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An Apostate Instauration:

Religion, Moral Vision and Humanism in Modern Science Fiction.

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ABSTRACT

Since the characteristic logicity of most science fiction can overshadow its debt to Romantic, or more properly, Gothic literature, the humanistic 'science fiction of aspiration' is a rather neglected element of the genre. This study offers evidence of a distinctive, often quite fundamental current of Gothic feeling which runs through some early science fiction; and traces the changing presentation of scientific materialism and the first strains of anticlericalism in later texts. As religious writers also have used the themes and conventions of science fiction astutely in attacking 'profane' science and 'secular' morality, especially in the context of the scientific or materialistic 'utopia', their stories are of considerable interest and are also discussed in detail.

A reader by turns reminded of human sinfulness and then again confronted with the imputed inadequacies which the Romantic humanist seeks to transcend may well wonder why religion and science clash so recurrently in science fiction. The provenances, contexts and discourse of the moral perspectives which are commonly encountered in this popular genre are identified and discussed. These are particularly significant in the light of the apostate quality of humanistic texts, and their teleological concerns. Several influential critiques of institutionalised religion and clerical hypocrisy are examined fully; they reveal how the central device of the factitious religion developed from its generic beginnings in Butler's first satire, Erewhon, and emerged as a distinctive feature of science fiction.

From the outset, the utilization of Faustian, Promethean and Messianic protagonists in this 'science fiction of aspiration' is scrutinised. Other intertextual features, whether conceptual, structural or thematic, are also elucidated. The study concludes with an examination of the most hubristic, sublime and teleological of the many themes of contemporary science fiction: the self-transcendence of man, the ultimate fulfilment of humanistic aspiration.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.	1
Abstract.	2
Contents.	4
Introduction.	5
References and Footnotes.	25
Chapter 1: <u>Four Auspices</u>	29
References and Footnotes.	50
Chapter 2: <u>A Legacy of Aspiration and Satire</u>	51
References and Footnotes.	106
Chapter 3: <u>Rationalism and Hubris: Some Science Fictional</u> <u>Views of "Progress"</u>	117
Objectifying the Sublime	118
Verne's Providential Universe and Wells's Dispassionate Cosmos.	148
An Inhumane Future: Utilitarian Ethics and Technological Servitude	165
References and Footnotes.	176
Chapter 4: <u>'Screams of Horror?': The Intemperate Moral Climate</u> <u>of the Brave New World</u>	197
The Devout Tradition and the <u>Philosophia Perennia</u>	202
<u>Brave New World</u> and <u>Walden Two</u> : Twin Visions of the City of Man	230
Modern Parables: The Religious Science Fiction of Lewis, Miller and Blish.	257
References and Footnotes.	301
Chapter 5: <u>Anticlericalism and Satire in the</u> <u>Factitious Religions of Science Fiction</u>	313
Rationalistic Scepticism: Religion as Immature Mythopoesis.	316
Orthodox Opiates: Theocracy, Aspiration and Sceptical Humanism	375
The Prophet of Futility and the Royal Faustus.	422
References and Footnotes.	442
Chapter 6: <u>Apostate Visions: from Man to Messiah, and Beyond</u>	457
The Consecrated Man: Theophany and Apotheosis in Science Fiction.	472
'A Sudden Surge': Synergy and The Teleological Transfiguration of Man	526
'GOD IS NOWHERE / GOD IS NOW HERE': Salvation and 'the prime aberration of the human mind'.	566
References and Footnotes.	597
Appendix: Wells's View of the Social Role of Religion.	602
Fiction Bibliography.	607
Note: Fiction is listed alphabetically by author with chapter reference(s).	

INTRODUCTION

The present work reports the findings of an extended study of the themes, images and devices used by a very diverse group of writers whose work discussed here reflects an attitude to religious belief, and an interest - however superficial or dismissive - in contemporary ethics. Their chosen medium is science fiction, a genre whose very nature ordains that its conventions are far from being hard and fast, and which encompasses some of the most prosaic, the most outré, and the most inventive fiction of recent times.

Attempts to describe science fiction definitively have long been a favourite critical pastime; collectively, however, these have only served to suggest how protean the field actually is, for science (or, as Robert Heinlein preferred, speculative) fiction hallmarks and conventions are continually being reworked by the genre's avant-garde. Generally speaking, though, science fiction can be regarded as a particular kind of radical fiction because it deals with what has been aptly called 'the forward edge of the present'; that is, the nature and potential impact of change.

Though critics have often disputed the essential nature of social change and its provenance, the central point is rarely disputed: science, or if you will, speculative fiction deals with momentous or general change as no other popular medium does. Moreover, some science fiction, though clearly conservative in values and perspective, is at the same time radical in the earlier sense. The change treated may be pernicious, malign or demonic, but it is happening, may happen or will happen. Other stories promote a more encouraging picture of human development. As will become evident, a fundamental argument about human fallibility and human perfectibility

is at the heart of this debate. The controversy seems perennial; it has continued through changes of theme and context, from the commitment to rationalism seen in early works, through the religious response to potentially lethal science and the anti-religious satires presented as factitious religions, emerging in recent post-modern depictions of human apotheosis. Indeed the fiction discussed in the following chapters reflects this marked disaffection with traditional perspectives, most notably religious attitudes, established in the past and hence rejected by minds whose attention is turned to the future.

Classic studies of the genre have tended to stress the man/machine relationship, the utopian and anti-utopian generic tradition, or have sought to formulate ontological definitions which discriminate between science fiction and science fantasy. Despite the religious title of his pioneering survey, J.O. Bailey did not identify or collate a group of religious science fiction texts in Pilgrims Through Space and Time: Trends and Patterns in Scientific and Utopian Fiction (1947), in the same way as he was able to discuss 'The Gothic Romance' or 'The Wonderful Journey'. In the late 1950's and early sixties, however, it was recognised that a group of distinctly religious texts was emerging, much as James Blish (writing as William Atheling) had anticipated in 1953:

Science fiction has already dealt at some length with the problems of interplanetary man's allegiance to a home country, to a home government, to the family he left behind, and even to the home sexual code. Lately there have been several science-fictional inquiries into his relationship with the home god...

This is of particular interest to the practising writer or critic, be he theist or mechanistic materialist himself, because it represents an enormous potential extension of the subject matter of science fiction in the direction of real human problems - which is the direction in which the medium must be extended if it is to remain viable.

James Gunn followed Blish (whose criticism written under the pen-name of William Atheling was later published as The Issue at Hand and More Issues at Hand), in grouping together (in The Road to Science Fiction) some of the more notable of the works discussed in the following chapters, and Brian Aldiss indicated the religious or moral nature of some texts in Billion Year Spree(1973) and Trillion Year Spree(1986) offering, in the later edition co-written with David Wingrove, a memorable, epigrammatic definition of science fiction as 'Hubris clobbered by nemesis.'⁽²⁾ Anthologies and collections such as Other Worlds, Other Gods (edited by Mayo Mohs) have found their way into libraries as hard-bound editions rather than as successful paperbacks. A degree of more sustained critical interest has also attended religious science fiction, and surveys of the field have been published, notably Harold L. Berger's study of chiliastic and dystopian themes, Science Fiction and the New Dark Age; and, most recently, The Transcendent Adventure: Studies of Religion in Science Fiction/Fantasy edited by Robert Reilly. Cogent, perceptive criticism has also lately provided semiotic and structuralist perspectives (by Darko Suvin, and Robert Scholes, respectively).

Science fiction with a religious setting or theosophical theme has quite a respectable pedigree in terms of the genre as a whole. Not much of it turns out to be very respectful towards orthodox or conventional religious belief, however. There are stories and novels which plainly are imbued with religious conviction, accepting Mankind's subordinate role in a created universe: however critical, unorthodox or visionary, these are, like the four novels named in the next paragraph, essentially devout fabrications and speculations. Then again there is sceptical writing which ranges from constructive

satire to hostile iconoclasm. The four titles below (by Mary Shelley, Philip K. Dick, and Samuel Butler) demonstrate the difficulty in assigning closely-defined values to these terms, for all are also sceptical to the extent that they are unorthodox. The question, being in many cases effectively a matter of degree, leads into the difficult area of authorial purpose, and demands close reading(3). (Fortunately authors often make their sympathies quite evident.)

The empirical approach adopted here aims to identify and explicate the contentions and ideologies of 'the science fiction of aspiration' by employing an original conceptual framework which supports the systematic exploration of the fiction, and which permits any views held in common by these many authors to be established. Their works have been organized to reflect the dominant ideology - religious faith, rationalism, transcendentalism - which they reflect, and to reveal their mutual influences and thematic resonances however overshadowed these may seem to be by the philosophical affiliations or religious persuasions of their authors.

Granted, the canon of texts discussed is not exhaustive, and while there are a number of texts, particularly short stories, which were not included, well-known examples illustrating every aspect of the science fiction of aspiration have been. The texts adduced in this study (many of them recognised to be amongst the finest of the genre) may be seen as forming a group within the genre as a whole. Each work discussed in the following chapters is like the others in two significant ways. In the first place, they all can be said to be science fiction (as opposed to science fantasy, horror, or escapist literature) because they all present scenarios which would be meaningless without their central scientific element, and offer a

narrative which remains faithful to the author's initial premises and is internally self-consistent, generally, from start to finish. Secondly, they deal with a chiliastic or teleological question, and consequently the term 'science fiction of aspiration' fittingly conveys their thematic concerns with destiny and the ultimate point or purpose of existence.

The appeal of this variety of science fiction has had a far greater durability than stories which dealt with such seven-day wonders as the lie detector, or other contemporary anxieties like the greenhouse effect. So even though the promethean theme, for example, is central to what was arguably the first modern science fiction (Mary Shelley's Frankenstein of 1818) one could easily find several recent novels in which this theme predominates, Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, for example. Furthermore, the unique significance of Samuel Butler's utopian satires, Erewhon (1872; 1901) and Erewhon Revisited (1901), can be discerned if they are seen as precursors of some of the most common forms of the science fiction of aspiration.

In his study of the genre, New Worlds for Old (4), David Ketterer proposed that science fiction is characteristically a 'literature of apocalypse'; and novels like Cat's Cradle, The Time Machine, Deus Irae and A Canticle for Leibowitz do afford plentiful evidence of the apocalyptic strand of modern science fiction. Yet, as Brian Aldiss's potted definition ('hubris clobbered by nemesis') implies, science fiction can also be seen, in similar terms to Mr. Ketterer's, as a 'literature of aspiration'. This study aims to elucidate the development and present standing of that complementary strand of the imagination in an important popular genre.

Since aspiration to divine power, humanistic rebelliousness and a concern with some moral issue are typical features, many of these stories possess distinctive storylines. Prometheus, Faust and the Messiah turn up in many guises in this 'instauration' of humanistic science fiction. Just as often (especially in stories of the late 1940's and 1950's such as C.S.Lewis's Out of the Silent Planet and James Blish's A Case of Conscience) the story has a manifestly religious setting or theme. A prominent concern with specific aspects of religion, morality and humanism is a feature of all of the work discussed. The preferred term is 'apostate' rather than 'heretical', however, for the idea of apostasy subsumes that of heresy and extends to the secular rebellion and radicalism of Nineteen Eighty-Four and Player Piano.

In his first novel, Jean-Paul Sartre listed fifteen humanistic persuasions(5), all of which probably are represented among the ranks of science fiction writers. The science fiction of aspiration is the generic form which is pre-eminently theirs; and the changing and diffuse nature of humanistic opinions, and their ethical imperatives, are of primary interest here. One cannot hope to be quite categorical faced with the sheer variety of argument and illustration advanced by so many authors, and the empirical approach ordains that these best be examined in their literary contexts rather than in the abstract. Yet a quite distinct form of idealistic humanism is often encountered in this group of diverse stories and novels. Essentially it is John Passmore's 'scientific humanist ideal...a world without myths, in which men will see for themselves, without feeling the need for any mythical justification, that to be at once rational, free and loving is the only life proper to man.'(6) With the decisive addition

of aspiration (which admittedly does not sit well with the implicit contentment of Passmore's secular culture), we have the well-spring of the late 'instauration' or revitalization of a radical genre less and less attracted by technological solutions or mechanistic thinking, but as concerned as ever with humane ethics and human destiny(7).

Crucially, aspiration (cognate in this context with disaffection with the present order) is in religious terms ipso facto apostate. For according to Christian epistemology - once the conventional metaphysical system of Western science fiction - the present order is Providential, i.e., the result of God's active interest in human affairs, and, notwithstanding the doctrine of free will, is subject always to Divine Will. To aspire, then, is to reject the Christian Revelation in favour of another code of behaviour, and to abandon the established religious sensibility in pursuit of a degree of ethical autonomy. One may therefore speak of the 'hubris' of humanism.

Ketterer acknowledges that 'most science fiction is optimistic'; but the science fiction of aspiration goes beyond scientific positivism or even a simple faith in progress in its humanistic implications. This literature is generally progressive, invoking constructive visions of the world as it is (or could be made) either by attempting "mimetic" description utilising rational extrapolation, or by pitching critical inferences in a dialectic with the prevailing social order. Very often these texts have a distinctive moral dimension; indeed, some are devout tracts, while others serve as a sort of authorial soapbox from which the writer harangues us with his insights into our frailties, vices or disappointingly unheroic lassitude. Their ideology and rhetoric are both individualistic - even solipsistic - and eclectic. Accordingly, both relevant critical

discussion and influential non-fiction such as Aldous Huxley's essay on Literature and Science, Sartre's Existentialism and Humanism, and C.P.Snow's controversial view of The Two Cultures are drawn upon where appropriate. Quite often, too, one encounters familiar ideas (the so-called 'shaggy God' stories culled from Christian Scripture, though other sources abound) which have been re-cast in a 'space-age' contextualisation. For instance, 'God is dead,' asserted Nietzsche; Philip K.Dick was able to be much more specific:

'God is dead,' Nick said. 'They found his carcass in 2109. Floating out in space near Alpha.'

'They found the remains of an organism advanced several thousand times over what we are,' Charley said. 'And it evidently could create habitable worlds and populate them with living organisms, derived from itself. But that doesn't prove it was God.'

'I think it was God.'

Our Friends from Frolix 8 (1970); p.50.

Of course, uncertainty or indeed despair about the nature of God is by no means a twentieth-century phenomenon, however secular the present may seem. When Nietzsche, the supreme advocate of self-assertion, was but ten years old, Gerard de Nerval paraphrased an even earlier source(8) to produce the impassioned declaration: 'God is dead! Heaven is empty - Weep, children, you no longer have a father.' The idea of God as a benevolent father bespeaks the fundamental link between morality and religion.

The most potent moral tenets have a religious provenance, for they are sanctioned (the very word has religious connotations) by God Himself, the Creator of mankind. Yet in the Garden of Eden there was but one law - 'Though shalt not eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.' Prelapsarian humans were, we are told, innocently ignorant of good and evil. The inference (of which much more will be said later) to be drawn could be that it is knowledge which sets apart Creator

and created. Yet even in their state of amoral simplicity man and woman desired to be greater than they were, for they were readily tempted, and the archetypal innocent primitives duly became Fallen Men(9).

What is remarkable about much of the fiction examined in this thesis is suggested by the quotation from Dick, which reflects a readiness to speculate about God, and godhood. Voltaire suggested that if God did not exist, then we should have to invent him. Not deterred by its latent anthropocentrism, this is a contention many science fiction writers have treated in their modern Faustian and Promethean allegories for two reasons. It raises the question of the validity of the enormous influence religions of all kinds possess, and regularly exercise in resolving moral issues conservatively. More significantly, this apostate principle suggests that godhood is somehow within the scope of human endeavour.

Such is the diversity of the science fiction of aspiration that many ideologies and faiths are represented, sympathetically or otherwise. However, four philosophies dominate the field: Christian ethics, scientific rationalism, atheistic materialism, and holistic gnosticism. Each has its own traditions and distinctive orientation of three particular tenets - the nature of the universe (cosmogony) and its beginnings (cosmogony); the role, and the purpose, of human existence (teleology); and the final state of the changing universe (eschatology).

Equally important is the characteristic epistemology, or theory of knowledge, central to, or implicit in the tenets of these several philosophical systems; and their essential ontology, or axiomatic

ideas of human nature.

Traditional Christian ideas about the nature of man and his knowledge of both the sublunary world and the angelic realms are conveyed - metaphorically or (even) literally - by the story of Adam and Eve and their Fall from Grace in Eden. Some knowledge is divine and therefore proscribed; and human nature is inherently imperfect. Accordingly, in speaking of the epistemology inherent in Christianity we must include three varieties of knowledge - mundane or pragmatic knowledge about the physical world; mystical or prophetic lore about the transcendent spiritual realm; and Revelation itself, the Word of God brought by the Redeemer of mankind who restored Fallen Man's birthright, and re-established in the world the teleological possibility of Salvation for mankind.

By contrast, scientific rationalism began and has remained emphatically materialistic, and by its very nature has long rejected the inference that there is knowledge about man and the universe which is too dangerous to be understood or utilised. Science, then, has since Classical times been seen as the means whereby man might be afforded increasing control of his environment and destiny. Also, the discoveries and theories of scientists have been taken, commonly, as being inimical to key elements of religious beliefs, giving rise to the ideas of atheistic materialism and other 'heresies' against the 'philosophia perennia'. Yet the increasing sophistication of science has paradoxically afforded late, apocalyptic evidence of the idea of human fallibility - thus, one may infer, of the imperfectness of human nature - while confirming that rationalism possesses its own limitations. Since the 1930's, science fiction has reflected the contemporary power of applied science (and the prevailing popular

view of science which it itself partly created) in its conventional presentation of science as being either millennial or deadly, the epitome of a Promethean endeavour.

Latterly the Enlightenment confidence of scientific materialism has been eroded by degrees into contemporary prudence or caution by the prescient awareness of the deficiencies of scientific methodology, a mood which echoes the tenor of Kant's critique of empiricism⁽¹⁰⁾. Ironically, while many Christians have retained their absolute faith in revealed knowledge (i.e., god-given knowledge), scientists have become increasingly aware of the inadequacies of the mechanistic approach which led their predecessors to suppose that anything might be possible for promethean man. The ancient Greeks, for instance, were aware of the dangers of assuming that rationalism held or could provide all the answers even in that most logical of disciplines, mathematics; but these same followers of Pythagoras who knew that his famous theorem is true for all cases except 1,1 and the (irrational) square root of 2 quietly suppressed the unpropitious fact. Heisenberg, author of the celebrated and fundamental 'Uncertainty Principle,' and after him, Einstein, whose theories of Relativity embody a persistent paradox, have re-introduced into science a spirit of enquiry which is much more conjectural and wary of its own premises, and prepared to be sceptical about its own findings.

For some writers this era of scientific scepticism is only the very threshold of the Age of Science rather than its culmination. Certainly Christian and other religious perspectives have developed over a similarly protracted time-scale; and new ideas such as Teilhard de Chardin's 'noosphere' - the spiritual totality of his theological theory of evolution - emerge as unorthodox but devout

reinterpretations of Christian teleology. Naturally all this is fertile ground for the genre's more original talents, for this same scientific scepticism supports thoroughly unscientific speculations, perhaps the least positively fantastic of which is gnostic holism.

Like science itself, gnosticism promises man power. However, the central premise of this school of thought is sceptical: if the scientific code has after all only an expedient or pragmatic objective relationship with the world as it actually is, then it may in fact be occluding our perception of the real world which scientific data approximately describe. Gnostic holism is the most intuitive and chimerical of the epistemologies which are encountered in science fiction, though fittingly it generally subsists in the more tenebrous locales of science fantasy wherein the implausible donnée may be projected with a less precise sort of extrapolation. Perhaps the purest modern avatar of Gothicism, it has annexed the macrocosm as its sublime demesne. Generally, its expressions are arcane rather than explicative, but where gnostic fabulation emerges in books like Fritz Leiber's Gather, Darkness, the Dune series and Ian Watson's The Embedding, for instance, it is buttressed by 'ultralogic' and 'ur-' or 'meta-language'. These approach Poe's 'arabesque reality' - 'a visionary realm outside of time and space' (11). Poe's gnostic stories invoke pseudo-science, arcana and apocrypha in creating a fearful scenario, but some modern successors in science fiction have employed similar materials to portray humane growth. Rather than Poe's microcosms - disruptive or morbid intrusions of multiplex reality into the familiar or quotidian - science fiction's hubrists, from Victor Frankenstein to the Atreides dynasty, strive to break through to the macrocosm in order to learn and develop.

Still, whatever its actual limitations, the pace of scientific change and innovation increases all the time, bringing mankind new challenges and vistas:

'...the technological and behavioral powers born of the new sciences convey the sense of control over the creational process. The idea emerges of man's purposes; of his actively shaping himself, his society, and his history. Instead of enquiring into God's creation of nature and man in the past, attention turns to man's self-creation in the future.'

12

The kind of progressive impulse described above J. Norman King is more and more coming to replace positivism in the promethean metaphor of science fiction. The idea of (self-) transcendence is essential to aspirational science fiction, which has evolved its own special representations, none more specific than the transformational alien synergies with which contemporary science fiction abounds as lusus naturae like 'Odd' John Wainwright once did. No materialist writer seems happy with the idea that human nature has reached a pitch of perfection that cannot be surpassed, and so aspiration, the progressive impulse central to this fiction is sustained. Indeed, some see man as having the potential to become (with or without the apocalyptic help of aliens) his own god.

Apocalypse and aspiration are complementary facets of science fiction and are found together in many of the novels discussed in this thesis, such as in Childhood's End, for instance, or in Dune, as indeed they are linked in the Gothic precursors of modern science fiction like Frankenstein and the sublime stories of Edgar Allan Poe. It is, however, hard to find a better instance of their association than in the novels of Philip K. Dick, of which Angus M. Taylor has written:

This (perfect) other world is Dick's ideal, organized, humanly-constructed realm of the spirit - of God, not transcendent, external, or above the world, but immanent - the full expression of the human potential. It is on this level that that Dick the political-scientist/sociologist merges with Dick the religious prophet, for if we recognize in his work the concept of immanent divinity, then the religious and political dimensions need not conflict. When humanity is God the politics is religion. The struggle for ideal social relations is the struggle of mankind towards its Godhood.

13

This heretical idea is the supreme humanist vision, bespeaking the ultimate vindication of the humanist tradition at the expense of orthodox religious beliefs. This teleology generally rejects Christian eschatology, in which the world (i.e., the Cosmos inhabited by man) is finally destroyed by God at the end of time after the Second Coming; and Christian soteriology - the promise of salvation and eternal reward extended to the individual. Yet two forms of materialist eschatology are not reducible in the same way, these being Spengler's theory of the ineluctable cyclical collapse of civilization; and the physical principle of cosmic entropy, in the 'heat-death' of the Universe. Even in the most inspired materialistic visions of human destiny, deterministic, cosmic factors like these remain to blight the outlook for Mankind.

Taylor's reading of Dick's moral vision introduces the idea of the immanent divinity of human nature - man can become a god in his own image. Humane theodicy, a highly speculative teleology, is the logical and intuitive culmination of humanistic aspiration. From Classical times it has stood for the most blasphemous, yet also the most inspiring, of humanist projections of man's creative potential and his immanent divinity. Symbolized for centuries by the Promethean myth, it has been transmitted to the present with only small concessions to Christian ethics. We may consider briefly two historic representations.

Marlowe's Faustus cannot sustain his acquired superhuman abilities because they are not innate; when his contract expires, they fail and the Devil claims him. His Icarian humanism thus prompted his seduction and self-betrayal.

Victor Frankenstein, the 'Modern Prometheus', tries to engineer an improvement on human nature, thereby fulfilling his aspiration to rule and to create in his own (idealized) image, but his hopes collapse when his viable if outwardly repellent creature rejects him in revenge for his earlier inability to cope with the consequences of his profane meddling with nature. In both these parables of scientific hubris, self-transcendence (the radical transformation of self and hence, personal situation) proves illusory and transitory.

