FIVE : THE SYMBOLISM OF THE BEAST

> *The animal does not reason, but it sees. And it acts with certainty; it acts 'rightly', appropriately. That is why all animals are beautiful. It is the animal who knows the way, the way home. It is the animal within us, the primitive, the dark brother, the shadow soul, who is the guide.*
>
> *Ursula Le Guin*

Earlier chapters have considered writers who deal with the concept of redemption in terms of both personal fufilment and in larger terms which encompass not only the individual, but also the tribe or race to which the central character belongs. In each of these cases, it is suggested, redemption is a struggle to reach beyond the state of flawed humanity, a striving to transcend mere flesh in order to attain maturity or 'at-one-ment'. In a sense, then, this journey through the psychic spaces is motivated by the urge to rise *above* the merely human or animal aspects of existence. Here, the archetypal symbols of transformation, such as the mandala and the rose, are those which suggest both transcendence and perfection.

This chapter, however, will demonstrate that the movement towards spiritual and ethical maturity can come from the darkest areas of the psyche also, and that the passionate desire for transcendence may emerge from psychic zones that humanity has often regarded as base and which it has struggled to suppress. This section will, therefore, look at writing which suggests that it is from *below*, from these bestial and abhorred strata of the mind, that salvation may sometimes come. It will consider writers who have used archetypal imagery to suggest that, in certain circumstances, the symbol of the beast can become both redemptive and transfiguring.

In an earlier chapter, a discussion of Alfred Bester's Tiger! Tiger! shows how the protagonist's face is marked by a terrible and bestial tattoo that becomes symbolic of his own savage and 'animal' nature. Bester's 'hero', Gully Foyle, must learn to contain and overcome the 'beast within' in order to commence the journey towards spiritual salvation. This chapter investigates further aspects of beast symbolism. It will explore the manner in which some sf and fantasy writers have used theriomorphic imagery to suggest not simply the savage proclivities that may lurk deep within the human psyche, but also the way in which the beast may symbolise more positive aspects of human nature as well as certain abstract concepts.

Beasts and beast imagery have long been used to suggest the ungovernable and the horrifying in human nature. Yet, mankind has not always regarded the beast with loathing. The ancient Egyptian pantheon of gods often linked deities with animal properties that were seen as miraculous and admirable. Horus was associated with the falcon or hawk and was typically depicted with avian head and hooked beak. Osiris, one of the most powerful and universally revered gods - he was not only the ruler of the dead but also a fertility god - often appeared in the guise of a jackal. And Greek Apollo was sometimes referred to as 'wolf-born Apollo' or Lyceius, perhaps because he was thought to protect flocks from wolves (*lykoi*). Somewhat later, in what is perhaps the first recorded case of wolves raising feral children, the mythical founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, were protected and suckled by a she-wolf. In such cases, the beast appears to confer something of its own mysterious power, helping to enhance the superiority of the gods and heroes themselves.

Animals have always inspired an extraordinary complexity of emotional and spiritual responses in man. Since time immemorial animals have shared the spaces that man inhabits, moving secretively through the labyrinths of dark forests or freely on the open plains and savannahs. To mankind, animals appear to pass through this world with a magical grace, an integrity and a complete sense of at-one-ment that has, since earliest times, aroused in man - hampered as he is by his constant self-awareness - a complex mixture of emotions. Awe, fear, pleasure and envy are intertwined in the rich fabric of the human response to animals. The primeval paintings that adorn the walls of the caves of Lascaux and Altamira are testimony to the fact that man has always been moved by the animal world. That the depth of these emotions is profound is attested to by these decorations, which reveal the formal element of the hunt and in which the doomed animal is placated by ritual and respect

But mankind does not only observe animals from a distance. Humans take fish, birds, dogs, cats and other more exotic species into their homes and hearts, making intimates of them. The power of animals to evoke a complexity of responses in the human heart and mind must, then, surely be intensified by the twin senses of guilt and gratitude that hedge around these relationships. For, over the centuries, man has used these beasts in expiatory and sacrificial capacities, offering them up to the gods in his stead, forcing them to take on the burden of his own sins and malevolences. Finally, man also consumes these extraordinary creatures, adding further complexities to humanity's co-existence with the animal kingdom. Such conflicting knowledge must, of necessity, be intensely disturbing to the human psyche. The sense of sin, the awareness of human presumption in such disruptions of the life force, can only be assuaged by the adoption of rituals that sanctify the killing and eating of living things. Today, in certain communities, shamanism still lingers, its

practitioners attempting - as did our ancestors in ages past - to propitiate the spirit of the hunted beast and seeking to rise above the merely human by gaining some share of the beast's mysterious *mana* or power. And even 'civilised' man finds that animals still have special significance, for humanity is closely tied to the lives of beasts by bonds of responsibility, as well as those of dread, guilt and admiration.

Evolutionary psychologist and ethologist Mary Midgely, in Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature (1979), puts forward the interesting hypothesis that while religion was in a pagan state and the gods were seen as capricious and fallible, man could blame his bad behaviour on his deities. Since the gods directed human action, men and women could always disclaim responsibility for their misdemeanours. In fact, pagan gods and goddesses, despite their superior power, were often as fallible as men and women, and were as likely as their human subjects to fall into fits of jealousy, lust, rage, ambition or spite. However, as the great monotheistic religions evolved, and as God came to be regarded as a suprahuman force of total goodness and power, man was more hard-pressed to find excuses for his own bad behaviour. In the Judaeo-Christian ethic, mankind regards itself as having been created in the image of God. This leaves the human species with a profound ethical dilemma. If God is all-good, and if humans are created in the image of God, whence, then, comes their frequently criminal and brutish behaviour? Midgely suggests that it was from this knotty moral problem that the concept of the 'beast within' evolved (1979:43). Thus, when men and women misbehave, it must be because of some animal component in the nature of humanity. In the light of this argument, the desire for the sacrificial animal victim becomes more logical. Indeed, it becomes not only desirable, but a necessity.

Midgely suggests that this is why animals became, in certain cases, 'demonised'. They became convenient scapegoats for all that was seen as abominable in man.[1] The tempting serpent became the root of all evil, the goat became a symbol of lust, the wolf became the archetype of cruelty, the fox became emblematic of slyness and deceit - and so forth. Yet it is now widely acknowledged that aberrant behaviour is, on the whole, confined to humankind and that man, undoubtedly, is the most destructive and bestial of all creatures on this planet. Animals generally behave in ways that would be considered exemplary in man, and our traditional view of them is informed by the fact that we see them not as they are but as 'projections of our own fears and desires' (Midgely, 1979:25).

> We have thought of the wolf always as he appears to the shepherd at the moment of seizing a lamb from the fold. But this is like judging the shepherd by the impression he makes on the lamb at the moment when he finally decides to turn it into lamb chops. Recently, ethologists have taken the trouble to watch wolves systematically, between mealtimes, and have found them to be, by human standards, paragons of steadiness and good conduct. They pair for life, they are faithful and affectionate spouses and parents, they show great loyalty to their pack and great courage and persistence in the face of difficulties, they carefully respect one another's territories, keep their dens clean, and extremely seldom kill anything that they do not need for dinner. If they fight another wolf, the encounter normally ends with a submission. They have an inhibition about killing the suppliant and about attacking females and cubs.
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> (Midgely, 1979:25 - 26)

[1] '...the doctrines of the Roman Church...preached both compassion and hatred for sinners, for the bestial, for the wolf in man. And yet when laymen came to ask, in effect, 'What is this animal, *alone*, and how does he get on with the universe?' the Church responded less than compassionately. When laymen said, 'Let's consider the wolf as a biological entity, quite apart from the Devil and pagan worship and evil and the symbolism of man's bestial nature,' the Church, the seat of appeal for such enquiries in the Middle Ages, replied 'No...' (Lopez, 1978:213).

Animals are, in truth, simply incapable of the horrors that are manifest in some forms of 'human' behaviour. Animal behaviour, when considered rationally, is seldom malignant. The cruelty of nature is impersonal and unmalicious. Nature is neither good nor evil. It simply *is*. Although aberrant behaviour is not completely unknown to the animal kingdom, it remains, nevertheless, quite rare. In general, when animals kill, they do so in innocence and from necessity. Perhaps because man acknowledges this fact on some subliminal level, human sensibilities are also capable of recognising and being moved by the innate grace of the lives of animals and the beauty of their presence. Thus, paradoxically, the lion is often considered the epitome of nobility, courage and heroic strength, the gentle dove has come to symbolise peace and love, the dog personifies touching loyalty and devotion.

There are, then, a multitude of conflicting archetypal patterns and responses relating to animals, which are enshrined in the mythologies and folk-lore of many cultures. Such patterns permeate and shape many of man's perceptions of his own nature and appear frequently in the creative impulses of most peoples.

In sf and fantasy literature the image of the beast is a frequent *motif* and serves as a potent source of the awe, mystery and terror which invest these genres. Theriomorphic imagery has long been used to convey symbolic meanings of all kinds and the image of the beast is rooted in the lineage of sf and fantasy texts, growing from such beginnings as the monstrous constructs of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) and H. G. Wells's beast-men in The Island of Dr Moreau (1896), and taking horrifying and alien shape in the 'pulp' fiction of the 1930s and 1940s. Writing such as that of Shelley and Wells stressed ethical concepts. Frankenstein questions the right of man to take on the godlike role of creator, as

well as probing the effects that rejection and social alienation might play in the growth and formation of personality. Some of the horror implicit in both these works comes from the connection of the nightmarish beast with a vision of fallen humanity, from the contemplation of what is beastlike in man, and how animals and men both may be corrupted.

