BEARERS OF DREAMS

A STUDY OF ARCHETYPAL SYMBOLISM IN FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION

BY

AVRIL RUBENSTEIN

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE

(English)

in the

Faculty of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

PRETORIA

MAY 1998

PROMOTORS : MS. M. BROWN
PROF. S. M. FINN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to Ms Molly Brown for her relentless, but always tactful, pursuit of clarity. Her guiding hand was both firm and gentle, her interest in the topic was sincere and wide, and her criticism was always apt.

Both she and Professor Stephen Finn were never happy to settle for anything less than stringent academic standards. I am indebted to both for their professionalism.

A large part of my gratitude goes to my husband Robert, who made sure that I never lost sight of the final goal and who never failed to urge me on.

DEDICATION

Bearers of Dreams is dedicated to my father, Dr Ellis Fasser, who set me roaming through those mysterious inner and outer spaces, so many, many years ago.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is threefold: to suggest that archetypal symbols are present in much fantasy and science fiction literature; to isolate and explore these symbols, demonstrating how they contribute to the attractions of these genres; and to 'place' and assess fantasy and science fiction within the broader context of the literary mainstream.

Various problems are confronted: difficulties inherent in defining the genres; conflicting and confusing perceptions regarding the nature, purpose and value of these modes, both from within and without the fields; and the manner in which each may interpenetrate the other. Also discussed is the close connection of these genres with the language of mythic symbolism.

The study is, thereafter, confined to an analysis of various archetypal symbols, as identified by Carl Gustav Jung. The discussion argues for a reassessment of archetypal criticism, emphasising that such images are essentially symbols of transformational and metaphoric power. Several key themes and *motifs* are isolated and explicated, revealing how they expand and lend significance to narrative material by virtue of conscious and subliminal resonances, and showing why they call up sensations of wonder and revelation.

The symbols analysed are those which, in the Jungian mode, point the way towards the achievement of personal (ontogenic) and racial (phylogenic) individuation. Some of

these archetypal images are, for instance, the shadow, the threshold, the forest, the mandala, the desert or wasteland, the labyrinth, the beast and the green man. The focus is on their ubiquitous appearances and ramifications in the work of writers as diverse as, for example, Ursula Le Guin, Alfred Bester, Brian Aldiss and J. G. Ballard, and how such images can become vehicles for the passage towards redemption and revelation.. The genealogy and importance of each symbol is analysed, revealing how the writer's vision can transform these ancient images and impart to them idiosyncratic meaning and beauty as well as general contemporary relevance.

Finally, in synthesis, this study will show how and why fantasy and science fiction literature may, in certain instances, rise above the merely popular, escapist and artistically mundane to achieve beauty and gravity equal to much mainstream literature.

SAMEVATTING

Die doel van hierdie skripsie is drieledig: om te kenne te gee dat argitipiese simbole teenwoordig is in talle verbeeldings- en wetenskapsverhaalliteratuur; om hierdie simbole af te sonder en na te vors, aantonende hoe hulle bydra tot die bekoring van hierdie genres en om verbeeldings- en wetenskapsverhale binne die breër verband van die literêre hoofstroom te plaas en te evalueer.

Verskeie probleme word aangespreek: struikelblokke eie aan die verklaring van die twee genres; botsende en verwarrende waarnemings rakende die aard, doel en waarde van verbeeldings- en wetenskapsverhale, sowel binne as buite hierdie terreine. Die noue verband van hierdie twee genres met die taal van fabelsimbolisme word ook aangespreek.

Die studie word daarna gewy aan die nadere ontleding van verskeie argitipiese simbole soos deur Carl Gustav Jung uitgesonder. Die bespreking dui op 'n herwaardasie van argitipiese kritiek, met die klem daarop dat sodanige beelde wesenlik simbole is van omskeppende en metaforiese krag. Verskeie sleuteltemas en grondidees word uitgesonder en verduidelik, wat aan die lig bring hoe hulle ontwikkel en betekenis gee aan verhalende gegewens deur middel van bewuste en verhewe weerklanke, en wat aantoon hoekom hulle 'n gevoel van wonder en openbaring te voorskyn bring.

Om Jung se voorbeeld te volg, is die simbole wat ontleed word, daardie wat dui op die pad na bereiking van persoonlike (ontogeniese) en ras (filogeniese) individuasie. Sommige van hierdie argitipiese simbole is die skadu, die drumpel, die woud, die

mandala, die dorsland, die doolhof en die 'groen man'. Die klem is op hul alomteenwoordige verskynings en vertakkings in die werke van skrywers soos, byvoorbeeld, Ursula Le Guin, Alfred Bester, Brian Aldiss en J. G. Ballard, en tot watter mate sulke simbole dui op bevryding en openbaring. Die genealogie en belangrikheid van elke simbool is ontleed wat aan die lig bring hoe die outeur se opvatting daardie antieke beelde kan vervorm en idiosinkratiese betekenis en skoonheid, asook algemene asmede eietydse toepaslikheid daaraan kan verleen.

Sintese wys ten slotte in hierdie studie hoe en waarom verbeeldings- en wetenskapsverhaalliteratuur in bepaalde gevalle bo die blote gewilde ontvlugtings en kunstig alledaagse uitstyg om skoonheid en erns gelykstaande aan die meeste hoofstroomliteratuur te bereik.

ONE: INTRODUCTION

There is no total view of the world as an intelligible whole, and
it is our fictions that we shore against our ruins.
William Righter

The study which follows was suggested by a lifetime fascination with science fiction and, to a lesser extent, with fantasy writing. From this grew a desire to understand the particular and enduring pleasures of these two genres. Since readers with conservative academic backgrounds are not usually captivated by this sort of writing, my own enthusiasm became something of a puzzle. What constituted the vivid flavours of certain books, so that they did not pall with familiarity and time? Why was it possible to go back to some stories over and over, and be continually moved by them?

It seemed to me that one of the most potent sources of this attraction was the manner in which certain writers dealt with themes that were all too familiar in mainstream or canonical literature. In much of the science fiction and fantasy that I encountered, these ancient themes sprang forth with new vitality and fresh relevance. It began to seem that the sort of writing that was of enduring interest was largely centred on certain key images, concepts and symbols. Furthermore, it became apparent that these images were those that had been accessible to mankind since the beginnings of history. Because of this, the writing - which displayed, in many cases, literary skills equal to those acclaimed by the academic fraternity - attained a unique attraction, inspiring what has been called, within the science fiction fraternity, a 'sense of wonder'. This study will focus, therefore, on isolating these images and symbols, on analysing and explicating their specific potency, and on demonstrating that they bring a unique flavour to certain fictional works. In the

process, I hope to demonstrate also that the two genres, science fiction (which will from now on be referred to simply as sf) and fantasy, do not always deserve the denigration often meted out by sophisticated or academic readers, that they are constantly evolving and maturing literary forms and, furthermore, that they are capable, in certain cases, of taking their place alongside canonical or mainstream literature.

Perhaps what deflects a certain amount of approval away from the fantasy and sf genres is the fact that the critic who approaches these forms of literature with a view to serious assessment must needs confront a set of problems which does not arise in the considera-tion of most other literature. An initial difficulty is that of anatomising with any degree of precision what constitutes the particular nature of fantasy and sf, and this leads - a further complication - to the vexed question of how to define each genre. These dilemmas are compounded, moreover, by the fact that many theorists bring to the field an entire range of idiosyncratic and sometimes abstruse terminology. In addition, since sf and fantasy have been regarded for so long as commercial, sensational and popular, there has always been a marked resistance, from the academic fraternity, towards serious consideration of these genres.[1] Despite the fact that sf has been ubiquitous since the second half of the Victorian era, and notwithstanding the fact that some of its early practitioners were writers such as Mary Shelley, H. G. Wells and Jules Verne, none of the difficulties here mentioned has yet been wholly dissipated. Finally, yet another barrier has been created by the fact that there exists, within the sf and fantasy fields themselves, a noticeable hostility to critical attempts to relate these genres to the larger mainstream. This chapter will attempt to place these issues in perspective. It will then move on to a discussion of the scope of

---

[1] As Northrop Frye points out, academicians frequently regard such entertaining writing as 'delightful, and therefore detestable' ((1976:25).

this study, to an explanation of the critical method used, and to a justification of the particular form of analysis which has been chosen.

Unlike mainstream writing such as the realistic novel, the sf and fantasy genres display an interesting anomaly. This is the manner in which both readers and writers of sf and fantasy have long been closely linked in a remarkable relationship that is - at least to those readers and critics who remain beyond the parameters of these two genres - a phenomenon which arouses much puzzlement, admiration and commentary. Almost no other fictional genres elicit the same amount of enthusiasm or disapprobation. Sf and fantasy readers form a sub-culture that is vociferously involved in its chosen reading habits, producing 'fanzines', forming clubs and attending conferences that create an environment in which readers and writers interact closely in a unique symbiosis.[2]

Despite the long and ardent history of sf fandom, there was, until the 1970s, very little rigorous critical attention given to the field of sf. What did exist was supplied by the writers themselves - generally in forewords and introductions to the books of other sf writers - and by their fans. Such 'criticism' could not be said to be truly concerned with judgements about the texts, but only to quantify the reader's emotional response to them.[3] For this was a small and cosy world, infinitely comforting and somewhat incestuous. To be subjected to the glare of the outside world was not a sensation with which writers or

---

[2] Even here in South Africa there is an active fan club called SFSA which meets regularly, publishes its own fanzine (called Probe) which contains articles, reviews and fiction, runs an annual short story competition and holds yearly conferences and conventions.

[3] As an example of the sort of 'chummy' enthusiasm with which one sf writer will introduce another, here is an extract from the introduction to a collection of Connie Willis stories, Impossible Things (1994), written by Gardner Dozois. '...Connie has a mind like a steel trap - except that in Connie's case it would be some rarer and more subtle device, something with mirrors and lasers perhaps, that would somehow give the mice such a good laugh that they'd never even notice that their throats were being cut. Connie's work is like that, too. Deceptive and deadly, and ruthlessly effective' (xi).

readers of science fiction were familiar.

The sources of this unparalleled relationship between the writers and their fans are complex and related to the special nature of the two genres. This study, by isolating and investigating one particular aspect of sf and fantasy writing, will attempt to go some way towards explaining the peculiar and potent fascinations of these art forms.

Once ignored by the academic fraternity, critical interest in and assessment of these fields have now burgeoned, sometimes to be met with a high degree of hostility within the genres themselves. Many writers (and indeed readers) of sf and fantasy seem to feel that their love for the genre gives them the unique right to tread the hallowed ground of what has sometimes been packaged in the portmanteau term 'speculative fiction'. They suggest that the academic who has the temerity to enter this sacred precinct is damned. Even Kingsley Amis - who was one of the first academics to approach sf from a scholarly point of view - professes to understand the basis for this hostility.[4] He quotes sf writer E. C. Tubb as saying, in 1961, that 'the result of bringing high-brow values into what was an essentially popular form or field would be to ruin it' (Amis, 1981:8). Apart from professing to understand just what Tubb meant, Amis also claims to sympathise to a certain extent with the anonymous (but much-quoted) fan who maintained that the truly sensible thing to do would be to 'kick SF out of the classroom and back to the gutter where it belongs' (Amis, 1981:21).

Some highly-intelligent and successful writers, such as Joanna Russ and Arthur C. Clarke,

---

[4] Kingsley Amis gave a series of lectures on sf at Princeton University as early as 1959.

were - as late as the 1970s - still complaining bitterly that their writing was treated in a discriminatory manner. They were quick to point out that they were published and marketed in ways that set them apart from 'mainstream' literature. They were indignant that, in bookstores and in libraries, their books were, and indeed still are, generally relegated to special shelves and special sections - rather as though these works present some sinister danger to the general population.

A small minority of writers of sf have managed, however, to escape such categorisation. Kurt Vonnegut, author of <u>Player Piano</u> (1952), <u>Cat's Cradle</u> (1963), and <u>Slaughterhouse Five</u> (1969) has, for example, always strenuously rejected any attempts to label his writing sf. This resistance seems to have paid dividends, since he is usually referred to as a social satirist or a post modernist (McHale, 1987:16), rather than as an sf writer. The works of J. G. Ballard - on the strength of his wartime novel <u>Empire of the Sun</u> (1985),[5] - now regularly turn up on shelves that do not normally carry genre sf. Similarly, the works of Ursula K. Le Guin, since her mammoth work <u>Always Coming Home</u> (1988) was approvingly reviewed by several highly regarded journals not exclusively devoted to sf[6] and fantasy literature, are now not always confined to the sf ghetto.

But these writers are exceptions, and their success in crossing the barriers of rigidly defined marketing limits is due, in equal part, to luck and to their own abilities to transcend genre material. Other equally serious and gifted writers (for instance, Gene Wolfe

---

[5] <u>Empire of the Sun</u> was recommended for the Booker Prize in 1984, the year of its appearance.
[6] <u>Time</u> (14 October, 1985:79), for instance, reviewed <u>Always Coming Home</u> and called the book - despite certain reservations - 'inspired' and 'enchanting'.

and John Crowley) have not been as fortunate. Sometimes writers themselves seem confused about how they would wish to be received by the general reading public. Writers such as Joanna Russ appear to reject the sf label. Yet, paradoxically, Russ also lays clamorous claim to being 'different' or 'special'. Russ, a highly-regarded writer of sf and an academic herself[7] is on record as saying that contemporary criticism is inadaquate to the task of assessing sf. She maintains controversially:

> Not only do academic critics find themselves imprisoned by habitual (and unreflecting) condescension in dealing with this particular genre; quite often their critical tools, however finely honed, are simply not applicable to the body of work that - despite its superficial resemblance to realistic or naturalistic twentieth-century fiction - is fundamentally a drastically different form of literary art.
>
> (Russ, 1976:9)

Samuel R. Delany (1989:10), semiotician and acclaimed sf writer,[8] claims, somewhat extravagantly, that science fiction, by its very nature, cannot be literature, and that he himself does not wish, nor has he ever wished, for it to be literature. For Delany, sf has its own 'philosophical worth and an esthetic beauty', a beauty which is valorised by reading in a special kind of way.

In this, he would seem to agree with Joanna Russ that the critic of sf must needs be equipped in some particular way that is mysteriously unavailable to critics of canonical

---

[7] Joanna Russ is a 1972 Nebula Award winner (for 'When it Changed'[1983]), a 1983 Hugo Award winner (for the novella Souls [1985]), and a university professor of English who has produced a certain amount of interesting sf criticism.

[8] Delany won a 1966 Nebula Award for his novel Babel - 17 (1987), as well as a 1967 Nebula Award for his short story 'Aye, and Gomorrah' (1980). His novelette 'Time Considered as a Helix of Precious Stones' (1981) was awarded both the Hugo and Nebula awards in 1969. In addition, he has produced an impressively rigorous body of literary theory. No less a literary theorist than Umberto Eco has said of Delany that he is 'a fascinating writer in general who has invented a new style' (Matrix, Issue No. 120:8).

literature. Russ (1976:9), however, goes even further, maintaining that in order to criticise sf the critic has to understand modern science. Since the scientific component in most works of sf is slight - not least in her own works - this last statement is particularly inapt. In addition, of the countless readers who are passionate about sf, it is only a very small percentage who are actually initiates in the mysteries of science. It seems that an enthusiasm and reverence for the romance and the possibilities of science are of far greater value than scientific knowledge as such. To Russ's (1976:11) comment that 'unless a critic can bring to The Time Machine not only a knowledge of the science that stands behind it, but the passionate belief that such knowledge is real...the critic had better stay away from science fiction', one can respond only with astonishment. Since the 'science' behind The Time Machine is not only negligible but also spurious, her statement is quite meaningless.[9]

As theorist Damien Broderick remarks, 'science' in sf plays, for the most part, the role of an 'enabling device' and, as such, is certainly not to be taken too seriously. As he points out (1995:27), 'it is undeniable that the majority of sf's enabling devices...are mock-scientific at best'. The 'science' - such as faster-than-light travel, teleportation aids, time travel, extra-sensory perception, telekinesis (to name but a few of the tropes of sf) - is simply the means to set plot in motion and, often, to provide a background against which intellectual or ethical enquiry becomes valid. John Griffiths (1980:8) calls such settings 'hypothetical paradigms', while Cory and Alexei Panshin (1976:9) - those prolific, intelli-

---

[9] H. G. Wells's Time Machine is never clearly described, neither is the principle upon which it operates. The reader is told that it has parts of nickel, ivory, of rock crystal and quartz, that it has a saddle, a starting lever, a stopping lever and a clock (The Time Machine, 1957:17). But what the novella is truly remarkable for is the writer's horrifying and millennial vision of humanity's eventual decay and extinction, as well as for the nightmarish conception of the Earth's long slide into entropy beneath the feeble light of its dying sun. This vision has since become one of the more familiar tropes of sf and will, in fact, be dealt with at greater length in chapter five of this study.

gent and prophetic commentators on sf and fantasy literature[10] - state more bluntly that 'science fiction has never done better than pretend to be about science.'

Joanna Russ is not alone amongst sf writers in her condemnation of the literary critic. J. G. Ballard has referred uncharitably to certain academics who show interest in the field as the 'Lumpen Intelligentsia' (in Griffiths, 1980:2). Kingsley Amis, apparently in a state of some confusion on the subject of the value of criticism, maintains on the one hand (Spectrum, 1964), that sf 'is not ordinary fiction and cannot be judged as if it were...', and warns on the other hand - in the foreword to his early appraisal of sf, New Maps of Hell (1969:10) - against 'too much...reluctance to invoke ordinary critical standards'.

John Griffiths, in his lively study of sf, Three Tomorrows: American, British and Soviet Science Fiction (1980), displays a somewhat more balanced view. Although he does not rashly discount the value of measured criticism, he draws attention to the sudden profusion of academic interest as undesirable in that it often brings the 'arcane' and 'totally incomprehensible jargon' of the universities to a field hitherto unsullied by the gaze of the literary critic. He quotes a passage of criticism from Foundation II that is stunning in its opacity.

> Even so, being formed in the cracked mould of the capitalist ethos, M. Le Clezio has found a style for the mystery he seeks to corrode away. He is well experienced in the existential canon, with perhaps Camus and Barbusse as heroes, Genet and Robbe-Grillet as influences, and the Gallic penchant for masochistic rationalism being a compulsively used tool. Yet,

---

[10] The Panshins, writing in 1976, predicted - with remarkable prescience - a creative explosion in the sf field in the 1980s. The flowering of feminist and cyberpunk sf would seem to prove them right. Furthermore, they predicted that after 1980, fantasy and sf would become more closely entertwined, and that the audience for each would have grown enormously. In all of these predictions they have been proven correct.

given the existentialist's screaming inconclusiveness, the denial of abso-
lutes, the metaphysical/menstrual quality of such thought worlds, the val-
ues which drop out and crystallize at the end of the book are known to us
all: Freedom, Love, Privacy, Peace and Dogs, in whatever order.

(in Griffiths, 1980:9)

Leaving aside, for the moment, the fact that much literary criticism in general could be regarded as arcane jargon, written in such highly specialised language that even academics often find it impenetrable, it would be doing sf a grave disservice to suggest that it is unassimilable except by those who have some special gift, or to imply that it is 'owned' by the writers and fans who lay claim to it. Certain critics seem to feel that it is a private domain, unavailable to those who do not have the correct password. Recently, Damien Broderick (1995) has suggested that readers of sf need to serve a sort of apprenticeship, so that they become educated in, and familiar with, the tropes of the genre, rather as though they were initiates into some esoteric priesthood. But this would seem to be true of almost any art form. Poetry, opera, abstract art, drama in blank verse, dance, all these demand of their audiences a certain learned responsiveness and sophistication, a certain familiarity with the 'grammar' of the genre. In this, then, sf is not unique. The suspicion thus lingers that many writers of sf are not happy to be subjected to the harsh glare of external assessment.

In mitigation of this hesitancy to accept academic standards, however, it does appear that there might well be a certain legitimate cause for unease within the fields of sf and fantasy writing. In my opinion, there is at least some reason to distrust the sudden surge of interest by the academic world, since a certain amount of it would seem to come from the mercenary and arid region of self-interest. With academic research proliferating, academic

opportunists are constantly searching for fertile fields in which they might reap the benefits

of research. Most traditional literary areas have been endlessly ploughed and sifted, and

researchers must seek areas that have been less thoroughly worked. When a critic who is

not familiar with the entire context or development of the genre, nor familiar with its

particular forms and charms, selects a random sampling of texts and then comments upon

them without true empathy, the result can only be a dismaying and empty exercise.

Thomas J. Roberts, in his study of popular genres, An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction, has

called attention to the critical difficulties which may arise from this situation:

> Academic scholars who assign themselves the task of discovering the appeal of some genre or subgenre they do not read themselves - the historical romance, sword and sorcery, the caper novel - and who solemnly read and annotate some six or twenty of the novels are handicapped by the ignorance of the occasional reader, though they cannot afford to allow their readers or themselves to recognise this. The misunderstandings they foster do more mischief, for their descriptions are supported with massive citations and are smugly embedded in method.
>
> (Roberts, 1990:81)

Nevertheless, the situation is not entirely a negative one. Latterly, critical attitudes have

undergone a change, becoming more open and less rigid. There are now more egalitarian

attitudes towards what has hitherto been regarded as entertainment or popular literature.

As academic interest has, in the past two decades, shifted to those fields of popular

literature which have been less thoroughly explored, studies such as W. Wright's Sixguns

and Society: A Structural Study of the Western (1975), John G. Cawelti's Adventure,

Mystery and Romance: Formula Stories and Popular Culture (1976) and Umberto Eco's

The Bond Affair (1977) have signalled a newer, more serious response to genres that

appeal unashamedly to commercial markets. Sf and fantasy literature have not eluded this

expanding academic gaze.

For some writers and readers of sf, who still vigorously resist this movement towards the mainstream, it is a source of dismay that the not always dispassionate eye of the literary critic is turning in their direction. Others, happily, are more comfortable with such changes and are ready to throw themselves whole-heartedly into the hurly-burly of the literary mainstream, resigned to braving the possible chilliness of the academic response.[11] It is not only Kurt Vonnegut who is refreshingly open to academic considerations. Le Guin, for example, argued vigorously in 1975 - in a speech entitled 'The Stone Ax and the Muskoxen' - that sf must be judged, and judged as rigorously as any other branch of literature (Le Guin, 1989h:208).

Despite the fears of so many writers and readers of sf, however, there are considerable benefits to be derived from this new-found interest in less traditional genres. Of un-doubted importance is the fact that academics who formerly were less than eager to admit that they themselves were readers of sf or fantasy literature - Damien Broderick (1995:14) has neatly summarised this self-consciousness as 'the embarrassment of the complicit' - are no longer reluctant to announce publicly their enthusiasm for the field. They now feel free to add the weight of their experience to the field of criticism. Such scholarly scrutiny brings to sf and fantasy the combined benefits of a profound interest in these genres, as well as an ability to analyse and assess in an informed and balanced manner.

---

[11] One cannot help but speculate whether the unease about the value of academic criticism which is displayed so vociferously by, for instance, Russ, is not, in part, a defensive and protective reaction. She - unlike Ursula Le Guin - has not achieved a more generalised literary acceptance. And it would be interesting to evaluate J. G. Ballard's current response to critical appraisal in the light of the recent general interest and approbation that he is receiving. It is conceivable that, in the wake of such changing responses to his work, his own attitude to the academic fraternity may have altered.

For criticism, at its best, is instructive, not destructive. When it is offered with integrity, in the spirit of disinterested inquiry, and with the informed ability to 'place' writing against the larger tradition of literary and cultural development, criticism brings a new understanding to sf and fantasy literature. By steadfastly facing the ordeal of general critical assessment and by learning to regard such attention as enriching - something that other literary genres have learned to do - sf will undoubtedly come to new maturity. Writers of sf are slowly learning to 'face the music', as it were, in order to achieve legitimacy and esteem and in order to become fully-fledged and official members of the larger literary stream. Sf, like all other kinds of literature, must simply learn to take its chances. It must be prepared to accept the good and discard the bad.

Happily, this process of maturation seems now to be well under way. As previously pointed out, not only are sf and fantasy engaging the serious and rigorous attention of academics who are, themselves, writers of sf and fantasy, but these genres have begun to intrigue serious critics of canonical literature. The fact that theorists such as Christine Brooke-Rose, Rosemary Jackson, Karl Kroeber and Northrop Frye - to mention a few only - have been moved to discuss the special problems of sf and fantasy is, in itself, meaningful, for the motives of such critics are entirely unimpeachable. In addition, sf and fantasy devices have begun to infiltrate mainstream fiction. Thus, novelists who would hesitate to call themselves writers of sf (Doris Lessing, Margaret Atwood, William Golding and John Fowles, for example)[12] have begun to adopt science fictional modes and techniques. Far from being impoverished by such attention, sf and fantasy are already

---

[12] Books by these esteemed contemporary writers that are strongly science fictional or which contain science fictional tropes are, for example, Doris Lessing's Canopus in Argos: Archives (1979 - 1983) series, Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale (judged Best Sf Novel of the Year in 1986), William Golding's Lord of the Flies (1954) and The Inheritors (1955), and John Fowles's A Maggot (1986).

finding themselves considerably enriched in terms of more accomplished writing styles and more complex characterisation - aspects which this study will demonstrate.

Frye, in The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance (1976), has suggested a logical reason for the interpenetration of sf and fantasy with canonical writing. He has formulated the theory that an artistic development, before it reaches a peak of expressiveness and subtlety, is heralded by the initial appearance of what he calls a 'primitive' phase. Thus, '...the primitive is a quality in literature which emerges recurrently as an aspect of the popular, and as indicating also that certain conventions have been exhausted' (Frye, 1976:29). Frye describes this movement towards the primitive (or popular) as 'the wandering of desire' (1976:30). Rather than dismissing such writing as valueless, he feels that it creates a groundsoil, like some rank and richly odorous compost, which will later give birth to, and nourish, more exquisite growths - that is to say, the 'great literature' which will spring from it.

> Great literature is what the eye can see: it is the genuine infinite as opposed to the phony infinite, the endless adventures and endless sexual stimulation of the wandering of desire. But I have a notion that if the wandering of desire did not exist, great literature would not exist either.
>
> (Frye, 1976:30)

Frye finds that this necessary initial or 'primitive' phase appears as a popular genre, at a time when more highly-developed art forms have reached a peak and begun to slide toward obsolescence. The popular genre then begins to indicate movement in a fresh direction, eventually becoming the source of a new fecundity for writers in the mainstream.

James Gunn, sf writer, teacher and critic, had - two years earlier - already predicted much the same thing in relation to the field of sf writing:

> An increasing number of [sf] writers will be difficult or impossible to categorize. The goal will be the goal of the mainstream: each writer with his individual vision, his individual voice. Meanwhile, mainstream vigor, where it exists, seems to derive from its contacts with popular culture…
>
> (Gunn, 1974:211)

The following chapters will, amongst other concerns, attempt to develop the above concept in order to demonstrate more precisely the extent of the current evolution of the sf and fantasy genres. I would hesitate to say that a sense of responsibility is entering the field. The best sf has always been written in reaction to social and cultural phenomena.[13] In general, sf has usually had serious intent, despite its superficially playful appearance. However, it does seem recently that a *different* sense of responsibility is apparent. In a genre where the close relationship between reader and writer is so prevalent, market-orientated demands have often played a large part in the way in which practitioners shape their texts, responding directly to the demands of their readers, often to detrimental effect.[14] But, during the past two or three decades, the 'fabulous' and exotic qualities of sf and fantasy have, in the hands of certain writers, taken on a richness of intent and an expressiveness of style that enhance the discerning reader's delight. Inventive and fantas-

---

[13] To pick a few examples purely at random: Suzy McKee Charnas's <u>Walk to the End of the World</u> (1974) takes the hostility of the male sex towards women to a horrifying conclusion, while Arthur C. Clarke's 1970s novel <u>Rendezvous With Rama</u> (1991) and Stanislaw Lem's <u>Solaris</u> (1973) both attempt to hypothesise genuinely alien intelligences, and then try to grapple with the problem of how humankind might communicate with them. Judith Moffat's <u>Pennterra</u> (1987) dramatises the concept that mankind must take responsibility for maintaining the ecosystems which sustain all types of life. One of sf's newest manifestations, 'cyberpunk' sf, deals with the impact that computer technology will have on the human race in the near future.

[14] Evidence of this intellectual and artistic barrenness is all too visible on the shelves of bookstores, groaning under the weight of indifferently written and formula-laden sf and fantasy. Anne McCaffery and David Eddings - both extremely popular authors - are just two writers who produce this sort of jejune sf and fantasy.

tic qualities are heightened by a more highly-evolved use of language itself, a point that will be explored at greater length.

At this point it would be apposite to attempt some loose description of the two genres which will be under consideration in this study. Fantasy of the type which will be explored here proves somewhat easier to define than does sf - a point which should make itself clear during the discussion which follows. Confining sf to any single, all-encompassing description is no easy task, since the genre notoriously resists attempts at typification and categorisation. It is a much-quoted truism that readers can recognise immediately what is and what is not sf, even though they may be unable to describe its nature. Griffiths (1980:12) asserts that any attempt to define the genre is doomed to failure - despite the ease with which it can be recognised. John Clute and Peter Nicholls, editors of The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (1993:314) comment that 'There is really no good reason to expect that a workable definition of sf will ever be established. None has been, so far.'

Yet these difficulties, though admitted, have not deterred almost every writer or theorist of sf from attempting his or her own description of the genre, each in turn adding to the confusion.   The attempts range from the primitive[15] to the arcane,[16] with definitions tending to become lengthier and more imprecise as they become more subtle.   Brian Aldiss, noted sf writer, critic, anthologist and historiographer, in his Hugo Award-winning Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction, adds his definition to the roster, end-

---

[15] For instance, Donald Wollheim, in 1935, clumsily defined sf as '...that branch of fantasy which, while not true of present-day knowledge, is rendered plausible by the...recognition of...it being possible at some future date or at some uncertain period in the past' (in Nicholls, 1979:160).

[16] In 1972 Darko Suvin described sf as a 'literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment' (Suvin, 1979:7-8).

ing with a description that is somewhat grandiose and which consciously begs the question, since it is a definition that could - by extension - apply to many different kinds of literature:

> Science fiction is the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode.
>
> (Aldiss, 1986:26)

He goes on to say: 'It is often impossible to separate science fiction from science fantasy, or either from fantasy, since both modes are part of fantasy in a general sense' (1986:27).

Despite these many contradictions, and the difficulty of reaching a definitive conclusion about what is and what is not sf or fantasy, the distinction between the two genres seems to be generally accepted. Fantasy is that which is palpably unreal and which the reader cannot rationally accept. The worlds which fantasy writers create usually contain a high complement of wizards, witches or dragons, and the presence of the occult and the supernatural pervades most works of fantasy. Sf, on the other hand, creates fantastic worlds which - given the acceptance of some basic hypothetical concept from which all else logically flows - can be accommodated with a minimum of intellectual discomfort by the rational reader. Sf, while it may be regarded as a type of fantastic discourse, is, therefore, more rooted in reality than is fantasy *per se*. The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (1993:408), commenting on the overlap between the two genres, points out that '...all sf is fantasy, but not all fantasy is sf.'

If the above very generalised comments seem to evade the problem of definition, perhaps it is Samuel R. Delany who can bring this thorny question to the most balanced conclusion. Why, he asks, should sf be the only literary genre that critics struggle to contain in some limiting and reductive definition? As he points out, 'If SF were definable, then it would be the only genre that was!' (1994:192).

In an effort to escape from the contradictions implicit in defining genres and sub-genres that are notorious for their protean ability to mutate endlessly, Brian Attebery ingeniously proposes adopting 'fuzzy set theory' to the concepts of science fiction, science fantasy and their many offspring.

> Genres may be approached as 'fuzzy sets', meaning that they are defined
> not by boundaries but by a center.... fuzzy set theory proposes that a cate-
> gory such as 'bird' consists of central, prototypical examples like 'robin',
> surrounded at greater or lesser distance by more problematic instances
> such as 'ostrich', 'chicken', 'penguin' and even 'bat'.
>
> (Attebery, 1992:12)

The analogy is obvious and is certainly helpful in delineating the difficulties and ramifications of the genres. The purest forms of fantasy (Attebery proposes that J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings fits this category) can be seen as the central point of the fuzzy set system - much as the sun is the centre of the solar system. Works which bear relation to the fantastic in lesser or greater degrees may be regarded as orbiting this centrifugal point at nearer or further distances, dependent on the degree of the fantastic which forms their substance - just as the closest or more distant planets remain part of the solar system no

matter how closely or how distantly they may roam.[17]

While the fuzzy set concept is apt, it nevertheless leaves us with the need to unravel the specific qualities that constitute sf or fantasy. Patrick Parrinder, in <u>Science Fiction: Its Criticism and Teaching</u> (1980:19), suggests yet another way out of this difficulty. He points to the fact that younger sf writers themselves no longer seem to feel the need to define what they write, but are content to leave such matters to the 'academic theorists'. The perspective of much criticism has shifted moreover, revealing not so much the desire to define sf as the impulse to recognise it 'as a particular *type* of discourse...' (my italics). Brian Stapleford has also suggested that 'the label "Science Fiction" does not simply tell a would-be reader something about what a book contains. It also tells him something about *how it should be read'* (in Griffiths, 1980:5).

Here, then, is a clue as to how one might approach a subject that positively bristles with difficulties. Ignoring for the moment the question of precisely what it is that constitutes the nature of science fiction, a more productive approach may be to ask what it is that a reader of this particular kind of fantasy expects. What needs does the genre feed that remain unsatisfied by other and more traditional forms of fiction?

As pointed out earlier, an interest in the nature and purposes of fantasy has become central to much contemporary literary criticism. Rosemary Jackson's authoritative <u>Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion</u> (1988) has, for instance, become extremely influential, and sever-

---

[17] Speaking purely from a writer's point of view, Roger Zelazny comments, in his essay 'Fantasy and Science Fiction: A Writer's View', that he regards genre distinctions as 'different areas of a continuum - the same ingredients but different proportions' (1987:56).

al other respected academics have produced important works on the subject. Each critic, unfortunately, brings his or her own terminology to the field, so that - for example - what Frye designates the 'fabulous', Jackson calls the 'marvellous', while Karl Kroeber (1988) labels the same literary manifestations 'Romantic fantasy'.

Central to Jackson's approach to fantasy is her reading of it in Marxist and psychoanalytic terms, since she agrees with Freud that fantasy seeks to expel desire, to express, to discover what is hidden by culture and personality. She reads it, in other words, as part of the desire to exorcise the irrational. As such, she argues with Freud, fantasy is the product of neurosis.

However, Kroeber, in his stimulating study, Romantic Fantasy and Science Fiction (1988), finds that Jackson has missed the true subversiveness of fantasy, because she has overlooked the fact that fantasy '... provides important revelations about the strongest tendencies of modern society to exclude and exorcise whatever is neither natural nor amenable to rational explanation' (Kroeber, 1988:87).

Kroeber is critical of Jackson's strongly Marxist and Freudian bias. He maintains that Freud's theory of the 'uncanny' is yet another manifestation of the deterministic and mechanistic stance of our strongly rational and technological society, which explains away and dismisses anything that appears to be strange or 'impossible'. He feels, in fact, that fantasy expresses a desire, not to expel or exclude the irrational, but to embrace the mysterious. For Kroeber, fantasy is not a neurotic but a healthy response to the totalitarian yoke of rationality and technology that has restrained imaginative life during much of the twentieth century. It is his view that Romantic fantasy seeks '...to restore balance to a

world distorted by its total conquest by humankind...'(1988:7). He feels that this realiza-
tion is necessary in order to understand fully this particular literary mode. Furthermore, it
is his opinion that, until we can accept a psychological approach other than the Freudian,
we will be unable to fully appreciate the fantastic discourse. As will become apparent
later, this study will seek to approach fantasy from a point of view which is decidedly un-
Freudian.

While the distinction between Jackson's approach and that of Kroeber (or Attebery
[1992:21-23], who also takes Jackson to task on the narrowness of her point of view)
might seem to be mere hair-splitting, it is seminal, for the first approach sees the emissions
of the fantastic as the product of neurosis, while the second sees it as a healthy response to
the imperfections of society or culture. Thus, Jackson's approach can be seen, in the final
analysis, as reductive, for in her view fantasy is limited to what she regards as 'subversive',
while types of fantasy that do not conform to this 'subversive' category she simply dis-
cards or judges deficient. In her view, those kinds of fantasy which do not fall into the
subversive category are seen to '...reinforce a blind faith in "eternal" moral values, really
those of an outworn liberal humanism' (Jackson, 1988:155).

Kroeber, in contrast, regards fantasy as something that arises spontaneously and defen-
sively as a reaction to 'enlightenment' or rational thought. Indeed, he argues, sf and
fantasy come from the same source - that is to say, in reaction to the 'obliterating of
otherness' (1988:7) by our modern age. Paradoxically, although it grows out of an
antagonism to rationality, fantasy is also destroyed by the great emphasis placed by our
predominantly mechanistic society on the need to explicate or rationalise. Since Kroeber
points to the oxymoronic nature of fantasy (as indeed do most theoreticians) - which he

calls 'an impossible possibility' - this paradox seems fitting.

Here, perhaps, is part of the answer to the question of what it is that fantasy provides, and why there is so extraordinary a contemporary flowering of fantasy on bookshelves. Even though the greater part is emptily formulaic, as well as indifferently written, its sheer abundance indicates that it feeds an enormous hunger. Rather than being simply an indication of the failure of religion or of the mystical, it seems likely that this appetite for fantasy is also, in part, a reaction to the failure of the *rational.*

Damon Knight (1956), sf writer and one of the earliest and most intelligent critics of the genre, coined the much-quoted phrase 'a sense of wonder' in his effort to describe some-thing of the emotional and intellectual reactions that the best science fiction is able to evoke. Although Darko Suvin (1979) dismissed the phrase more than two decades later as a 'superannuated slogan', the words nevertheless express with some degree of precision what it is for which the reader of sf and fantasy hungers. For, while all successful art evokes the sense of being in the presence of the wondrous, sf and fantasy suggest a particular kind of vision, a more distinctive sense of wonder than that provided by the artfully constructed realities of genres such as, for example, the realistic novel or the thriller. Readers of sf and fantasy seek wonder in somewhat novel ways, for they wish to be aroused by a sense of what is epic in the history and nature of mankind. This particular kind of reader is intrigued by speculation about the future capabilities and possibilities of humanity's existence in space and time, intrigued even by speculation as to the very meaning of what constitutes 'humanity'. Indeed, rather than being engaged in a process of exorcism (as Jackson would have it), the reader of sf and fantasy is involved in a won-drous act of acknowledgement.

The questions that sf readers ask are often grandiose in scope, and the responses aroused by their reading are expected to provide a unique and powerful sense of revelation. Thus, sf at its best presents, in a dramatised form, those eternal metaphysical or existential questions that have consistently tormented the consciousness of humanity. Furthermore, as science and society progress or metamorphise, such writers also raise new questions and speculate about the future of differing aspects of human life. For example, Alfred Bester's The Demolished Man (1953) is, on one level, an exciting detective story. But on another level it asks questions about how a certain sort of society might be likely to function. The action is set against the background of an 'esper' society, a world in which certain individuals have the talent to read minds. Bester attempts to define ways in which citizens would need to be protected from this intrusive power. He ponders what the legal and ethical ramifications might be. He debates how this power might be controlled and policed, how it would affect both the possessor of the gift and the 'normal' man. He asks, in other words, questions about how humanity's social, political and cultural relationships would be changed by the alteration of one aspect of what we accept as normality.[18] Similarly, Ursula Le Guin's Left Hand of Darkness (1981), which first appeared in 1969, is, on the narrative level, about politics on an alien world of the far future. It also contains an account of a prison escape and a long and arduous journey that pits the protagonists against a hostile physical world. But, against the details of this adventure, what the book investigates are the implications of a world in which sexual orientation does not constitute the basis for a concept of personal identity - as it does in our own world.

---

[18] Certain critics even go so far as to insist upon the necessity of the 'didactic' element in sf, as Russ maintains in her essay 'Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction' (Science Fiction Studies, Vol. 2, 1975:112-119). Even Stanislaw Lem, the Polish sf novelist and intimidatingly intellectual theorist, contends that sf is essentially a form of argument and that knowledge is its prime concern (Science Fiction Studies, Vol. 1, 1974:26).

While fantasy is not as speculative in nature as sf, it, too, provides the reader with those sensations of awe and mystery that are allied to Knight's sense of wonder. In part, this sense of wonder is aroused by another process that is unique to sf and fantasy. This is the ability of the writing to force upon the reader what Suvin (1979:4) designated the experience of 'cognitive estrangement'. Again, this is a process that is not entirely unknown to other kinds of writing, for all art has the ability to make us experience the world afresh and in new ways. However, realistic or mimetic literature provides the sense of wonder through a process of recognition, through a perceived sensation that one is being shown a true reflection of what really *is*. The mimetic novelist creates a sense of wonder by drawing together the disparate or fragmented aspects of experience and imposing some kind of order on them that forces a sense of coherence and recognition.

Suvin's 'cognitive estrangement' is a concept that is obviously closely akin to what the Russian formalists called *ostranenie*[19] and what Bertold Brecht called *Verfremdungseffek*.[20] For Suvin (1979:7), however, estrangement has 'grown into the *formal framework of the genre*' [italics in text], and is the source of the special *frisson* which the reader gets from the sf and fantasy genres. Here it is estrangement rather than recognition which becomes the very base upon which such writing rests. There is a kind of shock that comes from the alien and the unfamiliar, a certain sensation of novelty or newness that is called into being for the reader. Suvin (1979:64) calls this novelty of background the 'novum', and for him the existence of the novum is axiomatic in the science fictional genre.[21] He

---

[19] The term *ostranenie*, translated as 'defamiliarisation', was the invention of Viktor Shklovsky, who identified it as a common literary device (in Seldon, 1989:10).

[20] Translated as 'alienation effect' (in Seldon, 1989:12).

[21] Suvin suggests that the 'novum' is produced by neither fantasy nor science-fantasy, but only by sf. However, this seems to me an unnecessary quibble, since much fantasy produces a background world or frame of reference that is as essentially estranging as any to be found in sf.

maintains that 'a novum of cognitive innovation is a totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality.'

Thus, the novum or *novelty* becomes the context in which the writing is placed. It is inextricably bound up with the 'idea' or 'concept' within which the writing is framed, and part of the special joy of sf is the recognition and acceptance of the idea. It is, in fact, the entire means by which the story is understood, rather than an occasional literary device. Sometimes the *frisson* involves, as well, the greeting by the reader of the familiar or the recognisable within the matrix of the unfamiliar. For sf and fantasy asks of its readers that they call into question the very fabric of everyday life: these genres force the reader to look with a different sort of vision, forcing also a questioning of a great many common assumptions. Attebery illustrates this very neatly in his discussion of J. R. R. Tolkien's concept of the 'recovery' of the everyday or the commonplace when he says that 'in order to recover our sense of something like a tree, it is only necessary to envision something like a dragon curled around its trunk' (Attebery, 1992:16).

Science fiction, obviously, shares with fantasy this miraculous process of recovery, although in the case of sf the dragon might well be replaced by a space ship or perhaps a picnicking alien.[22] Whatever the case, the estrangement is a potent source of the sense of revelation.

However, sf and fantasy are, in this, not quite as unique as Suvin would have it since, it could be argued, a certain sense of estrangement occurs in other kinds of writing - histori-

---

[22] As, indeed, happens in <u>Roadside Picnic</u> (1978), an intriguing and moving novel by Russian writers Arkady and Boris Strugatsky.

cal novels, for example, or indeed in any writing in which the plot moves against an exotic

background that is removed from the reader's own time and place; removed, that is, from

the contemporary and quotidian reality.[23]   Delany has, in various critical writings, ex-

panded upon Suvin's undeniably important body of theory by drawing attention to certain

linguistic elements which define more closely, for him, the special characteristics of sf and

fantasy.

For Delany, the concept of estrangement is simply not adaquate to explain the specific and

unique qualities of the genre. As early as 1977, when he began to produce his first writ-

ings in the field of literary criticism, he propounded the theory that sf interposes, in recog-

nisable or familiar syntagmatic chains of reference and relationship, signifiers from a

'wholly unexpected paradigm' (1977:255). Because these disruptions of the syntagmatic

chain create both linguistic and cognitive novelties that are specific to sf, the result is that

the reader's attention is focussed in a completely different way. Part of the novelty is

contained in the many innovatory and neologistic uses to which words are put, as well as

to what Delany calls 'fictive' words that writers create. Since such words often have no

reference outside of the science fictional text, they cannot bring to the reader anything but

new and unique associations and resonances, what Delany has called 'subjunctivity'. On

the other hand, sf may harness familiar words to unfamiliar meanings, or even cannibalise

words, corrupting them, subverting them and forcing them to serve in new ways. The

reader must then, perforce, receive the text in ways that are alien to canonical liter-

---

[23] It might even be possible to claim that works such as James Joyce's Ulysses (1960) or D. M. Thomas's
The White Hotel (1981), both of which utilise a wide range of linguistic and narrative devices, also rely for
effect on the degree of estrangement which they create in the mind of the reader.

ature.[24]

Such linguistic and conceptual disruptions and distortions enhance for the reader the 'wondrous' qualities which make the genre so attractive. But there are other factors that come into play. The ability of sf and fantasy to provoke a profound sense of revelation suggests that these genres share some of the same factors that are at work in the structures and images of myth - a link that many critics have noted.[25] Kroeber's (1988:7) suggestion that an entirely different psychological approach might lead to a fuller critical response to fantasy becomes interesting in the light of such correspondences. This study proposes that an analytic approach within the parameters of the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious and the powerful symbolism contained within the archetypal image will be fruitful in revealing much of the power and significance of certain sf and fantasy writing. Such an analysis will, I feel, help to reveal the particular pleasures of these two genres and will also, in the process, illuminate in large measure the powerful sense of wonder evoked by the symbolic components of such archetypal or mythic images.

