TWO: THE SYMBOLISM OF PERSONAL REDEMPTION

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sign of water.

T. S. Eliot.

The iconic voice of this age's pervading sense of emotional and psychic disinheritance is perhaps that of T. S. Eliot, whose great poem, 'The Waste Land' (1965) expresses, in a tangle of disparate images and personæ, the hollowness and horror which lies at the core of much contemporary experience. Like T. S. Eliot's speaker in the section called 'The Fire Sermon', we too '...can connect/Nothing with nothing' (ll 301 - 302), for it would seem that, despite the high level of scientific advancement reached by the human race, all forms of chaos proliferate. Endemic warfare, destruction of natural resources, loss of religious faith, and erosion of family life and sexual mores are only a few of the afflictions which oppress the twentieth century. Just as the physical universe expands indefinitely, the knowability of things expands also, constantly slipping just out of humanity's grasp. Men and women have discovered that there is a corollary to their knowledge. Balancing all that they have learned is an infinite amount that they have yet to learn.

It is not surprising, therefore, that as the century draws to a close, Western society experiences a sense of millennial catastrophe, a deep feeling of epistemological uncertainty. Possibly more than any other age, this one is marked by a failure of belief in the signifi-

cance of things. As Christine Brooke-Rose points out, man's mortality is driven home in this century, for man has - for the first time in his brief history - developed the capability not just for individual oblivion, but for the 'death of the species' (1981:7). To add to this alarming possibility, mankind has also suddenly become an enormous geophysical force, capable of altering the physical well-being of the planet on a vast scale merely through its presence. C. G. Jung expressed the awareness of imminent apocalypse thus:

> Our times have demonstrated what it means for the gates of the underworld to be opened. Things whose enormity nobody could have imagined in the idyllic harmlessness of the first decade of our century have happened and have turned our world upside down. Ever since, the world has remained in a state of schizophrenia.
>
> (Jung, 1978:83 - 84)

Where, in the past, faith kept mankind afloat on the seas of unreason and unreality, humanity now finds itself sinking beneath the wreckage of its previous blind belief in the consistency of what it formerly perceived as reality. And the failure of faith is not simply religious. Faith, in the previous two centuries, was a two-fold matter, involving not only belief in God, but belief in the reasonableness and rationality of the human race as well, and faith in its ability to achieve control over its mental and physical resources. This secular faith is, if not completely obliterated, now at least much diluted.

Humanity has put aside, to a large extent, its earlier invigorating and adolescent belief that knowledge can lead to wholeness, to personal redemption. In short, men and women are shaken, for they have discovered - as Brooke-Rose says - that 'the "real" [has] come to

seem unreal' (1981:4).[1]

In this chaos of unreality and confusion it may appear that our century is epistemologically unknowable. The individual is hard-pressed to know how to respond to the search for meaning. Humanity runs riot, seeking salvation in diverse and eccentric ways. Cults proliferate; Moonyism, Dianetics, Scientology, uncountable charismatic churches rise to give hope to people who are baffled and for whom redemption seems harder than ever to grasp in a complex society. Men and women dabble in 'alternative' routes to mental and physical health: aromatherapy, astrology, acupuncture, massaging of 'auras', belief in the curative powers of crystals. Astonishingly, in an age when the efficacy and power of science has been proven over and over again, and at a time when mankind has become capable of probing the outer reaches of the universe, First World civilization more and more frequently appears to turn its back on the rational and seeks, instead, the enigmatic, the unproven and the occult.[2]

Since it is in our cultural artefacts that we see the glimmerings of our most ardent hopes and fears, it would seem obvious that our literature produces many writers who are concerned with this sense of the eschatological. Rosemary Jackson, the influential author

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[1] One might add, correspondingly, that the unreal has also begun to seem real. A recent craze amongst affluent children is a tiny electronic toy which has to be 'fed' and 'put to sleep' regularly. If the child forgets, the toy 'dies'. Somewhat alarmingly, in Japan, cemeteries are now being provided so that grief-stricken owners of deceased Tamagotchi may inter their 'dead' toys (The Pretoria News, 20 January, 1998:1).

[2] C. G. Jung addressed himself to this problem during the 1950s, in an interesting book called Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies (1991). Jung hypothesises that the frequent reports of Ufos may be caused by the human need to feel that the race is not alone, that some vast overriding intelligence exists which watches, protects and which may even judge. The sightings are 'projections', caused both by psychic disturbance and human need. He notes that these 'signs in the heavens' are now as frequent as sightings of angels were in less sophisticated times.

of Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion, makes this point with a great deal of emphasis. She feels, furthermore, that in order to be meaningful, fantasy literature should reflect this evident chaos, should mirror the lack of overall pattern and coherence, should express the pointless and tragic situation in which we find ourselves. '[Fantasy] reveals reason and reality to be arbitrary, shifting constructs...' (1988:21). For her, the most meaningful fantasy would be, paradoxically, those forms which make meaninglessness visible and tangible. In corroboration of her theory she points, as do many other theorists (Tzvetan Todorov and Brooke-Rose, for example), to Henry James's 1898 The Turn of the Screw (1960) and to Franz Kafka's 1915 story 'Metamorphosis' (1961) as exemplars of this epistemological uncertainty. For in both these works there is no reconciling of the mysteries, no final solution or conclusion is possible for the reader.

Within the field of sf, a novel such as Samuel R. Delany's Dhalgren (1975) would similarly fulfil these criteria and would, if classified in these terms, be relegated to the field of pure fantasy rather than to the science fictional genre. In Dhalgren, a city disintegrated into strange forms of chaos - both physical and cultural - burns endlessly under a nightmare sky of roiling clouds and shadows. No explanation is offered for the aberrations and no conclusion seems possible. As in 'Metamorphosis' and The Turn of the Screw, all remains ambiguous, shadowy, baffling and occluded. M. John Harrison is another writer whose works, often of a highly poetic nature, are marketed as sf and read by readers of sf. However, in his Viriconium (1982) stories and in the novella A Storm of Wings (1987), he has produced writing that is as ambiguous, as imaginatively teasing and as non-resolvable as Dhalgren.

Similarly, Gene Wolfe's three novellas, The Fifth Head of Cerberus, 'A Story' by John V. Marsch and V. R. T. (1983), so confound the nature of reality and identity that the reader's ambivalent responses can never be resolved satisfactorily. Indeed, in The Fifth Head of Cerberus, ambiguity is the only constant. The reader never learns the protagonist's true name: he is simply 'Number 5'. Neither is it possible to determine Number 5's family name; we learn only that he has the same name as his father. Similarly, Dr Veil's Hypothesis is equally confusing and ambiguous. Dr Veil postulates that the aboriginals of the planet Sainte Anne were shape-changers, so adept at mimicking men that they eventually destroyed the human colonists and supplanted them. They took the place of humans so effectively, that they became - to all extents and purposes - humans themselves. The paradox lies in the fact that, as such succesful copyists, they would have had to lose their adaptive abilities completely, for men are not shape-changers. Have they, then, become humans in the course of losing the one attribute that made them different? And how is it possible to determine what constitutes 'humanity'? This is indeed an ambiguous puzzle and one which - like the identity of Number 5 - defies resolution. If Jackson's thesis is correct, such works would appear to fit into the category of the 'pure fantastic'. However, the speculative and dialectic components that form the context of these stories would seem to argue that they are undeniably sf.

Jackson's reading of fantasy is largely Freudian and psychoanalytical in approach. Unlike Jung, who took the view that fantasy was life-affirmative, healthy and necessary, Freud regarded fantasy - indeed, all human behaviour - as the expression of infantile and repressed sexual complexes and neuroses. Jung found himself instinctively at odds with Freud's unshakeable belief that sexuality was the fundament of all human experience.

> ...Freud's attitude towards the spirit seemed to me highly questionable. Wherever, in a person or in a work of art, an expression of spirituality (in the intellectual, not the supernatural sense) came to light, he suspected it, and insinuated that it was repressed sexuality. Anything that could not be directly interpreted as sexuality he referred to as 'psychosexuality.' I protested that this hypothesis, carried to its logical conclusion, would lead to an annihilating judgement upon culture.
>
> (Jung, 1993:172)

Since Jackson's view is Freudian and therefore somewhat reductive, fantasy must, for her, struggle to express or expel that which is denied or unsaid by culture, society and personality. She points to fantasy which deviates from these forms with a certain degree of denigration, stating that it evidences a 'retreat from any profound confrontation with existential dis-ease' (1981:9). Furthermore, she contends, such writing belongs to the field of the 'marvellous' rather than to the 'pure fantastic'. It adheres to an 'outworn liberal humanism', leaving 'problems of social order untouched' (155). The following chapters will, however, dispute this contention and will show that sf and fantasy writing can be as concerned with problematic aspects of existence as any other form of literature.