In Gary K. Wolfe's The Known and the Unknown: the Iconography of Science Fiction (1979), the writer isolates several potent images - such as the wasteland, the spaceship, the alien, the robot and the city - that have become so embedded in the 'mega-text' within which science fictional works are created, that they have acquired an iconic and almost mythic dimension. While such images are not exactly archetypal in the Jungian sense, they have begun to function, for the informed reader, rather in the way that the archetype functions. Indeed, so powerful and ubiquitous have many of these images become, that it is conceivable that they may, with time, be absorbed into what Jung called the collective unconscious. Amongst these images is one that Wolfe identifies as the 'icon of the monster'.

The monstrous in sf and fantasy manifests itself in a myriad grotesque forms and is clearly a close relation of, and indeed overlaps with, the *motif* of the beast. The monstrous alien became, for example, a recurring image in much sf and fantasy both before and after World War II, perhaps as a result of the particularly American form of paranoia that arose in reaction to the growth of Communism and the realisation that Russia had 'the bomb'.[2] This took the form of a profound fear of what was alien, 'other' and invasive. In America,

[2] John Griffiths, for instance, feels that 'It is...possible to distinguish between the fears of British writers of the breakdown of society and the disintegration of the individual personality, and those of the Americans of the annihilation of society or the manipulation of the personality' (1980:78).

MacCarthyism was the outward and most manifest form of this horror of the unknown. But the fear burgeoned, too, in the alien life-forms created by writers of pulp fiction. No reader of the fantasy and sf genres who grew up during the 1940s and 1950s could have remained unmoved by the creatures that stalked and destroyed - sometimes with brutish physicality, sometimes by overpowering in more insidious ways - the innocent inhabitants of planet Earth.[3] Such writing could suggest little complexity, only an almost pathological fear of what was *other*. It taught that the correct response to such evil must be to destroy it. A short story called 'Vault of the Beast' by A. E. van Vogt epitomises the crude appeal and terror of what became known to fans as BEM (Bug-Eyed Monster) stories:

> The creature crept. It whimpered from fear and pain. Shapeless, formless thing, yet changing shape and form with each jerky movement, it crept along the corridors of the space freighter, fighting the terrible urge of its elements to take the shape of its surroundings. A grey blob of disintegrating stuff, it crept and cascaded, it rolled, flowed and dissolved, every movement an agony of struggle against the abnormal need to become a stable shape. Any shape!
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> (A. E. van Vogt, 1953:7)

But, despite the ability of such images to arouse fear (and, indeed, some science fiction writers slip easily into the dark realm of horror), in certain cases the beast can call forth more complex emotional and intellectual responses than simple terror. An early story which does indeed suggest terror, and also conveys a more subtle sense of regret and loss, is Philip K. Dick's superb short story 'The Golden Man', which dates from the 1950s.

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[3] That such horrors speak to some profound part of the human psyche is evidenced by the longevity of these terrifying creations. The novels of Stephen King, and such films as Alien, Species, and - more recently -Independence Day (to name but a few) retain their old power to both attract and terrify, despite their use of decades-old clichés. Obviously, the wellspring of such fears has not yet run dry.

Dick, a better writer than A. E. van Vogt, here expresses a more complex fear. His 'beast' - the eponymous golden man - is not evil at all. On the contrary, its apparent nobility, beauty, poise and amiability make humans seem dwarfed and clumsy by comparison. Here, the terrifying 'otherness' of the beast is, in part, the seductiveness of its flawed strength and beauty, for this is what makes it so ultimately dangerous to humankind. The mindless perfection of this 'golden god' may spell doom for the human race, which it could, with its superior strength and adaptivity - eventually supersede. The complexity and horror implicit in this story belie the simple telling. But what the story also expresses is an evolution in humanity's response to the 'brute beast'.

The sense of ambiguity conveyed by Dick's story is now more likely to be present in contemporary fantasy and sf, which more frequently approach what is alien or other with greater ambivalence and thoughtfulness. Evolutionary philosophy has begun to teach us that we, too, are merely a link in the long chain which reaches upward from single-celled life forms. The Descartian separation of body and mind, which judged animals to be mere machines or automatons, incapable of rationality and therefore of sensation, has been superseded by the realisation that we, too, are governed by immutable biological imperatives and that we are closer to the animal kingdom than we have hitherto been inclined to acknowledge. No longer do we see the animal world as something over which we have been given dominion, which we may use or destroy at will. The human response to animals has become, most noticeably in the Western world, immeasurably more complex, and is now often one of empathy. We now recognise that the needs of animals, even if they do not always accord with our own, are valid and have their own logic. Thus, the latter half of the twentieth century has experienced a vast revision in the manner in which

humans appraise both themselves and their animal neighbours. We are now, more humbly, inclined to agree with Jung that

> ...in certain respects the animal is superior to man. It has not yet blundered into consciousness nor pitted a self-willed ego against the power from which it lives; on the contrary, it fulfils the will that actuates it in a well-nigh perfect manner.
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> (Jung, 1991e:98)

This revolution in humankind's approach to the natural world has resulted in works of fantasy and sf that use the imagery of the monstrous and the bestial in diverse and thoughtful ways, finding much to admire in beasts and suggesting that the strength and beauty of the beast may - rather than degrade - actually enhance humanity. Such writing manages, because of its powerful and evocative associations, to suggest the complexities and resonances of the archetypal beast motif.

This chapter will undertake to discuss writing which uses theriomorphic symbolism to express a variety of thought-provoking concepts. Two works by Tanith Lee will be considered. These are her novels Lycanthia (1990) and, in more detail, Sabella (1987), both of which use vulpine imagery to suggest ideas as well as to define character. John Crowley's Beasts (1987) mingles fable and sf in a tale that is simultaneously warning and promise. Both these writers use, for symbolic purposes, beasts that exist in the real world. But two other writers discussed in this chapter have used the image of a purely imaginative beast - albeit one that has long haunted the human imagination - to convey complicated abstract ideas. The dragons of Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea tetralogy (1979, 1990) will be discussed in this section, as well as the dragon in Clive Barker's Weaveworld (1988). All these writers demonstrate that these archetypal images retain their vitality,

their beauty and their terror, and that they still have an inexhaustible ability to arouse wonder and suggest meaning.

A writer who is consistently drawn to theriomorphic imagery is Tanith Lee, a British writer who is perhaps better-known in America than in the country of her birth. She has written novels and short stories in various genres ranging from fantasy and 'sword and sorcery' to science fiction, all of which show a highly individual style and visual sense, and many of which show a certain sly humour in 'deconstructing' some of the formulæ of genre fiction. The worlds that Lee creates are consistently sensational in both the emotional and in the visceral sense, their garishness revealing their origins in pulp fiction. Her style, though refined, manages to project a feverish, almost over-heated quality to her prose, to her protagonists, and to the worlds that she delineates. While this propensity for the extravagant occasionally tips over into affectation and even vulgarity, it does (at its most successful) add a piquancy and pathos to her writing.

Lee has shown herself, in both her novels and her shorter fiction, to be consistently preoccupied with the resonances that are evoked by lycanthropic imagery. Vulpine symbols, for instance, occur frequently in her writing, appearing to speak to her on some deeply-experienced and instinctual level. She is sensitive to the power of certain images, and their ability to arouse responses so profound that they are almost inarticulable. Her awareness of the subliminal resonances and echoes that beasts evoke in the human psyche have led her into some extraordinary by-ways. Her short stories probe the bizarre forms that love may take, and also suggest the connections between eroticism, innocence, masochism and cruelty ('Bite Me Not or Fleur de Feur' [1989], 'Bloodmantle' [1989]). She says of herself: 'Wolves are creatures that live most definitely in my mind forests. I meet them

with the primitive and often irrational wolf-fear, but also in fascinated love' (Introduction to 'Bloodmantle', 1989:1). Thus, a striking characteristic of her stories and novels is the fact that they are imbued with a deep and atavistic sense of the contradictory emotions of attraction and repulsion that make up the human response to predators such as wolves. She recognises the perversity in human nature that draws it towards what is dangerous and potentially destructive, and she shows an intense awareness of the complex nature of human sexuality.

In her 1981 novel Lycanthia (1990) she plays with all the tropes of the gothic horror story, gleefully parading one stereotype after another: the train which arrives at the deserted station, the inhospitable and reclusive villagers, the enigmatic housekeeper, the remote country residence, the wintry landscape, the strange history of the region, the solitary and perverse protagonist who is captivated by the mystery and drawn into it, revelling in the fear and the secretiveness. Yet, despite all this, Lee manages to create an unconventional tale that transcends her use of these very conventions.

