*.[17] Both predecessors recognized the value of artistic "strangeness" in performing these functions.

The goal of artistic defamiliarization is to speak "of the ordinary as if it were familiar,"[18] restoring to it a meaningful significance long denied by what C. S. Lewis rightly named the "veil of familiarity."[19] In its traditional form, defamiliarization was focused primarily upon the perceptual objects of material experience. Objects and our associative relations with them were to be stripped of such associational bonds through placement in new context, a process quite similar in some respects to the "eidetic reduction" of phenomenology, which seeks to reduce the object from a merely factual existence to its general essence. The aim of phenomenological reduction proper completes the process of defamiliarization by freeing the phenomena at hand from the transphenomenal elements that bind it in our consciousness.

Objective fantasy is the genre most sincerely directed by the aims of reductive defamiliarization. In a purely material sense, fantasy creates a new array of objects, objective essences, and accompanying relationships. In the initial two items fantasy achieves the avowed goal of phenomenological reduction by forcing the observer to concentrate upon the phenomena themselves as internally constituted and without external consideration of their "reality." It is in the last provision that fantasy attains the purpose of objective defamiliarization.

"Creative fantasy," J. R. R. Tolkien has written, "because it is mainly trying to do something else (make something new), may open your hoard

and let all the locked things fly away like cage-birds."[20] In Tolkien's functional profile of fantasy, the stage of "Recovery" is roughly correspondent with radical defamiliarization. Tolkien claims the ability of fantasy to restore "clear view" through the removal of objects from a position of triteness to serve as integral parts of a magical secondary world.[21]

The most important contribution of fantasy to the process of defamiliarization lies not in its removal of material objects, but in its transplantive reduction of ideas. Any argument, moral or otherwise, is ultimately grounded in a sociocultural environment that affects all stages of its conduct. Selectivity and perception of data, the logical relationships of warrant, and the valuative claim all reflect the mental and physical environment from which they sprang and in which they bear meaning.

The business of fantasy is to transplant the idea intact to an alien sociocultural milieu, leaving its previous associations behind. Although not technically in the genre of objective fantasy, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* exemplifies many of the techniques of defamiliarization later incorporated by the fantasists. Formalist Boris Tomashevsky analyzed Swift's transplantation of idea.

> Compelled to tell everything with the utmost accuracy, he removes the shell of euphemistic phrases and ficticious traditions which justify such things as war, class strife, parliamentary intrigue, and soon stripped of their verbal justification and thereby defamiliarized, these topics emerge in all their horror.[22]

The defamiliarization of ideas in fantasy has been a conscious undertaking, largely uniform throughout the genre. MacDonald's protagonist in *Lilith* is finally converted by the inappropriateness of his earthly motivations in meeting the demands of the secondary world. As MacDonald wrote in "The Golden Key," "things that look real in this country look very thin indeed in Fairyland, while some of the things that here cannot stand still for a moment, will not move there."[23] Maskull, Lindsay's protagonist in *A Voyage to Arcturus*, is plagued by constant illusion and the purposeful confusion of his limited earthly conceptual framework. It is only at the book's conclusion that Maskull is able to seriously accept the drama of Tormance as a real and vital one, as he is then able to envision "sin masquerading as eternal beauty . . . baseness masquerading as Nature . . . [and] the Devil masquerading as God."[24] Lindsay's *Arcturus* represents the foremost effort of fantasy to lay bare the disguising trappings of earthly ideas.

An effort not quite so complex but equally illustrative is contained in Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*. Philologist Elwin Ransom is transported against his will to the planet of Malacandra where he is forced to make his way through the alien planet on his own devices. Possessing no weapons,

Ransom is equipped only with the philosophical normalcies of the Silent Planet, Earth. As might be expected, the equipment proves to be somewhat inadequate, especially in the face of cultures premised and constructed on entirely different, but not irrational grounds. "Your thought must be at the mercy of your blood," a patient *sorn* expresses to a confused Ransom, "for you cannot compare it with thought that floats on a different blood."[25] Ransom's eventual approval by the godlike Oyarsa is gained only by a transfusion of ideas.

The contribution of fantasy to the defamiliarization of ideas has yet to be equaled by its literary counterparts. Two rhetorical devices employed effectively in fantasy set it apart from other genres. The rhetorical device discussed above is equivalent to the negative instance of conventional logic; fantasy denies or affirms the universality of moral concepts by exposing them to the limits of the morally conceivable. A second rhetorical implication of fantastic defamiliarization is discussed by Lawrence Gagnon in his brief article entitled "Philosophy and Fantasy":

> [Fantasy] worlds can be utilized in [testing] the tensile strength of concepts, so to speak. In other words, in such worlds we are allowed to see just how far it is possible to break down the connections between various concepts or between certain concepts and types of experiences without completely destroying the chosen concepts.[26]

The "freshness of vision"[27] supplied by fantasy is particularly necessary in the examination of moral positions. More than any other form of discourse, moral argument has been haunted by extremes of subjectivity and intolerance. A work that purports to address moral problems in a factual earthbound manner generally receives a factual earthbound reaction from the reader—he stops reading. Fantasy deals with the moral argument at least partially by necessity, and its presence seems natural and uncontrived in a world that seems to call it forth. Fantasy circumvents the prejudiced real-world associations accompanying moral precepts by stripping them of the associational environment. Nathan Scott, devoted to the study of theological horizons in literature, summarizes the basic importance of the defamiliarization of thought:

> if the high forms of faith are once again to appear at least possible for us, their reinterpretation must be informed by the kind of awareness that comes from facing the distresses of life without any of the supports and consolations of religious faith.[28]

Objective Reconstruction

Having stripped the objects and ideas of the primary world of their associative contexts, it is incumbent upon the fantasy to supply them with a secondary context in an invented milieu. In accomplishing this objective

reconstruction, fantasy is able to tailor the world and its perceptible features to the conduct of moral argument. Three further rhetorical devices aid in this endeavor: the physical embodiment of conflict; the physical characterization of conflicting elements; and the systematization of ethical principles in "natural law."

The objective fantasy allows the physical representation of moral principles and the conflict between them that can only be represented by the most indirect of symbolism in the primary world. "The mind," said Elizabeth Sewell, "can do nothing with infinity, that most unmanageable commodity."[29] Fantasy seeks to embody the cosmic and incomprehensible in tangible manifestations, to "lay bare those realities which are imperceptible to the physical senses"[30] in the primary world.

Different works of fantasy have represented moral conflict in a variety of ways. Lindsay's Tormance is equipped with two suns that bear different spectra and diverse effects. Joy Chant's *Red Moon and Black Mountain* displays two moons, each of a different color and each granting special power to the human and natural forces which further embody its value-system. The value-system thus displayed remains implicit, nonsymbolic (in relation to the primary world), and yet tangible.

Once manifested in objective form, the moral conflict in fantasy may be physically characterized. Physical laws of the primary world permit a large degree of discretion in physical description; Faulkner, for example, has objectively identified characters by some aspect of their appearance or manner to the point where names become unnecessary. Fantasy maintains the entire range of descriptive possibilities contained within the primary world and in addition inherits the limitless possibilities of the secondary imagination. Fantasy thus affords a descriptive depth which is matchless in realistic fiction and which can be utilized in characterizing a new philosophy or precept without bringing to bear the inescapable connotations of an object in primary existence.

Having manifested the moral conflict and physically characterized it, objective fantasy is able to integrate these appearances in an implicit value-system. Fantasy is more than a collection of impossible figures and occurrences; it is the objectification of an alternative Nature and natural laws. The utility of such a construction should be apparent; "through the construction of such worlds and the elaboration of their histories, one can reinterpret the concepts we ordinarily employ in organizing our manifold experiences."[31] The human visitor in the secondary world is forced to abide by its natural laws or receive its natural punishments. Similarly, the observer is conditioned to accept the imaginary system as his own, if only for the duration of the work.

The four procedural elements of fantasy combine to produce a unique conveyance of idea and argument in fiction. Through experiment,

isolation, defamiliarization, and objectification, fantasy produces a moral argument that is both concretely formalized and universally applicable. C. S. Lewis offers an appropriate summary of fantasy's argumentative offerings.

> The Fantastic or Mythical is a Mode available at all ages for some readers; for others, at none. At all ages, if it is well used by the author and meets the right reader, it has the same power: to generalize while remaining concrete, to present in palpable form not concepts or even experiences but whole classes of experience, and to throw off irrelevancies. But at its best it can do no more; it can give us experiences we have never had and thus, instead of 'commenting on life,' can add to it.[32]

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The Mechanical Hive: Urbmon 116 as the Villain-Hero of Silverberg's *The World Inside*

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■ At first glance, Robert Silverberg's *The World Inside*[1] (1970) seems to be a work with the standard flaws of satiric dystopian literature. We get long sections of exposition about the world of the story, primarily about Urban Monad ("Urbmon") 116, the thousand-story, three-kilometer-high building in which the principal characters live. We meet a "stranger," Nicanor Gortman of the planet Venus, whose only function is to be told about the strange land of Earth in A.D. 2381. And we read about major characters who meet and separate only in casual ways and who are dismissed after their stories are told. All together, it seems, we have the typical satiric "anatomy of abuses" in an episodic plot. But this first impression, we shall argue, is incorrect: *The World Inside* is a unified work that ironically celebrates the triumph of a villain-hero, the Urbmon itself. To the triumph of this mammoth hive-like organism, all the stories of human failure are carefully subordinated.[2]

Beginning on "a happy day in 2381," *The World Inside* covers about a year and gives us a detailed account of life inside Urbmon 116, a typical building in the Chipitts constellation in what was once the United States. The 999 inhabited floors of the Urbmon contain approximately 881,000 people; the fifty buildings of the Chipitts constellation contain some forty million people; and the many constellations of urbmons contain a global population of seventy-five billion people (Ch. 1, p. 5). Gortman, whose home planet has about the same human populations as the Chipitts constellation, is surprised that the people back on Earth are doing so well. He comments to his host, Charles Mattern,

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"It's all wonderful. I couldn't imagine how one little planet with 75,000,000, 000 people could even survive, but you've turned it into—into—"

"Utopia?" Mattern suggests.

"I meant to say that, yes," says Gortman. (Ch. 1, p. 11)

For the rest of the novel we are presented, in grand-hotel fashion, the stories of several urbmon inhabitants who are undergoing various problems of adaptation and adjustment to "utopia."

This pattern in *The World Inside* is established shortly after Gortman's and Mattern's "utopia" conversation; significantly, we see the first problem of adjustment immediately after they discuss the urbmon philosophy that "life is sacred. Making new life is blessed." While school children sing a hymn to human fertility, a pregnant young woman "rushes toward Mattern and Gortman in the corridor. . . . 'Help!' she shrieks. 'My husband's gone flippo!' " (Ch. 1, p. 13). The "flippo" (flipped out) husband is swarmed over by the school children, subdued, and held for the police, whose leader pronounces a formula of condemnation and then has him thrown to his death down a waste-disposal chute.[3] This is a very powerful and crucial scene, for the possibility of being declared flippo is present in the minds of all the characters who are having problems.

Of course, the chute is used only in cases of gross misconduct, for those who finally flip out or in other ways show "dangerous countersocial tendencies," as the formula has it (Ch. 1, p. 15 and Ch. 6, p. 160). Still, it is always *there*, a constant threat: the banal disposal chutes function as an analog to Room 101 in *1984*, Rockover Hospital in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, the Shock Shop in *Cuckoo's Nest*, the "farm" in the film version of *A Boy and His Dog*.

Mattern himself is probably in no danger of the chute. He is sincere in his conversations with Gortman, where he praises verticality and modern urbmon life. His game is Everything's Perfect: "the system works," "we are happy here," he says, convincing himself if not Gortman (pp. 10, 13). His desperate need to deceive himself becomes plain only at the end of the chapter when, "without warning" he is ambushed by the memory of an older brother, "Jeffrey, the whiner, the stealer, Jeffrey the selfish, Jeffrey the unadaptable, Jeffrey who had had to be given to a chute" (p. 16).

In an innocuous context, Mattern tells Gortman that urbmon civilization allows "certain conflicts to exist. Man wouldn't be man without conflicts, eh? Even here. Eh?" (Ch. 1, p. 4). But Mattern does not see what is plain to the reader: all conflicts of the world inside Urbmon 116 are being systematically weeded out. Anyone who does not conform is made to feel guilty, seek treatment ("moral engineering"), take drugs, repress his feelings—or face the chute. They are in total bondage.

Even the free sex in Urbmon 116 is part of a repressive system. As in *Brave New World*, sexual freedom in the urbmon is used to prevent

frustration, to eliminate potential conflicts. Mattern extols the "nightwalking" of urbmon males (and occasionally females) without realizing that such compulsary (and all *mores* in Urbmon 116 are compulsory) promiscuity is a kind of regression to childishness or animality: a form of sexual predation that subliminates potential "countersocial tendencies" into the most casual sort of sexual activity, helping the people fit docilely into their prescribed social roles.[4]

The theme of maladjustment is more explicit with the other major characters, who are introduced to us in an order of increasing maladjustment. Aurea Holston, like Charles Mattern, is superficially well adjusted. Consciously she loves her building so well she cannot bear to leave it when the "thinning time" comes (Ch. 1, pp. 20, 26). Some four thousand residents of the overcrowded 116 will be sent to be pioneers in a new Urbmon. However, after learning that she and her husband are going to be "*expelled*" (her word and emphasis), she "dreams of being born" (Ch. 2, p. 26).

In her dream she starts at the very bottom of 116, where she is sealed "into a liftshaft capsule." She rises through the living structure of the building, from the low-level "city" of Reykjavik "where the maintenance people live," all the way through the Urbmon's physical and social strata to "Louisville where the administrators dwell in unimaginable luxury," and finally to the landing stage at the top of the building. There, "a hatch opens . . . and Aurea is ejected. She soars into the sky, safe within her snug capsule . . ." (pp. 26–27). She sees the series of hexagons that make up Chipitts. High up she sees her world laid out before her and experiences a "transport of joy" while observing its "balanced economy" and social harmony. She is awestruck by the thought of so many people living together "A meaningful and enriching city life. Friends, lovers, mates, children" (p. 28). But the thought of children dismays her: she is childless in a world that holds fertility as its highest value. In her dream, she starts to spin and "she seem to vault to the edge of space, so that she sees the entire planet. . . . It is all quite wonderful, but it is terrifying as well, and she is uncertain for a moment whether the way man has reshaped his environment is the best of all possible ways[5]. . . . And doubt smites her and she begins to fall, and the capsule splits and releases her . . ." (p. 28). Her dream ends when she lands on the top of "a new tower" in the Chipitts constellation, impaled on Urbmon 158 (p. 29).[6]

Aurea Holston, we should note, does not look out at the stars and long for the freedom to explore them or even to observe them with the naked eye. In this way she is quite unlike Kuno in E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" or Alvin in Arthur C. Clarke's *The City and the Stars*. She does not observe the hexagonal shapes underlying the geometry of Chipitts and see herself trapped in a beehive-world. Nor does she look at "the way man has

reshaped his environment" and question (as one of Ursula Le Guin's heroes might) whether or not humankind should be so enthusiastic in reshaping worlds according to its will. No, her complaint is primarily a personal one: she knows that "we multiply. We multiply. We multiply"—and that the "we" in this case does not include her.

In time, her personal complaint might mature into a more general condemnation of the whole system. For now, though, she can think only of telling her husband to file an appeal. He warns her of the chute, tells her to "[p]op a pill. . . . Talk to the floor consoler. . . . Stay calm and let's adjust" (Ch. 2, p. 32). In the face of this rejection, she decides to try pulling strings: she has an uncle who is an administrator. "From the hormone chest she selects a capsule that will cause her to emanate the odor that inspires men to act protectively toward her" (Ch. 2, pp. 32–33), and she goes to visit Uncle Lewis. In this hive, however, pheromones are less powerful than law and administrative directives, and her uncle rejects her petition. She then tries sexual attraction (amplified with another hormone) on Siegmund Kluver, a rising young man in the Urbmon hierarchy. But even this "magic" fails, and she suggests to her husband that they both go down the chute.

Her husband, however, has no intention of committing a love-death for Aurea and Urbmon 116; he summons the machines to take her to the consoler—and the consoler sends her to the moral engineers. "For a week she lives in a sealed chamber filled with warm, sparkling fluids. . . . They speak to her over audio channels embedded in the walls of the chamber. . . . They drain the tensions and resistances from her" (Ch. 2, pp. 36–37). Upon leaving this mechanical womb, she is adjusted, happy, and glad to be one of the pioneers going to the new building. More, the conventional wisdom of her world that brooding and conflict sterilize proves true in her case: she is soon pregnant and goes to her new home like a joyful queen bee. "Now the poison of negativeness has been drained from her; she is able to fulfill a woman's proper destiny" and "Urbmon 116 has ceased to concern her" (Ch. 2, pp. 38–39).

Dillon Chrimes has no personal complaints. He is happily married with three children; he takes great joy in his job as the lead player in a cosmos group. Unlike the work of the early Bob Dylan, Chrimes's art has no explicit political content. He offers music and a spectacular light show. He know that his cosmos group serves social stability and efficiency: in his words, "bread and circuses" for "the lower levels," "psychic deconstipation" for the administrators and minor bureaucrats of the upper levels (Ch. 3, pp. 40–41). Still, he shows people the farthest reaches beyond the confines of his building, and there is in him the potential for rebellion.

During a trip on a "multiplexer" pill, Chrimes perceives and merges with the whole urbmon. He comes to see the people as "ants," a "swarm of biped bees" living a "beehive life" (Ch. 3, pp. 57–59). And during the trip he loves

all he sees. After he comes down, though, he experiences doubt. "Is this how it was meant to be? Is this how it has to be? Is this the best we can do? This building. This mighty hive" (Ch. 3, pp. 60–61). The doubt is there, and for a while "He cannot bear to play" his bibrastar instrument. But as we have seen, in the hive milieu, such doubts must be cast aside—or else—and Dillon Chrimes ends the novel content to live in the hive, so long as he can have the universe through his art. Besides, as he tells Siegmond Kluver, the alternatives to the urbmon are the farming communes and the chute, "so we stay here. And groove on the richness of it all" (Ch. 7, p. 169).

