

Ten Time
Hugo Award
Nominee!

The New York Review of Science Fiction

<http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/olp/nyrsf/nyrsf.html>

November 1998
Number 123
Vol. 11, No. 3: \$3.50

Brian W. Aldiss

The Referee of the War of the Worlds

Between them, H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds* give rapt consideration to time and space. Wells was certainly perceptive, since the term *space-time* in physics was not coined until 1915. The gradual disclosing by scientists of the venerable age of the Earth, and the age of our solar system, and of the vast extent of time that lay behind the creation of planets and the single cell, and vegetation and, eventually, mammals was still a cause for astonishment in 1897. The great mass of people had yet to come to terms with the discomfiting facts that the nineteenth century unveiled.

As T. S. Eliot said in "Burnt Norton," "Humankind cannot bear too much reality," and the findings of science remain difficult for us to accommodate. They remain, nevertheless, the best way we have of understanding our universe.

The Time Machine and *The War of the Worlds* have their similarities, for instance, in a reluctance to name names. Persons are "the time traveler," "the artilleryman." The former book explores concepts of time, the latter concepts of space. But not only of space. Wells presents us with glimpses of the distant past, in evolutionary developments on Mars, and of the future, in what the world might become. What are pleasing fancies to us, a century later, were challenging speculations to Wells's first audiences everywhere.

These two books between them stand like pillars of a proscenium arch, framing the perspectives of the looming twentieth century. Which is why they can still be read almost as contemporary documents. Well, for that reason, and because at that time Wells was, as Vladimir Nabokov said, "a great artist."

The War of the Worlds—we all know it and love it. However, love being blind, how well do we know it? We know—perhaps have known since childhood—that the Martians inflict cruel blows on poor suffering humanity before they are brought low. It is a nasty little war, no doubt of that, and Wells's implant of aversion to any form of Martian or alien life has lasted so far for a century. But, well, er. . .

I shall endeavor to answer the question, Whose side was Wells on, the humans' or the aliens'?

The assumption has always been that, naturally, Wells, as a human being himself, was on the side of Earth vs. Mars, much as, in a soccer match involving England versus anyone else, we would be perverse to cheer for Chile or Saudi Arabia, or whoever was the opposing team, instead of for England. But, imagine that we were in the referee's shoes, and were therefore supposedly impartial. . . . Well, let's examine the case.

There's much about *The War of the Worlds* that is slightly misleading. For one thing, the eponymous war is very limited in scope. It could more properly be entitled *The War Against Woking*. However, that title lacks the resonance we require from a work of sf. And this for its time was The Big Match! Woking is the target area for the Martian missiles. Wells relates how he cycles about the area: "I completely wreck and sack Woking—killing my neighbors in painful and eccentric ways" (Wells Archive). H. G. Wells on a bike could do a lot of damage.

We have to remember that Wells was then an angry young man—not the best choice for referee. It was clever of Norman and Jeanne

(Continued on page 4)

The Dead White Males Issue

Earth vs. Mars: Aldiss keeps score in Wells's war
1978: George Turner invades SF
Sylvia Kelso examines Lois McMaster Bujold's
battlefield (part 2)

Earth invades! David Langford on Harry
Turtledove's *A World of Difference*
Gwyneth Jones on the personality anthology
Plus Ray Davis has problems with Jonathan Lethem's
mainstream, and just how much is a monster dog's
prosthetic handshake worth on 47th Street?

Judith Buckrich

George Turner: A Life An Excerpt

The World of Science Fiction—1978–1985

Science fiction helped George Turner return to sanity and writing. Socially it provided him with a milieu and, because he was genuinely interested in humanity and its predicament, he used science-fiction writing to explore the effects of present actions on future times.

It is indeed difficult to overstate the importance that his contact with science-fiction culture has had on Turner's life. And once he had started writing it himself and found that his work was salable again, he was keen to go on. After *Beloved Son*, he had six novels and many short stories published, all of them science fiction. Even his memoirs are made up of alternative chapters of autobiography and an essay of commentary on science fiction as he experienced it throughout his life.

Beloved Son was a complex first attempt at science fiction, and it revealed the next stage of Turner's inner development. It had all the gutsiness of his earlier novel *Transit of Cassidy* but played on a much grander scale. Nonetheless the two works are closely related. Like *Transit of Cassidy*, *Beloved Son* is about men (much more than the "Treelake" books ever were), and is partly about defining son-father relationships. And again the son is loved and neglected and deserted by the father, but still wants him. And again, when he does find him, he is in for a terrible shock.

A thing that changed little between Turner's first book and this, his seventh, was the way he used language. He used a mid-twentieth-century Australian English, that was sometimes old fashioned and occasionally incongruous with the character from whose mouth it emanated. In *Beloved Son*, the Ombudsman Jackson who had survived an epoch ending in a holocaust remembers his teenage sister watching television with him in pre-holocaust 1988, and saying about two men who were about to head into space, "I could do a drool over the Englishman, but isn't our Australian a drear."

(Continued on page 8)

Special for Subscribers Only!

All back issues of **The New York Review of Science Fiction** are available to subscribers for only \$2.00 per issue!

They're usually \$3.50 each. Hey — you can't beat that with a stick.

Write to the intrepid NYRSF staff at **Dragon Press, P.O. Box 570, Pleasantville, NY 10570**,
or e-mail us at **74771.1527@compuserve.com**, for back issue flyers, or visit our website at

<http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/olp/nyrsf/nyrsf.html>

to see what we have available.

BACK ISSUES, VOLUME FOUR

Issue #37, September 1991: James Cappio, "Through the Momus Glass: James P. Blaylock's *The Paper Grail*"; Arinn Dembo, "Impassion'd Clay: Tim Powers' *The Stress of Her Regard*"; Kate Wilhelm's *Death Qualified* and Damon Knight's *A Reasonable World* reviewed by Frank Dietz; Candace Jane Dorsey, "Deconstructing Deconstructing Vietnam." _____

Issue #38, October 1991: Alexei Panshin, "When the Quest Ended"; Paul Park, "The Shadow of Hard Science Fiction"; Alexander Jablokov's *Carve the Sky* reviewed by Brian Stableford; Michael Swanwick, "Storyteller Rock" (Ninth in a series of "Writing in My Sleep"); Peter Emshwiller's *The Host* reviewed by Bryan Cholfin; reading list by Tom Maddox. _____

Issue #39, November 1991: David G. Hartwell, "Notes on the Evolution of Horror Literature"; Joe Sanders, "At the Frontiers of the Fantastic: Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs*"; Pamela Dean's *Tam Lin* reviewed by Delia Sherman; Carol Emshwiller's *The Start of the End of It All* reviewed by Gwyneth Jones; reading list by Kathryn Cramer. _____

Issue #40, December 1991: Nicholas Ruddick, "Is There Any British Science Fiction? A Serious Inquiry"; Frederik Pohl, "Is SFWA Real?"; Eduardo Galleano's *The Book of Embraces* reviewed by Rachel Pollack; David G. Hartwell, "The Best SF of the '70s"; Karen Joy Fowler's *Sarah Canary* reviewed by John Clute; reading list by Jonathan Carroll. _____

Issue #41, January 1992: James Morrow, "A Meditation on *War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination* by H. Bruce Franklin"; Patrick McGrath's and Bradford Morrow's (eds.) *The New Gothic* reviewed by Gene Wolfe; Barry Parker's *Cosmic Time Travel* reviewed by Larry Niven; Jack Vance's *Ecce and Old Earth* reviewed by Arthur B. Cover. _____

Issue #42, February 1992: David Ketterer, "The Establishment of Canadian Science Fiction" (pt. 1 of 2); Michael Swanwick, "Nine Short Fiction Reviews"; Michael Swanwick's *Gravity's Angels* reviewed by Alexander Jablokov; Fred Chappell's *More Shapes Than One* reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer; Alexei Panshin, "Greater Work and Lesser Work." _____

Issue #43, March 1992: Frank Dietz, "An Interview with Bruce Bethke"; J. G. Ballard's *The Kindness of Women* reviewed by Charles Platt; Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* reviewed by John Clute; David Ketterer, "The Establishment of Canadian Science Fiction" (pt. 2); reading lists by Phyllis Gotlieb, Élisabeth Vonarburg, et al. _____

Issue #44, April 1992: James Cappio, "A Long Guide to K.W. Jeter"; Robert Killheffer, "The Legacy of Columbus: The Lost Races of Edward Myers and Kenneth Morris"; Michael Swanwick, "Nine Short Fiction Reviews (pt. 2)"; Geoff Ryman's *The Child Garden* reviewed by Bruce Holland Rogers; reading lists by David A. Smith and Don Keller. _____

Issue #45, May 1992: Brian Stableford, "C.S. Lewis and the Decline of Scientific Romance"; Barry N. Malzberg, "Some Reflections on Freud, Fantasy & the Jewish Condition"; Jonathan Carroll's *Outside the Dog Museum* reviewed by Rachel Pollack; Tom Maddox's *Halo* reviewed by Leonard Rysdyk; reading lists by Steve Rasnic Tem and James Cappio. _____

Issue #46, June 1992: Joan Gordon, "Autobiographical Science Fiction and Möbius Strips: Joe Haldeman's *The Hemingway Hoax*"; Allen Steele, "Hard Again"; Howard V. Hendrix, "Memories of the Sun, Perceptions of Eclipse"; Larry Dark's *The Literary Ghost* reviewed by Brian Stableford; Tim Powers's *Last Call* reviewed by Kevin Helfenbein. _____

Issue #47, July 1992: Damien Broderick, "Reading SF as a Mega-Text"; Peter J. Heck, Greg Cox, and Shira Daemon, "Three Views of *Two Guys From the Future*"; Susan Palwick, "Believing (In) Fiction"; Ramsey Campbell's *Waking Nightmares* reviewed by Stefan Dziemianowicz; Earl Wells, "The Rule of the Game", reading list by Geoff Ryman. _____

Issue #48, August 1992: Samuel R. Delany, "Zelazny/Varley/Gibson—and Quality"; Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling's *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror: Fifth Annual Collection* reviewed by Arthur Byron Cover; Robert Sheckley, "Memories of the Fifties" (pt. I); Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* reviewed by Gwyneth Jones and by Howard Hendrix. _____

Full Year Subscriptions to NYRSF: \$31.00 U.S., \$36.00 Canada, \$44.00 Overseas.

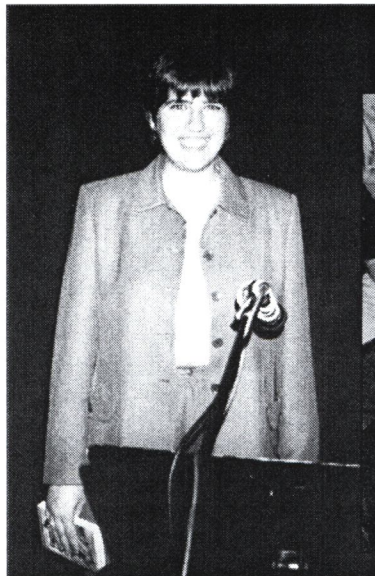
Name _____

Total _____

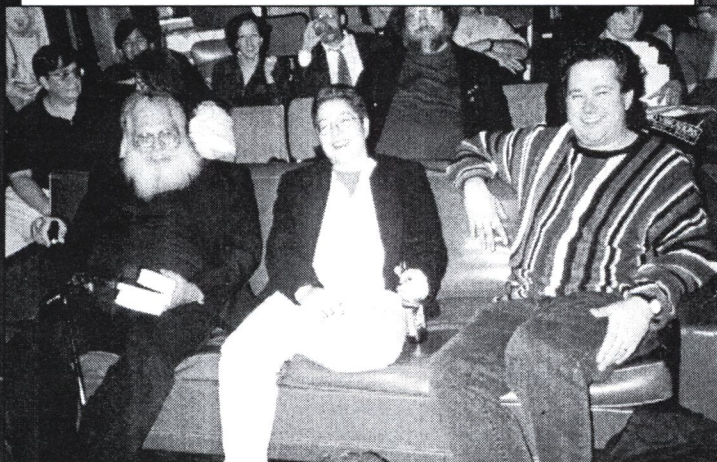
Address _____

Please make all monies payable in U.S. funds to Dragon Press, P.O. Box 78, Pleasantville, NY 10570

NYRSF Tenth Anniversary Reading at Dixon Place, September 23, 1998



Readings Curator Amy Goldschlager



Samuel R. Delany, Ariel Haméon, & Jim Minz



John Crowley

The New York Review of Science Fiction

ISSUE #123 November 1998
Volume 11, No. 3 ISSN #1052-9438

FEATURES

- Brian W. Aldiss: *The Referee of the War of the Worlds*: 1
Judith Buckrich: *George Turner: A Life*: An Excerpt: 1
Sylvia Kelso: *Loud Achievements*: Lois McMaster Bujold's Science Fiction (Part 2 of 2): 13
Henry Wessells: *Thoughts Occasioned by the Publication of The Avram Davidson Treasury*: 16
Ariel Haméon: *Blockbuster: Lives of the Monster Dogs*: 18

REVIEWS

- Harry Turtledove's *A World of Difference*, reviewed by David Langford: 6
Neil Gaiman's *Smoke and Mirrors*, reviewed by Gwyneth Jones: 16
Connie Willis's *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, reviewed by Joseph Milicia: 17
Philip Pullman's *The Subtle Knife*, reviewed by Greg L. Johnson: 21
Tom Cool's *Secret Realms*, reviewed by Michael M. Levy: 22

PLUS

Ray Davis responds to Jonathan Lethem: "Things Are Tough All Over" (p. 7); Michael Swanwick looks in the mirror (p. 14); a slipstream Reading List from Arthur D. Hlavaty (p. 19); Screed (p. 23); and an editorial (p. 24).

Kathryn Cramer, Art and Web Site Editor; Ariel Haméon, Managing Editor;
David G. Hartwell, Reviews and Features Editor; Kevin J. Maroney, Managing Editor.
Staff: Arthur D. Hlavaty and Kevin Seabrooke.
Special thanks to Avram Grumer and Lisa Padol.
Amy Goldschlager, Readings Curator. Samuel R. Delany, Contributing Editor.

Published monthly by Dragon Press, P.O. Box 78, Pleasantville NY 10570.
\$3.50 per copy. Annual subscriptions: In U.S., \$31; \$36 Canada; \$39 First Class;
overseas, \$44 (via Air Printed Matter). For overseas air mail, please inquire. Domestic institutional subscriptions \$35.
Please make checks payable to Dragon Press, and payable in U.S. funds.

New York Review of Science Fiction Home Page: <http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/olp/nyrsf/nyrsf.html>

The Referee of the War of the Worlds

continued from page 1

Mackenzie to chose for the jacket of their biography of Wells a detail from John Martin's painting, "The Great Day of His Wrath." The title fits Wells's state of mind while writing this novel.

What else might have been in his mind? There was the subject of colonialism. He mentions the cruel treatment of the Tasmanians. Also, he had behind him other Invasion of Britain stories, such as, most outstandingly—as Professor I. F. Clarke has brought to our notice—the historic case of Sir George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking*, published in 1871—the first Invasion story, a small-scale but excellent one, flavored by the bitter herb of regret.

Wells would also have been aware of the saying that "God is on the side of the big battalions" (an easy phrase which fell into disuse after the Vietnam war). The concept that God smiles on those who triumph dominated European minds for a long while.

Wells's judicial view of the social order of Victorian England had to digest the fact that Lady Fetherstonehaugh, the owner of Up Park, where his mother worked as housekeeper, had started life as a milkmaid, under her not particularly distinguished maiden name of Mary Ann Bullock. It was a striking example of the social mobility which Wells himself achieved.

On the subject of nature itself, Wells also faced ambiguities. Nature in some aspects favored human life; in others it opposed human life. This dichotomy is basic to Wells's thought. If it was instilled intellectually in his early studies under T. H. Huxley, he experienced it emotionally, too, in his father's activities as a gardener, striving to bring order to unruly horticulture. Nature is best confined to a flower bed. But then, again, Nature is an aspect of Darwinian evolution. Wells demonstrates that those bacteria which defeat the invaders from other worlds are not on our side. They are the cause of "all the fevers and contagions of human life," as Wells is careful to point out. We are as much their prey as are the Martians. Under the gardens where the Eloi live are dark things that devour them, microbes that have achieved maturity.

We remember that the Red Weed, which comes from Mars as a representative of its vegetable life, is shown in Ch. 5 of Book 2 as "the color of blood." Indeed, the unthinking vegetation enjoys better success on this planet than do the Martians. It remains when they are gone. The streams, at the end of the book, are choked with the weed, there described as "in appearance between butcher's meat and pickled cabbage" (186). How curiously prescient is the depiction of this red weed among the ruins; those of us who lived through the Second World War recall the pink rosebay willow herb which sprouted everywhere on bomb sites.

When Wells sat down to write, the unremitting conflict between these different orders of being must have been in his mind. Such uncertainties prevent him from being merely a boring moralist, and contribute to the overall artistic success of his story. As John Hunting-ton has said in his book, *The Logic of Fantasy*, "all claims to evolutionary superiority and triumph ask for ironic rebuttal" (137).

Behind these elements of doubt, reinforcing them, was Wells's awareness of the fragility of civilization—a possibility which *The Battle of Dorking* had rubbed home. As Mary Shelley's imagination was haunted by Comte de Volney's *Ruins of Empires*, first published in French in 1791, so Wells's terrible vision of civilization in crisis may have been in the mind of Oswald Spengler, the gloomy philosopher of history, when he came to write *Der Untergang des Abendlands* (*The Decline of the West*) a few years later (1918–1922). We readily sympathize with those of Wells's generation who understood that the cultured life, concerts, the Royal Academy of Arts, restaurants, and so forth were fragile constructs.

These somewhat *fin de siècle* cogitations must have been in Wells's capacious mind when he came to write *The War of the Worlds*. They are made corporate in the dreadful shape of the Martians.

Missiles are what the Martians fire at Earth, much as soldiers lob hand grenades.

In Chapter 1, an observer of Mars says

The spectroscope, to which he had at once resorted, indicated a mass of flaming gas, chiefly hydrogen, moving with an

enormous velocity towards this earth. This jet of fire had become invisible about a quarter past twelve. He compared it to a colossal puff of flame, suddenly and violently squirted out of the planet, "as flaming gas rushes out of a gun." (12)

Guns feature quite prominently in Wells's *oeuvre*. As Leon Stover has written in his recent edition of *The First Men in the Moon* (Intro 13), one of Wells's few borrowings from Jules Verne is his space gun. There is every reason to suppose that the Martians used Verne's space gun, or a similar weapon. The missiles which land on Woking heath have clearly been fired from some kind of cannon. In reality, their occupants would have been killed, if not by the impact of striking the earth, then by the concussion of launch.