Lycanthia tells, on the most obvious level, the story of the meeting of the protagonist with the two werewolves and of his interaction with them. While the reader may easily stop just there, enjoying the gothic trappings of the tale only, there is another dimension to the novel, for Lee makes of this well-worn subject-matter something rather different from the usual horror story. She manages also to show the beauty of these beasts, and suggests how they may speak to the receptive soul. She suggests, too, how deeply entwined these images are with the hereditary racial memories of human-kind, how indestructible they may be, and how deep the loss would be were they to be eradicated. She suggests the link between the mythic werewolf and human sexuality; it speaks not only to man's fears, but

also to the human desire for an uncomplicated and immediate contact with the violence of the physical world. The myth addresses, perhaps, some profound need for a simple and innocent relationship with instinctual nature. Marina Warner, in her comprehensive discussion of the beast *motif* in folk and fairy tale observes:

> The attraction of the wild, and the wild brother in twentieth century culture, cannot be overestimated; as the century advances...Beauty stands in need of the Beast, rather than vice versa...the Beast's beastliness will teach her something. Her need of him may be reprehensible, a moral flaw, a part of her carnal and materialist nature; or it can represent her understanding of love, her redemption. He no longer stands outside her...but he holds a mirror to the face of nature within her, which she is invited to accept...
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> (Warner, 1994:307)

For Lee - who recognises the dangerous necessity of the beast - the fabulous and monstrous werewolf is an enduring and valuable symbol which is embedded in the human psyche. Like Philip K. Dick, she shows the seductiveness of the beast. But where he insists upon its destruction, Lee suggests that it should be cherished. Finally the protagonist, who turns his back on the two werewolves, must be judged deficient because of his essential indifference, his inability to take on the true responsibility of his own role in their fate. He has used them to renew himself, to rediscover the wellsprings of his exhausted creativity and sensuality. And thus refreshed, he fails their needs and abandons them. The female werewolf, Gabrielle, passes judgement on him:

> 'You," she said softly. 'You are the wolf. Feeding on us all to get what you want, what you think you need. In order to sustain your life, which is the only life you respect.'
>
> (Lycanthia, 1990:219)

Where Lycanthia is unashamedly fantastic, Lee's novel Sabella (1987) is more science fictional in tone.[4] In Sabella, Lee has produced a bizarrely alluring heroine, who struggles to find love and fulfilment in a future world that is as lurid as she herself. Both her protagonist and the world she inhabits conjure up a wide range of archetypal imagery and symbolism, all of them treated in idiosyncratic ways.

Sabella evokes a world that speaks superficially of a nostalgia for early twentieth century Earth. Like the Mars of Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles,[5] Lee's Novo Mars evokes the small-town life and the cosy, bourgeois morality of Middle America. But where Bradbury's Mars is idealised and drawn with sugar-sweet sentimentality and nostalgia for a gentle and expansive American way of life, Lee's Novo Mars becomes a subversive parody of middle-class values. She creates a garishly kitsch world, one that is tawdry, vulgar and hard-edged. The towns of Novo Mars are clad in bright candy-like colours: greengage, peppermint, opal, strawberry - all of which seem to evoke the unnatural and the chemically intensified. If one could taste Lee's world, the flavours would be, undoubtedly, artificial.

Lee uses symbolism with an obviousness which would be crudely offensive if her writing were not so intelligent or her protagonist so psychologically convincing. Novo Mars has been so named by the colonists from Earth in tribute to its predominant red colour. And red is the dominating colour of the entire book. Novo Mars has 'sugar-mouse' coloured skies, 'tawny rose sands' and 'rust-red crags'. The light, too, is often red. Sabella talks of

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[4] Published in America as The Blood Stone.

[5] Although published as a collection of tales in 1951, the first story of The Martian Chronicles appeared in 1946. Since then, the collection has become something of an sf 'classic'.

'the scarlet minute of pre-sunset', and in her house is a glass window which stains the air with a 'crimson patch'. The wolves which are indigenous to the planet are pink as well.

The reader is immediately struck by the obviousness of Lee's symbolism. Red is, of course, the colour of blood, and its connection with Sabella is logical, for Lee's tormented heroine is that most lurid monster of folk tale and legend - a vampire. Sabella is indeed monstrous, and her monstrosity is a torment to herself. Guilt-ravaged and isolated from humanity, she struggles to control her appetite, despite the overwhelming urge for survival.

Sabella, from her first words, makes us aware that she is different, and that she sees herself as separated from the human race. It is not only that she has been out hunting at night, but also that she describes the mailman's eyes as he delivers a stellagram to her front door as 'sad malevolent human eyes'. The reader is instantly alert; here is a heroine with a difference. But Sabella's difference is not only her vampirism. She is, also, a very different sort of vampire.

Not for her the familiar clichés of vampire behaviour.[6] For Sabella there are no damp coffins smelling of earth and decay, no hours spent comatose until awakened by night to prey on humans, no phobias about garlic, crosses or running water. Sabella, despite her vampirism, is beguilingly human: she can see herself in mirrors, she throws an all too tangible shadow, and her mingled compassion and disgust for her victims, as well as her

[6] Sabella's history and predicament are, in my opinion, far more engagingly and satisfactorily handled than those of Anne Rice's tediously self-pitying vampire, Louis, in her acclaimed Interview with the Vampire (1976).

self-hatred, torment her as much as her guilt.

Sabella conforms to stereotypical vampire behaviour in only the most nominal of ways. She is, it is true, most active at night, but this is because she is photophobic. Her skin is unable to bear the rays of the sun. She is, however, able to get about quite well on overcast days with the aid of a large sunhat, dark glasses, black dress and black stockings.[7] She sleeps, incongruously, in an ultra-feminine four-poster bed decorated with carved doves and pineapples. Like the heroines of all pulp-fiction, she is beautiful and desirable, with her white skin and her 'hair like black coffee poured over me from the crown of my head to my shoulders' (9). (Sabella, it must be noted, is acutely and disarmingly self-conscious, aware of the picture she presents at all times.)

Unlike the vampire of tradition, Sabella has a soul. She has a deep sense of her own sinfulness and suffers terribly in the contemplation of her own strangeness. Her curse is that she 'has religion'. The awareness of her own guilt, and her belief that she is irredeemable, is her torment. Her own vision of herself is that she is a creature of horror, and eternally damned. She sees her own need for blood as a perversion of the sacramental Communion, in which the worshipper symbolically partakes of the flesh and blood of Christ.

> I dreamed.... In my bedroom, the bed was just a frame, and dust webs hung from the carved posts instead of gauze curtains. Then I came to the mirror and I saw myself. I wore the black night-hair wig I wore in the church, but it was thick with blood, and ends spiked stiff with it. There

[7] Of interest is the fact that, in genuine cases of a rare form of the disease porphyria (which has now been identified as the probable explanation for the many reported cases of lycanthropy), sufferers become acutely light-sensitive. Partly because they can move about during the hours of darkness only, their skins become very pale and unhealthy-looking.

> was blood over my mouth and down my dress.... My nails were long and pointed and sheathed in blood. My eyeballs were scarlet. My lips were parted and I saw my teeth were very long, like white needles; and my tongue was a thin black whip. The terror that filled me was unspeakable, unutterable. And when I plunged awake, the terror was still with me...
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> (Sabella, 1987:115)

Sabella's sins are doubled, for added to her need to drink blood is the fact that she must indulge in a sort of prostitution in order to continue to draw breath. Her alien evolutionary pattern (and the mystery of how Sabella became a vampire lends the book considerable tension) has given her a trick, a strategy to enable her survival. Here it is that Tanith Lee plays most effectively with the vampire myth, as well as with some archetypal feminine images. Sabella takes blood from the necks of men during the act of sexual intercourse. At the climactic moment, when she takes nourishment, her victims' pleasure is so intensified that they literally lose consciousness. Thereafter, they are 'hooked', importuning her for more of this particular form of ecstasy, not realising that they are begging for death.

Tanith Lee is an excellent story-teller. She is also quite conscious of the conventions that she is drawing upon when she creates symbols. She has an instinctive grasp of the archetypal component of the images that she uses so effectively and which evoke so many associations. In Sabella, she has created a heroine who fulfils, in a complex way, many archetypal - predominantly sexual - patterns.

Women have always compelled reactions of both attraction and repulsion in the hearts and minds of men. In her maternal aspect, woman is a life-giver, wielding a mysterious power to which men cannot aspire. But it is in her sexual aspect that she exerts perhaps a more complex hold over the imagination and actions of men. Infinitely desirable and mysterious

in one sense, she may also seem to live vicariously on and through men, relishing her power and using it to drain them of their vitality and energy. She has, at times, been stereotyped as a devourer, a succubus, a spider-woman who preys on her mate and, having no intrinsic vitalities of her own, sucks from him the life-force to sustain her own existence. John Keats's 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and Samuel T. Coleridge's 'Christabel' have helped to enshrine these lamia-like figures in Western thought. But she is no less frequent in other cultures, and in all her manifestations she symbolises destructive feminine power. A Lilith, she has in this role, inspired remarkable hatred and revulsion. It is incontrovertible that male phobias about women have often reached horrifying and pathological proportions.[8]

In addition, mankind's responses to the sexual act have been, through the ages, ambivalent. The moment of sexual abandon, in which personality is subsumed in sensation, has always been a source not only of great pleasure but of profound alarm. The loss of selfhood, of self-consciousness, has frequently been regarded as an intimation of mortality. Alexander the Great, over three hundred years before St Paul brought his sexual conservatism to the Judeo-Christian world, is said to have remarked that the pleasures of love always saddened him because they made him think of death. Both the Elizabethan sexual pun on the verb 'to die' and the French references to 'le petit mort' testify to the connections between sex and death.

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[8] It is not men only who have 'bought into' such rigid classifications of femaleness. Certain women writers of sf and fantasy have exploited male fears so effectively and with such apparent relish that it is difficult to deny that they themselves do not recognise that there may be (at the very least) some grain of truth inherent in these stereotypes. An example is the writing of C. L. Moore, whose febrile 'Shambleau' (1975), originally published in 1933, would seem to evoke every shuddery male emotion of attraction and repulsion for what is 'other' in the female.