The interest in symbolic meaning has been a constant stimulus in literary and philosophic discourse since the 1700s and 1800s. The movement received a fresh impetus, however,

---

[24] Early if simplistic examples of fictive words are Philip K. Dick's 'kipple' (A Scanner Darkly:1977), or Alfred Bester's 'jaunte' (Tiger, Tiger!:1991) and 'esper' (The Demolished Man:1953), all entirely synthetic and also entirely expressive. More recently, cyberpunk writers such as William Gibson and Bruce Sterling have engendered a flowering of brilliantly evocative words and concepts. Sometimes these are so apt that they spill over into the usage of other writers, eventually becoming what has been called a 'mega-text' - or, as Samual R. Delany would have it, a *textus* - that is uniquely science fictional. Sometimes, indeed, the neologisms are so appropriate that they infiltrate common usage, for example, terms such as 'cyberspace' and 'virtual reality'.

[25] Critics who have drawn analogies between the structures of myth and sf are almost too numerous to mention. Within the sf field, those that spring most immediately to mind are Ben Bova, Stanislaw Lem, Alexei and Cory Panshin, and Darko Suvin. Some general academic theorists who have commented on sf in relation to myth are Tzvetan Todorov, Northrop Frye, Christine Brooke-Rose, Robert Scholes and Brian McHale.

as the field of anthropology opened up to scholarly and analytic enquiry in the nineteenth century. By the second half of the 1800s there was a sudden surge of interest in myth, magic and ritual, and various interpretations of symbolic behaviour were propounded. Many of these pioneering works are now of historic interest only, considered valuable for the manner in which they expanded methodology and knowledge in the fields of anthropology, ethnology and philosophy, and for the important influences they exerted on those who came after them. One such was J. J. Bachofen, primarily an ardent student of antiquity, who can be regarded as an important precurser of C. G. Jung. He brought a somewhat romantic and spiritual outlook to his archeological and anthropological conclusions, and his work is now considered dated and unscholarly. However, his interest in symbolism is part of an important literary genealogical line, and has proven to be a stimulating influence to writers, poets and scholars of all types. Anthropologist Raymond Firth paraphrases Bachofen's concept of the importance of the symbol:

> He argued that human speech is too poor to convey all the thoughts aroused by such basic problems as the alternation of life and death and the sublimity of hope. Only the symbol and the related myth can meet this higher need. The symbol awakens intimations; speech can only explain. The symbol plucks all the strings of the human spirit at once; speech is compelled to take up a single thought at a time. Into the most secret depths of the soul the symbol strikes its roots.... The symbol aims inward; language aims outward. Only the symbol can combine the most disparate elements into a unitary expression....
>
> (Firth, 1973:105)

Bachofen's insistence on the 'disparate' qualities of the symbolic image is central to an understanding of the power and significance of the symbol. A symbol can be said to be an image that stands in the place of something else and which indicates that other thing. But,

as Jung (1960:45) quite correctly points out, the symbol cannot be interpreted semiotically, for it is not a sign merely. The symbol is far more complex, for within the apparent starkness and simplicity of its outlines is contained a multiplicity of meanings. The symbolic image is a condensation or synthesis of an entirely more elaborate and complex combination of meanings, both intellectual and emotional. As such it can have multiple - even inexhaustible - interpretations. It can be said, paradoxically, that it expresses in the simplicity of its form something which defies expression. Firth (1973:75) defines a symbol as '...a sign [that] has a complex series of associations, often of emotional kind, and difficult (some would say, impossible) to describe in terms other than partial representation.'

Jung, by inclination something of a mystic (a propensity for which he has often been castigated and which earned him Freud's antagonism), brought a certain emotional intensity to his own work, not least to his ideas on the symbolic aspects of creative thought. Even more than the work of Bachofen, his theories have taken root and fertilised much literary discourse. Although not an anthropologist by training, it is through his study of mythology, primitive culture and the recurring imagery of dreams, that Jung postulates his theory of a *collective unconscious*. He finds that certain images are universal in that they recur endlessly, and that such images are not always culturally specific, but appear in diverse cultures and societies at all levels of human development. Jung calls these thought patterns *archetypes*, and finds them to be part of a vast, impersonal reservoir available to all humanity. Furthermore, according to Jung, these archetypes are an essential component of the psychic health or wholeness of both individuals and of the larger groupings to which they belong. The archetype has cryptic significances that function on the level of allegory and metaphor, for it carries symbolic meaning and appears also to be intimately

connected to the processes of myth. Jung speaks of archetypes as being endowed with the *numinous*. That is to say, they are charged with special relevance and power, for they mean not only what their surface meaning suggests but other things as well. Many of these images are intricately bound up with those myths that are central to cultural identity and thus have significances that are profoundly meaningful and potent, even if they are unrecognised by the conscious mind.

Jung feels that these archetypes are inherent in the biology of the human race, that they are encoded into our genetic heritage and that they are, therefore, - as Anthony Stevens has pointed out - 'biological entities' (1982:23). They are imprinted on the human conscious-ness, and that is why they are universally present in cultures that differ so radically from each other. They are a result of the process of natural selection, just as much as the fact that the human race possesses other biological characteristics in response to the impera-tives of evolution. They are what mark us as essentially human.[26]

Freud, on the other hand, sees these images as the product of neuroses. For him, they are generated from within the neurotic and infantile personality and are the product of repres-sions and fears from which the healthy personality should strive to be freed. It was disagreement with Freud's view that these recurring images are symptomatic of sexual 'complexes' that led, in large part, to the final schism between Jung and Freud. For Jung,

---

[26] In the wake of recent research into the immensely complicated genetic patterns that are encoded in human DNA - and which are still little understood - it is possible that eventual evidence may come to light to sub-stantiate Jung's hypothesis. Furthermore, current theories about the moment in time when the human race diverged from other primates have placed the evolutionary step much later than was originally believed pos-sible (between 5 and 7 million years ago, a mere eyeblink in evolutionary terms), thus suggesting that the human race is not so far away , chronologically speaking, from its remote ancestors as initially believed (Dr L. R. Berger, palaeo-anthropologist, University of the Witwatersrand: pers. comm.). Such theoretical devel-opments suggest that the human brain might well retain mysterious patterns that link the race to its origins.

in direct opposition, regards such images as life-generating and life-sustaining. Contrary to Freud, he feels that they are valuable, that they are the source of secret reserves of psychic health. They are, for Jung, spontaneous and 'autochthonous'; that is to say, they are native to, and a pre-condition of, the human condition. Jung (1968:78) feels strongly that these primordial or archetypal patterns become visible in the products of 'creative fantasy'. Thus, mankind's symbol and mythology-making propensity is a reponse to the existence in the human consciousness of these archetypes, and 'provide[s] satisfaction for a fundamental human need - the need to *perceive meaning*, the need to *comprehend*' (Stevens, 1982:30) [Italics in text].   As Jung himself points out (in criticism of Freud's viewpoint), if all human behaviour can be explained exclusively in terms of neurotic sexuality, then '...you can explain a work of art or a religious experience in exactly the same terms as an hysterical symptom' (1960:57).

Jung's theory of a genetically encoded collective unconscious has not been uncritically received. More recently, philosopher Susanne K. Langer has pointed to what she calls the *transformational* mode of human perception. Like Jung, she finds a genetic component in the processes of human thought, though for somewhat different reasons. She feels that certain *organisational* modes of cognition are inherent in the human make-up. 'The symbol-making function is one of man's primary activities, like eating, looking, or moving about. It is the fundamental process of his mind...' (Langer, 1969:41). Thus, to remain sane, to have a semblance of control, humankind must make sense of what it perceives. To this end, it organises, systematises and interprets the flow of information to which it is constantly subjected. Mythic concepts are then, in part, a result of this need to achieve a semblance of meaning and order. In short, to allay the terrors of existence we 'need a sense of cosmic order, and our myths are one of its major sources' (Lowry, 1982:11).

Anthropologists and psychologists have suggested other reasons for the existence of those concepts which permeate so much of human thought and which constitute 'shared' experience. A process of cultural diffusion may account, in part, for the spread of concepts and symbols from one civilization to another, or from one continent to another - a form of 'cultural drift', as it were. And psychologists have pointed out that wherever and whenever human life evolves, the same natural processes, the same emotions, affect all men and women regardless of the cultural context.

> Put simply, many of our most powerful symbols arise out of nearly universal human experiences.... We are all born small and helpless into a world of giants. Since most of us are born into a family, our earliest experience includes a mother-goddess and a father-god. We all know hunger, thirst, heat, cold, darkness, sleep. We observe that falling feels peculiar and that landing hurts.... We see that babies come from bellies, dogs have a large number of sharp teeth, the sun goes away and comes back.
>
> (Fromm, 1951:18 - 19)

Whatever causes the prevalence of such images - and it seems most probable that an entire constellation of factors may be responsible for their existence - it cannot be denied that they exist and that they have enormous power to move the human imagination. Jung has been a seminal figure in the isolation and explication of many of those images that are most potent and therefore most frequently encountered. In more literary terms, these symbolic images or archetypes have been described by Frye (1990:102) as 'associative clusters' or 'complex variables'. They have what he calls 'cumulative power', which derives from all the associations with which they are imbricated. Thus, such images, while they may appear in themselves to be simple, have polysemous meaning. They help to connect one thing to another, they create resonances and have a strongly allusive character. Frye is careful to disassociate himself from any taint of Jungianism, warning of the

'danger of determinism' (1990:109). He claims that the Jungian collective unconscious is 'an unnecessary hypothesis in literary criticism' (1990:112). He maintains, rather, that these ubiquitous images arise simply from the tendency of the human imagination to conventionalise fantasy into stock 'formulaic units' (1976:36-37). As such, what he might recognise as an archetype is simply any image or symbol which recurs often enough in art to be instantly recognisable (1990:365). He does accept, however, that such images are closely associated with the metaphorical and allegorical structures to be found in myth.

Myths themselves function strongly on this symbolic level. Indeed, it may be said that their very nature is metaphorical. Peter Munz (1973:55) goes so far as to state that 'myths are no more than extreme cases of metaphor' and that they arise out of the fact that language itself is often an inadaquate means of expression. As such, the use of symbols is not simply an unneccessary artistic conceit, but a necessity '...forced upon man by the inability to describe a feeling-state literally. And, moreover, ... the substitution is not in fact a substitution but an elaboration' (Munz, 1973:76).

Like many literary symbols and images, myths appear on the surface to mean one thing but may simultaneously be expressing something else altogether. Thus Theseus, wandering lost through the labyrinth of Crete, hearing the distant bellows and roars of the fearsome Minotaur, may speak to us symbolically of the labyrinthine coils of the human mind in which we too can become lost and where we too might need to seek and overcome some monstrous and painful truth. The parallels between the functions of myth, then, and the function of literary symbolisation such as allegory or metaphor are very clear, since each welds complex and manifold meanings into simple but powerful images.

Because the work of some writers of sf and fantasy uses motifs and images which function on cryptic and symbolic levels of meaning, their writing bears a distinct relationship to myth. Rather than using realistic or mimetic techniques, such writing comments on culture and society in diffused rather than pointed, inferred rather than direct ways, through the use of symbol and metaphor rather than by obvious didactic lessons. Thus, novels such as Le Guin's Threshold (1982) or John Crowley's Engine Summer (1980) imply, rather than demonstrate, a profound dissatisfaction with society, as does Crowley's Beasts (1987) or most of the novels and short stories of J. G. Ballard. The concept of the Jungian archetype, which has an intuitive logic, will be the context within which the potency and significance of such images are unravelled in this study.

But there is another facet of sf and fantasy literature that is closely related to the effects and functions of myth. Myth, says Mircea Eliade (1974:3), 'narrates a sacred history.' It 'supplies models for human behaviour and ... gives meaning to life. Myth offers para-digms for all significant human acts' (Eliade, 1974:6). Myth, therefore, has something of the religious or the revelatory about it. Because myth is 'sacred', because it comes from a time that is unmapped in terms of human history, because it deals with events and beings that are suprahuman or supranatural, the response evoked by this sacred narration is one of awe. And it is here that one may find another parallel between myth and science fiction, for Damon Knight's sense of wonder is an expression of something akin to this same awed response. The wonder here is evoked, however, by the fantastic realities of sf and fantasy literature and by the contemplation of what is epic in the range of humanity's possibilities and ingenuity. Sf and fantasy - like myth, which lies in the lost hinterland of the past - also take place in unknown and mysterious areas of time and place and introduce the reader to fabulous creations, both living and mechanical.

It is a banality to point out that Western man, who has so eagerly embraced the mechanistic, the rationalistic and the scientific, has not done so without paying a price. At this particular point in time, as the twentieth century draws to a close, the human race might well be balanced at a crucial moment in its history, a moment of great potential danger. Not only is the existence of humanity itself imperilled by its own monstrous playthings but - and this is surely not coincidental - the health of the entire planet is at risk from the wonderful and terrible inventiveness of the human species.

Dudley Young, in his erudite, passionate and persuasive enquiry into the origins of the psychic malaise of the Western world, expresses the belief that humanity has, in accepting unquestioningly the dreams of science, lost the knowledge of *how* to respond to those dreams. Mankind has, correspondingly, lost that essential and immediate connection with the roots of experience, with those primal forms of knowledge which may well grant true human status.

> The voice of authority in our culture is unquestionably the voice of science, and yet that voice is still unable (and often unwilling) to master those parts of speech...without which no utterance can be fully human, no author authoritative.
>
> (Young, 1991:xv)

Young argues powerfully - although speculatively - that these crucial 'parts of speech' are to be found in those potent myths of origin with which modernity has lost touch. Western culture's 'loss of innocence' can, he feels, be regained only by returning to those areas of experience which teach man to 'heal the divisions in his soul' (1991:xvii). Only by finding again within the self that capacity for joyous, even ecstatic connection with the world, only by tracing human emotion back to the very roots of experience, will humankind be able to

cast off its profound sense of alienation and disquiet.

Young points out that 'if the young are not given proper images to dream upon, they will dream the improper, and civilization will suffer' (1991:xi). This study will, in part, argue that sf and fantasy, like those myths which once enriched culture and to which mankind looked for meaning and protection, are able, in certain circumstances, to open up windows into a space where those lost dreams - the dreams which arouse awe, wonder and amaze-ment and which are the founts of human experience - become once more accessible. Prudence might make one hesitate to go so far as Joseph Campbell, that ardently enthusi-astic student of comparative mythology, who asserts with sweeping confidence:

> It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through
> which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural
> manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive
> and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very
> dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth.
>
> (Campbell, 1975:13)

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the images and components of myth have power to move the receptive psyche, that they reappear through the ages in the works of artists of all types, and that they resonate deeply within the mind of the reader or viewer. The contention of this study is that sf and fantasy writing which contains the elements dis-cussed above may, when intuition and craftsmanship are combined with delicacy and skill, attain a unique and revelatory potency which is somewhat akin to the power of mythic and archetypal significance. Without belabouring the point too heavily, I would like to suggest that sf may have the capacity to teach its readers something of the *how* of dreaming. In the discussion of the chosen texts, it is hoped, it will also become clear that sf and fantasy

are moving in new directions and that both are achieving considerable relevance and richness in the process.

Like myth, sf and fantasy often have a metaphoric range. In such cases, the textual reality hides another reality, '... the other world that is awaiting ... below the surface of the text' (Armitt,1991:41). What may seem to be mere escapism is often enriched by deeper and hidden significances. It is, therefore, appropriate to discuss the symbolic and allegorical functions of many of those archetypal images mentioned earlier, as well as to discuss *how* these images achieve their effectiveness. In part, this effectiveness derives from what Frye - adding weight to Young's argument - calls 'special knowledge, something of what in religion is called revelation' (1976:6).[27] It would appear then, that Kroeber's comment that fantasy seeks to embrace rather than reject the unknowable, might have a great deal of validity.[28]

So close, in fact, is the similarity between the functions and the effects of myth and certain kinds of sf and fantasy, that some writers have consciously tried to rewrite classical themes in futuristic settings. Samuel R. Delany and Roger Zelazny are notable for their attempts to manipulate Greek myth. Examples are works such as Delany's early novelette The Einstein Intersection (1992) and Zelazny's This Immortal (1975) and The Dream Master (1976), each of which dates back to the 1960s. Not all of these are unalloyed successes, and it is of interest to analyse - in the light of the Jungian archetype - the extent to which each writer does or does not achieve what he has set out to do.

---

[27] Dudley Young does, indeed, acknowledge Northrop Frye as his 'first and most influential teacher' (1976:xxxvii).

[28] Kroeber's viewpoint is explained on pp. 19 - 20 of this study.

The power inherent in these mythic or archetypal symbols is at its most potent when the images appear to rise almost unconsciously from the subterranean areas of the writer's mind, from what Jung calls the 'dark side of the psyche'. They must be allowed to 'speak for themselves', as it were, in order to take on added potency and beauty. The reader should feel that such images have arisen almost accidentally, for they must give the impression that they spring - like Athena, who leapt from the forehead of Zeus - fully formed from the mind of the creator. This ability to create the illusion of spontaneity is one that tests the artistry, skill and integrity of the creative craftsman in any field. Poet Robert Graves has encapsulated the fragility of the creative 'dream', and the difficulty of recognising the moment of capture:

> Poet, never chase the dream.
>   Laugh yourself and turn away.
> Mask your hunger, let it seem
>   Small wonder is he come or stay;
> But when he nestles in your hand at last,
> Close up your fingers tight and hold him fast.
>
>   (Graves, 'A Pinch of Salt', 1978:32)

Not all writers meet this test with success, for such images are fragile and need to be handled with a gossamer touch. When they are manipulated with too-conscious a deliberateness they lose their innate grace and their ability to inspire wonder. For it is axiomatic to say that no writer can actually *create* myth, which can rise only spontaneously and over a period of time. The individual writer can, however, initiate a response that makes the reader *feel something similar* to what he or she might experience in the presence of the genuinely mythic. Thus, for example, a writer such as Robert Holdstock - who is interested not only in the existence of these mythic images but also in the mental or psycho-

logical processes that might create them - is sometimes guilty of too heavy-handed an approach. His writing shows, however, steady development in the handling of his chosen theme as he moves from the rather clumsy early novels such as Where Time Winds Blow (1981) and Earthwind (1987) to the more refined terrors of his Mythago novels and his more recent Lavondyss: Journey to an Unknown Region (1990) and The Hollowing (1994). Despite the fact that Delany's The Einstein Intersection (1992) has been ac-claimed by some critics within the sf field for his rewriting of the Orpheus myth,[29] his treatment would appear to be finally unsuccessful - a fact which will be discussed in Chapter Six of this study.

Because of the close relationship between mythic symbolism and the imagery present in much sf and fantasy literature, this study will demonstrate that an approach through the concept of the Jungian archetype can illuminate the particular enchantments of each genre. The revelatory nature of sf and fantasy and the sense of wonder that each evokes, testifies to the logic of this method. Although 'archetypal criticism', as it became known, flour-ished in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it had fallen into disfavour by the 1970s. Like all critical tools, this form of analysis needs to be applied with discretion. The critic needs a sure instinct for the precise value of the archetypal component within any given work of art, and should not ascribe to the archetype greater inherent weight or value than is implicit in the writing. In other words, a sense of proportion is necessary. The critic who hunts relentlessly for images and symbols in inappropriate places is guilty of doing vio-lence to, and distorting the fabric of, the text under scrutiny. Possibly because archetypal criticism was endorsed by the illustrious name of T. S. Eliot - who publicly announced his

---

[29] Nicholls calls the book a 'tour de force' (1993:316). It won the Nebula award in 1967.

indebtedness to Sir James Frazer's <u>The Golden Bough</u> (1996) and to Jessie Weston's <u>From Ritual to Romance</u> (1980)[30] - certain critics went on a kind of archetypal witch hunt, irresponsibly dragging symbols and archetypes into view and ascribing to them dispropor-tionately bloated importance and meaning. In the wake of this intellectual frenzy, arche-typal criticism became a little disreputable, giving way eventually to newer theoretical disciplines such as structuralism and semiotics.

However, far from being an entirely outmoded and irrelevant approach, this study will attempt to demonstrate that archetypal criticism can be of value in the study of much sf and fantasy writing. In order, though, to avoid the pitfalls outlined above, the material selected for analysis has been carefully restricted. Within the field of sf it is possible to find a great many books that treat of similar themes. Nonetheless, not all of sf is amenable to archetypal criticism and, even in books where the archetypal component is present, it is not always of major importance to the structure and coherence of the writing. Disap-pointing also, in a great deal of fantasy literature, much of what the writer glibly perceives as archetypal is displayed in the form of perfunctory images and symbolism, with little understanding of the inherent power of the archetype or the ways in which narrative and significance may, through its presence, converge. Such writing can never be a source of wonder or revelation, can never impart to the reader any sense of the weight of relevance and experience which underpin the archetype. Writing of this type also has been dis-carded.[31] Furthermore, in all cases the selection has been based on writing that has been

---

[30] Notes appended to the vastly influential 'The Waste Land' (1965:68-74). The poem first appeared in 1922.
[31] Thus, the immensely popular, but inherently superficial writing of novelists such as Anne McCaffrey, David Eddings, David Gemmell and even, on occasion, Michael Moorcock - all of whom use mythic sym-bolism at times - has been ignored.

judged to have genuine literary merit and which reveals not only accomplished writing skills, but also a profound concern with questions of a metaphysical or personal nature. As Richard F. Hardin points out: 'Work of otherwise limited imagination can assume great significance for the archetypal critic' (1989:43). Thus, the presence of archetypal and symbolic images alone has not been sufficient to ensure inclusion in this study.

Although Frye (1976) carefully separates myth and romance into two distinct modes, this study will demonstrate that these two areas may overlap uniquely in the fields of sf and fantasy and that the result is one that may, at its best, achieve new relevance and meaning. Frye categorises myth as that body of literature which has 'special authority' (1976:27), while romance or the fabulous has its roots in popular literary traditions such as folk and fairy tales. The images and symbols utilised by sf and fantasy - both forms of romance in Frye's estimation (1976:4) - are found in a good deal of art and literature generally. The contention of this study is that they are reinterpreted in unique ways by sf and fantasy so that they not only retain their ancient relevance but become renewed. Furthermore, the manner in which the mythic and the romantic merge in these two genres often achieves a unique and felicitous hybridisation.

Because sf and fantasy are rather like myth, they are both somewhat oxymoronic by nature, for both work through the relating of 'true lies' or 'impossible truths'. For example, in Le Guin's Threshold (1982) and Crowley's Little, Big (1981), the protagonists reach some form of self-realisation and maturity by a process that is distinctly impossible in the world as we know it (Suvin's 'empirical world' [1979:8]), demonstrating the paradoxical nature of the genre very clearly, for the reader reaches a truth by means of what appears to be palpably untrue.

Finally this study will attempt to illuminate the various ways in which sf and fantasy literature have begun to evolve and converge with mainstream literature. Kroeber argues (1988:9) that the directions in which sf and fantasy move are completely antithetical. They are, he feels, both responding to the hegemony of the technological. However, fantasy, in his view, turns inward, exploring what he calls the 'oxymoronic', the paradoxical aspects of human existence. Sf, on the other hand, turns outward, exploring the 'extrapolative' - what Suvin would call the 'cognitive'. As a result, Kroeber finds, the language each uses is different: fantasy is more experimental; more given to hyberbole, to exaggeration, to linguistic subtlety. Sf is cooler, more reportorial in style. Since it is extrapolative, it must give the appearance of reality, of verisimilitude (1988:29). This makes it essentially conservative in its usage of technique and language. He feels that sf 'is not well suited for articulating dialogic consciousness' (1988:22).

In agreement, although using very different terminology, Frye talks of the concepts of verticality and horizontality in literature (1976:49-50). Realism, the reportorial mode, is 'horizontal' - giving the appearance of logicality, of linearity, of rational cause and effect. By contrast, the fantastic mode adopts a more 'vertical' structure, in which logicality, characterisation and so forth are often tenuous. Indeed, says Frye, the 'romantic tendency is antirepresentational' (1976:36).

Seen in the light of the last two decades, however, neither of these viewpoints is, in my opinion, altogether justified. The so-called New Wave writers of the 1970s - Brian Aldiss, J.G. Ballard, Michael Moorcock, Roger Zelazny and Thomas Disch, for example - have forced a stylistic evolution of the genre. By turning inward, by probing the interior landscape of the mind, by journeying into what Ballard has called 'inner space', these

writers have abandoned much of the original 'horizontality' of sf in favour of more complex modes of expression. The writing of Ballard or Delany, for example, is highly sophisticated and subtle, and engages the reader on many levels. Although it does not always do so, fantasy overlaps quite frequently with sf. An analysis of works such as Tanith Lee's Sabella (1987), Roger Eldridge's The Fishers of Darksea (1984) or Ballard's The Drought (1978) will demonstrate *how* it overlaps, for each uses language adventurously - even fantastically. By contrast, Le Guin's very successful forays into pure fantasy (Threshold [1982], the Earthsea tetralogy [1979, 1990]) are told in extremely lucid and matter-of-fact terms, despite the fantastic content.

To be fair, neither Frye nor Kroeber are completely rigid in their categorisation. Each does comment briefly on the fact that the various modes can overlap and interpenetrate, though neither of them actually demonstrates how and when this happens. This overlapping is common rather than rare, however and the recent development of sf and fantasy is due, in part, to the fact that each seems to be becoming more flexible, to be appropriating techniques that have traditionally not been part of their structures. Aspects of realism are now more frequently woven into the fabric of the fantastic or the fabulous, creating an ambiguity that has previously been the traditional property of the realistic novel. The chapters which follow explore not only characterisation, motivation and use of language to reveal the truth of this statement, but will also demonstrate yet another convergence of the fantastic and the realistic.

Frye, in his 1976 anatomisation of the structures of the mythic and the fantastic (in his terminology, the 'fabulous'), employs a biblical analogy to explain one of the basic structures of romance literature. Referring to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden as a 'fall'

from grace, he points out that central to myth and to fantasy is the romantic concept of a fall from the 'idyllic' and paradisic world into the 'night world' of the 'demonic'. Inherent in romantic fantasy, however, is the fact that the descent into the demonic is not eternal: it is finally reversed by the expiatory or redeeming actions of the hero or heroine, who then subsequently returns to the idyllic world to live happily ever after - a correspondence with the biblical theme of resurrection. The Christian myth, says Frye, is 'the archetype of the completed romance' (1976:163).

But, in scrutinising the fantasy and sf that concern this study, a subtle evolution becomes visible in these two forms of fantastic literature, for many of these works reveal an inter-penetration of the romantic and the realistic modes. Here, it becomes apparent, is an interesting inversion. The fall does indeed occur. But it is a fall from the nightmare of the *real* (rather than the idyllic), into the nightmare of the demonic, followed by a return - not to the idyllic or utopian world of romance - but to the fragile and questionable comforts of the real world. Thus, despite the fantastic or fabulous matrix within which the action occurs, there is present, in many cases, a simultaneous and paradoxical sensation of realism.

In response, then, to Frye's statement that fantasy is vertical, with little plausibility or subtlety as far as development of character or motivation is concerned, this study will show how recent works of fantasy succeed in creating a richness and complexity of texture that is usually associated with realistic or mimetic fiction. In such works, the ascent out of the nightmare is often ambiguous, involving the protagonist in the uncom-fortable and ironic act of embracing the painful. The uneasy process by which Eldridge's No-Mirth (The Fishers of Darksea [1984]) begins to acknowledge his destiny, the lurid

sexual and psychic nightmare in which Lee's <u>Sabella</u> (1980) flounders, the mundane world to which the protagonists of Le Guin's <u>Threshold</u> return, attest to a new subtlety in the flavour of sf and fantasy.

Since the analyses of the above-mentioned works will be through the concept of the Jungian archetype, these texts will be approached by isolating and discussing those images and motifs that represent powerful emotional and ethical concepts. I shall also comment on the way each writer uses language to communicate with the reader and - finally - I hope to succeed in conveying something of the unique fascination of these extraordinary genres

In the chapters which follow, the Chapter Two, 'The Symbolism of Personal Redemption', explores the manner in which writers confront the eschatalogical and random aspects of the human condition and the means by which their flawed characters wrest pattern and purpose from the chaos which surrounds them. The books analysed in this section are the creations of two very contrasting authors: one writer has created works of purest fantasy, while the other has produced gritty and hard-edged sf. Yet the concerns of these works prove to be much the same, for they all reveal the same passionate involvement in the capacity of the individual to evolve towards maturity and personal redemption. Le Guin's <u>A Wizard of Earthsea</u>, <u>The Farthest Shore</u> and <u>Threshold</u>, surprisingly, mirror many of the themes of Alfred Bester's <u>Tiger, Tiger!</u> and <u>The Demolished Man</u>. Central to all of these works is a concern with how the protagonists learn to face the dark side of their own flawed natures and travel the arduous road towards wholeness or Jungian 'individuation'.

Chapter Three, 'The Symbolism of Messianism', is concerned with redemption on a much larger scale; that is to say, not only with the movement of the protagonist forward into a new life, but also the way in which the prophetic hero may transfigure the future of society, or even of the entire world. The protagonists of these books become close relatives of Campbell's mythic hero, he who will 'liberate the land' (1975:221). In each of these books the central symbol is that of the apocalypse, and each protagonist must find a way to lead his race towards a redemptive acceptance of either the future or the past. Each writer does this, to a large extent, through the use of archetypal symbolisms which take on powerful metaphoric connotations. Thus, Gene Wolfe's tetralogy The Book of the New Sun (1980-1983) will be discussed in some detail, since all four books are rich in allusive imagery and symbolism: the sword, the rose, the labyrinth and the ouroboros are just some of the archetypes which are central to the journey of Wolfe's protagonist towards his messianic destiny. Other books analysed in this section are Eldridge's The Fishers of Darksea (1984), Crowley's Engine Summer, and Le Guin's The Word for World is Forest (1991).

Chapter Four, rather than being concerned with progression or evolution of the personality, deals with retrogression and devolution on both the personal and the racial level. This chapter, 'The Symbolism of Entropy and Decay', probes those images of entropic decay which obsess certain writers of sf. The discussion will centre on Brian Aldiss's Hothouse (1979), two novels by J. G. Ballard, The Drowned World (1976) and The Drought (1978), and one of Ballard's longer stories, 'The Voices of Time' (1981). In all these works there is an over-riding conception of cosmic devolution, within which is enmeshed mankind's own decay. Archetypal images central to this Darwinian concept are those drawn from the natural world. Thus, the rampant and gargantuan forest of Hothouse, the

inundated or drought-stricken worlds created by Ballard, as well as his great cosmic

mandala in 'The Voices of Time' - all carry powerful symbolic and archetypal resonances

which will be carefully explored.

Chapter Five, 'The Symbolism of the Beast', in contrast to the preceding chapters, turns

outward, in a sense, for although the books discussed in this chapter are also concerned

with questions of spiritual growth (both for the individual and the larger grouping to

which that individual belongs), it probes such questions specifically through the use of

theriomorphic imagery. This section demonstrates some of the symbolic meanings with

which animal images are imbricated, and also shows how these may be used to give

resonance to character, and shape to the perception of reality. Lee's Lycanthia (1990) and

Sabella (1987), as well as Crowley's Beasts (1987) all make use of real animals that exert

a powerful hold on the human mind, while Le Guin's Earthsea tetralogy and Clive

Barker's Weaveworld (1988) use purely imaginative creatures that have long inhabited the

racial imagination. All these creatures have rich mythical connotations: they act as psy-

chopomps, leading the human protagonist into the realm of potentiality and potency. Each

will be discussed in some detail to illuminate how animal imagery has been used to amplify

the concerns of these writers.

Chapter Six, 'The Eternal Mind', unlike the other chapters, is concerned with the work of

one writer in particular. Robert Holdstock has made a courageous and surprisingly

successful attempt (given the difficulties inherent in the task of making the unconscious

visible) to penetrate the hidden recesses of the human psyche in order to give shape to

those very processes which might engender the archetypal image. Several of his books are

discussed, showing how he has progressed in this single-minded attempt to probe the

origins of archetypal thought, and demonstrating how he has chosen to deal with these powerful imaginative emanations. His earlier works are passed over briefly, in order to concentrate on his more mature works. Thus the greater part of the chapter is given over to Lavondyss: Journey to an Unknown Region (1990), The Bone Forest (1992), The Hollowing (1994) and Mythago Wood (1995).

Chapter Seven will offer, in conclusion, a synthesising view of the critical approach taken in the preceding chapters, demonstrating that, rather than being moribund and irrelevant, the archetypal method of criticism may enliven discussion of much fantasy and sf. It will also review the manner in which both genres have evolved towards greater maturity in the period from the 1950s to the 1990s, and will make the point that, rather than being shallow, clichéd and nostalgic, the use of mythic or archetypal symbolism can, when used with intuition and skill, add depth, resonance and extraordinary imaginative range. It will demonstrate how sf and fantasy - without compromising an admirable capacity to entertain - may lead the reader to a contemplation of those existential dilemmas which have plagued mankind since the birth of consciousness, and how each may offer some solutions for such eternal questions. At the same time, sf and fantasy may also confront matters of contemporary relevance, proving that, rather than being merely trivial and escapist, they may give their readers the courage to dream of facing the complexities of the human condition.

TWO: THE SYMBOLISM OF PERSONAL REDEMPTION

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,

And the dry stone no sign of water.

T. S. Eliot.

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

Men and women have discovered that there is a corollary to their knowledge. Balancing all that they have learned is an infinite amount that they have yet to learn.

It is not surprising, therefore, that as the century draws to a close, Western society experiences a sense of millennial catastrophe, a deep feeling of epistemological uncertainty.

Possibly more than any other age, this one is marked by a failure of belief in the signifi-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

for two novels (<u>The Demolished Man</u> [1953] and (<u>Tiger, Tiger!</u> [1956]) and a few short

stories which date from this period[3] and which have become classic examples of genre sf.[4]

Le Guin's style is serenely rational, never sensational, and always rather spare in texture,

while Bester's writing is passionate, fast-paced and lurid, having its roots firmly in the

pulp origins of the genre. Interestingly, however, despite such fundamental differences of

approach, both writers display a concern with the potential of their flawed protagonists to

grow and achieve redemption. Each also uses a number of archetypal images which

become central to their works, and which illuminate their sense of profound disquiet with

a century in which ethics and morality appear to have become tainted by expedience, self-

indulgence and lack of coherence. Each writer seems deeply aware that, despite the fact

that contemporary life is marked by rapidly increasing sophistication in technological

understanding of all kinds, in certain respects men and women inhabit a spiritual void.

A writer who works through a discourse of strongly archetypal symbols and imagery - of

which she appears to have an instinctual grasp and which she uses with singular artistry -

Ursula Le Guin is acclaimed not only for her fantasy writing, but also for her sf. And, like

Jungian psychology, she seems to be most concerned with wholeness, with integration,

and with reconciling opposing elements of personality. Le Guin appears firmly to believe

in the possibility of finding pattern and completion, for such balance is central to her

Taoist leanings. She is concerned, in short, with the attainment of maturity, with integra-

---

[3] "Fondly Fahrenheit' (1958) is perhaps the most admired.
[4] Genre sf is writing in which the conventions, the tropes or the 'protocols' of sf are instantaneously recognisable, leaving the reader in no doubt that what he or she is reading is, indeed, sf. Clute and Nicholls state that genre sf is 'conspicuous for its signals that it is honouring the compact between writers and readers to respect the protocols embedded in the texts which make up the canon' (1993:483).

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

exception to the rules that bind common humanity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

tered in the sense that they are not linked to any particular epoch; they are universal and

mythic in their simplicity. She describes, for instance, the sterility and aridity of a world

from which the essence of life is draining in a simple, yet effective, manner. In the arche-

typal mode, she draws her inspiration from the natural world. Water, which is a source of

life and fecundity, is the central image and Le Guin's metaphoric language here is subtly

sexual, hinting at the capacity of the earth to engender and sustain life, suggesting both the

uterine and the seminal fluids that signal the creation of life. In The Farthest Shore the

springs run dry, the fountains no longer play and 'the lips of the springs of water draw

back' (428), signalling sterility and loss.

In conjunction with these images of failing abundance, she uses images of dryness and

depletion. There are numerous images of darkness, of light 'running out'. The domain of

the dead, into which Arren and Ged must go, is dry, sandy, grey. The mountains and

ravines which they must traverse are boulder-strewn and sharp. Le Guin's 'dark land'

seems to owe something to Homer's Hades, where dwell the shadowy 'helpless ghosts of

the dead' (The Odyssey:171 - 172). For Le Guin's dead, too, are grey and colourless:

they are 'healed of pain and life... Quiet were their faces, freed from anger and desire and

there was in their shadowed eyes no hope' (456). Arren experiences terrible thirst in this

dry land, recalling T.S. Eliot's symbolic 'Waste Land', in which there is

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

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

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

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

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

side consciousness when conscious thought is not yet - or is no longer - possible..

(1991e:87)

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

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

In equally metaphoric and poetic terms he also tells Arren:

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

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

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

Arren, too, symbolically comes to embody the hero-image that Jung identifies as one of

the autonomous projections of which the human psyche is capable. He is a living creature

of flesh and blood and he evokes in the reader a strong sense of reality and empathy. But,

because Le Guin works in strongly metaphorical terms, he becomes something over and

above the young Prince of Enlad. Jung states that 'One of the essential features of the

child motif is its futurity. The child is potential future' (1991f:138).

And in his growth from blind devotion to Ged, through his seduction by the evil dream of

death's banishment, his subsequent disillusionment with his hero, and then his final realisa-

tion of both Ged's powers as a wizard and of his limitations as a human being, Arren

moves towards adulthood. He learns the great lesson that Ged teaches, that the traitor lies

within each human heart. It is our own voice that we hear as we give shape to fear and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

layers of meaning and symbolism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

tance of reality and redemption. At first the journey is merely physical, towards the idyllic

little mountain town called Tembreabrezi. But soon the writer introduces an entire set of

oppositions that dramatises the emotional evolution of both protagonists.

The writer suggests that the steady flow of life in this miraculous place is threatened.

Somehow Hugh's arrival coincides with and intensifies the threat. For Hugh, when he

appears, is a harbinger of change and Irena knows uncertainty, even fear, for the first time

in the 'ain country', her heart's home. Mysteriously, this once safe and peaceful place has

become isolated - a symbol perhaps of the way that both Hugh and Irene are isolated in

the 'real' world. No departure from it is possible, no arrival to it. In Mountain Town, the

welcoming place to which Hugh and Irena have found their way, the people are stricken

by fear and cannot venture even to the periphery of the town. Their sheep cannot graze

on the outskirts of the town. Traders no longer approach. As Irena becomes aware of the

isolation and the fear, her own world intrudes in the form of thoughts of her mother. The

reader understands that this could never have happened before the fear, that previously the

streams of the two worlds would never have been allowed to meet. This signals the first

tentative step towards self-realisation. And now Le Guin begins suddenly to use Irena's

everyday name, Irene, as the ordinary world begins to meet the Evening Place.

Hugh and Irene are now appointed by the townsfolk to seek out and subdue whatever it is

that generates the fear. They set off on an archetypal quest - one where the outcome is

unsure and where they are not even certain about what it is that they have to do. At one

level of meaning, they must find the source of this nameless terror, whose nature and

whereabouts are a mystery to them. In truth, they are in search of themselves, but this rite

of initiation is cloaked in mystery to them. They know only that they seek whatever it is

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

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

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

the mysterious areas of the human heart and mind - which Campbell has graphically

labelled the 'causal zones of the psyche' (1975:23). For Joseph L. Henderson the battle

with the mythic dragon

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

Thus, once set on the path, neither Hugh nor Irene can evade the Dragon, no matter how

they try. They are drawn inexorably onwards, despite their attempts to abandon the quest.

And when they finally confront the cave Hugh realises that 'he had been coming here all

his life and had never left it in the beginning' (150). Finally, for both of them, the crisis

has arrived: they feel compelled to push the meeting with this monstrous thing to its

conclusion. For each, now, there is no alternative. It is, symbolically, a moment of self-

confrontation. When they finally face the horror, the ghastly thing is never very clearly

defined. Le Guin tells us that it is white and wrinkled and that it drags its bulk 'painfully

and with terrible quickness, round mouth open in the hissing howl of hunger and insatiable

pain, and blind' (142).

This frightening image metaphorises the pain, the blindness and the helplessness in the

lives of Hugh and Irene. The slaying of the dragon is an unavoidable necessity for each of

these young people. Hugh, in this moment of symbolic confrontation, faces for the first

time, 'the face that was no face', the 'huge voice, the gobbling howl' - all metaphors for

the nightmare of his own existence.

Campbell points out that

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

where present in these two novels. Bester's style is almost manically exuberant, with great

flair and 'edge'. It also has a visual quality that is absent from much sf. Undoubtedly, the

years he spent writing dialogue and plotting action for the comic book industry is respon-

sible for the sharply, often luridly, imagined pictures that he draws.

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

closing scene of <u>The Demolished Man</u>, the psychically-shattered remnant that is Ben Reich

appears, in a state of partial Demolition.

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

The two men come face to face, the 'peeper' detective who has brought Reich to this

point, and his shattered victim - and a moment of genuine emotional transcendence occurs.

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

Although Nicholls comments on the 'cynical' quality and the 'ironic scepticism' in

Bester's work (in <u>The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction</u>, 1993:113), what is more striking

is the fervent desire for a sense of brotherhood amongst men and women, and the evident

yearning for humanity to transcend its spiritual deformities and reach a state of compas-

sionate maturity.   <u>The Demolished Man</u> ends with Powell's exultant and passionate

telepathic prayer:

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

The priest Joseph, leader of the Scientific People, recognises that Gully Foyle has found

his punishment. 'He has found it already in himself,' he says (282). And the suggestion is

that when Foyle awakes there will be some other sort of 'awakening', as well. For the

priest and Moira remind us suddenly of Joseph and Mary, and of the story of Christ.

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

Gully Foyle has, in the mode of the archetypal hero, not only returned to the point of his

beginning, - aboard *Nomad*, from where he was launched on the long voyage of self

discovery - but he has also made the redeeming sacrifice. Bester here suggests (albeit

somewhat perfunctorily - and this is perhaps the least succesful aspect of the book), that

Gully Foyle will be reborn from the womb of *Nomad* and that he has found atonement not

only for his own sins but also, in some degree, for suffering humanity.

In the context of genre sf, Bester's use of language is prophetic, particularly in the final

sections of <u>Tiger! Tiger!</u> His writing has a vigorous intensity that carries it above mere

journalism. He himself refers to his 'razzle-dazzle style' (1976:218). As pointed out

earlier, he was writing at a time when sf was relatively undeveloped from a stylistic point

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

> The lemon taste in his mouth became unbearable. The rake of talons on his skin was torture.

> He jaunted.

> He reappeared in the furnace beneath Old St Pat's less than a second after he had disappeared from there. He was drawn, as the sea-bird is drawn again and again to the flames from which it is struggling to escape. He endured the roaring furnace for only another moment.

> He jaunted.

> He was in the depths of Gouffre Martel.

> The velvet black darkness was bliss, paradise, euphoria.

> 'Ah!' he cried in relief.

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

AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

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

StOpStOpStOp

OpStOpStOpStOp

StOpStOpStOpStOp

OpStOpStOpStOpStOp

OpStOpStOpStOpSt

SpStOpStOpStOp

OpStOpStOpSt

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

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

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

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

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

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

THREE : THE SYMBOLISM OF MESSIANISM

The stories of Gilgamesh, the Fall, Oedipus and Medea are never 'over' for us.

Shirley Park Lowry

Since a great deal of fantasy and science fiction is concerned not so much with personal fate, but with the relationship and destiny of mankind within the cosmos, it is unsurprising that the messianic figure of the saviour and redeemer of mankind is one that is frequently encountered within these two genres. This figure has a long history in the literature of fantasy and sf, ranging from the most naïve and crude of appearances - as in the figures of comic-book heroes such as Superman and Batman - to the most sophisticated and ambiguous, as in Gene Wolfe's tetralogy The Book of the New Sun (1980 - 1983).

The concept of messianism seems to be one that is uniquely linked to the Judeo-Christian world and which appears to separate into two somewhat differing manifestations. Although the Old Testament saviour originates in the concept of a figure consecrated or anointed in some way by God, he is essentially a charismatic force, divinely inspired to lead an oppressed people. The messiah is, therefore, often very much the leader in a physical sense. He is a figure of great vigour, one who wields the flaming sword. He prophesies deliverance from bondage and promises a greater or more glowing future. This figure is often linked to kingship and temporal power, and the yearning for such a leader is intensified by hardship, persecution, suffering or slavery.