By the '30s, if not before, Wells must have known what damage impact velocities caused. Yet in the film, *Things to Come*, the space gun is in action again. If it is anti-scientific, it has become symbolic, penis-like, spurting its seed into the galaxy. Artillery has been converted to peaceful use; cannons have been beaten into—if not plowshares—humane means of travel. But in 1897, a gun was a dashed gun, often used against lesser breeds without the law, as terrestrials were without Martian law.

A didactic purpose of *The War of the Worlds* is to demonstrate that mankind is a lesser breed. The Martians are nasty, but intellectually our superiors. Unlike the Morlocks or the Selenites, they live not below ground but above us, in realms of the superego. The novel swarms with metaphors designed to illuminate humanity's contrasting humble state. These metaphors start to fizz as soon as the book begins, signifying Wells's intentions:

As men busied themselves about their affairs they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. (1)

That's not very flattering. Whereas the Martians, under pressure of necessity, "have brightened their intellects, enlarged their powers, and hardened their hearts" (2). So what's the consequence? That we who inhabit the earth "must be to them at least as alien and lowly as are the monkeys and lemurs to us" (3).

So there, in the first three pages of the story, the paradigms for the entire fable are set in place, and play begins. Inferior beings, superior beings: the pattern is a familiar one in Wells's work. The Eloi and the Morlocks, the terrestrials and the Selenites, the big people and the small people, the Samurai and the ruled. Wells the referee is always careful to bestow merits and demerits on both sides of his equations; which are his preferences for, the Eloi or the Morlocks? Marginally, I suppose, for the Eloi. At least his time traveler can have intercourse with one of them. His dislike is for the system that bred their division.

A clue to his preference in these struggles is that he is generally on the side of those who enjoy sexual intercourse. The Eloi are capable of it. The Martians are not. They gave it up for the long Martian Lent.

The division of species, brought about as in *The Time Machine* by the pressures of evolution, is apparent in *The War of the Worlds*. In Ch. 2 of Book Two, "What We Saw from the Ruined House," Wells brings off one of his masterstrokes. In the passage beginning, "They were, I now saw, the most unearthly creatures it is possible to conceive" (132), he draws the first full portrait of a Martian. After three pages of description, when we are thoroughly and scientifically disgusted, Wells remarks, "To me it is quite credible that the Martians may be descended from beings not unlike ourselves" (136). And who knows what we may become? "We men . . . are just at the beginning of the evolution that the Martians have worked out" (137–8). I make that two—nil to the Martians.

Perhaps aliens, in the hands of real writers and not mere sensation-alists, are always there to remind us of the fragility of civilization and the fact that evolution is a neutral force, and not necessarily on our side. Fifty years after *The War of the Worlds* was published, another satirist wrote a novel in which civilization has entirely collapsed. "What splendid tribal dances in the bat-infested halls of the Mother of Parliaments!" (28). After an atomic war, mankind has degenerated to the level of the chimpanzee. This is Aldous Huxley's *Ape and Essence*.

No chance of redemption is offered here. Huxley has inherited Wells's mantle. But he allows no chance of rebuilding in the ruins, as in Wells's book. He drubs us, but the drubbing is less subtle than Wells's and, in my judgment, less of an artistic success.

That ruined house, where the narrator of Wells's war is trapped with the curate, has become semi-subterranean. They are confined to the scullery of a half-destroyed house. This is unmistakably a reconstruction of the scullery of Atlas House, where Wells's mother slaved years of her life away when Bertie was a boy. You find it described again, in terms of love and disgust, in Ch. 4 of Section 3 of *In the Days of the Comet*. The squalor and discomfort of that place stayed with Wells for a long while. The symbolic value of the kitchen is used here: kitchens are places where things are prepared for eating and being eaten. The Martians feast on the blood of humans. And later on the curate.

The Martians have come to earth to get a good meal, among other things. Wells always has a sympathy for good meals. It's one result of his mother's dreadful cooking. No wonder Martians have a taste for humanity; as nourishment on their journey, they have brought over from the Red Planet some creatures, which "to judge from the shriveled remains that have fallen into human hands were bipeds, with flimsy siliceous skeletons . . . and feeble musculature"—creatures, in fact, not unlike our dear British and other lesser humans.

Wells's obsession with eating and being consumed has been explored in a book by Peter Kemp, *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Ape*, published in 1982. Indeed, people in *The War of the Worlds* are perceived as part of the food chain—and act the part. In the final paragraph of Ch. 6, we find the people of Woking fleeing from Martian fire "as blindly as a flock of sheep"—a telling simile. Another goal to the Martians.

Indeed, humanity is shown as ineffectual. This is what leads me to ask, Whose side was Wells on? Can we convict the referee of prejudice? The most ineffectual creature in the book is the curate, with his cry of "What are we to do? Are these creatures everywhere? Has the earth been given over to them?" But Londoners are no better. People stand at street corners, reading the papers or talking excitedly (86), not knowing what to do, waiting for the end.

Incidentally the curate, subject of Wells's mockery, was transformed—some might say travestied—in George Pal's 1953 version of the story, into the brave man of the cloth who walks towards enemy fire intoning "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, Thy—" *Pswooooosh!* Pal at least must have thought Wells prejudiced.

Wells's stern morality is of a different tone from Hollywood's, as we might expect. We are vulnerable creatures because we do not think ahead, we rely on religion, we are disorganized, and, in some cases, notably in the case of the artilleryman, we are frankly bastards.

The artilleryman gloats over the destruction of society.

"There won't be any more blessed concerts for a million years or so; there won't be any Royal Academy of Arts, and no nice little feeds at restaurants" (164–5). How curious that he, a soldier, does not rejoice that there will also be no more Army parades, "no more blanching on Sunday, no more asking for a pass" (to quote the old British Army song "When This Blinking War is Over").

In the passages of the artilleryman's monologue, Wells expresses once more his fear of the fragility of civilization. "Life," says the artilleryman, "is real again." And he reveals his theory of eugenics. He's very practical, our artilleryman.

The artilleryman and his like will survive, because they will abdicate from the human state. He plans to live in the many miles of London's drains. "We who keep wild will go savage," he says, "degenerate into a sort of big savage rat" (167). This is not one of Wells's similes, likening humanity to dodos, sheep, monkeys, rats; this is a man looking forward to *being* a kind of rat. No honor in survival there. Penalty kick against humanity.

One might suppose that the narrator of what threatens to become the massacre of mankind might exhibit some sympathy for the doomed. But no. Wells's contempt for the fleeing people of London is emphatic. For instance, Ch. 16 tells us,

By ten o'clock the police organization, and by mid-day even the railway organizations, were losing coherency, losing shape

and efficiency, guttering, softening, running at last in that liquefaction of the social body. (99)

(And of course he's right: Britain's railway organizations have lost coherence.)

We are told of people fighting, being trampled and crushed, shot, and stabbed. "The policemen who had been sent to direct the traffic . . . were breaking the heads of the people they were called out to protect" (99). When that happens in the nineteenth century, it's the end of the world. We are accustomed to it.

This passage marks the increasing dehumanization of humanity. The social body has liquefied, like the liver under an attack of cancer. With mankind's disorganization goes its sickness, and Wells's lifelong hatred of disorganization and sickness. We are told that diseases have never appeared on Mars, or alternatively that "Martian sanitary science eliminated them ages ago. A hundred diseases, all the fevers and contagions of human life, consumption, cancers, tumors, and such morbidities, never enter the scheme of their life" (136). A palpable goal to Mars.

At the beginning of Ch. 17, the process of disintegration continues. Any hypothetical balloonist, looking down on London in the June morning, Wells tells us, would see people as a series of black dots (112), each dot being not a human being but "a human *agon*y of terror and physical distress."

This was no disciplined march; it was a stampede—a stampede gigantic and terrible without order and without a goal, six million people, unarmed and unprovisioned, driving headlong. It was the beginning of the rout of civilization, of the massacre of mankind.

Of course, humanity is helpless against the invasion. Finally, we are saved by bacteria, "our microscopic allies," which kill off the Martians. It's full time. The game is over. Wells the referee blows the whistle on us! It may be here that we recall Joseph Conrad's old jibe against Wells: "You don't care for humanity but think they are to be improved" (Rupert Hart-Davis, "Hugh Walpole," 1952).

Perhaps to impress on the reader the facelessness of humanity, the narrator, his brother, the curate, and the artilleryman, who between them constitute the most prominent characters in the novel, are not named. What are rigorously named, by contrast, are all the places in the Thames Valley where the aliens land.

It is this endemic assumed contempt—at least we assume it is assumed—for mankind that gives the whole novel its cutting edge. Humanity will one day be superseded. Little doubt about that: perhaps by some ecological revolution or catastrophe, perhaps by intentional genetic transmutation. The novel, written by a man who has himself been near death, is designed to slice through Victorian complacency. Wells knew, as did few of his contemporaries, that entropy set a term to man's supremacy, and that the second law of thermodynamics ran in a dark stream against optimism.

With success and age, Wells ceased to be the angry young man—or, in this case, the angry young referee. His refereeing took other forms. However, already in *The War of the Worlds* we see the shape of things to come. After the near destruction of England (read "civilization"), a better world arises, in which "the gifts to human science [i.e., the invasion] has brought are enormous, and it has done much to promote the conception of the commonwealth of mankind" (191). This pattern of destruction followed by renewal or utopia is one Wells is to use over and over again in his later work.

I'd like to suggest, parenthetically, that this pattern—destruction and renewal of the social system—depends on a similar operation being performed with regard to individual attitudes. In "The Discovery of the Future," Wells's brilliant discourse delivered before the Royal Institution in 1902, he distinguishes between two divergent types of mind.

The predominant type scarcely thinks of the future. The second type, more modern and much less abundant, "thinks constantly and by preference of things to come, and of present things mainly in relation to the results that must arise from them" (*DotF*, 19). This latter type of person is seen as "perpetually attacking and altering the established order of things" (*Ibid.*)

Wells, the referee with attitude, seeks to change the former kind of mind into the latter kind precisely by the pungent medicine so artistically infused throughout *The War of the Worlds*.

Unfortunately, the former type of mind, the passive mind that scarcely thinks of the future, still predominates in our societies. Those who consistently refer back to the past are those who hate Wells and hate science fiction. They have yet to be defeated.

However, we may—as it were in self-defense—point out some of Wells's Victorian errors which underlie his novel. Bravely though Wells struggled against the misapprehensions of his contemporaries, he concurred in a belief common at the time, originating plausibly enough in Laplace's Nebular Hypothesis, that Mars was a much older planet than Earth. A statement to that effect appears in the novel's long and powerful first paragraph. So, Wells concludes that life must have begun its course on Mars long before Earth's surface ceased to be molten.

In an article in *The Saturday Review* #81, appearing in April of 1896, Wells discusses the possibility of intelligence on Mars. Here he states baldly, "There is no doubt that Mars is very like the Earth" (EWIS 175). There, as we now know, he was in error. How fortunate he was in error, or we would have been denied those chastening enjoyments he sets out—like a banquet, to use a congenial simile—in *The War of the Worlds*.

The War of the Worlds is the foundation stone of all alien invasion stories. It is the book which taught us to take an intelligent if nervous interest in all the other strange furniture of the solar system. The book might so easily have become outmoded during the last rather horrendous hundred years. That it is far from outmoded is primarily due to its astringency, the mercilessness of its judgments on humanity. Pile up the

hardware as you may, that critical attitude will never become superseded.

Wells puts himself in the position of those intellectuals "vast and cool and unsympathetic" which come to teach us our bitter lesson. *We never looked ahead*. His novel was, is, and remains singularly cathartic, ever topical in its thrilling sermon on humanity's weaknesses. ▲

Brian W. Aldiss lives in Oxford, England. This essay is based on the keynote speech at the recent H. G. Wells Conference devoted to *The War of the Worlds* in celebration of the centenary of its hardcover publication.

Notes

Peter Kemp, *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Ape*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.

Huntington, John. *The Logic of Fantasy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Nabokov, Vladimir. "The Art of Fiction" number XL, *Paris Review* #41
Wells, Herbert George. *The War of the Worlds*. London: Penguin, 1985 edition.

——— *H. G. Wells: Early Writings in Science & Science Fiction*. Edited by Robert Philmus & David Y. Hughes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975. Cited as EWIS in the text.

——— *The Discovery of the Future*. Edited and Introduced by Patrick Parrinder. PNL Press, 1989. Cited as DotF in the text.

A World of Difference by Harry Turtledove

London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998; £16.99 hc; 308 pages

reviewed by David Langford

To get the obligatory cavil out of the way: *A World of Difference* is of course best known, at least to sf historians, as a 1955 novel by Robert Conquest. Another established title that's gone the way of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*, John Buchan's *Greenmantle*, Charles Williams's *War in Heaven*, and others. . . .

I always expect Harry Turtledove to whelm me with frighteningly erudite alternate history, leading to worrying suspicions that the mere presence of practically any named character may in fact be a bit of brilliantly incisive historical irony which I would notice if only I'd *learned* the appropriate period. Soothingly, however, this venture is into a more Stephen Baxterish realm of alternate astronomy. Just as Garry Kilworth's "Navigator Kings" fantasies moved Britain to the position of New Zealand for the sake of some Celtic-Polynesian action, so Turtledove has quietly replaced Mars with the larger, more interesting, and definitely habitable planet Minerva.

History presumably starts to diverge significantly when the Viking I lander touches down on Minerva in 1976, and transmits back to Earth an epoch-making picture of the terrified Minervan native who is busily beating it to death with a stick (identified by our resourceful scientists as "the Artifact"). Because of this or some earlier effect of Minerva's existence, the ripples along the timestream—like the beating of that damned butterfly's wings—cut short one notable career: "Too bad Gorbachev had only lasted nine months. Tolmasov still wondered if his cerebral hemorrhage had been of the 5.54mm variety."

Thus, with what looks like a certain nostalgia for the old Cold War enemy, Turtledove magically restores the Soviet Union and the traditional U.S./U.S.S.R. friction in his presumed 1990s—as a joint Minervan expedition heads across space in separate manned craft, *Athena* and *Tsiolkovsky*. Some NASA double-dealing leads to a late course correction for *Athena*, which lands as close as possible to the Viking touchdown site and its Minervan community . . . while the Soviets find themselves in an adjacent country on the far side of a seemingly impassable canyon, making contact with a different Minervan group. Since the "Soviet" Minervans have already declared the equivalent of war on the "American" ones, the stage is set for an interesting game of military advisers.

The Minervans themselves are engaging creations, conscientiously imagined in a physical sense. Radially symmetrical, they have six legs, six arms, and six eyestalks, allowing a six-level graded approach to averting one's gaze or to idioms like "I've got my eye on you." Turning *all* one's eyestalks away from someone is extremely pointed, and there's a carefully calculated measure of interest in "Let me turn three eyes on him." Minervans may not have heard of ostriches, but are handy with proverbs like "pulling in my eyestalks won't make it go away." In other words, beneath the scanty disguise of a few routine quirks like this, the Minervans are likable in a very human rather than an alien way. There is no hint, for example, of six-valued logic or radial patterns of thought—as disconcertingly imagined by Naomi Mitchison when describing starfish aliens in *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962).

Both contact teams' interactions with the natives are interesting enough. The Americans incline to humane concerns, and, in a subplot straight out of James White's "Sector General" space-hospital sequence, one of them plans crude stratagems against the racial tragedy of all Minervan fauna, whose females invariably die in childbirth. Meanwhile the Soviets, though infested with KGB agents and some awful dialogue ("Would it not accord well with Marxist-Leninist principles to render fraternal assistance to this advanced society in its struggle against the oppressive feudal aristocrats on the eastern side of Jotun Canyon?"—I am not making this up), are decent folk at heart. Unfortunately they make the mistake of letting their aggressive Minervan comrades see a Kalashnikov in action.

So we come to the inevitable culminating battle, cunningly timed for just when the most likable female Minervan (and precociously the world's first feminist) is due to give birth. Can the aggressors' superior numbers and powerful secret weapons, both home-grown and annexed from their visitors, possibly win out against the nice Minervan defenders' skimpy resources of U.S. handguns, a microlite plane, and good old American know-how? Is the Pope a Scientologist? But it's an entertaining read, and caused me no pain. ▲

David Langford lives in Reading, England where he produces the notorious fan newsletter Ansible.

Ray Davis
Things Are Tough All Over

▲

I have a quarrel and a disagreement with Jonathan Lethem's "Why Can't We All Just Live Together?" piece.

The quarrel is methodological.

SF and mainstream (or, less flatteringly, "middlebrow") fiction are both *genres*. That is to say, the terms "sf" and "mainstream" are used to label loose overlapping bundles of marketing techniques (including bookstore placement and publishing imprints), critical communities (including journalistic and awards systems), and interwriterly influence (including career path options and the impetus of "I can go that one better" challenges).

But rather than treating the genres of sf and mainstream fiction on equal terms, Lethem's piece reifies the sf genre into a location, a family, and even a flirtatious and fearful person. This rhetorical move unintentionally flatters the institutions of mainstream fiction at the expense of the institutions of sf: instead of being an idiot leviathan that flings its gifts to the undeserving, "the mainstream" is a list of writers that Lethem respects. (Reversing that formula is left as an easy exercise for the reader.)

My disagreement hinges on personal taste.

Both Lethem and I are unabashed supporters of the ideal of the Great Book—it's an ideal with its share of problems, but let's leave those for another day—and I share his essay's unspoken assumption that, for us as readers, it's a genre's job to augment our personal lists of Great Books.

Thus a genre might be said to be "worthwhile" if it helps motivate the writing of Great Books: Hammett's and Chandler's novels would not have developed without the hard-boiled mystery as market and as field of dispute. To take a more painful example, failed crossover Herman Melville may have had mixed feelings about the sea story; still, his works exist because of the sea story.

As far as this betwixting chore goes, the sf genre still provides a uniquely demanding and dynamic market for short stories: I doubt that Lethem would disagree that the quality and range of short stories published as sf over the past thirty years overwhelm those of the mainstream. On the other hand, I wouldn't disagree with Lethem that, for his and my favorite contemporary novelists, intragenre influences play a lighter role than extragenre influences.

But a genre is not a passive container; as a set of institutions and communities, it also directs attention. To take an extreme example, I usually refer to Jack Womack as an sf writer and Don DeLillo as a mainstream writer. Now, in what sense is Womack "sf" and DeLillo not, since Womack did not rise from the genre's writerly community and Womack's novels are not now marketed as sf? Well, I think of Womack (and Fowler, and Crowley, and Emshwiller) as sf rather than as mainstream because my readerly attention was drawn to them from an sf context rather than from a mainstream context.