Jason and Micaela Quevado also struggle to reunite private yearnings and public weal, but they see their problem as genetic in origin. In his work, *The Urban Monad as Social Evolution: Parameters of the Spirit Defined by Community Structure* (Ch. 4, p. 68), Jason propounds his thesis "that selective breeding has produced a new species of human in the urbmons" (Ch. 4, p. 93): a species that has acquired a "more pliant, more acquiescent mode of response to events, a turning away from the old expansionist-individualist philosophy . . . toward a kind of communal expansion centered in the orderly and unlimited growth of the human race. Definitely a psychic evolution of some sort, a shift toward graceful acceptance of hive-life" (Ch. 4, p. 68).[7] Unfortunately for them, the Quevados can claim only "a veneer of urbmonism," with "jealousy, envy, possessiveness" underneath. In terms of Jason's theory, they are "both throwbacks" to a more primitive era, our era. To avoid the chute, they come to a reasonable, if unheroic, decision: "We have to wear better camouflage" (Ch. 4, p. 92).

So far it would seem that Charles Mattern has a fairly good case. The urbmon world of A.D. 2381 has its problems, but application of "the theory of verticality in urban thrust" has solved real challenges and has given a fairly decent life to a huge number of people (Ch. 7, p. 169). Artists and intellectuals in 2381 have some difficulties adjusting, but artists can sublimate and intellectuals can hide—a situation little different from the lot of artists and intellectuals in our world. But what of organization men? Would they not increase in numbers in such a world? Would they not find utopia in a world rapidly becoming a vast bureaucracy, a single mechanistic organism?

What of Michaela's brother, Michael Statler? He is a twenty-three-year-old computer-primer who for eleven years has literally been an extension to a machine.

> By now the work is purely automatic for him. . . . Drifting along the interface, he boosts or drains, shunts or couples, blends or splits, meeting every need of the computer he serves, and does it all in cool mindless efficiency, operating on reflex alone. . . .[A] properly trained interface crew is in effect a group of ten . . . excellent little organically grown computers jacked into the main unit (Ch. 6, p. 114).

Thoroughly mechanized, wired into his job, Michael Statler has time left over to think, perchance even to dream, and he does dream "of adventure outside Urban Monad 116" (Ch. 6, pp. 114–15). More important, Michael *acts* on his dream by leaving the urbmon. Like Forster's Kuno, he thirsts for direct experience of the greater world and takes the risks necessary to get it. He uses his knowledge to get an egress pass, to leave what he sees as a dead world. He walks under a real sky, feels the earth at his feet, sees himself as Adam on "the first morning of the world." He strips, swims, watches a sunrise, cries; "[H]e watches the sky turn blue, and puts his hand on himself . . . and summons his vision [from a travelog] of the beach at Capri, the wine, the boy, the goat, the kisses, Micaela, and the two of them bare at dawn, and he gasps as his seed spurts. Fertilizing the naked earth" (Ch. 6, p. 127). He is arrested at a farming commune and learns of their barbaric customs—including the custom of limiting population. Confused and ignorant, he attempts rape and is almost sacrificed as an offering to the harvest god "to become a mystic link binding commune to urbmon" (Ch. 6, pp. 131–55; see esp. pp. 146 or 155). But with help he escapes, then admits defeat and goes home to Urbmon 116, without having seen his major goal, the sea.

Although Michael is but a minor-league fertility god and Adam-figure, his adventure is the greatest odyssey of any urbanized man of his era. For so long he worked on the interface of the computer with the human portion of the urbmon; in leaving the urbmon he was moved through an "interface"—crossed a threshold—into a new world.[8] He cannot be allowed to return to the community. Michael had been a dreamer and an explorer. He never viewed himself as a revolutionary and was the most timid and culture-bound of rebels by the usual heroic standards. But the urbmon knows better. " 'Menace to harmony and stability, dangerous countersocial tendencies, immediate removal from environment to prevent spreading of reactive pattern.' As though he carries a plague of rebelliousness. He has seen this before: the summary judgment, the instant execution. And never really understood. And never imagined" (p. 160).

He must be sacrificed, as the administrators see it, for the common good. His death will bring no regeneration of Urbmon 116, but that does not bother Michael. He has dared and ventured, and discovered. As the chute is opened, he "hears the rushing of the tide. He feels the crash of the waves against the sleek shining sands. He tastes salt water . . . He has no regrets" (p. 160). With Michael's death, the Narrator tells us, "The Urbmon has taken the necessary protective steps, and an enemy of civilization has been removed" (p. 161).[9]

Siegmund Kluver's death is equally necessary, and it provides a clear demonstration of the abilities and limitations of the urbmon. Viewed one way—comically, from a distance—Siegmund is "an earnest, pushy little

rung-grabber, his gut afire with the upward urge," the standard-issue organization man, except that he is younger, smarter, and more competent than most (Ch. 5, p. 96). When we first see him at age fourteen, he already lives high up in Shanghai and so is doing very well in urbmon status-seeking, the only game in town for most of the upper classes. When we see him last, at fifteen years, five months, he is less than a year away from "promotion to the highest administrative levels" (Ch. 7, p. 163). Viewed another way—politically, socially—Siegmund Kluver is a young idealist who believes that the urbmon system is ideal, or at least should be ideal (Ch. 2, pp. 26, 164). In this view, he would be the classic prerevolutionary from the upper classes: the privileged, educated citizen who will strive to make reality live up to his expectations.

It is a tribute to the abilities of the urbmon that Kluver never even considers the possibility of revolution or even significant rebellion. On the other hand, the limitations of the urbmon are evident in Kluver's ultimate unhappiness. He becomes alienated from his work and his society, from others, and finally from himself. He comes to see the urbmon as far less than "an ideal commonwealth"; he comes to see it as a mechanical hive with no other purpose than expansion. He sees his world, finally, as a kind of "switchboard" that he is no longer plugged into (Ch. 7, p. 170).

In the book's last chapter Siegmund Kluver goes restlessly about the building, trying desperately to cope with his problem. He tells Dillon Chrimes that it is

> "A purely personal thing. A sense of coming apart. Or breaking loose from my roots. . . ."
>
> "A kind of rootlessness. As though not belonging in Shanghai, not belonging in Louisville, not belonging in Warsaw, not belonging anywhere. Just a cluster of ambitions and inhibitions, no real self. And I'm lost inside. . . ."
>
> "Inside myself. Inside the building . . ." (p. 170).

He correctly sees himself as a "hungry rung-grabber who gets almost to the top and decides he doesn't want it" (Ch. 7, p. 170). The Narrator tells us that he suffers from "A sense of coming apart. A dislocation of the soul" (p. 171). The blessman (a kind of priest) tells him that he suffers from "Angst. Anomie. Dissociation. Identity drain. Familiar complaints . . ." (p. 175).

The blessman's answer is to show him god: the cosmos (Ch. 7, pp. 176–77). This does not work, so he goes to a consoler, what we would call a psychotherapist. The consoler's solution is much more practical; Siegmund cannot learn to cope with his problem; he needs the therapy of the moral engineers for a "reality adjustment." This is advice that the laws of his society say Siegmund must accept, but it is a course of *non*-action that he refuses to accept, for "he is afraid of being changed. He will come forth healthy and stable and different. Another person. All his Siegmundness

lost along with his anguish." He thinks of Aurea Holston, who "came forth from her tank docile and placid, a vegetable in place of a neurotic. Not for me, Siegmund thinks" (Ch. 7, p. 178).

On the advice of Rhea, an older woman friend who has the significant name of the Great Mother of the Gods, he uses the Louisville Access Nexus and with exquisit bureaucratic logic, "instructs the computer to yank the therapy assignment for Siegmund Kluver"—on the authority of "Siegmund Kluver of the Louisville Access Nexus" (Ch. 7, pp. 179–80). But while Siegmund can rely on the computer's basic stupidity temporarily to outwit bureaucracy, he cannot defeat the larger enemy. He still has not found god and is still unable to fit into his "social matrix." He can no longer appreciate "The ecstasy of verticality"; he is no longer "Plugged into the . . . switchboard," no longer able to glory in "Homeostasis, and the defeat of entropy" in the monads (Ch. 7, p. 183).

So he goes to the top of the building and jumps, "And sails toward god in a splendid leap" (Ch. 7, p. 184). Siegmund Kluver is defeated in the closest thing to tragedy in this novel. He has been torn apart by his desire to serve his urbmon and his recognition that there is no final purpose to the monads or to the lives of their servants.

Kluver's defeat, however, is a victory for the urbmon, as have all the defeats of the people in *The World Inside*. The story is one of victory for the villain-hero, the triumph of the mechanized hive antagonist over the novel's philosophical protagonist, the human spirit, over everything in people that would rebel against overpopulation and a dehumanizing static order.

Silverberg insists on this personification of the urbmon. He gives it a head (Louisville), senses (the scanners), a couple of hearts, and a dual reproduction system: the human reproducers and "the machines that stamp out machines" on its lower levels (Ch. 7, p. 164). Silverberg even allows us to see the urbmons reproducing in the construction and stocking of Urbmon 158. The "biped bees" do not exactly swarm; that would be too organic, too disorganized, too much a bottom-up sort of thing engendered by the compulsive urges of the masses.[10] No, Urbmon 158 is stocked in a very orderly fashion, with volunteers, encouraged by a well-run propaganda campaign, and with draftees chosen by lottery from among the childless. Still, the stocking of Urbmon 158 is the moral equivalent of swarming: when its human population grows beyond their means to support them all, the urbmons replicate and produce a new one, identical to all the others.

Moreover, the urbmon is entirely self-contained and, with its surrounding farming communes, entirely self-sufficient. It has conduits which carry about its body fluids and "cells" (its human inhabitants). In its efficiency it recycles its waste products. It is sensitive to environmental changes and adapts to them, as when its skin surfaces respond to the

coming of day (Ch. 1, p. 1; Ch. 7, p. 184). All these functions the urbmon performs routinely. And like any advanced organism, it defends itself. Those human cells which are not operating in perfect conformity with the urbmon's needs it intimidates, converts, or destroys.[11]

Thus, all the human failures dramatized in the novel are but the reverse of the urbmon's triumph. That triumph is the unifying action of the novel, comparable to a hive ridding itself of dysfunctional elements (for example, unneeded drones) or a body destroying its own aging or injured cells.

The World Inside, then, presents us with an extreme dystopia in which the human organism is subordinated literally, turned into a cell of a larger gestalt.[12] This vision may be regarded as an end of a long process in science-fiction literature.[13] Hitherto there have been mechanized and dehumanized societies, like those of *1984*, *Brave New World*, and Yevgeny Zamiatin's *We*. Surveillance has been used as part of computer tyrannies in *Year of Consent* and *This Perfect Day*. And people have found themselves trapped in enormous world-hive buildings like E. M. Forster's "Machine" and Megan Terry's "Home" or have been put out of business by robots, as in Karel Capek's *R.U.R.* and Jack Williamson's "With Folded Hands." But never to our knowledge has there been such a thorough depiction of the *hive itself* coming alive to subsume humanity and establish itself as a world-ruling colonial organism.

By the end of *The World Inside*, threats from any Falstaffian expression of misrule, any threats, in other words, from the *human* spirit, have been dispelled. "Life goes on. God bless! Here begins another happy day" (Ch. 7, p. 184).[14]

Notes

1. New York: Garden City, 1971. Further citations to *The World Inside* will be found in this text.*
2. When he commented on this paper at the SFRA convention, Robert Silverberg noted that he took some pains to make clear the unity of *The World Inside*. He specifically mentioned the "happy day" lines beginning and ending the book and his use of a character introduced or given a minor function in one chapter as the major character of the next chapter.
3. "Flippo," hence may also suggest "flipped" (down the chute).
4. Jason Quevedo, at one point in the novel, "sees a forced self-conscious mode of a morality coming into being" (Ch. 4, p. 81); he is thinking about the late twentieth century. The mores of his own society seem to have developed from such "morality."
5. The allusion to Pangloss' repeated assertion/phase in Voltaire's *Candide* serves to reinforce our questioning of the Urbmon as a Utopia. In *Candide*, "the best of all possible worlds" proves to be unsatisfactory; urbmon civilization is equally, if more subtly, unsatisfactory.
6. The sentence following the end of Aurea Holston's dream has her clutching Memnon, her husband, "who murmurs sleepily and sleepily enters her" (Ch. 2, p. 29). The juxtaposition of Aurea's being impaled on the building with Memnon's penetrating her cannot be coincidental. It may indicate that Aurea has a lower opinion of sexual intercourse and "a

woman's proper destiny" of motherhood than is normal in the world of *The World Inside*. Certainly it is significant that Memnon "sleepily enters her." Like Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Memnon commits an atrocity in his sleep: not "topping" his wife but sending her off to the moral engineers without thinking a whole lot about an action that condemns her to be radically changed.

7. For a discussion of some other hive-worlds, see our paper, "A Vision of Dystopia: Bee Hives and Mechanization," delivered at the Third Annual Conference on Utopian Studies, Section VIII C, 28 Oct. 1978.
8. For the motif of the Hero crossing a threshold, see Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2nd ed. (1949; rpt. with minor changes, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968, paperback ed., 1972), Bollingen Series, XVII, Part I, ch. 1, section 4, "The Crossing of the First Threshold," esp. pp. 77–79, 82. See also Kathleen L. Spencer, "Exiles and Envoys: Liminality and Communitas in the Science Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin," a paper presented at the Le Guin Seminar at the 9th Annual Convention of the Popular Culture Association, 27 April 1979.
9. Michael Statler embodies the idea of the *pharmakos*, as that character is described by Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1966). Insofar as we identify with Michael, we see him as a kind of scapegoat, sacrificed out of a perverse vision of the common good. This kind of *pharmakos* "is neither innocent nor guilty. He is innocent in the sense that what happens to him is far greater than anything he has done provokes. . . . He is guilty in the sense that he is a member of a guilty society, or living in a world where such injustices are an inescapable part of existence" (Frye, p. 41). This, of course, is the view that readers will and should take. From the viewpoint of Michael's society, however, he is a *pharmakos* in the sense of ironic comedy: a rascal to be driven out of the community (Frye, p. 45).
10. For swarming in a more "insectoid" hive, see Frank Herbert, *Hellstrom's Hive* (original title, "Project 40," *Galaxy Magazine*, ca. 1972; rpt. Doubleday, 1973, and New York: Bantam, 1974), pp. 149, 158–59, and 164–65 in Bantam ed.
11. For the hive as organism and its individual members analogous to cells, see any standard etymology book, for example, Edmund O. Wilson, *The Insect Societies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), p. 1.
12. An alternative metaphor can be found in "*The Words of Trova Hellstrom*"; she refers to Hive life as "the ultimate form of human domestication" (*Hellstom's Hive*, Bantam ed., p. 140).
13. Harold L. Berger discusses *The World Inside* in his section on "The Obsessional Catastrophe." For a summary of the process we can only cover briefly, see his *Science Fiction and the New Dark Age* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1976). Berger's discussion of *The World Inside* is on pp. 188–89.
14. For the "Falstaffian spirit" versus the beehive-utopia of Henry V's Archbishop of Canterbury, see our paper "A Vision of Dystopia," (n. 7), esp. pp. 1–3.

The Stellar Parallels: Robert Silverberg, Larry Niven, and Arthur C. Clarke

ALEXANDER NEDELKOVICH

■ Three excellent science-fiction stories, closely similar, are discussed here in order to show their striking resemblances and parallels and also the characteristic and meaningful differences between them. They are: Arthur C. Clarke's justly famous "The Star,"[1] probably written in 1955, and winner of the 1956 Hugo award; Larry Niven's "Neutron Star,"[2] an excellent work—in fact, one of his best—probably written in 1965; and Robert Silverberg's "To the Dark Star,"[3] probably written in 1968, when Silverberg had about fifteen years of professional writing experience behind him. Permit me to attempt an analysis and a personal appreciation of the three works.

Consider the titles. Clarke's "The Star" is the simplest, the shortest, and the only one that could stand just as easily as a mainstream story; to me it has a kind of static dignity. Niven's title "Neutron Star" immediately calls to mind nuclear physics and astronomy; it also implies what the story is "about": it is "about" an *object*. This is quite enough to repel many readers but likely to attract those who prefer hardcore science fiction. Only Silverberg's title contains movement—"To the Dark Star." It signals that the story is science-fictional, but it leaves open many possibilities as to its "contents."[4]

All three works are short stories, but not of equal length: Clarke's is about 2,700 words, Niven's about 8,000 words, and Silverberg's about 4,700 words. Later I shall attempt an explanation of these differences in length.

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The scientific-fictional core of each is similar, but the degree of complexity seems to increase chronologically. In each story the central object of interest is a star which has exploded, gone, not to nova, but to supernova, a very long time ago. What remains of each, however, is not the same. In Clarke's story a much smaller star, a white dwarf, still shines brightly in the same place. Clarke's main interest, however, is not with the remaining star itself but with the fact that the explosion cindered and swept away its planetary system. In Niven's story, a vast quantity of stellar matter has condensed into neutrons tightly packed together—neutronium, a hypothetical substance thousands of times denser and heavier than rock. Niven is primarily interested in the fact that such a body, so massive but only 18 kilometers across,[5] would exert a titanic gravitational pull. And in Silverberg's story what remains after the explosion is a black dwarf, a vast ball of lava gradually cooling off (EOS, p. 130). (It is the unique quality of science fiction that literary criticism of it can sometimes sound like this. Where else in literary criticism can you find any mention of neutrons, novas, gravitation?) Silverberg postulates that this black dwarf star will undergo a gravitational collapse, during which it will first shrink into a black hole, and then under its own gravity shrink into a point of zero volume and infinite density. At that instant it will vanish from the fabric of space and time and from this universe altogether. All three concepts are scientifically plausible but not to the same degree. What Clarke describes—namely, the type of process that he describes—is within the realm of sound scientific fact; Niven's neutron star is a definite possibility; Silverberg's concept is the boldest, and somewhat far-fetched.