Within the Christian tradition, however, the iconography is somewhat different. Although the notion rises out of the Judaic concept of being anointed or consecrated, the sense of

divinity, of being the 'son of God', is stronger. Nationalistic and political implications become more tenuous. Within this framework, the hero becomes a spiritual redeemer, a saviour-figure who intercedes with God on behalf of humanity, who offers his own suffering flesh in atonement for the evils of the world. Such a redeemer is concerned more with the world of spirit than the world of flesh. Indeed, flesh is sacrificed for spiritual growth. Salvation is not temporal but sacral.

In our age, where loss of confidence in humanity's resources, in faith and in science is endemic, it is perhaps to be expected that the messiah-figure should become a frequent presence in much of the literature of science fiction and fantasy. Since the concept of messianism is associated with a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration with the world in its present state, messianic longings encompass, as a corollary, the strong desire for a saviour who will have the ability to redeem the tragic or unsatisfactory conditions of human life. Messianism is often associated with a sense of the eschatological, that is to say, with the profound and overwhelming sense of the imminent death or destruction of the old order. Here it is that the figure of the saviour, the man or woman with a divine mission, with the ability to take upon himself or herself the suffering of common humanity and to transform this experience into a regenerative process, becomes meaningful. The messianic figure undergoes not only a personal transformation, but takes on the mantle of common humanity, returning to it a gift that is the promise of fulfilment, of apotheosis. In the process, a newer, brighter age than the present is promised, in which the group, or even mankind in its entirety, is rejuvenated and transformed. Joseph Campbell (1975:22) expresses the desire for the saviour figure as 'a cry for the redeeming hero, the carrier of the shining blade, whose blow, whose touch, whose existence, will liberate the land.'

Writers of science fiction and fantasy have long been fascinated by the possibilities of the myth of messianic action and transfiguration. Perhaps one of the most well-known of contemporary examples is Frank Herbert's <u>Dune</u> (1966), which was followed by several sequels. Here, on the drought-stricken planet of Arrakis, where water is of the utmost value, the messianic figure of Paul Atreides rises to lead his world into a new history and a transformed future. The Old Testament connotations are strong. Since Biblical saviours are often associated with the privations and asceticism imposed by the desert landscape, it seems fitting that Arrakis is a uniformly harsh and arid world. <u>Dune</u> is a complex book, investigating concepts such as planetary ecology, the nature and obligations of leadership and the corrupting influence of power, to name a few only. It achieves a sweeping and epic range and is an example of how sf can, in certain cases, transcend the limitations of a featureless, lumpy or journalistic mode of expression to express ideas powerfully.

Robert Heinlein's <u>Stranger in a Strange Land</u> (1977), portrays yet another saviour figure. Valentine Michael Smith, a man from Mars who has paranormal powers, is brought to Earth where he becomes a virtual superman, without losing his superior (and Martian) sense of ethics. Heinlein draws some crude parallels with the New Testament life of Christ. The protagonist founds a church based on universal brotherhood, the sharing of water and sexual licence, and is nastily martyred by unbelievers. At the eleventh hour he transports himself - by 'discorporation'- onto the astral (perhaps heavenly) plane. Apart from the Biblical analogues, the book is a confused hodge-podge of Heinlein's always suspect and decidedly irrational social theories, all disguising a disturbing and shallow ideology of power and manipulation. In addition, the language is coyly stilted, consisting almost entirely of interminable and painfully self-conscious conversations. Alarmingly, this rather distasteful novel became something of a cult book in the 1960s and was, chillingly,

the favourite reading of mass-murderer Charles Manson[1] who was, no doubt, influenced by Michael Valentine Smith's habit of eliminating disagreeable or inconvenient persons by 'discorporating' them.

Recent writers of sf and fantasy have continued to be fascinated by the concept of messianism, and some have produced works that are infinitely superior in artistic terms to both of the above examples. One of these writers is, perhaps, the most stimulating and idiosyncratic writer now working in the sf and fantasy fields. Gene Wolfe, whose work had already being recognised as especially interesting by the 1970s, has experimented with various combinations of these two genres and has written what might sometimes be called sf, sometimes fantasy and sometimes science fantasy - the last being the term with which he himself seems to be most comfortable.[2]

His writing is marked by subtlety, intelligence and sophistication. He has a supple and precise prose style that is extraordinarily evocative in its allusiveness and its illusiveness. His style is often slightly mannered, but always individual and often quite beautiful. However, despite its beauty, it is never sentimental. There is, in fact, often a tinge of perversity present. He has also distinguished himself by the depth of the themes that he chooses to explore. Mythic in their scope, they include such archetypal concerns as the nature of reality, perception and identity, the importance of memory, and the ambiguous qualities of good and evil. In the flexibility of his prose and the scope of his concerns he is sometimes associated with the 'New Wave' novelists of the 1960s. It is obvious,

---

[1] The influence on Manson of this book is well-documented, Aldiss (1986:290) even quoting from Manson's biographer a passage in which the effect of the book is mentioned.

[2] In an interview with Larry McCaffery (1990:235), Wolfe stated: 'The only way I know to write is to write the kind of thing I would like to read myself, and when I do that it usually winds up being classified as SF or science fantasy, which is what I call most of my work.'

however, that his remarkable and literate style comes from a variety of sources within the mainstream itself, and that these sources amplify and enrich his writing.

When The Shadow of the Torturer - the first volume of his tetralogy, The Book of the New Sun - came out in 1980, it was greeted with much excitement. The other volumes followed soon after, and by 1983 The Claw of the Conciliator, The Sword of the Lictor and The Citadel of the Autarch had appeared and had been greeted by critics and fans alike with admiration. The whole series was hailed by David Pringle (1990:43), for example, as a 'master-piece: dense, complex, possibly allegorical.' While it is undoubtedly dense and complex and undeniably evocative and commanding, the certainty of its stature as a masterpiece is open to debate. Aldiss (1986:424), more cautious in his assessment, calls the work 'flawed' but 'magnificent'. What is certain is that, in the sinuosity of its style and its mysterious allusiveness, it is obviously superior to much that the twin fields of fantasy and sf have produced. The cycle, which displays all the qualities of a 'sword and sorcery' series becomes, on closer scrutiny, a richly evocative allegorical and metaphorical voyage of discovery.[3]

Set in the unimaginably far future of the dying 'Urth', when the sun has cooled and civilisation has decayed, the scope and range of the four novels constitute a brilliant and bewildering succession of adventures and images. The story resists summary, and perhaps the easiest way to approach its dense and complex structure is through the various

---

[3] 'Sword and Sorcery', sometimes known as 'heroic fantasy', forms an immensely popular, much-exploited and, more often than not, mediocre grouping within the fantasy genre. It is characterised by heroic physical action, is set most frequently in an exotic or medieval-styled society, has a strongly dualistic nature in which the forces of good are pitted against the forces of evil, and is marked by the use of magic or strange powers. J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings (1954 - 1955), though not a pure example of this type of writing, is perhaps the inspiration for, and the progenitor of, much that is currently produced in the sword and sorcery format

patterns and symbols that can be seen to emerge.

Dominating the tetralogy is a central image around which the story is organised. This is the archetypal and mythic image of the journey, what Campbell has called the 'road of trials'.

> ...the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials. This is a favourite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper.... Or it may be that he...discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him....
>
> (Campbell, 1975:90)

Wolfe's protagonist, the Torturer Severian, is banished from the great city of Nessus for aiding a prisoner of his guild to evade torture. He has committed the ultimate impropriety of falling in love with her and then giving her a knife with which she is able to take her own life, thereby escaping her sentence. Subsequent to his banishment, he embarks on a series of adventures that appear, initially, to be merely picaresque, but which eventually take on richly symbolic and compelling aspects. He finds himself in possession of a holy relic called the Claw of the Conciliator and vows to return it to the nun-like order of Pelerines from which it has been stolen. The rest of the story is dominated by the image of the Claw, with which Severian seems able to work miracles of healing and regeneration, and also by his growing perception of the presence of the 'Increate'. Finally, after enduring numerous prodigious and puzzling adventures, among which are war, mutilation and the loss of the woman he loves, he returns to Nessus and ascends the throne of the

Autarch. Indeed, the entire story is told by Severian in the first person from his vantage point as the newly- ascendant and powerful figure of Autarch. At the story's conclusion, Severian readies himself to undertake a journey to the stars, a journey that may serve to redeem the senescent planet and mankind from the entropy into which both have sunk.

This is the plot in its barest outline, since no précis could give expression to the story's many wonders. For one, the tale is told in a manner so complex, with so many digressions and ruminations, with so many side-steps away from the action of the plot, that the reader is deflected again and again from the course of the story's evolution.

Perhaps even more disturbing is the exotic vocabulary that Wolfe employs in this tetralogy. The writing is fantastically detailed, clotted with obscure and obsolete words. Over and over again, the reader is brought up short by a word, placed rather like an unexpected obstacle on a path, that seems to impede the free flow of thought and event - as in this excerpt from The Sword of the Lictor.

> *Terminus Est* I believe to have been the best blade ever forged, but I knew
> that she would accomplish nothing against the power that had routed so
> many cavalrymen; I cast her to one side in the vague hope that she might
> be found and eventually returned to Master Palaemon, and took the Claw
> from its little bag at my throat.
>
> It was my last, faint chance, and I saw at once that it had failed me.
> However the creature sensed the world about it (and I guessed that it was
> nearly blind on our Urth), it could make out the gem clearly, and it did not
> fear it. Its slow advance became a rapid and purposeful flowing forward.
> It reached the doorway - and there was a burst of smoke, a crash, and it
> was gone. Light from below flashed through the hole it had burned in the
> flimsy floor that began where the stone of the outcrop ended; at first it

> was the colorless light of the creature, then a rapid alternation of chatoyant pastels - peacock blue, lilac, and rose. Then only the faint, reddish light of leaping flames.

<div align="right">(The Sword of the Lictor:74)</div>

This moment is the culmination of a longish episode that takes up five pages of description, and which succeeds in building up a great deal of tension as the mysterious and horrifying creature pursues Severian, charring with hideous ruthlessness all in its path. And then suddenly, at the climactic moment, the reader is brought up short by the obscurity of the word 'chatoyant', a word with which very few are likely to be familiar and which comes like a dash of cold water to impede the forward-motion of the reader's thoughts.

The appearance of such obscurities is the rule rather than the exception. The four books are liberally sprinkled with words such as 'cataphract', 'ylem' 'epopt', 'armiger', 'gonfalon' 'anacreontic', 'nidorous', 'cacogen' and 'coryphaeus' - to mention a few only. Sometimes, passages are veritably choked with unfamiliar terminology, as in the following few sentences:

> The old castellan would have died of a stroke had I demanded it, and he was so concerned for my safety that any incognito would have been accompanied by at least a platoon of lurking halberdiers. I soon found myself arrayed in lapis lazuli jazerant, cothurni, and a stephane, the whole set off by an ebony baculus and a voluminous damassin cape.

<div align="right">(The Citadel of the Autarch:266)</div>

While the use of such arcane words certainly serves to give a unique flavour to the writing, and helps to create a world that is alien and removed from the reader's own

experience, there is a certain annoyance value attached to the fact that the reader has to stop so frequently to hunt for meanings.[4]

The language of The Book of the New Sun has been called 'baroque'; it is highly-ornamented, sinuous and labyrinthine, like the plot itself, sometimes lit by strange gleams that throw objects and events into high relief. However, it often achieves a remarkable precision and beauty, as in the opening of The Shadow of the Torturer.

> It is possible that I already had some presentiment of my future. The locked and rusted gate that stood before us, with wisps of river fog threading its spikes like the mountain paths, remains in my mind now as the symbol of my exile. That is why I have begun this account of it with the aftermath of our swim, in which I, the torturer's apprentice Severian, had so nearly drowned.

If the story itself 'resists' a context, it is perhaps from the myriad and intriguing array of events and circumambulations that a series of recurrent patterns and images gradually become visible and provide meaning. Indeed, the 'wisps of fog' in this first paragraph immediately suggest the intricate and circumambulatory nature of the many journeys which will follow; their intricate and tenuous meanings, and the difficulty of finding a pathway through the proliferating complexities of Severian's experiences. There is clearly a sense in which reading the tetralogy is rather like following a series of trails. Clues, like dropped hints, abound and later link up with other elements to give richness and amplitude

---

[4] It must be noted, to be fair to Wolfe, that many critics - Joan Gordon and C. N. Manlove are but two - comment approvingly on the elaborate quality of the writer's vocabulary, which is drawn from a wide range of sources and from many languages. Wolfe himself justifies his vocabulary in an appendix to The Shadow of the Torturer by explaining that he is translating from 'a tongue that has not yet achieved existence' and that, rather than invent terms, he has used the 'closest twentieth-century equivalents' (302). This is, of course, a permissible conceit on his part. However, it must also be noted that a vast proportion of the terminology used is archaic, certainly not in current use, and sometimes difficult to track down.

to the work. The profile on the coin that Vodalus gives Severian at the beginning of the story, for instance, turns out, later, to be the etched face of the Autarch. The old man in the Botanic Gardens searching for his dead young wife in the waters of the lake is revealed eventually to be the husband of the resurrected Dorcas. As Brian Attebery, in his discussion of Maude Bodkin's (1934) study of archetypal patterns, points out: 'The relationships among the images within [the poem] constitute its meaning' (1987:184). This sense of correspondence and interconnectedness is present to a large extent in The Book of the New Sun, and it is in the relationships of the parts that the 'meaning' of the book may be finally discernible. The story in its entirety is extraordinarily complex and yet the threads are all woven together so closely that the book becomes a marvel of organisation and intellect. Little seems gratuitous. All is eventually resolved through the action or turns out to have some bearing on Severian's grasp of reality or his sense of destiny.

Character, for instance, takes on an archetypal aspect. Perhaps one of the weaknesses of The Book of the New Sun is the way in which Severian, as well as the other characters, are not personalities (as are, for instance, Le Guin's characters) in the strict sense of the word. The reader often finds it difficult to interact with them on a visceral level. Instead, they are somewhat distanced; associated in a general way with enduring human characteristics that recall many of the images that Frye has identified in his Anatomy of Criticism (1990) as being the special province of the mythic imagination.

Severian himself is a striking figure. Tall, dark, bare-chested, clad in his fuliginous cloak and carrying the great sword *Terminus Est*, he recalls initially the sombre and foreboding figure of Death with his terminal scythe. The woman Agia, manipulative, vengeful and

alluring, and whom Severian desires intensely, becomes the archetypal eternal harlot or siren. Even more obviously emblematic is Jolenta, who would seem to characterise Desire. She is empty of all emotion except the need to inspire lust. As she herself says, she is 'only really comfortable when I can keep my legs apart' (<u>Claw of the Conciliator</u>:206). In different ways, both these women epitomise what Frye calls the 'demonic erotic relation that works against loyalty or frustrates the one who possesses it' (1990:149). Severian's other love, Dorcas, symbolises Innocence: she is blonde, childlike, delicate as the flowers she wears in her hair. Frye has pointed out that such figures are associated with eternal virginity. And despite the obvious evidence that she has carnal relations with Severian, she retains her virginal simplicity and trusting character.

Characters, then, take on aspects above and beyond the merely physical. The Green Man becomes an image of Renewal, associated with vegetation and growth.[5] The dog, Triskele, becomes, perhaps, an image of Devotion. But other recurring images take on richer significance and appear and reappear constantly throughout the tetralogy. One of these is the image of the rose: there are the purple roses in the necropolis of Nessus, the rose carved on the ruined mausoleum which the child Severian adopts as his own, the roses in the Atrium of Time, the roses of Holy St. Katherine's Day, the rose drawn in the air by the Vatic Fountain in the Autarch's gardens - and many more. So persistent are these images that the reader cannot help but be struck by them and, since Severian is in possession of the holy Claw and is constantly aware, also, of the numinous, it seems probable that the rose is more than just a flower. In fact, the rose is a potent communion symbol. Frye remarks: 'In the West the rose has a traditional priority among apocalyptic

---

[5] The symbolic meanings of the Green Man image are explored in much greater detail in Chapter Six of this study.

flowers' (1990:144). The image of the fully opened rose has, indeed, a relationship with the mandala, the magical circle that is a symbol of consciousness, of unity, of knowledge, of wholeness and of cosmic and sacral order.

Jung points out, in his commentary on the Chinese text 'The Secret of the Golden Flower' (1991d:351), that 'most mandalas take the form of a flower....' Just as a flower opens petal by petal, gradually exposing itself to the sun and sky, so does Severian's consciousness expand, until he reaches an intuitive and unshakeable belief in the existence of the 'Increate' and of the manner in which he is connected to all of suffering humanity. At the end of The Citadel of the Autarch, Severian undergoes an epiphanic experience that marks his assumption of maturity and true humanity. Alone on a deserted beach, he comes to a clump of wild roses. A thorn becomes embedded in his flesh, and as he withdraws it, it is transformed into a holy symbol.

> ...All that bush and all the other bushes growing with it were covered with white blossoms and these perfect Claws. The one in my palm flamed with transplendent light as I looked at it.
>
> What struck me on the beach - and it struck me indeed so that I staggered as at a blow - was that if the Eternal Principle had rested in that curved thorn...then it might rest in anything, and in fact probably did rest in everything, in every thorn on every bush, in every drop of water in the sea. The thorn was a sacred Claw because all thorns were sacred Claws; the sand in my boots was sacred sand because it came from a beach of sacred sand..... ...everything had approached and even touched the Pancreator, because everything had dropped from his hand. Everything was a relic.
>
> All the world was a relic. I drew off my boots that had traveled with me

so far, and threw them into the waves that I might not walk shod on holy ground.

<div align="right">(The Citadel of the Autarch:252 - 253)</div>

Another image central to this epic adventure is the image of Severian's sword, *Terminus Est*, a symbol of Severian's potency in the execution of his craft and also of his manhood. The sword also serves to connect Severian with the vigorous image of the Old Testament messiah or saviour. As an image, the sword suggests that it is he who will become the instrument of power, the leader who will bring enlightenment or rebirth to an Urth fallen into decay and darkness. Indeed, Severian is so closely bound to his sword that he risks great danger to regain *Terminus Est* when he loses her in The Claw of the Conciliator. After his struggle with the man-apes in the mine, he says 'I would have despised myself if I had left her behind' (54). And at another point, on regaining his sword he says 'I was a whole man again' (177).

Later, in The Sword of the Lictor, when Severian finally casts the broken remnant of the blade into the lake Diuturna, there is a distinct Arthurian echo. The action is symbolic: from this point on, Severian has freed himself of his earlier life. He will never again practise his craft as carnifex and torturer; he has dedicated himself more firmly to the Increate, and has renewed his resolution to return the Claw to the Pelerines. The casting aside of *Terminus Est* - which means, literally 'here is the end' - marks a moment of evolution and epiphany for Severian. It signifies that he has discarded what is no longer valid and marks a new beginning for him in terms of the role that he will soon assume - the transformation into a more Christ-like figure, possibly the Conciliator or the New Sun himself. In a bizarre reversal of the ceremony of communion he consumes part of the Autarch's brain (The Citadel of the Autarch:236), thus taking on the mantle of suffering

humanity and the task of regeneration. Whether this task will be the physical restoration of the dying solar body, whether it will mean the spiritual rejuvenation of the inhabitants of the moribund Urth, or whether it will be a mixture of both, is left ambiguous. The possibilities seem to exist for both or neither. The promise of the New Sun is tenuous, at best.

Severian's journey towards the messianic role is metaphorised by several complex symbols that Wolfe exploits in subtle and varied ways. Perhaps one of the most persistent images, one to which many commentators have drawn attention, is that of the labyrinth. The novels are filled with references to mazes. There are the convolutions of the Citadel itself, as well as the intricate passages and tunnels that lie beneath it. The Botanic Gardens where Severian goes with Agia seem maze-like in their complexity. There is Father Inire's 'room within a room' that is itself painted with labyrinths. Finally, the House Absolute which houses the Autarch, is labyrinthine in extent.

The image of the labyrinth is a well-documented symbol of the unconscious, the 'underworld', as it were, of the human psyche. The most ancient and archetypal of all labyrinths is undoubtedly the Cretan maze which housed the monstrous Minotaur, a hybrid creature which symbolised both King Minos's unchecked avarice and his queen's unbridled lust. The vast underground maze, therefore, is a powerful and composite image. It suggests not only the hidden and little understood areas of the human mind, but also the journey into these baffling and hidden zones, and the passage out again. Throughout Wolfe's tetralogy, The House Absolute, with its many subterranean levels, its vacant chambers and numberless rooms, becomes a potent image of the subconscious mind with its limitless possibilities and its areas of mystery and inaccessibility. This is the place to

which Severian must finally accede and in which he must find himself at home. Significantly, Severian is also, for a time, imprisoned in a dark, vast and underground chamber of the House Absolute (The Claw of the Conciliator) and must find a way to escape the meandering structure. It becomes difficult to deny that this maze-like web is a metaphor for Severian's sub-conscious as well as for his spiritual journey, and that the focal point of his wanderings is his assumption of the mantle of the Autarch and his acceptance of the challenge to become the champion of humanity and of the Urth.

And, finally, clarifying the symbolism of the maze, there is the composite structure of Severian's own personality, after he has eaten and thus absorbed the mind of the Autarch.

> ...my single personality was no more, but the new, complex structure no longer dazzled and bewildered me. It was a maze, but I was the owner and even the builder of that maze...
>
> (The Citadel of the Autarch:243)

And, indeed, the very structure of the tetralogy is an intricate network; branching, hydra-headed, interleaving - as maze-like as the memories of Severian himself. Symbolic meanings are suggested, too, by the fact that the different personae that Severian absorbs through the mind of the androgenous Autarch are both male and female. Thus, Severian's mind takes on an ambivalent, even bisexual aspect. Jung (1991f:148), calls the archetypal hermaphrodite figure a conciliator of opposites and draws attention to the fact that it signifies reconciliation, unity and wholeness. Despite its 'monstrosity', it is a bringer of healing.

But over and above the image of the maze is superimposed an even larger pattern that also

becomes a metaphor for the movement of Severian towards the point where he assumes responsibility for the future of mankind. Wolfe's approach to certain metaphysical and cosmic concepts such as the passage of time, the persistence of memory and the meaning of human life is often mystical. Certainly, Severian's musings and his capacity for metaphysical realisation seem to become more complex, more intense as the books progress. This sense of mystical enquiry is symbolised by a larger pattern that overlies the maze-like surface glitter and brilliance of invention and action. The third book, The Sword of the Lictor, seems to be particularly full of an awareness of the Increate, of the sense of a larger movement and of a larger pattern that embraces the smallness of men's lives, and which embraces even time's passing and the movements of history.

This greater pattern which shapes the entire Book of the New Sun takes on, it would appear, a spiral form. Campbell, talking of 'the metaphors used to represent eternity' (1960:65), identifies the spiral motif as an ancient one that symbolises birth.

> In archaic art, the labyrinth...was represented in the figure of the spiral.
> The spiral also appears spontaneously in certain stages of meditation, as
> well as to people going to sleep under ether. It is a prominent device,
> furthermore, at the silent entrances and within the dark passages of the
> ancient Irish burial mound...These facts suggest that a constellation of
> images denoting the plunge and dissolution of consciousness in the images
> of non-being must have been employed intentionally, from an early date,
> to represent the analogy of threshold rites to the mystery of the entry of
> the child into the womb for birth.
>
> (Campbell, 1960:65 - 66)

In The Book of the New Sun, the image of this entoptic spiral springs unbidden to mind and superimposes itself on the whirl of smaller patternings. The word 'entoptic' refers,

literally, to that which is within the eyeball, to the visibility to the eye of objects within itself. The entoptic spiral, as Campbell has pointed out, is a form seen sometimes in trance states and seen by migraine sufferers also, who experience explosions of light and other visual disorders during the onset of an attack. The spiral is also associated with shamanistic ritual. Severian falls habitually into trance states at moments of repose, fatigue or strain, spending a great deal of time in a dream-like suspension in which memory, speculation and revelation afflict him. At such moments in time, he often reaches heights of ecstatic religious revelation, as in <u>The Citadel of the Autarch,</u> when he prays in the chapel of the Pelerines and experiences an extraordinary vision.

> I asked only that I might lead myself; and as I did so, I seemed to see with a vision increasingly clear, through a chink in the universe to a new universe bathed in golden light, where my listener knelt to hear me. What had seemed a crevice in the world had expanded until I could see a face and folded hands, and the opening, like a tunnel, running deep into a human head...I was whispering into my own ear, and when I realized it I flew into it like a bee and stood up.
>
> (111 - 112)

This, the oneiric spiral - rather than the simple circle that is often suggested by the journey motif - seems to portray more clearly the overall shape of the <u>Book of the New Sun</u>. The spiral is appropriate, too, because of the fact that the frame of reference of the tetralogy is enormously wide (just as a spiral may begin at its widest or most open point and circle inward to its centre), with diverse images and information feeding into the matrix of the story and suggesting circle upon narrowing circle, which in turn hint at layers or levels of reality and meaning. This swirl of thoughts gradually narrows down to a central point as all the references and allusions become resolved, and as Severian's destiny as the New Sun becomes finally focused on his role as Autarch. To quote Campbell again:

> The maze form - which is an elaborated spiral - gives a long and indirect path from the outside of an area to the inside, at a point called the nucleus, generally near the centre. Its principle seems to be the provision of a difficult but possible access to some important point.
>
> (1960:69)

This image of the 'elaborated spiral' is one that takes form slowly with the unfolding of Severian's successive wanderings, both physical and spiritual, towards the final assumption of responsibility. The sharpness and precision of Wolfe's language gives an almost hallucinatory edge of clarity to the images he uses, and this precision complements the dreamlike nature of the symbol of the entoptic spiral. For Severian is often aware of his own incipient insanity, a state wherein dreams, visions, and things seen within the eye, are most likely to be encountered. His metaphysical thought processes are often depicted as though in wheeling motion, as he slowly circles toward some focal point of comprehension. Severian constantly attempts to relate events and sensations to some larger motion of the universe, and even speaks of the 'swirling order' of the galaxy - itself a spiral - in The Sword of the Lictor (227).

The coiled patterns are repeated with variations. Severian sees an amphisbaenae - a two-headed snake - in the heavens. The Hierodules speak of the ourobouros - the emblematic serpent that eternally devours itself, thus symbolising the cycle of destruction and rebirth. Despite the fact that Wolfe is a highly sophisticated and conscious craftsman, these patterns seem fortuitous rather than contrived, giving the impression that they have emerged spontaneously from the deepest recesses of the psyche. They express Severian's long wanderings and tribulations as he moves gradually back to the Matachin Tower and to the House Absolute, to be reborn (in a sense) as the New Sun. Gradually, the spiral

narrows to a central point. This point, the focus of all Severian's adventures, appears to be Jung's moment of 'self-individuation', Campbell's 'difficult but possible' task. For Severian's destiny encompasses more than simply the personal. He is, it has been frequently remarked, a 'Christ figure',[6] and here again there is a larger pattern super-imposed on the pattern of mere personal destiny.

There are several incidents in the course of the work that draw parallels between Severian and Christ. First of all, there is his status as a homeless wanderer with no property but his great sword, the clothes he wears, and the few objects that he carries in his sabretache. There are the various tests that he undergoes that have parallels in the life of Christ. Both the monstrous undine (in The Claw of the Conciliator) and the equally monstrous Typhon (in The Sword of the Lictor) offer Severian temptations which he resists. He is, with the help of the Claw, able to perform miracles of regeneration and healing: he raises Dorcas from her watery grave (The Shadow of the Torturer), revives the dead uhlan (The Claw of the Conciliator), and resurrects the dead soldier from whose flesh comes 'the smell of death' (The Citadel of the Autarch:14).

There are further correspondences. Like Christ, Severian suffers mutilations. In the final book, his face is disfigured by the hand of Agia. He is maimed, also, by a wound to his leg during the war with the Ascians. And Dorcas says, tellingly, (in The Claw of the Conciliator:200), that he is not really Death, that he could become 'a carpenter or a fisherman', her imagery thus linking him with Christ, who was both.

---

[6] Joan Gordon (1986:92), in her study of Gene Wolfe, states: 'Severian is a Christ figure who hopes to save the world from eternal darkness'.

However, it is in his potential capacity as the New Sun and as the potential redeemer of

the dying Urth and of humanity, that Severian's fullest destiny lies. As the story

progresses, he learns a greater sense of duty. He learns that he has been given the Claw in

trust, and as time progresses his ownership of it becomes more purposeful, more

deliberate. As he finally absorbs the personality of the old Autarch 'who in one body is a

thousand' (The Citadel of the Autarch:224), he becomes one with a multitude of

individuals, his personal identity subsumed in that of suffering humanity. And in his

readiness to undertake the final, enigmatic test that is offered him on behalf of all mankind,

he becomes a messianic figure. He gains, in Campbell's words, 'the power to bestow

boons on his fellow men' (1975:31).

Jung, in his essay 'The Psychology of the Child Archetype', points out:

> The hero's main feat is to overcome the monster of darkness: it is the
> long-hoped-for and expected triumph of consciousness over the
> unconscious. Day and light are synonyms for consciousness, night and
> dark for the unconscious...Hence, the 'child' distinguishes itself by deeds
> which point to the conquest of the dark.
>
> (Jung, 1991f:141)

Significantly, in the Book of the New Sun, Urth has fallen on dark times in the physical as

well as the metaphysical sense. The cooling sun is now only a dim remnant of the glowing

orb to which we are accustomed. An eternal twilight has fallen over the earth, so that

even the stars are visible during the daylight hours. And, throughout the tetralogy, there is

constant reference to the fervent hope in the coming of the New Sun, an ambiguous

renewal that may or may not take human form. The reader is left in doubt as to whether

Severian will be the saviour of mankind - the living New Sun - or whether the coming of

the New Sun refers to his belief in the regeneration of the sun itself and the rejuvenation of the senescent planet.

All these patterns and potentialities are curiously ambivalent and, indeed, an important aspect of The Book of the New Sun is its ambiguity. Agia says to Severian: 'Do you think there are answers to everything here?', and later, 'Then how can you ask the questions you do? Or if you have to ask them, can't you understand that I don't necessarily have the answers?' (The Shadow of the Torturer:180).

This seems to sum up some of the impenetrable and paradoxical qualities of the book. At various points in the story, Wolfe has different characters introduce parables or stories that have diffuse meanings. In The Sword of the Lictor, for example, the hierodule Famulimus offers Severian several metaphoric images that suggest that growth is balanced by decay, knowledge balanced by destruction, life balanced by death. She cites the amphisbaenae, of which one head is dead while the other head gnaws at it. She says, paradoxically:

> The living head stands for destruction. The head that does not live, for
> building. The former feeds upon the latter, and feeding, nourishes its
> food. A boy might think that if the first should die, the dead, constructive
> thing would triumph, making his twin now like himself. The truth is both
> would soon decay.
>
> (The Sword of the Lictor:265)

Perhaps the message of The Book of the New Sun is, in part, that the complexities of life, of reality and of identity, as well as the miraculous profligacy of creation, are too profound to be grasped entire. 'Final' answers can be self-defeating and reductive. The complexities of life, of creation, are too rich, too complex, to be narrowed to a definable

point. Just as Severian's personality merges with the myriad personalities encompassed by the mind of the Autarch, so too do meanings become interconnected and diffused. The branching structure of The Book of the New Sun is so large and so complex as to be, finally, ungraspable, becoming, in effect, a metaphor for its own enigmatic meaning. 'We can if we like read into it serious themes concerning alienation of the self or man's distance from reality..., but so to do is to limit that which refuses limits' (C. N. Manlove, 1986:215).

Wolfe's messianic hero acts on a grandly sweeping scale, moving across a vast and infinitely varied canvas and promising the boon of renewal to mankind in general. But sometimes the messianic figure is conceived within a smaller context, and the gift he brings is to a more circumscribed community. In Roger Eldridges's The Fishers of Darksea (1984) the hero-figure is part of a small, beleaguered tribe, and the gift he will bring is one of ambiguous, even doubtful, value.

Set at some unspecified point in the future, when nuclear war has altered and ravaged the planet, The Fishers of Darksea describes the life of a small group of people who fled a nuclear holocaust - the 'Burnings'. Generations ago, they settled in the polar regions, on the harsh little island of Darksea, where they have successfully adapted to the radioactive elements of their tiny home. The island is dominated by the 'Liferock', and its radioactive substance has become a necessity for their continued health and well-being.

The tribe, only a few hundred strong, lead hard and primitive lives, subsisting on the kelp that they farm and the beasts of the brine that are caught by their élite, the Fishers. Life is circumscribed by fears and taboos which centre on the need for the Liferock, and the tribe

is led by the Water Sorcerer, Glorkas, who presides over all the ceremonies that define existence.

Darksea has always been unstable, riven by blow-holes, spouters, and volcanic upheavals, shrouded in mists and steam, prey to the ravages of the encroaching polar ice-cap and to the storms that scour the scrap of land. Now, however, unknown to the people, the island is close to destruction. Enormous sub-terranean pressures are building slowly towards the final cataclysm. In addition, although the tribe is ignorant of the fact, supplies of the vital Liferock are failing.

The protagonist, No-mirth, is a young Fisher who has been paired as companion with another youth (Mirth) in a bonding that means that they are 'Others'. They are thus sworn to share life's perils and joys. But where Mirth is integrated into the tribe and comfortable with his status as Fisher, No-mirth is gifted with a special kind of sightedness that leads him gradually to apprehend disturbing and painful truths. He slowly realises that Glorkas the Water Sorcerer has been usurped by the blind curer, Nemu. He also sees that the visions which Nemu is imposing on the tribe will blind the people to reality and render them unable to prepare themselves for the coming end. No-mirth alone sees the evil of Nemu, that he leads his people to a dream-land that has no truth. Eventually, after much suffering, after excoriation and expulsion from the tribe, and after intense internal struggle, No-mirth slowly and painfully takes upon himself the responsibility of returning to his people and of bringing to them a saving, though dreadful, truth.

In order to focus upon the movement of No-mirth towards that point when he assumes the full burden of his role as saviour of his tribe, Eldridge makes use of a unifying image that

is focal to the book. It is in this image that much of the power of the writing is concentrated and through which No-mirth's development becomes clear. For, central to the book, to the understanding of No-mirth's character and of his rise to maturity, are images associated with sight or vision, with 'seeing' in both the physical and the metaphysical senses. No-mirth's role as messianic figure is inextricably bound to his growth as a visionary, as one who 'sees' the future and the truth of what awaits his tribe. His slow and painful evolution into a saviour figure is focussed in the way Eldridge uses these images, as he shows how No-mirth gradually comes to see more clearly, until the moment of final revelation.

Initially, No-mirth 'sees' certain things, yet simultaneously does not 'see'. That is to say, he sees in the physical sense but does not yet comprehend the meaning of what he is seeing. This is because he is gifted with a certain intuitive knowledge, yet has - at the same time and for the greater part of the book, until he reaches an epiphanic maturity of vision - no insight. The images of sight, of seeing, of vision, are stressed repeatedly by Eldridge. The reader's first glimpse of No-mirth is symbolic: he is peering into the gloom, trying to see clearly. And, indeed, he spends most of his time struggling to see. The first words he speaks are his admission that his 'eyes were tricked' (9). And his Other, Mirth, prophetically calls upon him to 'see true'. Seeing true, will, in fact, be No-mirth's final messianic mission.

The imagery of sight is elaborated further: a constant dichotomy is drawn between physical seeing and visionary sight. No-mirth and Mirth will have to endure the scrutiny of the Water Sorcerer, Glorkas. For 'Glorkas had sent his eyes to watch for them', and 'his eyes were bright and all-seeing' (24). Already No-mirth feels 'his mind stretched to see

with the Sorcerer's eyes' (25). In the dim recesses of No-mirth's mind, his strong need to

'see', to follow his destiny, is beginning to stir uncomfortably.

No-mirth is afflicted with eyes that view him sometimes too clearly, and sometimes not at

all. He feels that Nemu, for instance, 'sees' him, and that the members of the tribe - from

whom he hungers for acceptance - do not see him in any real sense as he is. And all the

while, he himself is struggling to 'see', to find the truth, sensing that some reality is being

hidden from the tribe. For No-mirth is the quintessential outsider. He is vision-haunted

and dream-troubled. Mirth tells him, 'You have a mind like smoke, always drifting, and

you have touched on matters that are not your concern' (61). While the common folk

keep their eyes downcast, No-mirth lifts his eyes to meet Nemu's. The blind curer also

sees in the visionary sense, despite the fact that he cannot see in the physical sense. Yet,

as No-mirth gradually learns, Nemu's visions are untrue. He seeks to keep the folk,

metaphorically, in a state like his own physical condition, one of blindness. It is No-mirth

who will finally 'see true' and who will lead his people to a moment of spiritual truth.

No-mirth hungers for full vision, and hungers, too, for others to meet his eyes. But this

last is an unreachable end. In whatever guise he appears to the folk, he makes them

uneasy. All eyes are on him, yet no one truly sees him as he sees himself. The eyes of the

people reject him, cast him away. Like the shadow which he senses has slipped between

himself and his Other, Mirth, he feels lost in an in-between place. He feels the 'sadness of

his unbelonging' (48). His role is constantly to stand apart. Until he accepts that he will

never be a part of the daily life of the tribe, he cannot accept his destiny.

From the moment he glimpses the great Fish, hears its mournful call and sees the menace of its single terrible eye (52 - 53) - which not so much sees him as 'discovers' him - he is catalysed into knowledge, into a vision of duty to Darksea. It only remains for him to find his way. This will prove an intensely painful and arduous task. No-mirth's is essentially a visionary mind: ghost-haunted, dream-ridden. Although taboos and rituals encircle him, his unsophisticated mind is capable of complexity. He will meet the challenge of his destiny. But the price he will pay is that of exile to a loneliness far beyond that which he has ever experienced as a maladroit member of the tribe. Significantly, he must finally break the greatest taboo in order to do so. He must separate himself from his Other, Mirth, who serves to symbolise the conforming and restraining aspects of his own personality. For No-mirth cannot be free until he has shaken off the restrictions which chain him to habitual submission to the tribe and to Nemu. When he finally kills his Other, whom he simultaneously loves and loathes, he is freed, for he has also destroyed that within his own psyche which keeps him fettered. He has, thus, sundered the final link with the tribe and may now breach the ultimate barrier and cross the forbidden ice on a journey that will lead him to transcendent revelation.

Finally, he accepts Glorkas's augury of 'the fish-within-a-fish' (76). Over the eye of the little fish is a 'scarlet wound...and its long gauzy tail was split into two parts, one healthy, the other crooked and infirm.' The symbolism of the prophecy becomes clear. The tiny fish within the bigger fish becomes a prophetic reflection of No-mirth caught within the entrails of the great Fish. Like No-mirth, the tiny fish is marked on the brow by a scar, and its split tail symbolises No-mirth's own bodily mutilations. No-mirth feels 'an unnatural bond of kinship with it' (76 - 78). Eventually, No-mirth will fulfil the prophecy, venturing out into forbidden territory, crossing the sea, braving the ice-pack, and finally

entering the great Fish itself. Thus, once again, the image of the journey becomes central. The voyage into unknown lands, symbolising the movement towards discovery within the self, becomes an outward manifestation of the manner in which No-mirth reaches inwards, into his own mind and heart to find the meaning for his sufferings and long travails. His sojourn within the submarine crystallises his disparate visions into a compelling and revelatory sense of redemptive messianism.

These symbolic images serve to add complexity and resonance to the book. Rather like Wolfe's Severian, No-mirth also becomes Christ-like in his assumption of the suffering of his tribe. The analogies with the Christian mono-myth are significant, for No-mirth is, like Christ, a "Fisher', and the fish itself is a potent and complex symbol. Apart from its pagan associations with fecundity and abundance, it has at times been a sacred creature, eaten on days of special significance in order that celebrants might absorb its divinity. In early Christian times, believers were known as *pisculi*. Significantly, the natural medium of the fish is water, and its immersion suggests baptism. When No-mirth enters the 'great Fish', yet another biblical echo is evoked, for the reader is irresistibly reminded of Jonah in the belly of the whale. Like Jonah, No-mirth will experience a revelation within the entrails of the great Fish, emerging reborn both intellectually and spiritually. Campbell points out the universality of the whale as an image of rebirth.

> ...a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolised in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died.
>
> (1975:79)

No-mirth's apotheosis takes place in the engine room of the great submarine. He finally realises the kinship between the nuclear-powered machine and the stuff of Liferock. His body irreparably altered, his mind begins to change, too.

> He was a Fisher still, but also something more shadowy, less touchable. He was a man of flesh who dwelled on land, yet he had travelled inside the ocean and tasted its infinity; his mind rolled with the cadence of a tide, and he was brinish....Some would say he was beyond saving, yet he had been saved.

> Even his physical form altered: he was smaller and a part of him was pared. Yet the lost flesh had been replaced by spirit, so that the shape of his body was not the outer limit of his being. He carried a second envelope, like a dawnish glow about his person.

> (176)

The transmutation is complete. He exclaims 'I am ready. I am cured' (177). Here, within the Fish, he has learned the truth: Darksea is nearing the end of its time. He exults as he begins to realise his true calling. Finally, No-mirth has learned to 'see true'.

> 'Once the Eye hunted me; now the Eye is I,' he cried. '*I* am the Eye who seeks and sees. Soon I shall know my true name.'

> (181)

Rejecting safety, No-mirth returns to Darksea in order to depose Nemu., who has begun to impose his false visions on the tribe. No-mirth takes upon himself the mantle of Glorkas, giving up with sorrow his dreams of becoming one with his people. He becomes, in effect, the Water Sorcerer himself, accepting that Glorkas is now his 'true name', and yielding to his destiny as an outsider, as a 'dream-wanderer'. No-mirth thus embodies yet another archetypal pattern: '...the passage of the threshold is a form of self-

annihilation. ....the hero goes inwards, to be born again' (Campbell, 1975:80).

He embraces his hideous knowledge and the unavoidability of his mission. The gift he takes back to his people is a painful one. He cannot save them in the physical sense, but he can perhaps hope to redeem their ending, to bring them nobility in their going, to offer them spiritual regeneration. 'If my people are to die, I shall die with them, and perhaps I shall make their going easier' (195). Christ-like, he will bring redemption to his tribe, and will take upon himself the burden of his people's pain. He shoulders his responsibilities, apparelling himself in Glorkas's identity and garb. He 'accepts his new maturity with mounting ease' (212), and teaches his tribe that 'there will be no more fear in our laws, and there will be no more Foretellings; for Darksea has reached its fullness. We are the peak of a dream, the flowering of a fire' (212). His terrible burden is to teach his people not to go fear-haunted to their end, but to face the truth in full knowledge and with courage.

The success of the book, its ability to hold and convince the reader, and to convey No-mirth's apotheosis from a timid and dream-haunted youth to a powerful leader of his people, is dependent to a large extent on Eldridge's use of language. There is a certain ornateness to his style, a rather fantastic quality, that well suits the other-worldliness of the images. Yet this elaborateness in no way vitiates the vigour of the imagery and of the characterisations, nor does it soften the essential mysteriousness and bleakness of the world that he creates.

In order to portray this astonishing world with intensity, Eldridge uses a great deal of metaphoric physical detail. The island of Darksea becomes, in a sense, almost personified.

The extensions of Liferock, for instance, are depicted as the veins running beneath the skin of the island of Darksea, and this skin is pitted with ruptures and spout-holes, like the open sores and wounds of a body that is constantly irritated and suppurating at its exposed nerve-ends.

The book is carefully organised around the person of No-mirth, and it is in him that Eldridge concentrates the simple, yet powerful images that become focal to the writing. As the book opens, Eldridge skilfully introduces the world of the Fishers. Their fear-haunted minds are immediately apparent, for he uses an almost anthropological approach to suggest to the reader that the people he is describing are alien and primitive. Through the consciousness of No-mirth and his Other, Mirth, the reader is able to apprehend the world in much the same terms that the two Fishers see it.