In the 1930s, the genre and industry called "mainstream fiction" protected itself less efficiently against *Ulysses* by legal barriers than by burying a psychiatrist-written review of the novel in the back pages of the *New York Times*, and the *Times* continues to bury nonmainstream fiction by treating it as naïvely unimportant. Since Womack's (and Fowler's, and Crowley's, and Emshwiller's) novels are currently being published as mainstream, they aren't rudely dismissed in the way that sf's Great Books of the 1970s were. But, at least at the moment, neither do those authors receive the ongoing focus (and rewards) allotted to books by the few born-and-bred mainstream fiction stars with whom they might naturally be compared. I doubt that I would have found them as easily if I had started from mainstream sources, and I even have some doubt that their works would exist in so brilliant a form if the writers had maintained careers thoroughly within the mainstream.

I certainly agree with Lethem that these writers should obtain

as large and appreciative an audience as possible, and that restricting their work to an sf imprint would only hurt their chances. And I think Lethem would agree with me that successfully publishing a Great Book in the mainstream does not necessarily make for a high-profile mainstream career. Where we probably part paths is in my paranoiac (or at least anti-utopian) extension: that the institutions of mainstream fiction work *against* the production of Great Books.

Lethem's list of Great Books is, I think, considerably larger than mine. At any rate, it contains many more books that have received mainstream attention. My guess is that there's enough of an overlap between his list and the yearly recommendations of the *New York Times* or the "A List" of the *Village Voice* that one could fairly say that, for Lethem, the mainstream *works*: it does a good job of finding, publishing, and drawing attention to Great Books.

For me, the mainstream does *not* work. Both Lethem and I cut our critical-readerly teeth on the approved American mainstream fiction of the late 1960s and the 1970s. But, unlike Lethem, I felt that the "interesting" wing of mainstream fiction (most often metonymized by Pynchon, although its giddy egos must by now number in the hundreds) was too intellectually and emotionally feeble to match the pre-1950 Great Books of my personal list. When I surveyed those Great Books, I found that few had received positive attention from the institutions of mainstream fiction in their time. Attempting a practical application of this bit of history, I turned to nonmainstream genres in search of contemporary Great Books. And, having been successful, I still turn to them.

(Note that refusal of mainstream attention is not always limited to the Great Book's own time: "For the first sixty-odd years of the century, American fiction was deficient in exactly those qualities [i.e., speculation and the fabulous] sf [split off here from American fiction] offered in abundance. . . ." That version of literary history seems based on a canon considerably more conservative than one might deduce from Lethem's own library. I'd instead say: "American mainstream literary institutions have consistently neglected imaginative writing, including that produced during the first sixty-odd years of the century.")

As Lethem indicates, sf career plans that include Great Books are unlikely to synch perfectly with the institutional plans of sf and fantasy genre markets. What I don't see in his essay is any corresponding indication of factors that might interfere with success in the markets of current mainstream fiction.

In Lethem's essay, "the mainstream" is that place where all can be judged by their writerly merits rather than (as in sf) by nostalgic prejudices. But a career-centered lifestyle, exceptional organizational ability, established social position, public speaking skills (and desires), photogenicity, coincidence with well-understood models of fiction, and zeitgeist-friendliness all come to mind as assets lacked by many Great Book writers. I would have welcomed an acknowledgment that the institutions of mainstream fiction have their own histories and prejudices, as well as their own advantages, and that they put up their own obstacles to the production of Great Books.

I agree with Lethem that the sf genre's markets provide limited freedom for production of Great Books, and that the strictures continue to tighten. I regretfully disagree that an equivalent number of Great Books will appear in mainstream fiction markets as they disappear from a fading sf genre, any more than (to switch media) an equivalent number of Great TV Movies showed up to offset the loss of Great B Pictures. I don't believe the balance sheets work that way. ▲

Ray Davis lives in Berkeley, California.

George Turner: A Life: An Excerpt

continued from page 1

The manuscript of *Beloved Son* had done the rounds of several other publishers before Charles Monteith at Faber & Faber in London accepted it in 1976 (a year after Turner finished it.) The letters sent by publishers who rejected it as well as Turner's agent in London, Carl Routledge, were published in a John Bangsund publication, *George Turner's Beloved Son: Some notes critical historical and crypto-philosophical by the author and his readers* (1978). The following is a selection from that publication.

On July 23, 1975, Howard Moorpark, an agent from New York, wrote the following about the manuscript:

Dear Mr. Turner,

I have read BELOVED SON, and am sorry to say that I do not think it would be salable here—apart from being twice as long as a s-f novel should be. In my opinion, it moves slowly, clumsily, and the characters are so dim that I couldn't find any of them interesting enough to care.

It goes back to you by seamount. I'm sorry.

Even Carl Routledge, Turner's agent in London, held little hope of ever getting *Beloved Son* published. He wrote the following on August 20, 1975:

My dear George,

I am very sorry about this. I enjoyed reading the novel, but then I am in a special position vis à vis yourself: I am interested in you, and also in Bernard's Star, and all my desire is to like it. But that doesn't alter the fact that it is a long book (it would have to be priced £5 in the UK—nearly \$10 in Australia) and it is a long slow read, and you need your wits about you.

I can't imagine the Woolworths readership going for it, next door to Michael Moorcock and Asimov on the SF shelves, in paperback, can you?

... Try for publication in Australia. I am very, very sad.

Turner himself put *Beloved Son* on a desk at Faber and Faber in London when he was there in 1976. It was, incidentally, his first overseas trip since the compulsory war time ones, and he did not go anywhere but the U.K. It was an excellent accident. Faber had published quality science fiction before, and were not put off by long manuscripts or ones that made the reader work a little. Charles Monteith of Faber wrote the following to Turner on August 3, 1976:

Dear Mr. Turner,

I'm just off on holiday but before I go I wanted to write you a brief note to say how very much I enjoyed and admired BELOVED SON. It's an excellent science fiction novel—and I've already made an offer for it to Mr. Carl Routledge from whom you'll doubtless be hearing very shortly. As we all realize, the real problem, commercially, is its jumbo size—but I don't honestly think (and I'm sure you'll agree!) that it would be easy to make any major cuts in it without doing it a major injury since one of the most attractive features of the whole novel to me is the closeness of the plotting and structuring.

I hope—indeed I feel confident—very shortly after I get back to the office at the beginning of September I'll be able to settle all the final details with Mr. Routledge; and all I need to do in the meantime is to congratulate you again on a first class book and thank you for having sent it to me.

When Turner finished writing *Beloved Son* in 1975, he was 59 years old, and he was no longer the young man who had written all the "Treelake" novels, nor the 50-year-old who had made a last desperate attempt to join life as other people seemed to live it by falling in love and having an adventure in another city.

According to Turner himself the motivation for writing *Beloved Son* was partly the quiet but persistent nudging by John Bangsund and also:

A goad came from fan reaction to my abrasive essays, a healthy resentment of what was seen as arrogant dismissal of fan

interests and preferences. The fans were not wrong, but their anger—a real anger, attested by a couple of cases of personal abuse—expressed itself mainly in fanzine letters asking "What science fiction did this so-and-so ever write that he claims to judge his betters. . . ."

I began a pilot exercise with half a dozen people in a homing starship, emphasis on characterization, with possible plot points noted in passing—and a parallel group in a post-holocaust Melbourne, neither group in contact with the other, but approaching confrontation.

It took Turner more than four years from this start to finish *Beloved Son* and halfway through he was again drinking heavily. It was not connected to working at the Carlton and United Breweries—he did not drink on the job. Rather it was just the return of a life's habit. And perhaps it would have gone on longer had it not been that he had become socially involved with a science fiction crowd:

... when Christmas of 1972 came around, and it was party time in fandom and everywhere else, I went to several powerfully alcoholic gatherings in the week between Christmas and New Year—and on New Year's Day I came to grief. In a week of circulating I had probably drunk more than in the previous year and was also insulting my stomach with cigars.

While at a New Year's Day party at Robin Johnson's flat (Robin Johnson is an Australian fan who knew everyone in science fiction and was always heading off to conventions—"anywhere between Heard Island and Novaya Zemlya"), Turner's ulcer perforated. He knew what was happening and got John Bangsund to take him home, but most strangely did not tell him why:

I don't know what demon of cock-eyed calmness takes over at such times, but I reckoned that I had several hours in hand before the internal bleeding killed me, that a thoughtful person should not make a fuss and destroy the enjoyment of others and that home was only two blocks away.

Once home he "sat down on the hall carpet and could not get up again." Luckily another lodger was home (it was a rooming house) who despite her own drunkenness managed to help him call an ambulance.

During the (next) morning I learned that I had been so close to DOA that the theatre staff had gone straight into exploratory surgery without an X-ray, removed the wreckage of the ulcer, sewed a flap of stomach wall over the hole and put me to bed.

"Not a neat job," tut-tutted the very young surgeon when he visited. "*Hurried*, you understand." I understood. "You were very lucky."

"I'm always lucky," says I, arrogant in the face of fate evaded. It was true: I have had the Devil's own luck not to finish in a dole queue, in an asylum, or on skid row.

This incident sheds a great deal of light on several of *Beloved Son's* themes and preoccupations, not the least of which is death and the idea of biological resurrection and rebirth through sleep tanks, cloning, and techniques of revival and rejuvenation. After this near-death experience Turner went through a kind of rebirth himself, one of the signs of which was that he lost all desire to smoke:

What had happened (in hindsight) was that the stress problems that fostered an addiction had vanished; I had suffered not only another brush with death but a fundamental reorientation to living.

He felt too that a lifetime of trying to cope with what he called "mental shackles" that had developed through a "closeted and repressed childhood" through which he developed a "grossly distorted view of the social world" were finally gone.

Turner himself stated that though he caught up a little at maturity in the army, that he had "the mental outlook of a twelve-year-old" when he joined and "when [he] left at twenty-nine had attained the attitudes of a school-leaver." It was only now (1973) that he felt free to be himself and be guided by his own "common sense and my predilection." With

this he also lost the need to drink in order to cope with what he saw as faking it. He “now developed a decision to live without explanation or apology . . .”

The decision to live (and write) without apology is strongly reflected in Turner’s extraordinary cast of players in *Beloved Son*. There is Albert Raft, “star traveller”—the “father” of a mass of clones of all kinds, returning to earth and meeting them, becoming megalomaniac and forcing his own demise—only to be resurrected with a different psyche. And Arthur, one of a homosexual clone group (cloned from Albert, but genetically altered in order to exaggerate some of Arthur’s characteristics and dilute others), who is a much stronger person than the silly “queen” he is introduced as. There is The Lady who turns out to be Albert’s mother, physically rejuvenated but mentally nearing some sort of senility. She revels in her own supposedly overwhelming sexual appetite, of which there is no real evidence except in a propensity to walk around naked and unsuccessfully invite sexual liaisons at the most inappropriate times.

There is also the clone group, who behave as though they had only one brain between them and who are entirely copies of Albert—except that in the most important way: they are utterly unlike him in that they have no personality.

There is Ian Campion, Controller of the International Security Force in Melbourne, Albert’s grandson, and as it turns out, also his son. (Ian’s mother is Albert’s daughter who had been fertilized without her permission with her own father’s sperm.)

Another character is John Heathcote, the great geneticist/biologist from pre-holocaust days. He is also Albert’s “father,” not his real father, but the one Albert thinks of as father, the one who loved him and then sent him away. Heathcote’s new body is cloned from his old one, and the memories of the old Heathcote have somehow been transferred to him, so sometimes he is the “old one” and sometimes the “young one.” He lives in the secret “Gangoil” caves, as do The Lady and the clones.

Bangsund’s notes on *Beloved Son* reflect much euphoria and an element of adoration surrounding the book and Turner—this adoration has continued to be part of Bangsund’s relationship with Turner to the present day. But in 1975 it reached a kind of fever pitch and was assisted by the joining of many voices in a kind of hymn of praise to Turner (who I think would like this turn of phrase in regard to this particular book at least), with one exception—Damien Broderick. *Beloved Son* added fuel to the fire of rumors about Turner’s homosexuality just as *Transit of Cassidy* had.

Moirra McAuliffe, reviewing *Beloved Son* for the *Australian Book Review* picked up this interesting point:

Ironically, however, given the book’s premises about identity, the most sharply drawn “character” is the homosexual clone brother Arthur, whose sexual preferences aren’t allowed to cloud and determine who and what he sees and will understand. As a clone-brother Arthur is supposed to lack individual identity. But as Turner handles him, Arthur is an intelligent human being and shown to be so.

Beloved Son revealed much about Turner’s feelings about politics, genetic engineering, and even religion and in this work he dived into these areas fearlessly and provided some thoughtful commentary, but on the subject of women little had changed. Only two female characters appear in *Beloved Son*: The Lady and Alice White. The former is a “monster” who Turner himself admits was an attempt to write his mother out of his system. The latter, Alice White, is just a pawn in the game played by the male characters, despite her position as an officer of Security.

We are introduced to The Lady by way of a walk down a corridor to her quarters at the secret laboratory called “Gangoil.” “Gangoil” has survived a holocaust and managed to keep running in secrecy. It is a self sufficient community set on several levels in a mountain connected by massive lifts. The location is Mount Bogong, a real mountain about 200 miles northeast of Melbourne.

The corridor to The Lady’s quarters in this labyrinth is lined with artwork that has been pillaged in the aftermath of the Five Days (the holocaust) from great galleries and museums all over the world. Lindley, the psychiatrist from the starship, has been “kidnapped” by

Alice White, who is a traitor to Security and has become a disciple of a new movement around The Lady (who has no power in it).

Walking down the corridor Lindley is impressed with the artwork, but not by the collector, and says so to Francis, another of the homosexual clones:

“ . . . No, no taste, but a jackdaw collection of works safely known as critically impeccable.”

He is even less impressed by The Lady herself:

He looked straight at her. The Lady who collected art and had been able to pillage the centuries while humanity clung to the shreds of existence was unhealthily overweight; she was not gross, but that would come. For the present she was pink and white rolling flesh with great unsupported breasts; she wore a humorously tiny cache-sexe mostly for display of a diamond placed with the infallible bad taste of the unrestrainedly opulent, and lolled on the Recamier couch like a baroque courtesan. Rubens would have delighted in her . . .

Turner makes odd “mistakes” in his writing, seeming to forget his own plot and the science—in this case I found the line about The Lady not being gross yet “but that would come” very glaring. The Lady is at least as old as the Ombudsmen, who are ancient. But as Lindley himself concludes: “The biosurgeons had been at work.” Surely they could then have made her look truly young. Confusion also arises because it is not at all clear that the above quoted thoughts about The Lady are Lindley’s or the omnipresent author’s. This of course is a problem with Turner’s work that has been previously discussed, but is worth remembering. Turner’s authorial voice is hard to tell apart from those of his characters. He was aware of this fault to a degree and even discussed it in *In the Heart or In the Head* with regard to the cuts he made from *Transit of Cassidy* where he recalled some “rumination, commentary, authorial intrusion which took the reader’s attention from the main matter.” But even when he is not obviously intruding he never seems to be further away than the distance at which he breathes life into them.

Thus when we read “The biosurgeons had been at work,” and find soon after that The Lady is not 40 or whatever Lindley first seems to assume, we wonder who has been thinking what and worse, who has known what—Turner or Lindley?

Apart from this textual confusion there is the personal one; The Lady is supposed to be some extreme caricature of Turner’s mother. So who is The Lady? Is she Turner’s fantasy of a sexually interesting woman, or is she his mother, or worse, is she both? Little more follows with regard to either The Lady or Alice White (who sleeps with Lindley once and never again), and unlike the male characters they are left unchanged like props while everything else whirls around them.

I found this disappointing enough, but when I thought a little longer on the idea of six men on a starship for years, and then returning to Earth, not having any curiosity, let alone desire to be with women, I wondered at the psychological truthfulness of the book, and on Turner’s perceptions of men and what drives them. Damien Broderick also held this view in a review published in the ABC magazine *24 Hours*:

My emotions reject almost all the characters in *Beloved Son*. The least acceptable is his protagonist, an Australian with the unfortunate name of Albert Raft, whose descent into megalomania is so unlikely that it is craftily ascribed to the misfiring application of psychochemical interrogation. . . .

The book’s end reads like a prescience of events that occurred in the Soviet Union in the 1990s, a kind of revolution against too much control and brainwashing resulting in chaos. Sneja Gunew’s review of the book points to a few more interesting details such as the inward looking obsessiveness of the society that the returning space travelers have to deal with and the “youth culture” which is so easily manipulated that is at the center of it. Gunew rightly points to “an overall richness that constantly engages the speculative mind.” Like many other reviewers she stated that she looked forward to more science fiction from Turner.

Beloved Son did not sell as well as it should have considering the praise heaped upon it and the promise of the publisher to mount a

marketing campaign (which never eventuated). But Turner had never been deterred by a lack of sales and he began another book almost immediately. As usual he wrote about what he wished and, in his own words, he “spoilt a ‘promising career’ by doing what [he] wanted to do instead of listening to advisers who know what the market will do to your wilfulness.”

He had in the meantime traveled to the United Kingdom and visited various cities including Glasgow, which would become the inspiration for his second science-fiction novel. The visit was partly inspired by the many letters of rejection he’d had from publishers for *Beloved Son*. He had never before been able to afford the trip and, in his own words, he “was fifty-nine; there was still time for new places and new experience.”

The London visit turned out to be an extremely good idea. His own reason for going was to “scout the literary terrain” for himself. But he managed to do a lot more besides. Lee Harding, another Australian science-fiction writer, gave him copies of *Beyond Tomorrow*, an anthology he’d edited, to deliver to some friends in London. These included the writers Brian Aldiss and Christopher Priest and the expatriate editor Peter Nicholls. Turner was initially happy to do this but was to wish that he hadn’t offered. He had a limited amount of time and wanted to see everything in London worth seeing and go to the theatre as much as possible. As well he was to meet with Carl Routledge, his agent, and talk about the two manuscripts he now had to sell, *Beloved Son* and *Transit of Cassidy*.

His meeting with Peter Nicholls was a good one and through him he met Hilary Bailey, who was then editor of *New Worlds Magazine*. He liked her and found that she was “the only British science fiction writer without an aura of constant watchfulness against unfavorable reaction to his/her work.”

His meeting with Brian Aldiss, one of the great figures of modern science fiction, went badly. It was unfortunate considering Aldiss’s influence, particularly as author of *Billion Year Spree*, which is an excellent history of science-fiction writing. I quote here Turner’s own words about the incident, not only because it is amusing but because it points well to his inflexibility and lack of grace when the mood takes him, even if the situation demands a different attitude:

The next delivery was to Brian Aldiss, and this went badly from the start. Part of the reason was my social clumsiness and bad temper. He lived outside Oxford, which meant the expense of a whole day of my crowded twenty-six just to hand over a parcel. While I cursed this wasteful commission, Brian Thompson suggested that I might save the day by looking in on a fine Uccello in one of the Oxford galleries; worth a trip he insisted, and I pretended to agree.

So I rang Brian Aldiss and decay set in at once. I explained, with sublime crassness, that I wanted to see the Uccello and this made it a good opportunity to deliver the book. He said “I think that’s pretty insulting” and I realized too late that I had trodden on the *amour propre* of a man very conscious of his eminence in British Science Fiction.