The traditional argument of the devout writer is that the moral code, being God-given, is immutable and absolute; yet this perspective is rejected by a significant body of opinion who argue that morals reflect their social context, and vary in important ways in different cultures. Moral relativists like Wells, Huxley and Skinner point out ways in which morality is diversified or qualified by circumstances even within a society. For some sceptical humanists, ideas of vice and virtue are the products of social consensus, and form an ethical superstructure reflecting the humane capacity to distinguish right from wrong. Indeed, conventional moral restraint is regularly rejected by science fiction's hubrists (often, as in Tiger! Tiger! and Barefoot in the Head, at the cost of their sanity.)

To the devout, the ideal of worldly human perfectibility is not merely heretical, it is the very height of human vanity. It is also the essence of the humanistic science fiction of aspiration. Faustus the mage, a man of power and knowledge, aspires to godhood for if God exists at all, it may be possible to become like Him.

Contrast this with the tragic logic of the Jansenists, who lived in certain despair of ever seeing the 'hidden' God of their doctrine, but remained very devout if unorthodox Christians. For all that, as one might have expected, the speculative scepticism of much of the science fiction written about religion is usually humanistic, for in this 'Age of Scepticism', committed humanists invest their faith in Man, not a putative God.

If in this literature faith may be said to be one side of the coin, the other surely is reason. In the same way as faith has always been associated with devout aspiration, reason has been the corrolary of humanistic aspiration; and in science fiction, reason has until the middle decades of the present century been cognate with the rigorously logical methods and thinking of the laboratory scientist or the engineer. Yet the characteristically optimistic mood of scientific positivism has also been challenged, for scepticism can be as readily applied as a means of critical evaluation to science as it has been used to confound or refute any other doctrine (Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle is a prime example). Consequently, both religious and materialistic science fiction can possess a polemical note one might not have expected to meet with such regularity in a pre-eminently imaginative type of fabulation.

Scientific rationalism may itself not deny the existence of God, Christian or otherwise; atheistic materialism, one of its main cultural expressions, does. A purely humanistic philosophical frame, materialism focuses on man's existential situation and dismisses the notion of a spiritual or supernatural dimension to life. Providence, Redemption and Salvation are effectively mythical notions, for even if Man is not perfect, mankind is not culpable for having betrayed God's trust. The disingenuous blasphemy of John Lennon, for

instance, who claimed that the Beatles were 'more popular than Jesus Christ', suggests the eager iconoclasm of the Sixties and Seventies reflected in Moorcock's Behold the Man.

Materialists, then, being sceptical about the past, deal existentially with the present, but with mankind as the single focus of their confidence, they are impelled to take a positive line about the future. On the face of it, to do otherwise would be to accept the discouraging possibility of ineluctable or external constraints upon Man's ethical and racial development (pace ecologists) which must weaken or contradict the epic idea of inexhaustible human potential central to materialistic humanism. In fact such simplistic positivism is rarely encountered in science fiction of aspiration except as an object of satire by religious humanists like Blish, Lewis and Miller. Their work represents another philosophical hybrid in which conventional religious ethics are imbued with a radical vision of spiritual development which, despite having unorthodox ontological and teleological values, retains the reverence for God and its hope in the Christian Salvation of the philosophia perennia. It may be seen as the science fiction of spiritual aspiration, in which the humanistic idealism which gives epic force to fiction is modified by Christian ethics and hopes.

The humanistic emphasis of some science fiction is attracting a great deal of attention because of its conceptual complexity and depth. Its contemporary popularity reflects its capacity to offer refurbished parables and paradigms of attractive values and humane achievement. However, since science fiction also possesses a catastrophic variant, it is equally good at offering reinvigorated paradigms of despair, and the two strains go hand-in-hand in many texts. We may, for the sake of argument, consider how three apposite

deterministic influences affect the progressivism central to the science fiction of aspiration.

One of the most radical assertions of man's dominion over nature and rejections of Christian perspectives was issued by the German writer Neitzsche. As his perspectives were atheist, he refused to accept that man was a creature limited by design by a Creator. Rather, he saw man as capable of further evolution, and of becoming 'superman'. To achieve this virtual apotheosis, traditional ethics and moral values would have to be ignored by the transcendent individual. Yet far from being regarded as the pinnacle of emancipation, the amoral Übermensch culture is generally seen as the epitome of inhumanity, for in its megalomaniacal, self-obsessive ruthlessness, it permits the individual only two possible roles, supremacist or slave. Consequently, Neitzsche's ideas - undeniably epic but corrupted by their violent brand of evolutionary principle - are rarely advanced with any enthusiasm by humanists.

Marxian determinism is considered by some to represent the opposite extreme in terms of its limitations upon individual aspirations. Again, the case has been made by apologists that communism is inherently humanistic in its denial of God and the realm of the spirit, and in its insistence upon collective development; but critics of this socialist teleology object to its central principle that a class or collectivity, as opposed to an individual, establishes the scope of development. Heroism may be an appropriate aspiration, but divinity is absolutely precluded.

However, the ideas of Neitzsche and of Utopian socialism are alike in their promotion of the humanistic ideal that man is capable of self-transcendence; in the latter case, in serving the collective will or, conversely, in ruthlessly pursuing the individual will to

the point of apotheosis, the ultimate fulfillment of the Neitzschean hero. Yet, reflecting its materialistic principles, communist ideology is scientific where Neitzsche's vitalist ideals are essentially solipsistic.

What undoubtedly provided the impetus for both these emphatically different humanistic ideologies is the real nemesis of man the scientist - entropy, the ineluctable terminal state of physical existence and matter. For all that this is a scientific principle, inferred from countless experimental tests and the most basic assumption of all other scientific processes, its very universality is the most chilling answer to religiose soteriological hope, for it deterministically predicts the evolution of absolute inertia and annihilation. Frank Herbert, author of Dune, ascribes these perceptions to his messianic hero Paul Atreides, known to his fanatical Fremen acolytes as 'Muad'Dib':

There is in all things a pattern that is part of our universe. It has symmetry, elegance and grace - those qualities you find always in that which the true artist captures. You can find it in the turning of the seasons, in the way sand trails along a ridge, in the branch clusters of the creosote bush or the pattern of its leaves. We try to copy these patterns in our lives and our society, seeking the rhythms, the dances, the forms that comfort. Yet, it is possible to see peril in the finding of ultimate perfection. It is clear that the ultimate pattern contains its own fixity. In such perfection, all things move towards death.
from 'The Collected Sayings of Muad'Dib' by the Princess Irulan;
Dune, Bk.III, p.361

In its final end-state, the Universe is to fulfil its ultimate tendency, replacing the complex organisation of organic, sentient life with its own mindless form of frozen, primitive ordering. Indeed, it is this very bleak teleological prospect which generally stimulates both complementary strands of the science fictional imagination. (On the other hand, by using a similarly direct kind of logic, the devout may find an answer to the astrophysicist's godless

void in St. Anselm's axiom: 'Since God is divine, he encompasses all possibilities, including the possibility of existence.') Whatever its provenance, its humanistic idealism is one of the most enduring strengths of a genre whose authors continually confront the deadly idea of human annihilation with a prospect of transcendence and fulfilment.

REFERENCES and FOOTNOTES

1. ATHELING, William (James BLISH), 'Cathedrals in Space;' reprinted in The Issue at Hand, Advent Publishers, Chicago, 1973; p.50.
2. Aldiss's tongue-in-cheek 'definition' refers as much to the quite variable critical reception of science fiction, and the genre's rather humble reputation, as much as to the genre itself. He goes on to characterise ordinary literature as 'hubris clobbered by mimesis.' For all that, his choice of terms is not without significance. His actual definition of science fiction in Trillion Year Spree (amended from that of Billion Year Spree only by the substitution of 'mankind' for 'man,' and of 'mode' for 'mould') is:

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

3. Adam J. FRISCH and Joseph MARTOS have argued, in their paper 'Religious Imagination and Imagined Religion' (The Transcendent Adventure, ed. Robert Reilly, pp.11-26), that 'what science fiction writers dismiss as unworthy of imitation or belief is not usually religion but its parody - religiosity. Occasionally they even reject religiosity in the name of genuinely religious fundamentalizing, ultimatizing, and moralizing.' (p.13) While the distinction between earnest, devout satire of orthodox religion of the kind written by Samuel Butler and, more recently, Keith Roberts; and sceptical iconoclasm may not always be utterly clear, Messrs. Frisch and Martos certainly go too far in concluding that:

The visions of some authors and some stories are obviously religious (even when they often appear to be antireligious); the visions of many other authors and stories are more subtly religious (even when they do not specifically mention religion). They are concerned in some way with basic being, meaning, and goodness, and since these are essentially religious concerns we can say that science fiction of this sort is essentially religious. Op.cit., p.25

What is manifestly obvious in some of the works discussed in the following chapters, especially Chapter Six, ('The Factitious Religions of Science Fiction'), is that concerns such as 'basic being, meaning, and goodness' are just as important to those secular writers who satirize religious beliefs and sentiments in good earnest, and who look upon these same qualities as humane qualities first and foremost, and religious qualities only by dogmatic annexation. In other words, some sort of moral propriety, observance, or decency is innate and antedates the Koran, the Ten Commandments, and any other orthodox codex of moral tenets, which directly counters their assumption that all or any morality is de facto religious.

Another remarkable proposition they lead in their discussion of varieties of religious science fiction is that Walter M. Miller's excellent A Canticle for Leibowitz is in fact a parody of institutionalized religion, a contention which is, to say the least, marvellously wide of the mark. The Order of Blessed Liebowitz may indeed possess what are, even by today's standards, unique oddities because its canon was distorted by the legacy of the holocaust from which it emerged as the guardian of faith and learning, but the reader is never in any doubt that the Order is indeed the repository of a moral authority which clearly transcends such circumstantial distortions. (See also Chapter Four, below.)

4. KETTERER, David, New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature; Indiana Univ. Press, London, 1974.
5. Antoine Roquentin, the diarist of Sartre's Nausea (1938), regales the reader with the following catalogue (which has been abridged by leaving out most of 'Roquentin's' bitter sarcasm):

The radical humanist is a special friend of civil servants. The so-called 'Left-wing' humanist's chief concern is to preserve human values; he belongs to no party because he doesn't want to betray humanity as a whole, but his sympathies go towards the humble; it is to the humble that he devotes his fine classical culture... The Communist writer has been loving men ever since the second Five-Year Plan; he punishes because he loves... The Catholic humanist, the late-comer, the Benjamin, speaks of men with a wonder-struck air. What a beautiful fairy-tale, he says, is the humblest life, that of a London docker, of a girl in a shoe factory! He has chosen the humanism of the angels; he writes, for the edification of the angels, long, sad, beautiful novels, which frequently win the Prix Femina.

Those are the principal types. But there are others, a swarm of others: the humanist philosopher who bends over his brothers like an elder brother who is conscious of his responsibilities; the humanist who loves men as they are, the one who loves them as they ought to be, the one who wants to save them with their consent, and the one who will save them in spite of themselves, the one who wants to create myths, and the one who is satisfied with the old myths, the one who loves man for his death, the one who loves man for his life, the happy humanist who always knows what to say to make people laugh, the gloomy humanist whom you usually meet at wakes. They all hate one another: as individuals, of course, not as men.

From the 1965 Penguin Edition, pp.168-169;

translated by Robert Baldick.

6. PASSMORE, John, Science and its Critics; Duckworth & Co. Ltd., London, 1978; p.19. His further discussion, in which he confronts the propositions of Skinner, the advocate of behavioral psychology, is of interest in the light of the present discussion:

The scientific humanist ideal, one might say, is a world without myths, in which men will see for themselves, without feeling the need for any mythical justification, that to be at once rational, free, and loving is the only life proper to man. It is a splendid ideal, one that I do not wish for a moment to deny. But when we look at other societies, we see clearly enough the way in which their moral policies are supported by myths - the myth of the proletariat, the myth of the classless society, for example. And we know that to the inhabitants of such societies, these doctrines are not myths - modern versions of ancient myths about the rule of saints in an earthly paradise - but manifest truths. Is humanist-democratic thinking dependent on similar myths, myths about responsibility, freedom, and creativity that the growth of science might destroy? Skinner clearly thinks so. I have taken the opposite view. I have argued that science can destroy myths about the degree of autonomy human beings possess without weakening our everyday concepts of freedom, responsibility, and dignity. But if I am wrong, then science could end by destroying the self-conception on which its very existence depends. And that I am wrong, many antisocialists would argue. (Ibid.)

7. Clearly Stanislaw LEM, author of Solaris, is seeking not so much a revitalization of science fiction but its transformation in the following keynote challenge to its conventions:

We thus come to understand what SF has done to the cosmos, for it makes no sense at all to look at the universe from the point of view of ethics. Therefore, the universe of SF is not only miniscule, simplified and lukewarm, but it has also been turned towards its inhabitants, and in this way can be subjugated by them, losing thereby its indifference. . . . In the universe of SF there is not the slightest chance that genuine myths and theologies might arise, for the thing itself is a bastard of myths gone to the dogs. The SF of today is a "graveyard of gravity," in which that subgenre that promised the cosmos to mankind, dreams away its defeats in onanistic delusions and chimeras - onanistic because they are anthropocentric.

Science Fiction Studies 4 (1977)

Lem's are serious contentions; some science fiction does seem merely derivative or unexciting conceptually, and of a genre which enjoys a reputation for imagination and originality, such charges are simply damning. His pessimism extends to the intellectual range of a genre which focuses inwards on man at the expense of 'genuine myths and theologies' which would not subsist on ethical concerns. Significantly Lem's main criticism expresses his impatience with science fiction which sustains the genre's humanistic tradition, which he rejects as anthropocentric and self-serving. The science fiction of aspiration treated in this study disappoints when viewed from this rigorous perspective, as, for all its apostasy, its central concerns are with the teleology (and thereby) the ontology of man. But it does not follow that it is thereby as conservative in nature as he seems to argue.

Lem also takes issue with the way science fiction authors have domesticated the universe itself with comforting ethics. Yet, as is argued elsewhere in this study, the characteristic hubris of the science fiction of aspiration and the maverick rebelliousness of its protagonist, is the quality which imbues its 'myths gone to the dogs', its Promethean, Faustian and Messianic storylines, with their vigour and lasting appeal. Moreover, the 'humane' ethics Lem scorns usually function in this kind of science fiction as an aspect of a confrontation with conservative values. Advanced as improvements or correctives to the values of the times, they therefore testify to an author's progressive intent and prevent the dismissal of his arguments as simply unprincipled. If they seem relativistic or anthropocentric by comparison with the absolutist morality they challenge, it is because their respective authors in fact recognize the cosmic indifference of which Lem speaks, as is borne out by the existentialist perspective some stories reveal. Their ethics are 'humane' (i.e., 'local' and sometimes so localized as to be simply the egotistical responses of the hubrist) not 'cosmic;' but the vision and experience they portray are macrocosmic.

8. Jean-Paul, Blumen- Frucht- und Dornstucke, 1796.
9. Intriguingly, even in Christian lore, the Old Testament Jews did not receive sacrosanct laws until Moses' time (though then these were straight from the hands of God).
10. Passmore, op.cit., discusses three common criticisms of the scientific method and the scope of its principles:

What can such critics have in mind? What, if not what science does by creating and testing theories, would count as "telling us why?" If scientific explanations were really satisfactory, if they really told us why, then - so it has often been replied - first, they would refer us to reasons so fundamental that we should at once see why everything must be as it is; secondly, these fundamental reasons would take the form of purposes; thirdly, they would explain everything, leaving no room whatsoever for chance or coincidence. All that science does, in contrast, is to tell us that one thing happens as a result of something else happening; it draws attention to a mechanism, not a purpose; it sets aside much that happens as, by the nature of the case, not admitting of explanation. So it leaves us, if we are in search of genuine explanations, as dissatisfied as ever.

p.4

11. See Ketterer, op.cit., Chapter 3.III; as well as Chap. 3 below.
12. KING, J.Norman, 'Theology, Science Fiction, and Man's Future Orientation;' in Many Futures, Many Worlds ed. by Thomas D. Claerson, Kent State University Press, 1977; pp.237-259.
13. Angus M. TAYLOR, 'Critics Dream of Electric Dick;' Foundation 10 (June 1976); p.125

CHAPTER ONE:

Four Auspices

Lately modern science fiction has attracted a good deal of critical attention, at least partly because the assumption is abroad that it has "caught up" with the mainstream of contemporary literature or otherwise "matured":

As a noncanonical, subliterary genre, science fiction has inevitably tended to lag behind canonized or mainstream literature in its adoption of new literary modes.Dating from the "new wave," however, the pace of change in science fiction has accelerated, so that already by the late 1960's and early 1970's we can begin to discern...an increased openness to developments in post-modernist writing - in other words, a tendency towards the "post-modernization" of science fiction.

Brian McHale,
Postmodernist Fiction(1)

The general re-evaluation of science fiction has been prompted to some extent by the familiarity of a new generation of structuralist and "poetic" critics who dismiss the damning prejudices with which even the more impressive works of the 1950's and 1960's were often met. However, it has coincided with a new readiness of some authors to experiment more freely and ambitiously with science-fictional language, motifs and ideas, and use them with a greater awareness of what limitations generic conventions may possess. Above all, though, some contemporary science fiction writers have succeeded in adapting the materials traditionally associated with the genre to create new parables of human endeavour and enterprise in the bewildering and disturbing post-modernist climate of scepticism, anxiety, confusion and personal insecurity. Writing in the early 1970's, Brian Aldiss noted that, 'Science fiction, like most branches of art today, is more aware than ever before of its own nature'; and went on to characterise

the 'basic impulse' of science fiction as being 'as much evolutionary as technological.'⁽²⁾ The basic question this begs, however, must be teleological. If the interaction of these two modern wisdoms, technology and development, does offer mankind increasing control over the rate and direction of further social and personal evolution (man 'actively shaping himself, his society and his history' as King⁽³⁾ puts it), this basic teleological question - 'What is the ultimate point or purpose of existence?' - is undoubtedly germane, and not simply because many celebrated authors of science fiction have explored it in their fiction.

Terms used in analysing and discussing the science fiction of aspiration may be unfamiliar; many of them are illustrated in the following discussion of two short stories (by Arthur C. Clarke, and Harry Harrison) which often have been selected for general anthologies of science fiction, a "novella", or short novel, by James Blish, and a recent short story by Brian Aldiss. These 'auspices' collectively convey an overview of the broad range of religious and humanist concerns encountered in this literature.

'Surface Tension' by James Blish(1957) deals with humane aspiration in an vivid and ingenious way, and is one of the longer sections of a novel, The Seedling Stars⁽⁴⁾, the whole consisting of four such 'books' about genetic engineering and the adaptation of human life to existence on other worlds. In a carefully crafted story consisting of a prologue and two 'cycles' each several chapters long, Blish tells of the beginnings of human life on an alien world called Hydrot.

The story opens with a prologue in which the crew of a crashed exploration ship consider their bleak future. The theme of aspiration is introduced at the outset as a crew member reflects grimly on their

hopeless situation and the mission which had brought them there:

'If I were a religious man," the pilot said suddenly, I'd call this a plain case of divine vengeance.'

..'It's as if we'd been struck down for--is it hubris? Pride, arrogance?'

'Hybris,' Chatvieux said, looking up at last. Well, is it? I don't feel swollen with pride at the moment. Do you?'

'...I was thinking about why we came here in the first place. It takes a lot of arrogance to think that you can scatter men, or things very much like men, all over the face of the galaxy. It takes even more pride to do the job - to pack up all the equipment and move from planet to planet and actually make men, make them suitable for every place you touch.'

'Surface Tension,' Prologue; p.108

The usurpation of divine creativity, the conscious meddling with the natural order in trying to take control of and direct human evolution, is, of course, a sort of Frankensteinian hubris. However, as Chatvieux points out to the anxious pilot, '...we don't make men. We adapt them' - pantropy does not aim to better created Man, merely to alter the basic human physique to allow survival in most exobiological environments, including, in this case, two-foot puddles. Thus, even if some of the necessary restructurings are fairly drastic - webbed feet, six-week breeding cycle, sporulate hibernation, and arachnid book-lungs, all to microscopic scale - the resultant creatures will be 'people' and 'men'. The scientists then determinedly talk out any possibility of divine usurpation:

Chatvieux nodded. 'All right, let's get started. While the pantropes are being calibrated, the rest of us can put our heads together on leaving a record for these people. We'll micro-engage the record on a set of corrosion-proof metal leaves, of a size our colonists can handle conveniently. We can tell them, very simply, what happened, and plant a few suggestions that there's more to the universe than what they find in their puddles. Some day they may puzzle it out.'

'Question,' Eunice Wagner said. 'Are we going to tell them they're microscopic? I'm opposed to it. It may saddle their entire early history with a gods-and-demons mythology that they'd be better off without.'

'Yes, we are,' Chatvieux said, and la Ventura could tell by the change in the tone of his voice that he was speaking now as their senior on the expedition. 'These people will be of the race of men, Eunice. We want them to win their way back into the community of men. They are not toys, to be protected from the truth forever in a fresh-water womb.

'Surface Tension,' Prologue; p.114

Though the adapted men could have been given important advantages in establishing themselves on Hydrot, Chatvieux ordains that their identity - and hence, sensibility - are to be forged through struggling to master their environment and overcoming the predators which could end their bid for survival. While evidently a celebration of human intelligence, fortitude and adaptability, this is also an adventure story which depicts both human aspiration and vulnerability in the macrocosm. The physical environment of the world where the tiny adapted men struggle for freedom, and the other obstacles which they have to overcome to claim and exercise their ancestral legacy, is exploited by the doomed scientists to ensure that the colonists will not become complacent or decadent.

This drive to contend against restrictions upon development and freedom, the ennobling struggle to change the human universe for the better, is actually a form of positivistic humanism; and none of the crew question the propriety of the idea. It is an implicit assumption of the story that humaneness - one's "humanity" - is the product of a righteous struggle to fulfill one's destiny or aspirations. Other humane qualities which are celebrated in this story are intelligence and organisation, below; and, later, initiative and the scientific method. For these impressive faculties, men are respected by the most intelligent of the indigent life-forms whose habitat they now share, the protozoans:

'Why do we need Shar?' the other Para said.

'For his brains, Para. He is a thinker.'

'But his thoughts are water. Since he has taught the Protos man's language, he has forgotten to think of the Eaters. He thinks forever of the mystery of how man came here. It is a mystery - even the Eaters are not like man. But understanding it will not help us to live.'

Lavon turned blindly toward the creature. 'Para, tell me something. Why do the Protos side with us? With man, I mean? Why do you need us? The Eaters fear you.'

There was a short silence. When the Para spoke again, the vibrations of its voice were more blurred than before, more even, more devoid of any understandable feeling.

'We live in this world,' the Para said. 'We are of it. We rule it. We came to that state long before the coming of men, in long warfare with the Eaters. But we think as the Eaters do, we do not plan, we share our knowledge and we exist. Men plan; men lead; men are different from each other; men want to remake the world. And they hate the Eaters, as we do. We will help.'

'And give up your rule?'

'And give it up, if the rule of men is better. That is reason...'

'Surface Tension', Cycle One; p.120

Blish's story also provides an excellent illustration of the crucial role given in the science fiction of aspiration to the acquisition of knowledge both as a characteristic motive of human behaviour, and as a uniquely humane achievement: 'if the new universe of which Shar had spoken existed at all, it had to exist beyond the sky, where the light was. Why could not the sky be passed, after all?' Motivated by his curiosity about the stars mentioned on the history plates, this intrepid, Icarian hero, Lavon, ascends to contest the natural barrier:

'Lavon! Where are you going? Lavon!'

He leaned out and looked down. The man with the adze, a doll-like figure, was beckoning to him from a patch of blue-green retreating over a violet abyss. Dizzily he looked away, clinging to the bole; he had never been so high before. He had, of course, nothing to fear from falling, but the fear was in his heritage. Then he began to climb again.

After a while, he touched the sky with one hand. He stopped to breathe. Curious bacteria gathered about the base of his thumb where blood from a small cut was fogging away, scattered at his gesture, and wriggled mindlessly back toward the dull red lure.

He waited until he no longer felt winded, and resumed climbing. The sky pressed down against the top of his head, against the back of his neck, against his shoulders. It seemed to give slightly, with a tough, frictionless elasticity. The water here was intensely bright, and quite colourless. He climbed another step, driving his shoulders against that enormous weight.