In Sabella - who literally sucks the life from her mates - Tanith Lee employs these archetypal patterns with obvious delight and exceptional skill, to create a heroine who epitomises the sexual stereotype while at the same time denying it. For, paradoxically, unlike the vampire of legend and folk-lore, Sabella has no blood-lust. She would rather flee from her victims than pursue them. She has no desire to kill, and no sexual desire either. Unlike the traditional vampire, she knows only that what she does is dreadful, that she is isolated from all genuine contact with humankind, and that her guilt and fear are intolerable and unavoidable.

In this sense, despite her vampiric associations, Sabella is closer to the archetypal werewolf. The shape-shifting werewolf has always been a more tormented creature than the vampire. Traditionally, the werewolf is aware of its own wretched state. It is conscious - during those periods of return to human form - that it is condemned to abhorrent and 'beastly' behaviour, aware that there is no escape from the horror that entraps it. Werewolves have often seemed more pitiful in literature and on film than have vampires, perhaps because, for them, the 'beast within' is a literal, rather than a purely metaphorical, embodiment. While the vampire can feel no remorse for its victims, the werewolf, in its periodic return to full humanity, must be stricken by the terror and repugnance of its crimes.[9] And so it is with Sabella. It is because of her awareness of her own moral plight that her journey towards love, sex and meaning is capable of engaging the reader.

[9] Robert Louis Stevenson's novella, The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (first published in 1886), is possibly the most well-known example in literature of the awareness of horror at the transformation into a state of 'beastliness'. 'He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness...he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned.... And...that the insurgent horror was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye...' (1994:86).

In choosing to connect Sabella with the wolves of Novo Mars, Lee has chosen a creature that is closely allied to an immense but subliminal network of significations upon which the reader can call. Wolves, typically present in many fairy tales to which children are introduced, are animals that have been, since earliest times, capable of arousing powerful reactions of fear and repulsion. The folk lore of almost all peoples has a place for the wolf in its most fearful aspects. Barry Lopez, in his fascinating and moving Of Wolves and Men (1978), demonstrates compellingly that mankind has, in a sense, 'created' the wolf as a spectre of horror, demonic cunning and strength. In less civilised times, when the darkness not only of ignorance but also of wild places, pressed in close upon human settlements, the wolf was a mysterious and fearful creature of the dusk, a ravager of flocks and men. When famine, plague and war were ever-present realities, the scavenging wolf was a fearsome symbol of chaos and savagery. This creature came, then, to speak of all that was to feared, both within and without the human soul. It spoke to men of all that was untamed and uncontrollable: of rapacity, greed, untruthfulness, slyness, treachery and hypocrisy. Nordic legend created the monstrous wolf Fenrir, the devourer of the sun. Prostitutes of ancient Rome were called *lupa* or she-wolves, and even as late as the eleventh century female wolves were associated with lust - as a vulpine figure on a pillar in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral testifies. Today, remnants of this belief are transmitted in the term 'wolf-whistle'. And in France it is still said of a woman who is sexually knowledgeable that 'elle a vu le loup'. A myriad fears and hatreds are, in fact, embedded in contemporary phraseology. During World War II, German submarines were said to hunt in 'wolf packs'. Being abandoned cold-bloodedly to an enemy is said to be 'being thrown to the wolves'. Psychologists such as Bruno Bettelheim have explained in persuasive terms the symbolic and sexual connotations of the wolf in the tale of Little Red Riding Hood (1991:172-173). In childhood fairy tales the wolf is a figure of depravity and evil,

possibly also an embodiment of the untamed male libido which must be feared, confronted and controlled. In all its appearances, however, this creature is to be confounded and destroyed. The associations it evokes are almost endless and the few mentioned here, alone, are enough to suggest the ramifications of the imagery.

Lee's Sabella is, however, connected to the creatures of her world in more positive terms. Like the pink Martian wolves that roam the razor-back hills of her world, she is driven by the instinct to life, to continuance. Her kinship with the wolves is a recurrent theme throughout the book; she feels a deep bond with them and they move her strangely.

> When they cry, when they cry, Sabella, the hair lifts on the scalp and the eyes fill up with tears and the mouth with water.
>
> (12)

Like the wolves of Novo Mars, Sabella is a nocturnal huntress. But unlike the wolves who hunt in the hills and ravines beneath the night sky, Sabella pursues her prey in the cities, drawing the analogy herself as she describes the environment within which she hunts.

> ...the hills of concrete and glass, and the valleys of neon and the trees of blue steel. The subways rumble wild as rivers. Great mountains of apartment blocks stand black on rays of white and indigo and violet. Sometimes jeweled birds fly over, planes coming into the landing strips of the port, or the golden tail of a phoenix, a space ship taking a fix on our glow...
>
> (111)

The wolves with which Sabella identifies herself, although creatures of the night, are not monstrous. They are perfectly adapted to their environment, move with grace through the

Novo Martian landscape, and hunt with skilful efficiency and without gratuitous violence. When Sabella finally solves the riddle of why she is as she is, and finds a way to exist that is logical and natural - for, happily, she does achieve this - she becomes, like the wolves with which she is so closely identified, perfectly attuned to her environment. Like the wolves, she is able to fulfil 'the will that actuates' her, and moves, in the process, a good way along the path towards maturity, happiness and completion. Finally, she can say, 'I can hear destiny now in the whistling cry of the enduring wolves, the cry of survival' (156).

Much of Lee's writing, in particular her short stories, uses animal imagery in a way that suggests connections with an ancient literary device, the beast fable. While animal stories are present in the folk tales of most cultures, the literary genealogy of the European beast fable has extremely penetrative roots and can be traced back six centuries before the birth of Christ, to the fables of Aesop of Samos. The lineage of Aesop's delightfully instructive stories moves forward through the Greek world and into the Roman world. It travels onward, producing multifarious progeny in mediaeval times; the works of Chaucer, the Christian bestiaries, and the sprawling, multi-textual Roman de Renart stand out as remarkable examples. In the seventeenth century, La Fontaine's unfaltering eye for human frailty, his vivacity, his elegant wit and his impassioned humanism created a body of fables that seems to lead directly to James Thurber's wryly ironic and subtly barbed Fables for Our Time (1976) and to George Orwell's merciless commentary on human nature in Animal Farm (1963).

A device that can be put to many uses, fable is capable of expressing diverse ideas by fantastic means, for it creates extraordinary juxtapositionings in order to make a point.

Because it so often has a didactic function, it is something of an apologue, serving as the vehicle for ideas or messages that are conveyed to the reader by means of the narrative. H. J. Blackham states that 'Fable generates conceptual meaning' (1985:xv), for fables have a philosophical aspect that invites the reader into some form of debate, or that generates a judgement about the matter which the fable illustrates. Blackham also points to the paradoxical quality of fabular fiction, reflecting that a 'fable is a story invented to tell the truth, not a true story' (1985:Preface).

The Aesopic tradition of beast fables uses the flagrantly fantastic, in the form of animals who talk and act exactly like men and women. This contrapositioning of the fantastic with the real world of greed, lust, cowardice, envy, rage, courage, nobility and loyalty, presents for the reader's examination certain concepts that are an integral part of the human experience. In a sense, since the fiction discussed in this study conforms to this same paradoxical and intriguing set of rules, most of these books could be regarded as exhibiting some kinship with fabular form. In addition, since fable has a marked fantastic, as well as metaphoric context - characteristics which it shares with much fantasy and science fiction - these genres lend themselves to association with the device of fable.

However, while admitting this relationship between the world inhabited by fable and the world (or rather worlds) inhabited by sf and fantasy, one important distinction should be borne in mind. Fable is most frequently concerned with the bright, daylight world of familiar social and political relations and behaviour, with the mechanics of day to day existence, rather than with the clouded and mysterious world that is hidden below the conscious levels of the mind. The wisdom of fable is practical and usually easily perceived, while the wisdom of the mythic and symbolic is not always as readily accessible.

Nevertheless, especially in its use of animals, Aesopic fable makes use of emblematic imagery that is deeply engrained in the Western psyche.

In a work by John Crowley, these two aspects combine with surprising felicity to produce a book that has something of the charm and innocence of the beast fable as well as the disturbing emotional reach of the symbolic and the archetypal. In this remarkable writer's Beasts (1987),[10] the links with the Aesopic tradition, as well as with Le Roman de Renart, are masterfully handled. Despite the futuristic setting, the whole novel has something of the transparency of fable or fairy tale. Yet, the book takes on considerable emotive significance as well, carrying the reader into the subterranean realm of the unconscious.

Beasts is set in a bleak future America, a world that is politically and ethically fragmented into a complex system of independent and feuding 'autonomies', one of which is effectively ruled by Dr Jarrell Gregorius. Man - technologically advanced despite the decay of his society - has managed to create, through the union of human and animal cells, a race of biological grotesques called 'leos'. These creatures, the result of the fusion of human and leonine tissue, have become, in essence, a distinct and separate race, for they have managed to produce offspring, have developed a complex family structure and live outside the bounds of 'normal' society. Now, however, they are being forced into a small northern preserve (where the hunting is poor and where the cold will eventually exterminate them) by the Union for Social Engineering, a shadowy body which is calling for an amalgamation of the autonomies under a central government, and which wants a mandate to manage the resources of the planet as effectively as possible for mankind's all-devouring needs. In the

[10] First published in 1976.

process, the leos are seen as expendable. However, the Union must contend not only with the leos, but also with another genetically altered and subtle creature resulting from the marriage between cellular material from both man and fox.

Against this background is unfolded the story of several men and women, the majestic leo Painter, the skilfully manipulative Counselor Reynard and the genetically altered dog Sweets. All of these become not only players in the unravelling drama, but also symbolic of certain significant and emotion-laden concepts.