In the opening scene, the two young men are keeping watch on the fishwalk at the edge of the sea. To them, the sea is a vast, living monster which they fear. No-mirth, for instance, sees the sea as

> many-faced and deadly. Today it lay tame at his feet, sleek and silvery like a newly gaffed fish. Yet the sea could not fool him, for he knew the secret motion of its breathing, as it lightly rose and fell against the fishwalk. Just below the surface little lights sparked like eyes in the brine, watching him and wishing him harm.
>
> ...He lifted his long fish-stick and stabbed the sly sea, breaking its skin and making wrinkles spread outwards from the wound.
>
> (9)

The sea, then, becomes a living entity. It is guileful, playing at being 'tame'; yet, all the

while it watches No-mirth with ill-will, breathing quietly and trying to 'fool' him. This animistic approach immediately alerts the reader to the fact that No-mirth and his Other think in terms that are primitive, yet not unsubtle. The metaphor becomes more extensive and more elaborate as the action proceeds. Mirth's harpoon caresses the air 'like the feeler of a giant sea-crawler' (9), and later the sea bubbles 'greedily' (13). The writer takes us into the consciousness even of a seal, which

> ...turned on its back and grumbled gently to itself, disturbed by the nearness of Darksea. It had strayed far from the cold playgrounds of its tribe, drawn by the lush aroma of fish spiced with a bitter-sweetness it could not resist. The scent was still there, heady and tantalizing on the outcoming drift, but there was something else now, a blackness that seeped from the island like poisoned blood. The young seal wavered and wished it were not alone.
>
> (11)

This kind of personification of both animate and inanimate objects is skilfully maintained by Eldridge throughout the book, consistently allowing the reader a passage into the intimate thought processes of his protagonist. The device never descends to the sentimental or the precious, and therefore never becomes obtrusive or cloying. Rather than being jarring - who after all can claim with authority to know what a seal or a walrus thinks or feels? - Eldridge manages to convince us of the naturalness of such anthropomorphism. He succeeds in this because he has convinced us that, like many primitive people who live close to the natural world, No-mirth and his Other have an empathetic - almost a symbiotic - relationship with the animals they hunt. Later, when No-mirth comes into contact with the 'nixie', the writer is able to make the reader see with perfect clarity the terms in which No-mirth translates the machinery of its airtight suit and its breathing apparatus into the natural terms of his own world and his own

vocabulary.

> The creature who straddled him was like a man, yet such a man as creeps
> in nightmares. His skin was of burnished silver, and he had no features,
> only a vast round skull with a single eye that glowed from within. The
> hands which kneaded No-mirth's ribs had no fingers, and the toeless feet
> were stiffly blunted. A pale gut curled from his head into a bladder on his
> back.
>
> (133)

Similarly, the ice-bound nuclear submarine is perceived as a fearful living beast by No-mirth:

> ...the Fish was ailing, perhaps even dying. It was bloodless and dry, and
> sometimes a rending crack hurt his ears. The Fish was made of a myriad
> of interlocking husks which seemed to be crumbling one by one, imploding
> under the gnawing stranglement of the ice.
>
> The silver-men were fully in command inside this living labyrinth of
> sapless cells, following the arteries and veins as easily as he trod the
> gullies of Darksea. They were like the parasites he had seen in the gut of
> diseased sea beasts....
>
> (168)

It is because of the grace with which the writer handles such moments that the reader can be so deeply involved in No-mirth's world and experience.

As well as the intensely detailed physical world, Eldridge achieves an almost epic quality in the unfolding of the story. There is a strongly mythic feeling in the chants and sagas of the folk of Darksea, to which he gives depth by the addition of much detail. For instance, he quotes a 'snarl-song' from Mirth's childhood:

hissy-sissy seal

hair-wet and frail

cry and die and squeal

I caught you by the tail...

(10)

The diction of the tribe is filled with simple, yet strong, poetic images, with metaphors and similes - as is the language of primitive peoples - and this stresses the mythic and epic qualities of the writing. Mirth, for instance, pungently tells his Other, No-mirth 'I know there's emptiness in you where there should be meat' (102). And the writer assays, too, the oral traditions and heroic style of the saga songs with which the Fishers regale each other, as in this snatch of Mirth's gleeful account of the killing of the walrus, 'the fang-walker':

It was then my Other manfully rose

scorning the brutish glutton cries;

Even as Old Churny opened his jaws,

my Other struck, planting his arrow

in its gore-box. It was the end.

Its spirit soared away, and its body

was our great and glorious prize.

(36)

Roger Eldridge is, apparently, little recognised by the science fiction fraternity, and there is no critical comment that I can discover on The Fishers of Darksea.[7] Despite the lack of acclaim, however, it is my opinion that, in The Fishers of Darksea, he has produced a small gem of a novel, one that functions with a great deal of veracity and power and which

---

[7] The first edition of The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (1979) ignores Eldridge completely, while the second edition dismisses him in a brief paragraph. Neither does Aldiss make any mention of Eldridge in his comprehensive Trillion Year Spree (1986).

is deserving of critical attention. Although just over two hundred pages in length, the symbolic use of language and the mythic nature of No-mirth's character, his tribulations and his final apotheosis, convey an epic scope. Furthermore, the ambiguity of the ending gives the lie, yet again, to Frye's (1976) contention that fantasy is 'vertical', that it functions without the suggestion of 'linearity' or causality, that action is not contiguous and that character has no true consistency. For, in The Fishers of Darksea, character is carefully built up, stroke by stroke, through the layering of detail, and events follow one upon the other in logical progression. The result is one of complexity and subtlety, rather than one of transparent simplicity, and the extent to which the reader is emotionally involved with the destiny of No-mirth indicates the depth with which Eldridge creates his strange world and its doomed inhabitants. Fascinating, too, is the manner in which fantasy and sf elements are interwoven, with the scientific rationale for the radioactive Liferock and the tribe's adaptations to these alien exigencies only gradually becoming clear as the story unfolds.

In both The Book of the New Sun and The Fishers of Darksea, the success of the messianic role of the protagonist is left in some doubt. Severian may or may not meet the final test that awaits him when he journeys beyond the bounds of the solar system as an emissary from the dying Urth. And No-mirth's services to his people cannot save them physically, can bring them only the tenuous comforts of safety from metaphysical or spiritual peril. Nevertheless, what is undeniable is that the protagonists of the books discussed above share certain characteristics which link them to the archetypal structures of myth. One of the most striking aspects of each is his youth, often a significant aspect of the archetypal calling of the saviour figure. Jung, in his discussion of the archetypal 'child hero', draws attention to the fact of youth being an expression of 'potentiality' and of

futurity, and each of these heroes is, if not quite a child, extremely young. Jung sees the child hero as one who unites opposites, 'a mediator, a bringer of healing, that is, one who makes whole' (1991d:138). The child paves the way for the potential future. Furthermore, the various difficulties that the young hero must face are proof of his 'semi-divine' or special nature, for '...the hero's supernaturalness includes human nature and thus he represents a synthesis of the ("divine", i.e., not yet humanised) unconscious and human consciousness' (1991d:140). Each of the books discussed so far in this section, displays this archetypal pattern. Paul Atreides, as Dune opens, is just fifteen years of age, and by the time he has undergone all the tests of manhood and taken on the mantle of the saviour of Arrakis, he is barely seventeen. Gene Wolfe's Severian is still an adolescent at the start of his adventures, and not a great deal older - though he seems so in experience - by the time he prepares himself for his final messianic task. And No-Mirth, as we meet him in the opening chapter of The Fishers of Darksea , is readying himself to bid farewell to his childhood.

Symbolically, these tests and privations also express in concrete terms the tenuous nature of safety and reality, concepts which the saviour figure must needs transcend in order to be able to deliver those liberating or redeeming boons of which he is the bearer. Severian and No-mirth show, simultaneously, some of the traits of both the Old Testament saviour figure and of the Christian messianic ideal. In Old Testament terms, each is something of the man of action, both moving within the realm of temporal power. Severian, through the various offices of carnifex, lictor and finally of Autarch, achieves a position of authority and dominance in the political sphere. And No-mirth, too, must act with wiliness and great skill to achieve leadership of his tribe. Yet, despite the 'political' role that each plays, both protagonists are messiah figures also in the visionary Christian sense.

Each achieves moments of epiphany. Severian, at the edge of the ocean in the closing pages of <u>The Citadel of the Autarch</u>, reaches an overwhelming sense of the sacred nature of all creation and of his part in it. No-mirth's vision in the belly of the great Fish is of his compelling need to return to his people and bring them healing.

But in another moving novel set in the far future, the protagonist - also not yet out of his teens - eschews completely the temporal consequences of action and power. Like Severian and No-mirth, he must face experiences of loss and learning to achieve his vision. His peregrinations and sufferings, too, become a beacon that will guide the future. John Crowley's <u>Engine Summer</u> (1980) is a remarkable book that engages the reader on many levels and that requires careful reading to reveal its subtleties and beauties.

The central character, Rush that Speaks, dwells - like Severian and No-mirth - in a world that is apocalyptic in the sense that there is a feeling that things are drawing to a close, running down, coming to an end. His world has long since seen the 'Storm' which destroyed the 'angels'- which is what men now call their distant ancestors. The angels dominated Earth with their roads and engines, with all the magical paraphernalia of their powers. The world that remains appears almost idyllic, by contrast. Technology has been destroyed, and people have slowly reverted to a pastoral life ruled by the seasons and the collecting of the remnants of the angel's world.

A culture that is at once gentler, kinder, and more simple, now exists. It is dominated by the myths and legends that still remain from the time of the angels. The meaning and purpose of many of the angels' works are long forgotten. Their cities are deserted even by the rats, their 'engines' stand in ruins. The most obscure and trivial of their objects

remain, to become relics of the past: venerated, feared, misunderstood, seen as signs and

portents. Rush that Speaks is struck dumb with fear by an ancient weather barometer in

the shape of a Swiss cottage, and also by a picture of the four gigantic heads of Mount

Rushmore - which become linked in his mind with the myth of the four dead men, the

meaning of which is revealed only much later in the book. Even language has altered to

some extent. For instance, 'engine summer' is a corruption of 'indian summer'.

> There's a time in some years, after the first frosts, when the sun gets hot
> again, and summer returns for a time. Winter is coming; you know that
> from the way the mornings smell, the way the leaves, half-turned to color,
> are dry and poised to drop. But summer goes on, a small false summer,
> all the more precious for being small and false. In Little Belaire, we
> called this time - for some reason nobody now knows - engine summer.
>
> (42)

The style of the writing is simple and poetic; the mood is evocative, elegiac and ultimately

beguiling. Crowley is acutely aware of the harmonious and seasonal patterns of nature,

and his writing is suffused with a quiet acceptance of, and compassion for, humanity. Part

of the beauty of the book lies in the gentle and pastoral nature of Rush that Speaks's

peregrinations. For, in archetypal mode, he leaves his birthplace, Little Belaire, and sets

off on a series of wanderings and adventures. There is a slightly fantastical and humorous

quality to many of his experiences, and these link the book, in a sense, to the wondrous

absurdities of fable or fairy-tale. He meets the twins, Budding and Blooming. 'Naked,

they poled upstream, the leaf shadows flowing over them, wearing flowers in their hair'

(69). He adopts, or is adopted by, a cow that he calls Fido - because this is what the

angels called their animals. He meets a saint who lives in a tree, in a little house made from

'pieces of angel-made this and that' (72), and who presents a charming figure.

He was fast asleep. His hands were crossed over his bosom, and he snored; his feet, clad in big boots, stuck up. His white hair lay all around him on the ground, and his beard spread out around his small brown face so that he looked like a milkweed seed...Seeing us, he sneezed loudly, got up grumbling, and started off towards the woods across the pasture. Budding cried out and started chasing him as though he were a bird we'd raised. Blooming followed after...

When they had been some time crashing around in the woods into which the saint had gone, they came back to me panting.

"He's in a tree," said Blooming.

(70)

Once again, as in the books discussed previously, it is the long journey of the protagonist towards some final vision of grace and enlightenment that becomes the true focus of the story. And, as in <u>The Book of the New Sun</u> and <u>The Fishers of Darksea</u>, this voyage takes the hero not only towards a moment of personal revelation, but also towards a point of general meaning, a point which will benefit more than his own single persona. For, the promise of the saviour figure is that he bears gifts which enrich the spiritual lives of his entire community or world, and Rush that Speaks's motivation for his long journey is, in fact, his own compelling desire to become a saint.

For him, a saint is not so much a holy or religious figure, as one who teaches men something. A saint is 'transparent'. By listening to the story of a saint's life, men may learn something about their own lives. Painted Red, who is Rush that Speaks's mentor in Little Belaire, puts it like this:

She said: "The saints found that truthful speaking was more than just being understood; the important thing was that the better you spoke, the more other people saw themselves in you, as in a mirror. Or better: the

more they saw themselves through you, as though you had become
transparent."

(57 - 58)

Rush that Speaks himself wants 'to make sense of the world in the stories I told' (63). He wants to find a truth and meaning that goes beyond what can be apprehended merely by the senses.

First, however, Rush that Speaks must embark on that archetypal voyage of discovery which will enable him to reach for those meanings. One of the most significant of these is learned from the people of Dr Boots's List. Rush that Speaks wishes intensely to achieve the state of grace which the members of the List have attained, a state free of desire and need. The people of Boots's List seem to know how to 'be', and he longs to know what they know, to be as they are. He can do this only by receiving the enigmatic 'letter from Dr Boots'. When he finally experiences the consciousness, the being, of Boots, he is changed ineradicably. He learns a new kind of awareness, an instantaneous vibrancy of being that is recreated at each moment with each new and momentary sensation. He learns a kind of vividness, a clarity of sensation, a means of being that is completely visceral, completely unintellectual and of the moment. It is an awareness that has no memory, 'no meanwhile'.

Boots, the reader learns only much later, is - or was - a cat. The angels had experimented with imprisoning or retaining consciousness, capturing four human minds in the glass spheres that have become part of Rush that Speaks's mythology - the 'four dead men'. But, not knowing whether the process would be fatal to their subjects or not, their initial attempt had been with a cat called Boots. Boots's sphere has remained through

generations with the List, and her small, rich life is what has conditioned the people of the List to be as they are. Rush that Speaks learns what the List knows and what the angels, in their 'great anguish', struggled with and failed to learn. He learns a simpler, wiser mode of being, less confused, more lovely. He will somehow, ever after, carry Boots within him. He will be able, henceforth, 'to let the task be the master: which is only not to choose to do anything but what has chosen me to be done' (145). In a sense, the letter from Dr Boots carries T. S. Eliot's prayer from 'Ash Wednesday'. It is:

> Teach us to care and not to care
> Teach us to sit still.
>
> (ll. 39 - 40)

The secret of Boots, paradoxically, 'is that Boots has nothing, nothing at all to say (145).

Finally the realisation comes that the Rush that Speaks with whom the reader has been interacting for the duration of the book is long since dead. What has seemed like a life in the process of being recorded is, in fact, a life in the process of being replayed or re-experienced. Ironically, it is not Rush that Speaks himself who is speaking. His vision of life, his story, is being told - perhaps for the hundredth time in many, many generations - by the fifth sphere that contains his consciousness, and which the angels have captured for all eternity and for their own purposes. Indeed, the angels use Rush that Speaks much as the people of Boots's List use Boots - to learn something essential about existence and about the human condition, for he has indeed finally learned to make sense of the world in the stories that he tells. If, as Campbell maintains, the hero is one who has 'the courage to face the trials and to bring a whole new body of possibilities into the field of interpreted experience for other people to experience' (1988:41), then Rush that Speaks is

undoubtedly a hero.

For when Crowley's protagonist describes the Storm which overwhelmed the angels, the reader senses that it is, in some measure, a warning, a description of contemporary life and what may very well await us. We learn of the angels' genetic tampering, their headlong, furious-paced lives, their creation of a second satellite to the earth, Little Moon. Rush that Speaks expresses the sense of things hastening to a climactic and violent finish, a maelstrom of destruction and senselessness. He knows that 'It can't be put back together' (83). He knows that the angels' search for immortality 'left us all legless men' (90). Humanity has been maimed: the angels have taken something from the world which cannot be replaced. The loss is final, irremediable.

What the reader has been experiencing is a Rush that Speaks that has been caught within the sphere, like a fly trapped in amber. He has recounted his brief life (he is only seventeen at the time of his telling) countless times, and will do so countless more times in the future for the angels, who will weep as they experience the beauty and the meaning of his existence. And poignantly, each time Rush that Speaks's conscious mind is recalled, it is fully awake; each time he himself experiences anew the loss of his past, experiences again the terror and anguish of not knowing what happened to him in the time after he entered the sphere. He himself can never learn about the years that remained to him when his consciousness was captured by the angels; he can never know whether he will find his love, Once a Day; whether he ever remeets Blink; whether he returns to Little Belaire. This is what makes his life ultimately so touching. His final painful cry is:

'They're all gone. And I...what did I do, then, angel, in my life? Did I grow old? Did I ever go down the hill? And Once a Day...oh, angel, what became of me?

...

And do I each time learn this? And then forget?

...

Then free me now, angel. Let me sleep, if I can't die. Free me, quickly, while I can still bear all this...

(181 - 18)

What we learn, together with the angels, is that Rush that Speaks's seventeen years of life have indeed become a transparency, like that of a saint. Through him, the angels learn to understand their own past, and we learn to understand something of our own present. For the lesson that he teaches is one of humanity and of humility. In giving up his life to the angels, Rush that Speaks seems close to the Christian vision of the messiah who sacrifices himself for the redemption of mankind.   While Severian and No-mirth undergo metaphorical death in order to be reborn anew, Rush that Speaks's death is real. He has offered his life, and the result is a joyous vision; a clear sense of existence leavened by humility, love, compassion and patience. He teaches the angels to weep and to regain, perhaps, something of what they have lost.

Engine Summer is a particularly graceful book, each image containing a meaning above the purely visual and decorative. Thus, the fly caught in the clear cube of plastic, Mother Tom waving eternally, St. Gene's mobius loop - all these become metaphors for the captured and incomplete essence of Rush that Speaks. 'Engine summer' becomes a metaphor for the long, gentle twilight of the world, perhaps before the fall of some final and eternally chilling winter of darkness and total ignorance. Brian Aldiss feels that Engine Summer 'unfolds like a mysterious flower' and points out that its very complexity

'divorces it from the bulk of science fiction' (1986:361). For, despite the fantastic quality of the story, there is depth of character and meaning that is not usually expected of fantasy. In <u>Engine Summer</u>, Crowley has proved the protean quality of sf, for he has shown that the genre is as capable of expressing intellectual and emotional complexity as are more traditional and more widely respected forms of writing.

All these protagonists, while gaining enormously in their stature as human beings and in their realisation of vision and achievement, must, as a corollary, give up something personal to achieve their apotheosis. Each suffers deep loss of some sort or another. Severian loses both Dorcas and his physical beauty. He faces, moreover, the threat of becoming an androgyne should he fail in his final mission. No-mirth, too, is scarred and disfigured by his sufferings. But, a greater pain than his bodily hurts, is the fact that he is forever sundered from the warmth of brotherhood, of communion with his tribe. By accepting his messianic role he condemns himself, as does Severian, to a life of isolation and otherness that can never be allayed by contact with the common mass of humanity. In each case, in serving some larger vision, the protagonist must give up some part of his self.

In a powerful novella by Ursula K. Le Guin, however, the loss is not only personal but is felt by an entire race. In order to fulfil his messianic vision, the protagonist takes not only from himself, but from his people, something which can never be replaced and which scars both his personal and his racial psyche irreparably.

<u>The Word for World is Forest</u> (1991) tells a simple and brutal tale. To the fertile and forested planet of Athshe comes an invasion of Terran colonists who call this world New Tahiti and see it simply as a source of raw material, to be stripped, plundered and looted

for the benefit of Earth. In the process, it is not only Athshe which is being destroyed but also the indigenous population, which consists of uniformly small, green-furred humanoids who live in careful and delicate balance with the flora and fauna of their world. They are undeveloped in the sense that technology plays no part in their lives, and they have lived in static and unaggressive harmony with their environment for centuries. But they are highly developed in the sense that they can control the 'unconscious', the dream-producing parts of the mind. They dream deliberately, controlling and using their dreams productively, separating the 'dream-time' from the 'world-time'. By contrast, the Terrans dream only in sleep. Or '...they take poison to let loose the dreams in them, but it only makes them drunk or sick' (206). To the Athsheans, the Terrans seem insane, out of control and their humanity is doubtful.

Since the arrival of the Terrans, the Athsheans have witnessed their forests razed to the ground, their fauna hunted for sport, their own people enslaved as 'voluntary' labour for the colonists. In addition, the Terrans - who see the natives as 'alien' and 'inhuman' - use brutality and torture in their efforts to force the Athsheans to conform to expected standards of behaviour and productivity.

Le Guin's creation of the luxuriantly forested world of Athshe becomes emblematic, a potent metaphor that contains the seeds of the conflict and oppositions of two clashing cultures. The forest world, darkly intricate and mysterious, represents to the Terrans all that they fear and abhor. It symbolises the realm of dream, the subconscious world where motives and desires are shadowy and unclear. It is the 'forest of the night', which can be approached and understood only by plumbing the dark reaches of the mind that are normally inaccessible to those who are bound to daylight, bound to what the Athsheans

call the 'dead world of action'. Campbell refers to the 'dark forest' as the world of

'original experience' (1988:41), in which the psyche must struggle to reconcile conscious

and unconscious elements. Whereas, for the Athsheans, the subterranean world of the

dream is a revitalising and reinvigorating landscape, for the men of Earth it is a primeval

landscape in which they are lost and fearful. The Terrans, sundered from instinctual

wisdom, have lost the art of listening to their dreams. Like Jung, Le Guin appears to

believe that the sickness in the soul of Western civilization results from an inability to

reconcile the instinctive and the rational aspects of personality. Jung comments wryly:

> Modern man does not understand how much his 'rationalism' (which has
> destroyed his capacity to respond to numinous symbols and ideas) has put
> him at the mercy of the psychic 'underworld.' He has freed himself from
> 'superstition' (or so he believes), but in the process he has lost his
> spiritual values to a positively dangerous degree.
>
> (1978:84)

This cultural polarisation is emblematised in two central characters who personify, through

their very different personalities, the oppositions between Earth and Athshe. It is in the

antagonism of these two figures, and the conflict between that for which each stands, that

Le Guin animates and strengthens the collision between the two opposing worlds and

cultures. The Earthman, Captain Davidson, is drawn in quick and vivid strokes, his

swaggering figure becoming a powerful, almost a caricatured, presence. As Le Guin

herself says, in her Introduction (1991:8),[8] he is 'purely evil'. In this novella, which has

something of the effect of metaphor or myth, Davidson, in the simplification of his nature,

speaks symbolically for all that is arrogant and brutal in the culture of Earth.

---

[8] The book was written in 1968.

From the moment he steps onto the pages of <u>The Word for World is Forest</u>, he reveals himself - and therefore some aspects of our own culture. Intensely patriotic, armoured in his male pride and arrogance, he classifies all creatures into stereotypes. Women are, like cattle, 'prime stock'. His fellow officers are seen in terms of their racial characteristics. They are dismissed as 'euros' or - if they are specialists in a particular field - as 'bigdomes'. The implication is that they are not quite trustworthy, not quite real men. The planet, New Tahiti, needs to be 'cleaned out', remade into Earth's image.   The indigenous people are 'creechies' and, because of their small size, despised and dominated.

In Davidson's predatory philosophy, New Tahiti is totally expendable. The deer can be hunted purely for pleasure and to relieve boredom, the people exploited to extinction, the forests destroyed until the world is a desert - and all for the continued existence and well-being of Earth. He sees Athshe as a 'wild' planet, waiting to be tamed and dominated by men like himself, who are in control. Davidson is the male principle carried to its final devastating conclusion. He personifies machismo. He is narrow, brutal, quick-thinking and, in some respects, very stupid. Like anything taken to extremes, his personality tips towards insanity.

Davidson is symbolic of the aggressive, rigidly-delineated and well-ordered patrist (or male-dominated) society which is fiercely intolerant of permissiveness, freedom from mental constraint and egalitarianism. As such, he instinctively opposes the matrist world in which Selver - the Athshean who will rise to lead his people to freedom - lives. Davidson loathes the forest with its shadows and its lack of clarity. Submitting to the forest, for him, is analogous to a descent into the 'dark side of the psyche', with all its primordial terrors and ambiguities.

> No way was clear, no light unbroken, in the forest. Into wind, water, sunlight, starlight, there always entered leaf and branch, bole and root, the shadowy, the complex. Little paths ran under the branches, around the boles, over the roots; they did not go straight, but yielded to every obstacle, devious as nerves.... The smell of the air was subtle, various, and sweet. The view was never long.... There was no seeing everything at once: no certainty.
>
> (191)

This is the world of the Athsheans, the world in which Davidson feels instinctively uneasy. To some extent, the forest symbolises Gaia, the eternal and fecund Earth Mother. Jung has frequently drawn attention to the connection of the feminine (or Great Mother) archetype with darkness and complexity, while light and clarity are often associated with the Father, or male, archetype. Light symbolises what is conscious and active. Darkness speaks of what is unconscious, unrealised and mysterious in nature and personality. Paradoxically, each principle contains both destructive and constructive attributes and, ideally, the two should be harmoniously balanced for psychic growth. Anthony Stevens (1982:317) feels that '...it can be convincingly argued that the most inventive and creative cultures are those...in which a balance between matrism and patrism is achieved'.[9]

Men like Davidson, however, are incapable of accepting this plurality. To Davidson, the mysterious complexity of the forest is unclean. He would like to see '...the dark forests cut down for open fields of grain, the primeval murk and savagery and ignorance wiped out, it would be a paradise, a real Eden' (175). Davidson becomes, then, more than a personality: he becomes emblematic of an entire culture, one that is single-mindedly - and

---

[9] Significantly, Le Guin has made her Athsheans green-furred - a colour that symbolises fertility and that which is capable of growth and transformation. Simultaneously, however, she may also have been making the point that her stereotypical 'little green men' are capable of greater humanity than earthmen.

therefore irrationally - aligned with the restricted, mechanistically exploitive and masculine world of the colonists. He embodies the kind of mentality that gives licence to atrocities, to genocide. Armoured in his narrow arrogance and pride, he feels himself inviolable, unassailable. He is unshakeably convinced of his own moral high ground. Tellingly, the world of the colonists is almost completely masculine. The only Terran women on New Tahiti are the 'Collies', brought from Earth for the recreation of the colonists, or the few colonial 'brides'. Women play no part in the military hierarchy in which Davidson moves.

In contrast, the culture of the Athsheans is a balanced assimilation of both masculine and feminine energies. The men are the 'great dreamers', while the women are the doers, active in the spheres of political and social organisation. Each small Athshean 'city' has a head woman, who decides on policy in consultation with the dreamers. In creating this harmonious, forested world, Le Guin's gives expression, once more, to her Taoist affinity with balance and duality.

The terms in which the Athsheans see the Terrans are horrific, apocalyptic.

> In the dream the giants walked, heavy and dire. Their dry scaly limbs were swathed in cloths; their eyes were little and light, like tin beads. Behind them crawled huge moving things made of polished iron. The trees fell down in front of them.
>
> (193)

Out of this terrible vision of death and enslavement, Selver rises to lead his people against the colonists, to defeat them and to treat for peace. However, the price that is paid for these actions is a terrible one. The Athsheans are a non-aggressive species. Violent crime is almost unknown in their society. Rather than cut an enemy down, they humiliate him by

'singing him down'. But now Selver teaches them a new thing. For Selver is, despite the incongruity of his small size and his green fur, a messiah figure. He grasps the moment: he sees the consequences of the arrival of the colonists, he knows that the time for desperate action has come. He sees the enormity of what he does, which is born of the violence of the Earthmen. He knows that 'all men's dreams will be changed' irrevocably in the time to come because of this new and dangerous thing that the people of Athshe have found it within themselves to do.

Whereas, in Severian's case, the apocalypse lies behind him and in No-mirth's case it lies ahead of him, in the case of the Athsheans, the apocalypse is upon them. For Selver, the colonists are bringers of death and destruction. The world is being 'cut open and left to rot', the humans 'kill the trees'; kill, therefore, the entire world.

Selver becomes, to his people, that rare thing, a being who will enter their myths and legends, a god, '...that knows death, a god that kills and is not himself reborn' (199). He becomes that singular personage who can span the gap between the dream-time and the world-time. He is 'a changer, a bridge between realities' (199). He brings a new reality to the people, a new and terrible thing into their hearts. Out of desperation, out of cruelty and oppression, he finds within himself the ability to kill, and he teaches his people to do the same. Selver becomes, then, a leader, truly wielding the 'shining blade' which will liberate his people and his land. He begins to have a messianic sense of purpose and also a sense of what is wrong with the 'yumens':

> They kill men and women; they do not spare those who ask life. They
> cannot sing in contest. They have left their roots behind them, perhaps, in
> this other forest from which they come, this forest with no trees....

> Therefore they go about in torment killing and destroying, driven by the
> gods within them, whom they will not set free but try to uproot and deny.
> If they are men they are evil men, having denied their own gods, afraid to
> see their own faces in the dark.
>
> (207)

He understands that the Terrans have cut themselves off from the very well-springs, the 'roots', of nature and he knows that, left alone, they will destroy the world, which is the forest. So strong is his vision, that the people are drawn to him, are led by him. They sense the power of his presence and of what he has done. They embrace the newness gladly. And so Selver becomes a man of action. He becomes a 'harvester' of fear and terror and, in so doing, changes his world wholly. He himself, together with his people, are 'changed radically, from the root' (245) by admitting violence and death, by translating into waking life the central experience of his vision. 'Only a god could lead so great a newcomer as Death across the bridge between two worlds' (254).

The corollary of his actions is the terrible loss of innocence of his people. The possibility of violent death will forever after stalk the Athsheans and change their society irrevocably. And from this there is no going back.

> 'Sometimes a god comes,' Selver said. 'He brings a new way to do a
> thing, or a new thing to be done. He brings this across the bridge between
> the dream-time and the world-time. When he has done this, it is
> done...What is, is. There is no use pretending, now, that we do not know
> how to kill one another.'
>
> (300)

The Word for World is Forest is - unusual for Le Guin - something of a polemic, and was written in a mood of passionate outrage against the Vietnam War, the defoliation of

forests and the killing of non-combatants. Perhaps it could, therefore, in some sense, be said to fulfil Joanna Russ's (1975:113) contention that science fiction is 'didactic'. There is clearly a 'message' encoded in the conflict between Selver and Davidson. Le Guin herself apologises for having succumbed, in the writing of this book, to 'the lure of the pulpit' (1989:127). But what adds to the potency of her writing is that the two contradictory cultures or world-views, and the two opposing personalities, take on a mythic significance because they evoke, on some subliminal level, those archetypes which have been identified in this discussion. While The Word for World is Forest is less poetic, less fantastic than, for instance, the world of Earthsea, Le Guin's ability to plumb the psyche for these metaphoric images is still clearly evident and adds to the power of her narrative to engage the reader.

The books discussed in this chapter achieve an epic scope and range, for each protagonist confronts not only a private destiny, but also the fate of his entire race. Campbell (1975:37) points out that the '...the hero of myth [achieves] a world-historical, macrocosmic triumph', and Severian, No-mirth, Rush that Speaks and Selver all become, in essence, messianic figures. Each is willing to sacrifice his life and sanity to become a facilitator of redemption, a saviour of his people. In so doing, each subscribes to a pattern so ancient that its origins cannot be ascertained.

> The general idea of Christ the Redeemer belongs to the world-wide and pre-Christ theme of the hero and rescuer who, although he has been devoured by a monster, appears again in a miraculous way, having over-come whatever monster it was that swallowed him.... The hero figure is an archetype, which has existed since time immemorial.
>
> (Jung, 1978:61)

What is fascinating in the books discussed here is the manner in which each writer weaves the archaic symbol of the messianic figure into a context which is at once particular and universal. Thus, Severian, No Mirth, Rush that Speaks and Selver - who inhabit very different worlds and who seek destiny amidst disparate sets of circumstances - each becomes an amalgam of both Old Testament messiah and Christian redeemer. Like the charismatically endowed Hebraic saviour-figure, each is unquestionably a human being. Gerald Blidstein points out that, even in rabbinic thought, the messiah is 'generally assumed to be man, though writ large' (1971:1412). As such, the sphere of the messiah is essentially a complicated one, encompassing prophecy, war, justice, kingship and teaching. Wolfe, Le Guin and Eldridge all create protagonists who become men of action: symbolic warriors, prophets and leaders. Yet, although each inhabits the world of dynamic physical energy (with the exception of Rush that Speaks), each also exhibits the characteristics of the Christian redeemer. Together with Crowley's gentle hero, they emerge as ethical and moral saviours. Like Rush that Speaks, each develops transfiguring powers and becomes a symbolic lever that shifts the balance of his world towards the possibility of spiritual salvation. Thus, like the central figure in the great Christian monomyth, these protagonists also serve as psychopomps. Each is both the sacrificer and the sacrificed, and each stands on the threshold of a symbolic doorway, mediating the entrance into unusual states of perception and being.

Within the fantastic and futuristic settings of each book, these universal and epic motifs take on renewed vitality, so that the story-teller achieves a vigorous contemporary relevance. Wolfe, Eldridge, Le Guin and Crowley deal with these archetypal concepts and patterns with a good deal of subtlety and versatility, grafting the components of character,

motivation and setting onto larger symbolic meaning, and demonstrating that sf and fantasy can attain, at their best, an emotional and intellectual amplitude that transcends mere narrative.

FOUR : THE SYMBOLISM OF ENTROPY AND DECAY

The nature of the psyche reaches into obscurities far beyond the scope of our understanding. It contains as many riddles as the universe with its galactic systems, before whose majestic configurations only a mind lacking in imagination can fail to admit its own insufficiency.

C. G. Jung

The two previous chapters deal with symbols that are associated with positive aspects of human thought and psychic development. They analyse images that are linked to the growth of consciousness, to the assumption of morality, and to the movement towards what, in Jungian terminology, would be called the attainment of individuation. Chapter Two is concerned with these symbols on a personal level, and the books analysed in that chapter deal with the struggle of the individual to achieve personal enlightenment and fulfilment. In Chapter Three, the concept of individual growth is linked to the larger meaning of the protagonist's role within society and culture. Here, the central character moves not only towards personal, psychic evolution, but takes on, also, a redemptive function, becoming, in effect, a messianic facilitator not only of his or her own movement towards wholeness or unity, but also of the movement of society towards redemption. The emphasis in books dealt with in these two chapters is not only on growth, but also on regeneration and renewal.

These two chapters are concerned, then, with movements of integration and progression, with the evolutionary capacity of mankind to achieve oneness or maturity by transcending or surpassing the limits of the purely human and personal. It might indeed be possible to say that they deal with an *enlargement* of the human state. However, certain writers of science fiction have become absorbed by what appears to them to be an urge inherent in

personality and culture to move towards the opposite pole; to move, in other words, in directions that are inward rather than outward, and which seem then to indicate contraction rather than expansion. Writers such as Brian Aldiss and J. G. Ballard, who frequently deal with themes and images of disintegration, devolution, sterility, or entropy, will be considered in this chapter.

'Entropy' has, in fact, become something of a modish term in science fiction writing. A scientific term that relates to thermodynamics, entropy refers to the amount of heat that is contained in a closed system and which is, for all practical purposes, unavailable or wasted energy. Because of this, entropy is often associated with an increase in disorder. The concept has also been applied to the working of the entire universe, which is thus seen as 'running down', slowly but irreversibly.

Sf writers have appropriated this term, seeing it as a useful one that provides a metaphor for all sorts of negative and retrogressive processes. Since society and personality can be regarded as mirroring, in microcosm, the larger cosmic movement, they are then seen to be in a similar state of slow disintegration. Peter Nicholls (1979:198) tentatively suggests that Philip K. Dick may have been the first writer to introduce the concept into sf. Certainly, his works are much concerned with the disintegration and increasing disorder of personality and society, and with the impossibility of defining objective reality. Even in an early novel such as Eye in the Sky (1957), Dick explores the theme of the subjectivity of experiential reality in a plot which has each character experiencing the strange, even paranoid terms in which other characters interpret the world and its events. In later works such as Ubik (1973), this theme is explored again, now linked with the progressive decay and devolution of the real world. Potplants that wither and die in a matter of hours, a

newly-bought newspaper that turns out to be a year old, a brand new tape recorder containing parts that are all worn out - all these are symptoms of the entropy that finally afflicts even the central characters in the novel.

Philip K. Dick's works ask numerous metaphysical questions. They have a grimly humorous, inventive and paranoid quality that is sustained through what appears sometimes to be careless or sketchy writing. Setting and character development are seldom of great interest to Dick, and are of a curiously undefined nature. What emerges clearly in his writing, however, is the simultaneously absurd and nightmarish quality of Dick's own deep-rooted sense of ontological uncertainty. The elusive nature of 'reality' is what underlies the decaying world of Ubik. Joe Chip, the novel's protagonist, experiences this entropic breakdown as a process within himself.

> What he saw now seemed to be a desert of ice from which stark boulders jutted. A wind spewed across the plain which reality had become; the wind congealed into deeper ice, and the boulders disappeared for the most part. And darkness presented itself off at the edges of his vision; he caught only a meagre glimpse of it.
>
> But, he thought, this is projection on my part. It isn't the universe which is being entombed by layers of wind, cold, darkness and ice; all this is going on within me, and yet I seem to see it outside.... It must be a manifestation of dying, he said to himself. The uncertainty which I feel, the slowing down into entropy - that's the process....
>
> (Ubik, 1973:107)

Philip K. Dick's profound unease within the world in which he finds himself stands in marked contrast to the pulp origins of his writing style, and testifies to the manner in which science fiction sometimes has the power to rise above undistinguished writing or

confused plotting to create a vision of striking effectiveness. Like Alfred Bester, an incomparably more 'stylish' writer, Philip K. Dick may be seen as a forerunner of a later movement within the sf genre - one which culminated in what has come to be called the New Wave.

New Wave sf is closely associated with New Worlds, a British sf magazine that was edited, during the 1960s and early 1970s, by Michael Moorcock, and which gradually began to publish work that was more exploratory, more experimental in its use of lan-guage, style and narrative technique, and generally less concerned with traditional genre sf concerns. At times it has elicited strong resistance and controversy, but the writers associated with New Worlds during this particular period became known as 'New Wave' writers and included J. G. Ballard, Brian Aldiss, Michael Moorcock, Ian Watson, Roger Zelazny, Samuel R. Delany and Thomas Disch. These writers eschew the conventional and technology-orientated themes of much traditional sf, as well as its generally 'upbeat' nature. And, although it is something of a simplification to see most sf as optimistic in nature - especially after the events of World War II, the atom bomb and the ensuing 'cold war' that created a vast schism between East and West - the emphasis, even in sf of a grimmer and more apocalyptic nature, was on the ability of mankind to triumph over obstacles, even to rise once more from the shattered ruins created by its own technology.

However, it was the work of New Wave writers that introduced newly ambiguous atti-tudes and adventurous writing techniques into a genre that had been generally notorious for the use of uncomplicated characterisation, fast-paced action and journalistic writing style. There had, of course, always been writers who transcended the limitations of the genre, and it was perhaps in the 1960s that such trends simply became assimilated into sf

in a more consciously determined manner by writers who began to use exploratory techniques that were already part of mainstream literature. In this sense, as William Sims Bainbridge (1986:90) suggests, the New Wave can probably be seen as the crest of a wave that had been gathering momentum slowly since the 1950s.

New Wave writing has drawn enormous criticism from fans and writers alike for what many see as its 'depressing' and 'nihilistic' attitudes. Stanislaw Lem (1976:26), for instance, has castigated J. G. Ballard for his 'negativism', 'emptiness' and 'irrationality', and for what he regards as a rejection of knowledge. For, unlike less controversial forms of sf which are inclined to celebrate the triumph of rationality and of the human spirit, New Wave writing often 'defends irrationality against the numbing chill of too much logic and against enslavement to the definitions of reality promulgated by bureaucrats and technocrats' (Bainbridge, 1986:99). James Gunn, writing in <u>Science Fiction, Today and Tomorrow</u>, sees the New Wave as a movement by the young away from 'scientific positivism':

> It was a response by young writers to the spirit of the times which was rejecting intellectualism as a blind alley, which demonstrated itself in a resurgence of fantasy, occultism and mysticism and a willingness to sacrifice the universities to end the war in Vietnam, to trade the classroom and the book for the experience, to seek answers in drugs and meditation rather than in study and experiment, to put together new groupings rather than improve old ones.
>
> (Gunn, 1974:207)

It is, therefore, not surprising that much that can be labelled 'subversive' has found a home within the New Wave, such as overtly feminist writing, as well as writing that is critical of conservative political and social attitudes and mores. Furthermore, some New Wave

writers were prepared to take the concept of Darwinian evolution to its logical conclusion. They were unflinching in their acceptance of the notion that humankind would eventually fulfil its evolutionary purpose and would ultimately decay into obsolescence, perhaps even into extinction.[1]

In part, some of the controversy inherent in New Wave is derived from the profoundly ambiguous manner in which many writers began to respond to the invasion of daily life by technology in ways that seemed to manipulate both the external world and the perception of reality. Contrary to the brave expectations of earlier writers, who saw in science the promise of a universal panacea for all mankind's ills, New Wave writers began to experience an uneasy sense that too blind a belief in science might be somewhat naïve.

One writer who has consistently expressed this sense of dis-ease is Brian Aldiss. As has been mentioned previously, Aldiss has been associated at times with New Wave writing, and has also been much concerned with themes of entropy and decay. He has produced, arguably, one of the most sweepingly comprehensive, entertaining and insightful studies of science fiction and fantasy in Trillion Year Spree (1986), and has also made forays into other genres. He is an eclectic writer: poet, essayist, reviewer, critic, writer of mainstream novels, autobiographer and travel writer; he is an accomplished and highly-regarded literary figure.[2]

Aldiss is, rather more than Dick, capable of producing polished and 'literary' prose. His

---

[1] Interestingly, H. G. Wells, in 1899, prophetically produced a novella called A Story of the Stone Age (1957), which depicts a mordant picture of the human race in decline.

[2] Aldiss has won a Hugo award (1962), a Nebula award (1965), the Ditmar Award for Best Contemporary Writer of Science Fiction (1969), and the British Science Fiction Award (1972).

writing is informed by his own wide reading and his knowledge of literature in general.

His sf is varied, displaying a wide range of style and theme. And while he has been

strongly attracted to the concept of entropy, his writings approach it in many different

ways. In his novel, Hothouse, which appeared originally in 1961 as a serialisation[3] and

was published in full the following year in Britain, his imaginative approach has mythic

overtones that evoke the archetypal and the symbolic.

The action of Hothouse (1972) is set, as is Gene Wolfe's Book of the New Sun, on a

dying Earth, many millennia hence. Although equally as fantastic as Wolfe's Urth of

teeming and monstrous cities and enigmatic technologies, the world that Aldiss creates is

very different. It, too, is dominated by a dying sun, but the Earth of Hothouse has ceased

to rotate. It is fixed in its orbit in relation to the dying star, which will, in fact, soon 'go

nova'. One half of the world is bathed in constant light, the other cloaked in endless

darkness. Between these two areas is the Terminator, a bleak twilight region. The Moon

has retreated beyond its old orbit and is connected to the Earth by the unimaginably long

'threads' spun by enormous semi-sentient vegetable organisms called Traversers, which

travel between the two worlds.[4]

On this senescent planet, human life, too, is devolved, forced to participate in an endless

and relentless struggle for survival in the multi-layered growth of the giant banyon tree

which covers almost an entire continent. Humans are reduced in size and have taken on

---

[3] It appeared in the magazine Fantasy and Science Fiction. The series was awarded the Science Fiction Achievement Award, known colloquially as the 'Hugo', in 1962.
[4] The 'science' in Hothouse is decidedly unsound, even to a reader with little knowledge of the subject, and Aldiss has been criticised on this score. However, the novel is yet another example of how sf and fantasy can succeed, despite inconsistencies, if the reader can - as Northrop Frye suggests - enter a state in which one neither believes nor disbelieves.

an adaptive green tinge. Their mental capabilities are shallow, primitive and unreflective. They exist in small groups, infant mortality is high, and the cycle of growth from child-hood to adulthood is much accelerated. Strangely enough, in this late afternoon of earth's life, as all processes wear down and decay, there is a paradoxical flurry of monstrous vegetable and insect growth, a paroxysm of terminal activity.

It is in the creation of this dying world that Aldiss invokes an archetypal image with many resonances. From the opening lines, the world of rampant growth is strongly delineated. This is a vegetable world where life has become motile, malevolent, and magnified to a gigantic scale. It is a world that is, despite its fecundity and its greenness, rabid and ravenous. It is partly in this paradox that the archetypal image resides, and it is this paradox, also, that lies at the heart of much of Aldiss's work.

In the preceding chapter, attention was drawn to the image of the natural world as the Great Mother, the nurturing and feminine principle that creates and nurtures life. But the Great Mother archetype has, simultaneously, a negative and terrible aspect which is present in the mythologies of most cultures. Like all symbols, she is multivalent and has a plurality of meanings, for no symbol can be confined or constricted into one monolithic meaning. It is the fluidity of symbols that constitutes their unique mystery and beauty. As Jung says in his essay on 'The Psychology of the Child Archetype':

> No archetype can be reduced to a simple formula. It is a vessel which we can never empty and never fill. It...requires interpreting ever anew. The archetypes are the imperishable elements of the unconscious, but they change their shape continually.