It was fruitless. He might as well have tried to penetrate a cliff.

Again he had to rest. While he panted, he made a curious discovery. All around the bole of the water plant, the steel surface of the sky curved upward, making a kind of sheath. He found that he could insert his hand into it - there was almost enough space to admit his head as well. Clinging closely to the bole, he looked up the inside of the sheath, probing it with his injured hand. The glare was blinding.

There was a kind of soundless explosion. His whole wrist was suddenly encircled in an intense, impersonal grip, as if it were being cut in two. In blind astonishment, he lunged upward.

The ring of pain travelled smoothly down his upflung arm as he rose, was suddenly around his shoulders and chest. Another lunge and his knees were being squeezed in the circular vice. Another...

Something was horribly wrong. He clung to the bole and tried to gasp, but there was - nothing to breathe.

The water came streaming out of his body, from his mouth, his nostrils, the spiracles in his sides, spurted in tangible jets. An intense and fiery itching crawled over the surface of his body. At each spasm, long knives ran into him, and from a great distance he heard more water being expelled from his book-lungs in an obscene, frothy sputtering. Inside his head, a patch of fire began to eat away at the floor of his nasal cavity.

Lavon was drowning.

With a final convulsion, he kicked himself away from the splintery bole, and fell. A hard impact shook him; and then the water, who had clung to him so tightly when he had first attempted to leave her, took him back with cold violence.

'Surface Tension,' Cycle Two; p.151

'In blind astonishment, he lunged upward' - Lavon's is almost a paradigm of the post-modernist hubrist's sensibility. Blish's adventurer lunges towards the unknown, rather than recoiling fearfully from it, for only by vanquishing his own timorousness can the seeker after knowledge secure it. Lavon is L'Allegro to Shar's Il Penseroso, continuing the Prologue's attributions of wisdom to Chatvieux the scientist and

daring to la Ventura the pilot, respectively. However, for this, the sixteenth generation of the adapted men, Lavon's audacious trip through the meniscus has twofold special significance, for it confirms that the hints of a greater world of men beyond the stars gleaned from the history plates are not mere misinterpretations; and, equally important, that there is something beyond their 'sky'.

Consequently, the adapted men design and then construct from the wooden materials to hand a vehicle which will take them through the surface tension which restricts them to their pool. After making a successful breakthrough, they pass through the 'roof' of their microcosm and traverse the intervening landscape in their water-filled 'space-ship'. The sun sets, and a breathtaking prospect takes its place in the heavens:

'Now then,' Shar said thoughtfully, 'I would guess that there's water over there in the canyon, if we can reach it. I'll go below again and arrange...'

Lavon gasped.

'What's the matter?'

Silently, Lavon pointed, his heart pounding.

The entire dome of indigo above them was spangled with tiny, incredibly brilliant lights. There were hundreds of them, and more and more were becoming visible as the darkness deepened. And far away, over the ultimate edge of the rocks, was a dim red globe, crescented with ghostly silver. Near the zenith was another such body, much smaller, and silvered all over...

Under the two moons of Hydrot, and under the eternal stars, the two-inch wooden spaceship and its microscopic cargo toiled down the slope toward the drying little rivulet.

'Surface Tension,' Cycle Two; p.175

Blish concludes with a flourish. Another surprise awaits the adventurers: the girls next door. The colonists have haploid, not diploid, genes and reproduction is asexual; thus, all the people in Lavon's pool are male. The discovery they make in the neighbouring pool, that there are two genders, is probably only the least significant element

of this resolution of the story. More importantly, the humans have finally won over the independent-minded but cooperative Protos to their cause, and so the lost history plates are returned. The clinching proof was the demonstration that knowledge is as important as Shar and his predecessors had always insisted, for as the dying Proto acknowledges, 'There is nothing that knowledge cannot do':

The Para stirred feebly. The girl watched it with wide eyes. The sound of the Para using human speech seemed to impress her more than the ship itself, or anything else that it contained.

'The Eaters can be conquered,' the thin, burring voice said. 'The Protos will help,' as they helped in the world from which we came. The Protos fought this flight through space, and deprived Man of his records; but Man made the trip without the records. The Protos will never oppose Man again. We have already spoken to the Protos of this world, and have told them that what Man can dream, Man can do. Whether the Protos will it or not.

'Shar - your metal record is with you. It was hidden in the ship. My brothers will lead you to it.

'This organism dies now. It dies in confidence of knowledge, as an intelligent creature dies. Man has taught us this. There is nothing. That knowledge. Cannot do. With it...men...have crossed...have crossed space...'

'Surface Tension,' Cycle Two; p.180

Even if Blish could not resist mildly sending up this encounter with the opposite sex - looking at the girl, Lavon's gaze meets her eyes and he feels 'an unaccountable warmth' (and he fails to catch the significance of Shar's question, 'But - have we?') - the teleological question remains, as Shar realizes, unanswered. Their aspiration had brought them a rite of passage, from which they have emerged with their human identity confirmed and their ancestors' ontological problem effectively resolved. These are not decadent creatures, but men, possessing imagination, initiative, intelligence, technological and scientific awareness, creativity, and determination. However, they are also ignorant of their real origins (though they now have

their history plates again), and of one other vital faculty with which they were endowed and which Blish quietly allowed to slip out of the story's focal plane: they will one day be air-breathers again, and comprehend that space, as their progenitors knew it and beyond which lies their real birthright as part of the community of humankind to which they belong, is the real challenge which they must ultimately confront.

One strategy quite frequently used by partisan authors is to seek to discredit a religious creed by excoriating its doctrinal morality and vision; or less ambitiously, simply by depicting a particular sort of religious folly or paradox. In the next example, evangelical zeal and blind faith are exposed to satirical scorn.

'An Alien Agony' by Harry Harrison (1962; 5) is a transposition of Christ's death into a prelapsarian alien world in which the innocence of the native beings is at stake. The role of the serpent as corrupter is ironically filled by a missionary priest, whose zeal to bring the Weskers into the congregation of his faith brings him into direct confrontation with a sceptical trader, John Garth, who insists the priest leave them as they are. Father Mark is a humble, most devout and utterly sincere figure who resorts to self-assertion reluctantly, and only when his mission demands it:

'You're not wanted here and have no permission to land. You're a liability and there is no one on Wesker to take care of you. Get back into the ship.'

'I don't know who you are sir, or why you are lying to me,' the priest said. He was still calm but the smile was gone. 'But I have studied galactic law and the history of this planet very well. ...I have as much right to be here as you do.'

'An Alien Agony,' p.323

Garth is profoundly hostile to the priest because, knowing Wesker and its people well, he fears for their independence. He sees the Weskers

themselves as a rational, guileless and guiltless people completely at ease in their world. Their only slightly irritating trait is an apparently insatiable curiosity. Itin and the other Weskers take turns to act as their group's 'Knowledge Collector.' The Weskers have no religion, and Garth resents Father Mark's intention to introduce one to them, not just because he is an atheist and cannot see any point in religion, but because he believes that the logical Weskers, faced with its paradoxes and mysteries, will only become confused. However, unable to dissuade the priest, Garth leaves him to his evangelism.

The Weskers, with their characteristic obsession with knowledge, are a ready audience for Father Mark's biblical sermons but they find incongruities in the priest's discussions of the Scriptures. The paradoxes of the sacred mysteries which can only be resolved by an act of faith puzzle the aliens, and they consequently seek the views of Garth on the subject, asking him to confront Father Mark with his sceptical arguments so that they may decide for themselves by evaluating the debate:

'Will you come to the church? he asked. 'Many of the things that we study are difficult to learn, but none as difficult as this. We need your help because we must hear you and Father Mark talk together. This is because he says one thing is true and you say another is true and both cannot be true at the same time. We must find out what is true.'

'I'll come, of course,' Garth said, trying to hide the sudden feeling of elation.

'An Alien Agony,' p.331

Garth is elated by Itin's request for it suggests that they might still be disabused of the priest's teachings - 'There could still be grounds for hope that they might yet be free.' The idea of freedom for the Weskers, in Garth's eyes from the nonsense of religion, and in Father Mark's, from their native ignorance of Revelation and Providence, is central.

Garth's role in the discussion which ensues in the church is to advocate his atheistic materialism as the alternative to Christianity. The first question raised by the Weskers concerns the Creation: if, as Father Mark asserts, the Creator always existed even before his act of creation, might not the universe also always have existed? Father Mark replies that belief and contingent salvation are matters of faith - they are thus to be believed without the necessity of proof. Unconvinced, Itin turns to Garth, who advocates 'the scientific method which can examine all things - including itself - and give you answers that can prove the truth or falsity of any statement.'

To Garth's horror, Itin resolves to put the matter of God's existence to a logical test. A miracle is required, he decides, and only one kind will do:

'Now all He need do is make a miracle and He will bring us all to Him - the wonder of an entire new world worshipping at His throne, as you have told us, Father Mark. And you have told us how important this thing is. We have discussed this and find that there is only one kind of miracle that is best for this kind of thing.'

His boredom at the theological wrangling vanished from Garth in an instant. ... He could see the illustration in the bible where Itin held it open, and knew in advance what the picture was.

'An Alien Agony,' p.333

Incessantly curious about literal truth and already prepared to verify experimentally the priest's contentions about miracles, the aliens crucify him according to his account of Christ's redemptive sacrifice in a horrifyingly pragmatic test of the validity of his belief. In the aftermath, they perceive that their previous innocence has been replaced by a new knowledge of sin, guilt and repentance.

Garth had killed and injured several of the Weskers in struggling to prevent them taking Father Mark. When he revives he finds that Itin has returned to loosen his bonds so that he can escape, for some of

his fellows, taking their lead from Father Mark's bible, wish to put him to death in retribution for the deaths which occurred at his hands. Itin has another purpose, however. Confused and worried about what has happened, Itin wants Garth to reassure him that Father Mark will rise on the third day and that the expected miracle will occur. When Garth denies the possibility, Itin asks the now ineluctable questions:

'Then we will not be saved? We will not become pure?'
'You were pure,' Garth said, in a voice somewhere between a sob and a laugh. 'That's the horrible ugly dirty part of it. You were pure. Now you are...'
'Murderers,' Itin said, and the water ran down from his lowered head and streamed away into the darkness.
'An Alien Agony,' p.336

Religion, as well as being the cause of Father Mark's death and the deaths of several others, is also held to be the source of guilt and moral confusion. To Garth, the Weskers are now a fallen race, their character changed utterly by their encounter with Father Mark's Christianity. While before the priest's intrusion they were innocent, rational creatures they now are subject to guilt, violence and all the doubts of religion, but without faith in their religion to help them overcome these new problems.

Harrison's parable sets two mutually exclusive views of the world at odds with one another. The rational Weskers stretch the meaning of religious tenets to the point where they are found lacking literal credibility, and as a result, Itin approaches Garth's philosophical position as the story ends. If they have gained knowledge, they have also been degraded as free, rational creatures as a direct consequence of murdering the priest; and they have, in effect, committed their own version of Original Sin - which ironically casts the well-meaning but naive priest in the role of the Tempter.

Though hardly a triumph for the trader's scientific materialism, he has avoided sharing the fate of the priest, and his argument that it would have been better to allow the Weskers to come to their own conclusions about sin and redemption through their own undistorted experience seems to have been upheld. The story may seem contrived but it does vividly promote its author's view of the manifold weaknesses of both scientific and religious abstract thought.

J.B.S.Haldane once observed that, 'There is no great invention, from fire to flying, that has not been hailed as an insult to some god.' It seems that it remains as attractive as ever to depict religion as a reactionary social force; certainly, the authors of the profane factitious religions of modern science fiction (discussed in Chapter 5) would seem to think so. More generally, a golden, utopian version of technophilic humanism is set in opposition to religious conservatism in many works of the first half of the century. John Roberts caught this ideological confrontation well recently when he reflected that 'Progress relies on the power of reason rather than on the scrutiny of sacred texts.' (The Triumph of the West). However, in the generic fiction of the period from the Second World War until the mid-1960's it is not hard to find evidence of a growing uneasiness with the simplistic notion that machines which liberate mankind also ennoble us. The divine injunction against seeking potentially disastrous knowledge is to the fore in some of the science fiction of the time. Still, another common theme is that only Progress will bring us the challenges which will offer us more knowledge and hence, greater self-awareness and maturity. In Arthur C. Clarke's short story 'The Star'(1955;6), mankind exploits the future technology of space travel, and an unnerving revelation is thereby gained.

The crew of a scientific exploration vessel are investigating a supernova:

We were flying into the centre of a cosmic bomb that had detonated millenia ago and whose incandescent fragments were still hurtling apart. The immense scale of the explosion, and the fact that the debris already covered a volume of space of many billions of miles across, robbed the scene of any visible movement. It would take decades before the unaided eye could detect any motion in these tortured wisps and eddies of gas, yet the sense of turbulent expansion was overwhelming.

'The Star,' p.117

The narrator is a Jesuit scientist; the story is his rueful, tormented meditation over a deep crisis of faith: 'It is three thousand light-years to the Vatican. Once I believed that space could have no power over faith, just as I believed that the heavens declared the glory of God's handiwork. Now I have seen that handiwork, and my faith is sorely troubled.'(p.115) He is concerned also by the broader implications of their discovery - 'Will my report on the Phoenix Nebula end our thousand years of history? It will end, I fear, much more than that.'(p.116)

Forces of enormous magnitude were unleashed by the catastrophic detonation of the star, but almost at the centre of the chaos a lone, seared planet bearing an artificial pattern of radioactivity attracts the attention of the exploratory crew of scientists. The radioactive pattern which has brought them to the pathetic survivor of the planetary system which once revolved around the fatal star is in fact a beacon. They discover a vault buried deep beneath the planet's surface, which contains a terrible revelation:

A civilization that was about to die had made its last bid for immortality.

It will take us generations to examine all the treasures that were placed in the Vault. They had plenty of time to prepare, for their sun must have given its first warnings many years before the final detonation.

Everything that they wished to preserve, all the fruits of their genius, they brought here to this distant world in the days before the end, hoping that some other race would find it and that they would not be utterly forgotten. Would we have done as well, or would we have been too lost in our own misery to give thought to a future we could never see or share?

If only they had had a little more time! They could travel freely enough between the planets of their own sun, but they had not yet learned to cross the interstellar gulfs, and the nearest solar system was a hundred light-years away. Yet even had they possessed the secret of the Transfinite Drive, no more than a few millions could have been saved. Perhaps it was better thus.

Even if they had not been so disturbingly human as their sculpture shows, we could not have helped admiring them and grieving for their fate.

'The Star,' p.118

Mourning the long-past agony of this admirable race, the priest inwardly questions a fundamental doctrine of his faith, the compassion of God: 'It is one thing for a race to fail and die, as nations and cultures have done on Earth. But to be destroyed so completely in the full flower of its achievement, leaving no survivors, how could that be reconciled with the mercy of God?' (p.119) Alone in his cabin 'three thousand light-years from the Vatican' with the symbols of his faith, the 'empty' crucifix and the engraving of the saints of his order, the Jesuit can still rise to this challenge. His scientific colleagues will, he believes, assert upon their return to Earth that the fate of this wonderful race proves that the divine justice of the Catholic God is merely notional; and that the explosion of the star which swept aside the aliens who were 'so disturbingly human' was a random cosmic event in an universe which is not subject to the shaping of a divine grand plan. The priest's response is unequivocal: 'Yet, of course, what we have seen proves nothing of the sort. Anyone who argues thus is being swayed by emotion, not logic. God has no need to justify His actions to man. He who built the universe can destroy it when He

chooses.' (p.119) His faith is easily equal to this test, but casuistry is not enough to defeat the crucial challenge which follows it.

Dating the cataclysm on astronomical and geological evidence, the priest has brought to light the cause of the genocidal disaster: 'There can be no reasonable doubt: the ancient mystery is solved at last. Yet, oh God, there were so many stars you could have used. What was the need to give these people to the fire, that the symbol of their passing might shine above Bethlehem?' (p.120) The story finishes with the priest's agonized question, a denouement which brings the religious context of the story sharply into focus. The explosion of the star was not a random event in a godless universe, but the deliberate action of a deity seemingly indifferent to the suffering of the race so destroyed.

The familiar assumptions about the relationship between God and Man, and about the nature of the Creator, are presented in this story as mere sentimentalism in the face of the frigid, dispassionate and entropic nature of the Universe at large. The priestly narrator recoils from the apocalyptic truth and his vocation, founded in his faith in the benevolence of God, is shaken to its roots by a bewildering discovery made possible only by science. If science illuminates, the truth it reveals is sometimes bitter. It is clear to the priest that there is after all a divine plan, but it is promulgated without mercy or compassion. Rather than the Christian God of love, mercy and justice, the fate of the people of 'The Star' bespeaks a God of supreme destructiveness, of wrath rather than redemption.

The sense of crisis and of growing uncertainty about ethics reflected in much late twentieth century literature has not been ignored by authors of science fiction. The century's two greatest

disillusionments, first with religious faith and then with scientific positivism, are now clearly visible in a good deal of science fiction, nowhere more apparent, perhaps, than in the work of Kurt Vonnegut, 'a post-modernist comedian of the absurd,' as Patrick Parrinder has described him. Reality - pre-eminently a reality defined in scientific terms - once thought to be immutable, essential and indisputable, is nowadays often depicted as a description merely of things as they seem, rather than the definitive view of the world as it is.

The post-modern vision of recent science fiction by writers like Vonnegut, Dick, Ballard, and Watson is by no means 'anti-scientism' though there is ample evidence (discussed in later chapters) of a radical shift in the traditional enthusiasm of science fiction writers for the mechanistic, closed universe model of early scientific theory. The challenging relativistic perspective of twentieth-century physics provided some of the impetus, to judge by the number of stories dealing with space/time anomalies. Indeed, the open commitment to rationalism and science so characteristic of most science fiction written before the 1960's has been displaced by a more guarded mood. Even the values of sceptical humanism become, in such sophisticated but disquieting portrayals of contemporary and anticipated life, as problematic as those of religion. Appropriately, the remaining short story of this initial survey exemplifies this new, more philosophical strain.

Three would-be missionaries of Theomaniy land on the planet Bormidoor with the intention of establishing a church. 'Indifference' (Brian Aldiss, 1979;7), which offers an interesting contrast with Harrison's story discussed above, is the story of their struggle to complete the building and to survive until their task is completed

and the brain is installed in its shrine. The three are 'neucloves', and are at first all committed to their arduous project. However, by the end of the story only one has survived to departure by virtue of an increasingly grudging but quite irreducible faith in Theomany's grand design to fill the galaxies with the networks of consciousness which will represent their church when it is at last whole and functioning. Nupor, who has his own misgivings to overcome, takes on the additional task of trying to proselytise one of the planet's sparse indigenous population:

After prayers each night, before they slept, Nupor and Ovits educated Tom in theological history, hoping eventually to convert the lad to Theomany.

'The difference between man and the animals preceding him is that man has a large brain. That brain told human beings that they had a purpose. What the purpose was had to be discovered. That's clear enough, isn't it?' Nupor said.

'I suppose so,' said Tom. He showed no interest, but apathy in most things was one of his notable talents.

'Two of the leading characteristics of the brain should have given humanity a clue as to the nature of the purpose. A profound religious sense marked his thought from the start. In all mankind's long history, rationalism and atheism have been aberrations.

'Mankind's earliest cave paintings show him making religion to assist the hunt. They also show him making weapons. That was the start of science. A profound scientific sense also marks mankind's thought - although it has often been at war with the religious promptings. Those two characteristics had to be at odds, or there would have been no deep questioning. Mankind was going through its difficult childhood phase. You understand?'

'Oh yes.'

'By the time of mankind's first limited flights into space, it was generally understood that hydrogen was the basic building block of the universe. The idea was disseminated that consciousness might be even more basic to the universe than hydrogen. It seemed a mystical idea at first, and we don't know who were its first advocates - the astronauts themselves, possibly. They had been given the chance to see further than other men.'

'Indifference,' pp.203-204

Fundamental to the creed of Theomany is veneration of the brain as a most potent propagator of the immanent consciousness of the universe:

The dual nature of the brain was a striking new fact. It was a receiver of information, and hence a scientific instrument; it was also a religious instrument. The brain acts as an extremely complex amplifier of the subatomic, for only at subatomic levels can the mechanisms of intelligence and consciousness take place. Above the subatomic lies the great deterministic universe, with no place for consciousness. Below the subatomic lies the all-embracing cosmic consciousness we perceive as God. Throughout the universe, only the human brain - and to a lesser extent animal brains - serves as a transmitter-receiver between the deterministic macrocosm and the all-pervasive world of God.

'Indifference,' p.204

This passage reflects the finely-balanced blend of science and transcendentalism which pervades the story, and more than a hint of Zen buddhist philosophy emerges from Aldiss's sophisticated depiction of God as an immanent consciousness. At the same time, the story's teleological theme is writ large, the ultimate purpose of man being to cherish and to serve the greater universal consciousness. This reasoning is explicated by Nupor in another soliloquy:

This grandiose concept of the nature of the human brain, and hence of humanity and its role in the cosmos, was at first regarded with alarm. Many labelled it anthropocentric. But something happened which lent credence to the idea.

As space flight developed, and mankind reached towards planets beyond his own stellar system, no other intelligent beings were found. Man was the unique interpreter of God to the universe.

'Indifference,' p.205

Of course, this last contention - 'Man was the unique interpreter of God to the universe' - might just as easily mean that man is merely promoting his own conjecture of God, perhaps even his own image of deified man - as the ultimate mind of the universe, as the sacred brain seems to confirm in answering one of Nupor's questions: 'The correct answer is neither that God has existed eternally, nor that he came into existence with the universe. God came into existence only when the human brain first began to interpret God into the physical

world. He is still coming into being.' (p.214) More ominous yet is the brain's final answer, which reveals its psychotic aspiration: 'Both God and universe are process. When God and universe are finished, process is complete. Everything vanishes in a puff of smoke. Metaphorically speaking. I could cite the math.' (p.215) The inference is that the toil of Nupor and countless others in 'labouring on his behalf' only propagates a thanatic, self-annihilating megalomania as the most highly-ordered form of intellect in the universe; a deadly form of theosophy indeed.

His two fellows having as it were fallen by the wayside, Nupor, the sole survivor, receives the brain's blessing and departs, only to find on his return to the home system that he is destined to spend the rest of his life in a sort of psycho-geriatric retreat on a barren planet. The cruel irony is that by the time he leaves Bormidoor, Meritorious Nupor has become quite disillusioned with Theomany because of what he has been told by the brain.

In the Martian home, Nupor draws the inferences for himself, and comes to revile both the universe and the theocratic religion which sent him off to help consciousness perpetuate itself. His response to the universe he was taught to venerate as the domain of God has become heretical: he deplores it for its characteristic divine Indifference, and at the end of his meditation he urges the reader: 'Remember this. If there is a God, then we must become morally better than He.' (p.218)

With existentialism and phenomenology contributing to the contemporary precariousness of belief, the problem of creating and sustaining a humane but sceptical moral vision has become the stock-in-trade of writers like Philip K. Dick and Ian Watson. The Tower of Babel has replaced the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge as the fitter

symbol of humane aspiration to wrest an emancipating, dependable understanding of the cosmos from the inscrutable, omniscient creator who - if he exists - allegedly forbade it.

Many more authors have lately turned to transcendental portrayals of hubristic desire which display the visionary romanticism of the genre, Arthur C. Clarke's 2001:A Space Odyssey(1968) being a famous example. Homo Superior has a human gestation and endures frustration and bafflement. In the formative experience of metempsychosis he suddenly achieves divine perception after his individualistic struggle with a hostile and cryptic Cosmos, and thence attains divine power. Thus arrayed, this newly omniscient titan can protect and promote the best interests of his mortal fellows. The experience of metempsychosis (8), then, may be seen as functioning in this literature as a secular humanist parallel of theophany, religious revelation. While theophany does not confer divine power, it is the ultimate confirmation of the propriety of faith. Religious and humanistic science fiction abounds with theosophical referents like these, but in this latest type of science fiction about human aspiration as in all the earlier forms, knowledge - be it partial or portentous - is at the same time the driving force, and the prize coveted by science fiction's 'godling' protagonists.