It seems unneccesary to quibble with Jackson's label of the 'marvellous'. Northrop Frye (1990) calls such writing 'romance' and Karl Kroeber (1988) is happy with the term 'Romantic fantasy'. What one might take issue with is, rather, her opinion that such literature has outworn its uses and that response to it is simply nostalgia. With a slight switch of emphasis it is possible to accept a less 'pathological' view of fantasy, to see it not as seeking to expel or express the mystery and chaos of existence but, rather, as seeking to *embrace* it. Those writings that Jackson brands nostalgic and sentimental - such as those of J. R. R. Tolkien and Ursula Le Guin - can then be seen as *acknowledging*,

rather than as avoiding, problems of social dis-ease.

Kroeber, for instance, maintains that fantasy seeks to 'recover otherness', rather than to cast out or exorcise the mystery. He feels that fantasy writing reacts against the expulsion of the unsayable and the unknowable, seeking to embrace rather than to expel the unspoken and the unseen.

> The fantastic is exactly what one cannot identify with, something that is not mankind as mankind knows itself. Romantic fantasy is a protest against exactly the total humanization of life....
>
> (Kroeber, 1988:3)

This suggests, then, that fantasy might be an essentially healthy and integrating response to the chaotic and irreconcilable aspects of existence. Seen in this light, fantasy implies that men and women can move towards some final state of maturation and redemption and that they are not necessarily doomed to wander blindly and endlessly within a blizzard of uncertainty and unreality.

Kroeber suggests also that, since the approach to the fantastic by way of the Freudian viewpoint seems finally unsatisfactory, it might be possible to adopt a different psychological approach. Here it would seem that a 'Jungian' approach to the processes of fantasy might well be productive. Jung himself felt that a viewpoint that sees the fantastic emanations of the psyche purely as neurotic and chaotic impulses would deny that those impulses 'contain matter charged with material of illumination and transfiguration' (Van der Post, 1983:120).

Furthermore, Jung conjectures that those fantastic motifs (which he called 'archetypes') rise spontaneously in the psyche and appear to be the product of an inherited or collective preconscious mind. Like myths, these archetypal motifs 'are original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings...' (1991f:128). He argues that all human societies - even modern societies - without such myths suffer a psychic death that is a 'moral catastrophe' (128). The contention of this study will be, in part, that the fantasy and sf dealt with in the following chapters, is a potent source of such mythic and archetypal enrichment.

Some artists have an intuitive grasp of these archetypal motifs. They are able to access them, to reach deep within their own psyches and bring them out into the visible and audible world of art, music and literature. They are able to order these otherwise chaotic and random emissions of the 'dark side of the psyche' and to place them before us in an essentially coherent form. They are able to balance, with the rigour of their artistic vision, that 'state of reduced intensity of consciousness' (Jung, 1991f:129), which occurs when the conscious mind ceases to put a check on the unconscious. A unique type of discourse then results. It is precisely this sort of writing with which this study is concerned.

This chapter will deal with the works of two very different writers who both appear to have the capacity to harness to their artistic vision those unconscious products of the 'dark hinterland of the psyche' (Jung, 1991f:128). One of these, Ursula Le Guin, came to prominence in the 1970s and has been acclaimed for both her fantasy and her sf writing. Her renowned Earthsea tetralogy (published between the years 1968 and 1990) will be discussed in some detail in this chapter, as will her novella, Threshold (1982). The other writer, Alfred Bester, produced his best writing during the 1950s and is known primarily

for two novels (The Demolished Man [1953] and (Tiger, Tiger! [1956]) and a few short stories which date from this period[3] and which have become classic examples of genre sf.[4] Le Guin's style is serenely rational, never sensational, and always rather spare in texture, while Bester's writing is passionate, fast-paced and lurid, having its roots firmly in the pulp origins of the genre. Interestingly, however, despite such fundamental differences of approach, both writers display a concern with the potential of their flawed protagonists to grow and achieve redemption. Each also uses a number of archetypal images which become central to their works, and which illuminate their sense of profound disquiet with a century in which ethics and morality appear to have become tainted by expedience, self-indulgence and lack of coherence. Each writer seems deeply aware that, despite the fact that contemporary life is marked by rapidly increasing sophistication in technological understanding of all kinds, in certain respects men and women inhabit a spiritual void.

A writer who works through a discourse of strongly archetypal symbols and imagery - of which she appears to have an instinctual grasp and which she uses with singular artistry - Ursula Le Guin is acclaimed not only for her fantasy writing, but also for her sf. And, like Jungian psychology, she seems to be most concerned with wholeness, with integration, and with reconciling opposing elements of personality. Le Guin appears firmly to believe in the possibility of finding pattern and completion, for such balance is central to her Taoist leanings. She is concerned, in short, with the attainment of maturity, with integra-

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[3] "Fondly Fahrenheit' (1958) is perhaps the most admired.

[4] Genre sf is writing in which the conventions, the tropes or the 'protocols' of sf are instantaneously recognisable, leaving the reader in no doubt that what he or she is reading is, indeed, sf. Clute and Nicholls state that genre sf is 'conspicuous for its signals that it is honouring the compact between writers and readers to respect the protocols embedded in the texts which make up the canon' (1993:483).

tion of personality, and with the possibility of human redemption.[5]

The imagery through which she chooses to express such ideas is highly symbolic; it is often archetypal in its simplicity and strength, and capable of transformation onto many levels of meaning. Le Guin's images take on relevance over and above their literal meanings and contain metaphorical significances which are implicit in the text. In this she seems to be aware of, and capable of using in an artistic manner, many of those aspects of personality that have been identified by Jung as archetypes; that is to say, those manifestations that are universally inherent in the human psyche. However, in studying these images, the suggestion is not that they are the sole pivot about which the text revolves. This would be to skew perceptions and produce a lopsided view of the work concerned. The suggestion is, rather, that they are integral to the structure of the writing, that they add depth, texture and meaning. It is these aspects of sf and fantasy writing that will be the concern of this study.

An interesting case in point is Le Guin's treatment of images in her Earthsea tetralogy. In the first book, A Wizard of Earthsea (1979), the young apprentice wizard Ged, in his youthful pride and arrogance, attempts to conjure up a spirit from the heroic past. But from the shapeless darkness which he has summoned up springs 'something like a clot of black shadow' which leaps, with hideous strength and agility, on Ged, wounding him almost mortally.

[5] It is interesting to note that Le Guin maintains - and she is a writer of the utmost integrity - that her symbols and archetypes were produced before she had ever made the acquaintance of Jung and his theories. She says, in effect, that she 'found' these images within herself. It appears that it was only later, through her reading of Jung, that he gave her a critical vocabulary with which to apprehend and discuss these images about which she has been so articulate (Susan Wood's Introduction, in Language of the Night, 1989c:28).

Thenceforth, the young wizard is shadowed by this monstrous thing. It dogs his heels and he flees from it. His continuous flight cramps his life, prevents the full and proper use of his wizardly arts. He is only half a wizard and only half a man. Eventually, in an act of final desperation, he turns and begins to pursue the hideous clot of darkness, seeking it across the oceans and islands of Earthsea. When finally he confronts it, it assumes different shapes, first the figure of his father, then the figure of the young apprentice wizard who had urged him to commit the prideful act of summoning the dead. Suddenly he realises the nature of the thing. The shadow-thing is part of his own being, part of the evil that lurks in all mankind, that shadows all acts and tempts the human soul to ignoble feelings and actions.

The fearful and evil nature of the 'clot of shadow' is made abundantly clear through Le Guin's imagery, for it is black and misshapen and hideous.

> In that light all form of man sloughed off the thing that came towards Ged. It drew together and shrank and blackened, crawling on four short taloned legs upon the sand. But still it came forward, lifting up to him a blind unformed snout without lips or ears or eyes. As they came right together it became utterly black...and it heaved itself upright. In silence, man and shadow met face to face and stopped.
>
> (A Wizard of Earthsea, 1979:164)

Significantly, as Ged recognises the shadow-thing and names it, it names him too - and the two speak, with one voice, the single word 'Ged'. As Ged acknowledges its nature he reaches, finally, adulthood. He makes himself whole, affirming the duality in his own soul, uniting the two contradictory halves of his personality, admitting to himself that he has the capacity to do evil - as do all men and women - and that his wizardly arts make him no

exception to the rules that bind common humanity.

Le Guin is suggesting, through these strong images, that this dark side of the personality, this duality, is present almost universally in mankind, and that it is prudent to recognise its existence. She suggests that the integrated personality needs to admit the existence of evil, and that in order to achieve redemption, humanity must integrate these two conflicting aspects. Ged acknowledges the unacknowledgeable: '...look, it is done. It is over.... The wound is healed,' he said, 'I am whole, I am free' (165).