> (1991f:153)

The archetypal image of the Great Mother - Gaia in her benevolent manifestations - is as polymorphic as all other symbols. She is the giver of life and the source of warmth. Her bounty nourishes and provides. Fertility and growth are her components. But, since '...in a profound way life and birth are always bound up with death and destruction' (Erich Neumann, 1955:153), she has a demonic side as well. Janus-like, she is two-faced. As well as giving, she also withholds. She may cause hunger, thirst and cold. She may cease to protect and nurture. She gives not only life, but also death. She devours and makes captive. She brings, as well as extinction, pain, sickness and madness. She is associated with all that is secretive and hidden, with anything that devours, seduces or poisons. In Neumann's words:

> ...the womb of the earth becomes the deadly devouring maw of the under-world, and beside the fecundated womb and the protecting cave of earth and mountain gapes the abyss of hell, the dark hole of the depths, the devouring womb of the grave and of death, of darkness without light, of nothingness.
>
> (1955:149)

Aldiss's world displays some of the protective and maternal attributes of the Great Mother, but possesses also, in large measure, those negative characteristics which create a compelling and ambiguous image of a dying planet. In Hothouse, the fecundity of the Earth has provided the great banyon tree which shelters Lily-yo and her kind. Yet, simultaneously, it produces half-sentient and motile forms of vegetable life that are predatory and carnivorous. In these forms, the female principle is turned from nurturing to destruction and terror. In fact, almost the entire world of Aldiss's creation seems to be one voracious maw, for here Mother Nature is well-armed with tooth and claw - and she is more than ready to use both.

Aldiss evokes this malevolent vegetal life by using a host of descriptively witty and onomatopoeic names: life takes fantastic and endlessly inventive form in the dripperlips, leapycreepers, killerwillows, whistlethistles, trappersnappers, crocksocks, greenguts, thinpins. The mindless rapacity of life in this dying phase of the Earth is clear from the opening incident of the book, when the child, Clat, falls into a patch of nettlemoss.

> ...Clat lay on her back, watching them come, hoping to herself. She was still looking up when the green teeth sprouted through the leaf all about her.
>
> 'Jump, Clat!' Lily-yo cried.
>
> The child had time to scramble to her knees. Vegetable predators are not as fast as humans. Then the green teeth snapped shut about her waist.
>
> Under the leaf, a trappersnapper had moved into position, sensing the presence of prey through the single layer of foliage. The trappersnapper was a horny, caselike affair, just a pair of square jaws, hinged and with many long teeth. From one corner of it grew a stalk, very muscular and thicker than a human, and resembling a neck. Now it bent, carrying Clat away to its true mouth, which lived with the rest of the plant far below on the unseen forest Ground, in darkness and decay.
>
> (Hothouse, 8 - 9)

The world of Aldiss's <u>Hothouse</u> has its visual analogy in Hieronymous Bosch's 'The Garden of Earthly Delights', with its fantastically beautiful, yet grotesque, vegetable and animal creations amongst which tiny human forms sport or are tortured. For Aldiss's devolved humans seem relatively innocent and childlike, making comparisons with the Edenic green and paradisaic world inevitable.

Mircea Eliade (1974) has written at some length on the universality of the archetypal image of the paradisaic world, in which man can live close to nature, freed from labour and sin. He points out that this powerful image exists in all cultures, even in those primitive societies which are regarded by Western civilisation as uncorrupted. The 'noble savage' of the eighteenth-century imagination, too, had his vision of the 'fall' from grace. And even African myth relates to the 'primordial paradisaic epoch'. He maintains:

> At the *commencement* as at the *end* of the religious history of humanity, we find again the same nostalgia for Paradise. If we take account of the fact that this nostalgia for Paradise was similarly discernible in the general religious conduct of men in the archaic societies, we are justified in supposing that the mythical remembrances of a non-historical happiness has haunted humanity from the moment when man first became aware of his situation in the Cosmos.
>
> (1974:69)

Aldiss has, therefore, in the world of <u>Hothouse</u>, fortuitously created a multi-valenced image, with many symbolic resonances to which the reader may respond. However, despite the multiplicity of associations that are called forth by his images, the uniting theme is one of devolution and entropy. Nature, despite its manic activity, its frenzied and rapacious growth, is actually devolving, growing itself to a standstill, as it were, rather like a cancerous growth proliferating wildly until it kills the host on which it feeds. The intelligent fungus, the morel, tells the humans:

> We live in a world where each generation becomes less and less defined. All life is tending towards the mindless and the infinitesimal: the embryonic speck. So will be fulfilled the processes of the universe.... Under steadily increasing heat, devolutionary processes will accelerate.
>
> (204)

The ambiguities and dichotomies inherent in Aldiss's world are perhaps metaphors for the writer's own ambivalent attitude towards the morel. The morel opposes, metaphorically speaking, instinctual and emotional life. It symbolises and epitomises pure mind. It is the antithesis of the 'green' world. It exists essentially as an intellect, and must attach itself to a sentient host body in order to effectively utilise its powers of reason. Aldiss sets the morel's intelligence off against the unformed minds of his human protagonists, so that they seem childish and irrational, while the morel's reasonableness has an intellectual virility that is immensely appealing. Initially, after it takes control of Gren and his mate Poyly, it treats them with a certain degree of consideration. Rather like some benevolent dictator, it helps them to survive and shows tolerance for their physical needs. The morel, has in this role, a certain attraction, for it opposes here the mindless rapacity of Nature, which is headed blindly for extinction, and against which the humans have no recourse. The morel then, becomes a symbol of consciousness, decisiveness and mastery over the environment.

Implicit in Hothouse, is the author's ambivalence towards the oppositions created by these two contrasting symbolic concepts; nature and intellect. When Gren becomes intractable and attempts to assert his own will, the morel's benevolence vanishes. It becomes a ruthless taskmaster, brooking no interference in its vaulting ambition to propagate and master an empire. As it takes complete control of Gren, its unwholesome nature is suggested by its appearance.

> ...he fixed her with a dead gaze, then dropped his eyes again. Pallor
> marked his features, contrasting with the rich livery brown that glistened
> about his head and throat, framing his face with its sticky folds.
>
> (159)

The terms in which Aldiss evokes the morel would appear to leave the reader in no doubt as to its repellent nature. It is 'pustular', 'cancerous', 'like excrement', or like a 'burnt mess of food'. Finally, he seems to suggest, it is evil, as well.

> He glanced up at her from under the morel with a look she could not recognize as his; it held the fatal mixture of stupidity and cunning that lurks at the bottom of all evil.
>
> (161)

But the morel, which would seem to symbolise the dangers of intellect unbridled by emotion, paradoxically appears to possess positive qualities also. Aldiss never seems to reconcile this conflict satisfactorily, never succeeds in resolving his somewhat Lawrentian dilemma. Despite the perils of possession by the fungus, its mental vigour also offers the humans a chance to escape from the blind alley in which they are trapped. It offers them a chance to leave the dying solar system and to journey outward into space. It offers them the possibility of continuation and evolution into a new form of life.

For, Aldiss makes it clear, his Earth is headed for extinction - as is humanity, if it chooses to bind its own fate to that of the planet. But, curiously, Gren's story reveals Aldiss as deeply ambivalent towards the appeal of the rational. Despite the blandishments of the morel, the indisputability of its arguments, Gren elects not to voyage onward into space with the morel and the mutated humans who have become 'flymen'. Aldiss tells us that 'Nature was the supreme mistress of everything; and in the end it was as if she had laid a curse on her handiwork' (49). Yet, despite this, Gren consigns himself and his family to the dying planet, and to the green world of the giant banyon tree which is, for him, 'home'. His decision is a double renunciation. He refuses the attractions of consuming

intellect and exploration, and refuses, also, the path of continuation. In a sense, Gren

aligns himself with the processes of devolution and extinction.

Hothouse is not, perhaps, an unalloyed artistic success. While the ambiguities serve to

provide complexity of meaning and to initiate debate, they are also the result of a certain

lack of focus in the vision of the writer. Furthermore, there is an occasional clumsiness

evident in the structure of the book. In order to impart information to the reader, Aldiss

sometimes allows his devolved humans to step out of character momentarily, giving them

thoughts and vocabularies that they could not, logically, possess. And the morel, delving

into Gren's 'racial memories', comes up with a convoluted version of mankind's past over

untold millennia, replete with (spurious) historical detail, that would seem unlikely to be

part of the repository of the collective unconscious. Such illogicalities may serve to

distract the reader.

Despite such quibbles, the book is a sustained and potent evocation of a truly fantastic

world. If there are moments when Aldiss falters - as, perhaps, in the episode in the castle

of the termights - his successes are notable. He creates, for instance, the endearing and

pathetic tummy-belly men, the vivid and alarming sharp-furs, and the eerily destructive

siren-song of the Black Mouth. But it is the image of the giant banyon tree which casts its

shadow over the world of Hothouse, for it dominates the book as a potent symbol of the

dual aspects of the Great Mother. The morel, too, becomes a powerful symbol, suggest-

ing as it does both the blessings of intellect and the horrors of pure egoism. Aldiss thus

manages to invest his dying Earth with terror and mystery, displaying remarkable vigour

and imagination in the process and achieving a mythic sweep.

It is, however, in the works of a writer who began to rise to prominence during the 1960s that the concepts of entropy and the subjective nature of perception are given the most poetic and potent expression. Furthermore, since this particular writer works on a level that involves the implicit acceptance of Jung's theory of archetypal symbolism, his works achieve a unique and powerful force.

J. G. Ballard is something of a phenomenon in the world of sf - and, indeed, outside of it. He is much anthologised, much interviewed, much quoted - on radio, television and in print. Highly vocal and articulate, he seems to have few qualms about granting interviews of all kinds, and is quite willing to explicate his writing and the ethos that stimulates it. His work has made the 'jump' from genre to mainstream, and he has been extensively published in both the sf and the traditional format. Two of his novels, Empire of the Sun and Crash (neither of which is sf), have been filmed. His works have been translated into at least ten European languages, biographies have been written about him, and there even exists a JGB NEWS, a newsletter devoted to 'Ballardiana'. As part of sf's New Wave, which flowered in England in the 1960s, Ballard has always been at the forefront of innovatory experimental techniques - sometimes of a certain obscurity.

The writing of J. G. Ballard has not been immune to the fulminations of critics of the New Wave, and it is notable that he has met with strong antagonism within the ranks of sf fandom for his 'depressing' qualities, as well as for the bizarre forms that some of his writing experiments have taken.[5] Whether he is regarded with hostility or approbation, his

---

[5] It is interesting, however, to note that in his later novels (as, for instance, The Day of Creation (1987), The Kindness of Women (1991) and most recently Rushing to Paradise (1994) - which are, admittedly, not sf - he returns to more conventional, less outré narrative forms, despite the fact that his old obsessions are still much in evidence.

writing arouses strong reactions. All this interest in the man and his writing emanates perhaps, in part, from the intense and intriguingly dreamlike content of his work, which at once baffles and yet seems to make revelation possible. For Ballard's images and concerns all exert a strange fascination. They are instantly recognisable as his own personal obsessions - J. G. Ballard is perhaps the most obsessive of sf writers - yet they also 'feel' to the reader as though they have a larger and more universal significance. They haunt and tug at the edges of the mind. They are vaguely recognisable, and yet simultaneously alien and mysterious, like those melancholy and debris-laden beaches in the paintings of Yves Tanguy, in which the objects that we see seem to speak to some subterranean area of the psyche.

Not surprisingly, Ballard speaks frequently of his debt to painters such as Dali, Delvaux, Ernst and de Chirico, for the overall effect of his prose has a surrealist, 'frozen' quality. Much as the visual images of these surrealist painters seem to dredge up some half-remembered, half-familiar part of the mind, so Ballard's prose evokes a sense of simultaneous recognition and dislocation. Much like the canvases of de Chirico, Ballard's world often evokes emptiness, isolation, and profound silence. Ballard is, indeed, a remarkably 'visual' writer, presenting the reader with vivid scenes that achieve the quality of exotic tableaux transfixed into immobility.

But it is in more than the use of incongruously juxtaposed images that Ballard allies himself to the surrealists. Although Jung appears to have had little, if any, influence on surrealism, it shares with him a belief that man achieves his highest degree of existence when conscious and unconscious flourish together in harmony. 'Consciousness should defend its reason and protect itself, and the chaotic life of the unconscious should be given

the chance of having its way too...' (Jung, 1954:288). He calls this process, simultane-
ously, 'open conflict and open collaboration.' Surrealism strives, therefore, to unite these
two aspects of mind, that is to say, the conscious and the unconscious. Furthermore, it
seeks not just to mirror reality, but to expand it. It attempts to force an acknowledgement
of the logic inherent in what is the apparently irrational or the illogical. Through its
dislocation of common objects, it forces the mind away from tired old associations and
connections, thus revealing 'new strata of reality' (Barr, 1946:46). Furthermore, taking its
cue from Freud, it also finds fascination in abnormal mental states, which it sees, not as
merely pathological, but as providing transcendent insights.[6] Surrealism becomes, in this
sense, a source of revelation and wonder.

Like the surrealists, Ballard's writing explores sensations 'beyond the control of reason'
(Balakian, 1970:130). Like them, he acknowledges the fact that the exterior world may
reach into and penetrate the subjective world. Like them, he seeks the transcendent and
mystic moment that goes beyond quotidian reality. And, like them, he seeks this experi-
ence without resorting to the vocabulary or experiences of religion. All these aspects,
interpreted in his own idiosyncratic manner, impart to his writing its unique, often eccen-
tric, flavour.

In addition, he is an elegant stylist - something of a rarity in sf writing, even amongst the
New Wave writers. Ballard produces prose of a highly idiosyncratic and beautiful nature.
Unlike other writers, whose style appears to evolve or even to vary, Ballard's 'voice' is

---

[6] Salvador Dali, for instance, was fascinated by all sorts of bizarre behavioural states - insanity, hys-
teria, trance, somnambulism, delirium, delusion and dream - in all of which he found new and potent
forms of reality.

always unmistakably his own and instantly recognisable, as in this opening passage from

his short story, 'Tomorrow is a Million Years'.

> In the evenings the time-winds would blow across the Sea of Dreams, and
> the silver wreck of the excursion module would loom across the jewelled
> sand to where Glanville lay in the pavilion by the edge of the reef. During
> the first week after the crash, when he could barely move his head, he had
> seen the images of the *Santa Maria* and the *Golden Hind* sailing toward
> him through the copper sand, the fading light of the sunset illuminating the
> ornamental casements of the high stern-castles. Later, sitting up in the
> surgical chair, he had seen the spectral crews of these spectral ships, their
> dark figures watching him from the quarter-decks. Once, when he could
> walk again, Glanville went out on to the surface of the lake, his wife
> guiding his elbow as he hobbled on his stick. Two hundred yards from the
> module he had suddenly seen an immense ship materialise from the wreck
> and move through the sand towards them, its square sails lifted by the
> time-winds.
>
> (1971:33)

This excerpt contains much that is characteristic of Ballard's dream-conjuring prose. The

'Sea of Dreams' has an unreal quality, reminding the reader of the landscape of the moon

and recalling the lunar seas, such as the Sea of Tranquillity. The wrecked 'module'

reinforces the futuristic and other-worldly associations. The fact that this 'sea' is com-

posed of 'jewelled' sand and that Glanville lies at the edge of a reef, enhances both the

associations and the dislocations. The mystery of the time-winds and the spectral ships

that glide across the sands adds to the alien nature of this landscape. The reader wonders

immediately whether this is reality that Glanville perceives, or whether this is a projection

from his own mind.

Familiarity with Ballard's writing makes the reader instantly aware that this exterior landscape will prove to be a metaphor for the interior landscape of Glanville's mind and that, in some way, what he is seeing is a truer version of what is real than that which is apparent reality. Like most of Ballard's protagonists, Glanville is locked into a private process of transformation, of adaptation to a changing set of circumstances. At the dénouement, the reader will realise that Glanville's wife is, in fact, not even present, except as she exists in his mind.

This solitary protagonist is the central figure in most of Ballard's fiction. For Ballard is obsessed by the subjective and ungraspable nature of reality, and his strange geographies often become metaphors for an inner mental landscape. In the process, he creates iconographies that seem at once to be personal to him and that speak also to the mind of the reader on some unquantifiable and subliminal level. In this sense, that is to say, the sense that he is somehow approaching the numinous and the universal, Ballard seems to be plumbing those archetypal images which are the repository of the human unconscious. Jung has explained that the residual archetypal image may become transformed by the particular consciousness through which it is filtered:

> The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by be-
> coming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes it colour from the
> individual consciousness in which it happens to appear.
>
> (Jung, 1968a:5)

The images that Ballard uses (and which are already present to some extent in the passage quoted above) are ever-recurring and become immediately recognisable to the reader. These are the melancholy and entropic vistas of abandoned hotels filling slowly with desert

sand, the derelict aircraft and motor vehicles, the drained swimming pools, lakes or fountains, the canals and rivers clogged with the detritus of civilization. These persistent images of sterility and decay recall his experiences as a child in Shanghai after the Japanese occupation of the territory, and recall also his own internship in a Japanese civilian Prisoner of War camp between the ages of twelve and fifteen. Given the obsessive nature of these images and of the psychopathological states of mind that he investigates, it is hard not to accept that these experiences were seminal for him and that they left his mind filled with large stores of visual, emotional and intellectual content, upon which he has continued to draw throughout his writing career.

Ballard's concerns are generally with the subjective nature of both reality and time, as well as with the quest of his isolated and disturbed protagonists for some sense of self-fulfilment, and it is in his writing that is concerned with these issues that the sense of archetypal meaning is most directly invoked for the reader. His disturbing settings are most often those in which personality finds an echo for its own entropic dissolution. Unlike the so-called 'disaster novels' of writers such as John Christopher or John Wyndham, Ballard's writing shows little interest in the processes by which a traumatised society attempts to remake itself. He is obsessed, rather, with the submergence of personality. For the fulfilment towards which his characters move often seems deeply ambiguous. If other writers see the theme of transcendence as an outward movement that succeeds in passing beyond the purely personal or human limitations of the self, the Ballardian hero seems to shrink inwards. Whereas, in works discussed in the previous chapters, personality seeks to expand, to surpass the limits of the purely human by moving outward, in Ballard's work personality contracts, collapsing slowly towards some dark inner core. His

protagonists collude in the slow dissolution of their own consciousness towards extinction, often towards death.

His writing speaks relentlessly in symbols and images of decay. In an early novel which dates back to 1962, The Drowned World (1976), Earth has been overwhelmed by natural disaster. Gigantic solar storms have, over a period of time, depleted the Earth's atmosphere, so that it is no longer adequately shielded from solar radiation. As the temperature has risen, the polar ice-caps have gradually begun to melt, leading to vast inundations of cities and continents, the formations of massive deltas, and the alteration of the shapes of the land masses and the seas. The populations of the world have, for the most part, migrated towards the still habitable arctic and antarctic circles. Simultaneously, perhaps as a reaction to the catastrophe, the birth rate has dropped considerably.

The 'hero' of The Drowned World is, as so often in Ballard's fiction, a doctor.[7] Robert Kerans has come with a biological testing and exploration unit to a great abandoned city that is immersed, except for the highest buildings, in a series of lagoons and silt banks. (The reader will learn, only much later, that this submerged city is London.) The flora and fauna of this strange world have begun to mutate, achieving giant and grotesque forms that recall earlier millennia such as the Triassic period. It is a richly luxuriant, moist, exotic and overblown world, filled with both rampant growth and decay. The heat and humidity are so fierce that human life can be lived effectively only in the four or five hours just after dawn.

---

[7] Ballard himself spent two years studying medicine at King's College, Cambridge.

Kerans is a typical Ballard protagonist. He has isolated himself from the men at the testing station, preferring to live in a suite in one of the grand old hotels that still rises above the waters. Here, the juxtapositioning of the splendour of his surroundings with its 'gilt-legged Louis XV armchair' and the proliferating growth and stench of the external world suggests a commentary on the effeteness and decay of civilization set against the insane growth and vigour of the outer world.

As is often the case in Ballard, the alien outer landscape now begins to be a reflection of Kerans's internal world, of the psychic reality that he is experiencing. He begins to feel a growing sense of dissociation from the 'normal' world, the world that is represented by the biological mapping station. Strange dreams begin to trouble him, and more and more he begins to sense that he is entering a psychological 'zone of transit', in which his psyche is preparing itself for a new and more significant reality. In a sense, for Kerans, time has begun to run backwards as he moves deeper and deeper into a subliminal life, further and further back through the subconscious into the residual, 'spinal' memories that are embed-ded in both his flesh and his psyche.

Ballard himself accepts wholeheartedly Jung's theory of the 'collective unconscious' and the concept that humanity is genetically programmed to contain patterns of awareness, to contain all the evolutionary material that has made for our survival as a species through the ages. The collective unconscious is not merely an ontogenetic or individual possession or acquisition. It differs fundamentally from what Jung terms the 'personal unconscious'. The images and symbols contained by the collective unconscious are archetypes in the sense that they are 'universal'. They are 'primordial types...that have existed since the remotest times' (Jung, 1968b:5). They are 'archaic' or 'autochthonous', 'of a collective,

universal and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals' (Jung, 1968c:43). Our thought patterns thus evidence archetypal patterns that are phylogenetic; they are the legacy, not just of our individual development, but also of the biological evolution of our species. As Anthony Stevens puts it:

> ...the archetype, as Jung conceived it, is a precondition and coexistent of life itself; its manifestations not only reach upwards to the spiritual heights of religion, art and metaphysics, but also down into the dark realms of organic and inorganic matter.
>
> (1982:29)

Ballard appears unequivocally to agree with this ethological (or biological) approach to human psychology. In his own words:

> I accept the collective unconscious - I don't think its a *mystic* entity, I think its simply that whenever an individual is conceived, a whole set of operating instructions, a set of guidebooks, are meshed together like cards being shuffled. A whole set of unconscious mythologies are nestled and locked into one another to produce this individual, who will then spend the rest of his life evolving and fulfilling that private mythology for himself...
>
> (Interview with Graeme Revell, in Vale and Juno, 1984:45)

And, in talking of The Drowned World to Brendan Hennesy, in the Transatlantic Review (Spring, 1971), Ballard said:

> ...I wanted to look at our racial memory, our whole biological inheritance, the fact that we're all several hundred million years old, as old as the biological kingdoms in our spines, in our brains, in our cellular structure; our very identities reflect untold numbers of decisions made to adapt us to change in our environment, decisions lying behind us in the past like some enormous, largely forgotten journey.
>
> (in Vale and Juno, 1984:164)

The drowned city, thus, becomes a metaphor for those submerged areas of the mind, the drowned areas of the psyche, towards which Kerans begins falteringly to feel his way. For, like all Ballard's protagonists, he acquiesces in the process which moves him further and further into this strange subliminal zone. Instead of resisting, as do other characters in the book, such as Colonel Riggs and Strangman, he embraces gladly the process of transformation. What would appear to be self-immolation in the view of the external and 'normal' world becomes, for Ballard's protagonist, a journey towards a uniquely personal truth and reality. The landscape of lagoons and waterways becomes a projection of Kerans's inner world. As he physically maroons himself in the drowned world by refusing to return with the expedition to Camp Byrd, he chooses also to psychically maroon himself in this primeval and swampy world, the submerged world that mirrors the subconscious areas of the mind. He experiences a re-entry into what Ballard calls 'neuronic time'. The drowned world becomes a metaphor for the drowned mind, a mind travelling backwards in time to a memory of the steamy, oozing jungles of the Triassic era, into the submerged conscious, towards what Dr Bodkin, Kerans's colleague at the testing station, calls 'total biopsychic recall'.

As Kerans moves deeper into 'archeopsychic time', he begins to experience the terrible heat of the monstrous sun as a biological and emotional necessity. When, later in the book, the lagoons are drained by the enigmatic and manic Strangman, Kerans feels dislocated and disoriented. So intense has been Ballard's evocation of the drowned world, its uterine warmth and 'amnionic' waters, that the reader experiences Kerans's own sense of horror as the detritus of the city emerges from the lagoons. Strangman, in 'reclaiming' the city, is symbolically resisting the devolutionary tide, while Kerans now has an imperative need to embrace the drowned world.

Eventually, Kerans abandons the hotel suite and the city. He concludes that these things are vestiges of the past, relics that he clung to out of habit and initial resistance to those archetypal forces that drive him southward into the greater heat and ferocity of the sun. He will, henceforth, be true to his 'unconscious motives', to the need to move deeper into archaeopsychic time - 'into the brighter day of the interior, archaeopsychic sun' (144), the memories of which are encoded in his genetic structure. In truth, he now no longer has a choice, but is driven forward by powerful and relentless imperatives.

Ballard's proliferating and rampant jungles, the steaming lagoons, the harsh white glare of the ferocious sun, are so intensely and visually evoked that the reader is held by their archetypal and primeval nature, which seem to emanate from a rich store of unconscious, yet instantly recognisable, images. Within this wild disorder and growth, the giant spiders and bats, and the grotesquely enlarged crocodiles and iguanas, begin to seem familiar and recognisable, despite their strangeness. The effect is rather like that of a surrealist paint-ing, where the strange forms seem dreamlike, fantastic - yet simultaneously real. Ballard, in fact, draws the same parallel, showing Kerans looking at a painting on the wall of a hotel room in the inundated city - 'one of Max Ernst's self-devouring phantasmagoric jungles screamed silently to itself, like the sump of some insane unconscious' (29). And the jungle, itself, is a potent symbol of the chthonic aspects of human personality, of all those dark and hidden places from which humanity itself springs. Ballard's rank and swampy jungles are at once alluring and frightening. They speak to the reader, together with the submerged roads and buildings of the city, in timeless and universal images of the buried areas of the mind.

Ballard himself seems to agree with Jung that the prime objective of human life is the movement towards fulfilment, what Jung calls 'individuation'.

> My novels and my fiction are of fulfilment. My characters embrace what most people would run miles from... In many cases they embrace death, but that doesn't mean that I am pessimistic. In fact, they find fulfilment. I think that all my fiction is optimistic because it's a fiction of psychic fulfilment.
>
> (Interview with Catherine Bresson, in Vale and Juno, 1984:161)

And the concluding sentence of the book describes Kerans as 'a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn sun', thus suggesting that Kerans's journey will be regenerative as he moves southward into a new future. Imagery throughout the book suggests that Kerans is changing in radical ways, adapting to the environment, leaving behind what is recognisably 'normal' in order to journey towards some point of psychic self-realisation. When he has the first of his strange dreams, the suggestion is that the metamorphosis is beginning.

> As the great sun drummed nearer, almost filling the sky itself, the dense vegetation along the limestone cliffs was flung back abruptly, to reveal the black and stone-grey heads of enormous Triassic lizards. Strutting forward to the edge of the cliffs, they began to roar together at the sun, the noise gradually mounting until it became indistinguishable from the volcanic pounding of the solar flares. Kerans felt, beating within him like his own pulse, the powerful mesmeric pull of the baying reptiles, and stepped out into the lake, whose waters now seemed an extension of his own blood stream. As the dull pounding rose, he felt the barriers which divided his own cells from the surrounding medium dissolving, and he swam forwards, spreading outwards across the black thudding water... (ellipsis in text)

(69)

In this characteristic piece of Ballardian prose, the sense of yielding, even of dissolution, is marked, as is the ambiguity. For Ballardian self-individuation is a bizarrely inverted

process.   If this is fulfilment it is a strange and severely compromised destiny, indeed.

David Pringle, in his essay 'The Fourfold Symbolism of J. G. Ballard', claims that The

Drowned World describes a 'sombre and ironic' Edenic paradise.   'For all its horrors it

does represent a psychological Garden of Eden' (in Vale and Juno, 1984:128).   Yet, as

Kerans moves southward into the blazing furnace of the new world, it becomes impossible

for the reader to believe that anything awaits him but a tragic and terrible death.   The

horrifying figure of Sergeant Hardman, with his sun-blistered eyes and charred body - a

martyr to the glowing torch of the sun - seems the only true portent of what awaits

Kerans.

Ballard is superbly successful at evoking what Jung called the 'archaic strata' which lie

dormant within the consciousness.   He is also unswerving in his commitment to what he

himself sees as the 'fulfilment' of his protagonists; that is to say, that moment when they

allow themselves to be subsumed by the chthonic aspects of the unconscious.   Gregory

Stephenson maintains that the 'disaster motif in Ballard's fiction is...grounded, not in a

nihilistic wish for extinction, but in the desire for transcendence' (1991:41).   Ironically,

however, the Ballardian 'hero' has little choice in the matter.   He is impelled inward by

biological urges so strong that they overwhelm all conscious decision.   As Stephenson

puts it,

> The protagonists...undergo metamorphosis in the course of which their
> latent identities are realized, identities whose full elaboration necessitates
> the relinquishing of the physical temporal conscious self.
>
> (1991:61 - 62)

Despite Stephenson's conviction that the Ballardian hero achieves Jungian individuation, the resolution that he seeks is extremely ambiguous. If completion of the personality leads to the dissolution and extinction of the self, 'fulfilment' of this nature can seem, finally, to be a process of entropy or disintegration. The radical destinies of Ballard's protagonists, despite their special allure, become concentrated into a single and finite aspect of being that supersedes growth and leads to self-obliteration. In a sense, his characters are helpless, mere particles in a cosmic process that is spinning towards completion.

Jung's concept of the movement towards wholeness or unity suggests that individuation occurs only when consciousness and unconsciousness flourish together harmoniously, the one neither dominating or suppressing the other. However, Ballard's characters reach a point where consciousness is overwhelmed by, surrenders completely to the unconscious. His protagonists sacrifice conscious life, slipping blindly into a timeless, primordial zone beyond ego or reason. They give themselves over willingly to the extinction of personality and rationality, seeming to become biological entities at one with the vast, entropic processes of the cosmos. As seductive as are Ballard's landscapes of the mind, the obliteration of his protagonists' conscious lives cannot fail to seem an entropic movement, one which renounces potency and vitality and embraces dissolution. Thus, ironically, although Ballard insists that his protagonists are evolving to meet their new worlds, their transformations may seem more like devolution or dissolution than anything else. Nevertheless, although it is easy to understand why his work has sometimes aroused reactions of antagonism and repulsion, it also cannot be denied that the allure and logic with which Ballard invests this relentless biological imperative is testimony to his power as a writer.

Ballard's images are consistently melancholy and suggest - despite their strangely poetic nature - loss, sterility, desolation, retrogression and waste. In his third novel The Drought (1978), which was first published in 1965, the obsession with his own personal symbols again takes on an apocalyptic and archetypal significance.

Ballard himself is adamant in denying literary influences in his work, but in this 'disaster' novel the influence of T. S. Eliot's poetry seems, unmistakably, to be present. T. S. Eliot, writing in the period between the two World Wars, was singularly prescient in identifying as well as creating images of spiritual and urban decay. Because of the haunting and inescapable power of his symbolic images, many of them have become a sort of cultural residue, absorbed into the modern consciousness, a reservoir from which many literate people draw frequently. The components of his unique iconography, often drawn from archetypal and mythic sources, have become signposts which help to identify the surrealistic, the banal and sometimes the purely ungraspable aspects of modern life. Thus, the detritus of twentieth century urban living, as well as more timeless images drawn from religion, myth and Eliot's awe-inspiring literacy, have provided symbolic images such as the drained pool, the river, the wasted land, the arid desert, the debilitated and aging king, the rose garden, the winding stairway. All of these have become a kind of common currency that speaks, through learned association, to the educated reader. So revitalising, so fecund an influence has he proved, that he has continued to influence artists of all sorts in the decades since his death. Anti-Romantic, often a poet of decay and disintegration, his power is enormous, even by current standards.

Ballard's obsession with themes of decay, fragmentation, disassociation and alienation link him, to some extent, with Eliot. And while it is certainly possible that many artists are not

aware of the debt that they owe to this poet, it is hardly likely that Ballard is unconscious of his influence for, in the case of The Drought, the references seem quite deliberate. For instance, a chapter heading ('The Fire Sermon') recalls the third section of 'The Waste Land' which is similarly titled, and the general imagery (time, drought, the desert, sand, even Ballard's own reference to his landscape as a 'wasteland'), are quite obviously reminiscent not only of 'The Waste Land', but also of elements in the 'Four Quartets' and 'Gerontian'. Like Eliot, Ballard has grasped the iconic significance of these images, and uses them masterfully and idiosyncratically to evoke powerful intuitive responses. Also, the state of mind of Ballard's protagonist is somewhat akin to the emotional and intellec-tual state articulated by much of Eliot's poetry. Ballard's work, too, speaks of emotional detachment and bewilderment, while simultaneously expressing the intense conviction that there is another kind of reality, a metaphysical one, that lies just beyond reach.

The Drought opens at the point when the Earth suffers under the onset of a global drought. The arid land areas have increased dramatically in size and, simultaneously, global rainfall has ceased. The cause of this distortion of the weather patterns is what Ballard calls an 'act of retribution by the sea' (34). The sea has finally reacted to the vast amounts of industrial waste that have been continuously pumped into it over the past half century by forming a 'skin no thicker than a few atoms, but sufficiently strong to devastate the lands it once irrigated' (34).

As the lakes, rivers and reservoirs slowly and inexorably shrink, altering the contours of the land, society undergoes metamorphosis. The central character, Dr Charles Ransom (another of Ballard's besieged doctor figures), sets off with a small band of companions to reach the coast. There he stays for ten years, an outcast from the puritan beach commu-

nity that ekes out a miserable and insecure existence by distilling precious water on the edge of the retreating ocean. Finally, together with his original companions, he returns inland - to the point from which he started. Like so many journeys in which the psychic element is important, Ransom's journey is circular, suggesting a movement towards some form of self-realisation. But once again, as always in Ballard, this 'self-realisation' is ambiguous and ironic in character, for his protagonist will move more and more deeply into a realm of isolation and entropy.

As is often the case in Ballard's fiction, little seems to happen in terms of real action. Ballard is little interested in the mechanics of a disaster-stricken or ecologically trauma-tised society. Once again, the disaster becomes a means for him to explore a certain state of mind. As always with Ballard, we are in the realm of 'inner space'. Dr Charles Ran-som and the little group of grotesques that is gathered about him exist in a state of emo-tional suspension. The waste land that surrounds them becomes an extended metaphor for the psychic erosion within. Like the barges and houseboats stranded by the sinking waters of Ballard's slow-draining lakes and rivers, his characters are similarly becalmed in an emotional limbo.

T. S. Eliot has articulated much of our century's sense of meaninglessness, the loss of faith, the rootlessness, the general attrition of emotion and purpose, the fragmentation and decay of society, the reduction even of sex to a joyless activity. Charles Ransom seems to be marooned not only in his own physical waste land, but also in Eliot's 'Waste Land'. At the opening of the book, as he punts himself about the sinking lake, his state of mind - like that of all Ballard's protagonists - is curiously detached. In Eliot's words he is 'waiting

for rain'[8] in more than just the physical sense. To quote Eliot again, he has 'lost his

passion'.[9] Ballard's drought-stricken world is the landscape of sterility, his prose is the

lyricism of impotence and immobility.

In addition, there is much in the general texture and the allusiveness of Ballard's writing in

The Drought that prompt the reader to find resonances that recall 'The Waste Land'. The

opening paragraph of the novel irresistibly brings to mind the mood and some of the

contents of the 'Fire Sermon' section of the poem, in which the River Thames has lost its

grace and beauty, has become a sordid background for momentary and affectless trysts.

> The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
>
> Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
>
> Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are
>
>   departed.
>
> Sweet Thames run softly, till I end my song.
>
> The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
>
> Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
>
> Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are
>
>   departed.
>
>   ('The Waste Land', 1965: ll. 174 - 182)

Ballard's river similarly displays signs of decay and attrition, and Eliot's 'nymphs' become

transposed to the grotesque figure of the Caliban-like Quilter. The writer sets his scene

with his usual precision:

> At noon, when Dr Charles Ransom moored his houseboat in the entrance
>
> to the river, he saw Quilter, the idiot son of the old woman who lived in
>
> the ramshackle barge outside the yacht basin, standing on a spur of ex-

---

[8] 'Gerontian', l. 2

[9] 'Gerontian', l. 56.

posed rock on the opposite bank and smiling at the dead birds floating in the water below his feet. The reflection of his swollen head swam like a deformed nimbus among the limp plumage. The caking mud-bank was speckled with pieces of paper and driftwood, and to Ransom the dream-faced figure of Quilter resembled a demented faun strewing himself with leaves as he mourned the lost spirit of the river.

(The Drought, 1978:9)

There are other echoes. T. S. Eliot's poem frequently recalls Shakespeare's The Tempest. So, too, does Ballard's The Drought. The strangely androgenous figure of Richard Lomax recalls an insane Prospero, presiding over his diminutive and shrunken kingdom with erratic and progressively more bizarre behaviour. Lomax's sister, with her air of the 'diseased lily', is called Miranda. Philip Jordan, moving swiftly across the waters of the draining lake, reminds Ransom of Ariel, and the enigmatic and deformed Quilter is re-ferred to by Lomax constantly as 'Caliban'. All these characters become, finally, some-what totemic; symbolic and prophetic in various ways. And the allusions help to reinforce, within the mind of the reader, the mythic connotations, since the informed reader is aware that The Tempest, too, works within the realm of archetypal meaning and metaphor. Quilter is, for instance, a strangely perverse Caliban. Ballard's Quilter, like Shakespeare's Caliban, seems to suggest the untamed unconscious. Both Caliban and Quilter are mon-strous; yet each suggests the vitality of nature. Quilter's fantastic figure, striding about on stilts and bedecked with grotesque finery, is, in some way, the apotheosis of the landscape; a promise, perhaps, of some form of adaptation to the sterile surroundings. His children, with their brachycephalic skulls, their eyes 'full of dreams', also seem to hold some sort of unspoken and enigmatic promise. But where The Tempest seems to suggest a return to the world, towards resolution, reconciliation and closure, Ballard's symbols are pro-foundly ambiguous and unresolved.

Some of Ballard's most persistently used images, already alluded to earlier, are those entropic images such as the empty lake, the sinking river and the drained swimming pool - all of which suggest loss of energy and purpose. These echo, to some extent, T. S. Eliot's use of exhausted wells, sunken rivers and empty cisterns. The first section of the 'Four Quartets' also uses an image that is almost obsessively present in Ballard's writing - the image of the 'drained pool'.[10] In The Drought these references are not sporadic. These watery connotations are the very matrix within which what might be called the 'psychic action' of the novel occurs. But, unlike the fertile and amniotic waters of The Drowned World, what characterises The Drought is the *absence* of water.

Water, as an age-old and potent symbol of vitality and life, of birth and regeneration, is characteristically absent in this novel. Jung has repeatedly drawn attention to the mutabil- ity of the archetypal symbols and their 'manifold meaning': 'They are genuine symbols precisely because they are ambiguous, full of half-glimpsed meanings and in the last resort inexhaustible' (1968:38). Ballard's images often evidence this transformational capacity and, thus, where the 'amnionic' waters of The Drowned World suggest some form of strange rebirth, in The Drought it is the absence of water that is symbolic. The curiously mournful images of sinking rivers and lakes, and of drained swimming pools, give this ancient symbol an oddly 'modern' guise, one that has all the old associations - yet which has also a strangely new aspect to which the contemporary reader reacts on an intuitive level. The symbolism of Ballard's sinking lakes, his slow-draining canals and dry swim- ming pools is evident. They express loss of vitality, as well as loss of emotional and intellectual potency. Water, with its ebb and flow, is linked to seasonal rhythms and the

---

[10] 'Burnt Norton', in Four Quartets, 1. 33.

movement of tides. As it drains away, Ransom is 'becalmed in time', unable to come to

terms with the past or to accept the future. He 'can connect / Nothing with nothing'.[11]

His detachment from the world that surrounds him becomes almost pathological:

> During their journey to the south he had felt an increasing sense of vac-
> uum, as if he was pointlessly following a vestigial instinct that no longer
> had any real meaning for him. The four people with him were becoming
> more and more shadowy, residues of themselves as notional as the empty
> river.
>
> (92)

And later he feels

> ... the sense of isolation in time that he had known when he stood on the
> deck of the houseboat, looking out at the shrouded objects on the dry bed
> around him.
>
> (101)

Ransom exists in a state of bodily and emotional isolation on the edge of the sea, belong-
ing to neither of the two communities that are meagrely sustained by the fish and the bitter
waters. Here, in a zone that appears frozen, cut off from the ebb and flow of time, Ran-
som is marooned in a state of immobility. He retains only the remnants of vigour and
urgency. He is sundered emotionally and physically from all that surrounds him. Like the
monochromatic landscape, his emotions are reduced, colourless.

> Nowhere was there a defined margin between the shore and sea, and the
> endless shallows formed the only dividing zone, land and water submerged
> in this grey liquid limbo. At intervals the skeleton of a derelict conveyor
> emerged from the salt and seemed to point towards the sea, but then, after

---

[11] 'The Waste Land', ll. 301 - 302.

> a few hundred yards, sank from sight again. Gradually the pools of water
> congregated into larger lakes, small creeks formed into continuous chan-
> nels, but the water never seemed to move. Even after an hour's walk,
> knee-deep in the dissolving slush, the sea remained as distant as ever...
>
> (109)

This monotonous landscape delicately anatomises Ransom's state of mind. Boundaries are irresolute ('nowhere was there a defined margin'), undefined as Ransom's own mind, and the pools are as 'shallow' as his emotions. Like his own persona, the land and water are 'submerged' in a 'limbo', a state of suspension. And like his vestigial emotions and instincts, the derelict conveyors are simply inert and impotent skeletons, remnants only of their former selves. The water, too, 'never seemed to move'; it is as frozen, as immobile as the protagonist's psyche. Once again, landscape has become a metaphor for mind. Ransom's life is as bleak and monotonous as the dunes; like them, it undulates from day to day, with no emotional variance, no urgency, no sense of meaning.

The second over-riding image of <u>The Drought</u>, and one which is also a persistent symbol in much of Ballard's writing, is that of the desert. Desert imagery is associated symboli-cally with privation of the body and of the senses, with mortification of the flesh, with purification and the exorcism of desire. Jung calls the desert 'a wild land...an image of spiritual and moral isolation' (1968b:35). As is constant in Ballard's work, the outer landscape of <u>The Drought</u> becomes analogous to the inner world of the psyche. The vast, alien and very beautiful desert of his prose becomes a metaphor for the strangely eroded and affectless life of Dr Charles Ransom. The desert becomes a symbol, in part, of life stripped to essentials - 'a long-dormant skeleton' (151), in Ballard's words.

Yet it is precisely this arid and eroded landscape which is so seductive to the protagonist. From the start he is exhilarated by the transformation of the lake; it appears to him 'like the shores of a dream' (10). Initially, however, he tries to resist it, following - like the rest of the human lemmings - the exodus to the coast. But finally, after ten years, driven by some chthonic and subliminal impulse (like Kerans in <u>The Drowned World</u>), Ransom is impelled to turn from the sea and make his way into the desert and back to the point of his departure. The desert exerts a compulsion on his psyche; it draws him irresistibly on to turn his back finally on the eroded, half-buried town of Mount Royal and then to move ever deeper into the wasteland of sand and dunes. Strangely enough, as he surrenders himself finally and wholly to the power of the bone-white sand and the coruscating light, the terms in which he apprehends the desert are transmuted into images that are usually associated with water, thus suggesting that the inhospitable landscape in which he is immolating himself is his psychic 'home'. And finally, Dr Charles Ransome moves forward into the desert landscape as if into a dream, dissolving like some distant mirage.

> Far away, against the horizon, he could see the rolling waves of the dunes
> on the lake.... Smoothed by the wind, the white dunes covered the bed like
> motionless waves.... The height of the dunes steadily increased, and an
> hour later the crests were almost twenty feet above his head.
>
> (186 - 188)

In using the desert as a symbol of sterility and torment, Ballard is subscribing to a long tradition of both learned and intuitive associations that form in the mind of the reader, and which function on the level of archetype. Once again, however, while the desert imagery is rich in allusion and association, Ballard's vision of it is strikingly idiosyncratic and strangely absorbing. The manner in which his imagery functions on these two levels - that

is to say, on the personal as well as the general level - imparts to his writing a richness of texture and meaning.

Linked to the symbolic desert images are others that reinforce the connections with those themes of sterility and decay that are so prevalent in 'The Waste Land'. T. S. Eliot's poem was much influenced by his fascination with ancient sources that detail the myth of the Fisher King, in which the eponymous ruler is maimed or aged and therefore associated with the dying land, the loss of vegetation and fertility. The various 'voices' which speak in Eliot's 'Waste Land' are affected by the sterility of modern life. Relationships are impoverished, transitory and reduced to only the most residual or neurotic. The overall imagery is wintry, exhausted, mournfully nostalgic for vanished splendour and vitality; the mood is one of waiting for replenishment, for spring, for rain, for rebirth. Ballard's novel recalls these themes, as well as the image of the Fisher King, albeit in somewhat distorted form. For in The Drought rebirth is an ambiguous concept, more akin to the entropic processes of dissolution.

The fishermen, led by the darkly sombre figure of Jonas, to whom Ballard refers several times as the 'fisher captain', seem to take on symbolic aspects. Fishermen are associated with Christian imagery, the disciples of Christ were 'fishers of men'. And Jonas's bos'un is called Saul - yet another Biblical analogy. But Ballard's fishermen have pinched and drawn faces, they have 'the closed expression of a group of strikers or unemployed' (40), and they use force to try to capture and recruit Ransom - thus subverting, negating Chris-tian teaching. The half-mad figure of the fisher captain thus becomes ambiguous. Waiting in a diseased Eden for renewal, Jonas becomes associated with the fertility of water and

fish, and yet inextricably linked also to the dying land. The symbolism of regeneration is thus reversed, becoming the imagery of stasis and decay.