Turner was never one to doff his hat at anyone, although he did recover in time to save himself from total disgrace, and Aldiss invited him to lunch. But it was too late and having “Started on the wrong foot, [he] . . . never managed to change step.”

Having eventually delivered all the parcels, he left for Scotland. He went to Edinburgh first and was much taken by it. He wrote in *In the Heart or In the Head*, “To walk the mile or so of Canongate, from the eagle-crag of Edinburgh Castle to the dour silence of Holyrood, is to tread a thousand years of blood, treachery, high romance and murder.” But it was in Glasgow that he found the inspiration for *Vaneglorry*.

The visit to Glasgow came about because of his friendship with Jim Dunwoodie, a Glaswegian who he met in a boarding house in St. Kilda where they both lived, and who was attached to him as a kind of best friend for more than twenty years. Their relationship was an odd one, in which Dunwoodie admired Turner and Turner became like part of Dunwoodie’s family.

Vaneglorry, the book partly set in Glasgow, is a sequel to *Beloved Son*, but it can be read quite independently. It is set in the (then) future

of 1992. (In the reissues of these books done by AvoNova in 1996, the dates have been moved forward.) Many of the characters are Glaswegian, and one of the chief difficulties was deciding whether they should “speak” in the local Glaswegian “burr” as he calls it, or not. He decided that he would write the dialogue with the accent. He did it well, but it is hard to know if it would have been better, nonetheless, if he had not. The text might have been easier to read.

Vaneglorry is the closest to a kind of lyrical beauty that Turner ever got with his books. It has a cast which includes immortals and face-changers. Turner explores many philosophical areas in the book, including questions of humanness and immortality. In so far as any mere mortal is able to do so, he looks at whether an immortal would be human and in what way they would not be human. As well he explores the very human obsession with immortality. The plot is made more complex by the fact that the immortals (or “The Company,” as they call themselves) also have some special powers of hypnotism. Some of the characters introduced in *Beloved Son* appear in this book also. It is in fact a sequel, but self-contained.

The book was very well reviewed, and with it he seemed to have made his reputation as a science-fiction writer. It was assumed that he would continue to write science fiction from then on. John McLaren wrote a long and on the whole positive review of it in *Overland* in 1982. McLaren felt that it was very potent in the Cold War world which seemed then to be everlasting. The pace of the narrative is very fast and Turner’s future Scotland resounds with much of its real violent and turbulent past. It does this easily because of the very nature of the immortals, one of whom tells a story of his “participation” in the war between the British and their Scottish supporters and of “Bonny Prince Charlie” that ended in Charles’s defeat at Culloden on April 16, 1746.

This reference to Scotland’s past is a good reminder of Turner’s once passionate interest in historical novels and that he liked to use history in his books about the future. It is commonly stated that science-fiction writers are writers of history in reverse, and in Turner’s case this is probably very apt, especially considering his own interests. This passage in *Vaneglorry* is perhaps one of the most poignant.

“I turned Murray back. And then there was Culloden.” A mask melting and flowing, his face lost cohesion and shape as he forgot everything but ancient guilt.

“The bodies of the highlanders lay four and five deep at Culloden, slaughtered like penned rats. I did that.” He slid forward from the chair . . . He drew himself upright, pondering, with a blank gaze that had forgotten Sanders already, and began a silent, intolerable weeping. From a deep place he inhabited alone he said, “I lied to Murray. The French would have come. Lewis was waiting on the news.”

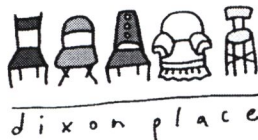
With the mask dispersed it was an empty, gutted Angus who fell like a log, with only silence, in his rigid, gaping mouth. His head curved forward, and his knees rose to his chest in the spasm of total retreat to a past so distant that no memory or pain could follow him.

McLaren’s review is as I said mainly positive, the last two paragraphs clearly stating what are the positive and negative aspects of the work in his opinion—and worth reprinting here:

Turner’s novel therefore succeeds as a good science fiction yarn, involving us by its awful plausibility, and as a prophecy, interpreting the present by extrapolating its central tendencies into the future, but also as a metaphysical study of the meaning of human life. His study is rigorously materialist, allowing no possibilities but those revealed by contemporary science, but because of this is more searching than works which finally succumb to forms of transcendentalism. His viewpoint shows us human nature as our own creation, not as any eternal essence, but then confronts us with the question of how far we can modify it without destroying everything we have put into its creation. He is a humanist writer who is nevertheless thoroughly at home with issues of good and evil.

Despite this, McLaren remained unconvinced by some aspects of the book:

The New York Review of Science Fiction Readings at



November 18:
Patricia McKillip, Carol Emshwiller

December 16:
Michael Kandel, t.b.a.

Admission: \$5.00. Seating is limited.
Readings start at 8:00 p.m. Doors open at 7:30.
All readings subject to change without notice.

Dixon Place • 258 Bowery between Prince & Houston
212-219-3088

... In part this is due to his arbitrary ending, which seems to state rather than demonstrate the hopelessness of the human condition. More, perhaps, it is due to the fact that he concerns himself almost entirely with the manipulation of his universe, rather than, except as a mass, with those who endure it.

Vaneglorry suffered criticism for the Glaswegian accents and the lack of detail about ordinary people in a "post-collapse" world, and because it took quite a bit of reading to find out what the book was actually about. But both *Vaneglorry* and *Beloved Son* were better, more subtly constructed books than the third and much shorter volume of what came to be known as the "Ethical Culture Trilogy," *Yesterday's Men*.

Yesterday's Men was well received and well reviewed except by Damien Broderick, who was fast becoming Turner's literary enemy. Broderick had taken over Turner's job as science-fiction reviewer for the *Age* on Turner's recommendation. His criticism was very severe, as he himself put it in a note that he sent to Turner along with a copy of the review, saying he had "put the boot in." He added that he didn't "really think this is due to ideological differences alone, or trendy shibboleths." It is really in this review that Turner is first accused of misogyny and the overuse of his narrative voice, which according to Broderick, "drenches the description, dialogue and interior meditation alike." *Yesterday's Men* was dangerous in another aspect too, though a related one to the narrative voice. It bore a marked resemblance to his first book, *Young Man of Talent*. It was set in New Guinea and reproduced warlike conditions for a study of the past by twenty-first century men who were driven by power and lacked any humane virtues altogether.

In defense of Turner, he was hard put because *Yesterday's Men* was forbidden to be more than a short book by Faber, and he "settled to write it as a straight adventure story with only minimum wordage allotted to exposition; psychological and philosophical points would have to remain implicit or even subtextual, taking their chance of being understood or noticed at all."

Yesterday's Men was in fact much more accessible than *Vaneglorry* because of its relative prosaicism and, apart from its terribly old-fashioned gender biases, a great read. It is well to remember that it was in New Guinea that Turner found that he had begun to like war (for a while at least) and that he certainly loved the savage beauty and backbreaking terrain of the place. In this third volume of the "Ethical Culture Trilogy," he was still trying hard to make the point that human beings stayed the same no matter what their circumstances, and that bad

situations can bring out the best, and worst, in people. He was also still relatively unmoved by the personal, at least when compared to what he saw as the more important general observations he made about human nature. *Yesterday's Men* was a chance to step back forty years and relive his life as soldier and to explore war in the light of what had happened in the world since 1942. It was also the first book to really make use of his theatrical background—though he had touched on this in both *Beloved Son* and *Vaneglorry* with the overwhelming theatricality of the homosexual clone in the former and face-changers in the latter.

In *Yesterday's Men* the plot hinges on what is supposed to be the filming of a hologram for an entertainment magnate called Cyrano Bergerac, who is a failed playwright and owner of something called "L5 Holotainment." Bergerac has realized that he wants to succeed with this so that he will be thought of as more than a mere entrepreneur. Other players include a cyborg called Corrigan who is really a camera—he is "wired" to film behind his eyes; an immortal called Dunbar who is placed as Corrigan's "batman" in the New Guinea jungle army base which he is filming; and Bergerac's courtesan, Anna Lisa, who is easily the most intelligent character in the book and the one whose body gets the greatest hammering (prompting some of Broderick's vituperative criticism). Even the chapter titles of the contents page of the book reads like a series of scenes with every idea having a "filmic" subtitle.

The New Guinea jungle inspired some wonderful descriptive prose in *Yesterday's Men*, just as it had in *Young Man of Talent*. All in all, despite Broderick's "screech," as Turner called it, *Yesterday's Men* was well reviewed and not so badly received.

In the meantime, several things occurred in Turner's world that had some positive effects on his life and on Australian science-fiction writing in general. The first was the meeting with Ursula K. Le Guin which I have briefly mentioned. When she was in Australia in 1975, Turner visited the workshop she was leading and was inspired by her to write *Beloved Son*, as well as being impressed by her style of workshoping, a skill he himself found he had when he led two workshops in 1977 and 1978:

Le Guin's secret lay not in what she did but in what she is. She inspires enthusiasm without working at it. . . . she transmitted not only knowledge but heart to young writers who had no local market for their work and needed a Grail to follow. Nearly all of them have been involved in the development of an Australian science fiction as writers, editors or publishers.

1975 also marked the year that Norstrilia Press was founded. Norstrilia published Turner's autobiographical *In the Heart or In the Head* in 1984, and was also the publisher of several other notable Australian science-fiction books including Damien Broderick's *Dreaming Dragons*, *The Plains* by Gerald Murnane, *An Unusual Angle* by Greg Egan, and even a book of poetry, *Where Pussywillows Last in the Catyard Bloomed* by Roger Zelazny. It also published the two anthologies of short stories to come out of the 1975 and 1977 workshops, *The Altered I* and *The View From the Edge*, the latter of which was edited by Turner. His care about every aspect of anything he was involved with is apparent in this anthology. Not only did he collect and edit the stories, but after each one he added an editor's note of explanation about the story. It is of some consequence that to this day reading this book and the notes is such a pleasure and so informative.

Turner was also one of the leaders of the Sydney 1979 workshop. He had just published *Beloved Son* and *Transit of Cassidy* and was already writing *Vaneglorry*. The house at which the workshop was held stood on a hill in Cremorne and gave a wonderful view of Sydney Harbor, though I doubt that those attending were able to appreciate it enough in the circumstances.

It was the last of these workshops to be held; the spin-off from the first Ursula Le Guin-led one had stretched as far as it would go. In Turner's own words, "The standard of entry stories was lower, the venue had no air-conditioning, and the mid-summer sun was relentless. Rousing enthusiasm in attendees and myself was a daily chore. . . ." The workshop had been organized by Petrina Smith, one of the attendees of the previous Melbourne workshops, who lived in Sydney and was inspired to do one in her city. Her effort was truly heroic in the face of little funding. Oddly, despite its lack of apparent success at the time, many attendees did achieve success, including Leanne Frahm, Lucy

Sussex, Sam Sejavka, and Rick Kennett. Petrina Smith still turns out a great story now and again, the latest one being "Angel Thing" published in *She's Fantastical*. This anthology had stories by Philippa Maddern and Yvonne Rousseau, as well as Smith, Frahm, and Sussex, all of whom are considered excellent writers in the genre and all of whom have had connections with Turner in one way or another.

No doubt that anthology, and many other science-fiction ventures in Australia, owe a great debt to Turner, who was always prepared to read people's manuscripts and give fair comment and who until his death still attended conventions and supported many science-fiction publications and foundations around the world.

After the "Ethical Culture Trilogy" was finished he embarked on the autobiographical *In the Heart or In the Head*. The subtitle of the book is "An Essay in Time Travel," and the title page bears a quote from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*:

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourished?

According to John Bangsund, the original title of the book was *Fancy Bred*, and this might have been a more fitting and certainly a shorter, more memorable title. The Australia Council funded Turner to write it, and it must have seemed some comfort to Turner that they still thought him important enough despite the lack of sales of his books in Australia.

In the Heart or In the Head is a strange mixture of the personal and the theoretical. It is, as previously stated, divided between chapters about himself and chapters about science-fiction history as it paralleled his own life. But a division of personal and theoretical is probably just as apt considering the fact that at times his analysis of his own life is more theoretical than his analysis of science fiction.

In terms of structure and content, this alternating between the subject of his life and the subject of science fiction gave Turner the obvious opportunity to air his theories on the latter, and just as importantly it gave him the opportunity to avoid writing about chunks of his life which he deemed irrelevant:

My years with the Commonwealth Employment Service, with the textile trade and in the brewery would make long chapters of human goodness, wickedness and fallibility, but they are off the point.

One wonders off what point Turner meant. In thus dismissing entire chapters of his life, he chooses to forget, or perhaps does not care, about readers who are interested in his personal life. These readers are perhaps less concerned with theories about literary (in this case genre) history and are certainly looking for the keys to his work. He gives little away about himself except the notably intimate view of his mother and his relationship with her. Certainly he touches on little that could be claimed to be controversial or revelatory.

On the other hand his views on science fiction are, to a degree, controversial. Since the publication of *In the Heart or In the Head*, much has been done in the way of theorizing about science fiction. There are camps of thought about its origins. But for Turner there were hard and fast rules separating science fiction from horror stories, gothic tales, and fantasy.

Thus such writers as Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe, who are included in the genre by others, are excluded by Turner. The latter is probably easy to dispose of because he was so particular that he can only be said to have a style all his own. It bears some relationship to Gothic and horror but really does not fit into any genre. Mary Shelley is a little more difficult to discard because *Frankenstein* is about making new people, a subject that would come up again and again in science fiction, in books such as Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and in Turner's work itself. In any case, according to Turner: "The literary ancestry of [science fiction] begins, as far as I can trace, in 1516, when Thomas More inaugurated the use of fiction as a tool for spreading philosophical ideas in an entertaining form. His *Utopia* is not scientification as Gernsbeck intended his invented category, but the form of it is."

Many women interested in science fiction have suspicions that those who deny that Mary Shelley is an important key in the science-

fiction genre are simply sexist. Of course, as with anything, this is not a simple issue, though both sides have arguments in their favor—according to the purists, science fiction should extrapolate from the present, and have a real scientific basis. Whatever be the case, it is interesting that Mary Shelley was really writing about what George Turner himself wrote about often—the creation of a new human, and the wish to manipulate the new human to what could be called immoral ends. If *Frankenstein* is excluded on the basis of not being scientific, I am sure she would not worry too much, since so many of the ideas and moral issues raised in the work have continued to preoccupy science fiction writers.

According to Turner, the first writer who can really claim science-fiction status is Jules Verne. "If there must be a 'father of science fiction' he should be Verne, who not only wrote technological novels aimed at anticipating the future but put such fiction once and for all on the readership map."

But in any case the term science fiction was not used until 1926 when Hugo Gernsbeck became the editor of a magazine called *Amazing Stories* in the U.S.A., which published what he called "scientification." The term would later be changed to "science fiction." The magazine had a motto on the cover which is probably still key to a definition of science fiction: "Fiction today—cold fact tomorrow."

Turner has much more to say about what science fiction is and is not, but it is not until the end of the autobiography that he finally declares himself on the subject, switching the focus from the writing to the writer:

A new style of science fiction writer is needed, one who will ignore trends and conventional ideas and predigested reader requirements, and find for a disintegrating genre a fresh reason for existence.

He will need to be one who thinks the work worth doing for its own sake. He will not be writing works of art—but solid, tradesmanlike fiction with a purpose, overt or covert.

The new author would not be writing science fiction as fans and publishers understand the term; he would be using the techniques to write political fiction; he would be preparing, whether bluntly or subtly, those mental buffers which Ballard had in mind when he called science fiction "the literature of preparation and change."

He was criticized for this seemingly narrow definition by Russell Blackford, among others. Blackford thought this prescription of what science-fiction writers should do much too narrow. His preference was for science-fiction writers to form a "Disparate but . . . squabbling family group which excludes the literal depiction of experience in the writer's society—which has been defined as the proper role of fiction by some realist critics." In other words Blackford sees science fiction as inclusive of many kinds of nonrealist fiction, rather than "forcing us to traverse the dangerous philosophical ground of objectivity or ultimacy of aesthetic judgements."

The last was a reply by Blackford to Turner's penultimate paragraph in which he gave his final opinion on the whole issue:

Commercialized science fiction could and would carry on mass production, and a more aesthetic science fiction would continue to play with metaphysics and philosophy. . . . When the term "science fiction" has broadened to meaninglessness there is room for all, even for a rediscovery of its prime function by a responsible authorship.

Really there is little difference of opinion about what science fiction is between Turner and Blackford. It is more that Blackford took exception to Turner's suggestion of the ideal. But Blackford did not know that by this time Turner had taken his own best advice and begun work on what would become his masterpiece and win him a Commonwealth Literary Prize and the Arthur C. Clarke Prize. He had begun to write *The Sea and Summer* (*Drowning Towers* in the U.S.), an extraordinary work which would bring Turner's work to much greater qualitative heights than he had ever achieved before. ▀

Judith Buckrich lives in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. George Turner: A Life will be published by Melbourne University Press in 1999.

Loud Achievements: Lois McMaster Bujold's Science Fiction

Part 2 of 2



With *Barrayar*, written eight years after *Shards*, “to grow in power and control before I could do justice to [its] themes” (Lake 8), Bujold moves, among the other escalations, into darker aspects of femalestuff, notably with pregnancy. In an early reading of one scene, “I never mentioned hemorrhage anywhere yet every female listener reported thinking about hemorrhage at exactly the point I intended them to” (Lake 7). Such biological femalestuff is rare in sf, beyond the work of Marion Zimmer Bradley. She herself repeats a comment that, “You can always tell a Bradley story—someone has a baby” (29). But Bradley tends to elide “all the complications of pregnancy and childbirth that women think of every day during the nine months” (Lake 7)—let alone the nightmares of finding the child imperfect, learning that your father-in-law wants it aborted, and having the embryo stolen by a political enemy. “The worst thing” happens to Cordelia as a birthing mother in *Barrayar*, not once but several times over. But Bujold neatly dodges the problems Bradley had after *Darkover Landfall* (1972), whose anti-abortion discourse drew heavy critiques from sf feminists. Cordelia fights against Miles’s abortion, rather than facing the thornier problem of whether an abortion should be done.

Though two women do have babies in *Barrayar*, neither Bujold nor her women accept Bradley’s Darkovian saw that “the world will go as it will, and not as you or I will have it.” Cordelia saves Miles with the Betan technology of the uterine replicator, first by a rescue raid in defiance of her husband, then by having Bothari execute the usurper. She also has a female support system: the noblewoman whose baby Bothari delivers has befriended her, and her female bodyguard guides the palace raid. Finally, the most powerful femalestuff in the novel is the scene where the fate of *Barrayar* is decided as Cordelia and the child emperor’s captive mother trade the whereabouts of their sons.