Thus, Ged's flight from, and then pursuit of the shadow, is a dramatisation of the dialogue between two aspects of his own personality. And Le Guin has, with considerable artistry and intuition, integrated an important element of the Jungian credo into her vision:

> The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognising the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge.
>
> (Jung, 1991d:8)

I would suggest, then, that Jackson is misled in saying that, in Earthsea, the 'dark "other" is magically defeated' (154), for it is not so much a magical defeat as a reconciling of opposites, a moral and psychological triumph. The magic is simply a metaphor for a spiritual process, for the manner in which the personality may grapple with itself, triumph over psychological adversity and ultimately achieve wholeness or, in Jungian terms, 'self-individuation'. Who, indeed, could deny that there is something magical in the process of psychic healing, occurring as it does in places which cannot be seen, and in ways which cannot be measured in terms of cold rationality?

This theme, the duality and balance of all things, is constant in Le Guin's work. In the third section of the tetralogy, The Farthest Shore (1973), she succeeds in striking a chord that resonates with the archetypal symbolism found in myth and fairy tale. She uses images which become metaphoric projections of the psyche, or as Jung puts it 'psychological manifestations of instinct' (1991b:xiii). The presence in Le Guin's work of such oppositions, such poise and counterpoise bears a strong relationship to the concepts of Taoism. Indeed, her interest in and use of Taoist images is well documented.[6] She is concerned with the achievement of an instinctive unity with the natural world, and sees many Western values as the product of an artificially induced process which has sundered humanity from its instinctual nature. She has said:

> Our curse is alienation, the separation of yang from yin [*and the moralisation of yang as good, yin as bad*]. Instead of a search for balance and integration, there is a struggle for dominance. Divisions are insisted upon, interdependence is denied. The dualism of value that destroys us, the dualism of superior/inferior, ruler/ruled, owner/owned, user/used, might give way to what seems to me...a much healthier, sounder, more promising modality of integration and integrity. [Italics denote Le Guin's own revisions to an earlier text.]
>
> (1989b:16)

In The Farthest Shore, Le Guin's images are consequently drawn from the timeless, enduring world of nature, where balance and integration are endlessly reviewed. In this book, the now mature wizard Ged, who has come into his full power as Archmage, is accompanied by the adolescent Prince Arren as they set off on a quest to find out who or what is draining the life-force from the world. The images which Le Guin uses are unfet-

[6] 'This attitude toward action, creation, is evidently a basic one, the same root from which the interest in the *I Ching* and Taoist philosophy evident in most of my books arises' (Le Guin, 'Dreams Must Explain Themselves', 1989d:39).

tered in the sense that they are not linked to any particular epoch; they are universal and mythic in their simplicity. She describes, for instance, the sterility and aridity of a world from which the essence of life is draining in a simple, yet effective, manner. In the archetypal mode, she draws her inspiration from the natural world. Water, which is a source of life and fecundity, is the central image and Le Guin's metaphoric language here is subtly sexual, hinting at the capacity of the earth to engender and sustain life, suggesting both the uterine and the seminal fluids that signal the creation of life. In The Farthest Shore the springs run dry, the fountains no longer play and 'the lips of the springs of water draw back' (428), signalling sterility and loss.

In conjunction with these images of failing abundance, she uses images of dryness and depletion. There are numerous images of darkness, of light 'running out'. The domain of the dead, into which Arren and Ged must go, is dry, sandy, grey. The mountains and ravines which they must traverse are boulder-strewn and sharp. Le Guin's 'dark land' seems to owe something to Homer's Hades, where dwell the shadowy 'helpless ghosts of the dead' (The Odyssey:171 - 172). For Le Guin's dead, too, are grey and colourless: they are 'healed of pain and life... Quiet were their faces, freed from anger and desire and there was in their shadowed eyes no hope' (456). Arren experiences terrible thirst in this dry land, recalling T.S. Eliot's symbolic 'Waste Land', in which there is

> ... no water but only rock
> Rock and no water and the sandy road
> The road winding above among the mountains
> Which are mountains of rock without water
> If there were water we would stop and drink
>
> (ll. 330 - 335)

Le Guin uses another striking symbolic image of depletion in an incident that dramatises loss, this time the loss of creativity. Ged and Arren encounter a tribe of raft-folk, dwellers of the open sea, who celebrate the shortest night of the year with a marathon of dance and song. But during the night the chanter 'runs dry', as it were; he cannot remember the words of his chants, the music falls silent and the folk are stricken with fear at this paralysis of creativity. For the chanter cries 'There are no more songs. It is ended' (415). Le Guin suggests that, should the primeval fear of death be taken from mankind, so also will those vigorous impulses which lead to creativity. And so she shows how even the wells of artistry will run dry when the balance between natural and integrating life forces is destroyed.

Also in the archetypal mode is her use of the characters of Ged and Arren. Although her protagonists impress as living and convincing personalities, they transcend the purely human state to become symbolic entities as well. The two protagonists, together, form an almost composite personality, each symbolising certain aspects of the dichotomy which concerns Le Guin. Constant themes in her works are the reconciling of conflicting oppositions: the contrasts between light and dark, half and whole, fragmentation and completion, cowardice and courage, chaos and order.

Jung, in his essay 'The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales', has drawn attention to the various archetypes that exist in fairy tales. One of these is the image of the old man, who appears when insight and understanding are needed and who

> ...is himself this purposeful reflection and concentration of moral and physical forces that comes about spontaneously in the psychic space out

> side consciousness when conscious thought is not yet - or is no longer - possible.
>
> (1991e:87)

In The Farthest Shore it is the image of Ged that would seem to fulfil this function. Although not yet old, he is mature, seasoned by experience and knowledge in a way that young Arren is not. Throughout the quest it is his patience, and his insight into the evils of man's nature, that guide their travels (both physical and emotional) and that lead the young prince to adulthood. And finally, he teaches a harsh and fundamental lesson about acceptance of the human condition: Arren learns that it is the willingness to consent that brings grace, savour and meaning to existence. Like the archetypal figure of the old man in Jung's explication of fairy tales, Ged '...thus represents knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition...and...moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help, which make his "spiritual" character sufficiently plain' (Jung, 1991e:90).

Ged's knowledge, as befits his wizardly occupation, is often gnomic in utterance and its cryptic nature is sometimes baffling to young Arren. Ged's wisdom is not easy of access and must often be deciphered with some difficulty. He gradually leads Arren to see the essential evil of trying to evade death. Death, he demonstrates to Arren, is the corollary of life. Just as the human soul - to be capable of joy - must open itself to sorrow, so - in order to live most fully - must the soul acquiesce in the acceptance of final death. The heinous crime in The Farthest Shore is to try to beat death, to avoid it. By so doing, life itself is also avoided. Existence becomes grey, dusty, lacking in intensity and colour without the savour imparted by the knowledge of death. For Ged says, 'Only in death is there rebirth. The Balance is not a stillness. It is a movement - an eternal becoming' (423).

In equally metaphoric and poetic terms he also tells Arren:

> There is no safety. There is no end. The word must be heard in silence. There must be darkness to see the stars. The dance is always danced above the hollow place, above the terrible abyss.
>
> (The Farthest Shore:410)

And later he says, pointing both the inevitability of death and its corresponding positive aspects:

> ...I will die... you will die.
> ...
> And I prize that knowledge. It is a great gift. It is the gift of selfhood. For only that is ours which we are willing to lose. That selfhood, our torment and glory, our humanity, does not endure. It changes and it goes, a wave on the sea.
>
> (The Farthest Shore:410)

Arren, too, symbolically comes to embody the hero-image that Jung identifies as one of the autonomous projections of which the human psyche is capable. He is a living creature of flesh and blood and he evokes in the reader a strong sense of reality and empathy. But, because Le Guin works in strongly metaphorical terms, he becomes something over and above the young Prince of Enlad. Jung states that 'One of the essential features of the child motif is its futurity. The child is potential future' (1991f:138).

And in his growth from blind devotion to Ged, through his seduction by the evil dream of death's banishment, his subsequent disillusionment with his hero, and then his final realisation of both Ged's powers as a wizard and of his limitations as a human being, Arren moves towards adulthood. He learns the great lesson that Ged teaches, that the traitor lies within each human heart. It is our own voice that we hear as we give shape to fear and

desire. As the wizard points out, the good man is not one who knows no evil but the man who senses the darkness within his own soul and resists it with all his strength. Ged demonstrates something which even the ancient Greeks knew: that it is only by consenting fully to the irony of the human condition that humans may overcome their own frailty and helplessness. This is the hard way to spiritual freedom, to human redemption.