Other images take on an iconographic aspect in <u>The Drought</u>. One of the most prevalent is the symbol of the fish, an ancient image associated with both the phallic principle and also with the uterine waters of the primordial element. Kerenyi mentions that the fish was known to the ancient Greeks as the 'uterine beast' and that they 'revered it above all the denizens of the deep' (1985:50). Fish, like birds, are images of chthonic power, repre-senting birth, fertility and resurrection. Ballard's dying fish, stranded by the ebbing waters of Ballard's world, are thus linked to the sterility of the landscape. Jessie Weston's 1920 work, on which T. S. Eliot drew for much of his knowledge of the Fisher King legend, remarks that '...the Fish [is] a Divine Life symbol, of immemorial antiquity...' (1980:121), and traces its appearance back in time to long before it appeared as a symbol of Christian faith. Again, Ballard's symbolism is ambiguous. For, while in <u>The Drought</u> the fish, dying together with birds and other forms of life, become archetypal symbols of failed fertility, they are also present as symbols of continuing survival and hope. To the community living on the edge of the 'bitter sea', fish are the main source of sustenance and also, together with water, the most important of currencies. In the chapel of the shore settlement

> The port-holes and windows had been replaced by crude stained glass im-
> ages of biblical scenes, in which some local craftsman had depicted Christ
> and his disciples surrounded by leaping sharks and sea-horses.
>
> (125)

Yet the fish, ironically, speak also of death and sterility, for they hang dead and mutilated from the rails of the ships:

> ...while an immense swordfish, the proudest catch of the settlement and
> the Reverend Johnstone's choice of a militant symbol to signify its pride,
> was tied to the whale-bone mast and hung below the cross, its huge
> blade pointed heaven-wards.
>
> <div align="right">(125)</div>

The fish symbolism becomes a consistent and unifying theme. When Ransom returns to
Mount Royal, he finds the androgenous Lomax (recalling T. S. Eliot's 'old man with
wrinkled dugs'[12]), who still retains some power over the strange little community that
exists around his reservoir. Once again, the symbolism is ambiguous, for the doomed and
perverse Lomax is described in terms that recall the fish images which have begun to
suggest both fertility and death.

> He wore a grey silk suit of extravagant cut, the pleated trousers like a
> close-fitting skirt, or the bifurcated tail of a huge fish...
>
> <div align="right">(174)</div>

Later, the fish imagery is reinforced, for Lomax's 'suit was puffed up, the lapels flaring
like the gills of an angry fish' (181). He is a 'demented Prospero', sensing the end of his
reign. However, unlike Shakespeare's Prospero, Lomax will come to no new wisdom. If
there is a 'sea-change' in The Drought, it is a strange affair, promising dissolution rather
than rebirth.

In a story dating from 1960, 'The Voices of Time', Ballard demonstrates his personal
interpretation of the imagery of fulfilment or completion. He uses an archetypal Jungian
symbol - the mandala - in a highly idiosyncratic manner, so that while it expresses his pro-

---

[12] 'The Waste Land', ll. 301 - 302.

tagonist's achievement of transcendent reality, it symbolises simultaneously the decay and final dissolution of the personality and of the life force itself. The story is beautiful and moving, the ultimate dénouement disturbing in its implications. The 'Voices of Time' encapsulates, in a sense, the cumulative effect of Ballard's entire body of work.

Several strands run concurrently through 'The Voices of Time' (1981), yet all are linked to the over-riding theme of entropy and devolution. Dr Robert Powers, a neuro-surgeon, is afflicted by the 'narcoma syndrome', as are increasing numbers of other people who now sleep endlessly in specially-built facilities.

> ...in the silent dormitories behind the sealed shutters, the terminals slept their long dreamless sleep...the vanguard of a vast somnambulist army massing for its last march.
>
> (150)

Powers' sleeping hours are gradually increasing while, as a corollary, his daylight hours are dwindling. Soon he will enter the endless twilight of the narcoma victim. However, his shrinking life is the counter subject to an entropic countdown on a larger, cosmic scale. From somewhere in the vicinity of the star Canes Venatici, a series of decreasing mathematical progressions are being broadcast to Earth. Although the sequences of numbers contain over fifty million digits and will take an immeasurable length of time before they finally run down to zero, this is, in essence, a cosmic countdown. The moment at which the final zero is transmitted will signal the final moment in the life of the universe.

Powers, intensely aware of his shrinking life, becomes aware also that he is a microcosmic reflection of entropy on an immense scale, an intrinsic part of the cosmic process of

devolution. His ex-patient Kaldren explains the diminishing mathematical progressions to him thus:

> 'These are the voices of time, and they're all saying goodbye to you. Think of yourself in a wider context. Every particle in your body, every grain of sand, every galaxy carries the same signature...you know what the real time is now, so what does the rest matter? There's no need to go on looking at the clock.'
>
> (172)

Linking the countdown of personal and cosmic time is a singular visual image, that of a gigantic mandala that Dr Powers begins to construct. This Jungian image of wholeness and perfection takes on an idiosyncratic meaning as it is handled by Ballard's unique sensibility. The story opens, in fact, with a view of a ruined mandala that had been built by the biologist Whitby before his death. As is typical of Ballard, the scene is delineated with surreal precision, introducing some of his most prevalent images:

> Later Powers often thought of Whitby, and the strange grooves the biologist had cut, apparently at random, all over the floor of the empty swimming pool. An inch deep and twenty feet long, interlocking to form an elaborate ideogram like a Chinese character, they had taken him all summer to complete, and he had obviously thought about little else, working away tirelessly through the long desert afternoons. Powers had watched him from his office window at the far end of the neurology wing, carefully marking out his pegs and string, carrying away the cement chips in a small canvas bucket. After Whitby's suicide no one had bothered about the grooves, but Powers often borrowed the supervisor's key and let himself into the disused pool, and would look down at the labyrinth of mouldering gulleys, half-filled with water leaking in from the chlorinator, an enigma now past any solution.
>
> (144)

This opening paragraph is typically Ballardian, setting up a melancholy and somewhat alien stream of associations. The 'empty swimming pool', like the 'strange grooves', 'apparently at random', suggests futility. The mandala itself, which should be a symbol of numinous completion, is abandoned, half-finished and mouldering, a picture of stasis and despair. As an 'enigma now past any solution' it seems to be pointless, a blind alley along which Whitby stumbles until his final despairing act.

All these images become applicable to Dr Robert Powers, as he succumbs to the relentless diminishment of his waking hours. He too experiences an overpowering urge to construct a mandala - this time on a disused weapons range, using a giant target bull as his central point. Powers works in a sort of obsessive somnambulistic dream, a state of suspended consciousness, seemingly unaware of what he is doing despite his failing strength and the intense physical effort involved. When the mandala is finally completed, Powers has, in effect, reached his own moment of completion. Standing at night within the mandala, he 'hears' the 'time-song' of the far-distant galaxies, the 'ancient' voices of the stars. As he moves towards the centre of the mandala, a point which symbolises the core of existence, he hears the 'great voice' of Canes Venatici:

> ...Powers knew that its source was the source of the cosmos itself. As it passed him, he felt its massive magnetic pull, let himself be drawn into it, borne gently on its powerful back. Quietly it carried him away, and he rotated slowly, facing the direction of the tide. Around him the outlines of the hills and the lake had faded, but the image of the mandala, like a cosmic clock, remained fixed before his eyes, illuminating the broad surface of the stream. Watching it constantly he felt his body gradually dissolving, its physical dimensions melting into the vast continuum of the current,

which bore him out into the centre of the great channel sweeping him on-
wards, beyond hope but at last at rest, down the broadening reaches of the
river of eternity.

(177 - 178)

Here, the archetypal symbol of growth and self-realisation, of 'at-one-ment', becomes
transformed, inverted and subtly distorted, by Ballard's very personal interpretation of the
Jungian symbology. Powers' death at the centre of the mandala becomes the climactic and
transcendent moment, the moment where he is absorbed into the cosmos, into eternity.
Here the image of the mandala mingles with another, that of 'Cosmic Man', an archetypal
symbol represented most clearly, perhaps, by Leonardo da Vinci's drawing of a man
standing with arms and legs splayed, to form the nucleus and outward-radiating spokes of
a perfect circle. This symbol of perfection and wholeness expresses the totality of man, his
unconscious and conscious knowledge, and shows diagramatically how man interacts with
and extends into the cosmos, learning to know himself and the world around him. Ballard
here achieves a lovely vision, combining these complex concepts into a composite image
as Powers is swept away by the time song of the cosmos. At the same time, the images
are interpreted in a highly individual, even perverse, way. For, in a strange reversal, where
the archetypal image would normally suggest growth, in Ballard there is only dissolution.
In Jungian terms, the symbol suggests the power of the life force. But in 'The Voices of
Time' the transcendent moment brings extinction - a 'dissolving' and a 'melting' as
Powers' life is swept away. Yet, so intense is the writer's commitment to the terms of his
strange reality, that there is an ironic logic to his idiosyncratic reading of what he calls
'fulfilment'. Gregory Stephenson says of these Ballardian 'heroes' that '...in the end they
achieve the courage of their compulsions and find fulfilment in surrender to the forces of
the unconscious' (1991:151).

Helen Gardner (1959:716) has pointed out that one of the problems associated with the interpretation of surrealist art is the fact that the symbols amd images arise out of the intensely personal psychic experiences of the artist. They can, therefore, be somewhat hermetic, unintelligible to the viewer or to the reader. The challenge for the artist is to find, within this private and oneiric iconography, common symbols that balance the personal and the universal. At its best, Ballard's writing succeeds in doing this. His images constantly evoke resonances in the mind of the reader. And, despite their ambiguity, they function powerfully, in part because of their age-old meanings and associations, in part because of the intense and meticulous quality of his prose and, finally, because of the writer's unshakeable commitment to the strange destinies of his protagonists. Ballard, like many of the surrealist painters to whom he pays homage, has built up his own 'dictionary' of obsessively recurring images. Like the drooping and softened watches and body parts of Dali, the mournful and deserted perspectives and colonnades of De Chirico, or Ernst's human forms which metamorphose into plant or animal entities, Ballard's frozen and silent vistas constitute a distinctive vocabulary. These intensely personal images impart to his prose much of its unique flavour and its constant flow of ambiguous, tenuous and teasing associations. His landscapes constantly provoke the interior and mysterious world. In his writing, the outer world - the world made manifest - is forced to confront the latent, unconscious world. Thus, his images take on a larger significance, working profoundly within the consciousness of the reader to evoke powerful archetypal responses. Rather like poetry, or like myth itself, Ballard's inner and outer landscapes make sense before they are understood.

J. G. Ballard is not the only sf writer to work with images of entropy that are mythic or archetypal in their appeal - but he is certainly the one who does so with the most consis-

tency and, in my opinion, with the most power. Ballard is, in a sense, a monothematic writer, showing little variation within the range of his concern with his disintegrating inner and outer worlds. Even from a stylistic point of view, his early work seems as elegant, as concise and as perverse in flavour as does the later writing. From a technical point of view, there seems to have been - apart from the experiments when he was so closely associated with New Wave writing - little change. Although he has, over the years, refined and then redefined his primary concerns, it is almost possible to feel, after reading only a few of his novels and short stories, that one is familiar with his entire body of work. Yet, within this limited range that he has set for himself, his work is significant.

Aldiss's work, despite a constant return to the antagonism between growth and entropy, is far more varied from a thematic point of view - although this study has not been able to demonstrate this, dealing as it does, with only one of his books. But both these writers epitomise, in a sense, the disillusionment - or, at the very least, the ambivalence - with which twentieth-century man is learning to view scientific progress. Other writers have taken a jaundiced view of technological advances, seeing them as, at best, a mixed blessing, and demonstrating that, in the spheres of emotional and sociological development, the human race still has a long and arduous road to travel before it reaches maturity. But the writers discussed in this chapter have approached the problem of psychic evolution in highly personal ways, using archetypes of universal culture and experience to illuminate their individual vision of the potentiality for sterility and decay inherent in civilisation, and creating in the process a powerful statement about the human condition. Kroeber, in Romantic Fantasy and Science Fiction, notes that sf is perhaps the genre most able to envisage the logical and tragic conclusion to humanity's existence. Furthermore, very perceptively, he points to the most disturbing aspects of evolutionary thinking:

> ...the true darkness implicit in evolutionary thinking is not that it implies humankind emerged from lower organisms, but that it must postulate man's transiency. Evolutionary thinking is frightening because it expands our capacity to imagine our inevitable natural doom. Only man, it has often been observed, imagines his own death. Perhaps only modern man has been able fully and exactly to imagine the natural extinction of his species. It is this awful power that science fiction taps.
>
> (Kroeber, 1988: 26)

Both Aldiss and Ballard appear to be have accepted this conclusion: both seem to suggest that the dignity of quiet acceptance might be preferable to the fevered and clamorous struggle for survival. In this, they would seem to accord with another aspect of Jungian philosophy. Jung accepted that death was the natural end of the life process and accepted, also, that this was the point towards which his own life was inexorably moving. Because he himself never lost the urge for discovery and for the unknown, his final years were both tranquil and productive. He was able to make emotional preparations and adjustments for this final voyage, and to embark upon it with a sense that he had completed his work, that he had explored the unconscious aspects of his mind and come to terms with its components. Aldiss and Ballard have, in a different sense, both had the courage to face precisely this ultimate and tragic destiny. Both manage to find, in the process, consolation and purpose in such endings, and both draw on the resonances of the mythic and archetypal symbol to convey with power and relevance their unique visions. Rather than finding this depressingly nihilistic, I contend that such readiness to envisage the destiny of our planet and our species is exhilarating and courageous. The fact that Aldiss and Ballard have achieved visions of beauty in the process testifies to the resilience of the human soul, rather than to its ineffectuality. It is in the contemplation of such strange dreams that the reader of sf may find true wonder and consolation.

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 transfor-mation, 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 <u>Tiger! Tiger!</u> 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 <u>Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature</u> (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.
>
> (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 <u>The Known and the Unknown: the Iconography of Science Fiction</u> (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!
>
> (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.

---

[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.
>
> (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 <u>Lycanthia</u> (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.

<u>Lycanthia</u> 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...
>
> (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 pro-

tagonist 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 nostal-

gia for a gentle and expansive American way of life, Lee's Novo Mars becomes a subver-

sive 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, un-

doubtedly, 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

---

[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 ap-
peared 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 <u>Interview with the Vampire</u> (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 over-cast 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 irre-deemable, 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 be-come 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...
>
> (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.

---

[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 <u>Of Wolves and Men</u> (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 re-

markable 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 <u>Beasts</u>. 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 <u>Le Roman de Renart</u>, 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 to-
> gether. 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 al-
though 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,

---

[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.

---

[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

---

[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.

---

[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 <u>Weaveworld</u> 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 hid-
> den amongst them is a filigree which will with time become a world.
>
> <div align="right">(<u>Weaveworld</u>:5)</div>

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 pro-

tagonist, 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-

---

[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.

SIX : THE ETERNAL MIND

> *...so shalt thou see and hear*
> *The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible*
> *Of that eternal language...*
> Samuel T. Coleridge.

Previous chapters have demonstrated how archetypal patterns and symbols can be accessed by writers and used to enrich their writing, amplifying meaning and adding powerful subliminal resonances of which the reader is not consciously aware. Writers such as Ursula Le Guin, J. G. Ballard, Alfred Bester, John Crowley and others have utilised these archetypal symbols to augment and enhance their subject matter. They have skilfully harnessed many multi-functional images into service as useful aids in the exploration of their individual ideas about personal or racial redemption, about the acceptance of what is alien or Other, and about the power of the imagination.

There are, however, some sf and fantasy writers who have sought to recreate the mythic sense in a more complete form in their writing, utilising not merely the components of myth - that is to say, the persistent archetypal images or symbols - but the broader structures of familiar myths, the stories themselves. Samuel R. Delany, for instance, has attempted to 'rewrite' myth, recasting and reshaping ancient formulæ in new guises in order to update the relevancies and meanings of these classic patterns. As a precociously intellectual young writer still in his twenties, Delany produced, in 1967, the novella The Einstein Intersection (1992). This is, ostensibly, a retelling of the Orpheus myth, with elements of the Theseus and other myths intermingled. Although this book won a Nebula award in the year of its publication, the acclaim that it received was, in my opinion, probably more a testimony to the unexpectedness of its intellectual pretensions within a

field not frequently noted for scholarly content, rather than a tribute to its artistic success.

The Einstein Intersection, despite being hailed as Delany's 'most satisfying work' (Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, 1993:316), is profoundly unsatisfactory.

Set on an injured earth in the immeasurably far future, a mutant musician defies Kid Death to find his murdered love in an underground labyrinth presided over by a master computer called PHAEDRA - an acronym for Psychic Harmony and Entangled Deranged Response Associations - and menaced by various dangers that include a bull-like creature. But, despite the vivacity of the writing, the overall impression is one of sketchiness. The Minotaur of Greek legend, for instance, is a powerful imaginative creation precisely because it suggests a plurality of meanings. Delany's bull-creature, however, seems to be there simply in order to prove that he is 'rewriting' myth. Delany has also thrown some dragons - those well-loved staples of fantasy writing - into his tale. But, where in Ursula Le Guin's work, for instance, the dragons are potent creatures, trailing in their wake all sorts of emotional and intellectual resonances, the dragons of The Einstein Intersection are simply oversized, tameable lizards. And while the central character assures the reader that it is a great feat to be able to control and ride them, they, like the bull-creature, appear decorative rather than functional. Mastering the dragon, in The Einstein Intersection,, holds none of the powerful and cathartic implications suggested by Ged, for instance, who has learned to be a 'dragonlord', or by Tehanu, who instinctively speaks the 'dragon tongue'. In addition, despite Delany's characteristically assured use of language, the tone is often adolescent, achieving only a superficial energy. There is, for instance, a comic-book approach in the use of descriptive sound effects that is regrettably juvenile ('Roaaaaaaa...!', for example, or 'Clack! Clack! Clack!'). Finally, allusions to the mythic sources are pointed with such bluntness that the reader is denied a truly revelatory sense of

exploration and consequent discovery. All these considerations prevent Delany's writing from achieving the kind of tone which carries with it those resonances that are embodied in the genuinely mythic. Thus, while the whole may well exercise the reader's intellect, the sense of awed response is not evoked in an entirely succesful manner. Delany has allowed himself to be satisfied largely with the pictorial aspects of these symbols and has been unsuccessful in harnessing them to characters and ideas that arouse a genuine emotional response. The writer does myth a disservice in here reworking the archetypal *motifs* in such a way that they become rather facile creations, what William Righter has called 'no more than a tag' (1975:81). Delany has, finally, been unable to capture the complex nature of the archetypal image, which Jung has explained thus:

> [Archetypes] are, at one and the same time, both images and emotions. One can speak of an archetype only when these two aspects are simultaneous. When there is merely an image, then there is simply a word picture of little consequence. But by being charged with emotion, the image gains numinosity (or psychic energy); it becomes dynamic...
>
> (Jung, 1978b:87)

Achieving this dynamic quality is particularly difficult for writers who toy with the patterns and images of myth. Mythic imagery is, in itself, neither poetic nor literary. It is only the manner in which the artist shapes his or her material that can make the ancient symbols speak powerfully. It is how the writer 'sees into' (to borrow a useful term from Herbert Read's <u>Art Now</u> [1960]) the myth and then gives it embodiment which is important. It would seem, then, that 'writing myth' is not simply a matter of dressing age-old symbolisms and narrative patterns in fresh intellectual apparel. Claude Lévi-Strauss's contention that myth is simply another form of 'language' without any special meaning and that, therefore, it can be 'translated' into any other 'language' without losing its meaning, is

manifestly erroneous. The failure of Samuel R. Delany (and other writers such as Roger Zelazny) testify to this. Myth may lose its meaning quite easily, it seems, if it is not handled correctly. Simple translation or transposition of the mythic images and symbols is obviously not enough to guarantee success. It seems that the author must succeed also in imparting the specific sense of awe and wonder which is an essential component of the mythic experience.

An entirely different approach - one which may be called transformation - appears to be what is needed. Robert Holdstock, a British writer of mythic fantasy, appears to have succeeded in this. He has found a less self-conscious, far more intuitive path into the realm of myth. His approach may even be said to be 'anthropological', for in many of his novels and short stories he attempts to plumb the mindset, the origins, from which mythic imagery might emerge. He seems fascinated by the enigmatic - and perhaps primitive - thought processes which give birth to 'mythopoeic' imagery. Bravely, he attempts to explore those mysterious aspects of the psyche from which such mythopoeic emanations flow, struggling to create within the minds of his protagonists a state which is so primor-dial that the genesis of symbolic thought patterns and image-creation are suggested. He is, in effect, trying to penetrate through to the mythopoeic mind core itself, to that shad-owy area of the unconscious psyche in which 'autochthonous' and 'myth-forming struc-tural elements must be present' (Jung, 1991f:126).

> These products are never...myths with a definite form, but rather
> mythological components which, because of their typical nature, we can
> call "motifs", "primordial images", types or - as I have named them - *ar-*
> *chetypes*...a generally unintelligible, irrational, not to say delirious se-

quence of images which nonetheless does not lack a certain hidden coher-

ence.

(Jung, 1991f:127)

Holdstock uses many of the images that have been discussed in earlier chapters: the

mandala, the labyrinth, the forest, the beast and the journey are some of these. It is his

ends that seem unique. He has shown, in the steady development of both his creative

skills and of his concerns, an unswerving interest in the sources of these primordial and

archetypal thought processes. Rather than using mythopoetic images as components of a

story-telling process which amplifies other concerns, he attempts - particularly in some of

his more recent works - to explore the evolution of the symbolic image. He engenders

what C. Kerenyi calls a 'torrent of mythological pictures' (1985a:3) in his attempt to

recreate in his protagonists that particular emotional state which must ensue in order to

conjure up that 'delirious' and unrestricted sequence of archetypal patterns. In his prog-

ress towards the suggestion of such mind states, Holdstock has shown ever-increasing

control.[1]

Holdstock's three early sf novels are all set on alien planets, where his characters are

forced to retreat further and further into their own psyches. Here, it is the estrangement

from foreign and essentially unassimilable environments that forces the protagonist inward,

towards an encounter with the primordial mind. In Eye Among the Blind (1976), Earth-

---

[1] Robert Holdstock is not entirely alone in his quest for the primordial self. Paddy Chayefsky, the
eminent American playwright, screenwriter and novelist, has, in his novel Altered States (1978), also
shown at least a passing interest in this theme. In a well-researched book which impresses through its
scientific detail and also attests to the manner in which sf can make the crossover to mainstream
writing, he explores the personal odyssey of a young scientist obsessed with finding the path back into
primal memory, which he is convinced is stored in the brain's limbic system. He wants to 'find a true
self, an immutable self.... to get down to the embedded rock of life, what Saint Joan would call the
bare and barren soul' (43). The novel is fascinating, even moving at times, but since it does not work
primarily through the creation of archetypal images, discussion of this work would not be entirely
appropriate to this study.

wind (1987) and Where Time Winds Blow (1981) he has - with initial clumsiness, but with steadily developing skill - explored the manner in which alien environments may force the human mind into an encounter with hitherto unreachable areas of the psyche. In all three books he has used a similar device to suggest the convoluted path that his protagonists must follow as they journey towards some interior and emotional focal point. The image of a mandala-like labyrinth recurs constantly, as well as the harsh concept that part of the personality - sometimes even some essential physical attribute - must be jettisoned in order to reach fulfilment.

Thus, in Eye Among the Blind Holdstock's 'hero' explores the underground passages of Ree'hdworld, seeking an emotional truth and sense of repose which has hitherto eluded him. Finally, he must literally give up his sight in order to 'see' more clearly. In Earth-wind, where the oracular wind called Earthsong blows through subterranean caverns and passages, Elspeth Mueller suffers mutilations of the flesh and of the mind, losing her memory and regressing to primitivity. On Vanderzande's World, in Where Time Winds Blow, Leo Faulcon explores the labyrinthine rift valley of the timewinds, and then gives up something of his humanity in order to achieve a transcendental state of being. In each of these books, the central image is of an immensely convoluted maze-like passage along which the protagonist must travel, moving slowly towards the centre from the outer rim, until the core is reached. At this central point - the belly of the world and a place of cosmic revelation and regeneration - Holdstock suggests that his protagonists achieve some enormous change of perception, a sort of apotheosis. This transformation, however, if revealed to the central character, is never shared fully with the reader. Because each of these early works is unsatisfactory in its resolution, the reader is left with a strong impression that Holdstock is feeling his way towards a point which is, as yet, not quite clear even

to himself. In reading the series, the reader's sensation is one of moving, with the author and with each successive book, towards greater clarity. It is only in the light of his later work that the writer's purpose becomes fully intelligible. While he does appear, in these early novels, to be working towards the suggestion that it is not only the interior journey which is necessary for self-revelation, but also that it is in the innermost recesses of the mind that life may be lived most vividly, his intentions seem somewhat opaque and confused in argument.

It is in a later series of works that the writer's vision becomes more sharply focussed and able, therefore, to convey his purposes more successfully. Here Holdstock abandons futuristic settings and concentrates his conception of what Wordsworth termed the 'eternal mind'[2] into a smaller, more restricted geographical area, a space which becomes a potent metaphor for the human psyche itself. This space is a small piece of contemporary England's Kentish countryside, an unspoiled wooded area which he calls Ryhope Wood. This primordial stand of trees becomes the setting of his 'Mythago Wood' cycle, and it is in these writings that his ideas are explored with growing assurance and with ever more finely-tuned focus.

Mythago Wood (first published in 1984) is the first of the series. Here it is that he begins his most mature attempt to probe the genesis of the chthonian images that appear in his earlier works. Lavondyss: Journey to an Unknown Region (1990) and The Hollowing (1994) continue this thematic development, as does the novella The Bone Forest (1992), and it is noticeable that both his writing skills and the prodigious flow of imagery show

---

[2] 'Intimations of Immortality', l. 113.

increasing grace and fluency. Here his interest is in what may cause the birth of animistic beliefs: he struggles to put into metaphoric language the coming-to-life of some of those primordial and powerfully pagan images which are ubiquitous in the myths and legends of rustic England.

Within this cycle of books Holdstock attempts to give concrete and artistic expression to Jung's contention that archetypal memory is a primary and powerful component of the human psyche.[3] He seems also to have accepted Jung's belief that memory falls into two quite distinct categories. Jung maintains that some archetypal images are 'ontogenic'. As such, they are personal to the particular mind that creates them, for they grow from the individual experiences and histories of men and women. But, if Jung is correct, archetypal images may be typified also as 'phylogenic', that is to say, not simply personal but racial, inscribed indelibly on the collective memory of the human species.

> Just as the body has an anatomical pre-history of millions of years, so also does the psychic system. And just as the human body today represents in each of its parts the result of this evolution, and everywhere shows traces of its earlier stages - so the same may be said of the psyche.
>
> (Jung, 1993:381)

Thus Holdstock attempts to conjure up images from some remote and unmeasurable past, images which are, he suggests, stored in some mysterious way in the cortex of the human brain. In The Bone Forest and Mythago Wood his intuition leads him to formulate a bizarre and yet utterly convincing creation. In both books there is a central and dominating image, the Urscumug, a terrifying figure that ranges the pages of these novels. An

---

[3] Indeed, during a telephone interview in January 1997, Robert Holdstock mentioned that he had found Jung's Man and his Symbols (1978) profoundly influential in the 1970s.

amalgam of animal and human attributes, the Urscumug is an attempt to embody what might have appeared to the primitive mind as a primal father figure - creator, protector, judge and executioner all in one.[4] The Urscumug is a sort of shadowy precursor of the avenging and punitive Yahwe, the deity of the Book of Genesis. It is a nightmare emanation of the intellect which prefigures the later, more sophisticated, cosmic Father of the Old Testament. In an interview (January 1997), Holdstock said that he wished to try to create a primal father that was analogous to the concept of the primal mother as both creatrix and detroyer. In the violent and monstrous Urscumug - a genuinely chthonian figure - he has personified this image with a great deal of vigour and success. While this primordial image is never actually encountered in <u>The Bone Forest</u> (despite the obsessive searching of the protagonist), in <u>Mythago Wood</u> it becomes quite tangible. A looming and powerful incarnation stinking of decayed leaf matter, urine, and other animal odours, the Urscumug materialises as a pursuing and vengeful force, both destroyer and saviour. Its archaic nature suggests also the animal potentiality within the heart of man, something beyond human consciousness, for it is simultaneously suprahuman and subhuman. And, in reinforcement of the primordial overtones conveyed by the Urscumug, the story is one of passionate conflict between two brothers, as well as between sons and father - an archetypal theme which is, perhaps, as old as mankind itself. Christian Huxley, one of the brothers, describes the awe-ful figure to his younger brother:

> Part boar, part man, elements of other beasts from the wildwood. It walks upright, but can run like the wind. It paints its face white in the semblance of a human face. Whatever age it lived in, one thing's for sure, it

---

[4] The prefix "Ur' refers, obviously, to the 'original' and 'primitive' sources of the image, while 'scumug' is an imaginative creation drawn from the author's knowledge of Celtic and Inuit languages, from which he drew sounds, experimenting with them and blending them until he found a word that pleased him (Holdstock, 1997:pers. comm.).

lived a long time before man as *we* understand 'man' existed; this thing comes from a time when man and nature were so close that they were indistinguishable.

(Mythago Wood, 1995:65)

G. S. Kirk, author of <u>Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures</u>, is ambivalent regarding Jung's theory of archetypal images. Yet he is compelled to admit that Jung was 'a master of intuition' (1978:277) . It is certainly true that many brilliant scientific advances have come about by imaginative and intuitive leaps into the unknown.[5] And Robert Holdstock, working within the boundaries of the Jungian hypothesis, appears - through his own intuitive and artistic vision - to have found an entirely individual way to suggest the genesis of symbolic thought in the primordial mind. In the process, he achieves an interesting synthesis of the imaginative and the dramatic in his evocation of both phylogenic and ontogenic memory, and he is often remarkably successful at suggesting not only the archaic and enigmatic nature of the archetypal image, but also the state of mind which might engender its birth.

There have been others besides Jung - philosophers, anthropologists, ethologogists, ethnologists and theologians - who have ventured theories about the origins of mythic and symbolic thought processes. Émile Durkheim, Bronislaw Malinowski and James Frazer were simply a few of the anthropologists much interested in the genesis of myth. Frazer, writing in the first quarter of this century, regarded magical rites as being the prologue to religion. For him, mythic thought and ritual was a primitive phase of human development that would, inevitably, be superseded by science. Influenced by Malinowski, an entire

---

[5] The most frequently-cited connection between intuition and scientific discovery is probably that of 19th century chemist, Friedrich August Kekulé von Stradonitz, whose discovery of the ring structure of the benzene molecule he ascribed to an inspirational dream he had, of a serpent biting its own tail. Interestingly, this image is also of archetypal and symbolic significance.

school of anthropological thought began to study myth in relation to the functions and needs that it fulfils within individual societies. This movement culminated eventually in the structuralist theories of Lévi-Strauss, who analysed myth not as a response to the numinous or the ineffable, but as a product of the need to solve problems of communication and social organisation. Other students of myth, such as C. Kerenyi, Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell, have followed the Jungian lead; they regard mythic symbolism as the expression of universal values and relevances, rather than purely functional structures specific to the needs of any one community. In the final analysis, as G. S. Kirk has pointed out, all theories are equally speculative, for it would seem that no single theory can be ever finally proved nor disproved.

> How a myth originates in a non-literate culture can never be determined....
> One must remain aware…of the limitations of *a priori* arguments in a
> field about which so little is known, and of the restricted value of personal
> intuitions on the part of the literate, demythologized and Aristotelianized
> academics.
>
> (Kirk, 1978:281)

However, there does seem to be some degree of consensual thinking about certain aspects of the mythic thought process. Jung is not alone in drawing parallels between myth and dream imagery. Most commentators (Freud, Eliade and Kerenyi amongst them) have agreed that myths seem to be as perplexing as dreams in the manner in which they may deny rational analysis while simultaneously appearing to carry enormous significance. Because of this, many myth commentators feel that myth formation precedes rational thought processes. For much the same reason, myth seems to share a great deal with religious thought, for religion also frequently resists intellectual argument and finally comes to rest on 'faith'. Thus, many also agree that myth and religion seem related in that

they 'invoke a passionate response' (Kirk, 1978:30). Ernst Cassirer has suggested that

mythic symbolism comes from the intense visceral apprehension of the natural world that

surrounds man, and from all the concomitant emotions aroused thereby, such as hope,

fear, hate and love (in Kirk:265). There seems to be general agreement - whatever the

current opinion is about the foundation of the mythic process - that the human mind has a

natural propensity to form symbols, to create patterns which seek to confer meaning on a

confusing, arbitrary and often brutal natural world. In other words, myth may be seen as

imbuing human existence with a sense of relevance. In Jung's terminology, it could be

said that mankind has always had a potent sense of the 'numinous', of the inscrutability of

creation and of the cosmos, and of what Catholic liturgy would define as the 'mysterium

tremendens'. Even the sceptical Kirk (1978:47) admits that '...man has a tendency to

reduce the manifold world of his experience to an orderly system whose operation he can

to some extent predict.'

Robert Ellwood, in <u>The History and Future of Faith: Religion Past, Present and to Come</u>

(1988), also seems to feel that 'metaphor-making referents' are probably inherent in the

psyche, inherited and passed along via genetic structures that may well be present even in

instinctual animal behaviour. In humans, with their developed language and thought

processes, these become more elaborate and overt, taking form in consciously exercised

patterns of behaviour, such as ritual and story-telling. He calls the primitive capacity for

symbolic thought - which he regards as essential for the evolution of spiritual thinking -

'proto-language' and suggests, much like Jung, that it is 'embedded' in the genetic inheri-

tance of the human race.

        ...the capacity for proto-language and proto-religious thought [is] *already*

embedded in the human psyche, having been carried over from the animal kingdom. Before the human dawn, our animal ancestors already bore a complete set of 'religious' gestures.... One thinks of the ritualized activity by which certain species define territory and inaugurate mating, or the responses - often highly symbolic - by which animals deal with danger, rivalry, and the presence of food and water.

(Ellwood, 1988:27)

Indeed, there is a body of evidence from researchers in the field of animal behaviour that does seem to bear out this theory. Wolfgang Köhler, writing as early as 1916, details how he observed wild chimps executing what he was compelled to regard as a sort of primitive dance. Clumsy as the movements were, they struck him as unusual because they appeared to fall into a regular and almost ritual pattern. The chimps appeared to 'keep time' with each other in an orderly manner, while moving repetitively around a central point (in Young, 1991:116).

In further corroboration of the existence of 'proto' thought is an incident documented by primatologist Jane Goodall, who is perhaps the contemporary world's most famous observer of primate behaviour. Goodall has spent most of her life studying wild chimpanzees - man's closest relative in the animal kingdom. Amongst such deeply disturbing discoveries as the fact that chimpanzees are occasional carnivores, cannibals and warmongers, and the surprising discovery that they also demonstrate primitive tool-making abilities, she records (1990:202) how a party of chimps, coming unexpectedly upon a waterfall, appeared to experience an intense emotional reaction to this manifestation of nature's power. Hair erect, they began to perform spontaneous and exuberant displays, swinging above the water, charging alonside the river and hurling rocks about in a transport of extrovert behaviour. Dr Goodall speculates (tentatively) that this performance may have

been a very primitive expression of awe. She surmises that such emotions may have been experienced by man's early ancestors and that such 'proto-religious' feelings may well have led early man to religion.

> For ten minutes the three performed their wild displays.... Were the chimpanzees expressing feelings of awe such as those which, in early man, surely gave rise to primitive religions, worship of the elements?
>
> (Goodall, 1990:202)

Ellwood stresses that such proto-religious thought is not religion in any sense of the word as we know it. Religious language, proper, he points out, is relatively new to humankind. Initially, such symbolic thought processes would have been simply an attempt to grasp the meaning of the outer world, to appropriate or manipulate it in order to alleviate its terror and mystery. Furthermore, it is quite possible that the perception of the numinous and the cosmic would have pervaded every aspect of primitive society. Proto-religious thought would not have been compartmentalised but would have suffused all of life. It would have been simply a part of daily experience 'connecting humankind to the cosmic environment' (Ellwood, 1988:30) .

Whether or not Robert Holdstock is aware of such observations and theorising is uncertain. But in his novel The Hollowing (1994) he creates an episode that suggests that he has, through a purely intuitive process, hypothesised a state of mind which approximates just such primordial interaction with the natural world. His protagonist, Richard Bradley, enters a mode of existence that suggests an instinctive acting out of ritualised proto-religious action and thought. His lengthy sojourn in the mysterious spaces of Ryhope finally affects him strangely: he becomes what Holdstock calls 'bosky', absorbed into the

seasonal life of the wildwood, into the cycle of birth and rebirth with which all creatures and vegetation within the wild places must comply - and from which modern man has sundered himself, denying this as an imperative which shapes his existence.

> As scientific understanding has grown, so our world has become dehumanised. Man feels himself isolated in the cosmos, because he is no longer involved in nature and has lost his emotional 'unconscious identity' with natural phenomena. They have slowly lost their symbolic implications. Thunder is no longer the voice of an angry god, nor is lightning his avenging missile. No river contains a spirit, no tree is the life principle of man, no snake the embodiment of wisdom, no mountain cave the home of a great demon. No voices now speak to man…nor does he speak to them believing that they can hear. His contact with nature has gone….
>
> (Jung, 1978b:85)

In a long episode that is striking for its creativity, its imaginative fervour, its erotic connotations and its impulsive forward movement, the writer describes how Richard Bradley's rationality is swept away, the conscious aspects of his mind subsumed into the purely instinctual and conative. His intellect eclipsed, Richard plunges into an instinctive interaction with the rhythms of the woods, surrendering himself to the thrall of the wild places and seeking his love, Helen Silverlock.

> …he moved at ease through the wildwood, through the dappled light, gathering the scents of rose and wood anemone, bud and sap, gathering all of these to the miasma that flowed with him. The scent-trail that he followed was strong, and he knew the woman was close. When the land dropped towards a moist hollow, filled with thorn and hazel thickets, he knew he had found her.
>
> (The Hollowing, 1994:289)

Later, after days of unsuccessful courtship, Richard is compelled by some strange, atavis-

tic memory to adorn himself in yet more primitive garb, becoming absorbed into the

instinctive life of pure sensation and irresistible biological imperative as he readies himself

for an elaborate mating display.

> ...he went to scavenge for leaves and feathers, to make himself the ritual
> garments of display, a primal urge impelling him to decorate himself.
>
> All day he constructed his display. He used thin splinters of tough grass
> to sew leaves of birch down each of his arms, and of oak across his chest,
> and of shining beech, emerald green, down the front of his legs. He was
> careful to pierce only the surface skin and not draw blood...
>
> He selected long heron feathers for his chin, working them through the
> long, thick hairs of his dark beard so that they hung like a white fringe.
> Black crow feathers formed a fringe across the base of his belly. He used
> chalk and light clay on the exposed skin of his body, then dabbed the pur-
> ple and red juices of sloe and belladonna to make eyes on the clay-white.
>
> (The Hollowing:192 - 193)

Richard Bradley and Helen Silverlock now seem, like two exotic New Guinean bower

birds, to become embodiments of some ancient and primal fertility rite, powerfully ani-

mated by the desire to display, to mate and to procreate. Holdstock successfully conveys

the strangely inhuman and yet numinous power of this urge, its *possessing* quality. He

makes of this whole scene something quite extraordinary, in which the reader senses the

dissolution of rationality and conscious volition. Surprisingly, neither character becomes

dehumanised, but seems simply to personify some primal aspect of the life process. Rather

than becoming ridiculous, the two personalities involved in the strange encounter are

moving in their inability to resist the chthonic power and manifestation of the life force.

The episode recalls Wordsworth's words from the first section of 'The Prelude'

(1969:426, ll. 391 - 393), in which he speaks of how he was overcome by 'a dim and undetermined sense / of unknown modes of being' (ll. 391 - 393). Here Holdstock has managed to suggest, to the reader, such a sensation very succesfully.

It is in his Ryhope Wood series of books that Holdstock's artistic vision becomes most fully integrated with his story-telling abilities. In <u>Lavondyss: Journey to an Unknown Region</u> his protagonist is the child, Tallis Keaton. As has been previously noted, children are often symbols of potentiality and possibility, their unformed minds and their evolving thought patterns signalling the movement forward towards greater emotional and intellectual awareness. Tallis Keaton becomes a potent embodiment of the capacity to experience 'proto-thought'. She is endowed by her creator with an unusually intense apprehension of the world that surrounds her, for she senses the mystery and power of the cosmos which envelops humankind. She has a very vivid and distinct sense of 'place'. For Tallis, streams, fields, rocks and trees are all permeated with spirit, with tangible presence to which she reacts with childlike simplicity. In her need to appropriate the world for herself, to make it her natural habitat, she finds that she has to name each part of it. Until she can 'find' the right and true name for each part of the countryside and woods that surround her, she feels that she has no right to familiarity with these places. Thus, she searches for names which evoke - or perhaps invoke - the spirit of place. A mighty oak becomes Strong against the Storm, a field becomes Sad Song Meadow. She creates for herself a set of taboos and rituals that are strongly reminiscent of the sort of apotropaic games that children play when, for instance, they feel compelled to avoid the cracks in flagstones.

> The name came to her as suddenly as the dread she had earlier felt. It was
> Morndun Ridge. The name thrilled her; it had a dark sound to it, a storm-
> wind sound. With the name came a fleeting sequence of other images: the

> sound of wind gusting through hides, stretched on wooden frames; the creak of a heavy cart; the swirl of smoke from a high fire; the smell of fresh earth being thrown up from a long trench; a figure, tall and dark, standing, dwarfed by a tree whose branches had been cut from the trunk.
>
> Morndun. It sounded like *Mourendoon.* It was an old place, and an old name, and a dark memory.
>
> Tallis rose to her feet again and began to step forward, out on to the stepping stones. But the water seemed to mock her and she drew back. She knew at once what was the cause of her concern. Although she knew the secret name of Barrow Hill, she hadn't yet named the stream. And she couldn't cross the stream without naming it or she would be trapped.
>
> (Lavondyss, 1990:47)

Tallis's naming games give her a pathway into a strangely convoluted labyrinth, the interminably branching world contained by Ryhope Wood. For it is in this cycle of books that Robert Holdstock first suggests that within the shadowy and primordial confines of Ryhope Wood is a larger space in which his protagonists may explore their psyches and find a mysterious form of happiness. Here, there is some kinship with the work of J. G. Ballard. Ballard's disaffected protagonists, too, withdraw into the alien environment, finding satisfaction in adapting to - and perhaps dying in - strange worlds. And, in the process, Ballard's dystopic landscapes also become metaphors for states of mind. But in these cases, the mind landscapes are an adaptation to a new and mutating external reality. The initial stimulus for this psychic mutation comes from without, from the changing world that gradually and irresistibly encroaches on the protagonist. In the case of Holdstock's writing, however, the landscape through which his characters must adventure is internal, for it is generated from within the psyche itself. This highly individual approach is consistently present and constantly evolving in his Mythago Wood cycle of novels.

Like J. G. Ballard's alienated protagonists, those of Holdstock often appear to lead emotionally scanty lives. His adult characters seem remote from their wives, and even from the children that they love. Their relationships appear unsatisfactory and they seem to be imbued with an all-pervading sense of isolation from the social life which surrounds them. For each of them, Ryhope Wood, the 'wild wood', creates a vortex which ensnares them and forces them to begin to interact once again with their own inner beings, living a constant stream of turbulent, violent and sensuous adventures. However, unlike Ballard's protagonists - who usually face a newly evolving future - Holdstock suggests that his are entering an archaic and eternal world, a zone which metaphorises the primordial energy of the psyche, the enduring unconscious mind of all humanity. The landscape to which they finally withdraw is one that is older than humanity itself and is charged with primeval energies.

Holdstock must, of necessity, use many of the archetypal symbols and images that have been put to such good use by Le Guin, Aldiss, Crowley and others, and which have been discussed in earlier chapters. He cannot fail to do so. They are the stock-in-trade of the novelist who grapples with the primordial mind, attempting to penetrate those baffling, even terrifying, regions of the psyche. However, he has shown remarkable artistic intuition and creativity in finding even more enigmatic symbolic images, some of which are subtly menacing and which seem to speak to the reader from the darkest recesses of the unconscious mind. Intrinsic to his particular vision is Holdstock's sense of place, the awareness of which helps to augment the individual qualities of his writing. His sensibilty seems to be particularly rural and 'English': his evocation of the primeval wood, as well as the uses to which he puts his landscape, is singular.

Ryhope Wood, outwardly only a small remnant of the primordial forest which once covered much of England's surface, becomes - once entered - an unrestricted area which teems with exuberant and violent life. The Wild Wood and the Forest have always been archetypal images of great power, for they are always 'alien places that baffle and confuse' (Lowry, 1982:77).