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6. CLARKE, Arthur C., 'The Star;' in The Other Side of the Sky, Corgi Books Ltd., London, 1973; pp.115-120.
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8. Clarke's novel is unusual in that its depiction of Bowman's transfiguration and rebirth as the Star Child is more or less in line with what theologians regard as metempsychosis, i.e., the reincarnation of the soul (or in materialistic terms, the identity) in this case, in a more evolved form. More frequently the idea is used loosely in presenting a sudden spiritual or intellectual transformation which leaves the protagonist inwardly transfigured by holistic self-transcendence, but to all outward purposes and appearances, the same person.

CHAPTER TWO

A Legacy of Aspiration and Satire

The single most important provenance of a major theme of modern science fiction dates from early last century, but it may also be discerned in still earlier sources. To understand how knowledge and aspiration have come to be so familiarly linked in the genre, one must begin by examining how it was that certain Gothic conventions first came to be associated with scientific and technological advancement in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein(1818). However one looks there in vain for the satirical spirit so evident in later science fiction which criticises orthodox religion. The factitious religions of Samuel Butler's Erewhon(1872) and its sequel discussed later in this chapter are early examples of a satirical device unique to science fiction.

In science fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the excitement of achieving a scientific breakthrough is portrayed in a conventional way. It is often meant to be taken as the ultimate materialistic confirmation of a sort of rationalistic godhood, a quasi-divine prestige to which all educated (i.e., scientific, progressive) men can aspire. Swinburne caught the mood of this way of thinking particularly well when he proclaimed: 'Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of all things.'⁽¹⁾ However, rejecting religious morality by blasphemously seeking knowledge and "meddling with nature" implicitly entails forsaking the most fundamental guarantee of stability in the sublunary world, divine infallibility made manifest both as the natural order and as sacred knowledge revealed to the faithful. Predictably, the change envisaged by the scientist or technologist excited by a discovery is commonly depicted as awesome,

ominous, or, reflecting science fiction's Gothic beginnings, repugnant.

For the story of the creation of mankind which is central to 'The Cunning of the Beast'(2), Nelson Bond seems to have relied heavily on Milton's interpretative version of The Book of Genesis, the epic Paradise Lost. There are obvious borrowings which all the scientific trappings of Bond's story cannot disguise, for example the case Bond's Adam puts to the Yawa to gain a mate(3), which is clearly derived from Paradise Lost, Book VIII, line 379 et seq.

Significantly, in Paradise Lost the fashioning of man is a divine act of pure creation; but in Bond's story it is attended by the laboratory horrors of vivisection, as his narrator's aghast response to one of the Yawa's less successful attempts reveals:

I yet recall traversing a steaming room wherein was sunk a hydroponic tank whence emanated an oddly noisome scent. I cannot speak with surety of what this tank contained, but I do recall that as we passed, from its oily depths there flopped a strange, amorphous something which scrabbled with nailless paws at the walls of its prison and babbled piteous plaints in a voice of tongueless horror.

'The Cunning of the Beast,' p.25

The tone and language of Bond's story are often unmistakably Gothic; and, as Michael Bishop's story 'The White Otters of Childhood' (1973) (4) suggests, Gothic revulsion and other intense sensations persist as important "special effects" in generic science fiction. The scientist Prendick is attempting a surgical metamorphosis of Serenos, a deposed tyrant:

I began to believe that no such man as Fearing Serenos had ever lived in Windfall Last, for the creature on Prendick's operating table bore no resemblance to any human being I had ever encountered. Its moist grey flesh was marbled with intimations of blue, its face grinned with the livid sewn-up grin of a museum horror.

'The White Otters of Childhood,' p.71

When in Bond's story we encounter the narrator's summary of the downfall of the Yawa Eloem the real source of its main theme is revealed as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein(1818)(5):

Doctor Eleom is more to be pitied than scorned. His was the sad fate of one who, delving into secrets better left unlearned, succeeded only in creating a monster mightier than its maker...

'The Cunning of the Beast,' p.20

Yet these stories differ markedly in their central image of human nature. Bond's story is explicitly pro-humanistic 'by their very rebellion have these creatures proven the existence of their souls.' (p.41), whereas the morbid prognostication of Bishop's disturbed protagonist casts human nature as having 'an improper balance of stardust and dross':

I am convinced that we are the freaks of the universe; we were never meant to be. In our natures there is an improper balance of stardust and dross, too much of one, too little of the other - but not enough of either to give us the perfection of the extreme.

My entire life has been a struggle to achieve that which the universe long ago decreed we might not achieve. I have been living with the delusions of the evolutionary mistake of which I am a product. But no more. Tomorrow morning I am tacking about into the indifferent winds of the cosmos and altering my course. Though perfection is denied me in the direction of the westward seas, I will attain it by swinging towards the dawn. God! even now the salt is in my blood and the power of a shark's primordial lust surges through my heart and loins!

I will swim against the current.

I will seek out the channel that cuts beneath the Galleon of the Hesperides and beach myself among the flowers. There I will die, knowing that the white otters will observe my death and scramble into the sea - aghast at so much unprincipled might.

And my death will be more honest than any single instance of a good man's piety.

'The White Otters of Childhood,' p.84

Mary Shelley's novel relates the circumstances and consequences of the creation of a grotesque "human" by the book's central figure, Victor Frankenstein, an obsessed experimenter whose perverse attempted

"benefaction" allows his authoress to portray him as a 'Modern Prometheus'. The overwhelming mood of the book is established by the dark fantasies (incest, vampirism, and hints of sadistic perversion) which can be discerned among other more obvious features. These prove it to be a late Gothic novel, somewhat influenced by M.G.Lewis's The Monk (1796). However, while the central protagonist of Frankenstein is assailed by illicit desires in the usual Gothic manner, Mary Shelley broke new ground by characterising him as a scientist, more or less in the modern sense. Moreover, three other scientists are given influential if modest roles. In deploying this scientific framework to such effect, Mary Shelley introduced an original strand to Romantic fiction for which her novel would be hailed as the forerunner of much of today's science fiction.

The figure of the scientific researcher was introduced to English letters by Francis Bacon(1561-1626) in the form of the 'fellows' of the House of Saloman in his speculative work The New Atlantis, left unfinished at his death. The aims of this institution (which the House 'father' expounds to guest visitors) clearly reflect the precepts of Bacon's Instauratio Magna, an unfinished, all-embracing compendium of contemporary knowledge: 'The end of our foundation is the knowledge of causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible.'(6) In other words, omniscience, omnipotence, and holistic mastery.

The Instauratio Magna was compiled from several of his earlier works which, together with some additional material, were intended to indicate not only what was known, but also where the gaps in human knowledge lay, so that these could attract investigation. This scholarly work was set down in Latin, but The New Atlantis, which drew on the

Instauratio Magna in its descriptions of the endeavours of the fellows, was published in English. Bacon bore something of a debt to Sir Thomas More's Utopia (ca.1516?) for The New Atlantis; continuing the sequence, the Academy of Lagado and its 'projectors' of Part III of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726) are a satirical rendering of Bacon's House of Saloman, meant as an attack upon the Royal Society of the day.

These, then, were the scientific forerunners of Victor Frankenstein. However, there is more to his nature, as Walton records shortly after their first meeting:

'When younger,' said he, 'I believed myself destined for some great enterprize. My feelings are profound, but I possessed a coolness of judgement that fitted me for illustrious achievements. This sentiment of the worth of my nature supported me when others would have been oppressed, for I deemed it criminal to throw away in useless grief those talents that might be useful to my fellow creatures.

'When I reflected on the work I had completed, no less a one than the creation of a sensitive and rational animal, I could not rank myself with the herd of common projectors. But this thought now serves only to plunge me lower in the dust. All my speculations and hopes are as nothing, and like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell...'

Frankenstein, chap.24 (p.484)

The archangel allusion may well be from Paradise Lost, which is a pervasive influence in Frankenstein. However thinly, Milton's epic tone found its way into Bond's short story, much as Frankenstein itself has similarly influenced the choices of many modern writers.

Mary Shelley's novel, which provoked some confusion among contemporary reviewers (7), has also had a rather mixed reception from critics in the second half of the present century. D.W.Harding decided in the 1950's that it was, 'one of those second-rate works, written under the influence of more distinguished minds, that sometimes display in conveniently simple form the preoccupations of a coterie.'(8) Without claiming too much for Mary Shelley's fairly

torrid tale, this seems glib, not to say harsh. More recently, the complex profusion of themes and ideas contained in the novel have prompted considered, less dismissive, evaluations(9) and, due in no small measure to the advocacy of Brian W. Aldiss (10), it has been recognized as 'the seminal work of the new literary genre of science fiction.'(11) Other historians of the genre, perhaps viewing the novel's Gothic milieu with disdain, have echoed Harding's disappointing literary snobbery; one simply called it 'an immature work which nevertheless has been enormously influential.'(12) Yet another reveals the shortcomings of too concise a resumé:

Science, in this Gothic melodrama, stands accused of perverting the awesome power of natural forces to ungodly ends. Frankenstein's researches do irreparable damage to himself and his family, and his last words are a warning against the ambition of distinguishing oneself in science and discoveries.

13.

Given that Frankenstein's last words are actually:

'Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed.'

Frankenstein, chap.24 (p.491)

'Ungodly ends?' - judged by their outcome, certainly; yet, what else is his sacrilegious attempt to surpass divine creativity but essentially 'god-like' or 'godly'? A warning to others not to meddle or aspire? Hardly a wholehearted or convincing caveat, surely. Frankenstein's sensibility is a more complex one than we might have been led to expect.

Although critics usually have a surer touch with contemporary science fiction, a similar fate has befallen too much of that since there are those who seem to find it very difficult to assess the stature of a work in an even-handed manner once they have noticed that

its public and provenance are popular rather than "literary"(14). While some have, for one partisan reason or another, heaped praise upon fairly shallow science fiction, other writers have been under-rated thanks largely to the exaggerated disdain with which their critics look upon generic fiction. It is of course pointless to seek a panacea for such a general problem because every text must be judged for its particular merit with its flaws well in mind, a practice which will underpin the approach taken to any text treated here.

The gestation of Mary Shelley's story as she recorded it in her Preface to the 1831 ('Standard Novels') edition has been the basis of the many repetitive accounts proffered by her biographers and others. Although her Letters and Journal offer evidence that the customary account is substantially true, a major implication for the proper critical evaluation of Frankenstein has usually been overlooked. The form of the novel in which it was first published is an augmented form; in the author's initial conception the story of Victor Frankenstein and his hideous creation was really little more than an inspired, psychological tale of terror.

At the head of a sheet of clean white paper Mary wrote, 'It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils', and on that June day in 1816 Frankenstein was born. It was to prove a prodigy, a marvellous, flawed but awesome creation: a monster hit that spanned time and place to become a part of modern mythology.

15.

Frankenstein was 'born' at what would become Chapter Five of the augmented story, and so one may safely infer that Mary Shelley's initial plan did not include the opening epistolary narrative of Walton or the first four chapters of the novel in its final form. This is significant because it is in those first four chapters that Frankenstein speaks to Walton of an educational progress which had taken him

from the 'wild fancies' of writers such as Paracelsus, Albertus Magnus and Cornelius Agrippa to the 'discovery and wonder' of contemporary science in general, and scientific research in particular. Moreover, the introduction of Walton was a crucial addition to what was at first simply the story of a battle for ascendancy between hideous creation and mortal creator, a daring, modern Prometheus plasticator(16). This hubristic endeavour was in itself not particularly original (cf. the 'Golem', a monster allegedly at the command of the Hebrew priesthood who fashioned it from earth, animating it by means of arcane rites; or the parallel idea of the alchemical homunculus). Therefore, while it is clear that in the original conception of the story Frankenstein is in some respects a promethean figure, using 'instruments of life' to infuse a 'spark of being' into a composite human frame, it is not particularly evident that he is a scientist, nor is it apparent that the author's initial intention was to question scientific innovation quite in the deliberate way it has sometimes been assumed she did:

It is ironic and perhaps indicative that the first major science fiction novel is essentially an anti-science anti-progress science fiction novel. Mary Shelley was obviously feeling the hot breath of the winds of change, and felt that someone should hold up a warning sign to the effect that Science and Progress weren't necessarily going to result in the best of everything.

17.

While few would deny that in Frankenstein science is the means by which the sequence of events is precipitated, such science as figures in the narrative is not science as we have come to know it - as Mary Shelley's account of her 'waking dream' indicates clearly: 'I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together.'(p.263) This horrid vision was the basis of the story of scientific terror which is Frankenstein in its final shape, for in its

original form, it was little more than a conventionally Gothic dark romance of 'unhallowed arts.' However, by the time it was completed Percy Shelley (who anonymously wrote the Preface for his wife) could claim that 'the event upon which the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere tale of spectres or enchantment', having already asserted that, 'I have not considered myself as merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors.'(Preface; p.267) Science in Mary Shelley's novel was utilized as a means of inventing a novel plausibility for what is essentially a Gothic tale; nevertheless, given the direct way in which she employed science, Frankenstein is something more than simply an attempt to produce a compelling or 'realistic' Gothic novel.

Frankenstein contains three levels of narrative, each with its own narrator (James Gunn mentions only two; 18): the primary being epistolary, given by Robert Walton in a series of letters addressed to his sister in England concerning his own quest and containing both of the others. The secondary level, which is also the novel's main narrative (as the chapter distribution of the novel emphasises), is given by Victor Frankenstein (Walton undertakes 'to record, as nearly as possible in his own words, what he has related' for his sister). Frankenstein's personal narrative also conveys that of the experiences of his creature and he relates to Walton what it told him, that narrative between creator and creature being the tertiary level of the novel's narrative structure. This complex structure is one of the strengths of the novel since it permits treatment of both sides of the creation issue.

Mary Shelley deftly employs in her novel what at first sight may appear to be a rather difficult and involved narrative structure to

emphasise two crucial relationships centred upon Frankenstein. In one of these the relationship is that which, as fellow scientists, Walton and Frankenstein share. The other, and by far the more ironic, is between Frankenstein and his creature. This latter relationship (underpinned by Paradise Lost) is used to set the sequence of events central to Frankenstein in a Christian moral framework, with Victor Frankenstein's act of scientific, profane creation being contrasted with real godly creation. Thus Frankenstein's story is told against two diverse backgrounds, one spiritual, the other materialistic; and if we look more closely into how the author evokes them the provenance of the conflicts which arise out of their conjunction will perhaps become clearer.

Frankenstein's scientific perspective was formed during his education at the University of Ingolstadt as a student of Professor Waldman. Waldman is favourably contrasted to the other university scientist Frankenstein meets early in his career, Professor Krempe. Krempe alienates Frankenstein almost immediately by pouring scorn upon his youthful interest in alchemy:

'Good God! In what desert land have you lived, where no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies which you have so greedily imbibed are a thousand years old and as musty as they are ancient? I little expected, in this enlightened and scientific age, to find a disciple of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. My dear sir, you must begin your studies entirely anew!'

Frankenstein, chap.3 (p.305)

Frankenstein does begin his studies afresh, but under the guidance of Waldman(19). Waldman's outlook, though apparently no less 'enlightened and scientific' than Krempe's, is more closely in harmony with Frankenstein's own compulsive inquisitiveness into the processes of the physical world ('the natural world') which had prompted his study

of alchemy. Indeed, in his panegyric of 'modern chemistry' which inspires Frankenstein to apply himself to the study of the science, the professor reveals a scientific sensibility in which the knowledge gained from the investigation of natural processes is seen as a means of gaining control of them:

'...these philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of Nature and show how she works in her hiding places. They ascend into the heavens; they have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows.'

Frankenstein, chap.3 (p.307)

Waldman's hyperbolic paean to the power of science provoked a profound excitement in Frankenstein, so lately turned from the hermetic syllogisms of alchemy. Although Waldman's visionary utterance is prefaced by the admission that the aims of contemporary scientists ('they promise very little') are much more limited than those of the alchemists, his 'modern' sensibility is not wholly devoid of a similar hysteria ('they can even mock the invisible world with its own shadows' he excitedly proclaims) which has its roots in esoteric ritual:

Magic was originally the appurtenance of religion; and when religion cast it off, it subsisted in the outer darkness along with appetites and curiosities which religion proscribed. Between magic and science... the lines were not yet sharply drawn.

20.

Such qualification as Waldman allows is quite overwhelmed by his subsequent assertions of the quasi-superhuman powers won by scientists, and therefore the science for which Waldman speaks as an advocate to Frankenstein is as attractive in most respects to the student as alchemy had been. Thus Waldman performs the function of linking the "modern" scientific sensibility with its painstaking and seemingly

trivial practices ('whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt') with the arcane pursuits of the alchemist: the ends to be attained are conflated by Waldman. In his turn, the student enthusiastically projects his own grand vistas of achievement:

So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein - more, far more will I achieve; treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.

Frankenstein, chap.3 (p.308)

Speaking so eloquently of the humanistic, spiritual impulse which fired him, Frankenstein seems to justify his author's choice of subtitle for her work, 'The Modern Prometheus' in one sense at least. The outlook of this aspiring scientist is indisputably "modern", for he would 'pour a torrent of light into our dark world' at a time when Newtonian mechanics and optics shone with unparalleled lucidity. Furthermore, the object of his quest and the source of the knowledge he aims to 'unfold to the world', a process by which life itself could be created anew, is indeed worthy of a latter-day Prometheus:

...when I considered the improvement which every day takes place in science and mechanics, I was encouraged to hope my present attempts would at least lay the foundations of future success. Nor could I consider the magnitude and complexity of my plan as any argument of its impracticability. It was with these feelings that I began the creation of a human being.

Frankenstein, chap.4 (p.314)

However, Frankenstein's motives are more complex than simply those of an idealistic humanist unmindful of scriptural injunctions upon our native curiosity and aspiration, and hardened by familiarity with the contents of charnel houses. Though he had claimed to want to extend the range of human knowledge, and thence (or so he believed) produce an improvement in the general human condition, he confesses to Walton retrospectively that he had also yearned to 'explore new

powers'. He thereby reveals a degree of sustained self-interest in the results of his efforts no less prominent than that of his twentieth-century fellows vilified by generic moralists and religious writers like C.S. Lewis and Walter M. Miller. This 'Prometheus' is, of course, less altruistic than he at first sight appears; and, at the risk of labouring the points already made about this influential novel, an examination of a few of his literary forebears may reveal more about why Frankenstein's Gothic visions have so many echoes in contemporary science fiction.

When Victor describes his particular vision of the new society which will follow from his research, his hubristic impulse to usurp the divine prerogative of creation is revealed quite starkly: 'A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me.' (p.314)

Here, then, is the true magnitude of his ambition. Frankenstein seeks nothing less than to arrogate to himself the prestige and power of godhood, the recognition of which would proceed from those 'many happy and excellent natures' he would create. His vision exactly matches the activities of the sardonic, irreligious persona of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's early poem, 'Prometheus' (ca.1772):

Here sit I, fashion men
In mine own image --
A race to be like me,
To weep and suffer,
To be happy and enjoy themselves,
All careless of thee too,
As I!

21.

Goethe's blasphemous little poem serves as an apt reminder of the currency of these ideas among some of the European literati of the day (22). In fact, his influence is pervasive in Frankenstein: sometimes evident, but probably as often not clearly acknowledged. For instance,

in the latter half of the novel, part of the creature's incredible self-education is accomplished through reading the 'Sorrows of Werter', which is surely a reference to Goethe's first novel, The Sorrows of Young Werther, published over forty years before in 1774. It is clear from allusions in Frankenstein (voiced by the creature) such as, 'I thought Werter himself a more divine being than I had ever beheld or imagined; his character contained no pretension, but it sank deep. The disquisitions upon death and suicide were calculated to fill me with wonder.'(chap.15; p.395), that Mary Shelley had read and prized the novel. Incidentally, her care to provide her story with a scientific rationale is further attested by her decision not to model the promethean scientist upon Prospero, his magic and his books, given her debt to The Tempest in evoking the ignorant rapture felt by Frankenstein's idiot savant creature adrift in the world. However, another work by Goethe which may have had a significant influence(23) is Faust:Erster Teil (1808), the first part of his Faust. Goethe's play includes this exchange between an aspiring student and Mephistopheles which rather anticipates some features of Mary Shelley's book:

STUDENT.

I scarce can bring myself to take my leave.
One kindness undertake on my behalf:
Inscribe my book, Sir, with your autograph.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

With pleasure.

(He takes the book, writes in it, and hands it back.)

STUDENT(reading).

Eritis sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum.

(He closes the book reverently, and ceremoniously takes his leave.)

MEPHISTOPHELES(alone).

Follow the adage of my cousin Snake.

From dreams of god-like knowledge you will wake
To fear, in which your very soul shall quake.

Faust: Part One

24.

Mary Shelley is nonetheless careful not to cast Waldman in the role of Mephistopheles. Although Frankenstein later remarks to Walton, 'Thus ended a day memorable to me; it decided my future destiny,' he is referring not just to the inspirational way in which his visions of glory crowded in upon him, but more directly to his introduction to science as a discipline and methodology. The science to which Frankenstein the student was introduced by Prof. Waldman is, however, still the natural philosophy of the time:

In the early days of science, it was believed that the truth lay all around us - was there for the taking, waiting, like a crop of corn, only to be harvested and brought in. The truth would make itself known to us if only we would observe nature...

25.

Thus an eminent twentieth-century scientist, P.B. Medawar, writing on 'Baconian experimentation' can also speak directly to the central idea of Waldman's, and hence, Frankenstein's, scientific perspective - the assumption that the physical world is like an enormous puzzle which would readily reveal potent secrets to the natural philosopher who saw it clearly and understood its forces and equilibria.

Although Frankenstein speaks of his intentions in terms of divine power, during at least the early stages of his endeavours his view of life itself and of the world in which it exists is not complicated by religious sentiments or tenets. He makes explicit the scepticism of the supernatural upon which his materialistic sensibility is founded when he describes the line of approach he followed in his first investigations:

To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I became acquainted with the science of anatomy, but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body. In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no

supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy, and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm.

Frankenstein, chap.4 (pp.311-312)

Frankenstein claims to have been unmoved by his macabre toils, but his composure is intended to be exceptional - perhaps encouraging the reader to mistrust him all the more by showing how effectively such a dangerous scientist may suppress his own emotional responses. Ghoulish and repulsive though they are, the story of his researches and the knowledge he has won through them excite Walton:

I see by your eagerness and the wonder and hope which your eyes express, my friend, that you hope to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted; that cannot be; listen patiently to the end of my story, and you will easily perceive why I am reserved upon that subject. I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery.

Frankenstein, chap.4 (p.313)

He dashes Walton's 'wonder and hope' with a grim warning. He reflects on the suffering his efforts have caused, and we are reminded of his situation aboard Walton's ship. Exhausted and near death himself, he is now obsessed with the destruction of his creature, and all too aware of his inability to perform the task. Events have gone full circle, and ironically the scientist who has courted madness in his quest for the secret of life is incapable of reversing what he achieved by playing God with the human frame and spirit. His memories are darkened by his experience of the consequences of his meddling.

Frankenstein's narrative next deals with the construction of a human frame to which he can apply the techniques he has discovered 'for bestowing animation upon lifeless matter.' In speaking of how he has worked with 'profane fingers' in his 'workshop of filthy creation'

(p.315), he now reveals guilt, the product of a troubled conscience. Moreover, the connotative terms he uses suggest that the morality he is convinced he flaunted in his experiments is a religious, rather than secular, code. Mary Shelley's main scientific protagonist thus is a dynamic character: his outlook has been driven beyond the self-centred materialism which has dominated his character before his act of blasphemous creation by his experiences after it.

Frankenstein and Waldman are "Baconian" scientists, scrutinising the natural world in pursuit of information of advantage to humanity, but more immediately, to themselves. However, unlike the necromancer or alchemist of old with whom they share a common visionary thirst for power, they pursue science rather than magic for their ends. Moreover, Frankenstein's science is not particularly well-defined or materialistic, the rather hermetic task he set himself being to try to 'infuse a spark of being' into a composite human frame. His endeavours have a transcendental quality, which he implicitly recognises. Therefore, his science is a means towards the achievement of a magical goal, though his vivisectionist methodology is mundane - he 'tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay.'