It is interesting to note that all three authors opted, in these stories at least, for the same type of universe.[6] In all three stories it is shown that the universe is populated, but only very sparsely populated, by intelligent races. Mankind is shown to have acquired faster-than-light (FTL) ships and in the several centuries after the twentieth, to have explored a great number of stars in the nearer parts of the Milky Way.

In all three stories there is a human expedition to the remains of the star concerned, and each is aimed only at gathering knowledge, not material wealth. Two of the expeditions appear to be academically funded, but in Niven's story the expedition is mounted for commercial reasons: gathering knowledge for a business purpose. In one case (Clarke) there is the tragic past to think about, namely, the violent extinction of a civilization that once existed on the planets surrounding the star in question. In fact, in Clarke's "The Star," that is the main theme. In Niven's "Neutron Star," there is no mention of this, while in Silverberg's "To the Dark Star," there is just a passing reference to such a possibility.

Clarke's story opens with the famous sentence (one of the best introductory sentences ever in the American science-fiction short story): "It

is three thousand light-years to the Vatican" (BAC, p. 125). The narrator is, curiously, a Jesuit priest who is also a practicing astronomer and a space-traveler, and he is a member (the chief astrophysicist) of a rather multitudinous expedition which surveys the remains of a supernova that exploded 6,000 years before. The story is set in the thirtieth century. (If it is true that one of the jobs of literary criticism is to *re-create* the work of art, then I should withhold the punch line from you and try to build suspense. But I will not.) The hero computes that the light of this supernova, which killed an entire race of people,[7] was *the* star of Bethlehem; and the readers learn this only in the last sentence of the story, which makes for one of the most famous, classical punch lines in the history of the science-fiction short story. As the ship, with its precious cargo of information, alien artifacts, and works of art, speeds back towards Earth, the Jesuit grieves over the theological and moral implications of his discovery.[8]

In my opinion, Clarke errs against plausibility in one matter. He postulates that the destroyed civilization, in the years before its destruction, could reach its outermost planet, its equivalent of Pluto, with such huge machinery and so much cargo that a vast bunkered museum was built there and marked by a colossal stone pillar—"The pylon . . . a mile high when it was built" (BAC, p. 124)—but they did not put a colony of their people into that same shelter to survive. The Jesuit even says, "It will take us generations to examine all the treasures that were placed in the Vault. They had plenty of time to prepare, for their sun must have given its first warnings many years before its final detonation" (BAC, p. 121). Is it credible that they would have such priorities, that they would build a titanic museum instead of a place where hundreds could live?

In Niven's "Neutron Star," the narrator is a space pilot by profession, but he is also a freelance author of sorts. (Thus it is credible that he can speak with a writer's surety of language.) It is shown here, and in other stories by Niven, that an alien firm is building spacecraft hulls of phenomenal resilience and is selling them on several worlds; the hulls are advertised and sold as impenetrable. But when two explorers journey to observe closely a neutron star, the ship returns with their smashed bodies. What had penetrated the supposedly impenetrable hull? This question, of obvious economic importance to the firm, has to be settled by one or more new expeditions. The hero, Beowulf Shaeffer, is hired to make the trip single-handedly for a sum that sounds like a million dollars. He goes into a onetime, slingshot orbit around the object. With skill, luck, great professional competence, and good intuition, Shaeffer survives and returns with the answer. The force of gravitation, or, rather, a unique combination of disproportionate tidal gravitational forces and inertial forces, has splattered the men inside the first ship against the rigid hull. As the story

ends, we see Shaeffer in the hospital for minor injuries, but rich, famous, and happy.

In Niven's story there are, to the best of my knowledge, no serious scientific mistakes, no major offenses against plausibility and logic. The physics of it is convincing (and in this genre, it constitutes a part of the literary merit of the work). There is even the suggestion, almost unnoticeable, that the neutron star's speedy rotation, coupled with its enormous mass and gravity, may distort the space around it (NS, p. 15). This wraps up the matter, covering any possible criticism of the main physical-mechanical point of the story.

And now I go to Silverberg. But there is a hidden flaw in my procedure, an unfairness, because "The Star" (with "The Sentinel," 1954) represents the very best of Arthur C. Clarke and "Neutron Star" is one of the best short stories of Larry Niven, but Silverberg's "To the Dark Star" is easily eclipsed by some of his other stories.[9]

The expedition in "To the Dark Star" consists of three scientists on board a spaceship. One is an Earthman. Another, also human, is a mutated woman, a lady from a two-gravities planet, who is by genetic engineering anatomically adjusted to the double burden: very short, strong-boned, thick-legged, squat, powerful. The third scientist is an alien, a creature remotely humanoid in form, but with his brain located somewhere inside his thorax, hence with only a very small head upon his shoulders. The Earthman, who is the narrator, calls him "microcephalon." In Clarke's story there were no aliens; in Niven's an alien of totally nonhuman anatomy is shown to mingle socially with humans (which we watch and hear in many scenes); and in Silverberg's, an alien is completely accepted and included in the team. These are three different attitudes towards aliens.

There is one unpleasant matter. I have to say that in "The Star," Clarke reveals an attitude toward aliens which is odd and, in my view, quite unacceptable. Of course, a narrator speaks in the story, not the author, but nevertheless, consider these three points. (1) There are no living aliens in the story even though there easily could have been. It is quite obvious and it really strikes us that there should have been a survival colony in the bunker, not the colossal museum. Perhaps the author went out of his way so that he would not have to deal with any aliens. (2) The preserved pictures of the aliens show them to be "disturbingly human" (BAC, p. 130) in appearance—this should mean, very strongly anthropomorphic. (3) About two hundred words are spent insisting that the aliens were good according to Earth standards of goodness, even "musical" in speech. Is tragedy in the loss of a civilization or only in the loss of a civilization *we like*? "They could travel freely enough between the planets of their own sun, but they had not yet learned to cross the interstellar gulfs, and the nearest

solar system was a hundred light-years away. Yet even had they possessed the secret of the Transfinite drive no more than a few millions could have been saved. Perhaps it was better thus" (BAC, p. 130).

Now imagine a mainstream writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald, for instance, writing something in this general vein and having his narrator, Nick Carraway, say:

> What a lovely, big heap of ruins I saw at West Egg! Gatsby's mansion had caved in, you see, roof and all, during a big party, and all doors were locked, so everybody was killed. Saw their pictures—they all looked like me. I think it is a tragedy because they weren't just any people, they looked disturbingly like me. Oh, and there was a vault there, uncollapsed, quite safe, within their reach, but they didn't go for shelter there, they all just flung their medallions and pocketwatches there, and a tape recorder. Thinking about those doors: even had the doors been wide open, only a few dozen people would have saved themselves. Perhaps it was better thus.

This may be painful to a science-fiction fan, but if science fiction is good literature, why not put its best writers and the best mainstream writers up against one another and just look at them? Perhaps it is better thus.

Let us return to less troubled waters, to Silverberg's "To the Dark Star." The two humans in the ship, the Earthman and the genetically engineered lady, quarrel bitterly, and this personal feud reduces their professional effectiveness. The third scientist, the microcephalon, acts as a voluntary mediator. They enter an orbit around the dark star, but at a very great, very safe, distance: some eight light-days, which is 200 milliard kilometers. (It would be very unconvincing, to me at least, if the astronauts entered a tight, clearly dangerous orbit unnecessarily. It would have shown an attitude that I call the see-risk-will-plunge attitude.) The three people, despite the quarrel, collect a mass of data about that cooling body of lava and confirm the prediction that the star will soon collapse into its peculiar state of zero-size and nonexistence. They have at their disposal a robot probe, designed for the purpose, which can land on the surface itself, on one of the cooler slag heaps, and which can help observe the end. (Bear in mind that another writer might have the astronauts, perhaps all three, land on the surface of the cooling star; then, even more suicidally, walk right into the nearest "mysterious" cave; then get trapped, etc.—all in accordance with the see-risk-will-plunge attitude—not so Silverberg.) But before the robot probe can be sent, there is a human problem to solve: somebody will have to sit in a control booth on board the ship, utilize the remote-control instruments, and personally observe things that happen to the probe, down on the surface. They know this is perilous because that person will have his senses hooked more or less directly into the probe's sensors and will closely experience those moments when the star, and the probe with it, divorce themselves from this universe. Madness may be the consequence. None will

volunteer, and, as the matter apparently has not been settled on Earth, the conflict intensifies. The two humans go beyond quarreling: each attempts to dope or to hypnotize and finally to clobber the other. However, they finally grab the alien and dump *him* into the control booth. The microcephalon accepts this, observes the event, and reports well, but when it is over, when the humans take him out, he is silent, his mind is blank, erased. ("So it goes"—I seem to hear the well-known refrain.)[10] The voyage home begins, and the story ends this way: "Miranda and I perform our chores in harmony. The hostility between us is gone. . . . She smiles at me. I do not find her hateful now. The microcephalon is silent" (EOS, pp. 138–39). The story does not end with any talk about the astronomical object; matters of human interest prevail. The same holds for the ending of Niven's "Neutron Star," also given over to personal matters. (So, if for the sake of the argument we decided to judge the three stories exclusively by their endings, it would appear that Clarke wrote a story about a problem, while Niven and Silverberg wrote stories about people.)

Silverberg does make a scientific mistake, but only a marginal one and only by omission. He gives no explanation about the *way* the remote pickup is effected, over the distance of eight light-days. Obviously an instantaneous communication is implied, but it is not explicitly stated. One could assume therefore that the author completely overlooked the matter, or perhaps saw it but did not bother to do anything about it. I think that just two words, or even a single word, would have sufficed. It appears then that of the three stories, only Niven's is free of such scientific faults.

Silverberg adds one almost unnoticed but brilliant little detail. His narrator says, "We are on our way back . . . now. The mission has been accomplished. We have relayed priceless and unique data" (EOS, pp. 138–39). Relayed, not brought back—that is the point. In so many stories about space travel, the discovery of an alien civilization or some such thing is never reported, brought back only by the lonely ship, practically by word of mouth, in a somewhat medieval fashion. One example of this occurs in Clarke's story: if the ship with the Jesuit should crash, no one would ever know what was discovered, if anything. All-the-eggs-in-one-starship, then. Robert Silverberg did not use that cliché, and his heroes report back in full detail as soon as they can.[11]

Perhaps in some cases there is a dilemma between plentiful adventures and suspension-of-disbelief, in the sense that more of one reduces the amount of the other. If the heroes in a story of this kind go into a perilous orbit, it will soup up the adventures. If they walk on the surface, get into caves and pitfalls, etc., it will heighten the tension and provide an opportunity for every individual to assert himself in action: a young lady by getting into danger, the hero by rescuing her, and so on. And if they never call home, then there will be a question—will they return and give the news

about their discoveries to the world, or will they perish and the knowledge with them?[12] The importance of their safe return is thereby artificially enhanced. Silverberg utilized none of these methods, and consequently his story looks very simply plotted, but very credible and enjoyable.

All three stories are told in the first person, and the reader sees everything through the eyes of the narrator, but Clarke's "The Star" is the most structurally complex of the three. "The Star" opens and closes with the Jesuit Father in his cell, thinking, contemplating, as the spacecraft is voyaging back to Earth. Inside that frame is the canvas itself: remembered discussions on board the ship before the arrival at the star and remembered images of the exploration itself. But there are also brief glimpses of the distant past of 6,000 years ago when the civilization in question still existed. And much is said about what will happen on Earth when the discovery is revealed. This structure reminds me of a canvas in a solid, four-sided frame, with an attached piece of painting behind it and another in front of it. The reader has to change telescopes several times. But all of this is firmly integrated into the confessional monologue. The story strikes me as cold and sad, a monotone voice in a little room. Reading it, I seem to hear a clock tick. Clarke's is the only story I have ever read that detonates a supernova quietly. There is a good reason for the shortness of the story: this solitary contemplation could not go on much longer without, to put it bluntly, getting dull.

Niven's story opens with a flesh-forward, or teaser—Beowulf Shaeffer floating in the cockpit of his ship and approaching the neutron star. Then comes the true beginning of the sequence of events: things that led to the signing of the contract, the preparations for the trip, etc.; the narrative reaches the point shown in the teaser and simply continues to the end, a talk in a hospital, where it is chopped off in the middle of a dialogue. This would make a good movie scenario. The style of the story, the feel of it, differs enormously from that of Clark's. Niven presents many sights and sounds, events, dialogues, and confrontations, and he dwells on the technology and physics of the matter. Of all three authors only Niven describes the outer appearance and the functioning of the spaceship. Not surprisingly, it is the longest story.

At first glance, the structure of Silverberg's story is the simplest: a single-line, straight narrative, beginning with the arrival at the dark star and describing events in their chronological order. But the predominant grammatical tense is past simple, while the last passage—an epilogue of a kind—stands sharply apart, being told predominantly in present simple. Only because of the tense change does the reader then realize that the epilogue is the dramatic *now*, the vantage point from which the narrator looks back at the past events. The story is put into a frame, but this is achieved with economy, sophistication, and beauty. In addition, it permits

greater tension: as we read, we wonder what will happen to the narrator, and only in the end do we see that nothing will happen to him because he is already safely on his way home. Compare! Clarke's story was also a remembrance of a space explorer already on his way home, but this was revealed at the *beginning* and put across in a rather ponderous manner. I can only repeat here what an editor said about Silverberg, "He does it so well."[13]

What Harry Kroitor, in discussing Niven and Silverberg in another context, called a "quick push out of present time"[14] is achieved in all three stories with swift and masterly moves. In each story, the very first sentence in itself is full of jolts that elevate the reader from his here and now, into the narrator's then and there. Just listen to them:

(1) "It is three thousand light years to the Vatican" (BAC, p. 125).

(2) "The *Skydiver* dropped out of hyperspace an even million miles above the neutron star" (NS, p. 9).

(3) "We came to the dark star, the microcephalon and the adapted girl, and I, and our struggle began (EOS, p. 128).

But in none of the three stories is there any use of the Asimov specialty, fancy footnotes with references to some learned works of far future.

I wish to praise all three authors discussed here for displaying the blessed ability *not* to say the wrong things, not to do the wrong things, not to fall into traps. To wit, can you imagine any one of them putting into the stories discussed here a sentence like this, for example: "And of course our astronauts, those brave sailors of the future, still took some precautions, because people are such: they take precautions . . ."? A single painful idiocy like that would have burst any story to shreds. Or, a more European kind of fiasco? Try to write this half-sentence into any of the three stories, putting it somewhere near the end: "And now, to make this long fantasy shorter for you. . . ." No footnotes here; you will have to take my word for it—I *have* read such things, at times. But in "The Star," "Neutron Star," and "To the Dark Star," the writers displayed the quality of mercy, blessed mercy, by not doing such things. Perhaps this constitutes more than half of success, or at least so I sometimes feel.

On the other hand, if a Kurt Vonnegut took any of these stories in his hands, fragmented it, added a big leaping dog and a few Martians who march to the sound of "rented a tent, rented a tent," it might still be good, but in a different way, in a different genre. It might become a socially relevant satirical fantasy in science-fiction guise, and that is very far from the hardcore science fiction which the three stories are.

The three hero-narrators have much in common; yet they are very different persons. All three are males, of Earth, highly educated, and presumably relatively young. As all three speak in the first person (what the Germans very conveniently call *die Ich-Erzählung*—the I-narration), none

is ever seen through someone else's eyes, and their physical features are not described, though in Silverberg's story there is an implication that the narrator is very short and slender. We know the name of only one of them, in the longest story (Niven's), and not surprisingly we get to see much more of Beowulf Shaeffer's personality than of anybody else's.[15]

The linguistic problems are smoothly avoided; all three men speak English. If the stories were translated into German, all the characters would be speaking German, modern literary German, or French in a French translation, etc.; so that the reader who thinks of such problems will conclude that the characters are simply *shown* for the reader's convenience to be speaking the reader's language. This is one reasonable solution to a difficult and complex problem[16] because it permits easy and untroubled reading while leaving the door open for readers to assume, if they wish, that in the remote future people will be speaking entirely differently and that what they are reading is not a transcript but only a convenient translation into a twentieth-century language.

Clarke's hero, the Jesuit, seems to be a very quiet and composed person. He is primarily concerned with the broad moral and theological implications of his discovery. That discovery he still does not share with anybody. (So, if anything should happen to him, the discovery could be buried forever; thus he increases and prolongs the danger to a piece of scientific knowledge.) Nonetheless, Clarke's excellent story, which appeared in 1955 and was widely read, probably has contributed to the development of the science-fiction genre by focusing so successfully on things other than space opera. The personality of the narrator must have been helpful.

Niven's narrator, Beowulf Shaeffer, could not be more different. He drinks, he upturns skirts, he lives high, and he spends mightily. This big spender only signs the contract because he is heavily in debt and, like Rawdon Crawley,[17] must not stop spending spectacularly because that might make his creditors suspicious. But I feel that he accepts the job not just for money, but also because, at heart, he was attracted by it.[18] Beowulf Shaeffer has great physical courage, and he delights in matters of professional competence; it is my impression that he loves space piloting. He feels an inner imperative to be good at his job, and in this he resembles some of Ernest Hemingway's characters (though without those irrational, destructive compulsions that some of Hemingway's heroes have about walking tall, staying taciturn, and picking unnecessary fights with men and Nature in order to die proud).