There are further archetypal patterns evident in The Farthest Shore that are revealed by close examination of the text. Jung (1991c:37) has drawn attention to the fact that the figure of Christ ' ...*exemplifies the archetype of the self*. He represents a totality of a divine or heavenly kind, a glorified man...' [italics in text]. If Christ represents the man who has achieved what Jung calls 'individuation', that is to say, complete realisation of the self as a whole or totality, then it is perhaps not too fanciful to see Ged as a type of Christ-figure. Certainly, the terms in which young Arren worships him and swears allegiance to him suggest the fervour of an acolyte. But there are other resonances with the Christian monomyth, though Le Guin herself might be startled to think so.

The trials and deflections that Ged and Arren are subjected to (the slavery of Arren, the wounding of Ged), suggest those trials and deflections of purpose, so carefully anatomised by Joseph Campbell in his comprehensive study of mythic patterns, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1975), that the hero must undergo on his way to redemption. There is Arren's dream of the 'tall lord of the shadows' who stands beckoning and holding 'a tiny flame no larger than a pearl...offering life' (351). This seems to be a subtle perversion of the figure of Christ, who holds the light of the world in his hand and who asks to be

followed to eternal life.[7] This 'lord of the shadows' appears, then, to be the counterbalance to Ged's somewhat more than human figure, a sort of Luciferian antagonist. Jung says:

> If we see the traditional figure of Christ as a parallel to the psychic manifestation of the self, then the Antichrist would correspond to the shadow of the self, namely the dark half of the human totality....
>
> (1991c:42)

Throughout The Farthest Shore, Le Guin has thus used images that are familiar and instantly recognisable. Yet, because of the freshness of her writing these images do not pall. She has used the archetypes with such vigour and intuitive skill that her vision is striking for its relevance and unfaltering clarity. She has, indeed, told the 'true lie'.

Le Guin, seventeen years after the Farthest Shore, produced a postscript to the Earthsea series in Tehanu (1990), a book that is unusual for its autumnal, even sour, mood. Here Le Guin has taken up and developed further the history of Tenar, the female protagonist who was central to The Tombs of Atuan (1979), the second book in the series. In this story, the wizard Ged, mature and at the height of his powers as Archmage, releases the young priestess Tenar from bondage to a decayed and sterile religion. He returns her to the world of normality, giving her back her identity, and together they destroy the ancient and evil power of the Tombs. The book again gives expression to Le Guin's perception of life as an endless balancing act, where male and female, dark and light, ignorance and wisdom, life and death are forever linked.

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[7] The image has a subtle visual resonance also, for it seems to echo the well-known painting called 'The Light of the World' by Victorian artist William Holman Hunt - an allegorical representation of Christ standing on the threshold of the human soul, knocking to be let in.

But, in Tehanu, the bright heroics of the earlier books are gone, as though Le Guin has felt a need for balance on an even larger scale. For the writer now deconstructs, almost, the powerful mythic presence of Ged. The wizard, in this final book, is much diminished, much reduced in stature. He has returned from the Dark Land victorious in one sense and yet, as though to balance that victory, he is also traumatised, scarred by the loss of his power and his art. He is reduced, in short, to a state of mere humanity.

Campbell states that the 'hero is the man of self-achieved submission' (1975:22), and Ged has submitted himself to the supreme test, so that his life and reason falter. Now his final battle must begin.

> ...the first work of the hero is to retreat from the world scene of secondary effects to those causal zones of the psyche where the difficulties really reside and there to clarify the difficulties, eradicate them in his own case (i.e. give battle to the nursery demons of his local culture) and break through to the undistorted, direct experience and assimilation of what C. G. Jung has called 'the archetypal images'.
>
> (Campbell, 1975:23)

Ged has made a supreme sacrifice, offering up his powers in order to redeem humanity. He now must find the strength to come to terms with this great loss in order to redeem himself. For he has lost part of his very being, and must start all over again to remake himself, to find meaning for himself in life. He must learn to find a new place in the world, he must learn to do battle with his particular 'nursery demons' and come to final terms with the dark places of his psyche.

Ged's passage to self-acceptance is agonising and he achieves it finally with the help of the

woman, Tenar. Le Guin seems to be suggesting that the battle is never over, that it has continually to be refought. She seems also to be saying that age and maturity may bring a new stage of consciousness into being, but that at each stage of life the 'demons' have to be conquered anew. The passage across each new emotional threshold is, like birth, neither painless nor safe. Every transition is a crisis. Tenar, who seems to embody the feminine principle here, helps Ged towards a re-affirmation of life, so that he may redeem what could be merely the emptiness of old age. Le Guin is, perhaps, here giving expression to the effect that the feminist movement has had on the evolution of her ideas, for in Tehanu it is the female characters who become central to the action.

Tenar, now matured by her years as wife, mother and manager of her own estate, serves, it could be argued, as Ged's anima figure. Jung has proposed that the male personality has, as an essential component, an archetypal feminine aspect which he called the 'anima'. Correspondingly, the female personality has a male aspect which he called the 'animus'. Each functions as a kind of psychopomp, 'a mediator between the conscious and the unconscious' (Jung, 1991:16), containing both negative and positive qualities. Tenar seems to embody those aspects of Ged's personality which aid him in this final stage of his emotional evolution. He calls Tenar 'life-giver' and, with her beside him, he reaches the realisation that he may still have an existence, a meaningful place for himself. It is, it is true, a much smaller place than that to which he has hitherto been accustomed; he must learn to take his satisfactions smaller. But he learns that there are still triumphs to be found in the rôle of a mere man.

Le Guin seems to have felt a need to counterbalance the triumphs of the earlier books with a bleaker, perhaps a more realistic vision. Her Taoist leanings are again in evidence, for

she is saying, once more, that in death there is life, in loss there is gain. She is also, perhaps, saying that the masculine aspects of life must be balanced by the female aspects, here embodied by Tenar. Tehanu is a call to sobriety. The grandeur is gone. Age follows youth and even small things may, in time, balance great things. Despite the sense of grimness and austerity in her vision, there is also a stern consolation, for Le Guin seems to be echoing one of Jung's beliefs about the meaning and purpose of the ageing process. Jung - perhaps because he himself was fortunate enough to remain intellectually and physically vigorous until late in life - was convinced that old age is a culmination of the movement towards full potentiality. In this process, of prime importance is an acceptance of the finite quality of human life.

> While Jung did not deny the element of decline in old age, he nevertheless insisted that the goal of this time of life was not senility but wisdom. Nor was he entirely alone in this view. His opinion was shared by one other eminent developmental psychologist of this century, Erik Erikson. According to Erikson, old age is a time when the individual is torn between the opposites of ego-integrity and despair: wisdom depends on the successful resolution of this conflict.
>
> (Stevens, 1991: 225)

This sense of balance and counter-balance is evident in Le Guin's novella Threshold (1982),[8] where she offers us a more intimate and personal vision of human redemption. Here the imagery and the symbols of opposition and integration are so closely entertwined with the events of the story that the two come almost to seem one and the same thing. For Threshold is an extremely artful interaction of the real world and the fantastic. Yet each resonates more fully because of the existence of the other, constantly deepening the

[8] Published in America by Victor Gollancz as The Beginning Place.

layers of meaning and symbolism.

In Threshold the everyday world - the world of clattering commerce, grime and impersonality - is juxtaposed with the distant vision of the mysteriously seductive 'twilight world'. Le Guin's young protagonist Hugh dwells in an excessively ugly world of cheap commodities, noise and repetitive meaningless tasks, where even his own persona is uncertain. 'They called him Rodge, except Donna, who called him Buck' (7). Nobody truly talks to him or listens to him. Even his mother - herself disturbed and rootless - has no contact with his sense of isolation.

This alienation is, in just the first few pages, successfully conveyed. Hugh has a feeling of heaviness, a sense that he is some large elephantine animal, mindlessly shovelling food into its own trunk. 'He was always hungry. He was never exactly hungry, but always wanting something to eat' (10). Both in the metaphorical and the physical, senses, his daily world dulls all appetite. It is unredeemed by anything bright, desirable or lovely.

When his desperation is almost beyond bearing, Hugh finds his 'vision', the 'twilight place'. He is a product of cities but he experiences a profound sense of recognition that is both 'strange and familiar' (11), 'what his mind had no words for his body understood entirely and with ease' (12). This place is the still centre in the whirling currents of Hugh's life. Its meaning is immediately apparent: it symbolises a healing, and symbolises too a generalised human need for something instinctual and natural. It is that for which we hunger, perhaps no longer knowing what it is that we want; what we miss without consciously realizing the lack.