Yet despite the Hugo that implies reader approval, and Bujold’s intent to write more femalestuff (Lake 9), the series’ structure marginalized Cordelia, as *The Warrior’s Apprentice* was followed by *Brothers in Arms*, *Borders of Infinity*, and *The Vor Game*, and *Barrayar* was succeeded by *Mirror Dance* and *Memory*. With Miles not merely developed but metamorphosed, any further femalestuff demanded a new female protagonist from outside Miles’s family, and optimally, to provide Miles’s adult, nontransient love interest. All these options, and a new expansion of femalestuff, appear with Ekaterin Vorsoisson in *Komarr*.

The new expansion is a first for Bujold, but not for the genre. What is sometimes called domestic sf has flitted through the genre from Gernsback’s day: women’s stories mostly, scorned by the cognoscenti (sometimes including feminists), rarely long in print, their tone resolutely unheroic, their focus determinedly on the nuts and bolts of not-so-everyday life. The classics include stories like Mildred Clingerman’s “Minister Without Portfolio.” Connie Willis does the update: housing problems on a space station, the double-joke of aliens who appear on earth as normally nerdy human scientists (“Spice Pogrom,” “And Come From Miles Around”). But this approach naturally militates against the high-gravity, save-the-universe tone of most sf; to combine them, without leaving the seams rucked awkwardly between the two, is one of the genre’s hardest challenges. *Komarr* does it remarkably well. More remarkably, *Komarr* does it structurally, by splitting the viewpoint between Miles and Ekaterin.

This split domesticates sf at a level previously inaccessible to Bujold’s fiction, where “home life” was either the elevated milieu of Vorkosigan House, or the space-Utopia of Beta Colony. In *Komarr*, the woman’s view provides the off-Earth equivalent of a posted U.S. army family: school-age son, colonial bureaucrat husband, nonworking wife. Except that on *Komarr*, middle-class mundanities like grocery shopping, putting up guests, taking the kids to school, are inexorably warped by the sf setting. On *Komarr*, you hire gravity beds, live in oxygen domes, buy vat-grown meat, and visit the countryside in a breather mask. This exotic domesticity simultaneously defamiliarizes the on-Earth parallel, and highlights the alternating scenes of scientific investigation and thriller violence.

The real depth of the femalestuff, however, plumbs a social rather than biological woman’s battlefield at a level few mainstream novels have reached. The scenes between Ekaterin and her husband illuminate a loveless marriage to its nadir: not merely the squabbles, the endemic disagreements, the bitter strains of mismanagement or failed ambition, the public putdowns and social embarrassments, but the ghastly apparatus of loveless sex. When Ekaterin has to “study Tien warily” and decide “she had better offer sex very soon” because “it was past time to defuse him” (*Komarr* 55), Bujold replaces the potential glamour of any sex-in-space with the excruciating truth of many “mundane” relationships; worst of all is the reader’s understanding that this is normal for them.

Beyond this gritty revision of yet another social myth, the happy marriage, *Komarr* offers the uncodedly female version of the metamorphoses in *Memory* and *Mirror Dance*. Ekaterin enters the novel as an unhappily married wife with a son threatened by her husband’s heritable genetic problem. She leaves a widow with a cured child, a firm ambition, and strong prospects for a future career in landscaping, from gardens to planets, plus the kudos for having prevented disaster to both *Komarr* and *Barrayar*. This picture of a woman struggling from a chrysalis of stagnation to begin a second life is a staple of feminist fiction, including sf like Sheri S. Tepper’s *Grass* (1989): it is a metamorphosis as arduous as Miles’s, from a suffocating life into one that, however painful the transit, at least promises to be free.

The femalestuff in *Komarr* again recalls Ursula K. Le Guin, but this time the later works, which so often center on female protagonists who take giant strides into an independent if unsafe unknown, as in “The New Atlantis” (1975) or *The Eye of the Heron* (1978). Such femalestuff is obviously related to second-wave feminism, but here the two writers do, ostensibly, part company. Although *The Left Hand of Darkness* was a landmark in feminist sf, it is only in the mid- and later ’70s that Le Guin openly espouses feminism, a shift clear in the two versions of her well-known essay “Is Gender Necessary?” Once “out,” however, Le Guin’s feminism is forthright and overt, characteristic of the ’60s and ’70s, when feminism was as much a political stance as a source of fictional ideas. Bujold, on the other hand, begins publishing in the ’80s, when feminism in the U.S. had been driven underground by political reverses and internal fragmentation, reverses that mark writers as well. Joan Gordon takes Connie Willis, Karen Joy Fowler, and Sheri S. Tepper as examples of ’80s writers who subsume rather than preach feminism, calling their work “post-feminist crypto SF” (5), a term that could cover Bujold too.

When pushed, Bujold will defend her covert feminism on the grounds that “[n]o feminist, writing a feminist tract” can “change any man’s . . . fixed mind” but that “a book packaged as militarist SF” might bring in “alien ideas” unnoticed (Lake 9). But her need to stress the female aspects of her work suggests that male readers ignore these elements. In fact, they compliment her on “writing like a doubt” (7), a phrase that must throw her subversive claim into serious doubt. Like Willis, who disavows feminism (Gordon 5), Bujold would rather “call myself a human beingist” (Lake 9). Her published credo includes “to journey from the self to the other is an improvement . . . People are more important than things. . . . Good and evil are only meaningful as a quality of individuals possessing free will” (11).

Against the current (feminist) theoretical field, these unremarkable statements proclaim what is called, with varying degrees of disapproval, classic liberalism: that is, the philosophic fountainhead of individualism, but also of crusades for human rights. And from the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments to the foundation of NOW, such thought has also been a constant in feminism. Indeed, in what Katie King calls “taxonomies of feminism” (124), the hegemonic divergence is between the liberal-heterosexual and radical-lesbian axes of thought and action, prefigured in the late ’60s gap between NOW and the more radical organization of WLM. It reappears in feminist sf with those two founding mothers, Le Guin and Joanna Russ. Though both are white,



Michael Swanwick
"M is for Mirrorganger"

Your reflection is an independent entity. It spends all your life aping your movements, copying your quirks, learning to be you. Then, after your death, it comes into its own.

Small wonder your reflection hates you. It sees you every day, frittering away the existence that it so desperately aspires to. Perhaps you saved somebody's life recently. Perhaps you won the Nobel Prize. Perhaps you impulsively gave away every penny you had to help feed the needy. Chances are, your reflection was not there. Mirrors are rarely found in such situations.

Instead, your reversed-self has witnessed the smug approval with which you apply your makeup, the vain way you comb your hair over your bald spot, the vacuous look you get when you pop your pimples. It was there for almost every bowel movement of your adult life.

Your mirrorganger is patient. It is disciplined. It duplicates your most ludicrous and sordid moments with perfect conviction. It knows the prize, long though it may be in the coming, is worth it.

It is only in the morning, when you are too sleepy to realize what is happening, that your reflection dares let its guard slip and expresses its true feelings in malicious and unforgivable satire. Which you mistake for truth. ▲

middle-class, university-educated feminists, Le Guin's work follows a '60s liberal trajectory from race to gender issues, picking up later essentialist feminist viewpoints and contending throughout with the liberal bias to individualism. Russ, on the other hand, brilliantly anticipates historical trends with the production of radical and lesbian perspectives; yet like radical feminism proper, that explosion of thought and action in the late '60s to early '70s, she "burns out" before the '70s end.

Given this perspective, Bujold aligns immediately with Le Guin, not simply for her liberal manifesto but because all her notable expansions of femalestuff are unquestioningly and entirely heterosexually based. As I mentioned, although male bisexuals and hermaphrodites appear, the Vorkosigan universe has no hint of lesbians. Moreover, as Le Guin moves in the '80s toward what is now called essentialist feminism, with its monolithic oppositions of "Men" and "Women," not a few of Bujold's remarks point the same way. Beyond the unshaded dichotomy of malestuff and femalestuff, there are remarks like "everything I've written is by definition through female eyes" (Lake 9). And if male readers miss these nuances, "I don't write like a man, you just read like one" (8). In feminist theoretical circles, even in the early '80s, such blanket statements would have drawn fast questions like "which female? White, black, middle-class, working class, Third World, First World, straight, lesbian?" The lessons against universalizing that (white

straight) feminists learnt in the early '80s have long precluded such claims.

Moreover, for some feminists, liberalism and its ties to individualism, and thence, less happily, to capitalism, are actually a handicap. To Sarah Lefanu, Le Guin's earlier and most famous male protagonists are "a dead weight in the center of the novels," because they are "caught in the stranglehold of liberal individualism" (137). And the feminist philosopher Andrea Nye considers liberalism to be inherently masculinist (526); to such feminist thinking, which has produced some of the most devastating critiques of Le Guin's work, her very emphasis on character, so laudable in the sf context, is a political weakness, while the liberal crusades, such as the Civil Rights campaign and the ongoing feminist initiatives that her work has engaged since the early '60s, are themselves tainted with the flavor of liberalism.

This stance is strongly influenced by radical and lesbian feminist thought, to use the commonest terminology, and it too has produced problems, most notably the hardening of universalist and ultimately dubious attempts to valorize women in terms of traditionally feminine attributes. The limits of liberal-heterosexual thought do emerge clearly, however, from critiques of Le Guin's work for the absence of alternate sexualities, and the assumptions that undercut even such Utopian societies as Anarres, where Shevek's career-focused mother is seen as cruel and cold, in direct contradiction of the gender equality supposedly prevalent. Such critiques can be leveled at Bujold, if not directly for her depictions of women: while the charge of hegemonic heterosexuality may appear narrow or special pleading, its consequences do not stop with the absence of lesbians on Barrayar. "Liberal-heterosexual" has usually taken "white" as its third cluster-term; and the blindness to class and sexuality of '70s feminists produced racism that extended from black to Third World women. The same racial myopia marks the Vorkosigan universe. While there is a vestigial echo of the long-lived U.S./Russian opposition in the siting of Barrayar, with its Cyrillic alphabet, its harsh world, savage history, and quasi-feudal society, against the glossy but flawed democracy of "galactics" like Beta Colony, on Barrayar itself there appear to be no racial tensions. Hillmen and city men may jeer at each other, districts may be backward and ethnic minorities preserved in a Greek dialect, but of ethnic enclaves, racial or even religious tensions, Barrayar appears remarkably free. One can argue they were all stamped out during the "Time of Isolation" or the ferocious Cetagandan war, but this too appears something of a special plea. Despite its savage past and sexist present, Barrayar is very much, as Bujold herself once described it, the "white-bread suburb of the galaxy" ("Letterspace," Letter 4).

For me this liberal-based myopia surfaces notably in *Komarr*, with a kneejerk response to some of the imperial ideology. As the series opened, Komarr appeared a hostile equal, whose perfidy in letting the Cetagandans invade Barrayar unresisted, and whose "geographic" position astride Barrayar's one outlet to the wider galaxy "forced" its conquest. By *Komarr* this status has insensibly eroded into the more orthodox position of a subtly inferior colony. The Komarran freedom fighters are either warped to lunacy, as in *Brothers in Arms*, or in *Komarr*, both disastrously short-sighted and mildly ludicrous. This begins to invoke the specter of live U.S. imperialism; and as an Australian, at once colonizer and colonized, my hackles rise at some of Miles's comments about foolish rebels who ought to know a benevolent tyranny when they see one. Miles and his emperor may mean well, but at my gut level, good guys are not colonizers.

Such flaws invoke feminist standpoint theory, developed notably by Nancy Hartsock and Donna Haraway, which conscripted Marx's claim that only those under a system see it with clarity, to argue that only "women" could see their oppression clearly. Less happily, this paved the way for more essentialist claims that only women, by virtue of their bare biological status, could perceive "the truth." It has been more usefully modified by Sandra Harding, who argued that if feminism is to make any difference, it must be considered that men can learn from "women's" picture of them, just as white feminists learnt from the critiques of blacks, middle-class women from working-class women, and so on. The crucial point is that to modify the "top-down" standpoint, it is necessary to reinvent that hegemonic Self as Other. And while Bujold has made remarkable innovations in the enduring

masculinist traditions of sf and military sf, such self-subversion has not yet begun to emerge.

These are sins of omission rather than commission; they are balanced by Bujold's expansions and innovations in the field, just as her covert feminism is balanced by accomplished examples of feminist strategy in recuperating myths, as in her cross of Ariadne and Andromeda in "Labyrinth." Moreover, if "there are no Utopias without women" (Fitting, 107), *Ethan of Athos* (1986) constructs a glimpse of a gay culture/world whose sole female presence is donated ovaries, yet whose protagonist comes to modify his stereotype of women in his adventures elsewhere. This is balanced by the sketch in *Shards of Honor* of Beta Colony, a liberal-heterosexual Utopia where men and women share armed service, uterine replicators allow reproduction *in vivo* or *in vitro*, girls' ears and hymens are pierced at puberty, and hermaphrodites live next to licensed sexual therapists.

Moreover, despite the repeated criticism that Bujold has little interest in technology, or much use for that hoary sf shibboleth, "big ideas," one could hardly ask for bigger ideas, or more smoothly assimilated science, than the terraforming scheme that underpins the plot in *Komarr*. Nor, if sf's mandate is to extrapolate (scientific) ideas in their social context, could one ask a more fascinating example than the long-term impact on Barrayar of the uterine replicator, whose ramifications appear throughout the three most recent books: young men left unmarried because their parents wanted only sons so there is a dearth of girls, class structures fraying as Vor aristocrats have to marry low-class girls, women dictating the marriage terms depending on whether the husband will sanction use of the replicator. As Cordelia remarks, "About half a generation from now, [the Vor system is] not going to know what hit it" (*Mirror* 297). This is social experiment on a truly ample scale; if it has gathered little interest, it may be because of that equally hoary prejudice against "ideas" that are neither hard science nor "men-based."

Given this plethora of innovative and formula-shaking sf, one wonders why Bujold remains obscure; especially when that list of shortlists and final nominations includes two novels that topped the *Locus* poll for best sf novel in the last five years. If the cognoscenti are reading *Locus*, then why does Bujold appear to be relatively unknown? Are all of Bujold's readers *Locus* readers? Are *Locus* readers all Bujold fans? And are none of the cognoscenti academics, or has she, like feminist sf as a whole, fallen in the crack between the canon of male writers who attract male critics (and women too), and the even smaller canon of feminist writers who attract academic criticism? I could quote Helen Merrick at length on the intersections of mainstream and sf feminism and the Black Hole at their intersection into which Marleen Barr also thinks feminist sf (or fabulation, in her terms) has fallen. Or I could point out that many feminist academics draw their knowledge of sf from lines like the Women's Press, and suggest that because her feminism is covert they consider Bujold a "man's author," while sf academics aren't always interested in feminism, a large number of them being men who consider Bujold a "woman's author." Whichever way it falls, this neglect seems as surprising as it is inexplicable. If all else fails, one can only hope that somewhere out there a legion of Bujold readers are now pressing books into the hands of unsuspecting others and urging, "Read this!" so that the wall of silence will be surmounted, if not in Miles's inimitable fashion, then some day very soon. ▲

Sylvia Kelso teaches at James Cook University of North Queensland in Australia.

Works Cited

- Bradley, Marion Zimmer. "Responsibilities and Temptations of Women Science Fiction Writers" in *Women Worldwalkers: New Dimensions of Science Fiction and Fantasy* Ed. Jane B. Weedman. Lubbock: Texas Tech, 1985. 25-42.
- Bujold, Lois McMaster. *Barrayar*. New York: Baen, 1991.
- . *Borders of Infinity*. 1989. New York: Baen, 1991.
- . "The Borders of Infinity" in *Borders of Infinity*. 1989. New York: Baen, 1991. 215-307.
- . *Brothers in Arms*. 1989. London: Headline, 1990.
- . *Cetaganda*. New York: Baen, 1996.

- . *Ethan of Athos*. 1986. London: Headline, 1989.
- . *Komarr*. New York: Baen, 1997.
- . "Labyrinth" in *Borders of Infinity*. 1989. New York: Baen, 1991. 103-211.
- . *Memory*. New York: Baen, 1996.
- . *Mirror Dance*. 1994. New York: Baen, 1995.
- . "The Mountains of Mourning" in *Borders of Infinity*. 1989. New York: Baen, 1991. 9-100.
- . *Shards of Honor*. 1986. New York: Baen, 1993.
- . *The Vor Game*. New York: Baen, 1990.
- . *The Warrior's Apprentice*. 1986. New York: Baen, 1988.
- Bujold, Lois, and Sylvia Kelso. "Letterspace" in *Women of Other Worlds*. Eds. Helen Merrick and Tess Williams, forthcoming.
- Counihan, Elizabeth. "The Worst Possible Thing." *Interzone*, November 1995. 20-23.
- Clute, John, and Peter Nicholls, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Second edition. London: Orbit, 1993.
- Fitting, Peter. "For Men Only: A Guide to Reading Single-sex Worlds." *Women's Studies* 14 (1987): 101-17.
- Gordon, Joan. "Connie Willis's Doomsday for Feminism: *Doomsday Book* by Connie Willis." *New York Review of Science Fiction*, June 1993: 4-5.
- Harding, Sandra. "Reinventing Ourselves as Other: More New Agents of History and Knowledge." *American Feminist Thought at Century's End: A Reader*. Ed. Linda S. Kauffman. Cambridge MA, Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1993. 140-64.
- King, Katie. *Theory In its Feminist Travels: Conversations in U.S. Women's Movements*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Lake, Ken. Interview with Lois McMaster Bujold. *Vector* February/March 1993: 7-11.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts On Words, Women, Places*. 1989. New York: Harper and Row, 1990.
- . *The Dispossessed*. 1974. St. Albans: Panther, 1975.
- . "The Eye of the Heron." 1978. in *The Eye of the Heron and Other Stories*. Ed. Virginia Kidd. St. Albans: Panther, 1980. 209-51.
- . "The Fisherwoman's Daughter." Le Guin, *Dancing* 212-37.
- . "Is Gender Necessary?" 1976. Susan Wood 161-69.
- . "Is Gender Necessary? Redux." 1976/1987. Le Guin, *Dancing* 7-16.
- . *The Left Hand of Darkness*. 1969. St. Albans: Panther, 1973.
- . "The New Atlantis." 1975. in *The Compass Rose*. London: Granada, 1984. 20-48.
- Lefanu, Sarah. *In the Chinks of the World Machine: Feminism and Science Fiction*. London: Women's Press, 1988.
- McGuirk, Carol. "The 'New' Romancers: Science Fiction Innovators from Gernsback to Gibson." *Fiction 2000: Cyberpunk and the Future of Narrative*. Eds. George E. Slusser and Tom Shippey. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992. 109-29.
- Niven, Larry and Jerry Pournelle. *The Mote in God's Eye*. 1974. London: Macdonald Futura, 1980.
- Nye, Andrea. *Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man*. 1988. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Roberts, Robin. *A New Species: Gender and Science in Science Fiction*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Stone, Allucquère Rosanne. "Risking Themselves: Identity in Oshkosh" in *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1995. 45-63.
- Villani, Jim. "The Woman Science Fiction Writer and the Non-Heroic Male Protagonist." *Patterns of the Fantastic*. Ed. Donald M. Hassler. Mercer Island: Starmon House, 1983. 21-30.