The book has a fine circularity and congruency of action. It opens in a deserted wetland, where a solitary Loren Casaubon has dedicated himself to releasing a number of endangered young peregrine falcons into the wild. He will spend the summer training them to fend for themselves, before finally abandoning them to the vagaries of nature. The story will end in the same geographical spot, when Loren has learned a salutary lesson about the nature of love and responsibility, and where the central players in the drama will finally converge, brought together by the wily Reynard. In the process, the reader, too, will have engaged in an intense debate about human culpability, the interdependence of species, the responsibilities involved in what it means to be 'human', and the capacity to love.

The 'beasts' in Beasts are, of course, not beasts in the real sense of the word. Nevertheless, Crowley chooses for them to conform to certain archetypal ideas about what animals symbolise for mankind. Lions, often the chosen sign of royalty, have long been associated with strength and nobility. They also symbolise courage and pride, all kingly virtues.[11]

[11] Today, the lion is still the British national emblem.

Christian iconography, which often depicts the Evangelists in animal form, has made the lion emblematic of Mark. The lion's strength has been linked to that of the sun: the solar body, with its intense light and warmth, speaks to the human psyche of fecundity, growth and immense power. The Chaldeans and Greeks often depicted lions in battle with the sun god. Crowley's leos, in fact, worship the sun, crave its warmth and find in it emotional as well as physical solace. Our first glimpse of a leo is through the eyes of the girl, Caddie. The leo appears in a dream which seems to express all the complexity of the human response to animals, both the awe and the fear. The imagery also points to the lion's significance as a sun symbol.

> She panted, trying to draw breath, waiting with growing dread for the leo to appear. She felt the thunder of dream realization: she had come to the wrong house, she shouldn't be here, it wasn't the leo but the Sun who lived here: that was why it was so hot. She awoke as the leo appeared, suddenly, towering over her; he was simply a lion standing like a man, yet his face glowed as though made of molten gold and his mane streamed whitely from his face.
>
> (17)

The leos's links with the sun are made clearer later in the book.

> ...a spark of sun flamed on the horison, and the sun lifted itself up, and the cries increased.
>
> It was laughter. The sun smiled on them, turning the water running from their golden bodies to molten silver, and they laughed in his face, a stupendous fierce orison of laughter.
>
> (89)

Painter, the 'leader' of the pride, evokes the immense power of the natural world, both its mercilessness as well as its capacity to nurture. Mankind, suggests Crowley, which prides

itself on having risen above biological imperatives, ignores its connection with nature and the other species that share its environment at its own peril. The remarkable physicality of the leos's lives is contrasted with the lives of Bree and Meric, who live in the vast, artificial world of Candy's Mountain. A visionary creation that is designed to impinge on the world as little as possible, the Mountain, nevertheless, drains a certain vitality from its inhabitants, who seem to live emotionally attenuated lives. The love-making of Meric and Bree has become so spiritualised that they barely seem to engage with each other in the process. In a sense it is they who have become the aliens, rather than the leos.

> They lay near each other, almost not touching, and with the least possible contact they helped each other...they could almost forget what they did, and make a kind of drunkenness or dream between them; other times, as this time, it was a peace: it suspended them together in some cool flame where each nearly forgot the other...
>
> (69)

By contrast, the warmth that the leos offer is of a rougher kind. It has both the impersonal kindness and cruelty of a natural force. Caddie's first intimacy with Painter comes when he offers her the rude comfort of his body.

> He drew her down to him, tucked her efficiently within the cavity of his lean belly. She wanted to resist, but the warmth that came from him was irresistible. She thrust her damp cold nose into his furry chest, unable not to, and rested her head on his hard forearm.
>
> 'Better,' he said.
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> 'Better with two.'

> 'Yes.' Somehow, without her having sensed their approach, warm tears had come to her eyes, a glow of weeping was within her; she pressed herself harder against him to stifle the sudden sobs. He took no notice; his breathing, slow and with a burring undertone, didn't alter.
>
> (27)

The leos have something to offer their creators. They speak for the 'dark, undifferentiated world, all the voiceless beasts' - including some voiceless part of his own being - from which man has drifted. Caddie, in Painter, 'has found a shore'. Meric, who comes from Candy's Mountain, feels, in the presence of the leos that he has been 'suddenly let out of a small, dark place to see the wide extent of the world' (88). He feels the presence of Painter like a 'fierce and subtle' intelligence. Indeed, Painter has a gift for mankind, if mankind will only recognise it and take it. He can show humans how to find again the elemental sense of immediacy they have lost, teach them to become fellow creatures, not only to each other, but also to those other species which inhabit the world. He can lead them back into intimacy with a world from which they have become sundered.

It is in functioning thus as a messenger that Crowley's leo becomes truly archetypal. Jung, in his study of fairytales, identified the power of theriomorphic images. He felt that the prevalence of animals in these tales pointed to a realisation of the dichotomy inherent in the human make-up. The 'daemonically superhuman' and the 'bestially subhuman' exist simultaneously and paradoxically within the human psyche. Rather than suggesting a 'devaluation', these impulses must be recognised and met openly. The frogs, wolves, dragons, horses and other beasts that are encountered in fairytales give voice, in Jung's opinion, to those buried areas of the psyche, which - precisely because they are so pow-

erful - have been covered over by the conscious mind and have no recourse but to deliver their messages in cryptic and elusive terms.

> Again and again in fairytales we encounter the motif of helpful animals. These act and speak a human language, and display a sagacity and a knowledge superior to man's. In these circumstances we can say with some justification that the archetype of the spirit is being expressed through an animal form.
>
> (1991e:99).

Crowley's leos differ considerably in many ways from the talking animals of fairytale in having a potent physicality and presence that transcends the symbolic. Nevertheless, they do simultaneously have the same function as the animal messengers identified by Jung, for they seem to give voice to the dark and unspoken areas of the psyche, those dangerous elements which are beyond conscious control. Reinforcing the metaphor of Painter as a psychopomp or chthonian guide, are his numerous appearances on thresholds or at entrances. Lions, as they appear in art and architecture, are frequently heraldic, framing portals and entrances, often rampant, winged or with human heads. Crowley's leo, too, has a heraldic quality. He is often shown standing in a doorway, emerging from some dark interior into the clarity of daylight. Thus, he suggests a state of transition, an in-between state, as befits his capacity to open certain symbolic doorways in the human mind.

The function of the leos is, therefore, archetypal and complex, for they compound the sense of awe and wonder that the reader experiences in encountering them and are perversely attractive and alien at one and the same time. In this, the leos are joined by the 'fox', also the product of man's technological ingenuity. In the metaphoric and often politically motivated Le Roman de Renart, the lion, often depicted as the king of beasts, is

served by his quick-witted councillor, the fox Renart, the two aligning themselves against the brutal wolf, Ysengrim, who emblematises the rapacious power of the barons. Here, the wily fox of the Aesopic tradition has mutated, becoming the outrageous and subversive Renart, a character whose machinations are initially endearing. Renart engages, often on behalf of his kingly lord, Noble, in grim contest with Ysengrim, whom he defeats and humiliates with regularity. A feature of the *roman* is the fact that though Renart is often cruelly savaged and left for dead, he always miraculously comes to life, living to fight yet another day. In this respect, he is perhaps a symbol of the power of the common people to survive all vicissitudes, of the adaptive and enduring qualities of human nature.[12]

So it is in Beasts. Counselor Reynard appears, initially, to be serving Dr Gregorius, leader of the Northern Autonomy. The 'fox' - true to his origins - thinks of Gregorius as 'Isengrim', thus making the emotional connections very clear. In truth, however, although he will, from time to time, be forced into betrayal of the leos, Reynard serves their cause. And he, too, is killed in the service of his lord, Painter and then comes surprisingly back to life - as a cloned version of himself.

Once again, Crowley makes his Reynard conform to the characteristics of the archetypal fox. His quickness and deviousness are juxtaposed with the stillness and dignity of the leos. A trickster, a sly manipulator and a creature without honour, he, too, embodies the ruthless imperatives of nature. The leo is his 'lord', whom he will betray in order to serve. A remarkable and touching creation, Reynard is as compelling a figure as Painter. Like his progenitor in Le Roman de Renart, Reynard is the worldly advisor. He is the one who

[12] In China, the fox was regarded as being able to take possession of the soul of someone who had died, and it became, thus, a symbol of longevity (Cooper, 1992:106).

knows how to make things work in the 'real' world of men and politics. He is pragmatic, far-sighted, unburdened by conscience. He is, in short, a statesman-politician, playing the game of expediency with consummate skill. His elliptical utterances conceal and reveal. His purposes seem shadowy. Like Renart with Noble, he forms a symbiotic relationship with Painter. The leo, unsubtle, direct, cannot see the traps that men lay for him.[13] Although his strength and courage are necessary to cow enemies, he needs his councillor to search out and evade the snares laid by men like Dr Gregorius, Crowley's 'Ysengrim'. Thus, Reynard, who is responsible for all the power that now rests in Gregorius's hands, will eventually contrive, by an extremely devious and complicated series of manoeuvres, to give Painter, 'as fox Reynard did in the old tale, the skin of Isengrim, the wolf' (51). Finally, he will deliver to the leo his 'realm'.

Crowley's ability to make his grotesque 'beasts' compelling and sympathetic is remarkable. Reynard's tiny caped figure makes all its exits and entrances with flamboyant flourishes. Despite his alien appearance and nature, which both repels and baffles the humans with which he deals, he is a captivating figure. He makes his first entry rather like a stage villain.