> Since ancient times the near-impenetrable forest in which we get lost has
> symbolised the dark, hidden, near-impenetrable world of our unconscious.
>
> (Bettelheim, 1991:94)

These are places in which one may meet and confront one's deepest fears, fears as ancient as the forest itself. And since the forest is a place of darkness and labyrinthine ways, it is a place in which one may easily become lost - a place which symbolises the chaos and disorder of the primordial, unconscious mind. In Mythago Wood, Christian Huxley, who has followed his father into Ryhope Wood, talks of the wood as the 'heartwoods' (189), clearly indicating its metaphoric significance.

These heartwoods are a place of mystery and terror, a tangle of signs and portents that are not easy to decipher. Holdstock is adept at suggesting the power of the greenwood, the countless millennia of history buried beneath the accumulated soil and leaf litter of England, the brutality and beauty of past ages, as well as the significance of primitive rite and custom. The wildwood, in his hands, becomes an exceptionally apt metaphorical setting for the journey inwards, the movement towards the psychic core.

Frazer points out that what remains of the forests of Europe are pitiful remnants of the vast wooded areas that once existed.

> For at the dawn of history Europe was covered with immense primaeval forests, in which the scattered clearings must have appeared like islets in an ocean of green. Down to the first century before our era the Hyrcynian forest stretched eastwards from the Rhine for a distance at once vast and unknown; Germans whom Caesar questioned had travelled for two months through it without reaching the end.... In our own country the wealds of Kent, Surrey and Sussex are remains of the great forest of Anderida, which once clothed the whole of the south-eastern portion of the island.... In the reign of Henry II the citizens of London still hunted the wild bull and the boar in the woods of Hampstead. Even under the later Plantagenets the royal forests were sixty-eight in number. In the forest of Arden it was said that down to modern times a squirrel might leap from tree to tree for nearly the whole length of Warwickshire.
>
> (Frazer, 1996:131-132)

It is not surprising, therefore, that the forest depths have become potent places of peril and possibility, or that they are so ubiquitous an image in folk and fairy tale through the ages. The forest must have, for countless ages, been a looming and threatening place of danger to the settlements which struggled to maintain themselves with a modicum of safety and peace; a place haunted by wolves, boars and social outcasts, all of which were unacceptable to civilized life. It was only much later, when the forests had been destroyed, when the boundaries of the wild places had been pushed back into smaller and more manageable areas that did not threaten human life, that more romantic and nostalgic attitudes towards the wild places became common currency. Kenneth Clarke (1966:18), in his study of the evolution of landscape as it is portrayed in art, reminds us that

> Mr Aldous Huxley once observed that if Wordsworth had been familiar with tropical forests he would have taken a less favourable view of his Goddess. There is...something in the character of great forests which is foreign, appalling, and utterly inimicable to intruding life.

Thus it is that in these dark, convoluted and 'appalling' places Hansel and Gretel and Little Red Riding Hood face dangers that test to the utmost their fortitude, their ingenuity and their moral capabilities, and from which they must struggle to emerge sound of life and limb. And it is in the tenebrious spaces of Ryhope Wood that Holdstock's protagonists, too, are tested, for it is within the forest that humans are cut off from all that is familiar; home and hearth and all the ramifications of social life and its protections. Significantly, his protagonists are often children, for children are aware and alert in ways that adults have forgotten. One of the ways to travel safely through the convolutions and dangers of the mindforest and to emerge safely on the other side, is to keep the child alive within the adult sensibility. Thus, in Lavondyss, Wynne-Jones says to the now grown-up Tallis, '...don't forget. Let the child ride *with* you' (410).

The many adventures and characters of the Mythago Wood cycle are all interconnected in one epic adventure that consumes many lives and decades, and which is, in fact, never quite completed. In brief, however, the journey into the Wild Wood begins as two researchers, Huxley and Wynne-Jones, discover that within Ryhope Wood are mysterious areas of energy. These areas are 'awakened', as it were, by activity in the most primitive parts of the brainstem, a cerebral activity which induces a process that they call 'mythogenesis'. Huxley's ancient and partly ruined journal, found by the child Tallis many years later, in Lavondyss, attempts to explain.

> [Wynne-Jones] has come to believe that the mythogenetic effect works not only to create the untouchable, mysterious figure of lore and legend, the hero figure, it also creates the forbidden *places* of the mythic past...But WJ has glimpsed these realms he calls *geistzones*, archetypal landscapes generated by the primordial energies of the inherited unconscious, lost in

the lower brain.

> The *geistzone* is a logical archetype, logically generated by the mind. It can be both the desired realm, or the most feared realm: the beginning place, or the final place; the place of life before birth, or life after death; the place of no hardship, or the place where life is tested and transition from one state of being to another accomplished. Such a realm would appear to exist in the heartwoods.

> (<u>Lavondyss</u>, 1990:202 - 203)

The 'mythagos' of animals, birds, trees and people, and all the other grotesque and inexplicable creatures which Huxley and Wynne-Jones encounter, are embodiments which spring from the contents of their own minds. They erupt from the deepest, most primordial levels, from those areas which they themselves cannot bring under conscious control. As the two researchers venture further and further into Ryhope Wood, they discover and enter areas that seem to exist in some shadowy realm that resists geographic mapping. Some of these areas generate mythagos of great age and primitivity, figures of fearful and impenetrable meanings. The constant encounters within the mind forest, some fleeting, some more prolonged, suggest the unchecked stream of thoughts that goes on at various levels of consciousness. Of these, some are subliminal - the protagonist glimpses them only fleetingly with his or her peripheral vision. Others are evanescent or concrete to varying degrees. This maelstrom of energy also seems symbolic. It suggests the life force, constantly present, yet also strengthening or fading, like the flickering of a fire. Some of the mythagos are frighteningly violent, others are more benign. They become emblematic of the content of the subconscious mind, which is filled with a chaos of whirling energies, some darker and more primitive than others. Ryhope Wood becomes, finally, one great metaphor for mind.

Holdstock skilfully evokes the mystery, horror and enigmatic significances of these encounters. In <u>The Bone Forest</u>, he creates, for instance, a riveting and frightening incident in Ryhope Wood. Huxley, lost and fearful, experiences a pivotal and emblematic moment in time, the moment when man and horse encounter each other in some primeval meeting of terrified recognition.

Huxley sees, running through the forest, four immense horses which scream in fear, 'each impaled on its back with what he assumed quickly were the signs of *taming*' (<u>The Bone Forest</u>, 1992:33). These emblematic horses, tormented by flaming torches, the sharpened stems of wheat and corn, and the shafts of arrows thrust painfully into their hides, stream past Huxley. Behind follow their 'tormentors'. Huxley's journal describes the even more alarming sequel to this enigmatic event.

> Toward dusk, the horses were sent into the world again, running, slapped to encourage them, back along the broken tracks.... On their backs, tied firmly to cradles of wood, the horrific shapes of their pale riders watched the gloom, dulled eyes seeing darker worlds than even this darkening forest. The first to depart was a chalk-white corpse, grotesquely garrotted. Then, a man, still living, swathed in thorns, screaming. After that, a ragged creature, stinking of blood and acid smoke from the part-burned but newly-skinned pelts that were wrapped around him.
>
> Finally came a figure decked and dressed in rush and reed, so that only his arms were visible, extended on the crucifix-like frame that was tied to the giant horse. He was on fire; the blaze taking swiftly. Flame streamed into the night, shedding light and heat in eerie streamers as the great stallion galloped in panic towards me.
>
> ...

> I am still shocked by the nature of the sacrifices and the awareness that the murdered men seemed *willing* participants in this early form of acknowledgement of the *power of the horse*.
>
> Was I witnessing one of the first true *intuitions* of early humankind? That the beast could be both friend and foe to a tribe that increasingly looked for control over nature itself?
>
> <div align="right">(The Bone Forest, 1992:36 - 37)</div>

The horse is, of course, a potent and emblematic figure in both art and literature, testifying to the hold that this particular creature has over the imagination of the human race. The combination of its beauty and strength must have always exerted an irresistible emotional and aesthetic influence on the minds of men. Its swiftness, power and energy would have, to the primitive mind, made it seem inextricably related to the mysterious forces which moved the cosmos, the appearance of sun, moon and stars and the cycle of the seasons. To harness such energy, whether for peaceful or warlike purposes, must have seemed infinitely desirable. There is enough evidence in European mythologies alone to testify to the awe with which the creature was regarded. Winged horses drew Apollo's fiery chariot daily across the heavens. The horse was sacred to Poseidon, god of the sea, and foam-tipped waves are spoken of as 'sea-horses' to this day. Pegasus, the winged horse, a symbol of the power of the unfettered imagination, is enshrined amongst the constellations. The ancient Celts venerated the horse as a sacred beast capable of transporting people to otherworldly places, and Nordic mythology also accords the horse an important role. Alexander the Great was admired for the manner in which, although a mere boy, he 'tamed' the great war horse Bucephalas, and it was widely believed that there was something supernatural in the bond he had with this animal. A more modern example of the manner in which the horse symbolises the streaming, untamed sweep of the subconscious mind and of the libido is graphically portrayed in Henry Fuseli's painting, 'The Night-

mare', in which the supine figure of a dreaming woman is oppressed by the terrifying apparition of a glaring horse's head.

Holdstock, in describing the encounter of Huxley with the horses, has attempted - and not without success - to create a vision that evokes for the reader all these associations, and which arouses something of the awe and wonder that must have afflicted primitive man in his fearful interactions with his mysterious and untamed world. Jung (1991f:129) talks of the way in which 'unconscious material streams, as though from opened side-sluices, into the field of consciousness', and certainly the power with which these huge and potent beasts rush past Huxley suggests all these connotations quite overwhelmingly. They suggest something of the way in which emotion, sensation and subliminal mental activity may be released from the subconscious mind to sweep with irresistible force through the imagination. But the scene also attempts to capture something of what the writer imag-ines might have been man's brutal efforts to gain power over his environment, and over the potent and enigmatic creatures that shared his forests and plains. Holdstock has attempted to take the reader deep within the mythic imagination, into what Jung calls the 'dark hinterland of the psyche' (1991f:128). The effect is extraordinarily minatory and convincing.[6]

Several times, as Holdstock delineates such chthonian figures and encounters, there is the sense, for the reader, of entering a genuinely ancient and elemental mindstate, for the mystery and terror of things primordial is powerfully invoked. In both Lavondyss and The

---

[6] The vigour of Holdstock's vision in this regard is even more striking when one compares it to the pallid evocation of the Neanderthal mind in, for instance, a novel like Jean M. Auel's The Clan of the Cave Bear (1981) - a novel which, nevertheless, achieved great popular success. William Golding's deeply moving The Inheritors (1955), which has aroused little interest, is far superior in this regard.

Hollowing, Holdstock creates an extraordinary image that seems to call to what is most atavistic and archaic in the human psyche. In Lavondyss (374 - 375), Tallis Keeton, irretrievably lost in the vastness of Ryhope Wood, is the first to encounter the enigmatic mythago of the Daurog.

> ...it took a quick, awkward step forward, sinewy body cracking like old wood underfoot.... It had stepped into a strand of light which played off the darkening face but caught the remnants of the leafy green which swathed the skull, the shoulders and the upper torso.
>
> Its fingers were long, many-jointed: twiglike. What Tallis had taken for a forked beard she could see, now, were curved tusks of wood growing from each side of the round, wet mouth. The tusks branched, one limb reaching up to the leafy mass on the head, the other reaching down, becoming tendrillar, tendils curling round the torso and the arms, then down the spindly legs, supplying lobate, oak-leaves as a covering for the scored, scoured bark-like flesh below. The creature's member swayed as it moved, a thin thorned length of tendril that flexed like a worm between the rustling thighs.
>
> ...Flat nostrils opened in the bark of its face. It was growing rotten, this thing, this Daurog, and was shedding summer's growth.... The Duarog didn't appear to blink, and streams of sap ran from the edges of its eyes. When it opened its mouth a slow drip of slime curled from the wet void; the mouth-tusks glistened.
>
> (Lavondyss, 1990:374 - 375)

Although it is the dark places of Tallis's own imagination which have created this strange figure, Holdstock suggests that it is also a racial memory, present in the archaic core of the human mind. For this mythago is, of course, a primitive embodiment of the Green Man - a pagan image which is prevalent all over Europe. It appears, paradoxically, with great fre-

quency in medieval church decoration of all types, from the carvings on stone portals, pediments and corbels to those on wooden pews. Like the vulpine figure in the crypt below Canterbury Cathedral (see p. 214 of this study), these foliate and sinister figures suggest that, despite the weight and authority of the church, there was still a need to propitiate, until comparatively recently, ancient and mysteriously potent forces of nature. Indeed, as Ellwood points out, recent research has proven the truth of this supposition.

> Meticulous research in social history is now beginning to paint a picture
> of popular religion up to the eve of the Reformation rather different from
> the conventional vision of a sea of Catholic piety. We perceive a popula-
> tion only lightly Christianised, in which various disorganised but potent
> pagan carry-overs were at least as trusted as the Church....
>
> (Ellwood, 1988:3)

Here, from William Anderson's <u>The Green Man: The Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth</u> (1990), are two descriptions of gothic stone-carved Green Men, the first in Bamberg, Germany, the second in a Wiltshire parish chapel. Each of these could have been a progenitor of Holdstock's visionary Daurog.[7]

> His leaf mask is formed of one acanthus frond, swelling out from the
> brows.... The lobes of the frond make a beard, moustaches, cheekbones,
> forehead and hair. The lips and mouth, the nose and nostrils, the eyes
> with their heavy folds and deep-drilled pupils...are finely modelled, rising
> naturally out of the leaf forms to create a face that is...powerful, accus-
> tomed, to rule, all-knowing and all-seeing. His command of everything
> that goes on in his domain is reinforced by the manner in which the holes
> formed by the overlapping of the leaf lobes seem to make a series of eyes

---

[7] In a short story called 'Thorn' (1992), in which he suggests the ancient and fecundating power of these images, Holdstock tells of a stonemason who is carving a green man image in the gallery of a village church and who feels the green man's 'cold, old breath' (102) on his fingers.

through which he observes the world.

I know of no sculpture which is at once so frightening and so beautiful.

(119)

Out of his mouth pour the twisting twigs of hawthorn rising in a swirling rhythm of undulating leaves between which hang bunches of haws. Four birds perching on the outsize leaves peck at the haws. The vigour of the foliage indicates spring: the presence of the berries indicates autumn. As for his face, it is of a power to make you draw back and compose your-self....

(120)

Surprisingly, the impulse which led to the generation of images such as the Green Man is still alive today, although its vitality is depleted. Frazer's <u>The Golden Bough</u> testifies to its continuance. This monumental work of scholarship is essentially a compilation of myths and rituals of fertility, especially those connected with the seasonal decay and regeneration of vegetation. Although Frazer's influence waned sharply during the period when anthropology became more of a science, his work still carries important literary resonances and is well worth acquaintance. His thesis was that all myth, ritual and magic that is associated with vegetal growth stem from the long-forgotten but widely practised sacrifice of the 'king of the wood'. That his work made questionable assumptions, drew doubtful conclusions and was patronising in its attitude to the 'savage' mind, is undeni-able. Nevertheless, he delineated - somewhat like Freud (whom he abominated) - a vast and hitherto hidden area of human behaviour. His catalogue of the symbolism of Euro-pean rustic customs stresses the links between human sexuality and agricultural ritual and bears witness to the prevalence - even currently - of many of these rituals, albeit in much diluted form. Just as the pagan connections behind Christmas trees and Easter eggs have been largely lost, so today most people are unaware of, and would probably be repelled

by, the brutal associations of what now seem to be merely quaint and picturesque customs such as May Day pageantry and Morris dancing, both of which are still enacted on village greens and in town squares.

> ...if these old spells and enchantments for the growth of leaves and blos-
> soms, of grass and flowers and fruit, have lingered down to our own time
> in the shape of pastoral plays and popular merry-makings, is it not rea-
> sonable to suppose that they survived in less attenuated forms some two
> thousand years ago among the civilised peoples of antiquity? Or to put it
> otherwise, is it not likely that in certain festivals of the ancients, we may
> be able to detect the equivalents of our May Day, Whitsuntide and Mid-
> summer celebrations, with this difference, that in these days the ceremo-
> nies had not yet dwindled into mere shows and pageants, but were still re-
> ligious or magical rites...?

(Frazer, 1996:168)

Robert Holdstock, in much of his work, and particularly in his Mythago cycle, seems to be attempting to reach back in time to those uncharted moments in human history when the human mind would have been inclined to invest natural objects with vigorous supernatural qualities. As Frazer testifies (1996:191 - 194), trees have always been regarded as sources of magical and prophetic power. The great and ancient oak at Dodona, in Epirus (now Albania), for instance, was sacred to Zeus and was a renowned oracle in pre-Christian times. It is considered not unlikely that Alexander the Great, a man of remarkable intel- lect, consulted the oracle here (Renault, 1983:57). In Italy, Frazer tells us, 'every oak was sacred to Jupiter' (1996:192), and that the Druids

> ...esteemed nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and the oak on which it
> grew: they chose groves of oaks for the scene of their solemn service, and
> they performed none of their rites without oak leaves.... Indeed the very

name of Druids is believed by good authorities to mean no more than 'oak men'.

(Frazer, 1996:193)

The oak, with its prodigious longevity, its mighty growth and its great sturdiness, must have impressed even the earliest of humans. Furthermore, the great trees of the primary forests would have seemed to inhabit otherworldly zones which ordinarily were inaccessible to mankind, for the roots of trees penetrate deep below the crust of the earth, while their branches reach upwards into the airy spaces of the sky, giving them commerce with both the dark underworld and the abode of sky spirits. Trees also provide prodigal bounty. They afford shelter to creatures of all shapes and sizes, and food in the form of nuts and fruits. Even more miraculous is the fact that each year they appear to die, shedding their outer garments of leaves and standing with their bare skeletons unprotected against the fierce elements. Yet, each spring they regenerate themselves, becoming reborn and putting forth the tender shoots of new growth. It is not surprising, therefore, that many cultures have created a mythic and sustaining 'tree of life'. Ancient Egyptian and Sumerian sources frequently depict such trees, while the Nordic world tree, Yggdrasil, is perhaps the most famous.

Trees must have become symbolic very early in human history, becoming endowed with supernatural potency and significance. Holdstock's bizarre Daurog are an attempt to recreate the manner in which the primeval mind might have struggled to come to terms with the enigmatic rotation of the seasons and the wondrous forces of fertility, death and regeneration. His oakjacks and hollyjacks, willowjacks and jackhazels are spectacular images. They are remarkably successful attempts to create primitive embodiments of the mythic Jack-in-the-Green figures which personify the spirit of the tree and which still

appear in seasonal rustic pageantry. Frazer's <u>Golden Bough</u> attests to the powerful hold

of the tree spirit over the human imagination, cataloguing an impressive array of country

rituals in which such animistic belief still lingers.   He describes the festival of 'Green

George' in Transylvania and Rumania which has, for instance, as its central figure 'a lad

who is concealed from top to toe in green leaves and blossoms' (153). He mentions the

English Jack-in-the Green, 'who walks encased in a pyramidal framework of wickerwork,

which is covered with holly and ivy...' (155). In all these instances, the mummery seems

to be associated with aspects of vegetal fertility and regeneration. Anderson's description

of a ceremony he witnessed at Hastings, England as recently as May 1990, makes this

aspect of the mummery clear:

> The Jack in the Green has erupted from beside the sea. A tower of leaves
> about eight feet high surmounted by an open crown of flowers with a
> mask face disgorging vegetation, he is escorted by several Green Men.
> Their hair, flesh, clothes and adornments are all green.... The Jack and
> his escort process through the streets of the town followed by sides of
> Morris dancers and clog dancers.... It is a splendid day with the sun
> shining down on the water beneath the castle heights, exactly right for the
> purpose of the ceremony: the release of the spirit of summer.
>
> This happens in the last dance, for which the Jack descends from his
> mound and bobs up and down on the edge of a side of Morris dancers per-
> forming a stick dance.... The dancers drive their wooden swords into the
> leaves of his covering. The crowd cheers and the Jack in the Green falls
> over dead.
>
> (Anderson, 1990:9)

Thus the concept of birth must also admit to the existence of death. If the spirit of the

tree suggests the magical potency of the reproductive cycle, it must also suggest that there

is a corresponding seasonal decay. Often the customs surrounding these festive figures

have unsettling undertones that suggest they were once associated with more sinister practises such as ritual sacrifice. Thus, like much of nature, Holdstock's Daurog mythagos are intensely ambiguous, for their motives are uncertain and unpredictable. They seem to be at once protective and threatening, and are imbued with all the enigmatic and slightly sinister qualities with which Green Man imagery is charged. In their summer aspect of sappy growth they may present the creatures of the forest, both animal and human, with their bounty of fruits, nuts and berries. Their leafy growth may give protection from the elements. But in winter, like the trees which become bare and comfortless, the Daurog are transformed into more feral and threatening manifestations, which Holdstock calls Scarag. In The Hollowing, the boy Alex is intensely aware of the dual nature of these mythagos. 'Try not to hurt them. When spring comes, they'll be our friends' (357). And indeed, for this lost child, the Scarag finally provide what is, in essence, a form of rebirth, giving him back full consciousness and memory. Wynne-Jones, whom Tallis has encountered deep within the heartwoods, attempts to explain the genesis of these strange images:

> They were...probably engendered by the association with the first post-Ice Age forest of the Mesolithic period ten thousand years or so before the birth of Christ. By Bronze Age times the 'green man' - Green Jack, or Hooded Robin, the medieval 'wodehouse' - had become a solitary forest figure, partially deified, reflected in and mingled with such elemental forms as Pan, and Dionysus, and vaguely remembered Dryads. But to the Mesolithic hunter-nomads they formed a forest kingdom, a race of forest creatures, saviours, oracles, and tormentors all at the same time; they arose in the mythogenic unconscious both to explain nature's hostility to the people's actions, and to express the hope of survival against the unknown.
>
> (Lavondyss:379)

It is this aspect of Holdstock's work which seems to be most remarkable, for he has created a unique synthesis of intellect and emotion, achieving something of what Jung described as the 'dynamic' qualities inherent in the true archetype. The manner in which his protagonists begin to interact with the emanations of their own minds is suggested with a great deal of immediacy and conviction. Jung (1978b:69) has said that '…in former times men did not reflect upon their symbols; they lived them…', and Robert Holdstock conveys this vigorous 'living out' of the dream, managing also to suggest both the unique-ness and the generality of the images generated by the minds of his protagonists. The mythagos have - for the most part - an impressively vital quality, and the writer's strong emotional commitment to his vision contributes to the success of his writing.

However, in devoting so much space to an explication of Holdstock's images, I do not wish to suggest a completely uncritical viewpoint. There are disappointments as well as delights to be found in his work. Inherent in an understanding of the archetypal symbol is the concept of the image as a transformational device. In pointing towards the inner realm, the archetype - to function most effectively - should lead towards some process of growth, should guide the protagonist along a path that leads towards full maturity or - in Jungian terms - individuation. The psyche has a miraculous capacity to heal itself, and the symbolic process is one way for humanity to transcend its limitations. This, also, is the meaning inherent in the labyrinthine journey towards the central point of the mandala. But, while Robert Holdstock takes his protagonists deep into this symbolic landscape, in a certain sense they fail to find completion through what should finally be a profoundly transformational experience. In a sense, therefore, the journey seems unfinished.

While the fascination of Holdstock's writing lies in his successful creation of primitive mindstates and of the subsequent images which are then engendered in his characters, his protagonists - like those of J. G. Ballard - are obsessive. Once they yield to Ryhope it is impossible for them to turn back. They travel, even while resisting, more and more deeply into the wild wood, moving irrevocably further and further away from the world that lies beyond the heartwoods. Disappointingly, once claimed by this mind landscape which is so seductive in its violence and beauty, they do not return. Even though they fear it, they must yield to its allurements. All finally abandon forever their 'normal' lives, plunging deeper into the maelstrom of emotion and sensation engendered by the magical combination of Ryhope and the power of mind. The spell of the wild woods is, finally, irresistible: neither Tallis, Richard Bradley, Wynne-Jones, or any of the Huxley family are able ever to emerge from the mindforest, to take up life in the mainstream of humanity where it should be lived most effectively and fully.

> As crossing the threshold into the adventure separates the hero from ordinary men and women, crossing the threshold from the adventure back into the commonday world separates the hero from all those who are hopelessly lost in dream, who live with ghosts, and who cannot be reached from the world outside themselves. The threshold separates the hero not only from the commonday world and his adventure, on the way in, but it also stands between the hero and insanity on the way out.
>
> (Hare, 1988:128)

This inability to accept normality seems, in the final count, to be something of a failure. It hints at an unhealthy self-absorption. If one chooses to live only within the mind, chooses to interact only with the products of one's own imagination, then one has rejected, in the long run, the outer world, has judged it wanting, incapable of providing true happiness or fulfilment. Despite the bewitching quality of Robert Holdstock's vision, it seems to be,

finally, inadaquate. Perhaps because his characters seem to be intrinsically normal - not pathological in the way of Ballard's characters - their surrender to the wildwoods is more disturbing. The long journey into the labyrinthine world seems, finally, to be an end in itself; his protagonists are never able to leave the mindforests and mindcaverns. Integration - at this point in Holdstock's development, at any rate - does not follow upon discovery. His protagonists simply become more sundered from the outer world, when one cannot help but feel that they ought to become better equipped to contend with it. For Holdstock, the journey becomes a final retreat and a rejection of the social contract.[8]

However, one of the intriguing qualities of Robert Holdstock's work is the sensation - perhaps more so than with any other writer discussed in this study - that the reader is following work in progress. For this particular writer, the journey is not yet over and it is quite possible that he is still working through some internal process that may ultimately lead in another direction. While not wishing to belabour the importance of his work - he himself would probably be the first to admit (despite the seriousness with which he pursues his craft) that he writes primarily to entertain - I suggest that he is a writer whose future work may present interesting development.

What makes Holdstock's work seem strikingly original is the direction in which he has chosen to go: inward, towards the 'dark hinterland' of the psyche. Also impressive is the richness, the vitality and the evocativeness of the archetypal symbols that he has summon-

---

[8] In a later book - not dealt with here - called <u>Ancient Echoes</u> (1996), the writer does seem to have become aware of this problem. He chooses now to allow his protagonist to live in two worlds simultaneously, that is to say, in the mind forest as well as in the world of mundane reality. However, this dichotomy within the personality of the main character still seems more like fragmentation than integration. It seems that Robert Holdstock has not yet solved the problem of how to fuse successfully the dark, secret life of the mind forest with the needs of daily experience.

ed from the recesses of his own imagination, and then transformed for his particular purposes. He seems to be instinctively aware, as Jung has said, that:

> In earlier ages, as instinctive concepts welled up in the mind of man, his conscious mind could no doubt integrate them into a coherent psychic pattern. But the 'civilized' man is no longer able to do this. His advanced consciousness has deprived itself of the means by which the auxiliary contributions of the instincts and the unconscious can be assimilated.
>
> (Jung, 1978b:84)

Holdstock's work, while appearing purely fantastic, is thus set within an intellectual and theoretical framework which imparts something of that discursive quality which is essential to the sf genre. Not simply tales of mystery and gothic horror, his stories demonstrate the rich amalgam that can occur when the fantastic and the scientific are blended with innovative and imaginative gifts. His work demonstrates, as does the work of writers discussed in previous chapters, the potent and the protean qualities of both sf and fantasy. Furthermore, it becomes clear from the works discussed here, that these genres can move in a multitude of directions, and that they can be possessed of visionary power.

SEVEN : CONCLUSION

Mythology, like the severed head of Orpheus, goes on
singing even in death and from afar.

Carl Kerenyi.

This study has attempted to isolate and analyse in depth one very particular and potent

aspect of sf and fantasy literature. It has sought to find - in selected works - images that

are imbued with that 'sense of wonder' which constitutes, perhaps, the most mysterious

and fascinating aspect of this kind of writing, and which both writers and readers seek so

assiduously. For sf and fantasy have - as I hope I have shown - more than almost any

other fictional genres, the ability to awaken the urge to contemplate what is most enig-

matic about existence and about the cosmos which surrounds humankind.

I have suggested that - to a large extent - this sense of wonder lies precisely in the ability

of the writer to call up, to evoke from the mysterious realms of the unconscious mind,

certain images or symbols that have archetypal and iconic meanings, and that, conse-

quently, arouse a perception of the revelatory and the numinous. These images add extra

dimension and resonance to the writing, for they elaborate upon and intensify those

aspects of sf and fantasy which inspire profound responses.

In order to dissect these images and to lay bare their significances, I have used the meth-

ods of archetypal criticism, a critical approach which flourished during the 1950s and

1960s and which then gradually fell into disfavour. Archetypal criticism - or myth criti-

cism, as it is sometimes called - involves something akin to Baudelaire's *correspondences*;

that is to say, the isolation of certain key images or symbols, and their explication in terms

of the resonances they call up in the reader's mind. However, the images which are

central to the concerns of the archetypal critic are not merely personal, but those which appear to be embedded in culture and the human imagination, regardless of time and place. They seem universal in the sense that they persist through the ages, with roots that are sunk deep in the human mind and which reach back into what Jung called the 'collective unconscious'. Such images have, therefore, the power to move readers in ways of which they are not always consciously aware, since they unify not only the text but also general human experience.

However, as Darko Suvin (1979) has pointed out, the myth critic's task is not simply a mechanical identification of the underlying archetypes or the mythic patterns in writing of this nature. It involves also an assessment of the degree of skill and effectiveness with which such images are used, and an explication of why these symbols are capable of arousing powerful emotional and intellectual responses in the mind of the reader.

> ...the critic...of SF - must, I believe, abandon the belief that he has done much more than his formal homework when he has identified Yefremov's Andromeda as containing the myth of Perseus or Delany's Einstein Intersection...as containing the myth of Orpheus. He is still left face to face with the basic question of his trade, namely, is the myth or mytheme transmuted (1) into valid fiction; (2) into valid science fiction?
>
> (Suvin, 1979:35 - 36)

Anatomising these images, their genealogical lines, their polyvalent meanings and the sense of wonder that they confer upon the various texts under consideration, has necessitated using a wide range of sources as referents, so that this thesis is informed by what has been called 'discourse theory' or 'intertextuality':

> For those critics...who work within the school of deconstruction, the process of intertextual study in which sacred literature is related, along with works of history, philosophy, and psychology, to creative letters is a necessary aspect of the contemporary approach to the literary tradition.
>
> (Spivey, 1988:6)

In referring to such varied sources I have demonstrated as clearly as possible the complexity of these archetypal images, with their ancient provenances and their contemporary relevances. Necessary to this process, however, is a stringent discipline, an eschewal of personal free-association of the sort that became so contagious during the 1950s and 1960s[1] and which led, by the 1970s, to the perceived irrelevance of archetypal criticism as an analytical technique. Such undiscriminating pursuit of all possible echoes and resonances in the text is irresponsible and leads, finally, to obscurantism. Inherent in the task of interpretation is a form of delicacy or tact, as Frye puts it: 'The sense of tact, of the desirability of not pushing a point of interpretation "too far", is derived from the fact that the proportioning of emphasis in criticism should normally bear a rough analogy to the proportioning of emphasis in the poem' (Frye, 1990:86). Applying the principle of tact to archetypal criticism would mean, therefore, that the critic should proceed with discretion, bringing meaning into focus, and not spinning tenuous skeins of free-association that can lead to anything - or even to nothing.

It was almost certainly this sort of abuse which led to such a strong reaction against archetypal criticism decades ago. William Righter, author of <u>Myth and Literature</u>, levels the following harsh - but deserved - criticism at careless and overindulgent use of the term 'mythic' in contemporary criticism:

---

[1] An activity that Richard F. Hardin (1989:42) has referred to as 'an archetypalist binge'.

> 'Mythic' has...become a value term, with very little beyond a minimum of descriptive content, drawing upon other senses of myth in only the loosest possible way, with its claim to some cognitive content equally loosely staked in 'significance'. A strong degree of approval, a recognition of importance, an attribution of high seriousness - all are implied but hardly explained. And this seems a failure of critical imagination in placing too easy a reliance on 'mythic', where the importance of the term almost seems to come from the uncanny reverence in which it is held, from the myth of 'myth'.
>
> (Righter, 1975:55)

Any critical tool is as useful as the competence of its user renders it. I have, therefore, throughout this study tried to remain aware that it would be entirely inappropriate to confuse the presence of mythic components with excellence. As Righter (1975:18) also points out: '...the "collective unconscious" is pure hypothesis of the sort which is inaccessible to empirical investigation.' Thus, there is a certain latitude for what he calls 'seeing-as'. That is to say, a symbol is open to several interpretations, and no way exists to actually test the hypothesis or the interpretation in any way that can be finally definitive. He cautions that, in the end, the only judgement one can make is whether or not the interpretation or analysis is 'coherent'. But here (despite himself) he seems to be in agreement with Jung, who also warns:

> Not for a moment dare we succumb to the illusion that an archetype can be finally explained and disposed of. Even the best attempts at translation are only more or less successful translations into another metaphorical language.
>
> (Jung, 1991f:134)

For, the paradoxical nature of the archetype is such that, while it can be explained metaphorically or allegorically, it also resists final explication. Yet simultaneously, and rather

miraculously, exegesis does not destroy its power. Like a poem, its meaning is most clear in the form in which it exists. Nothing can quite replace it.

> Contents of an archetypal character...do not refer to anything that is or has been conscious, but to something essentially unconscious. In the last analysis, therefore, it is impossible to say what they refer to. Every inter-pretation necessarily remains an 'as-if'. The ultimate core of meaning may be circumscribed but not described.
>
> (Jung, 1991f:130)

Perhaps because of the paradoxical manner in which the archetypal symbol both resists and demands explication, myth and mythic symbolism themselves were also subjected to a great deal of adverse criticism during the 1960s. As a result of the passionate manner in which many of Jung's theories were expanded upon and proselytised by commentators such as Campbell, Eliade and Kerenyi, mythic interpretation became something of a religious cult, lending itself to an almost pseudo-spiritual response which outraged certain intellectuals who saw in it an unfortunate nebulosity and a mere sentimental hankering after a bygone past. It was referred to, somewhat sneeringly, as 'mythomania' (Rahv, 1966:109).

Philip Rahv's contention is that myth offers an illusory stability, since it 'confounds' past, present and future in an undifferentiated unity. He feels that it is, in fact, a withdrawal from the historical process that brings only stagnation (1966:118). Other theorists, rebelling against the romantic and somewhat mystical qualities inherent in much of Jung's teachings (and which were promulgated so ardently by disciples such as Campbell), have agreed with this viewpoint. In the 1970s, these theorists were disturbed and outraged by the notion that myth could be regarded as the bearer of some sort of racial memory or

essential meaning, and that mythic writing might, therefore, express realities which could be accessed only through myth itself. Wallace W. Douglas, in his essay on 'The Meanings of "Myth" in Modern Criticism', rejects Jung completely, finding it wholly unacceptable, in fact, that any work of literature might be 'a repository of truth, of racial memories, or of unconsciously held values' (1966:121).

There have been other objections to the archetypal method. Many critics have regarded this approach as a sign of regression. Rahv's objection to myth, for instance, is grounded in the fact that he regards myth as static and immutable, while history is, on the contrary, ever-changing and therefore 'progressive' (1966:109 - 118). The emotional affirmation of myth is, he feels, one that rejects progression, change and adaptation. The 'craze for myth represents...the fear of history' (111).

In contrast, the tendency of Campbell, Eliade and other archetypalists is to see myth as integrative, as a way of returning humanity to its lost roots.

> Mythology leads us back not only to the most ancient but also to the deepest springs of the human mind. The wish for a correct interpretation of mythology is therefore not just an academic or intellectual exercise. It stems from the concern to keep our lines of communication with the centre clear and untarnished.
>
> (Munz, 1973:xii - xii)

For, as Jung and others have so often pointed out, myth is not static, but constantly evolving and self-renewing. Because of its polysemous nature, its relevance can override the historical. The very longevity of myth, the vigour of certain symbols throughout

recorded history, is potent testimony that it is necessary and of inestimable value. If the myth cannot adapt, it is false and it dies.

> The longevity of myth and its spell-binding quality across millennia is an assurance that it adequately symbolises genuine feeling-states. In this respect false myths are like treason: they never prosper.
>
> (Munz, 1973:62)

The kinds of sf and fantasy dealt with here rely to a large extent on mythic patterns and symbols and would seem to provide cogent proof of both the enduring qualities and the power of these archetypal images. The writers dealt with in this study have demonstrated that the so-called static and immutable patterns of mythic and archetypal images are surprisingly plastic, capable of endless transformation, vibrancy and relevance. Particularly in the case of sf, there is no apparent 'fear of history', for here the mythic components are set against backgrounds that are futuristic and which embrace progress open-heartedly, although not always uncritically. Within these alien and futuristic settings, it is those very universal and stable qualities that convey a sense of progression and continuance. Rather like fairy tales which transport children into unfamiliar *milieux* (forests or castles or rustic villages) and surround them with strange characters (witches, kings, queens, dwarves, and talking animals) in order to distance or displace the existential message or lesson of the story and make its painful realities easier to absorb for the young mind, sf and fantasy can also transport the reader into settings which are disturbingly alien but which become powerful metaphors for the here and now. Psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim (1991), in his extremely influential analysis of the meanings carried by fairy

tales, has described these stories in terms that might well be used of much sf and fantasy:

'…these stories are *unreal*, they are not *untrue*' (1991:73).[2]

Since it seems to be generally accepted by psychologists and researchers such as Piaget and Bettelheim that even very young children are capable of symbolic thought processes, these fairy tales have inestimable value in their ability to point subtle lessons by the processes of psychological displacement, replacement, externalisation and symbolisation. Frye (1976:36 - 39) has noted the use of displacement techniques not only in romance literature, but also in mimetic or realistic fiction. He describes the process as 'the adjusting of formulaic structures to a roughly credible content' (Frye, 1976:36). Sf and fantasy may also convey messages about complex existential problems by much the same means. Indeed, the sf and fantasy works analysed in these chapters carry this metaphoric sense of significance, for they may be said to express essential truths through their use of archetypal *motifs* and symbols. Thus, John Crowley's Beasts speaks to the reader of the dangers and responsibilities inherent in man's custodianship of the world - and which are becoming ever more pressing with current scientific advances such as, for instance, the possibility of cloning animals and human beings. He leads the reader gently, however, so that the inferences culminate in a sense of revelation as the reader voyages through Crowley's unfamiliar world and meets the strange and complex characters who populate it. And J. G. Ballard's books constantly testify to the problems of psychic adaptation facing humanity in a society so dominated by technology that not only is the physical environment being irrevocably altered, but the perception of reality is constantly engulfed

---

[2] Stanislaw Lem (1976:2), no psychologist but an sf writer and theorist, agrees: "You would be quite mistaken if you believed…that the classical fairy tale has only its autonomous inner meanings and no relationship with the real world. If the real world did not exist, fairy tales would have no meaning.'

and manipulated by the controlling power of the mass media. Similarly, the fantasies of Ursula Le Guin take the reader, on one level, on a long and arduous journey through the islands and oceans of Earthsea. But on a subliminal level, what the reader is experiencing is the sensation of participating in an intense psychodrama: the growth of the human spirit; its search for wisdom and self-knowledge; the way in which it comes to terms with loss and age - all these are the true subjects of Le Guin's tale-telling.

I would like to suggest, then, that some sf and fantasy may even be regarded as fairy tales for adult minds. However, in comparing the typology of fairy tales with the sf and fantasy discussed in this study, some remarkable transformations became apparent. Bettelheim points out that the typology of fairy tales ensures that they state an existential problem briefly and succinctly, omitting all inessentials such as complexities of character, plot or setting. Evil and good, for instance, are polarised. Characters are never ambiguous, but good or evil, ugly or beautiful, rich or poor, old or young, lazy or industrious. In this sense, fairy tales may be regarded as primitive, lurid and unsubtle. Frye argues along much the same lines for what he calls romantic fantasy and the fabulous. He finds these forms highly stylised and claims that their 'verticality' leads to clear dichotomies or 'moral polarizing'.

> The characterisation of romance is really a feature of its mental land-
> scape. Its heroes and villains exist primarily to symbolize a contrast be-
> tween two worlds, one above the level of the ordinary experience, the
> other below it. There is, first, a world associated with happiness, security,
> and peace; the emphasis is often thrown on childhood or on an 'innocent'
> or pre-genital period of youth.... I shall call this world the idyllic world.
> The other is the world of exciting adventures, but adventures which in-
> volve separation, loneliness, humiliation, pain, and the threat of more

pain. I shall call this the demonic or night world. Because of the power-
ful polarizing tendency in romance, we are usually carried directly from
one to the other.

<div align="right">(Frye, 1976:53)</div>

However, as I have demonstrated, some sf and modern fantasy has evolved in surprising directions. While still retaining the archetypal components and patterns, these genres have undergone significant transformation. Settings, for instance, are now carefully drawn, often in painstakingly extrapolated detail. The all-devouring lushness of Brian Aldiss's Hothouse world, semi-sentient and constantly in motion, is vividly delineated, as are the silent and subtly menacing inundations by sea or sand of J. G. Ballard's strangely mutating surroundings. Similarly, the richness of Robert Holdstock's Ryhope Wood, with its endlessly shifting sunlight and shadow, has a reality that goes beyond the merely impres-sionistic. And Alfred Bester's twenty-fourth century world of Tiger, Tiger! provides a glitteringly menacing and completely logical backdrop to the actions of the novel. In all of these, the sense of place is strong, the reader absorbed into and convinced by these envi-ronments, which are both familiar and alien. Thus, the archetypal settings and images found in fairy tales can be transmuted into even more complex and potent symbols by the complex settings of the sf and fantasy which is considered here.

In addition, as I have demonstrated, characters have now evolved into more rounded personalities. Whereas, in fairy tale and myth, characters are simplistically typified as the brave prince, the beautiful princess, the wicked stepmother or the loyal sister, in much sf and fantasy character has evolved into more than just a recognisable 'type'. Le Guin, writing in the 1970s, in her essay 'Science Fiction and Mrs Brown' made a plea for writers of sf and fantasy to realise the importance of the human presence within their writings, the

need for writers to create characters who impress with a sense of the density of their being, the need to welcome common humanity - in the shape of Virginia Woolf's Mrs Brown - aboard their spaceships.

> If Mrs Brown is dead, you can take your galaxies and roll them up into a ball and throw them into the trashcan, for all I care. What good are all the objects in the universe if there is no subject?.... For we are not objects. That is essential. We are subjects.... If we stop looking, the world goes blind. If we cease to speak and listen, the world goes deaf and dumb. If we stop thinking, there is no thought. If we destroy ourselves, we destroy consciousness.
>
> (Le Guin, 1989g:99 - 100)

Le Guin, herself, has managed to capture admirably the essence of what she was suggesting other writers should do. No reader of her Earthsea tetralogy would be likely to forget the name of Ged, Archmage of Roke, or fail to have a strong sense of his physical presence, his dark skin, his scarred cheek, his stocky frame, his unshakeable dignity and his inherent reserve. Fortunately, she is not the only writer who has succeeded in suggesting the rounded qualities of her protagonists. Alfred Bester's Gully Foyle, the vengeful and amoral beast of Tiger, Tiger! is similarly unforgettable, as is Ben Reich, Bester's demolished man. It is the strong sense of humanity which such writers bring to their work, their intense awareness of the complexity of human nature, its terrible propensity for evil and stupidity, and its paradoxical yearning for transcendence, which helps them to create beings who appear to inhabit a world that is larger, more terrifying, more beautiful - and more real - than the surface of the printed page. Thus, John Crowley's heroic leo, Painter, his devious but endearing Reynard, his surgically-altered and suffering Sweets, craving a master to whom he can surrender his entire being - all these are unforgettable and touch-

ing creations because each in some way suggests the complexity and pathos of the human experience. Their varied existences are suggested with such solidity and weight that the reader cannot but become involved in their strange worlds and destinies.

Moreover, as I have demonstrated in earlier chapters, the sf and fantasy dealt with in this study have taken yet another step forward on the path towards maturity. Moral dilemmas and choices are now considerably more complex and subtle than in traditional forms of fabulous or romantic writing. But even more striking is the fact that solutions to problems are not clear-cut. Where traditionally the protagonist would be returned to a state of original happiness after the vicissitudes and torments of adventure, in much sf and fantasy the return is ambiguous and profoundly disquieting, demanding significant mental and emotional adjustment, signalling the equivocal and fragile nature of human happiness, and pointing to the compromises which lie at the heart of all experience. Hugh and Irene can leave the idyllic twilight world of Threshold because they grow to recognise that life can be lived most fully only by recognising the metaphoric dragons that beset all men and women. They learn that the truest triumph comes from admitting pain, defeat and disappointment into life, and that happiness can only be found within the shadow of darker emotions. Crowley's Rush that Speaks may relive his joys countless times, but to do so he must, as a corollary, experience his own sorrow endlessly. It becomes clear, then, that the works of sf and fantasy analysed here have evolved into more mature forms, transcending their origins in pulp or popular literary traditions. These stories are capable of engaging the reader not only intellectually, but also emotionally. Thus, while these genres have retained all the characteristics of what Frye (1990:49) calls the'mode of romance', they have managed to travel beyond the old boundaries to enter a new and more adult world.