"All You Movers—"

. . . please remember to send us a change of address card, lest we lose you forever.

Smoke and Mirrors by Neil Gaiman

New York: Avon Books, 1998; \$24.00 tpb; 339 pages

reviewed by Gwyneth Jones

Neil Gaiman's collection "of short fictions and illusions," *Smoke and Mirrors*, now out in paperback, is one of those things maybe best described as a personality anthology. It's not the stories you're buying, it's the author. It can't be denied that some of the material is pretty slight. With that disclaimer, buying a book that leans heavily on Neil Gaiman's personal jottings, semifictionalized diary entries, and dream-notebook pages isn't half a bad idea. The poetry bits, I have to admit, do nothing for me, and that's a pity because there's quite a lot of poetry. The only one I liked was the Baywatch-Beowulf, and even then it was the joke I liked, not the verse. But the rest, from the obligatory story notes to the slightly more solid fiction, is very pleasant reading.

Neil Gaiman has a lovely, easy voice and a confiding air that works well in a collection where the shift from autobiography to invention is often deliberately blurred. Some stories stand out as *proper* stories, like "Chivalry"—a charming Holy Grail skit in the style of Monty Python, that reminded me of the time Mr. Gaiman happily pointed out to me that whereas in the U.S. all men want to dress up as glamorous drag queens, in England every man born secretly longs to adorn himself in a floral pinnie and a cardigan, and swan around with his hair in curlers wrapped up in a headscarf (if you don't understand this cultural reference, I can't help you; just ignore it). In the same vein there's "Shoggoth's Old Peculiar"—though I don't know if Monty Python

would have done Lovecraft. Kierkegaard yes; but there's obscure, and then there's ridiculous.

Elsewhere, Neil Gaiman's fascination with the inherently tacky, wistful glamor of stage magic is a pervasive presence. The most interesting of the pieces seem to mirror each other, and it's hard to tell image from reflection. "Changes" (a radical cure for cancer) matches "Foreign Parts" (a young man fears that his sexual equipment is not his own). A weary "LA ate me and spat me out" riff called "The Goldfish Pool and Other Stories" is life fictionalized, but "Only the End of the World Again" seems like the same experience turned into a horror genre miniseries. A staggeringly banal centerfold story called "Looking for the Girl" is uneasily reversed as "Tastings" (the whore is consuming *you* when you think you are consuming her). . . . An atmospheric spooky cat story called "The Price" also caught my attention; and the fragment called "The Wedding Present" has a subtly chilling punchline.

Smoke and Mirrors gets a lot of A-list praise on the back of the cover. It's for the *oeuvre*, of course, rather than specifically for this volume. But if you buy the anthology looking for more of Neil Gaiman's inimitable style and personality, as much as for the fiction, you certainly won't be disappointed. ▶

Gwyneth Jones lives in Brighton, England.

Henry Wessells

Thoughts Occasioned by the Publication of *The Avram Davidson Treasury*

It would be *somewhat* improper for me to review this book, for reasons that are to be found in the table of contents (I am *somewhat* involved, or at the very least complicit, in other ways that I will spell out below). And yet. Having been accused of being a "one-man conspiracy" and "the world's greatest authority on Avram Davidson" (or was it "expert"?), I am reluctant to let this moment pass without doing what I have been doing on and off for the past five years. Namely, to say, to anyone who will listen, "Hey, have you ever read anything by Avram Davidson? You *really* should read this book. . . ."

Hence these paragraphs which, if not exactly a review, might still offer something of interest.

In the dark, out-of-print years just after Davidson's death in 1993, there were any number of reasons to keep the flame alive: the Vergil Magus and Peregrine books, the Limekiller stories, "The Affair at Lahore Cantonment," "The Slovo Stove," and "Naples." Now, with this book in front of me, there's all the more cause for celebrating the work of an American original. *The Avram Davidson Treasury* is a compendium of most (but by no means all) of Davidson's best short fictions, arranged chronologically, with story introductions by a host of eminent science-fiction authors (and one other, yours truly). The *Treasury* is a book that should be on the shelf of every reader of science fiction. Some of these 38 stories ("Or All the Seas With Oysters" or "The Golem") are ubiquitous; two have been published as chapbooks; and one of the most distinctive, "The Affair at Lahore Cantonment," is reprinted for the first time since its original appearance in 1961, for which Davidson won the Edgar Award.

Yes, Avram Davidson was the man who won the Hugo, Edgar, and World Fantasy Awards (and the last of the Ellery Queen Awards), and who spent his later years living in what was undeniably poverty. Davidson in the 1970s created the very distinct worlds of Jack Limekiller (in British Hidalgo, a twentieth-century Central American country that is so richly drawn that it *must* be somewhere on the map) and Dr. Englebert Eszterhazy (in the nineteenth-century Balkan empire of Scythia-Pannonia-Transbalkania), and wrote two of the most brilliantly understated tales ever, "Naples" and "And Don't Forget the One Red Rose."

But at one point during the mid-1970s (he would have been over 50 by then), he wrote that he lacked the money to mail a manuscript. The worst hells are always of our own making, but it still appalls me to think of what happened to him (and I never met the man).

For all his reputed cantankerousness, Davidson was a great writer, and in his work and in his person he touched a whole lot of writers (some of whom don't even talk to each other). No one buys a book merely for the introductions, but the introductions in the *Treasury* give some sense of the diversity of Avram's odyllic forces. Some are perfunctory nods, others bittersweet recollections of Davidson's wit and erudition, and a few are substantial essays or memoirs. The most noteworthy are, in no particular order: Gregory Benford's reflections on evolution for "Now Let Us Sleep"; William Gibson's note on "the instant of my missing Avram"; Robert Silverberg's introduction; Harlan Ellison's afterword to "Polly Charms" and his thoughts on learning of Avram's death, which form an afterword to the *Treasury*; Guy Davenport's remarks on "Or All the Seas with Oysters," which he calls "so sinister a fable of man and his losing battle with the machine"; John M. Ford's introduction to "Take Wooden Indians"; and Gregory Feeley's assessment of "The Sources of the Nile."

There are a few, very few, omissions: "The Dragon Skin Drum" is the one important early story I miss most. "They Loved Me in Utica" is hilarious but admittedly minor; both are worth digging up. One of the "Adventures in Unhistory" (perhaps "Postscript on Prester John") might have served to introduce new readers to Davidson's nonfiction. These and others might also form part of a volume of *Uncollected Writings*.

When I opened this book and came to the story "Polly Charms, the Sleeping Woman," I distinctly recalled that this was the first story by Davidson that I ever read, when I found a copy of the paperback *Enquiries of Doctor Eszterhazy* in the autumn of 1992, and first became interested by Davidson's digressive and often fragmentary prose. I soon bought the Owlswick *Adventures of Doctor Eszterhazy*, which I passed on to my brother in due course. In a desultory manner, I began looking for other stuff by Davidson to read. I did not have much luck at that point. What I did read seemed somehow to unlock something for me—

the notion of incorporating odd knowledge into fiction—although I cannot say that “The Polynesian History of the Kerguelen Islands” took the world by storm when it appeared in *Exquisite Corpse*, and “The Institute of Antarctic Archaeology” remains unpublished. In May 1993, I called up George Scithers to enquire if the *Adventures in Unhistory* book had ever appeared, and learned that Avram had just passed away (he did in fact see the book before his death). Over the next several months, I began to correspond with various people who were also interested in Davidson; I started to compile titles of stories and books to look out for. As I found these scattered stories and out-of-print books, this eventually grew into my “Preliminary Annotated Checklist of the Writings of Avram Davidson.” In September 1995, when I asked a colleague how to make a list into a database, instead, the first version of the Avram Davidson Website was born. The rest, is of course, history (and a labor of love). As I wrote at the beginning

of this letter, I am involved and complicit in the production of this book, having contributed a few thoughts on “The Lineaments of Gratified Desire” (another obliquely understated tale that makes me shiver just to recall it). In a few instances I provided Grania Davis with a clean copy of a story; and once suggested that an author be given a particular story to introduce.

With the recent publication by Tachyon of *The Boss in the Wall, A Treatise on the House Devil* by Avram Davidson and Grania Davis, the appearance of the *Treasury*, and *The Investigations of Avram Davidson* forthcoming from St. Martin’s, it seems that there is actually a Davidson renaissance under way. What a pity it didn’t happen during his lifetime. ▲

Henry Wessells lives in Montclair, New Jersey. He is the founder of The Avram Davidson Society.

To Say Nothing of the Dog; or, How We Found the Bishop’s Bird Stump At Last by Connie Willis

New York: Bantam Books, 1997; \$23.95 hc; 448 pages

reviewed by Joseph Milicia

“What a lark! What a plunge!” as Mrs. Dalloway might have exclaimed. True, we are stepping not into a bustling London on a glorious June day, as in Virginia Woolf’s novel, but—not too far off—into a refulgent English countryside about 50 years earlier on another glorious June day. And though our hero is desperate to make a correction in the Space-Time Continuum and get the hell out, we have the leisure to be amused as he finds his visit rather drawn out.

To Say Nothing of the Dog is not exactly a sequel to Willis’s previous forays into time travel, the award-winning “Fire Watch” and *Doomsday Book*, but it does feature the same time-travel technology and theory, and Messrs. Dunworthy and Finch remain at the controls, sending their “historians” back in time via something like a bird cage draped in gossamer. Again there is much difficulty in “landing” the historians in exactly the right place and time (to say nothing of picking them up again) because of “slippage,” which relates to the time net’s unwillingness to let things or people pass through the time portals who would affect the future in any significant way. In the new novel, however, instead of finding themselves stranded among the terrors of the Middle Ages, our historians are becalmed in one of the more idyllic (as long as one is not working class) periods of English history.

The plot is so loopy that one relishes the opportunity to tell just a little of it. In a twenty-first-century England when time travel is possible, at least on a limited basis out of an Oxford laboratory, a Lady Schrapnell is devoting her billions to the building of an exact replica of pre-1940 Coventry Cathedral—the original (or rather the much-built-upon medieval structure) having been largely destroyed by the Nazis, and the stridently modernist mid-twentieth-century replacement having recently been turned into a shopping mall. To make copies of all the splendid—and not so splendid—art and artifacts once on display within the noble structure, Lady S. sends a battery of time travelers back to get the details right, and in return for their labor will provide vital funding for the time lab. Without tangling ourselves in time-travel paradoxes, let us simply say that when historian Verity Kindle, snooping in 1878 for clues to one of the cathedral’s lost artifacts, rescues an apparently drowning cat and brings it into the twenty-first century, her fellow historian (and our narrator) Ned Henry must take it back at once in order not to disrupt the Space-Time Continuum—a disruption that could (for reasons we will skip here) cause the Nazis to win WWII. Unfortunately, Ned is suffering from the equivalent of jet lag from previous expeditions to 1940—and time lag causes a great deal more befuddlement. Thus, standing at the Oxford train station in 1878, in suitable costume and loaded with luggage, he can’t quite recollect what he’s supposed to be doing here. He does, however, remember Verity stepping wet out of the time net as a vision of Waterhousean loveliness.

While steeped in the literature of time travel, *Dog* seems most directly inspired by quite other literary traditions. Allusions are made to Victorian authors great and small—the latter including most promi-

nently Jerome K. Jerome, whose *Three Men in a Boat* is in fact subtitled *To Say Nothing of the Dog*. This genial, leisurely tale of a boating trip on the Thames appears to be a major inspiration for the holiday mood permeating much of Willis’s novel—and she gives it a direct salute when Ned, with his own boating party, passes Jerome and friends, to say nothing of the dog, en route from Oxford to the spot where the kitty had been flung into the Thames.

Other literary influences come—less anachronistically than one might think—from well into the twentieth century. For example, there are numerous allusions to Dorothy Sayers’s sleuthing team, Lord Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane. But the true spirit behind Willis’s novel, beyond Jerome or any time travel tale, is P. G. Wodehouse. Ned Henry may not be quite as dopey as Bertie Wooster, but he will suffice, and once he arrives at the cat’s home, Muchings End, his adventures are totally in the spirit of one of Bertie and Jeeves’s preposterous country house gatherings. Here our cast of Victorian characters is straight out of flapper-era Wodehouse: amiable twit, unflappable butler, eccentric don, bossy matriarch, blustering sporty gentleman, and of course the cat, Princess Arjumand no less, who becomes the object of pursuit of several characters.

It must be said that *Dog* is way too long, at 434 rather full pages of text, for material that is exceedingly slender—though, like gold wire, capable of being spun out to astonishing length (if one will forgive the extravagant language to which some of Willis’s characters are prone). As if in denial over the fact that at heart it is a Wooster-and-Jeeves romp, the novel poses itself as a Victorian tome, complete with lengthy fragment-summaries at the head of each chapter (a device used by Jerome too, though his own book is a slim one). Typical is Chapter 12’s heading: “A Rescue—Why English Country Houses Have a Reputation for Being Haunted—Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Elopement—Visitors—A Confession—The Mystery of Princess Arjumand’s Drowning Solved—” etc., etc. Still, much of the book is as amusing as Wodehouse, which is saying a lot, and it does have in addition its somber moments of awareness of war and loss—even if a greater number of pages are occupied with ardent young love and plain silliness. Those enamored of the time travel tradition in sf should revel in *Dog*’s explorations of all the dizzying ramifications of altering a time line. And not least, there is a pleasure for history buffs as well as lovers of literature in the rich weave of detail; anyone impressed by the amount of research into historical fads that Willis seems to have done for her recent *Bellwether* will be staggered by the detail on Coventry Cathedral and life along a stretch of the Thames in the new novel.

One caveat. With such exhaustive research one might have expected Willis to develop more than a bemused stance toward the Victorian Age. Her sense of the late nineteenth century is really that of the early twentieth (say, the ’20s through the ’50s), when “Victorian” and “monstrosity” went together as naturally as “ice cream” and

“sundae.” We can accept that the bishop’s bird stump—a sculptural object which is the ultimate goal of Ned and Verity’s research—is as hideous as our heroes find it. We may love the joke that it is never described in its entirety but only in ghastly parts, like some alien creature in a 1950s movie deemed too shudderingly awful to be seen whole, lest the audience feel its Medusa power. But it is another matter when Willis groups it together with actual, more grandly scaled, Victorian constructions for which she reserves special scorn, the Albert Memorial and St. Pancras Station. Could she possibly have seen the latter at least, recently restored and standing in all its Romanesque/Venetian gothic/Flemish-gabled red-brick glory under a late afternoon sun, and not felt it to be some kind of architectural masterpiece? As for the

Pre-Raphaelites, they surely need no defense here. At least Willis does acknowledge, without too much arching of the brow, the intricacies of “The Lady of Shallot,” the Tennyson poem which occupies Ned’s mind for a good deal of the story: indeed, she ingeniously links lines like “Out flew the web and floated wide” to the possible unraveling of the Space-Time Continuum. And thus, nearly as overstuffed as one of those Victorian parlors merrily satirized within its own pages, *To Say Nothing of the Dog* barges down the Thames (not quite to shift the metaphor, for the book is more houseboat than punt), miraculously without quite ever sinking. ▲

Joseph Milicia lives in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Ariel Haméon

Blockbuster: *Lives of the Monster Dogs*

With her first novel, *Lives of the Monster Dogs*, Kirsten Bakis touched my heart in a very special way—she blew up my block.

I’m sure many readers have heard of her book by now. Nineteenth-century Prussian cokehead attempts to build obedient soldiers for the fatherland by grafting voice boxes and prosthetic hands on dogs—shepherds (German, of course), Samoyeds, Rottweilers. His descendants perfect this slave “race” in an isolated Canadian town, but revolutionary dogs off the oppressors and move to turn-of-the-century Manhattan. There they live like celebrities in 1880s drag and demolish an entire city block—my block!—to build themselves a replica of Mad Ludwig’s Neuschwanstein castle.

And I’m sure many readers have also seen the glowing reviews this novel received from the mainstream press—“a dazzling, unforgettable meditation on what it means to be human” drooled the *New York Times Book Review*—as well as the more guarded praise, what there was of it, from genre readers.

I’ll fess up: I thought it was a nice book. It wears its belatedness well and has a strong sense of place. My place. Turn-of-the-century Manhattan, and more specifically, the East Village.

Of course, it’s the turn of the twenty-first century we’re talking about here. Most of the events in *Lives of the Monster Dogs* not revealed through secret histories and hidden nineteenth-century journals take place in that proverbial fifteen minutes into the future. And Bakis’s New York of 2011 is distinguished from my own only by the fashionable little laser gun our tender narrator, Cleo Pira, tucks into her boot to protect herself from her—my—bad neighborhood. Aside from the talking dogs, this is the only element in the book which would mark it as even slightly futuristic.

But the talking dogs are not meant to be futuristic—they’re the past personified. They’re meant as metaphor, and that, I suspect, is the problem many genre readers had with this novel. On my first read, I could feel my genre training making me ask all these uncomfortable questions: Just how did a bunch of isolated scientists—who live as if the nineteenth century never ended—tackle the neural surgery necessary to attach working hands, increase intelligence, change the musculature of the jaw to make those voice boxes work? How did their blacksmiths manufacture the electronics and the surgical equipment necessary to accomplish such tasks? Plus, the dogs say they finance their parquet-floor lifestyle with jewels stolen from the villagers they massacred, yet the acts that translated rocks into real estate are never mentioned. Just how did they accomplish this? What’s a monster dog’s prosthetic handshake worth on 47th Street? And just where do they put their tails in those tailored Prussian uniforms?

All of these are signs of a reader who is used to taking the metaphors literally, and then nitpicking as rigorously as possible, as if all these things—talking dogs, prosthetics that really work, surgically enhanced intelligence—could really be true. This is not just a different way of reading, it’s a very different attitude towards what most people refer to as reality. Attempting to think through the consequences of an action—Jesus, now where is that going to lead ya? But happily, that’s not the only mode of existence available on this planet.

I went through several different modes of dealing with reality in the course of reading *Lives of the Monster Dogs*. One was as the reader who wants to be entertained, to escape the consensus reality—not even thinking of genres or consequences, I rode with the plot and liked or disliked the good guys and the bad. Interestingly enough, it was in this mode that I had the most quibbles with the novel. Bakis’s much-praised style—displayed in a series of pastiches meant to encompass the late-1800s journals of Augustus Rank, the brain-burned madman who first conceived of the dogs; the 2009 history of the monster dogs by the canine Ludwig von Sacher; *Mops Hacker, The Opera*, the story of the revolution, performed solely in the dogs’s own castle; and the boyfriendless musings of Cleo Pira—was not exactly convincing. On a fast read, for entertainment’s sake, it was certainly adequate, but if I’ve learned anything from William Gibson, it’s that consistent dedication to a few well-selected artifices will not only read as style, but also cover up a multitude of novelistic faults. Cleo Pira’s own excerpted articles, which supposedly appear in the *New York Times* and *Vanity Fair* of the future, were the most galling examples of this failure: they sure didn’t read like anything that could be published in the *Times* or *Vanity Fair*.