There was little popular understanding of the authentic science of Mary Shelley's day, and most of even that now seems fairly commonplace. True, Newton's laws of physics had helped establish a new scientific perspective which in time would allow the scope of the sciences to be much better defined, but there remained many unknown quantities in the physical sciences such as galvanism, the early study of electrical phenomena. Yet the characterisation of Frankenstein the scientist is not 'modern', even by prevailing contemporary standards;

Krempe's attitude is more nearly that of the professional scientist. However, Frankenstein can be seen as a Baconian scientist in an even more literal way, for in Francis Bacon's The New Atlantis one aspect of the researches carried out in the House of Saloman rather neatly anticipates Frankenstein's methodology:

"We have also parks, and enclosures of all sorts, of beasts and birds; which we use not only for view or rareness, but likewise for dissections and trials, that thereby we may take light what may be wrought upon the body of man. Wherein we find many strange effects: as continuing life in them, though divers parts, which you account vital, be perished and taken forth; resuscitating of some that seem dead in appearance, and the like...."

The New Atlantis.

26.

While there is no direct evidence available which would confirm that Mary Shelley was familiar with The New Atlantis, an entry in her Journal shortly after she had lost her first baby proves that as early as March 1815, when she was seventeen or so, she had heard of revivification: 'Dream that my little baby came to life again; that it had only been cold, and that we had rubbed it before the fire, and it had lived.' Another English provenance contributing to her particular version of the promethean theme may have been the second Book of Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene, a compendious work which the reading lists of her Journal(27) show her to have been familiar with prior to writing Frankenstein. Canto X of Spenser's second Book deals in part with the apocryphal history of the 'faerie' folk, from whom the 'elfin' knights are descended, and Spenser draws on both the Prometheus of Aeschylus and the story of the Creation in Genesis:

It told, how first Prometheus did create
A man, of many partes from beasts deriued,
And then stole fire from heauen, to animate
His worke, for which he was by Ioue deprived
Of life him selfe, and hart-strings of an Aegle riued.

That man so made, he called elfe, to weete
Quick, the first authour of all Elfin kind:
Who wandring through the world with wearie feet,
Did in the Gardins of Adonis find
A goodly creature, whom he deemed in mind
To be no earthly wight, but either Spright,
Or Angell, th'authour of all woman kind;
Therefore, a Fay he her according hight,
Of whom all Faeryes spring, and fetch their lignage right.
The Faerie Queene, Book II, Canto X, stanzas 70&71.

Whether or not Mary Shelley was consciously drawing ideas from Spenser is really a moot point; however, the appearance of the Promethean myth in The Faerie Queene (ca.1590) suggests that it was considered interesting long before it was radically popularised by the success of Mary Shelley's novel. Incidentally, Spenser again anticipates not only Frankenstein itself, but perhaps the entire genre of Gothic fiction in Canto XI of the Second Book of his allegorical romance:

Thereat he smitten was with great affright,
And trembling terror did his hart apall,
Ne wist he, what to thinke of that same sight,
Ne what to say, ne what to doe at all;
Ne doubted, least it were some magicall
Illusion, that did beguile his sense,
Or wandring ghost, that wanted funerall,
Or aerie spirit vnder false pretence,
Or hellish feend rayseed vp through diuelish science.
The Faerie Queene, II, XI, stanza 39.

A final clue as to the possible influence of Spenser's poem on Frankenstein is to be found in Mary Shelley's Letters. In only one letter did she address her husband as 'Sweet Elf,' the endearment being twice repeated, in a letter written on 5th December 1861; in other words, after Mary and Shelley had returned to England from Switzerland where they had stayed at the Villa Diodati. Mary also writes in the same letter that she has, 'finished the 4.Chap. of Frankenstein which is a very long one & I think you would like it.'(28)

Frankenstein's motivation has been shown above to be both hubristic and humanistic; in these respects he fulfils our expecta-

tions of a stock promethean figure. The knowledge he wishes to gain, and, he professes, to impart is also in some respects a "promethean" gift. As with the legend of the original Prometheus of Greek mythology and his gift of fire to the human race, the promethean gift in Frankenstein is ambiguous, having a constructive or beneficial potential but also possessing a destructive capability. The danger for the recipients lies in how they exploit the promethean gift; to avoid realizing the destructive potential of the gift, its exploitation must be governed by a code of conduct, in social terms, by a moral code. In Frankenstein such a moral code is introduced through the narrative of the scientist's creature. However, in attempting the most convincing characterisation of a materialistic, hubristic scientist Mary Shelley drew upon not only the Promethean myth but upon another, even more familiar stock figure recently given a new currency by one of the Shelleys' favourite European authors, Goethe:

In Matthew Lewis's The Monk(1795), Ambrosio, a monk known to the world as 'The Man of Holiness', is aided in his decidedly unholy pursuit of Antonia by a magic mirror and the devil himself. Spells and potions were part of the Gothic brew served up in William Beckford's Vathek (1786), Veit Weber's The Sorcerer (1795), and other delicacies on Mary Shelley's reading lists. Invariably, they follow the Faustian pattern; momentary control of super-human forces is followed by a gruesomely described and inevitable eternal punishment.

29.

Frankenstein, with his Baconian scientific perspective and his youthful flirtations with alchemy, bears distinct general resemblances to the protagonist of Christopher Marlowe's The Tragic History of Doctor Faustus, who, as the quotation above shows, was adopted by Gothic authors as an egotistical archetype of the hubristic, amoral sceptic so essential to a good story. Frankenstein and Faustus do have some more subtle parallels, but they also have major differences.

Like Marlowe's Faustus, Frankenstein tempted himself. Although it is Waldman who first made science seem so attractive to Frankenstein, the professor of chemistry is not a mephistophelean tempter. Rather, Frankenstein projects for himself vast vistas of achievement ('A new species would bless me as their creator') which induce him to give way to a self-interest composed of ambition and an appetite for divine power:

Marlowe's protagonists do not simply out-Herod their fellow mortals; they act out their invidious self-comparisons with the gods; and, from Aeneas to Faustus, they see themselves deified in one manner or another. Faustus' Evil Angel holds out the hope that he will be 'on earth as Ioue is in the skie.' Ignoring his Good Angel and the threat of 'Gods heauy wrath', Faustus readily amplifies the enticement, which far outdoes all other Marlovian seductions. He envisages a hierarchy of spirits, answering his queries and serving his whims.

30.

Again like Faustus, Frankenstein turns his back on religious morality to pursue his goal; yet this is apostasy, not heresy. Moreover, they both make a final abjuration; for Frankenstein later recognises the dangerous intensity of his drive to create his ideal man:

Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless and almost frantic impulse urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or reason but for this one pursuit.

Frankenstein, chap.4 (p.315)

As Faustus had done, Frankenstein suppresses aspects of his moral sensibility in his macabre pursuits which so brutalize his consciousness that he can vivisect cruelly and despoil graves without qualms. Lastly, for Frankenstein as for Faustus, what has been a quest for knowledge for its own sake is transformed into a near-insatiable craving for power:

His quest for knowledge leads him to taste the fruit of the tree that had shaded Adam and Eve, to savour the distinction between good and evil. From that point he abandons his disinterested pursuit....

31.

Marlowe's play is some two centuries older than Mary Shelley's novel, and Europe had seen, in the Age of Reason, the rise of logical philosophies and the growth of agnostic scepticism - both, some have argued, at the expense of religion:

Whitehead in his preface to Science and the Modern World wrote that the various human interests which suggest cosmologies and are influenced by them, are science, aesthetics, ethics, religion. He suggested that during the last three centuries, the cosmology derived from science had been asserting itself at the expense of the older points of view which had their origin elsewhere.

32.

This may be what lies behind one of the more important differences between these two works: the army of Satan which populates Marlowe's tragedy is notably absent from Frankenstein. Indeed, Frankenstein, unlike Faustus, has no direct experience of the realm of the spirit. Although God is hidden from Faustus, his existence is at least implied by the presence in the necromancer's world of Mephistophiles and the various other demons Faustus encounters. The scientist's alienation from religious and spiritual morality may be partly due to his scepticism, but his view of the world is mechanical and matter-of-fact whereas the alchemist's embraces the arcane and the supernatural. Nevertheless, both are eventually victims of the operation upon them of a retribution which in Faustus' case is clearly shown to be at the disposal of the Creator, whereas in Frankenstein's case its origins are rather less straightforward. In Frankenstein God's existence is never questioned polemically: at no point does the supernatural world intrude into the sublunary except implicitly. Given this, where lies

the provenance in Mary Shelley's Gothic novel of the 'sublime'?

Beginning in 1756, when Burke published his Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, it became commonplace among both writers and readers to consider the emotions of terror and awe as sources of 'the Sublime' - a ready conduit to ideas of Divinity, Omnipotence, and all Final Things.

33.

In Frankenstein the author employed a new source of such feelings of overwhelming terror - it is science itself which, by placing within reach of human aspiration the enjoyment of superhuman powers, throws up extremes of suffering as well as visions of glory and power. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is again within reach, but the Serpent is now an inner voice inextricably woven into our attitudes and ways of thinking about ourselves(34). This new source of the sublime, then, the terrors which might be unleashed by scientists driven beyond morality rather than beyond reason by logical positivism, materialism, and hubris, gives Frankenstein a greater currency than was furnished by the usual musty Gothic horrors:

The result of this fusion of 'Gothic' materials and science was not only to bring the tale of horror clearly into the stream of scientific fiction, but also to provide for it a more credible basis.

35.

The guilt which Frankenstein reveals to Walton is not a product of the amorality with which he has pursued his early investigations, no matter how distasteful and macabre these have been. In fact it stems from his successful attempt to revivify the body which he has cobbled together. However, neither the act of profane creation itself nor his crude attempt to make his creature physically more capable than he is are directly responsible for the succession of extreme and violent events which follow from these: rather, it is Frankenstein's own response to his creation which is the crucial factor. He relates

how, after it first stirred into life, he was suddenly overcome by revulsion for the creature's hideous aspect. Unable to endure the sight of the ugliness with which he had unwittingly endowed it, he fled the room wherein he had administered the 'spark of life' to it and (somewhat improbably) sought refuge in sleep. He recalls that he awoke after having experienced a particularly disturbing nightmare:

I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch - the miserable monster whom I had created. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs.

Frankenstein, chap.5 (p.319)

When he goes looking for the 'monster' next day, he finds that it has left his rooms; many months elapse before he encounters it again, during which its primal consciousness has undergone a series of transformations. But the sin for which Frankenstein is to atone in such a painful manner has already occurred. Seeing it to be outwardly hideous, he presumes it to be wholly hideous; fleeing from it, he abdicates whatever responsibility he as its creator owes to it. Later, in a different frame of mind, Frankenstein is confronted with these obligations by the creature itself:

'Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other and trample on me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed.'

Frankenstein, chap.10 (p.364)

The fundamental nature of this relationship is established when Frankenstein himself begins to recognise the obligations implicit in his act of creation. He has tried to prove he could exercise divine mastery over the forces of life, and though he does bestow life he is

ironically not able to predict or dictate its subsequent responses because he cannot even control his own reactions.

When he meets it again it is already too late for him to redeem either himself or the creature, for both have by then been overtaken by the chain of events his rejection of the 'monster' initiates. While deaths have been caused among the Frankenstein family and their less-exalted neighbours by its vengeful intervention, the creature asserts that its sense of vengeance is an acquired trait instilled by its direct experience of mankind. It goes on to relate to Frankenstein how it was soon innocently engaged by the rustic world into which it had fled having been spurned inexplicably by its creator:

I gradually saw plainly the clear stream that supplied me with drink and the trees that shaded me with their foliage. I was delighted when I first discovered that a pleasant sound, which often saluted my ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had often intercepted the light from my eyes.

Frankenstein, chap.11 (p.368)

As the creature quickly discovers, the world is also inhabited by the ungentle descendants of an older Adam. Mankind teaches it to discriminate, to fear and to hate; irredeemably changed, that hatred will be ultimately directed against its creator.

Many of the arguments it puts forward to Frankenstein when they finally meet are drawn from Milton's account of Adam's first days in the Garden. By then, though, unlike Adam it has already undergone its version of the Fall, for it has killed. The recognition of this guilt is foremost in the creature's mind when it relates to Frankenstein its response to Paradise Lost: 'Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition'(chap.15, p.396) By the time they meet the creature is no longer the Noble Savage of its first condition. It has been transformed into a luciferian archetype, a 'fallen angel'

even in its own eyes, by having succumbed to dark impulses it could not understand or even hope to control because in its primal state it lacked moral awareness of any sort. Yet even here Mary Shelley's humanistic rather than Calvinistic sensibility is evident when the 'monster' tells its maker, 'I am malicious because I am miserable.' (chap.17, p.412)

Although Frankenstein knows it to be a murderer, he is initially moved to pity the creature and decides to provide a mate for it in the hope that the killing will then stop. Having resorted to a remote Hebridean island accompanied by his first creature, Frankenstein almost completes a mate for it when the vision of the race of hideous creatures which might then be produced prompts him to destroy the second one. His surviving first creature is thereby transformed finally into an avenging 'daemon'; and when it tells Frankenstein, 'I shall be with you on your wedding night.' (chap.20, p.438), the Gothic pattern becomes fully established, as Martin Tropp, commenting upon the psychological structure of Frankenstein, has noted:

Frankenstein reflects this Gothic tradition in the characterisation of scientist and Monster, the pattern of pursuit that links them both, and the persistent feeling of evil close at hand.

A subspecies of Gothicism played directly upon the theme of the divided self; derived from ancient and nearly universal legend, the Doppelganger tale may well have helped Mrs. Shelley give form to her dream of self-destruction.

36.

Linked together by mutual hatred, Frankenstein and his creature take it in turns to pursue each other across increasingly dark, barren landscapes or wild seascapes. First the creature fulfils its threat by murdering Frankenstein's bride on their wedding-night; then Frankenstein sets out to destroy his hideous creation, who in turn draws its maker across the seas and into the vast icy wastes of the north where

it has a physical advantage:

The image of boats and water not only ties the two sides of scientist-monster together - it also chronicles the transfer of power from maker to Monster.

37.

Whether or not one is inclined to accept Tropp's premise fully, it does suggest that Mary Shelley's construction of her story is quite deliberately ironic. While her scientist has achieved most of that which he set out to do, the outcome has been but an inverted travesty of his hopes. The final act of the Gothic melodrama of her novel takes place on board Walton's ship. Frankenstein has died, worn out by his obsessive pursuit of the creature to exact the price of his vengeance. The creature, stealing aboard to cast a last look upon its mortal creator, anticipates its own lonely suicide while acknowledging the comprehensiveness of its fall from grace: 'the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil.' It then vanishes from Walton's sight into the vast wastes of the polar regions.

In Frankenstein, science is used to a larger purpose than merely the provision of a delectable new sort of frisson for the author's readers, although in terms of the Gothic expectations it was designed to meet that aim is competently accomplished. An important reason for using science at all is to try to imbue the novel with a degree of plausibility in an era when science-consciousness was rapidly growing. Another aim, which arose from it, was to make an ethical comment about the social role of science and technology. This emerges in the nature of the relationship between Walton and Frankenstein.

As Walton himself reveals in his fourth letter to England (that is, before Frankenstein's narrative proper has commenced), the attributes that he and Victor Frankenstein both possess are more than

purely temperamental - indeed they are professional:

He is now much recovered from his illness and is continually on deck, apparently watching for the sledge that preceded his own. Yet, although unhappy, he is not so utterly occupied by his own misery but that he interests himself in the projects of others. He has frequently conversed with me on mine, which I have communicated to him without disguise. He entered attentively into all my arguments in favour of my eventual success and into every minute detail of the measures I had taken to secure it. I was easily led by the sympathy which he evinced to use the language of my heart, to give utterance to the burning ardour of my soul, and to say, with all the fervour that warmed me, how gladly I would sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprise. One man's life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge I sought, for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the elemental foes of our race. As I spoke, a dark gloom spread over my listener's countenance. At first I perceived that he tried to suppress his emotion; he placed his hands before his eyes, and my voice quivered and failed me as I beheld tears trickle fast from between his fingers; a groan burst from his heaving breast. I paused; at length he spoke, in broken accents: 'Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me; let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!'

Frankenstein, Letter 4 (pp.283-284)

By pitching Walton's character so close to Frankenstein's(38), Mary Shelley implies that both share a similarly Baconian scientific outlook. When towards the end of the novel the narrative returns to Walton and his letters we find him facing a threatened mutiny and receiving conflicting advice from Frankenstein, who also tries unsuccessfully to harangue the crew into going on with the voyage as Walton seems to wish. Taking Waldman also into account, it is clear that the scientists of Frankenstein (with the exception of the testy Krempe, whose role is in any case fairly tangential) all conform to a pattern, possessing the same sort of scientific perspective and motivation. Thus they represent the contemporary scientific sensibility, according to Mary Shelley, whose values she asserts in Frankenstein to

be paradigms of the potentially destructive materialism of science and technology. Even Frankenstein himself at times seems to endorse this view of science and scientists, though paradoxically his ultimate view tends to contradict rather than confirm it. Nevertheless, it seems that he does after all want to dissuade Walton from his quest, and tries to convince Walton of the danger inherent in his attitude. To this end, he adduces his own story; for Frankenstein as for Faustus, 'the fruit of experience is disillusionment.'⁽³⁹⁾ In Frankenstein's case, his own disillusionment - the source of his new-found conscience - prompts him to warn Walton, however confusedly. Yet even in extremis, he remains ambivalent about scientific discovery, however harrowing and disastrous his forceful ethical education has been - 'Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed.'^(p.491)

Early in Frankenstein's narrative Mary Shelley has him remind us of Walton's presence and the scientist's reason for telling the explorer the daunting facts of his own experience; this time, the author makes the theme of her novel quite explicit, and once again stresses the nature of the obsessive scientific perspective they share:

'Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the whole world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.'

Frankenstein, chap.4 (p.313)

Frankenstein already knows that Walton the explorer is motivated by a similar thirst for knowledge in his pursuit of the geographical investigation of the Arctic regions (wherein he encounters Frankenstein and sets down his doomed fellow's narrative), a craving to which he had himself been subject. In warning Walton about 'how dangerous is

the acquirement of knowledge' Frankenstein adopts a geographical metaphor to extol the happiness which he asserts is the lot of the man whose ignorance is not a burden to him, favourably contrasting this rather complacent figure with the restless scientific humanist 'who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow' - a clear allusion to himself, and, one could perhaps infer, to a Creator who chose to limit the faculties and sensibility of Man. Of course, the geographical metaphor also brings the ethical and moral concerns associated with Frankenstein's narrative into Walton's own situation. It reminds us that Walton the explorer himself faces a testing moral dilemma in whether or not to continue his voyage into the unknown by forcing his men on against their will. 'Learn from me...by my example,' Frankenstein urges him. Clearly, Frankenstein's tale is intended to serve as a moral exemplum for Walton, who in turn acts as a kind of foil to Frankenstein. The outlook of both is similar in every respect except that now Frankenstein's is informed by a species of conscience (the product of the experiences of one who had aspired to 'become greater than his nature would allow') whereas for Walton, himself on the threshold of a similarly speculative venture, the prospect is a tormenting temptation. Here is revealed, then, the true nature of the scientists of Mary Shelley's novel; they, like Faustus, are compulsive 'over-reachers' engaged in trying to improve their lives by surpassing themselves, transcending the limitations which restrict their perception and world-view, or, ultimately, even trying to outdo a God whom they resent or whose powers they covet (assuming, of course, they even acknowledge his existence in the first place):

In Tamburlaine the emblem of tragic pride is Phaethon, rashly attempting to drive the fiery chariot of the sun. In Doctor Faustus it is Icarus... In each instance, it is a question of flying too high, of falling from the

loftiest height imaginable, of seeking illumination and finding more heat than light. Faustus prefers...to seek what flies beyond his reach; he is accused...of trying 'to ouer-reach the Diuell'.

40.

Walton serves the author's ostensible moral purpose when it is revealed towards the end of the novel that his decision is to return home rather than risk all, including the lives of his crew, in continuing his quest. Unlike Frankenstein before him, he has recognised the unique moral responsibility which is the scientist's, and so Frankenstein's story is further established as an exemplum. It seems clear that Mary Shelley's intention was to expose the threat of scientists for whom moral and ethical concerns seem to be only inconveniences which baulk the credulous or devout. While it may be true that the arcane science she portrays in Frankenstein was outmoded even by the standards of her own times, the fear of the amoral fervour of the unscrupulous scientist remains as strong today as it ever was, and perhaps for some familiar with the even greater pathological potential of contemporary science, is all the more strongly felt.

Unfortunately, the characterisation of Victor Frankenstein is too shallow to bear the strain his author latterly imposes on it in trying to inflate him into a tragic hero. While she does manage to suggest that his dormant conscience has been awakened by his sublime experiences, her attempt to make him seem to be aware of a more complex perspective is not wholly successful. As a result, his final state of mind arguably owes more to simple confusion than tragic ambiguity.

The same applies to her attempt to show that Frankenstein's quest for knowledge has brought him an unsought wisdom, for although he is certainly disillusioned and his confession to Walton is supposed to give the other scientist the benefit of his acquired self-knowledge,

at the end of it all Frankenstein does not seem to be any the wiser. This of course raises the question of what she was trying to achieve in reducing her formerly unshakeable, implacable hubrist to a vacillating, enfeebled wretch, and undoubtedly the need to show him in some way subject to retribution for his daring did influence her thinking. However, were that her sole intention it would arguably have been more coherent to show him unregenerate to the end, but ultimately the scientist seems more confused than sorrowful or implacable. Moreover, his guilt stems more from his failure and the knowledge of the consequences of it than from a deliberate intention to flout religious morality and ethics, which he saw as being immaterial. Yet in an elliptical way Mary Shelley does imply that the confusion which besets Frankenstein at the very end is the product of moral uncertainty - Victor's last vision is not of his eagerly sought immortalisation as a self-liberating hubrist, but perhaps is a belated recognition that unprincipled humanism may indeed be dangerous.

Frankenstein can be seen as the prototype science fiction novel not only because it introduced a new source of 'sublime' sensations to reader and writer alike, but because it dealt with the relationship between the scientist, his methodology, and his discoveries. A moral dimension was also introduced with this new authorial stress on the scientist's responsibility for the application of what he has revealed, which in a more general sense is his responsibility for the technology resulting from his research. Undoubtedly a flawed book which does too readily lapse into sentimentality for its own sake, this novel nonetheless stands on the threshold of a new genre of popular literature in which the most optimistic and most pessimistic perspectives of human

nature are set against a background of that moral ambiguity which many regard as a more or less intrinsic feature of modern technological society. Frankenstein's debilitating moral confusion is the characteristic affliction of the reluctant heroes and unwilling messiahs (such as Gallinger, below) of later science fiction.

The legacy of this 'first major science fiction novel' was indeed substantial, to judge by the many themes now firmly established in the genre which were first seen together in Mary Shelley's novel. To take just one to provide a concise example, witness the sheer number and variety of "doppelgangers" which figure in science fiction, particularly the artificial doppelgangers, the robots, computers, and androids which, suffering derangements, turn against their human creators or owners(41). Furthermore, usually mankind's creations are superhumanly strong(42), and in turning upon their masters such prodigies become in many respects analogous to Frankenstein's eight feet tall creature; all attest the lasting influence of Mary Shelley's hubristic scientist and his hideous prodigy.

In Frankenstein, Mary Shelley follows tradition and Milton in using the twin symbols of light and darkness: unfallen creatures are creatures of the light; creatures fallen from grace dwell in darkness. Moreover, she alludes to the poignancy of the Miltonic Lucifer's Fall in evoking the downward transformation of Frankenstein's creature, from Noble Savage to 'fallen angel'. Nelson Bond's story 'The Cunning of the Beast,' with which this discussion of the influence of Frankenstein upon later science fiction began, is worth another look now because its author deliberately sets aside these conventions.