In "Neutron Star," there is a peculiar, almost masochistic, delight in exposing the cynicism and cold materialism of the world in which the hero lives—a world in which self-interest is announced with blunt disregard for anybody else. Fraud and deceit are planned by each side as a matter of

course and are anticipated by the opposite side. Beowulf Shaeffer is, most conspicuously, *not* an idealist. He apparently believes in nothing higher, and he tries to handle whatever the universe hurls at him strictly on a self-interest basis. This earthliness may be Niven's way of convincing his readers of the realism and credibility of the story. Besides, Niven's characters bring us joy by spectacularly tearing down the veils of hypocrisy. Borrowing a phrase of Robert Philmus, I shall call this earthliness a "rhetorical strategy . . . to get the reader to suspend disbelief."[19] And to borrow further from Philmus, I believe that all three stories definitely fall into the category that Philmus called "public myth" as opposed to "private myth."[20] Namely, all three stories happen in broad daylight before many witnesses. There is no possibility that in the end the hero will be alone in his knowledge that something has happened, with no one else knowing or having heard or believing, with no proof remaining. In these three stories, the whole world knows about the stellar expeditions, the whole of mankind believes that they are really taking place.

Finally, there is Silverberg's hero, who is only sketched in. The entertaining aspect is that his physical appearance can only be judged in proportion to the woman scientist Miranda, who is said to look titanically fat and to weigh (here the narrator ties himself to a specific figure) 300 pounds. Such a person would have to be short. I estimate that she is about five feet tall. I support this by reasoning that on a two-gravities planet, a tall person would not be able to function; she would soon die of heart failure and broken blood vessels. Therefore, a person genetically engineered, as Miranda is, especially *for* a 2-G planet would have to be very short. I hope this is how Silverberg meant it because if he did not, he has committed a serious scientific mistake. Yet, if I am estimating correctly, the narrator, who once says of Miranda that "Her enormous body reared up before me" (EOS, p. 136), must be even shorter than she is. There are also clues that he is delicately built. Perhaps the author meant all this to be only a comic aspect of the story and did not bother to work it out in proper detail. In an autobiographical article, Robert Silverberg admitted that at one time he ". . . mass-produced formularized stories at high speed. . . . I developed a deadly facility. . . . I withdrew, bit by bit, from my lunatic work schedule: having written better than a million and a half words for publication in 1965, I barely exceeded a million in 1966, and have never been anywhere near that insane level of productivity since."[21] If he wrote "To the Dark Star" in 1968, perhaps he was more careful by then and wanted his hero to be so small.

Psychologically, both humans in "To the Dark Star" are sour types, as the unnecessary ugliness between them shows. They do not seem at all awed by the grandness of space flight as such or of their particular space flight, not in the sense of becoming dignified and respectful about their great

mission. This contrasts very sharply with the atmosphere aboard Clarke's ship, where all people seem dignified, friendly, peaceful, and elevated.

Only in Silverberg's story is there sex. Science-fiction criticism today demands a normalization of science fiction in this respect. For instance, critics Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin acknowledge sex as a "legitimate aspect of science fiction" and even deplore that "science fiction has been a bit belated in according sexual relations their due."[22] This opinion illustrates the *Zeitgeist*—the spirit of the times. In "To the Dark Star," Miranda, the lady scientist, often walks the corridors naked, maybe with good intentions, but the narrator, immersed in hatred, finds her nudity repugnant, not sexy. This, naturally, contributes to the comical side of the story. Here is the sexiest passage, one that would be totally unacceptable to editors like Hugo Gernsback or to John W. Campbell before 1950:

> She devoted her energies to an immature attempt to trouble me. Lately she took to walking around the ship in the nude, I suspect trying to stir some spark of sexual feeling in me that she could douse with a blunt, mocking refusal. The trouble was that I could feel no desire whatever for a grotesque adapted creature like Miranda, a mound of muscle and bone twice my size. The sight of her massive udders and monumental buttocks stirred nothing in me but disgust. (EOS, pp. 132–33)

In Clarke's story, there is absolutely no mention of anything base in the monastic monologue; no mention of any woman on board the ship or any women anywhere; no mention of any females among the thousands of pictures and sculptures that the aliens had left; no reference to any little girls in the one described picture of alien children; no female moths anywhere in the museum; absolutely no creature unclean.

Niven's hero, Beowulf Shaeffer, has sex much on his mind, but not in this story. In the "Neutron Star" there are repeated references to a lady astronaut, Sonya Laskin, who died with her husband in the initial disaster, the disaster that necessitated Shaeffer's trip. There are two references to a female nurse (p. 27) and also a reference to an alien voice exciting to Shaeffer, like that of "a lovely woman" (p. 11). That is all. By comparison, Silverberg's story is by far the most sex-oriented of the three.

As David Larson said, "Most unfriendly critics of . . . science fiction finally rest their cases on extra-literary grounds."[23] These three stories certainly could be attacked on extra-literary grounds. None of them is "relevant" in the sense of commenting upon the twentieth-century world and advising the readers how to cope with their real problems today, and if any such crude utilitarian demand is accepted as a standard of literary value, if such "relevance" is the *differentia specifica* of the mainstream, then these three stories must be confined to the science-fiction ghetto. Yet, at least two have underlying philosophical meanings and attitudes. Clarke's story is rather complex in this respect, with two world views, theological

and atheistic, being argued side by side in an attempt to explain a tragedy. Niven's is a brightly optimistic story because it postulates a universe governed by reason and logic, an understandable, graspable, controllable universe, one in which a man can struggle and achieve. (It is good reading for young people.) How far it is from the sadness of an Albert Camus and his myth of Sisyphus! Beowulf Shaeffer, the space pilot, may have heard of the Greek legend of Sisyphus, but he himself is no Sisyphus; he does not think that all human effort is basically in vain. He has never heard of Sartre and would only be amused if someone tried to persuade him that his existence is without "essence." "Neutron Star" ends triumphantly, the success is complete, there is rejoicing, almost cheering. But then, for precisely these reasons, the story might be attacked as puerile, shallow, and naïve.

It might seem natural to conclude by rating the stories—which is the best, which the second-best, and in what way and to what degree—but I will do no such thing. I only hope that their similarities allow their important differences to be seen more prominently.

Notes

1. *The Best of Arthur C. Clarke, 1937–1971* (London: Sphere Book, 1975), pp. 125–32. All further references to Clarke's story are based on this edition. Citations in the text are coded BAC.
2. First published in *Worlds of If* magazine, October, 1966. However, all references here are based on Larry Niven, *Neutron Star* (New York: Ballantine, 1976), pp. 9–28. This is a collection of stories, a book within a tetralogy. Citations in the text are coded NS.
3. At least the copyright indicates 1968. All references are based on Robert Silverberg, *Earth's Other Shadow* (New York: New American Library, 1973), pp. 128–39. Citations in the text are coded EOS.
4. "Contents" may be the wrong word to use in literary criticism because it might imply that the work itself is only a vessel for something else, separable and distinct, a "contents."
5. Eleven miles, Niven's narrator says, and if he meant the old land miles of 1,609 meters, it computes to 18 kays. But if he meant English miles of 1,523 meters, it is 16.7 kays, and if he meant geographical miles—and who can tell?—then it is 20.4 kilometers.
6. Niven's universe, however, is worked out in greater detail. He plotted the history of it in detail (like Heinlein who, decades ago, constructed his future history of the Earth). Niven marginally linked his universe to the *Star Trek* universe through the cartoon episode *The Slaver Weapon* which he wrote.
7. Perhaps I should say, of non-Earth humans.
8. Clarke's story fits in well with certain of David Ketterer's ideas about apocalyptic aspects of science fiction; though he speaks of "an epistemological or philosophical apocalypse," while in "The Star," indeed, "a new world destroys an old world" quite literally. See David Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 77.
9. For instance by Silverberg's superb story "Passengers," which is a genuine masterpiece and, in my opinion, stands side by side with Franz Kafka's much acclaimed 1916 piece "Transformation" ("Die Verwandlung").
10. From Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* (New York: Dell; eleventh printing, n.d.), pp. 19, 21, 22, 23, et passim.

11. Niven's hero reports as soon as he is rescued and, in the hospital, is visited by his employer.
12. *Star Trek* is inclined to this all-the-eggs-in-one-starship attitude, and also to the see-risk-will-plunge attitude. In many episodes, Captain Kirk learns of something vastly important, and it is obvious that he ought to retreat a little, have a long talk with his Admiralty, and then act—but no, he wants to first plunge into desperate battles.
13. Harry Harrison said it, in Harry Harrison and Brian Aldiss, ed., *The Year's Best SF No. 7* (London: Sphere Books, 1975), p. 119.
14. Harry P. Kroitor, "The Special Demands of Point of View in Science Fiction," *Extrapolation* (May, 1976), p. 154.
15. But it is difficult for me to separate what one can learn about Beowulf Shaeffer from this one story, and what comes from those other stories in which he appears, such as "At the Core," "Flatlander," "Grendel," etc. These can be found in Niven, *Neutron Star.*
16. One of the works about the linguistic problems in science fiction is Myra Jean Barnes, *Linguistics and Languages in Science Fiction-Fantasy* (New York: Arno Press, 1975).
17. A character in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair.*
18. This despite the fact that he schemed to break the contract and run away with his employer's excellent and fast ship.
19. Robert M. Philmus, *Into the Unknown, the Evolution of Science Fiction from Francis Godwin to H. G. Wells* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1970), p. vii.
20. Philmus, pp. 33–35.
21. Robert Silverberg, "Sounding Brass, Tinkling Cymbal," an autobiographical article in Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison, ed., *Hell's Cartographers, Some Personal Histories of Science Fiction Writers* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson Publishers, 1975), pp. 19, 20, 33.
22. Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin, *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 187.
23. David M. Larson, "Science Fiction, the Novel, and the Continuity of Condemnation," *Journal of General Education* (Spring, 1976), pp. 63–74, 71.

Flights into the Unknown: Structural Similarities in Two Works by H. G. Wells and Henry James

BARBARA BENGELS

■ Henry James voiced a great admiration for H. G. Wells's 1895 science-fiction gem, *The Time Machine*,[1] and well he might, for his own brilliant chiller, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), bears a striking resemblance in style and format to the earlier work. That is not to suggest any attempt on James's part to copy from his younger friend; in fact, James states that he first read *The Time Machine* in 1900, five years after its publication, and two years after the publication of *The Turn of the Screw*. There is, nevertheless, an interesting bond between the two men, for while *The Time Machine* fascinated James, Wells seemed equally interested in the Jamesian novel, which he was to satirize in *Boon* several years later when their friendship had gone sour.[2] To gain greater understanding of the fine line between the science fiction of Wells, which focuses on sociological extrapolation, and the gothic mode of James, which centers on psychological implications, it is worthwile to see how similar the two novels are, and how, when they do diverge, it is always to achieve a greater sense of individual characterization in the one novel and a greater emphasis upon the character of the human race as a whole in the other.

The first, and most obvious, similarity of the two works is in their initial settings. As Bernard Bergonzi points out in his fine essay "*The Time Machine*: An Ironic Myth," *The Time Machine* "belongs to the class of story which includes James's *Turn of the Screw*, and which Northrop Frye has called 'the tale told in quotation marks, where we have an opening setting with a small group of congenial people, and then the real story told by one of the members.' "[3] In *The Time Machine*, of course, that setting is a

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skeptical after-dinner discussion of the Time Traveller's latest invention, his time machine, a discussion attended by an assortment of stereotypes—all highly uncharacterized—and the outermost narrator who, while unnamed, nevertheless informs us that he "was one of the Time Traveller's most constant guests" (p. 24).[4] This first chapter establishes the scientific basis for the concept of time travel; in the second chapter, which occurs one week later (on the following Thursday night, with a somewhat different assortment of guests in attendance) the Time Traveller returns late and disheveled, but prepared to unfold his preposterous and astounding tale of future horrors. In *The Turn of the Screw* the single framework chapter immediately establishes the appropriate mood for a ghost story as a generally anonymous group is settled around the fireplace (presumably on Christmas Eve), listening to horror tales. Douglas, the protagonist's erstwhile confidant, promises an even more frightening—because real—story as soon as he can obtain the original manuscript (interestingly enough, also on the following Thursday night), and, while reluctant to unfold a story which has remained untold for forty years, he nevertheless carries on a dialog with the again unnamed outermost narrator, practically imploring him (or her) to help him break the ice. Just as the initial narrator in *The Time Machine* seems to be a special friend of the Time Traveller's, so the outermost narrator in *The Turn of the Screw* seems to bear a special relationship to Douglas, a relationship which allows Douglas to say, " 'You'll easily judge,' he repeated: '*you* will.' " (p. 3).[5] Thus, in the opening chapters of both books important groundwork is established: in one, a mood of suspense and tension pervades the scene, preparing the reader for what is to come; in the other, the scientific premise is explained, but, as Bergonzi points out, the "atmosphere makes the completest possible contrast with what is to come: an account of a wholly imaginative world of dominantly paradisal and demonic imagery, lying far outside the possible experience of the late Victorian bourgeoisie."[6] This was all very much in keeping with Wells's style of having the exotic occur in commonplace settings, but James was to follow this pattern too in the main portion of his novel: James "liked the strange and the sinister embroidered on the very type of the normal and the easy. . . . That is why James preferred daylight ghosts."[7] In both books there also appears an especially attentive listener (akin to the young wedding guest in Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"), who will ultimately retell what he has heard and experienced. Here the two books differ, for we expect that Wells's outermost narrator is an impartial witness to the events in the story—and, in fact, later in the book, a participant in them as he watches the Time Traveller depart on his final journey, thereby ultimately vouching for his veracity. Douglas' friend, however, not only obviously shares some special relationship with Douglas but also reveals that Douglas himself obviously

held some very special feelings, feelings in fact of love, for the governess. Therefore, James may very well want us to constantly reassess Douglas' appraisal of the governess's character and of his attestation of her sanity as he recounts the very odd events in which she took part. Finally, in the framework chapters of both books there is an interval of time between the first mention of the extraordinary occurrence and the continuation of the tale—building up tension in the listener and reader alike.

Another area in which both books are strikingly similar is the manner in which their authors try to establish the credibility of their obviously incredible inventions, a machine in the one book and a particularly ambiguous set of ghosts in the other. Wells's Time Traveller first tries to convince his guests of the impossibility of an "instantaneous cube," and once he has established the existence of the Fourth Dimension (this in a pre-Einsteinian world), he leads his guests to see his device:

> "Would you like to see the Time Machine itself?" asked the Time Traveller. And therewith, taking his lamp in his hand, he led the way down the long, draughty corridor to his laboratory. I remember vividly the flickering light, his queer, broad head in silhouette, the dance of the shadows, how we all followed him, puzzled but incredulous, and how there in the laboratory we beheld a larger edition of his little mechanism which we had seen vanish from before our eyes. Parts were of nickel, parts of ivory, parts had certainly been filed or sawn out of rock crystal. The thing was generally complete, but the twisted crystalline bars lay unfinished upon the bench beside some sheets of drawings, and I took one up for a better look at it. Quartz it seemed to be. (p. 22)

The description exhibits a twofold interest: for one thing, it is a fascinating mixture of the gothic with its draughty corridor and flickering lights, and of "early" science fiction with its laboratory and scientific trappings. It is equally fascinating, however, for its imprecision. As Bergonzi points out, "The assemblage of details is strictly speaking meaningless but nevertheless conveys effectively a *sense of the machine* without putting the author to the taxing necessity of giving a direct description."[8] How similar this sounds to James's own description of his technique for creating ghosts "capable of portentous evil."[9] In his "New York Preface" to *Turn of the Screw*, he writes:

> What, in the last analysis, had I to give the sense of? Of their being, the haunting pair, capable, as the phrase is, of everything—that is, of exerting, in respect to the children, the very worst action small victims so conditioned might be conceived as subject to. What would *be* then, on reflexion, this utmost conceivability?—a question to which the answer all admirably came. There is for such a case no eligible *absolute* of the wrong; it remains relative to fifty other elements, a matter of appreciation, speculation, imagination—these things moreover quite exactly in the light of the spectator's, the critic's, the reader's experience. Only make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough, I said

> to myself—and that already is a charming job—and his own experience, his own imagination, his own sympathy (with the children) and horror (of their false friends) will supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars. Make him *think* the evil, make him think it for himself, and you are released from weak specifications.[10]

Thus he lays the groundwork for ghosts so horrendous that they may very well spring from anyone's fertile imagination, the most imaginative in the tale being the governess herself. (It is especially interesting to note that he speaks in the above paragraph of the children's "false friends" rather than more specifically of the "haunting pair" as he does earlier in the passage, another indication that the "evil" in the book may be even more complicated than the governess can possibly know.)