> She went to the tree and he held out for her to take an impossibly tiny black-palmed hand, its wrist long and fine as a bunch of sticks tied together. If he hadn't gripped her hard, like a little child, she would have dropped the hand in fear. He pulled himself toward the opening, and she could see his long mouth grinning with the effort; his yellow teeth shone. 'Who are you?' she said.
>
> He ceased his efforts but didn't release her. His eyes, brown and tender behind the glasses, searched her. 'That's difficult to say, exactly.' Was

[13] Symbolically, Painter has to be taught by Loren Casaubon to make and lay snares.

> he smiling? She was close to him now, and an odor that before had been only part of the woods odor grew distinct. Distinct and familiar. 'Difficult to say. But you can call me Reynard.'
>
> (6)

Despite this grotesquerie, Reynard is ultimately a touching creation, as much manipulated as manipulator. His physical fragility, his 'tender' brown eyes, his anxious, childlike grip, all these point to his vulnerability. For he, too, serves imperatives that he cannot deny. He too is circumscribed and defined by the world in which he finds himself. He is, despite his machinations, essentially innocent. The reader is dismayed by his violent death, which seems a loss, and then deeply relieved at his 'reappearance', which is as dramatic as all his comings and goings. When all the characters are finally reunited at the old shot tower in the marshes - where the action initially began - they know that Reynard is dead. The reader shares their amazement - and relief -when he 'reappears'.

> ...their visitor bent over, closing his eyes against the machine's rising, his cape snapping about him. Then he straightened, tidying himself.
>
> Reynard stood in the tower courtyard, leaning on a stick, waiting.
>
> They came slowly from their hiding places. Reynard nodded to them as they came forth, pointing to each one with his stick....
>
> 'You're dead,' Caddie said, staying far from him. 'I killed you.'
>
> 'No,' he said. 'Not dead.' He walked towards her, not limping now, and she retreated; he seemed brisk, young, almost gay.
>
> 'I shot you.' She giggled, a mad strangled laugh.
>
> 'The one you shot,' Reynard said, 'was my parent. I am his - child. In a sense. In another sense, I am he almost as much as he was.' ... He grinned

> showing the points of his yellow teeth. 'How anyway could Reynard the Fox die?'
>
> (181 - 182)

Crowley, while showing humans alongside these products of man's technology, has not forgotten to put man into conjunction with 'unaltered' creatures. Loren Casaubon is an ethologist, deeply committed to the survival of the natural world and the species that share it with mankind. In showing his interaction with his geese and his falcons, Crowley adds a further dimension to the questions he is asking about human responsibility.

Loren 'serves' his falcons with apparent selflessness. He will spend months in discomfort and isolation, readying his small fierce charges for the time when they must fend for themselves, knowing all the while that this cannot guarantee their survival, that his efforts may well be wasted. Yet Crowley makes the reader aware, at the same time, that although he serves the birds's interests, Loren's own interests are involved also. '...even Loren, who served the hawks, knew his reasons were a man's reasons and not a bird's' (6). Man may be the author of animal lives, the curator, the final arbiter - yet, to the animals concerned, man is irrelevant. The lesson that the hawks finally teach Loren, is one that he almost fails to learn. His love for Sten, the young son of Dr Gregorius, becomes so all-consuming that he fails to set him free, as he has done his hawks. His own reasons, his 'man's reasons' intercede, so that he resists Sten's assertion of independence and growth.

It is the fox who points the lesson. 'Men are the Lords of Creation', he tells Caddie mockingly. Later, he places the responsibility firmly in human hands:

> 'I make no plans,' he said. 'I discern what is, and act accordingly. You can never trust me. I must act; it's my nature. I'll never stop. You. You make the future. You know yourselves. I will act in the world you make. It's all up to you.'
>
> (183)

Men and women, who have ultimate knowledge, must learn how best they may serve their world. If the 'beasts' are the symbolic conductors of souls, humans are the custodians of the world. They cannot abrogate their responsibility, and they must learn the humility to number themselves amongst the world's creatures. In a sense, the biblical injunction that gives man dominion over the beasts has done the world an immense disservice, for it has armoured humanity in pride and presumption, and sundered men and women from the rest of creation. The 'beasts' have instinctual knowledge, the dark certainty and repose, the lack of desire, that comes with at-one-ment. They simply *are*, neither wanting nor doubting. Reynard knows that he serves the leo. The dog Sweets knows this too. It is for the humans to learn what it is that they serve. Crowley seems to be suggesting that men and women must find within themselves the capacity to be a part of creation, not to live outside of creation. And in finding this part, humankind may find the whole.

The final scene of Beasts is as fantastic and as evocative as that of any fairytale: two women, two men, a lion, a fox and a dog, gather in a circle to plan the future.[14] Crowley has used all the conventions of fable, as well as all the archetypal and symbolic connotations implicit in animal imagery, and yet he has also, miraculously, transcended these categorisations. His 'beasts' become resonant physical presences and, because of all this,

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[14] An inescapable echo for any sf reader would be, at this point, Clifford D. Simak's City (1954), in which an abandoned Earth is left to the custodianship of genetically altered and intelligent dogs who will oversee the planet's future. A book of some charm and nostalgic sentiment, the writing is, however, nowhere near as eloquent or as telling as the writing in Beasts.

are potent sources of precisely that sense of awe and wonder that sf can provide. Painter, Reynard and Sweets step forward from the pages to address the reader with immediacy and significance. And the strange conjunction of characters that Crowley creates asks its own question: who is truly the beast?

Bruno Bettelheim, in his study of fairytales, agrees with Jung that the theriomorphic presence speaks for the id, that dangerous area of the psyche which is not under conscious control. Some of these presences are 'helpful' animal figures, while some are 'dangerous and destructive' (1991:76).[15] While both symbolise instinctual aspects of human nature, those which are 'dangerous' are threatening because they are untamed. They externalise those aspects of personality which are not yet subject to conscious control. Thus the energies which they represent are a potential source of peril, for they lie beyond reach and defy the polite bounds of law and order. The wolf, a figure that is horrifyingly real, is the most obvious of these minatory figures. But there is another beast, ubiquitous in folk and fairytale, which is equally terrifying and complex, despite its fantastic nature.

The dragon, a creature purely of the imagination, is deeply rooted in the mythology of most peoples. Unlike the wolf, the fox, the dog or the lion, it is not usually associated with the 'beast-like' aspects of human behaviour, but is generally allied to more impersonal forces. It is closely associated with the chaotic, the untamed and the destructive aspects of nature. Varying in form from snaky and scaled with bat-like wings to the many-headed Hydra of Greek mythology, it is a curiously paradoxical image and even more of a

[15] It seems that, even in the enlightened terms of twentieth-century psychology, animals are still seen as scapegoats, bearing labels ascribed to them by humankind.

shapeshifter than the werewolf, for it is ever fluid, never static, constantly changing shape as it changes meaning.

In China, the dragon is regarded as beneficent and powerful. A symbol of royalty, it is associated with both the life-giving and powerful properties of nature. A flying beast, a creature of the air, it is closely allied with storms, waves and winds, with thunder, lightning and floods, with fire, with darkness and light. Perhaps because its supple and writhing form suggests kinship with the snake - a creature that renews itself by shedding its old skin and emerging, as it were, newborn - the dragon is also regarded as a cosmic force, associated with growth and new life, with regeneration and rebirth.[16]

Since the dragon is also a creature immune to fear and caution, it became, in the west, a warlike symbol, painted on shields, on standards and on ships' prows, a portent of rampant power and terror. Here, too, it became a heraldic symbol of royalty, its winged and snakelike form emblazoning the family crests of kings from the mythic time of Uther Pendragon to the present-day Prince of Wales. It became burdened too, perhaps through its relationship with the duplicitous Edenic snake, with negative connotations such as profanity, heresy and Satanic power. Paintings of St George rescuing the chained virgin from the foul, fire-belching jaws of the dragon - although they seem merely quaint today - were, often, not only a depiction of medieval chivalry, but also an allegorisation of the defeat of evil by the divine strength and nobility of Holy Church.

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[16] That ophidian imagery exerts a strong hold on the human imagination, and that it has long been associated with regenerative powers, is attested to, most famously, by the small bare-breasted mother-goddess figures of ancient Crete, which bear writhing snakes in their outstretched hands. The roots of such imagery are buried as far back as the Neolithic period (c. 6,500 - 3,000 BC).

Such a multiplicity of meanings and forms (only touched on here), and the prevalence of them in so many cultures, is proof that the image of the dragon is extraordinarily powerful and that it exerts an almost universal compulsion. Paul Newman (1979), in tracing the history of the dragon since its first recorded appearance, points out that visions of dragons were at one time almost as prevalent as 'sightings' of UFOs are today.[17] It seems, therefore, both fitting and logical that the dragon's combined powers of attraction and repulsion make it a complex and irresistible image for writers of fantasy and, more occasionally, for sf writers as well.

A much-anthologised short story by Cordwainer Smith, 'The Game of Rat and Dragon' (1981), is an example of how this imaginary creature, so closely associated with the world of faerie, can become a component in a science fiction tale - and without losing its traditional meaning. In a story heavily laced with symbolism, men learn to lock minds with that familiar domestic creature, the cat, to overcome a nightmarish menace that prowls the 'Up-and-Out' of outer space. The story, told with the endearingly naive simplicity of a childhood tale, makes it clear that the 'dragons' are allied with, and perhaps symbolic of, those untamed and violent aspects of personality.[18]

Although Cordwainer Smith's dragons are immutably evil and destructive, other writers have viewed these chimeric beasts with a greater degree of complexity, suggesting a wider

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[17] Jung, in his interesting enquiry into the prevalence of contemporary UFO sightings (1991a), posited such 'visions' as archetypal emanations from the collective unconscious. Such sightings, he felt, are 'visionary rumours' arising partly from collective emotional distress as well as from the human desire for transcendental signs and portents akin to those which appeared in the heavens in less technologically advanced times.