It was noted earlier that Bond's story also features a creation myth which is a version of Genesis - the creatures ('beasts' 43) are

Adam and Eve. Strangely, though, they are completely at ease in an environment which their creator finds threatening because his race is susceptible in the atmosphere of the world where the story is set. They need not fear the dark, but their creator does. Incidentally, the fall from grace in Bond's story relates not to Adam and Eve as one might have been led to expect, but to the Yawa for he shares their banishment. The loss is his, not theirs: although Bond's rather sentimental Adam regrets his actions, Eve is quite unregenerate; the humans have lost nothing, their creator, all. Alas, the poignancy of the Miltonic Fall is reduced in Bond's trite story to being little more than the irony of the fate of a fairly impotent Creator who stood in the way of human aspirations fearlessly pursued by the She:

On her features was scorn; on her lips pride, anger,
and rebellion.

And she cried defiantly, "Yea, even I, my lord. It was I who showed the He how to build the garments. I, too, who read the books and learned the secret of making the flame which explodes, the fire that destroys, of smashing the Masters' domes..."

'The Cunning of the Beast,' p.40

The Yawa's troubles are caused by a determined assertion of human qualities. Eve's crime is committed in acquiring the knowledge (science) placed under an interdict by her maker, and their technological application of this knowledge provides the means whereby Adam and Eve can destroy the Yawa's ascendancy. This same act of 'rebellion' proves that the human spirit is not merely animal: "...by their very rebellion have these creatures proven the existence of their souls."(p.41) One is reminded of Roger Zelazny's much finer story, 'A Rose for Ecclesiastes'(1972;44) and his narrator Gallinger's assertion to the moribund Martians: 'It is the hubris of rationalism to always attack the prophet, the mystic, the god. It is our blasphemy which has made us great, and will sustain us, and which the gods

secretly admire in us.'(p.130)

Caught up in the destiny of an entire people, Gallinger takes on the heavy task of trying to dissuade the last inhabitants of a dying planet from accepting the end of their race. The Martians have consulted their religious texts and concluded that their extinction is fore-ordained. Their men have become sterile, but as the outcome of Gallinger's seduction by Braxa has revealed, interbreeding between their two races is a viable solution. However, logic alone is not sufficient to prevail against their beliefs; he must find a more telling argument. Inspiration comes to the rescue in the form of an exposition which he thinks could disabuse the Martians of their fatalism.

Gallinger, a poet of some distinction and the philologist of the expedition, has been polishing his own grasp of the Martian 'High Tongue' by translating the Book of Ecclesiastes into this Martian ritual idiom. His own race has managed to overcome the worst effects of the defeatism which their version of the Martian 'Book of Locar' sanctified, as the very presence on Mars of the Earth expedition attests. He decides to preach them a message of defiance and hope:

If I read them the Book of Ecclesiastes - if I read them a greater piece of literature than any Locar ever wrote - and as somber - and as pessimistic - and showed them that our race had gone on despite one man's condemning all of life in the highest poetry - showed them that the vanity he had mocked had borne us to the Heavens - would they believe it - would they change their minds?

I ground out my cigarette on the beautiful floor, and found my notebook. A strange fury rose within me as I stood.

And I walked into the Temple to preach the Black Gospel according to Gallinger, from the Book of Life.

'A Rose for Ecclesiastes,' (pp.128-129)

Yet an ironic denouement awaits this egomaniacal, sceptical humanist. Reeling with fatigue after by his marathon tirade against the passivity of the Martians, and convinced of the failure of his efforts, he is

taken completely aback when M'Cwyie addresses him as 'holy man.' He quickly and earnestly declines the acclamation: 'I'm not a holy man... Just a second-rate poet with a bad case of hubris.' However, when she mentions the fulfillment of a prophecy, he rather crossly demands an explanation. Her reply staggers him:

'The Promise of Locar,' she replied, as though the explaining were unnecessary, 'that a holy man would come from the Heavens to save us in our last hours, if all the dances of Locar were completed. He would defeat the Fist of Malaan and bring us life.'

'How?'

'As with Braxa, and as the example in the Temple.'

'Example?'

'You read us his words, as great as Locar's. You read to us how there is "nothing new under the sun." And you mocked his words as you read them - showing us a new thing.'

'There has never been a flower on Mars,' she said, but we will learn to grow them.'

'You are the Sacred Scoffer,' she finished. 'He-Who-Must-Mock-in-the-Temple - you go shod on holy ground.'

'A Rose for Ecclesiastes,' (p.131)

There is even more dismal news in store. M'Cwyie reveals that Braxa's involvement with him has not been, as he has blithely assumed, founded simply upon a genuine attraction to him, but is in accordance with an historic plan enshrined in the Martian scriptures. She has been carrying out a duty to which she has long ago been assigned, and she does not wish to see him again as she has not fallen in love with him during their affair. Completely disheartened, he can only return to his vessel, where he will unsuccessfully attempt suicide.

The irony of the situation in which he now finds himself is not lost on Gallinger: 'I have conquered thee, Malaan - and the victory is thine. Rest easy on thy starry bed. God damned!' (p.132) In arguing so strenuously against the religion of the Martians, Gallinger has paradoxically been instrumental in fulfilling its prophecies and thus implicitly confirming their veracity. Far from liberating them from an

oppressive, primitive, orthodox faith he has unwillingly convinced them that they were right to trust in their Providence after all. His own despair is not just the aftermath of a betrayed love, but is more profound, for Mars has reduced his much-vaunted hubris to fairly vapid, ethnocentric posturing, and overwhelmed his scepticism.

Both Bond and Zelazny seem to have followed Mary Shelley's lead to some extent, for both authors adopt a similar approach to hers in equating the acquisition of forbidden knowledge or the adoption of a rationalistic perspective with an hubris which holds out the promise of self-fulfilment. In Bond's story, an interdict on knowledge is defied and human attributes are vindicated; in Zelazny's, the interdict is thought by Gallinger to be false, for it prevents the Martians from adopting rationalism as an alternative to religious Providence, and he accordingly urges upon them an hubristic self-assertion which they in fact do not want or need, their lives - and his - having been predetermined by an inscrutable, superhuman agency.

Samuel Butler's Erewhon(1872) and its sequel present the most elaborate and telling rationalistic satire against a religion in early science fiction. Butler's nineteenth-century fantasies present the twin archetypal factitious religions: in the Erewhonian 'musical banks' he satirically sent up both of the twin contemporary obsessions of commercial exchange and 'respectable' Anglican propriety; and in a further development of the device in the sequel (discussed fully in Chapter 7), his professedly fallible protagonist Higgs became the literal deus absconditus of a new faith, the messianic Sunchild. In its own way Erewhon is arguably as seminal a work as Frankenstein even if it never has attained the popular status of Mary Shelley's novel.

Tiring of life as a shepherd on a colonial sheep station, Higgs sets off on a journey of speculative exploration into the unknown hinterland accompanied by Chowbok, a native guide. Higgs's motives are characteristically those of the Faustian hubrist: a distinctive streak of self-interest (which shows itself in his palpable desire for wealth) and an obsessive curiosity nurtured by his dissatisfaction with the dullness of his present circumstances. Although Chowbok abandons him soon after they enter the mountain fastnesses unexplored by the colonists, we know of his eventual success since he has already feverishly reported it in the very first page of Erewhon, the account of his adventures. He has conceded that he has not yet capitalized upon it, but:

It is true, I imagine myself to have made a discovery which, if I can be the first to profit by it, will bring me a recompense beyond all money computation, and secure me a position such has not been attained by more than some fifteen or sixteen persons, since the creation of the universe.

45.

While Higgs reveals no more of this seemingly millennial secret, he does betray that unmistakable charismatic excitement with which Mary Shelley endowed her deranged scientist, Victor Frankenstein; and like his literary ancestor, Higgs's self-centred aspirations (however hyperbolized by Butler) owe much more to Doctor Faustus than to Prometheus.

After enduring some privation, Higgs toils past the huge statues which guard the only pass into Erewhon, having overcome his own terror of the weird, other-worldly noises they utter. Now he fully understands Chowbok's reluctance to travel into the mountains, and it is clear that even he is not immune, seeking recourse to long-neglected prayer in his own pressing need for reassurance:

Thank Heaven, whatever it was, it was over now. I reasoned with myself, and recovered my firmness. I came convinced that I had only been dreaming more vividly than usual. Soon I began even to laugh, and think what a fool I was to be frightened at nothing, reminding myself that even if I were to come to a bad end it would be no such dreadful matter after all. I said my prayers, a duty which I had too often neglected, and in a little time fell into a really refreshing sleep...

Erewhon, p.60.

Butler's characterisation of the adventurer is really tongue-in-cheek, particularly when religion comes to the fore in the story. Higgs, with a characteristic lack of modesty, boasts of his Establishment pedigree while relating how he has striven to save Chowbok's heathen soul from perdition:

...I had set my heart upon making him a real convert to the Christian religion, which he had already embraced outwardly, though I cannot think that it had taken deep root in his impenetrably stupid nature. I used to catechise him by our camp fire, and explain to him the mysteries of the Trinity and of original sin, with which I was myself familiar, having been the grandson of an archdeacon by my mother's side, to say nothing of the fact that my father was a clergyman of the English Church.

Erewhon, p.63.

This seemingly quite selfless philanthropy is quite shallow, however. Higgs's evangelical zeal is usually short-lived; his candour, equally, is more often than not merely apologetics for his veniality ('I am not a much greater hypocrite than other people,' as he later concedes disarmingly). By authorial design Higgs is very much a man of his times, one in whom opportunism and a reluctant religiosity vie in an unequal struggle, particularly since Butler enjoys ironically showing up his sanctimonious self-interest for the get-rich-quick pragmatism it really is. Even the artful Chowbok is a means to an end:

I was therefore sufficiently qualified for the task, and was the more inclined to it, over and above my real desire to save the unhappy creature from an eternity of torture, by recollecting the promise of St. James, that if any one converted a sinner (which Chowbok surely was) he should hide a multitude of sins. Ibid.

All this reflects, in miniature as it were, both Butler's larger satirical purpose and his method, synthetic and symbolic, which is nowhere more apparent than when Higgs ruefully recollects the outcome of his attempt to enlighten Chowbok:

Indeed, on the evening of the same day that I baptized him he tried for the twentieth time to steal the brandy, which made me rather unhappy as to whether I could have baptized him rightly. He had a prayer book - more than twenty years old - which had been given him by the missionaries, but the only thing in it which had taken any living hold upon him was the title of Adelaide the Queen Dowager, which he would repeat whenever strongly moved or touched, and which did really seem to have some deep spiritual significance to him, though he could never completely separate her individuality from that of Mary Magdalene, whose name had also fascinated him, though in a less degree.

Erewhon, p.64.

Higgs clearly despises Chowbok's totemism, ironically ignorant of how his author already has exposed his own religious panic in the passage quoted above.

As he leaves behind him 'the river and the range', the naturalistic description of this account of the journey into Erewhon gives way to disquisitions about the graceful, comely people who live in what Higgs had hoped would be an El Dorado. These recollections prompt an excited Higgs to reveal his 'staggering' discovery:

To restore the ten lost tribes of Israel to a knowledge of the only truth: here would indeed be an immortal crown of glory! What a position would it not ensure me in the next world; or perhaps even in this! What folly it would be to throw such a chance away! I should rank next to the Apostles, if not as high as they - certainly above the minor prophets, and possibly above any Old Testament writer except Moses and Isaiah. For such a future as this I would sacrifice all that I have without a moment's hesitation, could I be reasonably assured of it.I feel now no longer uncertain.

Erewhon, p.76.

In an age in which Reason seemed more and more likely to eclipse Faith completely, Butler deals Higgs's credibility the ultimate blow

by revealing that his millennial secret is religious rather than technical or scientific, and naively - even fancifully - is very much based on treating a Scriptural apocrypha as literal truth. Nor is this sardonic treatment of his narrator casual, for while deriding the human weaknesses he embodies in his characters is a distinctive and ubiquitous feature of his style, Butler was a forthright critic of the religious observance and sentiment of his day, and rehearsed the religious arguments of Erewhon in a series of earlier non-fiction pieces which were assimilated into the novel.

The well-favoured people of Erewhon enjoy 'wonderful health and grace and beauty', but if their country is an utopia, it is not without peculiarities. Machines, for example, have been banished to museums as a device to allow Butler to satirize Darwin's ideas about evolution. The ancestors of the Erewhonians Higgs encounters generations before had produced a highly-developed, mechanized society but, warned by one of their philosophers of what their growing dependence upon machines would mean, resolved to abandon their efficient machine culture. Butler's ironic argument (in which he attacks both Darwin and the machine culture) is as follows: if creatures develop through meeting circumstantial or environmental challenges, then the special relationship between mankind and machines will cause the machines to develop faster than humans. Humanity will ultimately be weakened:

In Samuel Butler's witty satire Erewhon(1872), there is a "Book of the Machines" in which Butler suggested that machines were improving faster than people were by forcing people to tend them and develop them. This idea of machine evolution was intended to satirize Darwin. Today, many people hold...that machine evolution is a real process independent of human control.

46.

As Higgs recalls how he learned of Erewhonian customs, morals and doctrines, the narrative (also supported by a run-of-the-mill romance with the beautiful Arowhena Nosnibor) becomes more discursive. Higgs plays the Gulliver in describing and construing the involved, sometimes seemingly perverse doctrines pursued by the inhabitants of this Shangri-la:

This is what I gathered. That in that country if a man falls into ill health, or catches any disorder, or fails bodily in any way before he is seventy years old, he is tried before a jury of his countrymen and if convicted is held up to public scorn and sentenced more or less severely as the case may be.But if a man forges a cheque, or sets his house on fire, or robs with violence from the person, or does any such things as are criminal in our country, he is either taken to a hospital and most carefully tended at the the public expense, or if he is in good circumstances, he lets it be known to all his friends that he is suffering from a severe fit of immorality....

Erewhon, p.102.

Higgs further reports that Erewhonians customarily seek guidance from a special caste charged with moral cure, the straighteners:

It is hardly necessary to say that the office of straightener is one which requires long and special training. It stands to reason that he who would cure a moral ailment must be practically acquainted with it in all its bearings. The student..is required to set apart certain seasons for the practice of each vice in turn, as a religious duty. These seasons are called 'fasts,' and are continued by the student until he finds that he really can subdue all the more usual vices in his own person, and hence can advise his patients from the results of his own experience.

Those who intend to be specialists...devote themselves more particularly to the branch in which their practice will mainly lie. Some students have been obliged to continue their exercises during their whole lives, and some devoted men have actually died as martyrs to the drink, or gluttony, or whatever branch of vice they have chosen for their especial study. The greater number, however, take no harm by the excursions into the various departments of vice which it is incumbent upon them to study.

For the Erewhonians hold that unalloyed virtue is not a thing to be immoderately indulged in...

Erewhon, pp.110-111.

A distinctive, even idiosyncratic mixture of unorthodox sense and 'deliberate and sustained illogicalities(47)' is the most notable feature of Butler's handling of moral issues - 'For the Erewhonians hold that unalloyed virtue is not a thing to be immoderately indulged in... The straighteners say that the most that can be truly said for virtue is that there is a considerable balance in its favour, and that it is on the whole a good deal better to be on its side than against it...' (p.111) - there do not seem to be any absolute criteria in their morals. Indeed, the fact that the entire section quoted above is from Butler's final, augmented version of the novel suggests that these are ideas and contentions he emphasises, and not for their value as purely comic invective. He concludes this section by introducing a quiet hint that ultimately the influence of the guardians of Erewhonian morals may be repressive: 'Those men, they say, are best who are not remarkable either for vice or virtue,' a satisfaction with conformity which one recalls was as repellent to Marlowe's hubrist Faustus as it was to Smith, Orwell's very ordinary 'hero' of Nineteen Eighty-four to whom self-knowledge has been forbidden. In Erewhon social deviancy and uncontrolled individualism are taken as a symptom of moral sickness. For all that, these 'straighteners' cannot wholly 'make strait' the Erewhonian mind, for if its logic often seems to us utterly, even perniciously illogical, Higgs does note offhandedly that 'they were very tolerant' (p.89) - at least of him. Moreover, certain minority opinions (such as those of 'the malcontents') are countenanced.

Thus, if Butler accords morality (as personified by the straightener) a degree of social importance, he makes it clear that these special practitioners of the vices and virtues also act as a

kind of external, formal conscience allowing the offender not only the chance to expiate his guilt, but indeed to devolve upon a professional moralist the responsibility for ethical judgement. Consequently, personal morality is not merely secularised, it is clearly relativistic and devoid of any association with revealed divine wisdom or dicta. This treatment of morality as a relativistic phenomenon (not uncontroversial in a Victorian publication) is wholly in keeping with the larger theme discerned in Erewhon by Peter Mudford:

In The Way of All Flesh Butler concentrates on the flaws and limitations in family relationships, especially as these are influenced by the command to 'honour thy father and mother'. In Erewhon it is attitudes, not relationships, that come under surveillance; and the range taken is wide. All reflect in their various ways the one common enemy: blind adherence to attitudes inculcated in childhood or handed down from past generations.

48.

Clearly Butler was acutely aware of what he had decided was the unacceptable burden of highly proscriptive traditional moral views and inadequate, even reactionary social values (concerning, for instance, the correction of criminals). As for 'straightening', the pragmatic Erewhonians accept it because they find it works, rather than because it is allegedly a product of more-than-human wisdom. While Butler's novel abounds with such provoking notions (especially concerning the Erewhonians' views on machines) the lampoon most germane to the discussion of the factitious creeds of science fiction is his highly original, satirical invention, the 'Musical Banks' of Erewhon. As J.C.Garrett has observed, the tone of Butler's narrative alters in this section:

As author, Butler has delicious fun with Higg's efforts to convert Chowbok and with his hopes of finding the ten lost tribes of Israel across the ranges. But the Higgs who arrives in Erewhon, however earnest he may be in trying to

persuade Arowhena of the truths of Christianity, is a different man when he comments on the early training of the managers of the Musical Banks (i.e. priests of religion). Higgs comments that '..they had the misfortune to have been betrayed into a false position at an age for the most part when their judgement was not matured, and after having been kept in studied ignorance of the real difficulties of the system'(p.117). This remark indicates a reflective experience unlikely in the narrator of the early chapters but it also sounds uncommonly like the son of Canon Butler, who could never suppress his bitter memories of Langar Rectory.

49.

Compounding the confusion of the inclination Butler has to speak directly - even sermonize - while Higgs is discarded to hang abandoned in the wings like a neglected puppet is the apparent disorder of what Butler advances as his own views. The unconventional nature of Butler's novel, however, is an effective vehicle for his unorthodox opinions. In view of Higgs's observation that the Erewhonians '...appeared to have little or no religious feeling, and to have never so much as heard of the divine institution of the Sabbath'; and ascribed Higgs's weekly observance as being a strange 'fit of sulki-ness' (pp.88-89), Butler's treatment of his major religious theme may seem to have a degree of inconsistency. Of course this is deliberate, as one of Butler's main preoccupations is with the weakness of human logic: as represented by the prevailing attitudes of the Erewhonian 'Colleges of Unreason'(50), 'Reason' itself, the very touchstone of scientific positivism, is not beyond the scope of Butler's satire. Accepting for the moment Garrett's propositions concerning satire, there may in fact be little hard evidence in Erewhon itself to support his second conclusion:

The inconsistencies mar the satire. To succeed, satire must assume a set of values by which either the present world or the "never-never-land" can be appraised. These values need not be explicit, but they must be there. No-one misunderstands the moral indignation lying behind Swift's ironic Argument against abolishing Christianity, for example. But it is hard to deduce a consistent set of values from

Erewhon - and this is not merely because the authorial tone and attitude vary. It is hard, I suggest, for two reasons: first, the ironist in Butler never could control the Butler who was enchanted with ideas as playthings; second, Butler's attitude to society and its institutions was unclear to himself.

51.

This is Butler's own 'Erewhon' ("Nowhere") after all, where any absurd inversion, startling analogy or simple facetiousness may allow a fresh perspective of a time-honoured issue. That the second edition of the novel really was the third revision and presentation of these notions suggests compellingly that there is nothing merely fortuitous about the expository treatment of religion he offers, even if he has himself been unsettled by the inability to reconcile relativism and religion, as has also been proposed:

To be really effective, satire must rest on a system of values; and irony must contain an implicit attitude. By approaching a subject from an unusual point of view Butler so bemuses his readers that they quite forget what Butler explicitly avows over and over again: that he is a relativist. Moreover, when Butler occasionally forgets his relativism, he inadvertently reveals an undercurrent of conservatism or conventionality. Thus his occasional admissions about religion preserve his anxiety to preserve it...

52.

Unmistakeably, the underlying problem confronting Butler is the same as is frequently apparent in the science fiction of his successors (not excepting H.G.Wells) who are repelled by the all-too-evident failings of the orthodox religions of the day, and yet, however sceptical and unorthodox, nonetheless remain essentially religious in their outlook. Indeed, such a perspective is the well-spring of a host of later writings whose authors are no less systematic than Butler, whose methods and argument anticipate those of the post-modernists of science fiction who may offer existentialism, comparative theology and phenomenology as rational where Butler had only his own sense of outrage and his determination to ridicule

Victorian Anglicanism - here by analogy, there by parody, and with scorn passim. Garrett's own prosaic view of satire rather undercuts his contentions about the inadequacies of Butler's satire(53).

Butler begins by establishing certain premises about the nature of orthodox or established religion which he then develops in his preferred syllogistic manner:

So far...as I could collect anything certain, I gathered that they have two distinct currencies, each under the control of its own banks and mercantile code. One of these (the one with the Musical Banks) was supposed to be the system, and to give out the currency in which all monetary transactions should be carried on; and as far as I could see, all who wished to be considered respectable, kept a larger or smaller balance at these banks. On the other hand, if there is one thing I am more sure of than another, it is that the amount so kept had no direct commercial value in the outside world; I am sure that the managers and cashiers of the Musical Banks were not paid in their own currency.

Erewhon, pp.137-138.

It becomes clear that obtaining credit (symbolised by the purchase of financially useless token coins) at the Musical Banks is essential for maintaining and increasing one's respectability:

...in the coinage of the Musical Banks he not only challenges the false consolations of religion based on the desire to appear respectable, but the symbolic value of money as a sacred cow whose hold over the feelings is powerful and corrupt. But Butler's satire here, as elsewhere, tempered by an acceptance of the important part played by luck in human affairs; this acts to restrain any absolute condemnation - and so by implication ought to encourage moderation or compassion.

54.

Higgs's first visit to a Musical Bank is at once overwhelming and bewildering, but we are well served by his customary curiosity. This approach also permits his author to dress his expository style most happily in the conventions of naturalism:

I cannot describe all that took place in these inner precincts, for a sinister-looking person in a black gown came and made unpleasant gestures at me for peeping. I happened to have in my pocket one of the Musical Bank

pieces, which had been given by Mrs.Nosnibor, so I tried to tip him with it; but having seen what it was, he became so angry that I had to give him a piece of the other kind of money to pacify him. When I had done this he became civil directly. As soon as he was gone I ventured to take a second look, and saw Zulora in the very act of giving a piece of paper which looked like a cheque to one of the cashiers. He did not examine it, but his hand into an antique coffer hard by, he pulled out a quantity of metal pieces apparently at random, and handed them over without counting them; neither did Zulora count them, but put them into her purse and went back to her seat after dropping a few pieces of the other coinage into an alms box that stood by the cashier's side.

Erewhon, p.140

Having suggested the material uselessness of this 'currency' in the undisguised resentment of the Bank official who spurns Higgs's attempt at bribery, Butler emphasises it in various ways, most particularly when Higgs notes how everyone he has accompanied to the Bank gives the metal tokens back to a 'verger' before they leave, who restores them to the 'antique coffer' overseen by the 'cashiers'. The scriptural text behind this one-way transaction would seem to be St. Matthew's injunction against accumulating worldly-wealth at the expense of one's soul: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven' (Matt.6,19). Of course Butler's target is the hypocrisy of clerics who condemn materialism in the name of their various creeds but garner ecclesiastical power and personal wealth. The state religion of Erewhon is a device permitting Butler to castigate the English Establishment and Anglicanism, and though the fictional Mrs.Nosnibor echoes the contemporary concern about the declining number of its adherents, Higgs notes that 'She might say what she pleased, but her manner carried no conviction'.(p.142) As usual, Higgs contrives to speak to a senior figure who can expound the precepts of the

institution:

In conversation with one of the Musical Bank managers I ventured to hint this [the decline of the Banks] as plainly as politeness would allow. He said that it had been more or less true till lately; but that now they had put fresh stained glass windows into all the banks in the country, and repaired the buildings, and enlarged organs; the presidents, moreover, had taken to riding in omnibuses and talking nicely to people in the streets, and to remembering the ages of their children, and giving them things when they were naughty, so that all would henceforth go smoothly.