The place that Hugh finds is, quite literally, a threshold, for it bridges, symbolically, the borders between the unconscious mind and the world of conscious thought. In fantasy literature of all types, this boundary takes various forms. It may be a doorway, a cave, a mountain range or a river. In C. S. Lewis's renowned 1950s Narnia series, it takes the form of a wardrobe. In Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) it is a rabbit hole down which Alice falls to encounter the Cheshire Cat and the Mad Hatter. Later, in Through the Looking Glass (1871), the transforming device becomes a mirror. The crossing of the boundary is the important symbolic step. For Hugh it will signal a movement forward into a realm of infinite possibility, for, as Campbell puts it, '...the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth' (1975:79). Fittingly, Hugh finds it at twilight, because this undefined and enigmatic time symbolizes also the twilight areas of the human soul, those buried, mysterious regions which we lose all too easily and which are so difficult to locate. Paradoxically, too, we must first register a sense of loss before we can find our hidden places. Hugh will need to travel through this dimly-lit psychic zone in order to emerge whole on the other side.

When Le Guin introduces the girl, Irena, the reader is as shocked at this intrusion of the real world as is Hugh. The reader has felt, together with Hugh, that this place is for him alone. But immediately it is clear that the girl, too, is troubled and that this place is for her, also, a place of healing and safety. Her frustration and her need are immediately apparent, and her sense of the ugliness of intrusion is as strong as Hugh's. Interestingly, she sees Hugh much as he sees himself: lumpy, large, graceless. To her he is 'garbage', a 'dog turd' (35).

Le Guin takes these two young people on a psychic journey towards growth, the accep-

tance of reality and redemption. At first the journey is merely physical, towards the idyllic little mountain town called Tembreabrezi. But soon the writer introduces an entire set of oppositions that dramatises the emotional evolution of both protagonists.

The writer suggests that the steady flow of life in this miraculous place is threatened. Somehow Hugh's arrival coincides with and intensifies the threat. For Hugh, when he appears, is a harbinger of change and Irena knows uncertainty, even fear, for the first time in the 'ain country', her heart's home. Mysteriously, this once safe and peaceful place has become isolated - a symbol perhaps of the way that both Hugh and Irene are isolated in the 'real' world. No departure from it is possible, no arrival to it. In Mountain Town, the welcoming place to which Hugh and Irena have found their way, the people are stricken by fear and cannot venture even to the periphery of the town. Their sheep cannot graze on the outskirts of the town. Traders no longer approach. As Irena becomes aware of the isolation and the fear, her own world intrudes in the form of thoughts of her mother. The reader understands that this could never have happened before the fear, that previously the streams of the two worlds would never have been allowed to meet. This signals the first tentative step towards self-realisation. And now Le Guin begins suddenly to use Irena's everyday name, Irene, as the ordinary world begins to meet the Evening Place.

Hugh and Irene are now appointed by the townsfolk to seek out and subdue whatever it is that generates the fear. They set off on an archetypal quest - one where the outcome is unsure and where they are not even certain about what it is that they have to do. At one level of meaning, they must find the source of this nameless terror, whose nature and whereabouts are a mystery to them. In truth, they are in search of themselves, but this rite of initiation is cloaked in mystery to them. They know only that they seek whatever it is

that terrifies the townsfolk and that - judging by the sword that has been given to Hugh - whatever it is that they seek is dangerous and very real.

The whole book, each event, has been directed towards this final, truer meeting in front of the Dragon's cave. But like all steps to maturity, the way is harsh, obscured by uncomprehension, non-realization, symbolic blindness. For both Hugh and Irene yearn, simultanously, for what is attainable and yet unattainable. The unattainable is the unreality, the static, unchanging peace of the twilight world where all desire is extinguished, where all difficulties are made simple. The attainable is what they want from the real world, their own world. For each of them it is the recognition of himself or herself as an entity, a unity, a whole person. Although they are not yet capable of awareness, their distorted lives can be redeemed only by recognition of what it is that they truly want.

This recognition, however, is not easily achieved. The steep and winding path up which they must labour symbolises the difficulty of reaching self-awareness. Jung has pointed out that the image of the mountain is an archetypal and constantly recurring mythic image, with the final destination being the realisation of self. 'The mountain stands for the goal of the pilgrimage and ascent, hence it often has the psychological meaning of the self' (Jung, 1991b:87). This rite of passage, archetypal as it is, is beset by difficulties. The Dragon, here, symbolises in part the unknown, and it also symbolises that which we fear within ourselves, yet perhaps never acknowledge. It is, in a sense, akin to Ged's shadowy 'other'. The winding path that leads to the Dragon seems to suggest those circuitous and labyrinthine routes we take through life, often evading, seldom going straight forward, twisting and turning to avoid the demands of the subconscious mind. And interesting too is the suggestion that the Dragon lives in a lair, a hidden and sinister place that symbolises

the mysterious areas of the human heart and mind - which Campbell has graphically labelled the 'causal zones of the psyche' (1975:23). For Joseph L. Henderson the battle with the mythic dragon

> shows clearly the archetypal theme of the ego's triumph over regressive trends. For most people the dark or negative side of the personality remains unconscious. The hero, on the contrary, must realize that the shadow exists and that he can draw strength from it. He must come to terms with its destructive powers if he is to become sufficiently terrible to overcome the dragon. I.e., before the ego can triumph, it must master and assimilate the shadow.
>
> (in Jung, 1978:112)

Thus, once set on the path, neither Hugh nor Irene can evade the Dragon, no matter how they try. They are drawn inexorably onwards, despite their attempts to abandon the quest. And when they finally confront the cave Hugh realises that 'he had been coming here all his life and had never left it in the beginning' (150). Finally, for both of them, the crisis has arrived: they feel compelled to push the meeting with this monstrous thing to its conclusion. For each, now, there is no alternative. It is, symbolically, a moment of self-confrontation. When they finally face the horror, the ghastly thing is never very clearly defined. Le Guin tells us that it is white and wrinkled and that it drags its bulk 'painfully and with terrible quickness, round mouth open in the hissing howl of hunger and insatiable pain, and blind' (142).

This frightening image metaphorises the pain, the blindness and the helplessness in the lives of Hugh and Irene. The slaying of the dragon is an unavoidable necessity for each of these young people. Hugh, in this moment of symbolic confrontation, faces for the first time, 'the face that was no face', the 'huge voice, the gobbling howl' - all metaphors for

the nightmare of his own existence.

Campbell points out that

> The motif of the difficult task as a prerequisite to the bridal bed has spun the hero-deeds of all time and all the world. In the stories of this pattern the parent is in the rôle of Holdfast: the hero's artful solution of the task amounts to a slaying of the dragon.
>
> (1975:290)

Anthony Stevens (1991), in his explication of Jung's concept of the adolescent archetypal pattern, refers to the possibility of being 'psychically devoured by the parental complexes' and of being 'incapable of breaking free'. He also draws attention to the universality of 'the ubiquitous mythical motif of the devouring monster that has to be slain if the hero is to win a damsel and inherit a kingdom' (119). Similarly, Bruno Bettelheim, in The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales, indicates that this pattern is constantly present in fairy tale as well. Here, '...the unlikely hero proves himself through slaying dragons, solving riddles, and living by his wits and goodness until eventually he frees the beautiful princess, marries her, and lives happily ever after' (Bettelheim, 1991:111). And, indeed, Hugh and Irene must free themselves from the stifling circumstances of their private and everyday lives in order to inherit their own personal kingdom of the adult psyche.

Le Guin's balancing of the 'real' and the 'unreal' is masterful, as is her handling of her images of balance and counterbalance. Within the larger patterns of the story, smaller contrapuntal patterns and oppositions are discernible that constantly throw the main motifs into relief. Hugh and Irene are balanced opposite each other in mutual antagonism, for

instance - Hugh fair, Irene dark. In Mountain Town, Hugh becomes smitten by the unattainable blonde daughter of the Lord, while Irene feels an intense attraction for the equally unreachable and saturnine Master Sark. Hugh and Irene's growing realization of each other is very moving, however, as they set out together to save Mountain Town. Irene slowly grows aware of Hugh's beauty, his gentleness and integrity. Hugh gradually learns to appreciate Irene's courage, her intelligence and her womanliness. But significantly, their sexual union takes place only after the slaying of the dragon in which, tellingly, they both participate.

Equally tellingly, they both suddenly need to return home, to the 'real' world. Initially, Irene mourns the fact that she will never be able to return to the idyllic twilight world, the womblike protection of what Frye calls the 'pre-genital period of youth (1976:53):

> ...I can't go back. I have to go on. It was my home, the light in the window, the fire on the hearth. I was a child there, I was the daughter, but it's gone...there is no home behind me.
>
> (155)

But, as they journey back into the real world, they begin to 'see' each other for the first time, to find beauty and comfort and strength. Both begin to crave the mutability of the real world, the sunlight, the shifting things that had defeated them in the past. They finally know where home is. Hugh says 'Home's that country...not this one' (171). In this final realisation of precisely where home lies, Hugh and Irene fulfill the archetypal movement toward adulthood. This movement of return is the final challenge of the quest pattern. The hero who fails this ultimate test has evaded responsibility.