[18] The powerful malevolence of these mysterious cosmic creatures unleashes within the human psyche '...vivid spouting columns of fiery terror bursting from the primordial id itself, the volcanic sources of life' (Smith, 1981:227).

range of symbolic meanings and seeing them as messengers of more abstract concepts than the 'beast within'. One writer who uses the dragon to suggest the rich diversity of the natural world - as well as the complexity of the human response to that world - is Ursula Le Guin, always a writer who seeks to portray the subtle interplay of positive and negative forces which underpin the processes of experience.

In her acclaimed Earthsea tetralogy, Le Guin manipulates her dragons skilfully, so that while they are creations of the purest fantasy; they also suggest, simultaneously, concepts of abundant reality. Immensely powerful and threatening, they are also strangely attractive, evoking resonances and suggesting possibilities that constantly expand the reader's enjoyment and understanding. Her Taoist inclinations are here manifest in these beasts, which appear, like the Chinese dragon, to be linked with the beneficent forces of nature. Because she is alive to, and able to harness, the reader's response to these images, Le Guin's 'worms' become - despite their terrible characteristics - vessels of exaltation and regeneration.

In the dragons of Earthsea, Le Guin recognises the archaic and terrible force of nature, its unknowability and its awesome strength. Thus, her gigantic worms conform to all the stereotypes of the image. Her dragons are clearly linked to the chthonic and the primordial. Like the earth itself, which can, at times, breathe fire and destruction from its molten interior, Le Guin's dragons are ferocious and dangerous to man. They, too, belch fire and smoke. The scent of their breath is almost unbearable. Their blood is poisonous, their eyes dangerous to look into. They are not accountable to man, not even to the wizard Ged, who is a 'dragonlord' and who knows how to converse with them. They live by their own rules and are true to their own predatory natures. They are of nature and - like

nature - governed by rules that are unpredictable and unknown to man. As nature often does, they make man seem small, helpless, trifling.

Like nature, they have malign power, and also the power to do good to man. Like the external world, they are a source of joyous acceptance as well as of deeply-rooted terror. They are avaricious, malicious and insatiable. Yet they also speak of all that is truly wondrous. When Ged first sees the young dragons flying over the sea towards him, his heart swells with joy and wonder at the sight, despite the fact that they are out to do him grievous harm. But it is the sight of the great dragon of Pendor, answering to Ged's challenging cry, that seems to speak of the gigantic and unknowable forces of the natural world.

> No creature moved nor voice spoke for a long while on the island, but only the waves beat loudly on the shore. Then Ged was aware that the highest tower slowly changed its shape, bulging out on one side as if it grew an arm... What he had taken for a part of the tower was the shoulder of the Dragon Pendor, as he uncurled his bulk and lifted himself slowly up.
>
> When he was all afoot his scaled head, spike-crowned and triple-tongued, rose higher than the broken tower's height, and his taloned forefeet rested on the rubble of the town below. His scales were grey-black, catching the daylight like broken stone. Lean as a hound he was and huge as a hill. Ged stared in awe. There was no song or tale could prepare the mind for this sight.
>
> (A Wizard of Earthsea, 1979:86 - 87)

The immensity of the dragon, its slow unfolding, like some organic outgrowth of the rock itself, suggests its chthonian nature and arouses in the reader a shudder of apprehensive recognition for the hidden aspects of the world. Like nature, the dragon dwarfs humanity.

He is a reminder that there are limits to human power and control. He reminds men and women that they are essentially small and fragile creatures, and that it was not so long ago that they themselves were prey to the beasts of the field. Le Guin's dragons are capricious and unreliable, like nature itself. They may be tamed but, when they are, it is only because they themselves have, for some unfathomable reason, allowed their natures to be subdued.

Where other writers (Aldiss, for instance) have evoked the enormous dichotomies inherent in the natural world, Le Guin, more than any other sf and fantasy writer, seems concerned with equilibriums. Because Le Guin is a skilful and thoughtful writer, her 'wind-worms' add symbolic depth to the story of Ged's quest for balance. Ged knows that life is a continual search for harmony, for the delicate balance that weighs loss with gain, grief with joy, life with death. These are the intricate patterns of the dance of life. Man, unlike 'the leaf and the whale and the wind', cannot dance instinctively, but must learn, through rigorous self-discipline, the steps and the music. Le Guin's dragons, archaic, sphinx-like and terrible, are party to the enigmas which man must seek to understand. The appearance of the greatest of all dragons, Kalessin, makes manifest this sense of the mystery and power of nature. His vast and inscrutable presence arouses fear and wonder in the heart of the beholder.

> Its head, the colour of iron, stained with red rust at nostril and eye socket and jowl, hung facing him, almost over him. The talons sank deep into the soft wet sand on the edge of the stream. The folded wings were partly visible, like sails, but the length of the dark body was lost in the fog.
>
> It did not move. It might have been crouching there for hours, or for years, or for centuries. It was carven of iron, shaped from rock - but the eyes, the eyes he dared not look into, the eyes like oil coiling on water, like

> yellow smoke behind glass, the opaque, profound and yellow eyes watched...
>
> (The Farthest Shore, 1979:471)

Le Guin's powerful dragons resonate long within the mind, becoming complex metaphors for concepts which, otherwise, can be expressed only in the language of mysticism and transcendence. Like the frogs, birds and assorted animal psychopomps of fairy tale, they evoke an archaic and reverential fear, opening windows into a world of subjective truth, and guiding the reader along the pathways of symbolic and archetypal meaning.[19] In Tehanu (1990), the last book of the Earthsea series, the dragon Kalessin again makes an appearance, this time serving a different purpose. Where before he seemed to speak of the chthonic majesty and inscrutablity of the natural world, now he suggests the presence of change, of possibility and potentiality.

Tehanu, as discussed in the first chapter, is strangely unsettling, and leaves the reader in a state of some uncertainty, mourning for the clear vision and the sense of heroic purpose that existed in the three earlier novels. A muted anger seems to animate the book, fuelled by Le Guin's consciousness of the manner in which women have been, through the ages, disempowered, and also by a sense that they themselves - through ignorance and naivety - may sometimes collude in this disempowerment. Her anger, unlike the coruscating and sometimes repellent fury of Joanna Russ, is strongly controlled, expressed with discipline and unshakeable civility.

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[19] Le Guin's clarity and vision become even more remarkable compared with the manner in which less talented writers use the dragon image. In the works of the popular Anne McCaffrey, for instance, the dragon is entirely emasculated. She has 'tamed' its fire, so that it has no value beyond a superficial and somewhat cloying charm. In anthropomorphising and domesticating her dragons, she sacrifices their most valuable of attributes, their 'unknowability'. McCaffrey's charming - indeed, almost loveable - dragons are, therefore, entirely one-dimensional, for they cannot become vehicles for the conveyance of metaphoric truth.

In Tehanu, Le Guin has reconsidered her position *vis-a-vis* the wizard Ged, stripping him of his special powers and suggesting that women be admitted into the hallowed precinct where men have traditionally reigned. The damaged child, Tehanu, who is scarred physically and emotionally, here becomes a symbol of all the potential power which might lie in female hands. The child is an outsider, shunned because of her terrible disfigurement, but Le Guin suggests that in this difference lies her potency. The village witch Ivy senses that the child might 'see' in ways inaccessible to others. She tells Tenar, '...I don't know what she is. I mean when she looks at me with that one eye seeing and one eye blind I don't know what she sees....' (149).

Indeed, Tehanu is the key to ancient knowledge, for she can speak the tongue of the dragons, calling up the might of creatures that are allied to the mysterious forces of creation. Mircea Eliade (1974) has pointed to the mythic significance of the animal and also to the meaning of the one who can speak to it. Animals, he says, 'are charged with a symbolism...so that to communicate with animals, to speak their language and become their friend and master is to appropriate a spiritual life much richer than the merely human life of ordinary mortals' (1974:61). But, Le Guin, as well as suggesting these symbolic connections, has added another dimension to her story, so that the implications expand gently outwards on the surface of the reader's consciousness.

The archetypal dragons of myth and fairy tale were often ravagers of the countryside, placated only by the regular sacrifice of a virgin female. Tehanu recalls - and subtly deconstructs - this old relationship between dragon and girl-child. Tehanu, the abused and mutilated child, has, in a sense, been sacrificed already, to the terrible desires of men. But, unlike the impotent maidens of myth and fairy tale, who must await a male rescuer,

Tehanu is empowered by her relationship with the dragon. Tehanu, who calls to the great dragon Kalessin, seems to become symbolic of the immense and untapped power and knowledge that lie within womankind. Associated with dark and hidden places, the power of this mythic ophidian beast is hidden until it bursts forth, breathing fire and sowing fear. Tehanu, stepping forth so unexpectedly out of her habitual silence and impotence, summoning powers of which all around her are ignorant - suggests that the female spirit and the archetypal and chthonian dragon are inextricably linked. Together, Tehanu and the dragon symbolise the promise of the future.