Finally, it is in the main characters and their experiences that we find some of the most interesting similarities of the two works. Obviously our first need as readers is to be able to believe the fantastic tales the narrators tell. Wells sets himself an easier task in this instance. On the one hand, he warns us through his outermost narrator that his "Time Traveller was one of those men who are too clever to be believed . . . ; you always suspected some subtle reserve, some ingenuity in ambush, behind his lucid frankness" and in fact he had "more than a touch of whim among his elements, and we distrusted him" (p. 23). On the other hand, however, he has the Time Traveller bring back Weena's flowers and then actually vanish into Time in the narrator's presence. Ultimately, because the narrator has the "last word" in the final framework chapter, we are left no alternative but to believe in the Time Traveller's adventures and his version of the dismal future he has visited. Such, however, is not the case with James's governess, for he has carefully failed to return to close his framework chapter at the novel's end. Thus we never hear the remarks and analysis or the credence or disbelief given to the governess's tale of ghostly visitation—for to have openly discussed it would surely have been to spoil James's carefully wrought effect. What we are left with is what Douglas tells us about the governess—and about himself—what she wittingly and unwittingly reveals, and what we make of her actions, and the reactions of those around her. This indeed is far more complex than the Time Traveller's "whimsical" nature. We learn of the governess's instant infatuation with her employer, of her cloistered upbringing, of her eccentric father, of her need to be in command and worthy of the master, all suggesting the possibility that the ghosts are as much her invention as the machine is the Time Traveller's. But to offset the psychological implications we also learn that after Miles's death she has subsequently gone on to another similar position, in fact in Douglas' own household, certainly a fact that seems to substantiate her reliability and veracity. What we have here, then, is far more difficult to evaluate, James's "*amusette* to catch those not easily caught."[11]

Regardless of their varying degrees of credibility, however, what is also

interesting to note are the initial reactions of both the Time Traveller and the governess (both unnamed) to their new environments and how disturbingly unprepared they are to evaluate their situations. The Time Traveller, for example, informs us that he had "always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand odd would be incredibly in front of us in knowledge, art, everything" (p. 36). Initially he feels disappointment: "For a moment I felt that I had built the Time Machine in vain" (p. 36). But he is yet far from comprehending the predicament of either the Eloi or of the human race. The governess's initial reactions to Bly are quite the opposite: "I suppose I had expected—or had dreaded, something so dreary that what greeted me was a good surprise. . . . The scene had a greatness that made a different affair from my own scant home, and there immediately appeared at the door, with a little girl in her hand, a civil person who dropped me as decent a curtsy as if I had been the mistress or a distinguished visitor" (p. 7). How unlike the Time Traveller's ego-bruising experience! Thus although their first impressions of their domains are quite opposite (possibly as the result of the way in which they are greeted), they both come to feel similarly about the inhabitants of their new worlds. The Time Traveller speaks of the "very beautiful and graceful creature" (p. 34), of the "something in these pretty little people that inspired confidence—a graceful gentleness, a certain childlike ease" (p. 35). He soon sees himself "like a schoolmaster amidst children" (p. 39) and before long stands in smug judgment of them: "As I stood there in the gathering dark I thought that in this simple explanation I had mastered the problem of the whole secret of these delicious people" (p. 45). So, too, the governess (who, of course, is in fact a schoolmistress amongst her children) sizes them up in the most favorable of terms: Flora is "the most beautiful child I had ever seen" (p. 7), "beatific" (p. 8), "the vision of . . . angelic beauty" (p. 8). "To watch, teach, 'form' little Flora would too evidently be the making of a happy and useful life" (p. 8). When she first sees Miles it is "in the great glow of freshness, the same positive fragrance of purity, in which I had from the first moment seen his little sister. He was incredibly beautiful . . . " (p. 13). And like the Time Traveller, she too begins to feel in command—but of a very different situation: "I had the fancy of our being almost as lost as a handful of passengers in a great drifting ship. Well, I was strangely at the helm!" (p. 10). Therefore, as romantic as is the governess's original appraisal of her situation, she perhaps more rapidly perceives the underlying menace. The Time Traveller had flirted with the idea that the human race might have "developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful" (p. 33), but he continues to survey his Paradise until he discovers the total lack of fellow feeling that allows for Weena's near drowning. His subsequent discovery of the bifurcation of mankind, the inevitable outcome of its earlier worker-aristocrat division, forces him to entirely reevaluate all that he has witnessed both in future and present

time. So, too, the governess's increasing awareness of diabolical presences, either real or imagined, forces her to pursue a course of action based upon the assumption that the children are anything but angelic, that they are instead in league with the devilish pair.

To be sure, there are other peculiar correspondences between the two novels, the pervasive and ambivalent use of fire, for example,[12] even the sense of Nathaniel Hawthorne hovering somewhere offstage. (Wells acknowledges that he initially rewrote his earliest draft of *The Time Machine*, "The Chronic Argonauts," because it sounded too Hawthornian;[13] James was impressed enough by Hawthorne to write his biography.) But in a larger sense the similarities between the two works appear right from the settings, through the stylistic devices of obscuring the petty details to achieve a sense of the whole, finally in the plight and reactions of the major characters, a young girl whose innocence may be leading her into a hell of her own making, and a scientist who, in his naïve optimism, may have to shed his innocence to fully assess the future degeneracy of the human race. They both may hope for the best, but neither science fiction nor human psychology can truly predict what mankind is capable of.

Notes

1. Having just read *The Time Machine*, James wrote to Wells in a letter dated January 29, 1900: "You are very magnificent. I am beastly critical—but you are in a still higher degree wonderful. I re-write you, much, as I read—which is the highest tribute my damned impertinence can pay an author." *Henry James and H. G. Wells: A Record of their Friendship, their Debate on the Art of Fiction, and their Quarrel*, ed. Leon Edel and Gordon N. Ray (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1958), p. 63.
2. Edel and Ray, p. 37.
3. In *H. G. Wells: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Twentieth Century Views, 127 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Spectrum/Prentice-Hall: 1976), p. 40. Henceforth, this will be referred to as "Ironic Myth."
4. H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* in *The Time Machine and War of the Worlds: A Critical Edition*, ed. Frank D. McConnell (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 24. All references to *The Time Machine* are from this edition.
5. Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1966), p. 3. All references are from this edition.
6. "Ironic Myth," p. 41.
7. Leon Edel, *Henry James: 1895–1901—The Treacherous Years* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1969), p. 214.
8. "Ironic Myth," p. 42. Emphasis added.
9. Henry James, "The New York Preface," in *The Turn of the Screw*, p. 122.
10. Pp. 122–23.
11. "The New York Preface," p. 120.
12. In *The Turn of the Screw*, fire is used throughout as a symbol both of passion and demonic possession; in *The Time Machine* it is both the Time Traveller's mode of escape and ultimately of his loss of Weena.
13. H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), p. 253.

Devil's Tor: A Rehabilitation of David Lindsay's "Monster"

J. DERRICK McCLURE

■ The most ambitious of David Lindsay's published novels, *Devil's Tor* (1932), is a formidably difficult book both to read and to assess. Early reviews demonstrate the incomprehension of critics from its first appearance; more recent commentators have also shown themselves to be daunted or repelled. The task of evaluating a novel that is so extraordinary even for this starkly individualistic writer is undoubtedly a large one: major barriers to sympathetic criticism abound, and no amount of intellectual acclimatization or good will can alter the fact that the writing contains serious flaws. The long passages where the characters' mental workings are minutely analyzed for page after page, the massive display of erudition, and the boldness and strangeness of the philosophical concepts combine to make reading the book a challenge of considerable magnitude. The doctrine of white supremacy, stated specifically and emphatically and holding an important place in the worldview which the book expounds, is *a priori* objectionable to many people. Lindsay's attempt to portray a goddess-like figure in the character of Ingrid is a disastrous failure: though we are repeatedly told that the other characters recognize, through her presence and manner, a woman bearing a divinely ordained and cosmic destiny, she impresses the reader as an utterly colorless girl, intellectually gifted and imaginative, certainly, but possessing virtually no positive character trait except an obstinate determination to make no decision whatever on her own initiative.

The uncompromising character and uneven quality of the book, however, clearly should be judged with reference to the author's intention. Lindsay's purpose in writing this novel was nothing less than the dramatic presentation of a new philosophy of the natural and supernatural universes, embracing and transcending all existing creeds, including

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Christianity; of the evidence—namely, the histories, religions, and mythologies of a large section of mankind—on which this philosophy is based; and, most audacious of all, of the nature and mode of operation of the divine powers governing the cosmos. There can be no doubt that Lindsay is presenting his thought not as mere fantasy but for serious consideration; the enormous effort which was obviously put into the writing of the book is evidence of this. So stupendous a theme could clearly not be treated in a lightweight or easy piece of writing, and Lindsay is certainly transgressing no literary convention in demanding a real intellectual effort on the part of his readers. If James Joyce has the right to make an obscure and difficult novel out of some very ordinary incidents and characters, Lindsay is equally entitled to expect that some readers will be prepared to devote serious attention to a story of events as far from ordinary as they could be. Or—a more apt comparison—Robert Graves is not, as far as I know, considered to be taking any particular liberty in incorporating a vast amount of historical detail, philosophical speculation, and intimate knowledge of ancient mythology and theology, into his remarkable novel *King Jesus*; he is simply applying to his momentous theme all the resources it demands. This is in no way different from Lindsay's practice in *Devil's Tor*. The fictional framework in which the theme is presented, too, is precisely the gradual realization by the characters, as the result of a long series of incidents, some dramatic and others apparently trivial, that an event of cosmic importance is about to take place with themselves at its center. A slow pace to the story is almost prescribed by such an approach. The intensely detailed exploration of the characters' minds, as their intellects assimilate the overwhelming significance of the events surrounding them and their conventional modes of thought and behavior engage in a losing struggle to accommodate them, is in itself neither inappropriate nor irrelevant.

The basic questions that must be asked before any assessment of the novel can be made are: for whom is Lindsay writing, and what does he ask of his readers? Several answers are possible. First, the book is not to be read for simple entertainment, not even by those who have a taste for stories of the fantastic and the supernatural. It is clear from the beginning, and throughout, that we are in deeper waters here than in *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, or even the Ransom trilogy of C. S. Lewis. Lindsay's other published novels could be appreciated to some extent, though obviously not in full, by a person reading solely for recreation. The paperback edition of *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920, paperback 1968) keeps company on the science fiction shelves of bookshops with Fritz Lieber and Barry Malzberg. Apart from their philosophical significance, *The Haunted Woman* (1922) is an excellent story, *Sphinx* (1923) at least a passably good one, and *Adventures of Monsieur de Mailly* (1925) has fooled even some of

Lindsay's critics into regarding it as a mere piece of escapist writing;[1] but no casual reader will progress very far into *Devil's Tor*. Many passages are, on the level of the story alone, superbly dramatic, but even in such passages erudition and profundity of thought are evident, and there is no possibility of dissociating the exciting parts of the book from those which require a more cerebral response.

The first three chapters provide a clear illustration of this. The mountaineer Hugh Drapier and Ingrid Fleming walk over the moors toward Devil's Tor in increasingly ominous weather conditions, come abruptly within view of the hill as a bolt of lightning illuminates the strange monument surmounting it, continue their climb through a violent electrical storm, and are sheltering under the statue when it is spectacularly destroyed by the explosion of a lightning ball to reveal what appears to be a passage descending into the earth. This sequence of events, presented with Lindsay's characteristically detailed descriptions and intense visual realism, is difficult to surpass as sheer drama. More importantly, the concept of a massive and inconceivably ancient artifact instantaneously shattered by a mighty force of nature must act as a powerful stimulus to any reader's imagination. Indeed, the author's audacity in presenting such awe-inspiring and portentous happenings at the very outset of a long novel can hardly be overstated; the obligation which he thereby assumes of fulfilling the expectations aroused by such an opening is truly overwhelming. Those events, however, take almost forty pages to describe, during which the protagonists' disturbing thoughts, induced by the Tor, of antiquity and the supernatural, are reported and discussed, while their conversation leads the reader far beyond the immediate details of the story to speculations on such topics as the nature of courage, ancient races and their religions, and second sight. Additionally, more apparently mundane matters, such as the family background and previous history of Ingrid and Hugh, are narrated in some detail, and hints are given of Hugh's feyness and preoccupation with death and Ingrid's status as the fated bearer of a superhuman destiny. The deep significance of the difference in racial type between the cousins is suggested. Ingrid's vision of a spectral woman apparently emerging from the opened tomb is not only described but subjected to a penetrating analysis, both in itself and in its implications for her. This is writing which is at once absorbing and thought-provoking, but the two functions of the narrative are wholly integrated. The reader is never permitted simply to enjoy the imaginative thrill of what he sees; he is obliged to apply his intellectual and critical faculties to it as well.

Second, it follows from this that another class of readers for whom *Devil's Tor* is inescapably a lost cause are those whose belief-systems reject serious consideration of the supernatural, or of a supernatural world beyond that of an established religion. Ghost stories and the like are, of

course, enjoyed by many readers who would dismiss out of hand the notion that such writing could be anything but fiction, but a book which raises, as a question of sober fact, the issue of supernatural intervention in the affairs of the world is in an entirely different category. Here again, *Devil's Tor* stands somewhat apart from Lindsay's other published novels. *Arcturus* can be read as an allegory; *The Haunted Woman* and *Sphinx*—slighter works, in any case, than it or the present book—as stories in which the supernatural element has a symbolic significance only. In *Devil's Tor*, by contrast, the reader is confronted with the serious and reasoned thesis that a mother-goddess, the supreme creative principle of the universe, visited the earth in a primordial age to alter the evolutionary course of a section of the human race. It is not possible to regard the elaborate mechanisms by which Lindsay puts forward this conception as mere devices for adding realism to the book, as if the thesis were part of the fiction instead of the fiction being a vehicle for the thesis. The accumulating series of details by which the concept of a female spirit is brought to the reader's attention is skillfully handled to ensure that this concept has an absolutely central place in the book. Ingrid's seemingly unportended reference to the goddess Nyx during her walk to the Tor with Hugh; the strange and disturbing portrait of her as the Madonna (which was executed, of course, before the opening events of the book); Peter's reference in conversation with her to "fated women," the mothers of great men; the long, fascinating, and most carefully reasoned discourse put into the mouth of Magnus—a character of otherwise minor importance—on motherhood; the "femaleness" of nature; and the Mary-figure as an artistic symbol—the pervasive presence of this theme in the minds of the characters is transmitted by a wide variety of allusions to the mind of the reader.

In the first half of the book, nearly all the characters either experience, or are reported as having experienced in the past, some vision involving a female figure. The widowed Helga and her brother-in-law Magnus are the only exceptions, though Helga tells of two such visions seen by her dead husband, while the dream that Magnus recounts of the glory on the Tor, though not involving a goddess-figure, is striking enough. Hugh's breathtaking vision in the tomb is described with superb skill and in language which leaves no room for doubt that it is to be understood as a genuine religious experience. Lindsay is careful to make clear, too, that the supernatural overtakings of the various characters are mutually independent. Hugh and Ingrid, in their talks of the strange properties of the Tor and its effects on their thoughts and perceptions, never describe their visions to each other, and the prehistoric funeral rite which Peter recounts to Ingrid manifested itself to him at a time when he was unaware that any supernatural events had taken place at all. The occult experiences of Stephen Arsinal, the brilliant polymath, and the explorer Henry Saltfleet

occurred when neither was even acquainted with any of the other characters; those of Magnus and Helga's husband, years before the action of the book commences. It is from these hauntings that the entire story springs. The birth of Helga's daughter, Ingrid, the location of the family home near the Tor, Saltfleet's friendship with Arsinal and the latter's association with the Great Mother cult, all result from actions influenced by paranormal experiences. Similar cases are recorded at various later stages in the book.

This gradual and progressive revelation of the development of a cosmic plot arouses most potently the impression of an inexorable destiny through which seemingly unrelated and insignificant events are seen to be essential to the divine scheme, and by which the actions of the individual characters, irrespective of their conscious motivation, contribute inescapably to the final consummation. Not only is the theme presented dramatically with great skill, it is subjected to repeated discussions in which all its aspects are examined at length, in intense detail, and with a clear and tenacious intellectual grip that is maintained with amazing skill. Readers with no time or patience to spare for such speculations are not included in Lindsay's intended audience.

Besides the structure and qualities of the theme's fictional treatment, further evidence of the serious consideration which the reader is expected to devote to it is found in the immense battery of knowledge and reasoning which supports it. A full discussion of it would require much more space, and very much more learning, than is at my disposal. Suffice it to say that any ordinarily well-informed reader who is prepared to approach this book with an open mind will not only be wholly fascinated by this aspect of it, but will inescapably be drawn into the discussion and find himself seeking facts and arguments to counter (or support?) Lindsay's case. At the very least he will be forced to admit that the thesis is brilliantly presented and is too substantial to be dismissed as mere fantasy or game-playing. The reference just made to an open mind, however, represents a basic proviso. A request to treat the worship of the Great Mother as a live issue is not one with which a contemporary reader is often faced,[2] and is liable to result in puzzlement or revulsion. Such reactions must clearly be put aside—and this will require more effort than many readers will be prepared to make—before any appreciation of the book is possible.

Third, this novel should not be attempted by readers who are unable to make a considerable mental adjustment to the historical period of the writing. *Devil's Tor*, in fact, provides a very clear demonstration of a truth which is not always obvious—that the degree to which a reader must emancipate himself from his normal thought patterns in order to accommodate those of the writer is not necessarily proportional to the chronological difference between the two parties. A piece of medieval

literature represents a culture so obviously unlike that of a late twentieth-century reader that he would be unwise even to attempt it before acquiring some knowledge of the literary conventions and the general background of thought and belief which characterized that period. A book which appeared in 1932 (and was probably conceived and largely written somewhat earlier), however, dates no less from a period when thought and behavior—or at any rate, conventional assumptions regarding them—were unlike and, in some respects, even antipathetic to what passes as orthodoxy and normality in the present period. Lindsay's book is, in a number of respects, "dated"—in the sense that "dated" has in popular usage. His characters are of a type rarely found in modern literature or life: gracious and high-minded people whose actions are governed by a combination of moral principles and social propriety. To describe them as "boring"[3] is a truly incredible proceeding, for an hour spent in conversation with any of the major figures in the book would be an intellectual pleasure of a high order; but the rigid conventionality of their behavior is inescapably wearing to readers accustomed to a less ceremonious, less cultured, and in fact less civilized (in at least a superficial sense of that word) mode of life. Rugged explorers and adventurers with the social refinement of Hugh and Saltfleet, or engaged couples who treat each other with such astonishing formality as Peter and Ingrid, appear startling in the 1970s. It is not the case that the unfamiliarity, to a modern reader, of the characters' behavior is *solely* a function of the passage of time. Ingrid and Saltfleet, it is emphasized, are to be seen as manifestly remarkable people (and the distinction of the latter, at least, is suggested with considerable success). Helga is surely a portrait of an ideal woman rather than one of a type frequently encountered in any age, and even Peter is said to be "not of the crowd." Lindsay, that is, is not using the traditional device of causing extraordinary events to happen to ordinary people in a simple way; indeed, because so much of his effort is devoted to the detailed examination of his characters' reactions to their supernatural experiences, it is essential to his purpose that they should be people of extreme fineness of thought and perceptions. It is unavoidably true, however, that the social world of the Colbornes and their circle has vanished, and that its representation in literature presents readers of a later period with problems which an author could not foresee.