> When the hero-quest has been accomplished, through the penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer must still return with his life-transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labour of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity....
>
> (Campbell, 1975:170)

Jung's belief was that the psyche inherently contains self-healing and recreative faculties, and that the human organism, just as it instinctively seeks physical health, will also strive towards psychic well-being, wholeness or 'individuation'. He felt, in fact, that this integrative function was the primary aim and purpose of life.

> The Self, therefore, possesses a *teleological* function, in that it has the innate characteristic of seeking its own fulfillment in life....
>
> The goal of the Self is wholeness. Jung called this lifelong process the quest for *individuation*, and individuation is the *raison d'etre* of the Self: its inherent purpose is the attainment of the fullest possible Self-realization in the psyche and in the world [Italics in text].
>
> (Stevens, 1991:41)

Le Guin has, in Threshold, used richly symbolic and archetypal means to dramatise this movement towards completion. Clearly, she tells us, the balance for which we strive is attained at high cost and not without struggle, and it is through the reconciling of often apparently antagonistic elements that maturity or self-realisation or self-redemption is attained. Her two young protagonists become, in a sense, Everyman and Everywoman, achieving a kind of generalised mythic significance along with the very particular significances of their own story. Le Guin's skill and artistic integrity is such that she can give such age-old symbols a new dimensionality. Hugh and Irene are genuine inhabitants of the

twentieth century world, a world of consumerism, suburbia, commodities, transient relationships. Yet Le Guin transports them into a world of mythic symbols and images that are purely of the imagination - and does so without destroying the probity of her protaganists, their 'rounded' human qualities.

In Le Guin's work, in fact, the mythic patterns are used with such apparant naturalness that it becomes impossible to say whether they have been used with deliberate artfulness or whether they are the instinctual manifestations of those psychological patterns that Jung identified as archetypes. Whatever the process by which she has reached her ends, all is achieved with great economy of event and language. Because she does not strain for effect, the simplicity and clarity of her writing belie the depth of meaning.

Writers of fantasy often use a highly ornamented and baroque style in order to heighten the sense of the fantastic and the exotic. Le Guin, perhaps because her fantasy worlds are, to some extent, sparer, more timeless than those of many other writers, manages to transport the reader with relative ease and without recourse to such linguistic devices. A short extract from Threshold will serve to demonstrate the unforced economy and gentle rhythms of her style:

> The road swung in a long rising curve, on and on. The slopes to the right below it steepened and began to drop away so sharply that the trees below the road no longer blocked his view. He could for the first time in this land see for a long way. He saw he was on the side of a mountain. To his right and ahead, beyond a falling sweep of treetops, the rim of a further mountain stood dark against the clarity of the sky. He walked on between the vast, obscure valleys and the vast gulfs of the sky. He looked along the road as it turned again, and saw nestled against the mountain shoulder

> the roofs and chimneys of a town, the gleam of a lighted window in the cold dusk. There was home, and he walked towards it, and came down the street between the lamp-lit windows, hearing a child's voice calling words he did not understand.
>
> (69)

Le Guin is, in fact, never plainer than when her world is most fantastic. Here the smooth, unhurried lines of her sentences reflect the rhythm of Hugh's journey as he trudges steadily onwards. The language used is sober, matter-of-fact, so that the fantastic aspects of the little town that Hugh finally enters are accepted without surprise or fuss. And the slight incantatory aspects of her prose (the repetition of 'vast' in 'the vast obscure valleys and the vast gulfs of the sky') never quite dissolve into irritating mannerism. This rhythmic quality is felt, too, in the last sentence with the 'ands' adding a cumulative effect, so that there is an inevitability, a sense of homecoming about Hugh's arrival in Tembreabrezi. The style is one that never calls attention to itself, but which says what it has to say with understated directness and simplicity.

Le Guin's concerns are those that are traditionally seen as occupying a central rôle in fantasy; that is to say, she is concerned with the development or growth of personality, usually within an ethical framework. Detractors of sf, on the other hand, often find that this 'inner' world is not the province of sf, and point to the resulting lack of depth of character and motivation as defects of the genre. While this is undoubtedly true of a great deal of sf (as it is indeed true of much that is produced in the field of fantasy - and in most spheres of popular fiction, for that matter), it is certainly not true of all. There are numerous examples that belie this accusation.

An interesting case in point is the writing of Alfred Bester, who exhibits many anomalies within the sf field. Bester is associated with an earlier, somewhat more simplistic period in the history of the genre. His two best-known novels date back to the 1950s: The Demolished Man was published in 1953 and Tiger! Tiger! came out in 1956.[9] Peter Nicholls rates these two works - justifiably in my opinion - 'among the few genuine classics of genre sf' (1979:113).

During this period and the earlier so-called Golden Age of science fiction (1938 - 1946), the audience at which sf was traditionally aimed was a young male readership. The popular appetite for sf and fantasy was initially fed and moulded by the so-called pulp magazines.[10] These specialised in stories which were, for the most part, rapidly written and stylistically unpolished, and which were packed with either adventure or technological gimmickry. As a result, the genre shied away from complex characterisation and linguistic subtleties. Working within this tradition, Bester produced more rigorous writing that demonstrates qualities that look forward to a later, more demanding, period. His writing displays a greater technical and emotional freedom than does that of most sf writers of the period, perhaps because the years he spent living in Europe exposed him to wider literary influences.

Stylistically, although his writing is deeply rooted in the sf genre tradition, Bester's prose is in direct contrast to the seamless prose of Le Guin. Roughhewn, energetic, virile, filled with intensity and panache, the coolly reportorial style associated with the genre is no-

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[9] Tiger, Tiger! was published in America as The Stars My Destination.

[10] Pulp magazines, of which *The Argosy* was amongst the first, began to appear towards the end of the 1800s. They were printed on coarse and highly absorbent wood-pulp paper, the page edges were ragged and the covers were crudely coloured with coal-tar based inks. These forerunners of today's paperback industry made reading material available to a wider readership than ever before.

where present in these two novels. Bester's style is almost manically exuberant, with great flair and 'edge'. It also has a visual quality that is absent from much sf. Undoubtedly, the years he spent writing dialogue and plotting action for the comic book industry is responsible for the sharply, often luridly, imagined pictures that he draws.

> The pawnshop was in darkness. A single lamp burned on the counter, sending out its sphere of soft light. As the three men spoke, they leaned in and out of the illumination, their faces and gesticulating hands suddenly appearing and disappearing in staccato eclipses.
>
> (The Demolished Man, 1953:102)

And here is the Chapter One opening of Tiger! Tiger!

> He was one hundred and seventy days dying and not yet dead. He fought for survival with the passion of a beast in a trap. He was delirious and rotting, but occasionally his primitive mind emerged from the burning nightmare of survival into something resembling sanity. Then he lifted his mute face to Eternity and muttered: 'What's a matter, me? Help, you Heels. Help, is all.'
>
> Blasphemy came easily to him; it was half his speech, all his life. He had been raised in the gutter school of the twenty-fourth century and spoke nothing but the gutter tongue. Of all the brutes in the world he was least valuable alive and most likely to live. So he struggled to survive and prayed in blasphemy; but occasionally his ravelling mind leaped backward years to his childhood and remembered a nursery jingle:
>
> Gully Foyle is my name
> And Terra is my nation
> Deep space is my dwelling place
> And death's my destination.
>
> (Tiger, Tiger!, 1991:17)

The restless energy of the writing points ahead to the 1980s and 1990s, during which the sub-genre cyberpunk science fiction surfaced.[11] But in its treatment of the themes of human betrayal, individual growth and redemption, Bester's writing anticipates the concern with 'inner space' that is more usually associated with fantasy or with the New Wave of the 1960s and 1970s. For, in both novels, Bester succeeds in employing potent and terrifying symbols of the inner 'shadow' that defaces personality and that must be confronted and overcome in order for the protagonist to become an integrated personality.

In his earlier novel, The Demolished Man, Bester tells the story of an obsessed and powerful magnate, Ben Reich, who is driven by internal pressures to commit murder, an obsolete crime in the twenty-fourth century of the book's setting. Thereafter, he is pursued relentlessly by policeman Lincoln Powell, a telepath or 'peeper', who dedicates himself with single-minded purpose to proving Reich's guilt and bringing him to Demolition, a process by which the psyche is erased and then painfully rebuilt so that the subject can begin to lead an ethically sound life.