Le Guin, who is often rather elliptical in expression, refusing to draw clear lines or to state her meaning baldly, seems here to be suggesting that women, who have always been sidelined in society, whose self-esteem and confidence have been subtly undermined by male arrogance, need to grasp their own knowledge and power firmly, learn to speak the 'dragon's tongue' without fear, as does Tehanu, in order to come finally into their own realm. Tehanu represents, perhaps, the unfledged power of the feminine psyche, damaged, but still capable of being actuated. Thus, Le Guin's strange little fantasy expresses, in these archetypal and symbolic images, a vision that is as contemporary as the 1990s in which she was writing. Rosemary Jackson's (1988:155) contention that Le Guin's fantasy 'leave[s] problems of social order untouched' is patently set firmly up-side-down.

Although Le Guin's dragons achieve archetypal majesty and significance, she also treats these fantastic beasts as perfectly real creatures in her (admittedly) unreal worlds. But in Clive Barker's Weaveworld (1988), a book which fairly shimmers with fantastic devices, an imaginary dragon is used to express, in metaphor, a completely different, but equally complex, idea. Barker, known primarily as a writer within the genre of 'horror' fiction,

has a mind capable of creating a kaleidoscopic variety of visceral images which range from the beautiful and beguiling to those which invoke both terror and disgust. In Weaveworld he offers a passionate plea for the value of fantasy, and uses an archetypal dragon as a vehicle to express his own vision of what fantasy can achieve.

The story is played out against the background of two worlds. One is the 'real' world, the 'Kingdom', which is inhabited by humans, or Cuckoos. The other world is the 'Fugue', a world of magical possibilities, inhabited by the 'Kind', a race of people who have at their disposal magic or 'raptures'. Once upon a time, Barker tells us, these two worlds lived closely entertwined, but as the harshness of human reality tried to destroy the Kind they retreated into ever smaller and smaller spaces. Finally, perilously pressured and on the verge of destruction by the Cuckoos, they wove a magical carpet to contain their miraculous world and within which they would be safe.

From the moment the book opens, Barker introduces the image of the Loom, thus personifying the metaphoric and magical process by which the threads of a story are woven together into a fabulous and cohering vision. And in the process he shows how old stories may be transformed into new enchantments with more contemporary relevancies.

> Nothing ever begins.
>
> There is no first moment, no single word or place from which this or any other story springs.
>
> The threads can always be traced back to some earlier tale, and to the tales that preceded that; though as the narrator's voice recedes the connections will seem to grow more tenuous, for each age will want the tale told as if it were of its own making.

...

> Nothing is fixed. In and out the shuttle goes, fact and fiction, mind and matter, woven into patterns that may have only this in common: that hidden amongst them is a filigree which will with time become a world.
>
> (Weaveworld:5)

This metaphor - not entirely original, to be sure - is expanded into the unique and concrete weave of the magical carpet which contains the Fugue. The story begins with the protagonist, Cal Mooney, getting a fleeting glimpse of this fabulous object. Once he has seen it he is obsessed with the wonders that it reveals. He cannot doubt its veracity, for he hungers for it with unbearable intensity. Cal senses that in the Fugue lies the home of his heart's desire. He calls it 'Wonderland' and he knows immediately and instinctively that 'The true Wonderland... was as much shadow as sunlight, and its mysteries could only be unveiled when your wits were about used up and your mind close to cracking' (42).

Linked with the image of the carpet is also the image of an ancient book of fairytales, *Geschichten der Geheimen Orte*, in which Barker embodies a message: 'what can be imagined can never be lost.' When the female protagonist Suzanne finds the book she knows that the stories move her, that in losing her childish capacity to believe in these imaginary worlds, she has lost something vital.

> Yet the stories moved her...And they moved her in a way only *true* things could. It wasn't sentiment that brought tears to her eyes. The stories weren't sentimental. They were tough, even cruel. No, what made her weep was being reminded of an inner life that she'd been so familiar with as a child; a life that was both an escape from, and a revenge upon, the pains and frustrations of childhood; a life that was neither mawkish nor

> unknowing; a life of mind-places - haunted, soaring - that she'd chosen to forget when she'd taken up the cause of adulthood.
>
> (101)

Barker seems to be saying that Wonderland is both a marvellous and a dangerous place - like fantasy itself - and that one enters it only in a state of surrender. Throughout the book, the message is that the mind hungers for a state it once knew, perhaps in childhood, when all things were possible, when there was no limit to imagination, and when reality and unreality were closely intertwined.

But Weaveworld, in speaking for the value of fantasy, does not let the reader forget that not all fantasy is wholesome. Shadwell, the Salesman, offers his victims a diseased fantasy, a spurious fantasy that is shabby, insincere, meretricious and tawdry.[20] The reader is left in no doubt that it is the Fugue that offers the real thing, with all its magical disorder, its light and dark, its clarity and mystery. The Fugue invites the mind to roam free and to believe in all possibilities. It becomes a metaphor for the fecundating power of the human imagination.

At the heart of the book, Barker includes an extraordinary scene, where an archetypal beast image is conjured into reality purely by the imaginative force of the female protagonist, Suzanna, and her enemy, Inspector Hobart. Hobart is a man locked in the rationality of the Kingdom, who is repelled by the disorder and unlimited possibilities of the imagina-

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[20] Clive Barker himself, it must be said, has been guilty of purveying inferior fantasy in books such as The Hellbound Heart (1991), in which his gifts have been subverted into the unjustifiably cheap and sensational. Perhaps seduced by the Hollywood entertainment industry which has filmed several of his books, Barker appears here to have worked hastily and carelessly: characters are sketchily drawn, the nastiness of the visceral effects is not balanced by any cohering vision, and the entire impression is of formulaic writing.

tion. He both desires and fears Suzanna, whom he sees as complicit with all that is deviant and irrational. She and Hobart, each grimly struggling to wrest the book of *marchen* away from the other, are transported into the archetypal fairytale forest, the Wild Woods. Here, in this place of enchantment, danger and infinite possibility, Hobart takes form as a splendid dragon, albeit one wounded by his own intellectual limitations and emotional bewilderment. Suzanna, who accepts whole-heartedly the seductive power of the Fugue - and who has, Barker suggests, therefore embraced all the magical potentiality of the human state - meets with the dragon in the dark heart of the Wild Woods. The confrontation of minds has cast her, initially, in the guise of the archetypal Maiden; she is virginal and helpless. The encounter is superbly visual, comic and terrifying at one and the same time.

> The Great Worm Hobart opened its one good eye. A broken arrow protruded from its twin, the work of some hero or other no doubt, who'd gone his tasselled and shining way in the belief that he'd dispatched the beast. It was not so easily destroyed. It lived still, its coils no less tremendous for the scars they bore, its glamour untarnished. And the living eye? It held enough malice for a tribe of dragons.
>
> It saw her, and raised its head a little. Molten stone seethed between its lips and murdered the poppies.
>
> ...
>
> It was a beautiful worm, there was no denying that, its iridescent scales glittering, the elegance of its malice enchanting. She felt, looking at it, the same combination of yearning and anxiety which she remembered so well from childhood.
>
> (Weaveworld:452)

Once again, the archetypal beast functions as a psychopomp, conducting the reader towards an intellectual concept which has taken shape as a visual image. It becomes a guiding force, indicating some aspect of truth - in this instance, a new understanding of the powers of the imagination. For this Great Worm Hobart, scarred and wounded as it is, metaphorises the true nature of the limited and fearful spirit. Despite Hobart's imaginative chastity, his belief in reason, his repugnance for all the fantastic arabesques which the imagination might describe, he wishes profoundly to be ravished by those very passions which he fears. 'He, in his private imaginings, was power besieged, and seduced, and finally - painfully - *martyred* (453).

The moment Suzanna understands the true nature of Hobart, she understands also the truth about herself. She knows suddenly why Hobart fears her, that she is a woman and that 'the role of Maiden - all milk and soft sighs - didn't fit'. With this realisation comes a lightning transformation. In a trice, Hobart and Suzanna have switched roles. The Great Worm Hobart dwindles, shrinking to become a naked and vulnerable 'human male, covered in wounds. A chaste knight at the end of a weary road, bereft of strength or certitude' (454). Rather like the damaged child in Tehanu, Suzanna, in turn, becomes an immense and dangerous Dragon, a symbolic manifestation of the power of her own femininity and intelligence.

Although this encounter is one purely of the imagination, the strength of these images speaks profoundly to some atavistic and primeval component in the reader's mind, activating subtle emotional responses and transforming the image into a potent source of wonder and revelation. The dragon, in both these manifestations, and in the fluidity of its changing shapes, speaks for the *potentiality* of the human imagination. It personifies the

possibility of *becoming*, and suggests the power of the imagination to transform and to make real. The axis upon which the events of Weaveworld revolve is the belief that 'what can be imagined can never be lost'. The dragon, an enduring image present in even the earliest of recorded societies, here achieves a new potency, becoming one aspect of 'what can be imagined'.

The books discussed in this chapter testify to the ancient power of the image of the beast. Each suggests that recognition of, and communion with, the beast may help humans to go beyond their earthbound condition and to achieve transcendence. Each writer suggests that it is those instinctual and animal components of the psyche which, if accorded the dignity of recognition and responsibility, may provide something of value to humanity. Lee, Crowley, Le Guin and Barker have shown that these archaic beast symbols still have power to stir the heart and the mind, and that such base material may stimulate both an understanding of, and the ability to rise above, the merely human. Simultaneously, these writers also demonstrate that sf and fantasy are protean in the manner in which they focus the vitality of such images to engage the reader in a complex discourse with emotional, spiritual, imaginative and intellectual ramifications. Kingsley Amis's view that sf has 'spent' its 'talent and energy' (1981:25) would seem, happily, to be entirely misplaced.