'But haven't you done anything to the money itself?' said I, timidly.

'It is not necessary,' he rejoined; 'not in the least necessary, I assure you.'

Erewhon, pp.142-143.

If Butler profanes orthodox religion by identifying it with greed, exploitation and hypocrisy, his convictions remain essentially religious - 'theistic'. Furthermore, however scathing Butler is about the Anglican Establishment, he never directly attacks religious faith itself, for the shortcomings of orthodox Christian morality are his constant target, especially when hypocritical faithlessness to one's espoused creed is involved. Yet underlying Butler's satiric indignation about pernicious religious principles and practice is a belief in man's capacity for moral growth and innate spirituality. In Erewhon and its sequel, his satires of factitious religion, he takes issue with any hegemony, technological or religious, which would vitiate these humane qualities; but his vision is deeply religious.

Of course the knowledge revealed to Mankind in scripture and in theophany - the foundation of religious faith - is assumed to have divine benevolence behind it, whereas few would place much faith in the notions of a power-hungry, ambitious scientist, or indeed, any mere mortal. Thus, the organisation of human curiosity, initiative, and that appetite for dominion endorsed by the economic pattern of Western life into the methodical, scientific pursuit of knowledge is

often represented as chancy if not utterly fatal and, in contrast to the more sanguine predictions of the positivists, it is frequently disastrous. The gloom of many devout authors, and some sceptics, is reinforced by the conviction that human judgement is altogether too weak to assure our general safety. These issues come to the fore in Philip K. Dick's excellent novel, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968)(55).

World War Terminus has turned the world into a waste with habitable pockets where 'the specials', those who cannot fulfill the requirements for emigration to new colony planets, must make the best of it. Anxious to preserve the race, the U.N. has decreed that only persons whose genetic patterns have not been deranged by radiation and the persistent fallout may be permitted to leave Earth, much of which is now poisoned and derelict. One of Dick's first targets is the political-military-industrial establishment which misled a superpower about the consequences of nuclear war:

In a giant, empty, decaying building which had once housed thousands, a single TV set hawked its wares to an uninhabited room.

This ownerless ruin had, before World War Terminus, been tended and maintained. Here had been the suburbs of San Francisco, a short ride by monorail rapid transit; the entire peninsula had chattered like a bird tree with life and opinions and complaints, and now the watchful owners had either died or migrated to a colony world. Mostly the former; it had been a costly war despite the valiant predictions of the Pentagon and its scientific vassal, the Rand Corporation - which had, in fact, existed not far from this spot. Like the apartment owners, the corporation had departed, evidently for good. No one missed it.

Do Androids Dream, pp.16-17.

To help establish themselves in their alien surroundings each colonist is allocated an artificial helper, a humanoid robot or 'android'. These were first developed as a sort of expendable soldier

(the 'Synthetic Freedom Fighter', as Dick trenchantly calls the man-made helots), but had soon proliferated into many types because of the shortage of manpower after mankind's self-inflicted, indiscriminate pogrom:

..able to function on an alien world the humanoid robot - strictly speaking, the organic android - had become the mobile donkey engine of the colonization programme. Under U.N. law each emigrant automatically received possession of an android subtype of his choice, and by 1990, the variety of subtypes passed all understanding, in the manner of American automobiles of the 1960s.

Ibid.

However, Dick's concerns have to do with life on Earth rather than on some exotic planet, and indeed with an ontological question which is quite fundamental: what is the aspect of consciousness which is uniquely human? This issue is dramatised in Do Androids Dream as a refined Frankensteinian problem - how can we distinguish between creator and creature when our artificial progeny are as perfect as we can make them?

...the Nexus-6 did have two trillion constituents plus a choice of within a range of ten million possible combinations of cerebral activity. In .45 of a second an android equipped with such a brain structure could assume any one of fourteen basic reaction-postures. Well, no intelligence test would trap such an andy. But then, intelligence tests hadn't trapped an andy in years, not since the primordial, crude varieties of the '70s.

The Nexus-6 android types, Rick reflected, surpassed several classes of human specials in terms of intelligence. In other words, androids equipped with the new Nexus-6 brain unit had from a sort of rough, pragmatic, no-nonsense standpoint, evolved beyond a major - but inferior - segment of mankind. For better or worse. The servant had in some cases become more adroit than its master.

Do Androids Dream, p.27.

For Rick Deckard, this is as much a pragmatic problem as a philosophical one, for he earns a living as a bounty hunter, 'retiring' renegade androids. His latest assignment is to trace and destroy a

number of the latest type, which have fled to Earth hoping to live out their short lives freely in one of the derelict areas people now avoid. Rick has no qualms about 'retiring' androids - who in any case usually try to kill him first - but his equanimity depends upon being confident that his quarry actually is an android and not a fellow human being, something which has, with this latest commercially developed type, become extremely difficult. The acid test involves measuring an individual's capacity for empathy - an uniquely human attribute - rather than intelligence. For their own quite commercial reasons, however, the corporation who produce Nexus-6 androids tries to discredit this last means of telling 'servant' from 'master' by requiring Rick to try out his test on Rachael Rosen. Although he later detects the truth and correctly identifies her as an android, she at first passes the test thanks to an elaborate cover story and her advanced design. Rick is in no doubt whatever as to what lies behind the technological refinements which have created the problem - corporate greed:

'This problem,' Rick said, 'stems from your method of operation, Mr. Rosen. Nobody forced your organization to evolve the production of humanoid robots to a point where -'

'We produced what the colonists wanted,' Eldon Rosen said. 'We followed the time-honoured principle underlying every commercial venture. If our firm hadn't made these progressively more human types, other firms in the field would have. We knew the risk we were taking when we developed the Nexus-6 brain unit. But your Voigt-Kampff test was a failure before we released that type of android. If you had failed to classify a Nexus-6 android as an android, if you had checked it out as human - but that's not what happened.' His voice had become hard and bitingly penetrating. 'Your police department - others as well - may have retired, very probably have retired, authentic humans with underdeveloped empathic ability, such as my innocent niece here. Your position, Mr. Deckard, is extremely bad morally. Ours isn't.'

Do Androids Dream, p.45

Rosen's hypocrisy is later revealed, but while he has the advantage he

tries to shift the balance of moral opprobrium in his own favour. No corporate Frankenstein he, but merely a businessman whose activities are condoned, indeed encouraged by his society.

Decard duly hunts down and destroys the androids, but as he does so he becomes increasingly oppressed by his assignment. He realises that he has begun to empathise with them, to perceive the situation from their point of view. To fight off this deepening mood, he invests in a real animal, a commodity increasingly at a premium in his wasted world. Consequently he must continue the android hunt, and kill the remaining three to pay for his expensive investment - a live goat. Yet while this means that he must carry out the rest of the assignment to pay for the goat, he remains demoralised by his growing doubts about the propriety of killing these almost-human creatures. In this fretful mood, he seeks reassurance from a communion with Mercer, the old universal scapegoat.

On the screen the faint, old, robed figure of Mercer toiled upward, and all at once a rock sailed past him. Watching, Rick thought, My God; there's something worse about my situation than his. Mercer doesn't have to do anything alien to him. He suffers but at least he isn't required to violate his own identity.

Bending, he gently removed his wife's fingers from the twin handles. He then himself took her place. For the first time in weeks. An impulse; he hadn't planned it; all at once it had happened.

A landscape of weeds confronted him, a desolation. The air smelled of harsh blossoms; this was the desert, and there was no rain.

A man stood before him, a sorrowful light in his weary, pain-drenched eyes.

'Mercer,' Rick said.

Do Androids Dream, p.135

Mercerism is a factitious transcendental cult which uses the uniquely human faculty of empathy to create a fusion of consciousness with the suffering but indomitable figure of Wilbur Mercer. Communing with him, acolytes may share his mortification. It is a religious experience

which, in its twentieth-century, sceptical, post-modern despair, embodies a quite unsurpassable neo-Gothic sublimity.

'I am your friend,' the old man said. 'But you must go on as if I did not exist. Can you understand that? He spread empty hands.

'No.' Rick said. 'I can't understand that. I need help.'

'How can I save you,' the old man said, 'if I can't save myself?' He smiled. 'Don't you see? There is no salvation.'

Ibid.

Mercer's counsel - fatalistic acceptance - is as devastatingly simple as it is inevitable:

'Then what's this for?' Rick demanded. 'What are you for?'

'To show you,' Wilbur Mercer said, 'that you aren't alone. I am here with you and always will be. Go and do your task, even though you know it's wrong.'

'Why?' Rick said. 'Why should I do it? I'll quit my job and emigrate.'

The old man said, 'You will be required to do wrong no matter where you go. It's the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your own identity. At some time, every creature which lives must do so. It is the ultimate shadow, the defeat of creation; this is the curse at work, the curse that feeds on all life. Everywhere in the universe.'

Ibid.

Once the prophet has personally told Rick that the sole purpose to life is to continue with it, his estrangement becomes worse until he himself becomes almost an alien in his own society. A primal existentialism prevails, though, and however reluctantly, Rick goes ahead with his task, and gets to retain the goat.

The texts discussed have shown how, even from the very beginnings of this modern genre, 'Progress' has often been associated with the hubristic intellectual pride of a self-regarding scientist and thence portrayed as a rather less than respectable or even potentially immoral objective. Nowadays materialistic and religionist notions of

humanism seem to diverge quite widely; gone is the closer relationship these ideas may have had in pre-industrial times (to be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4 with reference to A Canticle for Leibowitz, and in Chapter 6, to Pavane, among others). Indeed, the moral orientation of the humanist ideal has become quite controversial, and perhaps unexpectedly given popular expectations of the genre, it has come to be a preferred theme of some contemporary science fiction writers.

REFERENCES and FOOTNOTES

1. Algernon Charles SWINBURNE, 'Hymn of Man'.
2. Nelson BOND, 'The Cunning of the Beast', in Other Worlds, Other Gods, edited by Mayo MOHS; Doubleday & Co., New York, 1971. p.28.
3. Bond, ibid., p.25.
4. Michael BISHOP, 'The White Otters of Childhood', in Beneath the Shattered Moons; Sphere Books Ltd., London, 1978; pp.71-83 passim.

Bishop's name for the scientist, Prendick, associates his story with H.G. WELLS'S The Island Of Doctor Moreau(1896), in which the earlier Prendick is the aghast narrator.
5. The text of Mary SHELLEY'S Frankenstein I have used throughout is that edited by Mario PRAZ and Peter FAIRCLOUGH for Penguin Books Ltd., in Three Gothic Novels. (Harmondsworth, 1968.)
6. Francis BACON, The New Atlantis; reprinted in The Road to Science Fiction: from Gilgamesh to Wells, edited James GUNN; New English Library, London, 1977; p.74.
7. As Christopher SMALL'S highly informative account shows, Frankenstein was received critically with 'enthusiasm and bewilderment' by the reviewer (possibly Sir Walter Scott) for Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine; praised perceptively by the reviewer for the Gentlemen's Magazine; and received with 'outrage' by a reviewer for the studiously polemical Quarterly Review.
Ariel like a Harpy: Shelley, Mary and Frankenstein;
V.Gollancz Ltd., London, 1972; pp.19-21.
8. D.W. HARDING, 'The Character of Literature from Blake to Byron,' in Vol.5 of The Pelican Guide to English Literature, edited by B.FORD; Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, 1957; p.74.
9. Christopher SMALL, op.cit. (see 7).
Martin TROPP, Mary Shelley's Monster; Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1977.
Jane DUNN, Moon in Eclipse: A Life of Mary Shelley; Weidenfield and Nicolson, London, 1978.
10. In 'On the Origin of Species: Mary Shelley,' Chapter I of his Billion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction; Weidenfield and Nicolson, London, 1973.

In the Introduction to his revised and extended Trillion Year Spree(1986), Aldiss is able to reflect on the change which his earlier promotion of Frankenstein effected:

Before I wrote, almost no one paid any attention to that old pre-Victorian novel of Mary Shelley's. Having seen travesties of the theme on film and television, they believed

they knew what they did not. The situation has remarkably improved since then. Trillion Year Spree, p.18

He also declares, 'Bearing in mind that no genre is pure, Frankenstein is more than a merely convenient place at which to begin the story. ...Mary Shelley's novel betokens an inescapably new perception of man's capabilities..' Idem.

In Trillion Year Spree, Aldiss offers a deeper and even more sustained analysis of Frankenstein confirming much of the the discussion in my 'A Gothic Legacy and its Sources,' which was written some years before his fuller discussion went to press. However, many other elements of the present purview of the science fiction of aspiration retain their originality. Butler, for instance, whose work Erewhon is discussed by Aldiss in terms of a sustained critique on Darwinism, remains a neglected figure in most treatises - not earning a mention in Robert Reilly's anthology of studies of religion in science fiction, The Transcendent Adventure, for instance; and even Aldiss himself quite overlooks Butler's central concern with religious morality in Erewhon, a feature which is of no less importance in the sequel, Erewhon Revisited (see Chapter 6, 'From Man to Messiah,' of the present work).

11. Eric S. RABKIN and Robert SCHOLLES, Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision; Oxford University Press, 1977; p.196.
12. Mark R. HILLEGAS, 'The Literary Background to Science Fiction,' in Science Fiction, A Critical Guide, edited Parrinder; Longman Group Ltd., London, 1979; p.11.
13. Patrick PARRINDER, 'Science Fiction and the Scientific World-View,' in Science Fiction, A Critical Guide, edited Parrinder; Longman Group Ltd., London, 1979; p.68.

This slip is not typical of Mr.Parrinder's valued contribution to the field of science fiction criticism, but it does show how widespread are some misconceptions about Mary Shelley's scientist. (See also 38 & 43, below.)

Commenting on Frankenstein's last words, Brian Aldiss dryly (and to better effect) observed, 'Some people never learn.'
(Billion Year Spree, p.33)

14. Kingsley Amis put this pithily:

"S.f.'s no good," they bellow till we're deaf.
"But this looks good. Well then, it's not s.f."

Brian Aldiss wrote of the problem of the lack of recognition of Frankenstein as being a particular example of the wider problem of the critical response to science fiction:

It is all too appropriate that Mary Shelley's should be neglected. Science fiction has been similarly neglected

until recently. As the standing of Mary Shelley's reputation is still in the balance, so is science fiction's.
Billion Year Spree, p.41.

However, Robert PLANK is quite forthright about the stature of science fiction:

As "everybody" knows, science fiction is about rockets, bloody erotic adventures on distant stars, and galactic empires in the year 235,000. Everybody? We evidently have to except those who know what science fiction is really about. They are quite aware that something incomparably more important is at stake. Science fiction has become as indispensable for the embodiment of the great moral questions in literature as religion and mythology used to be.
'The Place of Evil in Science Fiction,'
Extrapolation 14 (1973), p.100.

Robert L.WYMER's more measured evaluation also includes the argument that 'popular literature need not be inferior:'

There will no doubt always be a market in SF for its more ephemeral manifestations, like adventures, escapes, puzzles, and scientific speculations, and certainly SF will remain in many ways a literature of ideas; indeed, it may even effectively extol the quest for knowledge as James Gunn does in The Listeners (1972). But instead of human beings existing to add drama to the exploration of science, technology, or the future, these latter elements have come to exist in a more sizable body of literature to heighten and expose a central concern with what it means to be a human being. What is especially delightful about this development is that in the process SF has grown from being a manifestation of the interests of a small coterie of specialized readers into a truly popular literature, and its growth in popularity has paralleled its growth in depth, sophistication, and understanding of the Western literary tradition. Science fiction reveals that popular literature need not be inferior, that it can function as the means by which a culture critically explores and creates its own values and consciousness.

'Perception and Value in Science Fiction,'
Extrapolation 16 (1975) pp.103-112.

15. Dunn, op.cit., p.131. Incidentally, this explodes the notion that galvanic experiments upon a Glasgow convict which allegedly ended with the revivification of the executed murderer were in some way the inspiration for Frankenstein. It is not really clear from the title 'Frankenstein was a Glasgow Man' whether broadcaster Edward CHRISHALL means Dr. Jeffray, the university experimenter who is reputed to have succeeded in re-animating Matthew Clydesdale, or Clydesdale himself; but the footnote in The Glaswegian, 7 (May 1987), which mentions Mary Shelley's visit to the city suggests that her novel, 'published in 1818,' is in some obvious way

related to this amazing event - which must have taken place some time after Clydesdale's trial 'In the bleak October days of 1818.' Stories like this no doubt abound; indeed, in a recent television programme viewers were shown around the ancestral seat of the Frankensteins, a rather picturesque, semi-ruinous German castle. All this bespeaks the strength of a modern myth which is now so pervasive and ill-defined that it can even support its own body of apocryphal tales and lore!

16. Christopher Small provides an illuminating discussion (op.cit., pp.48-52) of the myth of Prometheus plasticator, a variation of the ancient Greek myth of the fire-stealing Titan, Prometheus. He is certainly correct in his insistence upon seeing Mary's scientist Victor Frankenstein as a contemporary emblem of the former promethean figure, but in linking Frankenstein's hubristic pursuit to the potent, promising force of science, she gave a crucial new currency to the popular image of the scientist and the technologist as the audacious, aspiring depredator of jealously-guarded divine secrets which can be of immense practical value to a progressive society. This may in some way explain why the original Greek myth (the basis of Prometheus Bound, Aeschylus's fifth-century B.C. drama) has come to overshadow that of Prometheus plasticator as a symbolic depiction of twentieth-century scientific endeavour, particularly in the nuclear age when it seemed so apt to see atomic research in promethean terms - scientists were daringly "meddling with the very fabric of creation" and "unleashing fire stolen from the gods", as it were.
17. Baird SEARLES et al., A Reader's Guide to Science Fiction; 'The Spawn of Frankenstein'; Avon Books, New York, 1979; p.246.
18. James GUNN, The Road to Science Fiction, Vol.I; New American Library, New York, 1977; p.163; an otherwise excellent work.
19. Aldiss puts this rather well: "Symbolically, Frankenstein turns away from alchemy and the past towards science and the future..." (Billion Year Spree, p.27).
20. Harry LEVIN, Christopher Marlowe, The Overreacher; Faber & Faber, London, 1954; p.130.
Christopher SMALL makes a similar distinction between magic and science:

The life of pre-scientific nature, the nature of animism, is free, as anything with a soul is free, a rock as much as a beast or another man, to be controlled if at all by magic, which is most uncertain. (For magic, even though it be the precursor of science, and even called 'science' by its practitioners, operates in a quite different way, not simply in being ineffective, but in its assumptions. It is at bottom a work of the emotions... The sorcerer... may be "reasonably" certain that autonomous nature will obey him...but he cannot be as sure as a scientist.
op.cit., p.256.

21. I have used the translation of Goethe's 'Prometheus' given in Vol.III of Specimens of Foreign Literature, edited by George Ripley for Hilliard, Gray and Co., Boston, 1839; pp.106-108.
22. As Small observes, 'The spirit of the age may include certain images: the idea of Prometheus was in the air.' (op.cit.,p.52) Goethe's version is unmistakably Prometheus plasticator, and since Percy Shelley had even essayed a poem similarly titled 'Prometheus' while staying at the Villa Diodati (Small, op.cit., p.53) where Mary began writing, it is entirely feasible that Frankenstein's reckless hubris was partly inspired by that of Goethe's sardonic man-maker.
23. The following development of this line of argument is largely my own conjecture; I can find no source of authority dealing with the extent to which Frankenstein was influenced by Goethe's Faust:Part One other than two rather suggestive but unclear observations by Brian Aldiss:

As Mary was commencing her novel, Byron was exiling himself from England forever. He stayed at the Villa Diodati.... The Shelley party was near by. "Monk" Lewis also appeared, and read Byron Goethe's Faust, translating from the German as he went - thus sowing the seeds of Byron's Manfred. As the Shelleys probably introduced Byron to Darwin's ideas about evolution and the future, he introduced them to the Prometheus Vincetus of Aeschylus. Billion Year Spree, p.28

and:

Although Frankenstein is a Gothic novel, and its predecessors are apparent in the text - an honourable array of godfathers they make, Paradise Lost, Goethe's Faust, and Godwin's Caleb Williams among them - fresh elements mark its departure from old pathways.

Science Fiction as Science Fiction, p.19

(Bran's Head Books, Frome, Somerset; 1978.)

Surprisingly, Aldiss dropped the association with Goethe from his rewritten version, Trillion Year Spree(p.46). While keeping the other wording of this short passage more or less intact, Aldiss quietly forgot about his (perhaps speculative) introduction of "Monk" Lewis into the Villa Diodati circle, and the latter's supposed influence on Byron. Other evidence suggests that Aldiss's earlier intuition may have been correct after all.

Christopher Small seems to tie Percy Shelley's knowledge of Faust:Part One to 1821-22(op.cit.,p.284), but elsewhere he also notes that Shelley's reading of Goethe's drama, as recorded in Shelley's letters, was 'after the composition of at any rate the main part of Prometheus Unbound,' (i.e., after 1819-20) and while he thinks it feasible that both Shelley and Mary knew of Goethe's work before she began writing Frankenstein, he is more cautious

than Aldiss in seeing Goethe as an important influence, though in a footnote (Chapter 6, 14, p.336) he includes the nickname Shelley had in Italy ("the Snake") as 'supposedly referring to Goethe's Faust'. There is evidence from another source that Shelley had had some familiarity with Goethe's play while at Diodati in 1816:

Byron also received some assistance from Shelley in his efforts to gain a more intimate knowledge of Faust. It was during one of his viva voce translations that an incident occurred which gained for Shelley the nickname of 'The Snake'. E.J. Trelawney relates:

As Shelley translated and repeated passages of Faust - to, as he said, impregnate Byron's brain - when he came to that passage, 'My Aunt, the renowned Snake', Byron said, 'Then you are her nephew' and henceforth he often called Shelley the Snake...

James BOYD, Goethe's Knowledge of English Literature; Oxford Univ. Press, 1936; p.162.

24. Faust:Part One, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; translated by Philip Wayne for Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, 1949; pp.98-99.
25. P.B.MEDAWAR, Advice to a Young Scientist; Harper & Row, New York, 1979; p.70.
26. Francis BACON, The New Atlantis; Gunn, op.cit., p.76.
27. Frederick L. JONES, (ed.) Mary Shelley's Journal; Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1947. Her reading lists show that in 1815 both she and Shelley read parts of The Faerie Queene; in 1816 she re-read Paradise Lost (she had read The Sorrows of Werter in 1815, probably in an edition of Richard Grave's translation from French, of which there were five impressions between 1779 and 1785, with a further seven impressions of another translation between 1786 and 1809). For 1815, see Jones p.47; for 1816, see Jones p.73.
28. Betty T. BENNETT, (ed.) The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Vol.I; John Hopkins Univ. Press, London, 1980; p.22.
29. Tropp, op.cit., p.57.
30. Levin, op.cit., p.136
31. Levin, idem., pp.141-142.
32. B. Ifor EVANS, Literature and Science; Allen & Unwin, London, 1954; p.11.
33. Joel PORTE, 'In the Hands of an Angry God: Religious Terror in Gothic Fiction'; in The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism, edited by G.R. THOMPSON; Washington State Univ. Press, 1974; p.43.

Still on the "sublime", Aldiss notes:

Burke distinguished between beauty, which is founded on pleasure and is placid, and the sublime, which inspires awe and terror and, with pain as its basis, disturbs the emotions. Billion Year Spree, p.17.