Unusual in sf during the period in which Bester was writing, is the relationship that he draws between Powell and Reich. The novel is essentially a detective story. But though Powell is obsessed with 'nailing' Reich and with leading him to final Demolition, the relationship goes beyond simple enmity, for Powell is aware of Reich's strength, his charm, his vast energies, and of his enormous sense of purpose and vision - all now sub-

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[11] A relatively new manifestation within the sf field, cyberpunk is a sub-genre that places emphasis on the existence of 'cyberspace' as a reality which humans can enter through 'interfacing' with advanced technology. However, it is the style of cyberpunk writing which is equally striking. It is fast-paced, visceral and brilliant, with an attractive surface glitter that overlies the urban seediness and lack of emotion or morality at its core. The definitive cyberpunk novel is, perhaps, William Gibson's Neuromancer (1986).

verted by his hatred of the rival whom he is driven to murder. Powell says:

> These men appear every so often...links between the past and the future. If they are permitted to mature...If the link is permitted to weld...The world finds itself chained to a dreadful tomorrow [Ellipses in text].
>
> (The Demolished Man:169)

Powell, seeing Reich's potential, pities him and struggles to ready him for Demolition, the 'slow, backward death'. Finally, Reich is forced by Powell to confront the terrible figure that has been distorting his dreams, the Man With No Face, 'the tall, ominous, familiar figure...looking, looming, silent, horrible'.

This haunting and terrifying figure is a symbol of Reich's suppressed knowledge of his own motive for revenge on his elderly rival, D'Courtney. In truth, what he cannot face, what the Man With No Face symbolises, is the shadow of his own patricidal desires and his suppressed horror at precisely this desire. Powell, with the telepathic aid of his entire Guild, initiates a genuinely appalling sequence of illusions in Reich's mind that deprives him slowly of his sense of reality, of his entire basis for rationality. This forces Reich to confront the Man With No Face, that is to say, the hidden aspects of his own psyche. He learns, finally, that the nightmare figure which he evades with such manic energy is partially the figure of the father that he hates and fears, and partially himself. It is only when he has been brought to this point that he is ripe for Demolition - the erasure of his personality and its subsequent slow and painful reconstruction.

It is a tribute to Bester's ability to create a certain complexity of character that he produces, at the end of the book, one of the few truly moving moments in genre sf. In the

closing scene of The Demolished Man, the psychically-shattered remnant that is Ben Reich appears, in a state of partial Demolition.

> A naked thing appeared on the stone wall, gibbering, screaming, twitching. It toppled over the edge and crashed down through the flower beds until it landed on the lawn, crying and jerking as though a steady stream of voltage was pouring through its nervous system. It was Ben Reich, almost unrecognizable, partway through Demolition.
>
> (173 - 174)

The two men come face to face, the 'peeper' detective who has brought Reich to this point, and his shattered victim - and a moment of genuine emotional transcendence occurs.

> Out of the chaos in Reich came an explosive fragment:
> '*Powell-peeper-Powell-friend-Powell-friend...*'
>
> (175)

Although Nicholls comments on the 'cynical' quality and the 'ironic scepticism' in Bester's work (in The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, 1993:113), what is more striking is the fervent desire for a sense of brotherhood amongst men and women, and the evident yearning for humanity to transcend its spiritual deformities and reach a state of compassionate maturity. The Demolished Man ends with Powell's exultant and passionate telepathic prayer:

> '*Listen*' he cried in exaltation. '*Listen, normals! You must learn what it is. You must learn how it is. You must tear the barriers down. You must tear the veils away. We see the truth you cannot see...That there is nothing in man but love and faith, courage and kindness, generosity and*

> *sacrifice. All else is only the barrier of your blindness. One day we'll all be mind to mind and heart to heart...*' [Ellipses in text]. [12]
>
> (175)

As in The Demolished Man, Tiger! Tiger! (1991) is organised around key motifs that dominate the novel and take on symbolic complexity. These two images are already present within the first lines that introduce the protagonist Gully Foyle to the reader. These are the 'beast' motif and the 'burning' motif. (See the quotation from Tiger! Tiger!, p. 81 of this study.)

In its essentials, the story is simple, what Nicholls (1979:69) calls 'the sf equivalent of the Jacobean revenge drama'. The story is set in the twenty-fourth century, when the human race has learned a new discipline, 'jaunting'. By a concentration of mental powers well within the reach of the average citizen, people are able to move instantaneously from one point on the planet's surface to another, an ability that has transformed society radically. No one has, however, yet learned to 'space-jaunte'. As the story begins, Bester's protaganist, Gully Foyle, has been left for dead, drifting helplessly in the ruins of the wrecked spaceship, *Nomad*. When another ship, the *Vorga*, appears and then deliberately passes him by, abandoning him to a hideous fate, his dull acceptance is transformed into an all-consuming passion for revenge. Hatred takes control of him. In his gutter argot, he dedicates himself to vengeance.

> 'You leave me rot like a dog. You leave me die...I find you, *Vorga*. I pay you back, me. I rot you. I kill you, *Vorga*. I kill you deadly.'
>
> (25)

[12] Bester uses italics to indicate telepathic speech or thought.

Foyle and *Nomad* are captured by the Scientific People, a pathetic, centuries-old remnant of civilization that inhabits an asteroid that is an accumulation of derelict ships and artefacts. The Scientific People's culture is a debased version of scraps of scientific knowledge, the rag-ends of barely-remembered formulæ and procedures. They induct him into their tribe, force him into a 'marriage' with one of their women, and mark his face hideously as a sign of initiation. Across his forehead is emblazoned the word 'Nomad', while the rest of his face is tattooed with a horrifyingly bestial mask of swirls and whorls. Escaping, Gully Foyle sets off on a rampage of rape, betrayal, theft and murder in pursuit of his ultimate aim, to revenge himself on the *Vorga*. In his heart is no room for compassion, no shred of conscience. There is place only for his single-minded passion, which he cannot control. Gully Foyle becomes a 'tiger', a predatory beast that preys alike on the helpless, the innocent and the not-so innocent. He stalks the decaying jungle of the twenty-fourth century.

In giving his protagonist, quite literally, the face of a beast, Bester has given potent - if not subtle - expression to an archetypal image of great power. Aniela Jaffé, discussing the important and ubiquitous nature of animal symbolism in the visual arts, says

> The animal motif is usually symbolic of man's primitive and instinctual nature. Even civilized men must realize the violence of their instinctual drives and their powerlessness in the face of the autonomous emotions erupting from the unconscious.
>
> (in Jung, 1978:264)

Of all the great feline predators, the tiger is most closely associated with ferocity, fearlessness and demonic energy. In Indian mythology, for instance, the god Siva, when in his destructive aspect, wears a tiger skin. And William Blake's 1794 poem 'The Tyger'

(1973) has furnished the literate 20th century Western mind not only with a metaphoric image of the dreadful powers of the creative force, but a compelling picture of the terrible beauty and energy of the creature also. Bester thus leaves his readers in no doubt that the beast lurking within Gully Foyle's soul is one that smoulders with rage and desire for vengeance. In thus stigmatising Gully Foyle with the hideous tattoo, the metaphorical beast hidden within his psyche has been given a graphic external aspect.[13] Bester not only symbolically, but literally also, sets his protagonist visibly apart from the rest of mankind.

Here, as in Le Guin's Threshold, the writer takes his central character on a journey that will lead to personal integration and wholeness. Gully Foyle is slowly redeemed as he moves towards a realisation of his own criminality and culpability. Initially, he is forced to learn to harness his raging emotions. His tattoos are surgically removed, but the process leaves scars beneath the surface of his skin, and these flare into livid colour at the slightest loss of emotional control, marking him with the sign of the beast. So, while he is superficially 'normal', the scars still remain as an ever-present stigma that forces him to learn to master his rage and hatred. In controlling first his rage, and then the violence of his other emotions, Gully Foyle has begun the process of growth toward maturity. Jaffé points out that the animal within man 'is never so wild and dangerous as when it is wounded' and that 'civilized man must heal the animal in himself' (1978:266). Such psychic processes were, during the 1950s and 1960s, rarely delineated in sf. While here the archetypal inner journey is drawn in bold and slashing strokes - what Brian Aldiss (1986:235) has called 'Wide Screen Baroque' - it is nevertheless an essential part of the 'vengeful history of Gulliver Foyle' (Tiger, Tiger!:13).

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[13] The idea of the 'beast within' is not always entirely negative. Chapter Five will explore the symbolism of the beast in greater detail.

The second dominant motif of the novel is the image of the 'burning man', which begins to appear midway through the novel at climactic moments, whenever Foyle commits one of his crimes.