This, of course, is in itself no fault of Lindsay's; but it directly results in one of the essential weaknesses of the book—the character of Ingrid. So far as Lindsay is able to show us, her sole qualification for a divine role is her determination to submit with total passivity to whatever fate may be awaiting her. He repeatedly *tells* us of an exaltedness of character that is immediately obvious to her acquaintances, but he does not succeed in making it obvious to the reader. And, imaginative, psychic, and social faculties apart, Ingrid certainly has no other striking features. That she is

lacking in obviously attractive human qualities is an effect of Lindsay's characteristic austerity of thought, which is simply another of the terms on which his writing must be accepted, and is not surprising; he would hardly have envisaged a Joiwind as the mother of a new messiah. But the notion that mere resigned apathy could be the manifestion of a divine nature cannot be made to ring true. Ingrid is too much a prisoner, both of social propriety and of the docility and obedience expected of the daughter of an upperclass family in the early decades of this century, to be a convincing goddess. The possibility that a woman of her alleged caliber and status might have it in her to contribute actively to the destiny she recognizes is never raised. Lindsay clearly intended the dramatic picture of a serene figure at the heart of a cosmic turmoil and, on the human level, at the eye of the emotional storm of Saltfleet and Arsinal's quarrels, Peter's fears and resentments, and Helga's heartbreaking introspections; but the effectiveness of this image is spoiled by the weakness at its center. He cannot have actually failed to realize that the mores of his time and place were not necessarily the only ones in terms of which a new Mary could be conceived; he is the last writer in the world, surely, who would have fallen into that particular error. The nature of the story, however, required that it should have a naturalistic setting among fairly ordinary and conventional characters, and his choice of scene virtually obliged him to present his heroine along those lines.

The same factor is responsible for another fault, though a less fatal one—a weakness in the portrayal of Saltfleet. The danger to Ingrid which he sees in Arsinal's possession of the two stones is never specified, but it centers on the prophecy of the joining together of a man and a woman for the begetting of a new savior. In neither of the two statements of the prophecy quoted is there any hint of danger to the fated parents and, in any case, Arsinal repudiates in the strongest possible terms the suggestion that he had so much as thought of Ingrid in that connection and repeatedly proves the truth of this by his subsequent behavior. Yet Saltfleet persists in his absolute determination to prevent Arsinal from obtaining the stones while Ingrid is present, and allows himself to use the word "degenerate" of his former friend's suspected intentions. That he should imagine that Arsinal has devoted a lifetime's application of his enormous mental gifts in following a trail that has led him through considerable physical dangers into the presence of sublime and terrifying supernatural forces, merely in order to furnish himself with an excuse for bedding down with an attractive girl—and, thinking so, that he should regard *this* as the thing to be feared most among the devastating events past and portended—is too ridiculous for comment. Yet that is what Lindsay seems to want us to believe. Though this is, in the context of the entire novel, a minor weakness, it is nonetheless a fault in the otherwise strikingly powerful characterization of Saltfleet, and

is again attributable to the framework of social conventions which Lindsay has chosen as the field of operation for his characters.

It is perhaps in the context of the "dated" aspect of the novel that an approach can best be made to what is, for modern readers, its most repellent and least defensible aspect—its patent racism. Lindsay's contempt for the Celts is of relatively little consequence and can be attributed to simple ignorance (an astonishing charge to bring against this writer, but unmistakably true). The statement on the first page that Hugh's "nameless ancestors had been unbreeched savages when [one of Ingrid's Viking forebears] was already subduing people and framing laws" is almost the precise opposite of the truth. The Celts were, of course, a highly organized and cultured people with a domain that included most of Central and Western Europe long before the history of Scandinavia had emerged from obscurity. In a later age, the rebuilding of European civilization after the destruction wrought by the "yellow-haired savages" was very largely a Celtic achievement and even the Norse Sagas, which Lindsay obviously admires and on which he draws for material to support his meta-historical argument, resulted from Viking contact with the literary traditions of Ireland. (John Herdman, presumably, has not read this book. If he had, he would surely never have mentioned Lindsay, on any pretext, in an essay on Fionn MacColla!)[4] Much more serious, and impossible to ignore, is the careful and reasoned presentation of the case that the glorious spiritual and cultural achievements of the European race, unmatched by those of any other people, resulted from a divine intervention which imparted an absolute superiority to this branch of humanity, and that this superiority entitles the white race to subjugate lesser peoples. The simple excuse that the most detailed and explicit statement to this effect is assigned to the flawed character of Arsinal, and that it therefore need not be taken as Lindsay's own view, will not serve. Arsinal's intellectual powers are never called in question, and his argument is too well-reasoned and documented to disregard. Nor does it help to dismiss the divine intervention part as a fantasy. This in itself cannot readily be done and, in any case, it would not materially alter the thesis.

I have no wish to defend racism, but I do wish to defend Lindsay; and this aspect of his writing must be considered in what I have called a "rehabilitation" of *Devil's Tor*. Part of the difficulty will be resolved if a modern reader is willing to make another mental adjustment to the time period of the book. In the present time, racism arouses the same reaction as sexual irregularity did a century ago. The slightest hint of it is enough to condemn a man to the status of pariah, no matter what other good qualities he may possess. Some people seem incapable of comprehending that a racist might have any good qualities at all. This is not to deny that racism is an evil, but it is not necessarily a sign that a man guilty of it is totally depraved; and the

intensity of the present repugnance to it is unquestionably a feature of the times. It has also been suggested[5] that the current fashionable loathing of racism is not due to any increase in virtue but simply to the fact that the most appalling example in history of racism run wild occurred within living memory. The negative aspect of that argument would seem to be all too clearly confirmed by the type of behavior sometimes observable in otherwise moderate and reasonable people when the issue is raised. Self-righteous prejudice is no grounds for condemning out of hand a book written at a time when the British Empire was still in being, and the attitude that the white-skinned peoples were the natural lords of creation was held as a simple unconscious assumption. Furthermore, it may be pointed out that much of Lindsay's case is based on fact. For good or ill—largely the latter, of course, as witness the histories of the native Americans, Africans, and Australasians—the white race has over a very long historical period manifested a spirit of energy and dynamism which no other people has shown. I am not qualified to comment on Lindsay's claim that the cultural achievements of Europe are superior to those of any other section of the world, but at least it is not self-evidently false. The relative potential of the various races, too, is the subject of serious scientific research and debate. Noam Chomsky—in appealing to whom I am, with real and *soi-disant* humanitarians, on the safest possible ground—argues forcefully against the conducting of research on the subject,[6] but not on the grounds that all races are, in his belief, of equal inherent ability or that it ought to be assumed that they are. His reason is that in a just society each individual would be treated on his own merits, regardless of preconceptions—even those with a statistically verifiable basis; and that such topics would therefore be regarded as unimportant.

All that being said, the fact remains that Lindsay expresses a belief in the status of the blond Nordic breed as a natural master race, a belief which contributed to the direst catastrophe of modern times. That he shared this belief with nearly all of his contemporaries is no exoneration: least of all, in fact, for a man with a mind as brilliant and independent as his. A plea for justice must rest in the fact that he has applied to his case all his vast mental resources, and that in his hands the argument becomes a formidable one. He deserves to be challenged on his own terms—through the media of fact, philosophy, and reasoning—and not to be condemned without a hearing. Of course, this is readily done: for example, he barely mentions the Amerindian peoples, though the sudden dynamic expansion of the Incas was no less remarkable, and much more constructive, than that of the Vikings; the achievements of the Mayas in astronomy—no pursuit, surely, for minds incapable of sublime thought—were unsurpassed in the world until comparatively recent times; and (to refer to the supernatural side of his argument) the "dark brother" motif is not unique to European lore and

literature but occurs also in legends of the Iroquois. It may be suggested that I am committing an absurdity in giving this amount of consideration to an argument not only outlandish in itself but appearing in what is, after all, a work of fiction. This is of course true as far as it goes, but Lindsay's fiction, however fantastic, is never mere fiction; it always bears directly on the real world.

In any case, the white supremacy theme is by no means the raison d'être of the book. A real absurdity, in fact, would be the presentation of a detailed critique of Lindsay's views on this subject as an important contribution to the criticism of *Devil's Tor*. Nor, certainly, is it treated in any spirit of naïve or facile chauvinism. Lindsay dwells extensively on the dark and sinister side of North European history and on the present debased state of a world in which European influence is dominant. His theme is the *potential* of this breed—a potential which has been realized only fitfully and at the cost of immense anguish and struggle, and of which the final destiny is to be the salvation of all mankind. The concept of a general redemption to be achieved through the supernaturally aided labors of a chosen people cannot in principle be rejected without abandoning an integral part of Judaeo-Christian philosophy. This deeper significance of Lindsay's writing will be lost on readers who are unable to see past their anger at the fact that it contains an element of racism.

Lindsay's critics have been inclined to write as if the difficult and forbidding character of *Devil's Tor* were attributable to simple incompetence on the author's part. This view I consider nonsensical. If few readers are prepared to expend the patience and concentration of effort that the book requires, that is not in itself an adverse criticism of Lindsay; he can hardly have expected anything else. And a careful reading shows beyond doubt that every detail of event, description, character analysis, and argument forms an essential and inseparable part of an integrated whole; and that the entire conception and its execution are the result not of ineptitude but of a brilliance of intellect and imagination, and a spiritual courage and integrity, that are rare in literature. Even the much-criticized idiosyncracies of style are not only appropriate but necessary, given the nature of the subject matter. Lindsay is writing of events such as no man has experienced and very few could even have begun to imagine. As his aim was to present these in full detail and with total realism—not merely to arouse a kind of subjective impression of them, as another writer might have tried to do by nonce linguistic experiments—he could hardly have avoided making use of a much greater elaboration of syntax and vocabulary than is commonly found in fiction. The long complex sentences, too, are handled with exceptional skill, and are not "scarcely intelligible,"[7] but perfectly intelligible to any reader who is prepared to give them more than a glance. Lindsay's style is indubitably heavy; but clumsy it

is not. Difficulties in approaching the novel certainly exist, but once those have been overcome the rewards are considerable. There is, for example, a veritable banquet of fascinating thoughts and speculations on art, history, philosophy, theology, psychology, and parapsychology, presented with vigor and lucidity and often in language of striking poetic force. All Lindsay's well-known powers of description are brought into play, and in the vision scenes, culminating in the astounding final section, he produces writing of an imaginative power unsurpassed in any of his earlier books. His analyses of the supernatural experiences undergone by the characters and of their mental reactions are a triumph of imagination and insight, and are surely as nearly successful as it is possible to be in causing the reader not only to appreciate but to understand the nature of such experiences—supposing they could happen. Almost equally important is the acquaintance which the book gives with the workings of one of the most extraordinary minds, in quality and scope, to be found among writers of recent times, for no other judgment is possible of the man who was capable of the imaginative power of *A Voyage to Arcturus*, the brilliant ingenuity of *Adventures of Monsieur de Mailly,* the intellectual range of *Devil's Tor*, and the penetration and boldness of philosophical thought that inspires all his work.

Yet one disturbing question remains: to what end was the novel written? No matter with what concentration a reader tackles it, and no matter how overwhelming the reading experience may be, once he has closed the book he is inescapably faced with the realization that this was only fiction, and that, like Ingrid and Saltfleet in the last pages, he must descend from the Tor to the ordinary, vulgar world—but without their hope of its redemption. For even if it is possible to give serious consideration to the notion of a mother-goddess, there is of course no question that events such as those narrated in the book have ever taken place, or ever will. Lindsay is not an escapist writer, and no novelist would have written so elaborate a book simply to furnish his readers with some unproductive intellectual and imaginative stimulation. What application does this book have to real life? In Lindsay's four earlier novels, the basic theme has been that the world in which we spend our ordinary daily lives is a dangerous and corrupting compound of illusions and frauds which must be challenged even at the cost of a life-and-death struggle. The ruthlessness of this view is clearly expressed in *Devil's Tor*, but in the discursive passages rather than in the narrative. The philosophical arguments contained in the book speak for themselves, but Lindsay has chosen to write not a philosophical treatise but a work of fiction with a story line much too elaborate in plot and characterization to be ignored. Clearly the story must have some significance.

It deals with the supernatural preparation for the recovery of mankind

from its failure and decadence, a recovery to be achieved at an incalculable cost, not only in human suffering but in "the anguish of the Creator." (The theme, in fact, is that of *Arcturus* on the universal instead of the individual level.) Several answers have already been suggested to the question of what is liable to hinder a reader's appreciation of *Devil's Tor*, but perhaps the most important factor of all has yet to be cited. If anybody believes that such a redemption is not called for, or that it can be attained by man's unaided efforts, such people will find this novel at best a sterile work, a massive effort without further significance. Even a simplistic religious faith—a notion that redemption can be, or has been, achieved *easily*—will not serve. It is all too easy for the Christian doctrine of Redemption to be reduced (by ignorance or malice) to a suggestion that God has everything nicely in hand and that all will be well in the next world if not in this. Any readers holding such a belief must adopt a less naïve stance before they can hear what Lindsay has to say. *Devil's Tor* was written by a man whose awareness of the falsity of the natural world and the magnitude of the task involved in its regeneration was not only a belief based on observation and reason but a conviction felt with passionate intensity. A willingness to sympathize with this is a prerequisite for an appreciation of his work; and it is only by this means that a reader will enjoy the full reward of *Devil's Tor*, which consists not merely in a stimulation of the intellect and an excitement of the imagination, but in an enlargement and a maturation of his entire world view.

Notes

1. The case that it is not merely escapist has been argued in " 'Purely as entertainment'? *Adventures of Monsieur de Mailly* as a Representative Work of David Lindsay" by the present writer, in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, XI, April 1974.
2. Though Robert Graves in *The White Goddess* mades it fairly clear that he does not regard the issue as wholly academic.
3. Colin Wilson in "Lindsay as Novelist and Mystic," in *The Strange Genius of David Lindsay* (London: C. Wilson, E. H. Visiak and J. B. Pick, 1970), p. 76.
4. John Herdman, "Fionn MacColla's Last Book," in *Scotia Review* 10, August 1975. The pretext is that both have a number of unpublished works. In fact—if the glaring antipathy suggested can be ignored—there is a curious parallel in that both are men of exceptional learning, insight, and originality of thought, whose literary achievements (though of major importance) are nonetheless surprisingly small in number.
5. Isaac Asimov in *Before the Golden Age*, for example, suggests this, in the context of a discussion of the racist attitudes innocently taken for granted in the writing of the early 1930s. Asimov, to be sure, is no philosopher, but the argument still merits consideration.
6. Noam Chomsky, "Psychology and Ideology," in *For Reasons of State* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 318–69.
7. E. H. Visiak in "*Devil's Tor*," in *The Strange Genius of David Lindsay*, p. 116. He illustrates this claim by quoting out of context a sentence which reads perfectly well within it.

Science Fiction Sources in Microform

HAL W. HALL

■As the interest in science fiction continues to grow, an, in particular, as scholarly study of science fiction continues to increase, it becomes necessary to build collections to support these activities. It has been possible to acquire materials in their original form, especially in the case of books, and maintain them for use. Magazines, however, present a different problem, first, because they are becoming scarce, and second, because they were frequently printed on pulp paper, which will not stand up to significant use.

Within the past decade, micropublishers have begun to move into this area, and now provide a significant sampling of science-fiction magazines in microformat. The quality of the materials thus offered varies both in quality of editorial decision and technical quality. Following this introduction is a listing of the titles (currently) available in microform. No annotations or commentary are provided; instead, an overview of each of the publishers is given.

University Microfilms International has provided more science-fiction magazines on microfilm than any other company. Their catalog offers nine titles. The quality of UMI filming is very high, and rarely are titles filmed with issues missing. Prices are reasonable for the product offered. One caution is in order, however; UMI often lists titles, or segments of a title, with the note "not filmed." This means simply that UMI owns filming rights, but will not film until enough orders are placed to ensure a profit. Of particular note in the UMI offerings are *Astounding/Analog* and the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

Another publisher, Oxford Microform Publications of Great Britain, offers an unusual selection of titles, including the science-fiction little

Extrapolation, Vol. 21, No. 4
0014-5483/80/0214-0006 $00.50/0

magazines (fanzines). The program is of particular value for this reason. The preservation and availability of *Vector* alone justifies the venture. The availability of other titles—*New Worlds, Impulse, Speculation,* and, *Foundation*—makes this the most broadly based program currently underway. Additional items planned will further broaden the scope. In terms of quality, the titles examined have all been highly legible, with clear indication of the content of each microfiche. Photocopies from the microfiche are readily possible.

Greenwood Press has emerged as the major micropublisher of science-fiction materials, offering a total of nineteen titles. The titles included in the program may lead to some questions about choice; the potential buyer must keep in mind that these choices are often dictated in part by such external factors as availability of microfilming rights, copyright problems, and availability of issues for filming. The titles filmed by Greenwood include some extremely short runs, but also such important titles as *Amazing*, *Planet Stories*, *Science Wonder Stories, Thrilling Wonder Stories,* and *Fantastic*. Whatever the comments may be about title choice, Greenwood has in fact made a significant step toward preservation of an important resource.

Technically, the Greenwood Press titles examined were excellent. Contrast was excellent, focus was sharp throughout, and each film was clearly identified externally (for example, on the box) and internally (with target frames).

Two problems with the Greenwood program bear comment. In the case of *Fantastic Stories*, a number of issues are missing. I consider this a serious flaw. Greenwood should arrange to film those issues, splice them in, and replace the film in all sets sold. So many libraries and dealers own the issues that locating them should not be difficult. Also, the brochures contain bibliographic inaccuracies which are at best annoying. For example, *Fantastic Stories* is not bibliographically connected with *Fantastic Adventures*, and *Fantastic* did not start in the summer of 1952. Though not critical, these errors are still not acceptable.