I suppose this escapist mode of reading came down to what I call a Gene Siskel review: What I felt about the book in that mode was based largely on how I felt about the narrator, Cleo Pira. I couldn’t stand the little twit. And why heap my wrath on this well-scrubbed heroine? Most likely because she so closely resembles the girl I’ve met so many times in my neighborhood, the trust fund baby who finds herself at NYU. The East Village has provided urban initiations to decades of NYU’s suburbanites, giving them their first taste of gritty authenticity, nonwhite people, life without parents, and the realities of rent—and, should their tastes run in that direction, really decent sex, drugs, and rock’n’roll. Cleo Pira’s tastes do not, however, so she’s having the *other* typical East Village experience: cocooned in her tenement apartment, she writes.

The monster dogs have chosen one person, and one person only, to represent them to a public hungry for their spectacle. Thus Cleo has a lock on the publication rights to their story. Her only previous experience has been writing for the school paper, but all of a sudden she is able to make a living from being the dogs’ spokesperson. Implausible as this is, it is not quite as unbelievable as the reasons the dogs have chosen her. First, Ludwig von Sacher thinks she is the spitting image of Maria Rank, mother of the savior. Second, Klaue Lutz, Treasurer of the Society of Dogs (domiciled at the Dogs’ Club on Fifth Avenue) and initiator Neuhundstein, the castle project, has found her

capable of being sensitive to our particular issues. Therefore, I would like you—and only you—to write about the construction of our castle. . . . I am not concerned about the amount of experience you have had. You will learn. What interests me is the—the quality of your vision, Cleo. A certain receptivity. (84–85)

In other words, Cleo has been chosen because she is just so damned sensitive. What a young girl’s dream come true! (Only occasionally does she wonder if it’s because she is such a perfect dupe.)

Read This

Recently read and recommended by *Arthur D. Hlavaty*:

A Deeper Dip in the Slipstream

The reference in a recent editorial to the deliberate writing of slipstream fiction puzzled me. The concept was originally defined negatively, as that which does not fit into defined groups, so it would seem that one could no more set out to write Slipstream than to write Miscellaneous. But I await results.

I would still say that the best of it was written before anyone set out to write “slipstream.” The late ’60s/early ’70s seemed a time for books that were not exactly “sf” or “mainstream,” in that they satisfied the same urge to speculate and explore new concepts that sf feeds, but avoided the usual sf tropes. Some I particularly enjoyed took up Hal Clement’s suggestion to consider something obvious and ask what if it were false, but applied the technique to the social, rather than the scientific, sphere.

Brian Aldiss attempted to annex some of these works under the rubric of “lifestyle sf.” His prime example was *The Dice Man*, by Luke Rhinehart (recently reprinted in trade paperback), a fascinating meditation on the possibility of radically changing one’s life by making important decisions on a random basis. I am told that the book was taken up in sf circles, with at least one fannish group actually trying some “diceliving.” Rhinehart followed it a few years later with *The Book of Est*, a lightly fictionalized treatment of the experience of undergoing that briefly fashionable form of personal change. I enjoyed the book and found it credible, but I speak as one who never actually did est. Given the national propensity for forgetting old fads, one might be tempted to reissue *The Book of Est* as a slipstream novel of a somewhat bizarre-sounding imagined therapy. The denial of bathroom privileges would fascinate some readers, but that may be the only thing about the actual est that is generally remembered.

Philip Roth, with his usual *chutzpah*, wrote a book entitled *The Great American Novel*, recounting the history of a third major baseball league that we have all agreed to forget. The book is a large and wondrous stew of exaggerated elements from baseball lore (midgets, Black Sox, etc.) and actual American life (McCarthyism), with a sportswriter narrator named Word Smith and players who bear the names of deities (Gil Gamesh, Hothead Ptah, Frenchy Astarte). Though I loved the book, I must admit it was full of wretched excesses, including bad taste, repetition, exaggeration, and general heavy-handedness, none of which should be too shocking to the seasoned sf reader.

Poet David R. Slavitt had set out to become a successful Showbiz Trash novelist under the name of Henry Sutton. He made brief inroads into the bestseller lists, then decided to switch back to novels he was willing to sign his real name to. Perhaps the best of these was *The Outer Mongolian*, in which a boy with Down’s Syndrome is inadvertently turned into a genius by vitamin overdoses. (My exceedingly permissive Suspension of Scientific Disbelief mechanism winced, but grudgingly allowed the explanation to pass.) The lad then Changes the World, becoming the

secret cause of many of the political events of 1968. The alternative explanations are, as such things should be, utter impossibilities that one cannot entirely dismiss, and the book has much wit and pathos.

Ishmael Reed has straight-facedly described his *Mumbo-Jumbo* as a mystery novel, one that should have won the Edgar Award. There are elements of that, with a detective whose name (Papa LaBas) combines Santeria and French decadence, but it is even more interesting as a Secret History, with much being achieved by undercover agencies, conspiracies, and third-world deities. Reed’s *Flight to Canada* is more like an alternate history; its title refers to the escape of slaves from the Confederacy by airplane, and the book’s finest set piece is the live telecast of Lincoln’s assassination. But rather than assuming a point of divergence from our consensus reality as the subgenre usually does, Reed derives his approach from the belief of some African religions that all time occurs at once.

The books I have mentioned thus far are the sort of “slipstream” published as general or unadjectived fiction, but offering at least some of what sf readers seek. There is, however, no reason why a book could not be published as Science Fiction, then cross the other way, pandering to the desire for verbal wit and gameplaying, self-reference, and other qualities we think of as mainstream, even post-modern.

Which brings me to John Sladek, whose first two novels, *The Reproductive System* (also published as *Mechasm*) and *The Müller-Fokker Effect*, always seemed like the sort of thing that could have been published as literary fiction. (In fact, if memory serves, the first American hardcover of *The Müller-Fokker Effect*, like that of Robert Sheckley’s *Mindswap* a few years earlier, was presented as an imaginative work of satire, with no reference to how its images resembled those of the books with rocket ships on the covers. Neither book escaped its author’s origins; the first paperback edition of each looked science-fictiony.)

In any event, Sladek’s books are delightful. *The Reproductive System* told the old story of machines that rebel, but made it new, and funny. *The Müller-Fokker Effect* dealt with computer consciousness (another contender in the great First Cyberpunk sweepstakes?) with equal imagination and wit. The first features a female protagonist whose IQ is so high that her community put her in a school with all the other “special” children because it couldn’t think of anything else to do with her; the second includes a men’s-magazine publisher whose staff keeps him from ever having sex, on the assumption that it is his endless, virginally desperate lusts that give the magazine whatever helps it sell better than all the other men’s mags. There are a few of the now-laughable sfnal commonplaces of the time (such as brand-name marijuana), but that seems a minor quibble. Both books delight with both conceptual inventiveness and word games, literary reference, and paradox. ►

Perhaps as a response to the fact that sensitive young girls just annoy me—a relic of my formative years as a punk—I began combing *Lives of the Monster Dogs* for signs of what constituted Cleo’s quality of vision. All I found was a willingness to take her own emotional inventory and an eye for pretty detail:

As soon as I’d written the first article I’d used all the money I had saved for tuition the next fall to decorate my apartment. Sometimes, if I had nothing to do for a morning or an afternoon, I would sit in the living room and just look at things . . . the little Victorian sofa covered with faded green velvet and flanked by two end tables on which I’d set two clear glass bowls overflowing with bunches of dark red and purple grapes that were made of twisted chrome wire and colored glass. I

loved letting my eyes wander from the couch to the grapes: the shock of the brilliant, gaudy colors after the pale, aristocratic-looking couch, to the windows, to the books, to the small marble mantelpiece, over which I’d hung a strange, bright-red-tinted mirror from the 1960s that was shaped like a dove . . . and two tiny green Edwardian cameos in gilded frames . . . They were the kinds of things I’d always longed to own. I thought I was happy, because that seemed to be the only thing I could reasonably be feeling under the circumstances, but really I was just very afraid that I was going to lose everything . . . (156–157)

Of course, this is Bakis’s writing, not Cleo’s. And at this point, I flipped from being entertained to being rather self-conscious about my

reading, ready to cover a multitude of dissonances with cool irony. Like Jonathan Lethem's first published novel, *Gun, with Occasional Music*, *Lives of the Monster Dogs* chews through the checklist of postmodern indicators by the numbers: pastiche, parody, the mining of the past. . . . Thus, the casual reader, especially the casual genre reader (as evidenced by the reviews posted on Amazon.com at least), may not have gotten that Cleo is to be taken every bit as metaphorically as the talking dogs. (It occurs to me that, demographically, Cleo is nothing so much as a perfect match for the fabled Manhattan editorial assistant: a high-falutin' education; a low-paying job; friends and family with much nicer places in *good* neighborhoods or in Connecticut; the appearance of good taste when it comes to food, clothes, and chotchkas; and the ever-present salvation of literary success.)

Cleo's sensibility, the quality of her vision, is shown in the passage quoted above to be nothing so much as a deep, personal appreciation of upper-middle-class consumer goods. This is the thread that winds its way through all of Cleo's utterances from beginning to end: even after the monster dogs X themselves out of the future, Cleo wakes from a dream, "craving food; endive, oysters, chard, chocolate, and some dark, bitter, smoky thing I couldn't identify" (280). Her life is not changed by her encounter with the fantastic. Indeed, her fascination with the dogs seems predicated not so much on the dogs themselves, the frankenscience miracle of their existence, or what the forced evolution of man's best friend bodes for planet Earth, but for their opulent lifestyle, which hearkens back to the New York of the Gilded Age, a previous turn of the century.

What is it about the dogs for Cleo? The costumes, the jewels, the limos, the servants, the dinners, the books, but above all, the real estate. Lydia, an Upper West Side Samoyed who becomes Cleo's closest girlfriend, inhabits

a beautiful early-twentieth-century building whose marble lobby and silent elevators reminded me of the places I had imagined visiting before I knew the dogs.

[She] lived in a twelfth-floor penthouse with french windows in the living room that looked out onto a terrace and, beyond that, the Hudson . . . (153)

Ludwig von Sacher lives in "a nice-looking building on Commerce Street in the West Village" (64), ground floor, with an entrance hall, more than a couple bedrooms, and a manservant, while Klaue Lutz prefers "the living room of [his] magnificent Central Park West home. The room is large, but the dimensions of the fireplace still surprise [Cleo], for it is as cavernous as one in a medieval castle hall" (127). The tone of these passages, and their frequency, convince me that Cleo has succumbed to one of the hazards of Manhattan living: unassuaged apartment lust.

In some ways, New York City is all about real estate and class—wealth and the lack thereof, and the unavoidably related power politics of race and otherness that seek to make up for that lack. I count it as a good thing that Bakis managed to push all my Lower East Side class resentment buttons with Cleo Pira: not only is it a sign that she writes good character, but it's a sign that she is well aware of what she is doing. Why else would she have blown up my block?

The site of the monster dogs' castle is, as Klaue Lutz mentions, a building "called Red Square, at Avenue A and Houston Street. I suspect it will not be much missed. It is a cheaply constructed—an ugly—ah, monstrosity" (81). He's right. For those who don't know, Red Square is a peculiarly 1980s-style monument, a relic of East Village gentrification. The developer—Leona Helmsley, a woman dubbed The Queen of Mean by the tabloids who has done time for tax evasion—erected a statue of Lenin on the roof. It salutes the huddled masses of the Lower East Side. This gesture is echoed by Bakis's "gold statue of a dog standing on its hind legs and holding a sword upright" (185) which she has placed on the roof of Neuhundstein. Helmsley also graced Red Square's strip mall annex with dreadful pseudo-garbage "art." This was supposed to reflect the main selling point of Leona's investment: bohemian atmosphere. One bedrooms start at \$2,500, and the doorman keeps those picturesque homeless people out of the lobby.

It is, of course, ironic that what Red Square is being replaced with is a replica of Neuschwanstein, the castle that was also the model, as

Klaue notes, for Sleeping Beauty's castle in the original Anaheim, California Disneyland. (Well, this is terribly ironic for me, at least, because moving to the East Village was my way of escaping Anaheim.) And it is certainly in tune with the economic reality of turn-of-the-century Manhattan outside my work window on Times Square: the corner where some of my transgender friends used to turn tricks has been "renovated" by the Disney Corporation. Movie tie-in goods are stacked high inside the company store while this giant talking mouse with a bow and a miniskirt squeaks "Hi!" at the tourists outside. They feel so much safer now.

But what the hell, Minnie Mouse is selling herself, too. Look at the new and improved Tomorrowland in Anaheim, where Disney has given up entirely on attempting to envision the future and settled for Victorian fantasy, or the mythic Main Street, U.S.A., which has been transformed into a real estate enterprise, the over-planned community of Celebration in Florida. Equating Disney's talking animals and its "future as imagined by the past," and the talking dogs and the rather select view of Manhattan presented in *Lives* is too much to resist. Both are the tools of a nostalgia for a past that never really was, and an escape from a present that is, well, cheap and ugly, among other things. *Who let those poor people in?* And in both, as well, there is no real future—that remains beyond imagination.

However, I'm not criticizing *Lives of the Monster Dogs* for not really being about the future. Nor do I think it matters that Bakis is unfamiliar with the science-fiction genre's talking pooch canon: Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Stapledon's *Sirius*, Clifford Simak, yea, even unto *Blood's a Rover*. How many genre critics, after all, are familiar with all the works cited in the aforementioned *New York Times* review, Mikael Bulgakov's *The Heart of a Dog*, for one? (And, David Hartwell asks, was the *Times* reviewer aware that Bulgakov was responding to a Russian sf genre work, Yefremov's "Heart of a Serpent"?) This is merely a game of critics marking their territory. No, I am more concerned with thinking through the consequences of the monster dog metaphor.

At first glance, the dogs obviously represent the Old World, the European order that went down the tubes round about World War I. I imagine that part of their appeal to Cleo is not only the return to a standard of living that now eludes her, but that the dogs represent a world where everyone knew their place. As the daughter of the upper middle classes, someone like Cleo would have been assured a quite cushy one. Contrast this with present day Manhattan, where white folk are a minority, and culture has gone defiantly multi.

Yet what is not considered at length in *Lives of the Monster Dogs*, in fact is barely even mentioned, is the status of the dogs as others. Reading as a New Yorker, I automatically put this otherness into terms of race and ethnicity or just plain self-selecting queerness, and it is surprising not to see this aspect of the metaphor carried through at all. Klaue, at one point, does compare the monster dogs's invasion of Manhattan to the experience of immigrants—

This is a country of immigrants, this city especially, of people who have left things behind. They have brought their pasts with them. They have not succeeded in turning this into the old country—there are too many old countries competing with one another. It is a city built on bits and pieces of many different times and places, and it offers those magical things to everyone who comes through it. You may think that coming, as it were, from a different century, and being dogs, we would find it impossible ever to blend in, even here. I suppose that is true: we won't. (131)

—but that's it.

So the history of the dogs as new kids on the block in Manhattan is fundamentally different from the history of every other group that has migrated here: the dogs refuse to assimilate. Instead, they hole themselves up in their castle and die, leaving their empty castle as a prime upper-end residential and commercial property, their "gift" to the people of Manhattan, as Klaue often says. They choose to die, supposedly, because they refuse the medical help the modern world might have offered them in combatting the fatal degenerative disease that just seems to part of being a monster dog. One can quibble with the implausibility of this plot device, but I am struck more by the dogs' own insistence on seeing themselves as a dying race—and that not so much

in terms of the death of the Old World, but the death of all those *others* cluttering up Manhattan real estate.

And I had the paranoid thought: wouldn't it be expedient if all us immigrants, queers, and bohos just offed ourselves, like the dogs? And left the world safe for those sensitive souls who want to write about us? And take our apartments? Is that what *Lives of the Monster Dogs* is really about? I mean, yes, immigrant/queer/boho neighborhoods have their charm, but all that charm means is that eventually the immigrants, queers, and bohos have to be moved out so that said charm can be sold to the likes of Cleo Pira. In light of the politics of gentrification and Cleo Pira's demographic, I do wonder.

So the dogs must die, because in some form or another, a world encompassing their kind of radical diversity on an ongoing basis is, for some folk, impossible to imagine. I would argue that most genre authors and readers aren't up to this task, either, but at least they try: one of the posted Amazon.com reviews—by someone who used Clifford Simak as the talking dog touchstone—was written in the persona of a dog. I don't think a stunt like that would have even occurred to most mainstream critics; indeed the *Times* quote, a "meditation on what it means to be human," indicates a reader perhaps unable to comprehend that a real other might exist. This is not surprising given the limited universe *Lives of the Monster Dogs* presents. The furthest Cleo

goes in identifying with an other is when she says to Ludwig, the dog who spends a great deal of time imagining what it would be like to be human, that she tries to imagine what it would be like to be him, too. But, "Being a dog is nothing," [Ludwig] said. "Literally. It is nothing but an absence, a negative" (225).

Really. I smell badly digested French theory. But aside from that—I must say it again—no wonder so many genre readers, so used to seeing themselves as other, had problems with this book. On the other hand, I've also got a problem with the genre folk who want to move this book on to our block to increase the value of our real estate. I don't think we need it: as a work of sf, this is just one more book that fails to think through its premise. And, in the long run, sf literature stands to profit more by staying with its particular method of thinking through the implausible.

Still, it also has to be recognized that the sf genre is not the sole owner and distributor of the fantastic, and I would not resist a bit of mongrelization on the part of both sf and the so-called mainstream. *Lives of the Monster Dogs* is fantastic in that sense, and it's an OK first novel. I only wish Kirsten Bakis could have done more damage.

Ariel Haméon is an NYU dropout who has lived in the East Village since 1978.

The Subtle Knife by Philip Pullman

New York: Del Rey Books, 1997; \$5.99 pb; 288 pages

reviewed by Greg L. Johnson

It has been over two decades since I last read a young adult fantasy novel, about the same length of time since I was a young adult. After college I became something of a science-fiction purist, reading sf on one hand and nonfiction on the other. This was about the time that fantasy writing began to be dominated by countless serials featuring either Celtic mythology or elves with guitars. I found it easy to stay away.

There are several fantasy books and writers I remember well from those late elementary school/early junior high days. Tolkien, of course, *Alice in Wonderland*, Eleanor Cameron's *Mushroom Planet* books, *A Wrinkle in Time*, and *Freddy the Pig*. I remember spending one school year working my way through the library's section on folk tales, myths, and legends. It's the memory of how much I enjoyed those books, then, which provides my context for reading *The Subtle Knife* by Philip Pullman.