> A flaming figure loomed on the beach, a huge man with burning clothes and a hideously tattooed face. It was himself.
>
> (165)

The burning man is a fearsome, demonic apparition that has genuine power to arouse wonder and fear in the reader. This ominous image is, in fact, the 'space-jaunting' figure of Gully Foyle, trapped in the burning ruins of St Patrick's Cathedral, New York, as he flickers in and out of the space-time continuum. The agony of his burning flesh forces him to make the jump that has been denied to mankind until this point: his desperate attempts to escape his agony of mind and body force him out into space and time. He space-jauntes, carrying his burning flesh and clothing with him into other places and other times.

Bester, who is never subtle (as is Le Guin, for example, in her treatment of symbol and image), allows one of his characters to make the connection for the reader. At the second appearance of the burning man she says 'It was Gully Foyle, burning in hell' (166). For Western readers, familiar as they are with the Judeo-Christian ethos, the imagery is powerfully resonant and calls up automatic symbolic associations. In both Christian and Judaic iconography, it is the eternal fires of hell that await the sinful. Gully Foyle's physical agony symbolises therefore, not only his mental torment, but suggests also his damning moral degradation. Intensifying the potency of this image is the fact that fire is also

associated with rites of cleansing and of purification.[14] Finally, Foyle's conscience and his disgust at both himself and at humanity is so intense that he struggles to purge himself, to pay a penalty for his crimes and to redeem himself: 'I want to be purged,' he said in a suffocated voice.... 'I want to pay for what I've done, and settle the account. I want to get rid of this damnable cross I'm carrying...' (272). He has found revulsion for himself and compassion for others and so has moved closer to personal redemption.

Bester has thus created, through the archetypal symbolism of hell and purification, another potent metaphor. The fire becomes an initiatory ordeal, a cleansing medium for the soul of Gully Foyle. The image of the burning man expresses both his physical and his moral agony. He knows finally that he is a monster, a beast of prey, a 'tiger', and he knows, too, that the rest of mankind is much the same. He also knows that if he can learn to master the beast within, so can the rest of humanity. In a climactic scene, he reverts to his pungent gutter tongue, speaking to the common man:

> 'You pigs, you. You rot like pigs, is all. You got the most in you and you use the least. You hear me, you? Got a million in you and spend pennies. Got a genius in you and think crazies. Got a heart in you and feel empties. All of you. Every you...'
>
> (279)

The final scene of Tiger! Tiger! is suggestive. Foyle, seeking peace, hurls himself through space and jauntes once more aboard the wreck of the *Nomad*, where it has been welded into the asteroid of the Scientific People. Here, his 'wife' Moira finds him.

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[14] For instance, in Mozart's opera The Magic Flute (1791), which is based to some extent on Masonic rites, his hero and heroine, Tamino and Pamina, must undergo an ordeal by fire before they can enter the precinct of the Temple and be united in marriage.

> He awoke from reverie to trance and drifted out of the locker, passing Moira with blind eyes, brushing past the awed girl who stepped aside and sank to her knees. He wandered through the empty passages and returned to the womb of the locker. He curled up again and was lost.
>
> (281)

The priest Joseph, leader of the Scientific People, recognises that Gully Foyle has found his punishment. 'He has found it already in himself,' he says (282). And the suggestion is that when Foyle awakes there will be some other sort of 'awakening', as well. For the priest and Moira remind us suddenly of Joseph and Mary, and of the story of Christ.

> The girl, Moira, ran up the twisted corridors and returned a few moments later with a silver basin of warm water and a silver tray of food. She bathed Foyle gently and then set the tray before him as an offering. Then she settled alongside Joseph...alongside the world...prepared to await the awakening.
>
> (282)

Gully Foyle has, in the mode of the archetypal hero, not only returned to the point of his beginning, - aboard *Nomad*, from where he was launched on the long voyage of self discovery - but he has also made the redeeming sacrifice. Bester here suggests (albeit somewhat perfunctorily - and this is perhaps the least succesful aspect of the book), that Gully Foyle will be reborn from the womb of *Nomad* and that he has found atonement not only for his own sins but also, in some degree, for suffering humanity.

In the context of genre sf, Bester's use of language is prophetic, particularly in the final sections of Tiger! Tiger! His writing has a vigorous intensity that carries it above mere journalism. He himself refers to his 'razzle-dazzle style' (1976:218). As pointed out earlier, he was writing at a time when sf was relatively undeveloped from a stylistic point

of view, and when there was little interest in the processes of writing as such. But in the section where Gully Foyle hurls himself repeatedly through space and time, Bester struggles to find a way to express his protagonist's 'other-worldly' experiences. Here, his writing becomes almost prophetic. In the effort to find expression for a range of sensations that are literally undescribable, Bester resorts to arranging words in geometric patterns, or in vertical streamers and other designs, and his prose here becomes tinged with something approaching the poetic. Brian McHale (1987:180), in his discussion of postmodern fiction, discusses how, in texts of the 1970s and 1980s, certain writers attempt to suggest ontological experience by manipulating physical elements of the printed text, exploiting typography and page layout in order to force upon the reader what he calls 'antagonistic realities'. Bester, writing two decades before the postmodern period, appears to be doing much the same thing.

> The lemon taste in his mouth became unbearable. The rake of talons on his skin was torture.
>
> He jaunted.
>
> He reappeared in the furnace beneath Old St Pat's less than a second after he had disappeared from there. He was drawn, as the sea-bird is drawn again and again to the flames from which it is struggling to escape. He endured the roaring furnace for only another moment.
>
> He jaunted.
>
> He was in the depths of Gouffre Martel.
>
> The velvet black darkness was bliss, paradise, euphoria.
>
> 'Ah!' he cried in relief.

'AH!' came the echo of his voice, and the sound was translated into a blinding pattern of light.

AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

The burning man winced. 'Stop!' he called, blinded by the noise. Again came the dazzling pattern of the echo:

StOpStOpStOp
OpStOpStOpStOp
StOpStOpStOpStOp
OpStOpStOpStOpStOp
OpStOpStOpStOpSt
SpStOpStOpStOp
OpStOpStOpSt

(Tiger, Tiger!, 1991:260 - 261)

This may seem, at first glance, to be a rather artificial attempt at effect-making. But indeed, in the context of McHale's comments, Bester's experiments would seem to be precocious. Bester has found, within the limits of the genre's range, an effective way to suggest the confused and paranormal range of Gully Foyle's sensory experiences as he beats through time and space. As with much sf, it is the cumulative effect, the growing sense of wonder that gives Bester's writing a transcendental quality. In his willingness to experiment (albeit narrowly) with language, as well as his concern with the development of Gully Foyle and with Ben Reich as human beings, Bester's work is extraordinarily forward-looking and manages to transcend the often constricting confines of genre sf. Both The Demolished Man and Tiger! Tiger! achieve a burning intensity, a pulsating

vigour, a sense of forward movement that seems to be almost self-propelling. Here, Bester's work seems to me to express very graphically that 'wandering of desire' that Frye was referring to when speaking of literature in its 'primitive phase'. For Bester's writing indicates movement in a new direction, hinting at a later fecundity that will renew and enrich sf, taking it closer to the concerns of canonical or mainstream literature.

As the above discussion has shown, both sf and fantasy, in the hands of writers with talent, imagination and a fundamental concern with the processes of psychic development, can utilise symbolic structures that function to reveal character and motive, and which can suggest the movement of the personality towards wholeness, integration and transcendence. None of the works discussed above are mere simple fables. Each is a complex creation that suggests that the journey towards redemption is a difficult one, involving pain, suffering, loss and even humiliation. In each case there is a stripping, a breaking down of the persona, in order that the new personality may begin to grow afresh towards adulthood and personal redemption.

It would seem, then, - despite the reservations of critics such as Frye, Kroeber and others - that both fantasy and sf are as capable as the realistic novel of detailing the progression and growth of character, and that they have, in fact, developed to a point where such concerns are well within the province of each genre. However, the discourse in which each involves the reader is quite different to that of mainstream literature. The reader is caught up in a background, a frame of reference, that is completely antithetical to the quotidian experience (which, indeed, *violates* the usual experience of reality) and is transported onto a plane where the imagination is tested by the alien and the exotic.

The reader is thus uncompromisingly confronted by Suvin's 'cognitive novum', by his 'imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment' (1988:8). It is a tribute to the skill of writers like Le Guin and Bester that, within this unfamiliar background, they are able to create images that are revelatory and that communicate deeply with the reader. The reader is, therefore, responding not only to the wonder and excitement of the alien, but also experiences a sense of recognition. For, despite the strange or futuristic worlds evoked by these writers, the symbols created have enduring and timeless qualities. These two very different kinds of writers have succeeded in creating works that illuminate - in part through the powerful symbolisms that are central to their discourse - the irony and fragility inherent in the human experience. But, reassuringly, each writer testifies to a firm belief in the possibility of personal redemption. With writers such as these, fantasy and sf can become deeply satisfying on both the intellectual and the emotional level, a fact which points to the increasing maturity of both genres.