Furthermore, all of the books discussed here are organised around the cohering power of the archetypal and symbolic image. Each book is clearly idiosyncratic, having its own unique concerns, and expressing these with great individuality. Yet, the power and resonance of the symbols are in no way diluted. Indeed, their strength and meaning shine forth even more brightly within these alien settings. It becomes obvious, then, that mythic images are, in fact, capable of endless and subtle transformation and that they can attain relevance in whatever period they are encountered. This would seem to deny Rosemary Jackson's (1988) contention that sf and fantasy are, in general, irrelevant because they fail to engage in matters of profound 'dis-ease'. Carl Kerenyi draws a useful analogy between myth and music, describing the reshaping and transformation of basic material thus: 'Various developments of the same ground-theme are always possible side by side or in succession, just like the variations on a musical theme' (Kerenyi, 1985a:3).

Accepting the power and relevance of the archetypal image is, therefore, not necessarily a sterile backward process. I agree with Susanne K. Langer, who has said of myth; 'Its ultimate end is not wishful distortion of the world, but serious envisagement of funda-mental truths: moral orientation, not escape' (Langer, 1969:177). For although Rahv feels that historical events occur once only, and that they are therefore specific to time, place and context,[3] I believe that there are eternal drives and impulses that govern human behaviour and response at all times and in all places, and that these go hand in hand with history. Since historic events are propelled by the actions of men, it is almost certain that these two aspects - the specificity of history and the universality of human imperatives -

---

[3] There have always been commentators who have reacted against the view of history as a random and disorderly aggregation of events. In our century, Oswald Spengler's Decline of the West (1926) and Arnold Toynbee's Study of History (1935) have posited theories that attempt to prove the cyclical or rhythmical nature of historical events.

are not mutually exclusive. Eric Gould, author of <u>Mythical Intentions in Modern Litera-</u><u>ture</u> (1981:177) maintains:

> Myth is an expanding contextual structure rather than a recurring motif, a
> logic of reconstruction against compromise. Because the crises occasion-
> ing myth by definition do not disappear but produce further myth, all that
> can be believed is the power of the human intelligence to persevere in its
> logical struggles in the face of nonmeaning.
>
> (Gould, 1981:177)

The value of myth, maintains Gould (1981:178), lies 'not in discovering the origin of fire, but in asserting the power of the human intelligence as it pursues such large questions.' My contention is that - while there are certainly many paths that lead towards the moment of epiphany - sf and fantasy literature are more inclined, by the nature of the material with which they treat, to pose such 'large questions' of an existential nature and to seek an-swers. Since sf and fantasy often force the reader to confront and contemplate mysteries, they are more likely than other forms of writing to possess a form of what Richard Chase, in his essay 'Notes on the Study of Myth', calls 'mana'.

> Myth must always discover and accept preternatural forces.... I...use the
> the word "preternatural", by which I mean to indicate no more or less than
> is conveyed by the Melanesian word *mana*; whatever has impersonal
> magic force or potency and is therefore extraordinarily beautiful, terrible,
> dangerous, awful, wonderful, uncanny or marvellous has *mana* and is, in
> our sense of the word, preternatural. Myth shows us reality set afire with
> our own emotions.
>
> (Chase, 1966:70)

Sf and fantasy writing, rather more frequently than other forms of fictional writing, are - as I believe I have shown - capable of arousing sensations of awe and wonder, in part

through the use of mythic images and symbols within complex settings and carefully delineated characters. Douglas (1966), in calling archetypal criticism 'mythogogic theorizing' is merely theorizing himself. For, if there is no proof that racial memory exists, neither is there any proof that it does not exist. In the end, what counts is the manner in which sense or non-sense is made of the evidence.

Furthermore, since the great Judaeo-Christian symbols which sustained much of western life seem to have largely failed our century, leaving it one in which a thousand obscure cults proliferate to feed the needs of the abandoned, the world that we currently inhabit has become largely demythologised. Most recently, the surprising convulsions of grief engendered by the death of a glamorous member of the British royal family would seem to be a testimony to the spiritual vacuum that many people inhabit. The modern fairy tale of Princess Diana created an iconic figure with which many identified and which evoked a form of worship. It would seem that, in this largely technological and secularised age, we still have a strong need for myths and fairy tales which guide and confer meaning on the vagaries of existence.

It seems that now, as we approach the millennium, disasters multiply: bloody internecine conflict is endemic throughout Africa, uncontrollable fires and the dumping of toxic waste threaten the well-being of our planet on a global scale, psychological disorders of all types appear to multiply, and each day seems to bring to light the death of yet another species of plant or animal life. There is a strong and all-pervasive sense that the human race is, in some fundamental way, diseased and that (in W. B. Yeats's much-quoted but still appropriate lines from 'The Second Coming'):

> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
>
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
>
> (Yeats, 1973:211. ll. 3 - 4)

Since my contention is that sf and fantasy have the capacity to become a source of those messages that once were to be found in the symbolic language of myth and religion, the archetypal mode seems to me to be extraordinarily well-suited to analysis of these genres. From the strange dreams of the writers of sf and fantasy, the reader may extrapolate questions, meanings - even possible answers. Sf and fantasy writings that evoke the sensation of the numinous and the contemplation of the eternal thus convey what Campbell (1988:xvi) calls 'the *experience* of being alive.' If myths are stories with messages, then sf and fantasy take upon themselves the role of myth, guiding the reader - through a transformation and a reinterpretation of the age-old symbols - both to new meanings and to a recapturing of the old significances.

> Myths are stories of our search through the ages for truth, for meaning, for significance…. We need for life to signify, to touch the eternal, to understand the mysterious, to find out who we are.
>
> (Campbell, 1988:5)

Campbell formulated his thinking several decades ago, but more recently Dudley Young has argued the importance of myth in much the same way. In <u>Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War</u> (1993), he theorises (for the most part persuasively) that what has fragmented much of human society's ethical and emotional stability is the loss of those ancient and guiding mythic codes and symbolic images which once sustained culture. He maintains that their disappearance has created a vacuum, sundering the species from its instinctual and hereditary wisdom. Furthermore, he feels that it is often given to artists to

perform a kind of shamanistic ritual, for their works help the reader or viewer to 'interface' with this hidden world of coherence:

> ...because Mother Nature in her wisdom (or unwisdom) unlocked the instinctual primate codes by which when we were apes we used to navigate the seas of desire. A good myth or poem stands for these codes, addresses our appetitive anarchies, and offers safe conduct to some life-enhancing energy by giving it a name; and a bad one does the opposite.... But in the absence of an *authoritative* myth or poem, the lights simply go out and the soul is closed down:
>
> (Young, 1993:xxiii)

Paradoxically, in a genre most frequently concerned with technological progress and its effects on the human race, the sf reader often recognises and is moved by the presence of precisely those universal and archetypal images for which Young mourns. It is partly for these reasons that I believe that an archetypal approach to sf is now apposite. I also believe that the dust thrown up by the original archetypal storm has subsided. In addition, as Marxism has become increaingly devalued, the scepticism - indeed the scorn - which grew from much Marxist-orientated criticism, with its emphasis on class structure and its contempt for, and deep suspicion of, what it perceived as the spiritual or non-rational, has lost much of its original impetus. I feel, therefore, that a more balanced, less emotional, response is now possible and that the advantages of archetypal criticism can become newly apparent. An approach of this nature thus seems to me to be timely and could well be greeted with a new receptiveness.

It would seem, also, that many of the *motifs* of sf and fantasy have penetrated the consciousness of the masses to an unprecedented extent. Barely a decade ago, interest in sf or fantasy was limited to a small segment of the population. Now, people who formerly

would not have admitted to seeing a 'sci-fi' film, or reading a fantasy or sf story, find that the messages and symbols of these genres are familiar currency. And, as pointed out earlier, many of these tropes have entered mainstream literature, film and art.[4] Frye (1976) has said that popularity is often prophetic, pointing towards the next trend that the more serious will follow. Sf and fantasy were already pointing towards these new directions with great vigour in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and have now interpenetrated mainstream literature to a noticeable extent. I believe that it is only their traditional limited marketing appeal that prevents many of the books under discussion here from being recognised and accepted by academia in general, and by the serious reading public at large.

The initial impulse behind this study was a fascination with the prevalence of mythic elements in much sf and fantasy. This suggested that these elements must, in large part, be responsible for the unique attraction of these genres. This was my route towards the archetypal approach. I have explained why I feel that this method, used judiciously, seems under the circumstances to be ideally suited to an exploration of this sort. I maintain that the archetypal approach reveals how and why these genres are capable of evoking such a strong response. Despite the disparagement of antagonistic critics, I agree with Haskell M. Block (1966:135 - 136) who maintains: 'When operative as a controlling principle, as part of the organic unity of a work, mythical patterns are at the core of aesthetic experience and cannot be neglected by criticism.'

---

[4] Within the field of sf, the term 'slipstream' has come to denote writing which uses sf devices, but which is not inherently sf. It would seem an appropriate term to denote forms of art which employ such tropes, for their momentum comes, as it were, from the energy generated by the sf genre, and a process of what The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (1993:1117) calls 'piggybacking'.

It is no doubt as a result of the use of such archetypal patterning that another striking attribute of the sf and fantasy fields becomes noticeable, one which cannot pass without brief comment. Although I have, in this study, confined myself to writing which has, in my opinion, literary as well as imaginative and intellectual value, these two genres display a characteristic peculiarly their own. This is the ability of mediocre, even poor writing, sometimes to exert a powerful - indeed, an unforgettable - hold over the imagination of the reader. Such stories, once read, can never be forgotten. An example is Isaac Asimov's first published short story, 'Nightfall' (1997), which appeared originally in 1941 and is generally considered to be the most successful American sf story ever written.[5] The story evokes graphically the terrifying vastness and incomprehensibility of the cosmos (calling up a profound sense of what Rosemary Jackson [1988:9] designates 'existential unease') in prose that is, paradoxically, entirely unmemorable.

Similarly, Harry Harrison's 1962 short story 'The Streets of Askelon' (1981) uses potent and brutal imagery to display the potential narrowness of Christian dogma and how it may, unwittingly, pervert essential innocence. The writing, however, is firmly rooted in pulp origins: it is stereotyped and formulaic. Characters such as the strapping planetary trader, the well-meaning but inflexible priest, the childlike indigenes of Wesker's World - all these are sketched with the crude simplicity of cartoon images. Yet, in numerous stories such as these, the intellectual content and final *dénouement* are so powerfully conveyed that the images and ideas strike with great force. Since language itself is always somewhat inadaquate - all it can do, in the final count, is to find synonyms, metaphors and symbols for

---

[5] Almost three decades after it first appeared, 'Nightfall' was voted the most popular sf story published before 1965 by the Science Fiction Writers of America guild, and it has continued to be so judged in many subsequent polls.

the inexpressible - words themselves are not always quite enough to bridge the 'ontological gap' (Gould, 1981:175). Yet, some sf and fantasy miraculously crosses this divide. Because they deal with large questions, and because the images and symbols seized upon by the writers of sf and fantasy are fundamentally archetypal and mythic in their universal significance, these genres often achieve a unique imaginative potency.[6]

It is for all of the above reasons that the archetypal approach offers a logical pathway into the interpretation of sf and fantasy literature, since this method provides a matrix of rationality within which one can approach the intuitions and messages of such writing. I have, however, as previously noted, avoided discussion of the category of writing which seems to me to be artistically mediocre. Thus, I have excluded writing in which the prose seems to me to be leaden or lacking in vivacity. Similarly, I have ignored writing in which characterisation fails to suggest the complexity of human nature and experience and which fails, moreover, to engage the reader in any form of intellectual discourse. In short, I have tried to avoid writing which I consider not only formulaic in terms of language, characterisation and ideas, but where such formulæ are unredeemed by any glimmerings of original-ity in their presentation. I have confined this study to works which have, in my opinion, genuine literary flavour, and have shown - by selecting certain passages for analysis - why certain writers may be regarded as artistically successful. Furthermore, I have been careful to investigate only those works which seem to me to be organised around a central point of gravity constituted by the archetypal image itself. To attempt to force this approach on

---

[6] My personal selection of some sf that fits this particular category would include some stories already mentioned in this study, such as Philip K. Dick's 'The Golden Man (1981) and Cordwainer Smith's 'The Game of Rat and Dragon' (1981). The list would also include, amongst others, Jerome Bixby's 'It's a *Good* Life' (1981), James Blish's 'Surface Tension' (1973), Arthur C. Clarke's Childhood's End (1953) and 'The Nine Billion Names of God' (1981), Vonda McIntyre's Dreamsnake (1978) and the 1977 story by James Tiptree (Raccoona Sheldon), 'The Screwfly Solution' (1981).

writing which does not yield comfortably to archetypal analyis would be merely foolish. All the works studied here would seem to evoke in some way that indefinable and numinous quality which is carried by myth. And in all of them, the central images are those which appear to be almost universally present in thought and culture, regardless of time or place. Yet, in contrast to the manner in which they are utilised by more simplistic folk and fairy tales, these powerful mythic and archetypal symbols are now successfully woven into complex settings and integrated into subtle forms of discourse.

Although I have tried to reserve a measure of detachment, the reader's response is always, to some extent, subjective. I do not apologise for my enthusiasm for the texts analysed here, but hope that I have sufficiently clarified the reasons for my response. Critics seek an equilibrium in which passion for the subject matter is balanced against detachment. This I hope I have achieved. I have been careful to eschew facile associations and references and have tried to track punctiliously the genealogy of each mythic image in order to determine where its roots may lie and what its credentials may be. I have not applied this form of analysis to inappropriate forms of sf and fantasy, doing violence to texts in the process, but have used this method only where it seemed strictly apposite. I have been highly selective in my choice of works, discarding much that seemed, at first reading, to be suitable for archetypal analysis. I have been as specific as possible, and have tried to demonstrate the resonances of the mythic and archetypal images clearly. I have shown how these small *motifs* may become integrated into the larger whole, and how they work within the text to amplify meaning and relevance. I am certainly not suggesting that my approach is relevant to all literature or even to all sf and fantasy. However, my hope is that I have demonstrated both that these genres have a very special appeal and also that

they can, in some instances, take their place alongside respected works of canonical literature.

I hope, also, that this study is not only a tribute to the protean aspect of the archetypal image, but that it testifies also to the vibrant and affirmative nature of sf and fantasy literature. Neither 'outmoded' nor 'nostalgic' (as Rosemary Jackson [1988] claims), these genres are not necessarily the pale reflections of an anodyne imagination, but can be vividly meaningful and fluid in their ability to transmute ancient patterns. Campbell (1975:19) maintains that it is 'the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols which carry the human spirit forwards...' and Lévi-Strauss has said of anthropology that it gave him the sensation of experiencing 'at one extreme the history of the world and at the other the history of myself...' (in Gould, 1981:91).

I believe that much sf and fantasy can do the same. As the bearers of humankind's dreams, these two genres can help to carry the human spirit forwards and can also, in the process, trace some tentative paths towards the meaning of both the broad sweep of history and the more intimate patterns of individual life. Furthermore, I maintain that they also offer, when at their best, aesthetic pleasures equal to those provided by much critically approved mainstream literature. Far from having exhausted themselves (as Kingsley Amis [1981:25] once averred), they have proven to be enduringly vibrant forms, constantly undergoing hybridisation, fertilising their own deep-growing and ever-spreading roots from a multitude of sources and putting forth, from time to time, blooms more exotic and intriguing than ever before. It would perhaps be apt to allow Ursula Le Guin the last word. 'When fantasy is the real thing,' maintains Le Guin (1989:81), 'nothing, after all, is realer'.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ALDISS, BRIAN. 1979. <u>Hothouse</u>. London: Granada. (First published 1962.)

ALDISS, BRIAN. 1986. <u>Trillion Year Spree. The History of Science Fiction</u>. London: Victor Gollancz. (First published 1962.)

ALDISS, BRIAN & HARRISON, HARRY (eds). 1976. <u>Hell's Cartographers</u>. London: Orbit.

AMIS, KINGSLEY. 1975. <u>New Maps of Hell: A Survey of Science Fiction</u>. New York: Arno. (First published 1960.)

AMIS, KINGSLEY (ed.). 1981. <u>The Golden Age of Science Fiction</u>. London: Hutchison.

ANDERSON, WILLIAM. 1990. <u>Green Man: The Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth</u>. London: Harper Collins.

ARMITT, LUCIE (ed.). 1991. <u>Where No Man Has Gone Before: Women and Science Fiction</u>. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

ASIMOV, ISAAC. 1997. Nightfall, in <u>The Complete Stories: Volume 2</u>. London: Harper Collins. (First published 1941.)

ATKINS, G. DOUGLAS & MORROW, LAURA (eds). 1989. <u>Contemporary Literary Theory</u>. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

ATTEBERY, BRIAN. 1987. Science Fantasy and Myth, in Slusser, G. E and Rabkin, E. S. (eds), <u>Intersections: Fantasy and Science Fiction</u>.

ATTEBERY, BRIAN. 1992. <u>Strategies of Fantasy</u>. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

ATWOOD, MARGARET. 1986. <u>The Handmaid's Tale</u>. London: Jonathan Cape.

AUEL, JEAN M. 1981. <u>The Clan of the Cave Bear</u>. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

BAINBRIDGE, WILLIAM SIMS. 1986. <u>Dimensions of Science Fiction</u>. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

BALAKIAN, ANNE. 1970. <u>Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute</u>. New York: Dutton. (First published 1959.)

BALLARD, J. G. 1971. Tomorrow is a Million Years, in <u>The Day of Forever</u>. London: Panther. (First published 1967.)

BALLARD, J. G. 1976. The Drowned World. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (First published 1962.)

BALLARD, J. G. 1978. The Drought. London: Triad/Panther. (First published 1965.)

BALLARD, J. G. 1981. The Voices of Time, in Amis, Kingsley (ed.), The Golden Age of Science Fiction. (First published 1960.)

BALLARD, J. G. 1985. Crash. New York: Vintage.

BALLARD, J. G. 1985. Empire of the Sun. London: Panther. (First published 1984.)

BALLARD, J. G. 1987. The Day of Creation. London: Victor Gollancz.

BALLARD, J. G. 1991. The Kindness of Women. London: Harper Collins.

BARKER, CLIVE. 1988. Weaveworld. London: Fontana. (First published 1987.)

BARKER, CLIVE. 1991. The Hellbound Heart. London: Fontana.

BARR, ALFRED H. (ed.). 1946. Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism. New York: Simon and Schuster.

BESTER, ALFRED. 1953. The Demolished Man. New York: Signet.

BESTER, ALFRED. 1958. Fondly Fahrenheit, in Starburst. New York: Signet. (First published 1953.)

BESTER, ALFRED. 1976. My Affair With Science Fiction, in Aldiss, Brian and Harrison, Harry (eds), Hell's Cartographers.

BESTER, ALFRED. 1991. Tiger! Tiger! London: Mandarin. (First published 1956.)

BETTELHEIM, BRUNO. 1991. The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales. London: Penguin. (First published 1976.)

BIXBY, JEROME. 1981. It's a Good Life, in Amis, Kingsley (ed.), The Golden Age of Science Fiction. (First published 1953.)

BLACKHAM, H. J. 1985. The Fable as Literature. London: Athlone.

BLAKE, WILLIAM. 1973. The Tyger, in William Blake: A Selection of Poems and Letters. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (First published 1794.)

BLIDSTEIN, GERALD J. 1971. Messiah in Rabbinic Thought, in Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 11.

BLISH, JAMES. 1973. Surface Tension, in Best Science Fiction Stories. Revised ed. London: Faber.

BLOCK, HASKELL M. 1966. Cultural Anthropology and Contemporary Literary Criticism, in Vickery, John B. (ed.), <u>Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practise</u>.

BOVA, BEN. 1974. The Role of Science Fiction, in Bretnor, Reginald (ed.), <u>Science Fiction, Today and Tomorrow</u>.

BRADBURY, RAY. 1951. <u>The Martian Chronicles</u>. London: Grafton.

BRESSON, CATHERINE. 1984. Interview with J. G. Ballard, in Vale, V. and Juno, A. (eds), <u>Re/Search: J. G. Ballard</u>.

BRETNOR, REGINALD (ed.). 1974. <u>Science Fiction, Today and Tomorrow</u>. New York: Harper and Rowe.

BRODERICK, DAMIEN. 1995. <u>Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction</u>. London: Routledge.

BROOKE - ROSE, CHRISTINE. 1981. <u>A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative Structure, Especially of the Fantastic</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CAMPBELL, JOSEPH. 1960. <u>The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology</u>. London: Secker and Warburg.

CAMPBELL, JOSEPH. 1975. <u>The Hero with a Thousand Faces</u>. London: Abacus. (First published 1949.)

CAMPBELL, JOSEPH. 1988. <u>The Power of Myth: Conversations with Bill Moyers</u>. New York: Doubleday.

CARROLL, LEWIS. 1972. <u>Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There</u>. London: MacGibbon and Kee. (First published 1871.)

CARROLL, LEWIS. 1989. <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</u>. London: Heinemann. (First published 1865.)

CAWELTI, J G. 1976. <u>Adventure, Mystery and Romance: Formula Stories and Popular Culture</u>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

CHARNAS, SUZY MCKEE. 1974. <u>Walk to the End of the World</u>. New York: Ballan-tine.

CHASE, RICHARD. 1966. Notes on the Study of Myth, in Vickery, John B. (ed.), <u>Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice</u>.

CHAYEFSKY, PADDY. 1978. <u>Altered States</u>. Johannesburg: Hutchinson.

CLARK, KENNETH. 1966. <u>Landscape into Art</u>. London: Penguin. (First published 1949.)

CLARKE, ARTHUR C. 1953. Childhood's End. New York: Ballantine.

CLARKE, ARTHUR C. 1981. The Nine Billion Names of God, in Amis, Kingsley (ed.), The Golden Age of Science Fiction. (First published 1953.)

CLARKE, ARTHUR C. 1991. Rendezvouz With Rama. London: Orbit. (First published 1973.)

CLUTE, JOHN & NICHOLLS, PETER. (eds). 1993. The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction. London: Orbit.

COLERIDGE, SAMUEL T. 1960. Christabel, in The Golden Treasury of Longer Poems. London: Dent & Sons. (First published 1816.)

COOPER, J. C. 1992. Dictionary of Symbolic and Mythological Animals. London: Thorsons.

CROWLEY, JOHN. 1980. Engine Summer. London: Methuen. (First published 1979.)

CROWLEY, JOHN. 1981. Little, Big. London: Methuen Frye.

CROWLEY, JOHN. 1987. Beasts. London: Victor Gollancz. (First published 1978.)

DELANY, SAMUEL R. 1975. Dhalgren. Toronto: Bantam.

DELANY. SAMUEL R. 1977. The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction. New York: Berkely Windhover.

DELANY, SAMUEL R. 1980. Aye, and Gemorrah, in Driftglass: Ten Tales of Speculative Fiction. London: Granada. (First published 1967.)

DELANY, SAMUEL R. (ed.) 1981. Nebula Winners Thirteen. Toronto: Bantam.

DELANY, SAMUEL R. 1981. Time Considered as a Helix of Precious Stones, in Distant Stars. New York: Bantam. (First published 1969.)

DELANY, SAMUEL R. 1987. Babel-17. London: Victor Gollancz. (First published 1966.)

DELANY, SAMUEL R. 1989. Neither the Beginning, Nor the End of Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Semiotics, or Deconstruction for SF Readers: An Introduction, in New York Review of Science Fiction, Nos. 6:8 - 12; 7:14 - 18; 8:9 - 11.

DELANY, SAMUEL R. 1992. The Einstein Intersection. London: Grafton. (First published 1967)

DELANY, SAMUEL R. 1994. Silent Interviews on Language, Race, Science Fiction and Some Comics: A Collection of Written Interviews. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.

DICK, PHILIP K. 1957. Eye in the Sky. New York: Ace.

DICK, PHILIP K. 1973. Ubik. London: Grafton. (First published 1969.)

DICK, PHILIP K. 1977. A Scanner Darkly. New York: Doubleday.

DICK, PHILIP K. 1981. The Golden Man, in The Golden Man. London: Methuen. (First published 1954.)

DOUGLAS, WALLACE W. 1966. The Meanings of "Myth" in Modern Criticism, in Vickery, John B. (ed.), Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice.

ECO, UMBERTO: 1977. The Bond Affair. London: Macdonald.

ELDRIDGE, ROGER. 1984. The Fishers of Darksea. London: Unwin (First published 1982.)

ELIADE, MIRCEA. 1974. Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Reality. Translated by Philip Mairet. London: Collins. (First published 1957.)

ELIOT, T. S. 1965. Selected Poems. London: Faber and Faber.

ELIOT, T. S. 1965. Ash Wednesday, in Selected Poems. (First published 1930.)

ELIOT, T. S. 1965. Gerontian, in Selected Poems. (First published 1920.)

ELIOT, T. S. 1965. The Waste Land, in Selected Poems..(First published 1922.)

ELIOT, T. S. 1972. Four Quartets. London: Faber and Faber. (First published 1944.)

ELLWOOD, ROBERT. 1988. The History and Future of Faith: Religion Past, Present and to Come. New York: Crossroad.

ENCYCLOPEDIA JUDAICA, Vol. 11. 1971. New York: Macmillan.

FIRTH, RAYMOND. 1973. Symbols: Public and Private. London: George Allen and Unwin.

FOWLES, JOHN. 1986. A Maggot. London: Pan. (First published 1985.)

FRAZER, SIR JAMES. 1996. The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion. Abridged edition. London: Penguin. (First published 1890.)

FROMM, ERICH. 1951. The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales and Myths. New York: Rinehart.

FRYE, NORTHROP. 1976. The Secular Scripture: A Study of Romance. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

FRYE, NORTHROP. 1990. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. London: Penguin. (First published 1957.)

GARDNER, HELEN. 1959. Art Through the Ages. London: G. Bell and Sons. (First published 1926.)

GIBSON, WILLIAM. 1986. Neuromancer. London: Grafton. (First published 1984.)

GOLDING, WILLIAM. 1954. Lord of the Flies. London: Faber and Faber.

GOLDING, WILLIAM. 1955. The Inheritors. London: Faber and Faber.

GOODALL, JANE. 1990. Through a Window: Thirty Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

GORDON, JOAN. 1986. Gene Wolfe. Washington: Starmont House.

GOULD, ERIC. 1981. Mythical Intentions in Modern Literature. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

GRAVES, ROBERT. 1978. A Pinch of Salt, in Fairies and Fusiliers. New York: Norwood. (First published 1918.)

GRAY, PAUL. 1985. History of an Imagined World, in Time, 14 October, p. 79.

GRIFFITHS, JOHN. 1980. Three Tomorrows: American, British and Soviet Science Fiction. London: Macmillan.

GUNN, JAMES. 1974. Science Fiction and the Mainstream, in Bretnor, Reginald (ed.), Science Fiction, Today and Tomorrow.

HARDIN, RICHARD F. 1989. Archetypal Criticism, in Atkins, Douglas and Morrow, Laura (eds), Contemporary Literary Theory.

HARE, Delmas E. 1988. In This Land There be Dragons: Carl G. Jung, Ursula Le Guin, and Narrative Prose Fantasy. Unpublished doctoral thesis from Emory University, Atlanta.

HARRISON, HARRY. 1983. The Streets of Askelon, in Amis, Kingsley (ed.), The Golden Age of Science Fiction. (First published 1962.)

HARRISON, M. JOHN. 1982. Viriconium. London: Victor Gollancz.

HARRISON, M. JOHN. 1987. A Storm of Wings. London: Unwin.

HEINLEIN, ROBERT A. 1977. Stranger in a Strange Land. [N.P.]: New English Library. (First published 1961.)

HENDERSON, JOSEPH L. 1978. Ancient Myths and Modern Man, in Jung, C. G. (ed.), Man and His Symbols. (First published 1964.)

HENNESY, BRENDAN. 1984. Interview with J. G. Ballard, in Vale, V. and Juno, A. (eds), Re/Search: J. G. Ballard.

HERBERT, FRANK. 1966. Dune. London: Victor Gollancz.

HOLDSTOCK, ROBERT. 1976. Eye Among the Blind. London: VGSF.

HOLDSTOCK, ROBERT. 1981. Where Time Winds Blow. London: Faber and Faber.

HOLDSTOCK, ROBERT. 1987. Earthwind. London: VGSF. (First published 1977.)

HOLDSTOCK, ROBERT. 1990. Lavondyss: Journey to an Unknown Region. London: Collins. (First published 1988.)

HOLDSTOCK, ROBERT. 1992. The Bone Forest. London: Grafton.

HOLDSTOCK, ROBERT. 1992. Thorn, in The Bone Forest. (First published 1986.)

HOLDSTOCK, ROBERT. 1994. The Hollowing. London: Grafton.

HOLDSTOCK, ROBERT. 1995. Mythago Wood. London: Voyager. (First published 1984.)

HOLDSTOCK, ROBERT. 1996. Ancient Echoes. London: Harper Collins.

HOMER. 1975. The Odyssey. Translated by E.V. Rieu. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

JACKSON, ROSEMARY. 1988. Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion. London: Routledge. (First published 1981.)

JAFFÉ, ANIELA. 1978. Symbolism in the Visual Arts, in Jung, C. G. (ed.), Man and His Symbols.

JAMES, HENRY. 1960. The Turn of the Screw. London: Dent & Sons. (First published 1898.)

JOYCE, JAMES. 1960. Ulysses. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (First published 1922.)

JUNG, C. G. 1960. On Psychic Energy, in The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche: The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 8. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (First published 1928.)

JUNG, C. G. 1968. The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. From The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 9.

JUNG, C. G. 1968. Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious, in The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. (First published 1954.)

JUNG, C. J. 1968. The Concept of the Collective Unconsious, in The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. (First published 1936.)

JUNG, C. G. (ed.). 1978. Man and His Symbols. London: Picador. (First published 1964.)

JUNG, C. G. 1978. Approaching the Unconscious, in Man and His Symbols. (First published 1964.)

JUNG, C. G. 1991. Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. (First published 1958.)

JUNG, C. G. 1991. Psyche and Symbol: A Selection from the Writings of C. G. Jung. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. (First published 1958.)

JUNG, C. G. 1991. Christ, a Symbol of the Self, in Psyche and Symbol. (First published 1951.)

JUNG, C. G. 1991. Commentary on 'The Secret of the Golden Flower', in Psyche and Symbol. (First published 1929.)

JUNG, C. G. 1991. The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairy Tales, in Psyche and Symbol. (First published 1945.)

JUNG, C. G. 1991. The Psychology of the Child Archetype, in Psyche and Symbol (First published 1940.)

JUNG, C. G. 1991. The Shadow, in Psyche and Symbol. (First published 1951.)

JUNG, C. G. 1991. The Syzygy: Anima and Animus, in Psyche and Symbol. (First published 1951.)

JUNG, C. G. 1993. Memories, Dreams, Reflections. London: Fontana Press. (First published 1963.)

JUNG, C. G. & KERENYI, C. 1985. Science of Mythology: Essays on the Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis. London: Ark. (First published 1949.)

KAFKA, FRANZ. 1961. Metamorphosis, in Metamorphosis and Other Stories. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (First published 1915.)

KEATS, JOHN. 1960. La Belle Dame Sans Merci, in The London Book of English Verse. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode. (First published 1820.)

KERENYI, C. 1985. Prolegomena, in Jung, C. G. and Kerenyi, C., <u>Science of Mythology: Essays on the Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis</u>. (First published 1949.)

KERENYI, C. 1985. The Primordial Child in Primordial Times, in Jung, C. G. and Kerenyi, C., <u>Science of Mythology: Essays on the Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis</u>. (First published 1949.)

KEYES, DANIEL. 1987. <u>Flowers for Algernon</u>. London: Gollancz. (First published 1966.

KIRK, G. S. 1978. <u>Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (First published 1970.)

KNIGHT, DAMON. 1967. <u>In Search of Wonder: Essays on Modern Science Fiction</u>. Chicago: Advent. (First published 1956.)

KROEBER, KARL. 1988. <u>Romantic Fantasy and Science Fiction</u>. New Haven: Yale University Press.

LANGER, SUSANNE K. 1969. <u>Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art</u>. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. (First published 1942.)

LEE, TANITH. 1987. <u>Sabella</u>. London: Unwin. (First published 1980.)

LEE, TANITH. 1989. <u>Forests of the Night</u>. London: Unwin.

LEE, TANITH. 1989. Bite Me Not or Fleur de Fur, in <u>Forests of the Night</u>. (First published 1984.)

LEE, TANITH. 1989. Bloodmantle, in <u>Forests of the Night</u>. (First published 1985.)

LEE, TANITH. 1990. <u>Lycanthia</u>. London: Legend. (First published 1981.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1979. <u>The Earthsea Trilogy</u>. London: Penguin.

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1979. <u>A Wizard of Earthsea</u>, in <u>The Earthsea Trilogy</u>. (First published 1968.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1979. <u>The Tombs of Atuan</u>, in <u>The Earthsea Trilogy</u>. (First published 1972.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1979. <u>The Farthest Shore</u>, in <u>The Earthsea Trilogy</u>. (First published 1973.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1981. <u>The Left Hand of Darkness</u>. London: Orbit. (First published 1969.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1982. Threshold. London: Granada. (First published 1980.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1988. Always Coming Home. London: Grafton. (First published 1985.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1989. Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places. London: Victor Gollancz.

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1989. Is Gender Necessary? Redux (1976/1987), in Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places.

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1989. The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction. London: The Women's Press. (First published 1979.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1989. Dreams Must Explain Themselves, in The Language of the Night. (First published 1973.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1989. Introduction to The Word for World is Forest, in The Language of the Night. (First published 1977.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1989. Myth and Archetype in Science Fiction, in The Language of the Night. (First published 1976.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1989. Science Fiction and Mrs Brown, in The Language of the Night. (First published 1976.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1989. The Stone Ax and the Muskoxen, in The Language of the Night. (First published 1976.)

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1990. Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea. London: Puffin.

LE GUIN, URSULA. 1991. The Word for World is Forest. London: VGSF. (First published 1972.)

LEM, STANISLAW. 1973. Solaris. London: Arrow. (First published 1961.)

LEM, STANISLAW. 1976. On the Structural Analysis of Science Fiction, in Suvin, Darko and Mullen, R. D. (eds), Science Fiction Studies (First published 1973, Science-Fiction Studies, Issue No. 1, pp. 26 - 33.)

LEM, STANISLAW. 1976. The Time Travel Story and Related Matters of SF Structuring, in Suvin, Darko and Mullen, R. D. (eds), Science Fiction Studies. (First published 1974, Science-Fiction Studies, Issue No. 1, Spring, pp. 143 - 154.)

LESSING, DORIS. 1980. The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five. London: Jonathan Cape.

LESSING, DORIS. 1994. Re: Colonised Planet 5, Shikasta. London: Flamingo. (First published 1979.)

LESSING, DORIS. 1994. The Sentimental Agents in the Volyen Empire. London: Flamingo. (First published 1983.)

LESSING, DORIS. 1994. The Sirian Experiments. London: Flamingo. (First published 1981.)

LEWIS, C. S. 1968. The Voyage of the Dawn Treader. London: Collins. (First published 1952.)

LEWIS, C. S. 1969. The Silver Chair. London: Collins. (First published 1953.)

LEWIS, C. S. 1971. The Horse and His Boy. London: Collins. (First published 1954.)

LEWIS, C. S. 1976. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Harmondsworth: Puffin. (First published 1950.)

LEWIS, C. S. 1980. Prince Caspian. London: Harper Collins. (First published 1951.)

LEWIS, C. S. 1984. The Magician's Nephew. London: Faber. (First published 1955.)

LEWIS, C. S. 1995. The Last Battle. London: Collins. (First published 1956.)

LOPEZ, BARRY HOLSTUN. 1978. Of Wolves and Men. London: J. M. Dent and Sons.

LOWRY, Shirley Park. 1982. Familiar Mysteries: The Truth in Myth. New York: Oxford University Press.

MANLOVE, C.N. 1986. Gene Wolfe: The Book of the New Sun, in Science Fiction: Ten Explorations. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press.

MATRIX, Issue No. 120. July - August, 1996.

MCCAFFERY, LARRY. 1990. Gene Wolfe, in Across the Wounded Galaxies: Interviews with Contemporary Science Fiction Writers. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

MCHALE, BRIAN. 1987. Postmodernist Fiction. New York: Methuen.

MCINTYRE, VONDA N. 1978. Dreamsnake. London: Victor Gollanz.

MIDGELY, MARY. 1979. Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature. Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press.

MOFFAT, JUDITH. 1987. Pennterra. New York: Congdon & Weed.

MOORE, C. L: 1975. Shambleau, in The Best of C. L. Moore. New York: Doubleday. (First published 1933.)

MUNZ, PETER. 1973. When the Golden Bough Breaks. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

NEUMANN, ERICH. 1955. The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

NEWMAN, PAUL. 1979. The Hill of the Dragon: An Enquiry into the Nature of Dragon Legends. Bath: Kingsmead Press.

NICHOLLS, PETER. (ed.). 1979. The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction: An Illustrated A to Z. London: Granada.

ORWELL, GEORGE. 1963. Animal Farm: A Fairy Story. Harmondsworth: Penguin. First published 1945.)

PANSHIN, ALEXEI & PANSHIN, CORY. 1974. Science Fiction: New Trends and Old, in Bretnor, Reginald (ed.), Science Fiction, Today and Tomorrow.

PANSHIN, ALEXEI & PANSHIN, CORY. 1976. SF in Dimension: A Book of Explorations. Chicago: Advent.

PANSHIN, ALEXEI & CORY. 1989. The World Beyond the Hill: Science Fiction and the Quest for Transcendence. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher.

PARRINDER, PATRICK. 1980. Science Fiction: Its Criticism and Teaching. London: Methuen.

PRINGLE, DAVID. 1984. The Fourfold Symbolism of Ballard, in Vale, V and Juno, A. (eds), Re/Search: J. G. Ballard.

RAHV, PHILIP. 1966. The Myth and the Powerhouse, in Vickery, John B. (ed.), Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice.

READ, HERBERT. 1960. Art Now: An Introduction to the Theory of Modern Painting and Sculpture. London: Faber and Faber.

RENAULT, MARY. 1983. The Nature of Alexander. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (First published 1975.)

REVELL, GRAEME. 1984. Interview with J. G. Ballard, in Vale, V and Juno A. (eds), Re/Search: J. G. Ballard.

RICE, ANNE. 1976. Interview with the Vampire. London: Raven.

RIGHTER, WILLIAM. 1975. Myth and Literature. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

ROBERTS, THOMAS J. 1990. An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

ROWLAND, BERYL. 1974. Animals with Human Faces: A Guide to Animal Symbolism. London: George Allen and Unwin.

RUSS, JOANNA. 1976. Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction, in Suvin, Darko and Mullen, R. D. (eds), Science Fiction Studies. (First published 1975, Science-Fiction Studies, Issue No 2, July, pp. 112 - 119.

RUSS, JOANNA. 1983. When it Changed, in The Zanzibar Cat. U.S.A: Arkham House. (First published 1972.)

RUSS, JOANNA. 1985. Souls, in Extra(Ordinary) People. London: The Women's Press.

SCHLOBIN, ROGER C. (ed.). 1982. The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

SELDON, RAMAN. 1989. A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf. (First published 1985.)

SHELLEY, MARY W. 1960. Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus. London: J. M. Dent and Sons. (First published 1818.)

SIMAK, CLIFFORD D. 1954. City. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson (First published 1952.)

SLUSSER, G. E. & RABKIN, E. S. (eds). 1987. Intersections: Fantasy and Science Fiction. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

SMITH, CORDWAINER. 1981. The Game of Rat and Dragon, in Amis, Kingsley (ed.), The Golden Age of Science Fiction. (First published in Galaxy Science Fiction.)

SPENGLER, OSWALD. 1926. Decline of the West. London: Allen and Unwin.

SPIVEY, TED R. 1988. Beyond Modernism: Toward a New Myth Criticism. Lanham: University Press of America.

STEPHENSON, GREGORY. 1991. Out of the Night and Into the Dream: A Thematic Study of the Fiction of J. G. Ballard. New York: Greenwood Press.

STEVENS, ANTHONY. 1982. Archetype: A Natural History of the Self. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

STEVENS, ANTHONY. 1991. Jung. London: Penguin.

STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS. 1994. The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde. London: Penguin. (First published 1886.)

STRUGATSKY, ARKADY & STRUGATSKY, BORIS. 1978. Roadside Picnic. London: Gollancz.

SUVIN, DARKO. 1979. Metamorphosis of Science Fiction. New Haven: Yale University Press.

SUVIN, DARKO & MULLEN R. D. (eds). 1976. Science Fiction Studies. Boston: Gregg. (Collection of articles published by the Science-Fiction Studies series, 1973 - 1975.)

THOMAS, D. M. 1981. The White Hotel. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

THURBER, JAMES. 1976. Fables for Our Time, in Vintage Thurber, Vol. 1. London: Hamish Hamilton. (First published 1940.)

TIPTREE, JAMES. 1981. The Screwfly Solution, in Delany, Samuel R. (ed.), Nebula Winners Thirteen. (First published 1977.)

TODOROV, TZVETAN. 1975. The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre. (Translated by Richard Howard.) Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press. (First published 1970.)

TOLKIEN, J. R. R. 1995. The Lord of the Rings. London: Harper Collins. (First published 1954 - 1955.)

TOYNBEE, ARNOLD. 1935. Study of History. London: Oxford University Press.

VALE, V. & JUNO, A. (eds). 1984. Re/Search: J. G. Ballard. San Francisco: Re/Search Publications.

VAN DER POST, LAURENS. 1983. Jung and the Story of Our Time. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (First published 1976.)

VAN VOGT, A. E. 1953. Vault of the Beast, in Away and Beyond. New York: Avon.

VICKERY, JOHN B. (ed.). 1966. Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice. [S.l.]: University of Nebraska Press.

VONNEGUT, KURT. 1965. Cat's Cradle. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (First published 1963.)

VONNEGUT, KURT. 1990. Player Piano. London: Flamingo. (First published 1952.)

VONNEGUT, KURT. 1990. Slaughterhouse Five. London: Flamingo. (First published 1969.)

WARNER, MARINA. 1994. From the Blonde to the Beast. London: Chatto and Windus.

WELLS, H. G. 1960. The Island of Dr Moreau. London: Heinemann. (First published 1896.)

WELLS, H. G. 1957. The Short Stories of H. G. Wells. London: Ernest Benn.

WELLS, H. G. 1957. A Story of the Stone Age, in The Short Stories of H. G. Wells. (First published 1899.)

WELLS, H. G. 1957. The Time Machine, in The Short Stories of H. G. Wells. (First published 1895.)

WESTON, JESSIE. 1980. From Ritual to Romance. Bath: Chivers. (First published 1920.)

WILLIS, CONNIE. 1983. A Letter from the Clearys, in Wollheim, Donald A.(ed.), The 1983 Annual World's Best SF. (First published 1982.)

WILLIS, CONNIE. 1994. Impossible Things. New York: Bantam

WOLFE, GARY K. 1979. The Known and the Unknown: the Iconography of Science Fiction. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press.

WOLFE, GARY K. 1982. The Encounter with Fantasy, in Schlobin, Roger C. (ed.), The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art.

WOLFE, GENE. 1983. The Fifth Head of Cerberus: Three Novellas. London: Arrow. (First published 1972.)

WOLFE, GENE. 1983. The Fifth Head of Cerberus, in The Fifth Head of Cerberus: Three Novellas.

WOLFE, GENE. 1983. 'A Story', by John V. Marsch, in The Fifth head of Cerberus: Three Novellas.

WOLFE, GENE. 1983. V. R. T., in The Fifth Head of Cerberus: Three Novellas.

WOLFE, GENE. 1984. The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories and Other Stories. London: Arrow. (First published 1981.)

WOLFE, GENE. 1990. The Shadow of the Torturer. London: Legend. (First published 1980)

WOLFE, GENE. 1990. The Claw of the Conciliator. London: Legend. (First published 1981)

WOLFE, GENE. 1991. The Sword of the Lictor. London: Legend. (First published 1982)

WOLFE, GENE. 1991. The Citadel of the Autarch. London: Legend. (First published 1983)

WOLLHEIM, DONALD A. (ed.). 1983. The 1983 Annual World's Best SF. New York: Daw.

WOOD, SUSAN. 1989. Introduction, in The Language of the Night.

WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM. 1969. Selected Poems of Wordsworth. London: Oxford University Press.

WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM. 1969. Intimations of Immortality, in Selected Poems of Wordsworth. (First published 1807)

WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM. 1969. The Prelude: Book I, in Selected Poems of Wordsworth. (First published 1850.)

WRIGHT, W. 1975. Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western. Berkley, California: University of California Press.

YEATS, W. B. 1973. The Second Coming, in The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats. London: Macmillan. (First published 1921.)

YOUNG, DUDLEY. 1993. Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War. London: Abacus.

ZELAZNY, ROGER. 1975. This Immortal. New York: Garland. (First published 1965.)

ZELAZNY, ROGER. 1976. The Dream Master. Boston: Gregg. (First published 1965.)

ZELAZNY, ROGER. 1987. Fantasy and Science Fiction: A Writer's View, in Slusser, G. E. and Rabkin E. S. (eds), Intersections: Fantasy and Science Fiction.