The Subtle Knife is part two of a trilogy with the overall title of *His Dark Materials*, the first part of which was *The Golden Compass*. *The Golden Compass* introduced us to the world of Lyra Belaqua, a young woman living at Jordan College. Lyra's world is much like our own, Jordan College is part of Oxford, the continents are the same, technology seems to be at a late nineteenth-century level.

There are significant differences, however. History has proceeded differently. There was no American Revolution. Britain's main enemy is the Muscovites, and nomadic boatsmen called gyptians roam the canals of England. The Church is all-powerful, and what we think of as physics is called experimental theology. Human beings are accompanied by daemons, physical manifestations of their souls in the form of animals. There are witches.

Lyra's life is fairly idyllic until a visit from her Uncle, Lord Asriel, shakes things up at the college. Then children begin disappearing, with rumors that they have been taken by the gobblers. When Lyra is taken away under the care of Mrs. Coulter, whom the reader already has good reason to distrust, she is given an alethiometer by one of the Scholars at the college, and told to keep it hidden. The alethiometer can be used to tell the truth, but Lyra must learn how to use it.

Lyra eventually escapes from the confines of Mrs. Coulter, and she brings her story to the gyptians. They embark on a quest to free the captured children, which story takes up the rest of *The Golden Compass*.

The Subtle Knife begins immediately after the events in *The Golden Compass*. Part of it is set in our world, where Will Parry is trying to protect his mother and search for his father. When he discovers a doorway into another world, he meets Lyra, now calling herself Lyra Silvertongue. Lyra has found this world in pursuit of Lord Asriel, but she quickly joins forces with Will to find his father. With help from a

scientist from Will's London, they discover some of what is going on, what the mysterious Dust is and how it connects to the dark matter of our own universe, and why so many people's fate seems to depend on the actions of Lord Asriel. When Will and Lyra embark on a journey across a strange land peopled by children and spectres, there are misguided decisions, heroic actions, and tragic deaths.

The problem with plot summaries is that they do little to convey the pleasure of reading the book. Pullman's prose is smoothly lyrical, and the characterizations are more subtle than most writing aimed at a younger audience. Lyra is undoubtedly the heroine, she is also undoubtedly at times a brat. Mrs. Coulter is the closest to a complete villain, yet she is capable of persuading others with charm and a smile. And whether or not Lord Asriel is right or wrong, good or bad, is the central question by the end of *The Subtle Knife*. This ambiguity helps give *The Subtle Knife* a different feel from most fantasy novels, where good and bad are more clearly delineated. The characters themselves are divided in their support of Lord Asriel and what they believe to be his goals. Characters we have reason to trust are on both sides, characters we are suspicious of are on both sides. In the tradition of part twos, *The Subtle Knife* leaves these and many other questions hanging at the end.

While there is no doubt that reading fantasy is a different experience than reading science fiction, the two forms do have some common ground. One of these is the art of world building, of creating a place that takes on a life of its own. Even without the completion of the third volume, the *His Dark Materials* series is already a classic piece of world building. There is an abundance of inventiveness, along with the kind of consistency that makes it all come together. A good example is the daemons who are part of the lives of all the humans of Lyra's home world. The daemons don't just help to give her world its own character, why they exist and why humans of our world don't seem to have them is important to the story. The daemons, appearing as animals, illuminate the character of the people they represent. And not only are they an inventive fantasy, they also function as a useful literary device. The author is able to provide a quick joke or explanatory conversation whenever needed, simply by having a human talk to his or her daemon. This multiple use of the daemons as metaphor for character, world-building device, sense-of-wonder conveyor, and occasional comic relief are another indication of the high level of writing Philip Pullman presents for our enjoyment in these books.

The Subtle Knife and *The Golden Compass* are works squarely in the tradition of the books cited at the beginning of this review. There is the convincing world building, which Tolkien so clearly established as a

requirement of all good fantasy. The mix of Christian theology and fantasy is quite comparable to that in *A Wrinkle in Time*. And the story of young people on a quest to save themselves and their world is a timeless one.

It's premature, and a bit unfair, to pronounce judgment on a trilogy that is only two-thirds complete. However, Philip Pullman is an

accomplished writer; there is no reason to believe that part three will not live up to the quality of the first two volumes. There is every reason to believe that the *His Dark Materials* trilogy will eventually take its place among the classics of its kind. ►

Greg L. Johnson lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Secret Realms by Tom Cool

New York: Tor Books, 1998; \$22.95 hc; 304 pages

reviewed by Michael M. Levy

Tom Cool! What a name for a science-fiction writer! If he were a rock star I'd assume it was fake, like Sid Vicious or Marilyn Manson, but evidently it's quite real. Commander Tom Cool, U.S. Navy, is currently Deputy Director of Intelligence for Plans and Programs, United States Southern Command, a position that evidently also allows him time to write fiction. According to his website, Cool has spent close to twenty years in the Navy, including extensive experience on aircraft carriers and with Naval Intelligence. He's also got a B.A. in creative writing (from Penn State, with honors no less) and an M.S. in computer science. The man's credentials are clearly made to order for a military science-fiction writer.

Set sometime in the twenty-first century, *Secret Realms* concerns Standing Whirlwind, a top secret Communist Chinese experiment designed to create super soldiers, virtual-reality warriors who are inhumanly efficient, not only in hand-to-hand combat, but, more importantly, on the level of tactics and strategy. Trickster, one of these cybernetic warriors, sums up himself and his "tribe" as follows: "[We're] the perfect forebrains of generals. Cold calculating killing machines. Our brains, our weapons. Tools of directors of battle." Going far beyond Orson Scott Card's vision in *Ender's Game*, Cool describes fifteen young men and women with names such as Trickster, Cat, and Dreamer, children really, who have literally been raised from birth in a virtual reality environment, with their entire lives devoted to increasingly sophisticated battle problems. From ancient Greece to World War II to the Bekka Valley in the Middle East, the tribe has fought and refought the great battles of the past, learning everything there is to know about warfare and mastering the most sophisticated computerized battle techniques.

The Chinese see Standing Whirlwind as an ace-in-the-hole in their upcoming confrontation with the resurgent military power of imperial Japan. With the Western Pacific on the brink of war, they have for the first time plugged the tribe into a real-world, real-time battle problem. This, however, turns out to be a mistake, at least from the perspective of the Chinese government. Trickster and his tribe have been kept in complete ignorance of the real world. Their virtual universe, the world of battle as ruled over by System, whom they believe to be a god, has been the totality of their existence. Given access to real-world communications networks so that they can monitor and take part in the actual confrontation between China and Japan, Trickster breaks out of his virtual world and quickly takes over the isolated military installation which, unbeknownst to them, has been the tribe's home since their births seventeen years ago. In the conflict that follows, Trickster and his tribe combine their skills in manipulating virtual reality, computer software, and all forms of electronic communications with their nearly superhuman physical abilities to attempt to end the escalating military crisis before it goes nuclear.

The merits of *Secret Realms* are many. First of all, it's quite well written. Cool's prose is polished and easy to read, even when he's firing off strings of U.S. Naval acronyms. His character development is also solid. Trickster, Cat, Dreamer, and the rest of the tribe are, pretty much by definition, stripped-down personalities, their minds focused by System almost exclusively on things military, but each of the fifteen cybernetic warriors is still clearly differentiated. Trickster is a well-realized protagonist, full of quirks and odd moods, something much more than the "cold calculating killing machine" his creators intended him to be. He is also, by his own lights, an intensely moral human being who must balance a high sense of tribal loyalty against the need to make difficult and painful decisions during wartime.

What particularly stands out in *Secret Realms*, though, is Cool's take on virtual reality. The tribe, having never known another world, accepts theirs as normal despite its strangeness. Individuals have enormous powers of movement and can jump from one pocket universe, from one body (or Avatar), to another through a simple act of will, yet they cannot touch except in combat. Pain can be turned on or off at the whim of the individual. Death in battle is never final and defeat is merely contingent upon a replay of the battle problem; at worst it is something that will be penalized by a few days of poor rations. The only really dangerous act that a member of the tribe can commit is to refuse to take part in the fighting. Those who don't fight their best, who give up, or who question the validity of System's rules are given Time Outs and, if their behavior persists, are in danger of being removed from the virtual universe entirely.

Among the many delights of *Secret Realms* are the reactions of Trickster and the rest of his tribe after they leave virtual reality and confront our universe for the first time. They find themselves in a world where, if you hit someone, it hurts you almost as much as the person you hit; a world where dead bodies simply lie where they've fallen, looking disgusting, rather than cleanly disappearing; a world where male and female bodies have strange appendages that get in the way during a fight, but feel very good when caressed. Cool makes each of these discoveries believable. Despite their enormous skills, their ferocious fighting abilities, and their great intelligence, we're constantly aware that in a very real sense the tribe are still children, innocents who understand very little of the world about them.

I have to admit that I'm not often a fan of military science fiction, especially when it's written from a simplistic, right-wing perspective that seems intent on glorifying death and destruction and symbolically justifying U.S. military intervention in Third World affairs. I generally prefer war novels like *All Quiet on the Western Front* or, to choose a recent genre example, Patricia Anthony's superb and widely overlooked *Flanders*. *Secret Realms*, however, avoids simplistic solutions. Despite having been raised in an environment where war literally is everything, where no one he loves really gets hurt, and where anything that goes wrong can be fixed, Trickster ultimately recognizes that lives are valuable and that violence should not be an end in itself. Equally important, however, he avoids the opposite extreme, realizing that pure passive resistance is equally futile in the face of a violent enemy. Confronting a war between China and Japan that is on the verge of going nuclear, he opposes violence with violence when necessary, sacrificing those whom he must sacrifice with total ruthlessness, but does so with a clear eye toward ending the violence as quickly as possible. He takes responsibility for the deaths of thousands, but, by causing their deaths, saves the lives of millions.

I don't know what Tom Cool's politics are, whether he's a liberal or a conservative, a Democrat or a Republican. I've had enough friends and students in the military, including a couple in the Intelligence community, to know that, contrary to some stereotypes, the politics of career military men run across the entire political spectrum. Whatever Cool's politics are, however, the man has a clear sense of the moral ambiguities involved in the military life. This sense of ambiguity is part of what makes him a fine writer. I suspect that it also makes him a pretty good intelligence officer as well. ►

Michael M. Levy lives in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Screed

(letters of comment)

James Morrow, State College, Pennsylvania

Thanks so much for giving us, in your September issue [*NYRSF* 121], the Director's Cut of Jonathan Lethem's *Village Voice* article, "Why Can't We All Just Live Together?: A Vision of Genre Paradise Lost."

One assertion struck a particularly responsive chord in me. "Marginality, it should be said, isn't always the worst thing for artists." There is something very peculiar about that sentence. Lethem uses the word "artists," and he uses it without embarrassment.

During the last fifteen years I have appeared on scores of panels at sf conventions, and I have never once heard anybody—in the audience or on the podium—use the word "art." In that fact, I feel, lies the source of our malaise.

I wasn't tuned into the sf world during the New Wave era, but I gather that—whether they used the word "art" or not—the New Wavers 1) knew what art was, 2) cared about it deeply, and 3) sought to create it. How far the field has come since then—in precisely the wrong direction.

God knows, the sf world doesn't need a lot of narcissists in black turtlenecks skulking around proclaiming their alienation from society while simultaneously bemoaning that same society's failure to appreciate them. (Rather touchingly, the average sf writer merely talks about the differences between his culture and the culture of "mundanity.") But it could use at least *some* such posturing. It's possible to be an artist and a fraud at the same time, but I'm no longer certain it's possible to be an artist and a science-fiction writer at the same time.

I have always been in the tiny minority that absolutely detests Theodore Sturgeon's celebrated riposte, "Ninety percent of everything is crap." He should have said something like, "You're right, and it's a terrible shame, and we should all work our asses off trying to make science fiction worthy of itself."

Arthur D. Hlavaty, Yonkers, New York

The combination of articles in *NYRSF* 121 raises some thoughts. Brian Stableford examines the *Fantasy Hall of Fame* assembled by SFWA and suggests that it suffers from a narrowness brought about by the influence of American science fiction—specifically the Campbellian emphasis on solving problems and finding explanations. We've heard this complaint before: John Clute's description of hard sf as "an idiom which treats the world as a problem to be solved, for gain." Clute says this as if there were something wrong with it, but some of us consider it one of the glories of the field,

especially if one defines "gain" broadly, as many of the writers do.

On the other half of the front page, Jonathan Lethem wishes that *Gravity's Rainbow* had won the Nebula. This suggestion has always puzzled me. *Gravity's Rainbow*, like "The Heat-Death of the Universe" before it and *Dhalgren* after it, gave me great pleasure, but I could not see a good reason to call any of them "science fiction." Perhaps it is the absence of those paradigmatic qualities of solution and explanation that made me see the works as something other than what I read the heirs of Campbell for. The authors show us wonders and marvels, like double moons or Tyrone Slothrop's mysteriously predictive erections, but do not choose to explain or harmonize these images, or discuss what they might be used for.

And then Earl Wells reminds us about A. E. van Vogt, who never really cared about Explaining or Making It All Make Sense. He would take those remarkable 800-word dream fragments and put them together, with minimal efforts to make sure that they cohered. If someone like Damon Knight made fun of him, he would do a fix on the problems brought to his attention, but would leave at least as many others, because that wasn't what really mattered to him. But there he was, in the midst of Campbell's *Astounding* in its glory years, and thus part of hard sf's heritage, even if we're still not sure where he fits.

Gregory Benford, Laguna Beach, California

I believe you're fundamentally right about classical sf opposing modernism ["Anti-modernist Bits," *NYRSF* 119], but with the caution that one must not mistake fuddy-duddy reactionism for theoretical difference. Many, like Lester del Rey, opposed modernism because they opposed the entire literary culture, or didn't know any better. Their critiques were not profound, but visceral.

Further, the customary choice of "plain writing" because the landscapes of sf are already strange enough works only in a limited sense. The *reaction* of real people in such stories can have all the signatures of modernist modes, particularly in the rejection of a consensus epistemology. In Bester's narrative gyres we are swept along by people who themselves find their worlds wrenching. Conveying this requires more than the flat, clear prose of a Clarke or Niven—who nonetheless are stylists, too.

[*Lester del Rey hung out with poets in New York City in the 1930s and '40s, and did know about Modernism, although his particular critique was generally and globally anti-literary. His critique could be mistaken for shallowness, but I believe it was not.*—DGH]

Michael Swanwick's Complete "L is for Language"

Due to an unfortunate accident involving two prepubescent sheep, three cream pies, and an Epson ES-1200C flatbed scanner, the last seven lines of the "L" installment of Michael Swanwick's Puck Aleshire's Abecedary were omitted from last month's issue. We present here in all its glory the full restored text. —The Editors

Nobody appreciates clichés until they've been surgically removed. When the Language Police caught me, I thought the recovery time in the hospital would be the worst of it. I had never a thought for what I'd lose.

The problem is that clichés are the simplest and easiest-to-use units of communication. When you're unable to refer to eggs frying in the same clause as sidewalks, it takes real mental effort to tell someone exactly how hot it was on that August afternoon when birds lay stunned on the ground and even the clouds were limp in the searing blue sky. And after you've made the effort—is what you've said an actual improvement?

I was sitting in a dim little post-op bar on exactly such an afternoon, nursing my resentment, when I heard a fellow say, "—a real scorcher out there."

I turned. He had one side of his head shaved and a fresh pink surgical scar running up it. "What did you say?"

He smirked. "Citation is not statement."

"What?"

"You think I found a way around the surgery, don't you?"

"Yes."

"I assure you I haven't. I am absolutely incapable of saying, for example, 'It was as easy as pie.'"

By now I was grinning like a—well, I can't tell you what I was grinning like. "Let me buy you a drink," I said.

"I bet you'd say, 'I'm grateful as hell,' if you could."

I shook my head admiringly. "Can't even say, 'Wish I'd thought of that.'"

Missing Pages

First of all, an apology to Michael Swanwick for failing to scan page two of the letter L in his alphabet serial. We have published the full text in this issue on page 23, and of course, we have the next full installment, the marvelous letter M, on page 14. The technology of scanning is an enormous help to us, making it possible for us to produce issues faster and with less labor (and with illustrations, too), but it introduces whole new vistas of possible error.

Throughout my publishing career, there have been intermittent cases of single manuscript pages not making it into the final and published version by mistake. In one notable case the whole last chapter of a novel was left out of the paperback after hardcover publication. The first one to notice is always the writer, even if no one else does. My most embarrassing example is of a short story published in *Cosmos* when I was editing that magazine. There was a page of manuscript missing in a story that made it to the final ballot of the Nebula—in part because the writer gritted his teeth and didn't make a public fuss about the missing page while the story was being widely admired and nominated. We thank Michael Swanwick for his distraught call and for his patience while we print the whole thing correctly.

Secondly, kudos to the cavalcade of *NYRSF* people (Gordon Van Gelder, Rob Killheffer, Claire Wolf, and now Amy Goldschlager) who have worked so hard for so many years to keep the *NYRSF*/Dixon Place readings in New York City a lively and ongoing event. Dixon Place is a seven-day-a-week event space in a loft on the Bowery just south of Houston Street that hosts the arts, especially the underground and avant garde. *NYRSF* has had one evening a month of sf and fantasy readings, and celebrated the tenth anniversary of the magazine in September with an evening of readings by Samuel R. Delany and John Crowley (see pictures on page 3). It was a lovely fall evening and a standing-room-only crowd helped kick off the fall season. Michael Flynn and Alexander Jablakov read in October, and in November Patricia McKillip and Carol Emshwiller will read. This is the best and only ongoing monthly sf/public reading series we know of in the U.S., and we are proud to sponsor it and be involved. There are lots of good bars and restaurants nearby, so come early and have dinner, or stay late. When you come to New York, don't forget to check our website for current reading information.

Third, we have been traveling a lot these days—from Constellation to Armadillocon to Confluence to Milford, Pennsylvania, Modena, New York, and to Germany for the Frankfurt Book Fair—and look forward to seeing many of you in the coming months, from the Monterey World Fantasy Convention to Philcon to the New York City SFWA author/editor party on November 16, from Potlatch to Boskone and beyond. Look for the *NYRSF* table in the dealers room, come tell us what you agree and disagree with in the magazine, buy some back issues or perhaps an excess review copy. From all of this activity you would think there was a new Golden Age of SF going on right now. And perhaps there is. ▲

—David G. Hartwell & the editors

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
Paid
Dover, NH
Permit No. 61

The New York Review of Science Fiction
P.O. Box 78, Pleasantville, NY 10570

Forwarding and Address Correction Requested

Visit our Web site at <http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/olp/nyrsf/nyrsf.html>