The existing programs are helpful, as far as they go. Libraries should encourage these micropublishers by purchasing their science-fiction products and by actively suggesting titles which are needed. In the case of University Microfilms, where the notation "not filmed" appears, a letter indicating interest in the title will speed the decision to film.

Perhaps the greatest single gap in serial science-fiction titles remains that of the non-English language magazines. A research collection without the French *Fiction* on its shelves, for example, has a severe flaw in its coverage. Similar cases can be made for other titles. For most of these items, no alternative to the purchase of microfilm is feasible; yet no micropublisher currently offers these titles. Perhaps the next decade will bring a complete set of science-fiction titles in microformat.

Only thirty-three titles have been microfilmed to date. Of over 140 English-language magazines published, and of those filmed, six may be categorized as fanzines, and three are critical/professional journals such as *Extrapolation* and the *SFWA Bulletin*. In terms of the professional English-language science-fiction magazines, only twenty-four have been filmed (and some of those only partly). In other terms, less than twenty percent of the English-language titles have been filmed, and only about eight percent of the known world science-fiction magazines have been preserved on microfilm.

The efforts made thus far are laudable, but the lack of preservation on microform becomes a more serious problem as the years go by. The preservation of original copies in library special collections partly meets the needs of preservation, but even under the controlled use in special collections, pulp magazines have a finite life-span. Further efforts to promote filming are needed.

The SFRA member, faculty scholar, or interested fan may actively support efforts toward microfilm preservation by requesting their local library to purchase titles on the list below. Particularly, academic libraries should be encouraged to buy as many of the titles as can be afforded. Such purchases will both broaden the availability of science-fiction resources for study and will encourage micropublishers to continue their filming work.

Science Fiction Sources in Microform

Algol

1962–1972.	not filmed
Vol. 20–29, 1973–1977	$6.00 per year
Vol. 30– , 1978–	$5.00 per year
University Microfilms	

Alien Critic

(a) Vol. 2–3, 1973–1974	$13.00 per year
see also *Science Fiction Review*	
University Microfilms	
(b) (Range not specified)	$25.00
Oxford Microform Publications	

Amazing Stories

Vol. 1–19, 1926–1945	$1,075.00
Vol. 20–49, 1946–1975	$1,545.00
35 mm, positive	
Greenwood Press	

Amazing Stories Annual

1927 (all published)	$20.00

35 mm, positive
Greenwood Press

Amazing Stories Quarterly
Vol. 1-7, 1928-1934 (all published) $130.00
35 mm, positive
Greenwood Press

Amra
1959-1969 not filmed
1969-1979 $6.60 per year
University Microfilms

Analog Science Fiction Science Fact
Vol. 66-88, Sept. 1960-Feb. 1972
6 reels $240.00
Vol. 89-95, Mar. 1972-Dec. 1975 $22.00 per year
Vol. 96- , 1976- $16.50 per year
British Edition, Vol. 17,18, 1961-1962
2 reels $29.00
University Microfilms

Astonishing Stories
Vol. 1-4, 1940-1943 $55.00
(all published)
Greenwood Press

Astounding Science Fiction
Vol. 1-65, Jan. 1930-Aug. 1960
15 reels $699.00
University Microfilms

Comet
Vol. 1, Dec. 1940-July 1941 $25.00
(all published)
Greenwood Press

Cosmic Stories
Vol. 1, March-July 1941 $20.00
(all published)
Greenwood Press

Dynamic Science Stories
Vol. 1, Feb.-May 1939 $20.00
(all published)
Greenwood Press

Extrapolation
Vol. 1–15, Dec. 1959–May 1974 $65.00
Vol. 16–19, 1974–1978 $25.00
Greenwood Press

Famous Fantastic Mysteries
1943–1953 not filmed
University Microfilms

Fantastic Adventures
Vol. 1–7, May 1939–Oct. 1945 $345.00
Greenwood Press

Fantastic Novels
1948–1951 not filmed
University Microfilms

Fantastic Stories
Series I, Vol. 8–15, Feb. 1946–Mar. 1953
Series II, Vol. 2, no. 3–24,
May, June 1953–Oct. 1975 $1,485.00
Greenwood Press

Foundation
No. 1–12 $32.00
10 Microfiche
Oxford Microform Publications

Impulse
10 Microfiche $32.00
Oxford Microform Publications

Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction
Vol. 1–39, Fall 1949–Dec. 1970
13 reels (16 mm only) $282.10
Vol. 40–53, Jan. 1971–1977 $15.40 per year
Vol. 54– 1978– $11.60 per year
University Microfilms

Miracle Stories
Vol. 1, 1931 $25.00
(all published)
Greenwood Press

New Worlds
1946–1963 Price n.a.
1964–1971 $175.00

Microfiche
Oxford Microform Publications

Planet Stories
Vol. 1–2, 1939–1945 $115.00
Greenwood Press

Riverside Quarterly
Vol. 1–4, Aug. 1964–Mar. 1971 $13.20
Vol. 5– 1971+ $6.60 per year
University Microfilms

SFWA Bulletin
1965–1973 not filmed
1974–1977 $6.60 per year
1978– $5.50 per year
University Microfilms

Science Fiction
Vol. 1–3, 1939-1943 $55.00
(all published)
Greenwood Press

Science Fiction Quarterly
No. 1–10, 1940–1943 $50.00
(all published)
Greenwood Press

Science Fiction Review
Vol. 4–6, 1975–1977 $6.60 per year
Vol. 7– , 1978– $5.50 per year
University Microfilms

Science Wonder Quarterly/Wonder Stories Quarterly
Vol. 1–4, 1929–1933 $75.00
(all published)
Greenwood Press

Science Wonder Stories/Wonder Stories/Thrilling Wonder Stories
Vol. 1–7, 1929–1936 $395.00
(all published)
Vol. 8–44, 1936–1955 $450.00
Greenwood Press

Speculation
20 microfiche $62.50
Oxford Microform Publications

Startling Stories
Vol. 1–33, 1939–1955 $450.00
(all published)
Greenwood Press

Stirring Science Stories
Vol. 1, 1941–1942 $30.00
(all published)
Greenwood Press

Vector
25 microfiche $75.00
Oxford Microform Publications

Addresses

University Microfilms International
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Greenwood Press
51 Riverside Ave.
Westport, CT 06880

Oxford Microform Publications
Wheatsheaf Yard
Blue Boar Street
Oxford OX1 4EY
England

The Launching Pad

(*continued from page 308*)

for support for 1981. If you wish to add your letter to those asking for a continuing Discussion Section, please drop me a note. I'll send you a form letter—only because the appointment of an initial Executive Committee is essential and is a part of that letter.

Best wishes for the New Year.

TDC

BOOKS

Among the Nebula Contenders

■ Within a few months the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) will again vote upon the Nebula Awards for the best science fiction of the year, this time choosing from nominees published in 1980. Although Robert Silverberg's *Lord Valentine's Castle* (Harper & Row) is a certain candidate, a number of other titles must be given serious consideration.

First among them is Clifford D. Simak's *The Visitors* (Ballantine: A Del Rey Book), in which he returns to favorite themes in order to speculate about the effects of man's first encounter with alien intelligence. Simak's galaxies are an inhabited universe, and perhaps more than any other writer now active he is deeply concerned with "first contact" not only because it will introduce mankind into a brotherhood of sentient beings but also because it will undoubtedly effect what he believes are needed changes in man's society. *The Visitors* gives voice to many of his characteristic themes and techniques, but it is no mere reshuffling of familiar material. True, the background is pastoral, for the first of the Visitors lands in the town of Lone Pine, supposedly near Bemidji in northern Minnesota. The central characters are newspaper reporters (perhaps the chief variation here is the focus upon Kathy Foster, a reporter for the Minneapolis *Tribune*), a young forestry student, and the press secretary for the President of the United States. With this combination, Simak can dramatize the encounter through a series of vignette-length chapters, shifting back and forth among Lone Pine, Minneapolis, and Washington—which accomplishes a number of things effectively and simultaneously. To begin with, of course, the narrative structure becomes that of a news story unfolding. Secondly, the contrast between the reactions of private individuals who actually par-

ticipate in the episode (the young forestry student is taken aboard the Visitor, while Kathy assists one of the "babies" which has budded from it and is recognized by the "mother") and the bureaucratic, impersonal reaction of official Washington is carried off perhaps more successfully than in most of his fiction. Here are the attacks on the military's insistence upon both testing weapons and hushing up the whole affair, the attempt to prevent full (and international) release of the news, and the hope that the encounter will release society from the "tyranny of technology." In contrast to his other works, however, Simak at least twice makes explicit the parallel between the European take-over of America from the Indians and the possible take-over of Earth by the "invading" aliens.

The difference between *The Visitors* and Simak's other treatments of the same central theme lies in what one character calls the inability of almost everyone (at least the official establishment) to realize the "true, utter alienness of these creatures," for they have the shape of "gaunt, overgrown" big black boxes which are "too alien to feel anything like kinship" to mankind. They are made of cellulose, and they feed on trees, leaving bundles of cellulose which their young eat. The strength of the novel, however, results from its open ending. (In a recent letter Simak said that a number of individuals have asked him when and how he is going to finish the story. His answer has been that it is finished.) Since the climax does not occur fully until the very last paragraph, one must be careful not to give that twist away. Its implications turn what might well be a peaceful rapprochement into a potential horror story. It arises from the fact that before seeming to depart the aliens plant trees, an action which leads the President to believe that the two species, man and Visitor, can coexist and perhaps somehow communicate. But then the Visitors, in seclusion on an island in the Mississippi River, bud their young in the form of automobiles. Immediately, while Americans seek to obtain these free cars, drowning themselves in their attempts to reach the island and thereby bringing about a military cordon, the debate begins whether or not this new budding is an act of gratitude or a threat to the American (perhaps the world) economy. That issue is never resolved, for deeper in the wilderness, the vacationing city editor of the *Tribune* discovers that still other Visitors have spawned young in the shape of houses. The climax occurs when the managing editor kills the last paragraph of the story of this discovery. All in all, Simak has produced one of his most memorable recent novels—with Wellsian overtones warning of man's pride as well as his societal hangups. It ranks with such earlier works as *A Choice of Gods*.

Fred Pohl's *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon* (a second Ballantine-Del Rey title) should also rank among the finalists. The sequel of *Gateway*, Pohl's earlier prize-winning novel, it expands the epic encounter between humanity and the vanished Heechee. Whereas the earlier work had its strength in the study of Robin Broadhead, he has retreated to the

background here; he remains haunted by the fact that he abandoned Gelle-Klara Moynlin and the rest of his crew in a Black Hole. Here the elaborate background of *Gateway* becomes the center of attention, for a ship discovers a Heechee Food Factory—called "Heechee Heaven"—still operable. Much of the action concerns this discovery, the exploration of the artifact, and the attempt to control it. Were this all, Pohl would have produced an enjoyable adventure story. But like Simak, he leaves the ending open so that one can only infer that *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon* is but an episode in a wider epic. One learns that "Heechee Heaven" includes a computer into which have been fed the minds of all the humans who have ever encountered (or been brought to) this artifact beyond the orbit of Pluto, as well as descendants of the "old ones," some of whom belonged to Australopithecus and roamed the Olduvai Gorge. "The Oldest One," however, is a complex robot who has controlled the artifact and all of those aboard it for hundreds of thousands of years—apparently as part of some unspecified plan; however, he is destroyed when tne Food Factory is taken control of by humans. One learns, finally, that the Heechee have planted races on unnumbered planets and that they long ago learned how to create and cancel mass. At some time in the past they "sought a volume of space a few dozen light-years across, filled it with stars, entered it with their ships. . . . And watched it close around them" (p. 323). As the novel closes, the reader becomes aware that the Heechee realize not only that "the universe might be destroyed in order to rebuild it—but that Someone, somewhere was actually doing it—" (p. 326). In short, the narrative promises a major confrontation. If it fails to win the Nebula, one reason may be that it is so obviously an episode. One anticipates the epic scale of what is to come.

In like manner one anticipates what will happen next to Severian, apprentice to the Torturers Guild and protagonist of Gene Wolfe's *The Shadow of the Torturer* (Simon and Schuster), the first volume in the tetralogy to be entitled *The Book of the New Sun*. The second volume, *The Claw of the Conciliator*, has been promised for 1981. Told in the first person by an old man who has apparently risen at least temporarily to power in the strange society dominated by the Autarch, the ruler of the City Imperishable, the narrative recounts only the events of his youth which lead to his exile. One learns of Severian's initiation into the Guild; his love for and murder of the Lady Thecla to save her from torture; the judgment which sends him to Thrax, the City of Windowless Rooms, where he will act as public executioner; and those subsequent events which cover only a few days and take him only to the gate of the City Imperishable. The result is one of the richest characterizations in contemporary science fiction.

Yet to say only this neglects the center of the novel's strength: its portrayal of the richly complex society of the unnamed world. One cannot praise Wolfe's accomplishment too highly. The basic texture of that society

is medieval so that, coupled with the first person narrator, the world is immediately acceptable. Bit by bit Wolfe introduces details that remove it from the familiar until one readily accepts its strangeness. So rich is the fabric that the result equals if it does not surpass the worlds of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *Dune*, and even, perhaps, *Lord Valentine's Castle*. One learns that the City Imperishable has mushroomed along the banks of a river in the southern hemisphere of the planet; that, apparently, at some time in its past the world has known interstellar trade/visitors; and a new ice age has come about as the sun grew old. All of this is presented in terms that stress the antiquity and decadence of the current civilization. So distant are past glories that they have become myth, not history; the world is truly caught in a dark, barbaric, perhaps transitional age. The highest measure of Wolfe's accomplishment may be that he has fused the medievalism with the strangeness of unknown science fiction worlds until at times one cannot be certain that this is not Earth in some far-distant future. The effective tension between the familiar and strange which brings the novel alive results, of course, in large part because of the success that Wolfe achieves in having the reader share the experience of Severian. Certainly the quality of *The Shadow of the Torturer* proves once again how fortunate the field is that Wolfe finds science fiction a compatible vehicle for his fictions, for he has already proved in *Peace* and *The Devil in a Forest* that he can handle any mode with the skill of anyone now writing in America. Certainly one regrets that some matters are not fully explained or revealed because the novel is but the first volume of a tetralogy, but the effect, finally, is that of whetting one's appetite for what is to come. There can be little doubt that *The Book of the New Sun*, when complete, will become as much a classic in the field as, say, the *Foundation* trilogy.

Incidentally, those who have long regretted the absence of a collection of Wolfe's shorter pieces will welcome the publication of *The Island of Dr. Death and Other Stories and Other Stories* [sic] (Pocket Books). Among other titles it includes "The Death of Dr. Island," for which Wolfe won the 1973 Nebula; "The Doctor of Death Island"; "The Eyeflash Miracles"; and "Seven American Nights." One hopes that Gregg Press, which has been doing such a fine job in reprinting books which have seen only paperback editions, will include this collection among its forthcoming selections. There should, of course, be at least a second volume, for too much of Wolfe's shorter pieces remain uncollected.

If one anticipates the next volumes by Pohl and Wolfe, then it is with a mixture of pleasure and regret that one completes Philip José Farmer's *The Magic Labyrinth* (Berkley Putnam), the final volume of the Riverworld Series. The best survey of the thematic and technical complexities of Farmer's epic quest, although discussion of *The Magic Labyrinth* cannot be included, is Mary T. Brizzi's *Philip José Farmer*, just released by Starmont House. The search for truth—and, consequently, for order and im-

mortality—ends when Richard Burton and his party reach the "Dark Tower" at the northern pole of Riverworld. One hesitates to reveal their discovery because it serves, of course, as the philosophical climax of the four-volume work. Significantly, however, the final triumph comes through Lewis Carroll's Alice—through "an introverted eccentric writer of mathematical texts and children's books and by the child who'd inspired him" (p. 339). No other writer active in the field has Farmer's knack of fusing together characters, both from history and literature, to expand and make vivid his themes. It has become something of a trademark, and in this unique manner Farmer compliments his audience by expecting them to be able to handle the richness of his allusions and sweep of intellectual history. The Riverworld Series has been a delightful experience—at times, almost a game.

An unexpected pleasure awaits the readers of Farmer, for a new publisher, Ellis Press of Peoria, Illinois (61625), has just issued *Riverworld War: The Suppressed Fiction of Philip José Farmer*. It takes its title from five chapters originally intended for *The Magic Labyrinth* and also includes his condensed version of "Jesus on Mars," not that abridged by Larry T. Shaw, which did see publication in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. (The cost, incidentally, is $6.95, and orders should be directed to Ellis Press.)

Other works deserve to be considered for the 1980 Nebula. Among them are Joan D. Vinge's *The Snow Queen* (Dial Press), which draws effectively upon Hans Christian Andersen's folk tale, "The Snow Queen" and Robert Grave's *The White Goddess*. To name them all, particularly if one includes those which have seen only paperback editions, risks the chance of becoming a catalog of titles. What strikes one is not only the diversity of the works, but increasingly the high quality of their craftsmanship. Such evidence may well support the idea that science fiction provides increasingly the most effective literary vehicle for the contemporary period.

TDC

Ray Bradbury, by Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg. Taplinger, 1980. $12.95 cloth; $5.95 paper.

Ray Bradbury is the fourth title in Taplinger's "Writers of the 21st Century" series. Only two of the ten essays included here have seen previous publication. The quality of the new essays seems particularly even, and one finds it hard to rate one higher than another. Gary K. Wolfe's "The Frontier Myth in Ray Bradbury" brings a hitherto underemphasized perspective to his fiction, while Marvin E. Mengeling's "The Machineries of Joy and Despair: Bradbury's Attitudes toward Science and Technology" gives fresh insight to an old controversy.

A pair of essays examine Bradbury's best known work: Edward J. Gallagher's "The Thematic Structure of *The Martian Chronicles*" and Eric S. Rabkin's "To Fairyland by Rocket: Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*." Hazel Pierce may come closest to the heart of Bradbury so far as form and literary indebtedness are concerned in her "Ray Bradbury and the Gothic Tradition," while Lahna Diskin undoubtedly probes his central thematic concerns in "Bradbury on Children." More orthodox but compelling in their arguments are Sarah-Warner J. Pell's "Style Is the Man: Imagery in Bradbury's Fiction" and Donald Watt's "Burning Bright: *Fahrenheit 451* as Symbolic Dystopia." Marshall Tymn has compiled a bibliography of Bradbury's writings. Perhaps coincidentally, in their notes three of the critics refer to the essay opening the volume, "Two Views . . ." by Willis E. McNelly and A. James Stupple. If "Writers of the 21st Century" can maintain the quality of the *Ray Bradbury* volume it could well become the basic classroom and library series devoted to individual writers.

Teaching Science Fiction: Education for Tomorrow, by Jack Williamson, ed. Owlswick Press, 1980. $15.00.

Although delayed several years in its preparation, this collection of essays should become the single most provocative source for teachers of science fiction at all levels. It is divided into three sections: "The Topic," "The Teachers," and "The Tools." Those should be self-explanatory, but what they do not reveal is that Williamson has brought together a noteworthy group of academicians and professional writers to gain a wide and thorough coverage of the field. Contributors include Kate Wilhelm, Vondra N. McIntyre, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Stanley Schmidt from the writer's side and Leon Stover, Mark R. Hillegas, Robert Plank, and Carolyn Wendell from the academic side. Individual essays include Susan Wood's "Women and Science Fiction," James Gunn's "The Tinsel Screen: Science Fiction and the Movies," Thomas D. Clareson's "Science Fiction, Literary Tradition, and Intellectual History," and Andrew J. Burgess' "Science Fiction and Religion." All in all, there are twenty-five essays, including one that gives three sample syllabi. Alexei and Cory Panshin provide a bibliography, while Neil Barron discusses "Library and Reference Sources." Although the book might not best serve as a text for a course, it is essential both to teachers and libraries—and should form the basis for some reading assignments for students. It should be ordered directly from Owlswick Press, Box 8243, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

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REACTION TIME

The Accused Swears He is Not Guilty

15 April 1980

■ Leslie Swigart—my conduit for material on the academic view of Ellisonian writings—has sent along Xerox copies of exerpts from *Extrapolation* (Winter 1979) that make mention of the true meanings hidden in my stories. As usual, I'm amazed and in some instances bemused. The essay by Mr. Rubens is dynamite. He has even picked up on some subtleties I *did* intend. (He is the only observer to perceive, correctly, that I named the protagonist of "Delusion For a Dragon Slayer" Warren *Glazer* Griffin because a *glazier*—not "glazer" as Rubens incorrectly puts it—a "glazer" works with pottery while a "glazier" works with windows—is intimately linked with windows and it is through a "window" into the land of dreams that Warren Glazer Griffin passes to have his destiny decided.) I am currently unhappy as hell with several wrongheaded academic studies done on me—most notably the dumb essay by Carol D. Stevens in Frank Magill's *Survey of Science Fiction Literature*—and am heartily buoyed up by the sensitivity and imagination Rubens brings to the analysis. Please extend my appreciation to him, if you have occasion to communicate with him.

On the other hand, and strictly *en passant*, in reading Carolyn Wendell's study of the Nebula winners, I must say I am wearied and saddened by her perpetuation of a parochial interpretation of "A Boy and His Dog" that has—in the past seven years—come to haunt me. The novella does *not* view women as she interprets the work. It is an *anti-rape* message I proffer, and it is a satirization of the ways in which the Solid Middle Class have always

manipulated and exploited female sexuality. I've had to fight this *courant* analysis of the story within extremely limited feminist terms for some time now. Were I not so tired of explaining all this over and over again—that the story is *not* specifically about male-female relationships but is a paradigm of the Generation Gap in America during the social upheavals of the Sixties/Seventies—I would write at length.

But I *am* unhappy that so many self-acknowledged "critics" read in such a slovenly manner that they deal in superficialities, speaking only to what is currently fashionable. Suffice to say, for the moment, that Wendell misses the many salient points by a significant margin. I realize this smacks of belated self-defense, but I know of no other way to say it than this: the accused swears he is not guilty, that he has been framed, that his soul is pure and that Ms. Wendell may have been so taken with the ferociousness of the forest that she has missed the singular nature of the trees.

Arboreally yours,
Harlan Ellison

11 August 1980

P.S. Your inclusion of an exerpt from "Reaction Time" ["The Left Hand of Sexism? Women as the Alien Species on Gethen," Summer, 1980, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 187-89] containing a letter from Martin LaBar of Central Wesleyan College, appended to your request to publish the above letter, prompts further response. Happily, it is the sort of response that will further buttress my assertion that deponent is not a misogynist but rather an across-the-board misanthrope. Mr. LaBar, while not exactly "defending" me with his complaint directed at Ms. Wendell's comments anent the Harlequin/Ticktockman story, does attempt to clarify the situation with that charmingly wonky academic thinking we who are not outpatients refer to as "bugfuck."

The portrayal of Pretty Alice in the story is neither sexual stereotyping—as Ms. Wendell bent over everywhichway to make it seem—nor is it unsympathetic—as Mr. LaBar misconstrues it. Both of these gentlefolk seem hellbent on ignoring the words on the page. Determined that they shall not go to their graves harboring these misconceptions, I point out the following:

Pretty Alice is intended as a paradigm for *most people*, male and female. She is an *average person* who, like most of us, has been gulled by society into worshipping the false values of security and status quo. Were it not obvious that Ms. Wendell either ignored or purposely misinterpreted the words on the page, it would have been clear to her that Pretty Alice is precisely the *opposite* of passive, dependant, needful of protection and incompetent. In the one scene where she appears it is obvious that she finds the Harlequin pathetic and a pain in the ass. She is a "good citizen" who

happens to be in love (or was at one time in love) with a malcontent. Because of his personal character flaws—which she points out to him even though he does nothing to alter them to preserve their liaison—her sense of discomfort outweighs her loyalty. He becomes ridiculous in her eyes, and she says so. Thus, she responds to a greater loyalty to the society and turns him in. This can, of course, be construed as "betrayal" if, like Ms. Wendell, one cares to view with tunnel vision. I didn't write it, nor did I intend it, as "betrayal" any more than I intended the relief of Marshall Delahanty's wife that her husband got the Termination notice rather than her as betrayal. (I suppose it flies in the face of what old-line sf fans and writers call "the sense of wonder" or whatever the hell it's supposed to be, for a character in a story to act in his/her own self-interest, to act selfishly, to be sufficiently mimetic to put one's own survival before even that of a treasured loved one, rather than squaring the jaw and girding the loins and stepping in front of the bullet. But I have long been bored with the conventions of traditional sf writing in which every man must act like Kimball Kinnison and every woman must scream and faint at the first sign of danger.)

And it is this demonstration of what I like to call the ugliness of simply being human that Ms. Wendell *and* Mr. LaBar would like to excruciate with their convoluted misperceptions.

I view with pity, rather than contempt or even lack of sympathy, the character of Pretty Alice. Her actions are clearly shown to be motivated by the free-floating fear propagated by her society, even as are most of ours. When the Ticktockman hauls the Harlequin in, this conversation ensues:

> "You're a nonconformist."
> "That didn't used to be a felony."
> "It is now. Live in the world around you."
> "I hate it. It's a terrible world."
> "Not everyone thinks so. Most people enjoy order."
> "I don't, and most of the people I know don't."
> "That's not true. How do you think we caught you?"
> "I'm not interested."
> "A girl named Pretty Alice told us who you were."
> "That's a lie."
> "It's true. You unnerve her. She wants to belong, she wants to conform, I'm going to turn you off."

This is hardly an "unsympathetic portrait." It follows a scene earlier in which Everett C. Marm, the Harlequin, is shown to be just another man, just a human being with a character flaw that puts him out of step with his culture. Pretty Alice, on the other hand, is a normal (by her society's standards) woman who wants to belong. That's an affliction with which most people suffer. And it doesn't make her a bad person or a bitch or a betrayer. It makes her simply *human*!

The only way in which—I presume—I could have avoided unsettling Ms. Wendell and giving her fuel for the belief that I've written an anti-female, unsympathetic character, would be if I'd had the Harlequin living with a male love-partner . . . [ellipsis in original] which would have made it a different story and would, no doubt, have brought down the wrath of gay readers.

I go on at this length and savage both Ms. Wendell *and* Mr. LaBar because this is, to me, a perfect example of the overintellectualized monkeyshines that freeze so many sf writers. The attention of navel-contemplaters who would rather justify their preconceived theses by misreading, denying, excluding and openly falsifying *the words* is a dangerous new addition to the literary universe in which most sf/fantasy writers work. It paralyzes out of fear of being pilloried for not having the currently acceptable political stance. It is gawdawful and I suspect most writers choose not to respond to this flummery because of the ingroup disdain that members of the academic daisychain will visit on both the writer and his/her work.

Nonetheless, Wendell and LaBar read in a slovenly manner. They refuse to trust the writer. They choose to rewrite and reinterpret, to the detriment of the work. They serve the devil without realizing it. And since God is off taking the sun in Palm Springs, it falls to fools like me to set matters right.

I'm sure this selflessness on my part will be applauded by one and all in the Halls of Ivy, the claque being led, no doubt, by Ms. Wendell and Mr. LaBar.

Charmingly,
Harlan Ellison

A Note on Alternate History

■ In an earlier issue of *Extrapolation* (Vol. 20, No. 2, Summer 1979), Jan Pinkerton, in a brief essay on Edward Everett Hale, makes some useful observations on the genealogy of "essays in alternate history." She points out that Hale's "Hands Off" (1881) is the first such story in English, though anticipated by two works in French: Louis-Napoleon Geoffroy's *Napoleon apocryphe* (1836) and Charles Renouvier's *Uchronie* (1857). She makes the further point that Hale had reviewed an edition of Geoffroy's book, and thus had presumably borrowed the idea. As she traces the conceptual roots of the notion of alternate histories still further back, Pinkerton's further references are also to French writers—to Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* and to Leibniz's *Theodicy*. Pinkerton's argument is that the notion arises from an association of the problem of determinism and "the principle of plenitude: the doctrine of God's creation of all possible worlds."

I have no real quarrel with Pinkerton's account as given—though I have some doubts about the relevance of the principle of plentitude—but it does seem to me to be less than complete. Though Geoffroy's book may be the first alternate history *story*, it is certainly not the first such imaginative adventure; it is not only anticipated by several other essays in imaginary history but also by an essay *on* essays in imaginary history—a kind of prospectus for the genre. This can be found in Isaac D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature* (ed. B. D'Israeli, London and New York: G. Routledge and Co., 1858); it is in the second volume of the 1858 edition edited by D'Israeli's son (then Chancellor of the Exchequer), but was presumably first published in the second series of the *Curiosities*, which was issued between 1823 and 1834. This essay is entitled "Of a History of Events Which Have Not Happened" and sets out its purpose as follows:

> Such a title might serve for a work of not incurious nor unphilosophical speculation, which might enlarge our general views of human affairs, and assist our comprehension of those events which are enrolled on the registers of history. . . . Some mortals have recently written history, and "Lectures on History," who presume to explain the great scene of human affairs, affecting the same familiarity with the designs of Providence as with the events which they compile from human authorities. Every party discovers in the events which at first were adverse to their own cause but finally terminate in their favour, that Providence had used a peculiar and particular interference; this is a source of human error and intolerant prejudice. . . .
>
> Without venturing to penetrate into the mysteries of the present order of human affairs, and the great scheme of fatality or of accident, it may be sufficiently evident to us, that often on a single event revolve the fortunes of men and of nations. (pp. 428–29)

D'Israeli goes on to offer various candidates for turning-points in history, at which the alteration of a single event might have caused dramatic changes in the pattern of European history. Pinkerton notes that two of the authors she mentions concerned themselves with amendments to the influence of Christianity, and this is one of the themes which preoccupies D'Israeli; he attempts to imagine what might have happened had Charles Martel not defeated the Saracens at Tours, and what might have occurred had Martin Luther been treated more kindly and taken more seriously by the Diet of Worms. His best candidate for the role of an utterly trivial accident which changed history is to be found in his contention that the letter from Rome which would almost certainly have reconciled Henry VIII with the papacy following the sentence of death passed on Anne Boleyn arrived one day too late in England, for the king had already consummated a new marriage with another Protestant, Jane Seymour.

D'Israeli offers several more examples of his own, each one pertaining to some crucial event in European politics. Though he does not mention

Napoleon and Waterloo, he does refer to the other favorite of subsequent British writers of alternate history, the fate of the Spanish Armada. Of equal interest, however, are the examples he takes from other writers. He credits the first exercise in alternate history to Livy, who tried to imagine what would have been the result if Alexander the Great had invaded Italy, opposing Greek writers who argued that Alexander could have aborted the growth of the Roman Empire with military calculations designed to prove that the Macedonians must have been repelled. He finds a contemporary example in William Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, which appeared in 1796, where Roscoe rejects Sismondi's hypothesis that Lorenzo's death did not affect the fortunes of Italy. Roscoe constructs the pattern of decisions which Lorenzo would have taken in response to the French invasion launched by Charles VIII had he still been alive and contends that those decisions would, indeed, have preserved Italy against conquest. D'Israeli quotes with approval Roscoe's contention that "*As a single remove at chess varies the whole game*, so the death of an individual of such importance in the affairs of Europe as Lorenzo de' Medici could not fail of producing such a change in its political relations as must have varied them in an incalculable degree" (D'Israeli, p. 437; emphasis presumably D'Israeli's). The historian Pignotti, according to D'Israeli, followed a similar flight of fancy in alleging that Lorenzo's prolonged life would have saved Italy from the "lamented struggles" which in fact followed his death. Yet another example, borrowed from Whitaker's "Vindication of Mary Queen of Scots," has English prosperity advanced by the accession of Mary instead of her cousin.

The essay concludes with the following observation:

> Thus important events have been nearly occurring, which, however, did not take place; and others have happened which may be traced to accident, and to the character of an individual. We shall enlarge our conception of the nature of human events, and gather some useful instruction in our historical reading by pausing at intervals; contemplating, for a moment, *on certain events which have not happened!* (D'Israeli, pp. 437–38)

All of this seems to the modern reader to be eminently sensible—so sensible, in fact, that it becomes something of a puzzle why D'Israeli's prospectus did not result in a proliferation of exercises in imaginary history a hundred years earlier than the genre actually began to flourish. D'Israeli is objecting, of course, to historians who interpreted history as the operations of the Divine Hand of Providence, assuring that events work out as intended, but these writers can hardly be said to have had the field to themselves. Ever since Machiavelli had first taken it upon himself to conduct an analysis of the reasons why events in history had happened as they had rather than taking other courses, the notion of the *contingency* of

history had been well-entrenched. Hume in Britain and Voltaire in France were enormously influential writers who paid proper tribute to the role of blind chance in history, and though they may have played down the roles of great men and their particular choices they left plenty of scope for alternativity in history and added a good deal of fuel to the debate concerning determinism and historical causality.

There are, perhaps, two main reasons why there was no proliferation of essays in alternate history in the wake of D'Israeli's observations—one of which pertains specifically to Britain, while the other is of wider importance. The great British historians of the nineteenth century were the literary men, Macaulay and Carlyle, who were less interested than men like Whitaker and Roscoe in analyzing patterns of coincidence and consequence, and who promoted instead history-as-narrative, emphasizing coherency at the expense of contingency. These men were largely responsible for a shift in *rhetorical style* which carried historical speculation away from the avenues slighted by D'Israeli. At the same time, however, a new and very different philosophy of history—even more inimical to speculation about alternate history—was growing rapidly in its influence on continental thought: the philosophy of progress.

There are two more-or-less independent traditions of thought which thrived in the early nineteenth century and are no less deterministic than the admirers of Providence in their emphasis on the notion that the pattern of history is a single story possessed of an inevitability that excludes all possibility of alternatives. One existed in Germany, and proceeds from Hegel through Feuerbach to Marx and Engels; the other existed in France and proceeds from Turgot and Condorcet to August Cômte. Both traditions, however, intended to convert social philosophy into social *science*, and both stressed the necessary progress of human society through a series of inevitable stages. In neither pattern of thought does it even *make sense* to talk about alternate histories, for everything *essential* that has happened (it is alleged) has happened because it *had* to, in conformity with historical laws.

This kind of naïve evolutionism (historicism, as Popper calls it) dominated social science in the nineteenth century, and had a profound effect upon the analytical tendency among historians. Many historians, of course, refused to yield to the presumed imperatives of social science in the pursuit of their labors, but in refusing they tended to forsake the analytical tendency altogether, rather than finding alternatives to the evolutionist perspective. Thus, a polarization of "literary historians" and "evolutionists" resulted in a virtual desertion of the middle ground where an understanding of the kind D'Israeli had advocated might have flourished. It was not until evolutionism declined rapidly in popularity, to be replaced in social science by more realistic perspectives, that the study of history re-

covered a more balanced view of the problem of method. (Historians, by and large, still do not approve of social science, but that is mainly because they are, for the most part, better social scientists than social scientists are.)

Hopefully, these brief comments on Jan Pinkerton's observations will help to extend a little further the task that she has begun—the exploration of the genealogy of a rather special and highly appealing species of fiction. It is, I think, a shame that we are still waiting for definitive essays on several of the subjects raised by D'Israeli—and, of course, the magnificent possibility offered by J. C. Squire in his introduction to *If It Had Happened Otherwise,* "If Sodom and Gomorrah had not been destroyed."

Brian Stableford

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