34. Plank, op.cit.:

Absolute evil used to be concretized in but one person: the Devil. He has fallen on evil days. In Dante and Milton he still was grand. In Goethe's Faust he is rather a comical figure. In The Brothers Karamazov and in Mann's Doctor Faustus, it is only the deranged that can even perceive him. Exit Devil. Enter science fiction.

'The Place of Evil in Science Fiction.'

Aldiss supports the implications of Plank's argument in his much-revised and extended study of Frankenstein in Trillion Year Spree(1986):

What exactly is uniquely innovative about Frankenstein? Interest has always centred on the creation of a nameless monster. This is the core of the novel, an experiment that goes wrong - a prescription to be repeated later, more sensationally, in Amazing Stories and elsewhere. Frankenstein's is the Faustian dream of unlimited power, but Frankenstein makes no pact with the devil. "The devil" belongs to a relegated system of belief. Frankenstein's pursuits bear fruit only when he throws away his old reference books from a pre-scientific age and gets down to some research in the laboratory. This is now accepted practice, of course. But what is now accepted practice was, in 1818, a startling perception, a small revolution.

The novel dramatizes the difference between the old and the new, between an age when things went by rote and one where everything was suddenly called into question.

Jiggery-pokery magic, of which Wells was to speak so contemptuously, achieves nothing in this new age.

Trillion Year Spree, pp.39-40.

If "'The devil" belongs to a relegated system of belief,' the same cannot quite be said of God, for though Frankenstein aspires to wield divine power and be the focus of the adoration of a new race he would create, he himself has innate weaknesses (for instance, the spontaneous revulsion which blinds him to all but the outward appearance of the creature he endows with life) which make it impossible for him to fulfil his desires. Even if represented only as no more than a most remote influence rather than as a Providential force actively determining Frankenstein's fate, his creator (an 'absentee landlord,' according to Aldiss), persists into the new scientific era in some form, as does the moral confusion which has always been the hubrist's nemesis.

35. J.O. BAILEY, Pilgrims Through Space and Time; Argus Books, New York, 1947; p.29.

36. Tropp, op.cit., p.37.

37. Tropp, ibid., p.46.

38. Indeed, so close are these resemblances of one to the other that Messrs. Scholes and Rabkin (op.cit.) appear to wrongly attribute a remark of Walton to Frankenstein, thereby confounding the entire sense of the novel with respect to Frankenstein's role as a personified warning to the naive Walton:

Victor, like Robert, will seek knowledge at any cost. When he first tries to justify his behaviour, Victor says, 'One man's life were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought.'

Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision, p.195.

However, they do observe that, 'Both Victor and Robert are Faust figures'; and furthermore, they correctly note that, 'Victor's last words before he dies begin as advice to Robert, but end quite differently...' (p.195) a point misinterpreted by Parrinder.

39. Levin, op.cit., p.140.

40. Levin, op.cit., pp.133-134.

41. Alfred Bester's 'Fondly Fahrenheit' (1954) (in which an artificial man (an "android") becomes infected with its master's pschyopathy); and Walter M. Miller's 'I Made You' (1954) (in which a cybernetic lunar fortress attacks the technicians who built it), are stories which illustrate two rather different approaches to this theme.

42. Perhaps the most well-known author of robot stories, Isaac Asimov, took this notion to a conclusion of sorts by inventing a code of conduct for the robots of his stories, the "Three Laws of Robotics", designed to prevent man's artificial creatures in any way harming a human being.

43. In Bond's story, the "beasts" are of course the heroes, their "otherness" from their creator a pseudo-ironic vindication of their human attributes. This is however a relatively rare use of the theme of alienation and hubristic menace; much more common is the sort of "beastly otherness" exemplified by this sort of treatment:

The creature crept. It whimpered from fear and pain, a thin, slobbering sound horrible to hear. Shapeless, formless thing yet changing shape and form with every jerky movement.

It crept along the corridor of the space freighter, fighting the terrible urge of its elements to take the shape of its surroundings. A gray blob of disintegrating stuff, it crept, it cascaded, it rolled, flowed, dissolved, every movement an agony of struggle against the abnormal need to become a stable shape.

A.E. van Vogt, 'Vault of the Beast' (1940).

Van Vogt's story neatly, if unwittingly, demonstrates yet again the general confusion over Victor Frankenstein. In this case, the names of the creator and "beastly" creation have become quite transposed:

'But why did you do it? Why?' (asks the human hero)
'Because they were hurting me. They were going to destroy me. Because...I liked...being human. I was...somebody!' (replies the beast)
The flesh dissolved. It flowed slowly into a pool of lavalike gray. The lava crinkled, split into dry, brittle pieces.
.....
'Poor Frankenstein.' (the hero concludes)

While resisting the temptation to slate the quality and style of 'The Vault of the Beast,' it is fair comment to observe that sadly it is representative of perhaps too much of the fiction which won an enthusiastic readership via the pulp magazines of the 1940's and 1950's.

44. Roger ZELAZNY, 'A Rose for Ecclesiastes;' from The Doors of his Face, The Lamps of his Mouth; Corgi Books, London, 1975; p.130.
45. Samuel BUTLER, Erewhon, p.39. All references to Erewhon are to the Penguin Books edition of 1970, introduced by Peter MUDFORD.
46. Robert SCHOLLES and Eric S.RABKIN, Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision; Oxford Univ.Press, New York, 1977; pp.131-132.
47. MUDFORD, loc.cit., p.8.
48. MUDFORD, p.13;
Mudford also provides the following concise account of the new school of intellectual scepticism which emerged during the nineteenth century, confirming the influence this had on what Butler wrote.

The influence of sceptical inquiry on theology had been complemented by the advances of scientific knowledge, especially in geology. In 1797 James Hutton had asserted the apparently limitless age of the earth against the traditional teaching of the Church that it only dated back to 4004 B.C. Sir James Lyell, in his Principles of Geology, published thirty years later, had adduced massive evidence for the earth's evolution over countless millennia. To this the Origin had added the evidence for organic evolution, and a theory as to the means by which it had occurred. At the same time it finally established the supremacy of scientific fact over ecclesiastical assertion in matters where the Church had previously claimed to preach the absolute truth.

The appearance of the Origin at a time when Biblical criticism was making inroads on traditional doctrine gave a special kind of authority to sceptical inquiry at this time, which is reflected in the intellectual tenor of Butler's book.

Loc.cit., pp.14-15.

49. J.C.GARRETT, Hope or Disillusion - Three Versions of Utopia: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Samuel Butler, George Orwell; Univ. of Canterbury Publications Committee, 1984; pp.22-23.
50. The professors' view of reason itself is as fair an example as any of Butler's paradoxical wit, which departs from a sensible premise, usually cavorts through a syllogism or two, and ends by contriving a satirically inverted reflection of the first principle.

Life, they urge, would be intolerable if men were to be guided in all they did by reason and reason only. Reason betrays men into the drawing of hard and fast lines, and to the defining by language - language being like the sun, which rears and then scorches. Extremes alone are logical, but they are always absurd; the mean is illogical, but an illogical mean is better than the sheer absurdity of an extreme. There are no follies and no unreasonablenesses so great as those which can be so irrefragibly defended by reason itself, and there is hardly an error into which men may not easily be led if they base their conduct upon reason only.

Erewhon, p.187.

Modern anti-utopian fiction certainly affords abundant instances of 'men being led into error by basing their conduct upon reason only.' Materialistic rationalism (as has also been suggested elsewhere in this thesis) is ideal for fostering social conformity and the expeditious ethics of the totalitarian state. Astutely, Butler even anticipates two of the fundamental principles of Orwell's dreadful Ingsoc, 'doublethink' and 'the Mutability of the Past':

'It is not our business,' he said, 'to help students to think for themselves. Surely this is the very last thing which one who wishes them well should encourage them to do. Our duty is to ensure that they shall think as we do, or at any rate, as we hold it expedient to say we do.' In some respects, however, he was thought to hold somewhat radical opinions, for he was President of the Society for the Suppression of Useless Knowledge, and for the Completer Obliteration of the Past.

p.190.

51. Garrett, op.cit., p.25.
52. Garrett, idem., pp.28-29.

53. It is unwise to be too prescriptive about literary conventions in discussing a work like Butler's; indeed, one wonders what Garrett, using similarly narrow criteria, might make of Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle (a devastatingly effective satirical novel), in which W. John LEVERENCE has discerned no less than '...sixteen traditional aspects of American Humor' including 'the tall tale, the unreliable narrator, the Negro minstrel, comedy in a grim situation, grotesque naturalism...' and so on. Leverence, 'Cat's Cradle and Traditional American Humor'; Journal of Popular Culture, Vol.5(1972).
54. Mudford, op.cit., p.17.
55. Philip K. DICK, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?; Panther Books, London, 1972.

Dick's story was recently released in an impressive film production as Bladerunner.

CHAPTER THREE

Rationalism and Hubris: Some Science Fictional Views of 'Progress'

Whether or not one sees the Icaromenippus of Lucian(1) or Frankenstein as 'the first science fiction novel' is in the end of limited importance if the influence of Mary Shelley's novel on later popular science fiction is recognised for what it is. The transference of horror and dread from necromancy to contemporary science was one of the most significant and lasting achievements of its authoress, as J.O.Bailey noted delightedly:

These 'Gothic' themes have somewhat deepened the emotional possibilities of scientific fiction; the use of science has, in return, strengthened the basis of the tale of terror. The streams merge. Alph the sacred river, bound for a sunless sea, is diverted to a wider ocean. Ghosts, elixirs and mesmerisms lose their thrill, but there is ample material for the tale of terror in the theory of evolution and the atomic bomb.

2.

Furthermore, she anticipated a new variety of fiction which would take as its subject-matter the promise, and the threat, of change in a modern world more and more appreciative of the benefits, generally speaking, rather than costs of science-inspired technology.

These elements - the new developments in biological science and the invention of the Gothic novel - combined with discoveries in electricity, particularly the creation of an electric current by Alexander Volta, came together in the imagination of an eighteen-year-old woman to produce what was, if not the first science fiction novel, at least the first novel that showed what a science fiction novel would be. That novel was Mary Shelley's Frankenstein(1818).

3.

The following discussion of a number of well-known novels, aimed at exploring the question of how rationalism and scientific materialism came to represent a crucial aspect of 'Progress', will permit a close examination of a range of the attitudes towards religion, morality

and science which emerge in science fiction.(4) While in isolation these may seem to be simply the expression of an individual author's perspective, they centre on the promethean ideal and hence share a conceptual complex without parallel in popular fiction. Moreover this aggregation of theme, argument and ideology is a rich provenance for the didactic work discussed in Chapter 5 whose writers deal with the ideals of progressive humanism far less sympathetically.

In the early texts discussed here an obvious Gothic element is linked to a quest for applicable knowledge, reflecting contemporary interest in technological innovation for personal, economic and political power and the emergent materialistic perspectives of the early twentieth century. In several later texts an important new humanistic apostasy is seen - subversion of the technocrat, the surrogate god of dystopian fiction. This dissident theme, where hubris becomes political rebellion, constitutes an important expression of humanist disaffection with technology.

The early development of the Gothic legacy and an emergent generic distinction between rationalism and reasonableness (i.e., materialism advancing 'natural justice' and 'common decency' as humane ethics in preference to utilitarian values or positivistic zeal) are the focus of the opening discussion below. Where a factitious religion is described in a text it is also reviewed en passant. However since there are few early examples extended discussion of the more elaborate satires must be deferred.

Objectifying the Sublime: Gothic Fiction and Scientific Principles.

The science fiction of Edgar Allan Poe(1808-49) is here and there quite clearly indebted to Mary Shelley's novel, but he did

refine the presentation of her conjunction of science and dread by a fuller, more structured adaptation of the logic and objectivity of the scientific method. Whereas Frankenstein was an individual so obsessed by the power he sought through science that eventually he utterly lost his composure if not his mind, Poe's scientists observe the most horrifying phenomena with more convincingly portrayed scientific detachment, even though they often seem scarcely less profane in their persistent onslaught against the fastnesses of the ultimate questions about existence and death.

In stories such as 'The Facts in the Case of M.Valdemar'(1845), (5) he utilises scientific methodology and data in presenting in a coherent and plausible way the unusual phenomena which underlie many of his stories: 'Poe's biological details are good, his manner cool and clinical. He regarded mesmerism as a strange but legitimate new science.'(6) He also exploits the outward calmness of his scientists to draw upon another dimension of horror for his story, by juxtaposing the extreme phenomena described with the coolly logical, 'objective' stance of the narrator:

After pressing Valdemar's hand, I took these gentlemen aside, and obtained from them a minute account of the patient's condition. The left lung ...was entirely useless for all purposes of vitality. The right, in its upper portion, was also partially, if not thoroughly, ossified, while the lower region was merely a mass of purulent tubercles, running into one another. Several extensive perforations existed, and, at one point, permanent adhesion to the ribs had taken place.... It was the opinion of both physicians that M.Valdemar would die about midnight on the morrow (Sunday). It was then about seven o'clock on Saturday evening.

'The Facts in the Case of M.Valdemar,' pp.116-117

The story concerns an investigation of the nature of death to discover whether or not the animal principle of human life can be hypnotically compelled to reside in the body after the intellective

faculties have deteriorated. The title reflects the narrator's promise of a true account which will set the record straight about an intriguing event recorded with the dispassionate thoroughness of the professional scientist:

Mr.L____l was so kind as to accede to my desire that he would take notes of all that occurred; and it is from his memoranda that what I now have to relate is, for the most part, either condensed or copied verbatim.
'The Facts in the Case of M.Valdemar,' p.117

M.Valdemar is to be the subject in a morbidly Gothic experiment which nonetheless has been contrived not merely to observe, but to interrogate Nature. However 'objective' their manner, they (and Poe's reader) will feel disappointed if nothing extraordinary happens; this is not that sort of modern 'Galilean' (after Galileo) science in which the negative result is, properly construed, as revealing as an affirmative outcome. The scientists Poe depicts here are of course out to prove something which they anticipate more in a spirit of curiosity than of reason - for all their apparent professionalism, his Aristotelian scientists are asking leading, rather than open questions:

Joseph Glanvill, in common with many of his contemporary Fellows of the Royal Society, had the utmost contempt for Aristotle, whose teachings he regarded as major impediments to the advancement of learning. In Plus Ultra he wrote of such experiments thus: 'Aristotle...did not use and imploy experiments for the erecting of his Theories: but having abritrarily pitch'd his Theories, his manner was to force Experience to suffragate, and yield countenance to his precarious Propositions.'

7.

So the anonymous mesmerist who acts as narrator, and his colleagues, may not be wholly convincing as scientists, but their professionalism and methodical manner do preserve them from the charge of being simply morbid voyeurs. Though the conduct of their investigation is quite evidently rationalistic, Poe uses science in the familiar

Gothic way, that is, to ensure the effectiveness of his fiction as horror fiction by giving his reader a retrospective 'verbatim' account of the sensational outcome to a pragmatic (Baconian) test of a (Kantian) metaphysical problem. The conclusion of his story is as devoid as the rest of any discernible moral perspective, and is where the science at last gives way completely to the Gothic when Valdemar, suspended for seven months between life and death, finally dies:

For what really occurred, however, it is quite impossible that any human being could have been prepared. As I rapidly made the mesmeric passes, amid ejaculations of 'dead! dead!' absolutely bursting from the tongue and not the lips of the sufferer, his whole frame at once - within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk - crumbled, absolutely rotted away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome - of detestable putridity.

'The Facts in the Case of M.Valdemar', p.123

Like young Victor Frankenstein, Poe's scientists see their squeamishness as being the only thing which might limit their noble pursuit of knowledge; their sole ethic is scientific, and if they are outwardly less excitable, they are just as visionary as their Gothic predecessor. Yet unlike both Frankenstein and Faustus, their questions about human existence are ontological, that is, about the nature of existence rather than teleological, that is, having to do with the purpose of existence, which is rarely if ever explored in Poe's science fiction. Unlike their forerunners, Poe's scientists seek to push back the limits of understanding and the horizons of their existence, but do not aspire blasphemously to usurp God.

However, in other stories - as H.Bruce Franklin has observed(8) - the scientific components of the fiction provide a reasoned predictive framework for the story, as in 'Mellonta Tauta'(1849), a short story of balloon travel set in 2848 A.D. Poe waggishly extols the

wonders of the age: twelve-line railways with three-hundred miles per hour trains, and so on. These 'wonders' are quite clearly meant to be seen as extrapolations or projections into the future of existing devices, as Poe himself makes plain by having his narrator refer disparagingly to their nineteenth-century precursors:

Pundit says that the route for the great Kanadaw railroad road must have been in some measure marked out about nine hundred years ago! In fact, he goes so far as to assert that actual traces of a road are still discernible....The track, it appears, was double only; ours, you know, has twelve paths...

The ancient rails were very slight, and placed so closely together as to be, according to modern notions, quite frivolous, if not dangerous in the extreme.

'Mellonta Tauta', p.131; 9.

Yet Poe the eclectic visionary, hoaxer and satirist, deplored the rigorous, deliberate, seemingly quite uninspired 'merely scientific men' of his age and also seemingly refused to see much merit in technological developments:

But it was not science he hated so much as the triumph of mechanical reason, confirmed by technical progress. In 'The Colloquy of Monos and Una' Monos denounces 'the harsh mathematical reason of the schools,' sweeping aside the 'rectangular obscenities' with which technology has littered our globe. Poe used speculative theory from the start to frustrate technological methods and aims. Each 'advance in practical science' meant a 'retro-gradation in the true utility.'

10.

Poe was a chameleon, fanciful and wittily deceptive in much of what he wrote. He dared to be creatively inconsistent, preferring here to be quite strictly logical in his fiction, and there to strike a pose as a manic literary and philosophical jackdaw whose idiosyncratic and dazzling sensibility matched poetic absolutes with pure mathematics. As Kant had, Poe sought to form a synthetic, holistic theorem of the nature of existence and of perception. The literary results were, as the mood or whim took him, either overwhelming, visionary narratives such as 'Descent into the Maelstrom' and 'The

Power of Words'; or odd concoctions like 'Mellonta Tauta'(11). Thus it is quite ironic that it is for his use of extrapolation as a fictional device that Poe is most often seen as having made a notable contribution to the genre:

Science fiction as a form of physical (as opposed from utopian, moral, psychological or religious) speculation is what Poe may have provided with significant new dimensions, though by no means giving it birth.

12.

The relationship between science and fiction in the 'scientific romances' of H.G.Wells (1866-1946) is often thought to be more straightforward than that of Poe's science fiction; V.S.Pritchett wrote in 1946 that during the century and a half which passed between Swift and Wells no other English novelist had gone to 'science for his data and materials as Wells has done'. The influence of science on English fiction before Wells was 'philosophical, not factual' (13), and there is certainly some clear evidence of the philosophical influences to be found in the utopian fiction of the later nineteenth century which will be discussed shortly.

As his care in keeping the scientific elements of his writing consistent and self-explanatory shows(14), his fiction is crafted rather than casual. Evidently he did not favour dilatory narratives, at least between 1894-1901 when he was writing his early science fiction. Even in his first published novel, The Time Machine, Wells reveals a gift for choosing the telling detail and voicing the chilling phrase. Moreover, he draws upon exciting, recent contemporary scientific influences which lend new force to the extrapolative, Gothic science fiction of Poe's mid-century era - practical, exciting discoveries about electricity, medicine and organic chemistry, and the evolutionary speculations of Charles Darwin(15).

Few would deny that his influence on twentieth century science fiction has been profound(16), but there has been some debate about the moral vision and ethical sensibility which helped shape and give depth to his work. Pritchett again:

Wells the Utopian, Kipling the patriot - they represent the day-dreams of the lower middle class which will either turn to socialism or to fascism. Opposed in tendency, they both have the vision of artists; they foresee the conditions of our time. They both foretell the violence with a certain appetite. Crudity appeals to them. They are indifferent or bad-hearted, in human relations. They understand only personal independence which, from time to time in their work, is swallowed up in mass relationships. 17.

Since Pritchett also wrote of The Island of Doctor Moreau as 'a superb piece of storytelling'(18) it is reasonable to deduce that the crudity of which he writes above is one of sensibility rather than of literary style. Perhaps Wells would have agreed - in 1933 he called the same novel 'an exercise in youthful blasphemy' (19).

The Island of Doctor Moreau(1896) was the second of Wells's scientific romances, and it was the third novel he published. In his first, The Time Machine, he took a nineteenth-century man into the far future, extrapolating the later society from his contemporary viewpoint much as Poe did in 'Mellonta Tauta'. Since The Time Machine will be discussed in another context later, we merely note in passing here that it is significant that his first two novels deal with social projection in one case, and vivisection - of a distinctly hubristic kind - in the other.

Wells chose a time-honoured way of introducing the ghastly subject of The Island of Doctor Moreau. Prendick, the narrator whose signature appears at the end of his story as if to attest its veracity, has come home from a remote island where Doctor Moreau has for years been conducting grisly investigations, and the story is a

verbatim account of his experiences. He begins with his outward voyage, relating how he becomes caught up in Moreau's endeavours.

Rescued from a boat adrift on the high seas after shipwreck, Prendick learns that he owes his life to Montgomery, an expatriate former medical student who now assists Doctor Moreau. Prendick is himself quickly established by Wells also to have a casual scientific interest:

I told him my name, Edward Prendick, and how I had taken to natural history as a relief from the dullness of my comfortable independence. He seemed interested in this.

The Island of Doctor Moreau, chap.6; 20

Since the captain of the vessel associates Prendick with Montgomery and his disturbing cargo, he is put ashore with them at the nameless island where Moreau runs what he calls his 'biological station'. At their first meeting, the secretive Moreau seems relieved to learn from Prendick that he has a scientific background: 'I told him I spent some years at the Royal College of Science, and had done some research in biology under Huxley.'(Chap.6) While Moreau is unwilling to take Prendick into his confidence so quickly - 'Our little establishment contains a secret or so, is a kind of Bluebeard's Chamber, in fact. Nothing very dreadful really - to a sane man.'(Chap.7); Prendick suddenly remembers a vivisectionist scandal which had, a decade before, obliged a Doctor Moreau to abandon his 'valuable work' in England and go abroad:

I followed him out with my eyes, and as I did so, by some trick of unconscious cerebration, there came surging into my head the phrase... 'The Moreau Horrors.' The phrase drifted loose in my mind for a moment, and then I saw it in red lettering on a little buff-coloured pamphlet, that to read made one shiver and creep. Then I remembered distinctly all about it. That long-forgotten pamphlet came back with startling vividness to my mind. I had been a mere lad then, and Moreau was, I suppose, about fifty; a prominent and masterful physiologist, well known in

scientific circles for his extraordinary imagination and his brutal directness in discussion. Was this the same Moreau? He had published some very astonishing facts in connection with the transfusion of blood, and, in addition, was known to be doing valuable work on morbid growths. Then suddenly his career was closed. He had to leave England. A journalist had obtained access to his laboratory...and by the help of a shocking accident... his gruesome pamphlet became notorious. On the day of its publication, a wretched dog, flayed and otherwise mutilated, escaped from Moreau's house.

Chapter 7.

In Chapter 7, Prendick takes on another role. No longer a merely passive spectator caught up unwillingly in something about which he is denied the truth, he emerges as Wells's moral witness. At first Prendick's thoughts reveal uncertainty about Moreau: while he clearly dislikes the scandal which ruined the doctor, he also feels an unvoiced, subconscious objection to the cruelty of Moreau's experiments (with the 'wretched', 'mutilated', 'flayed' dog in mind, he can't help but think of the whole affair as 'shocking' - as his middle-class sensibility requires). Wells casts Prendick as another scientist not simply because he can thus be a knowledgeable reporter, but also because Wells needs to have another scientist condemn Moreau's experiments so that the final verdict passed on them is professional, and free of the charge of ignorant prejudice which might attend the response of a lay observer. Though puzzled and increasingly suspicious, Prendick conscientiously displays the proper scientific attitude: 'Yet surely, and especially to another scientific man, there was nothing so horrible as to account for this secrecy.' (Chap.7) So Moreau seemingly is to be tried by a peer, and he has implicitly ventured what is left of his professional reputation on whether or not Prendick is 'sane' - 'Nothing very dreadful really - to a sane man.' Still, rationality and sanity are not always congruent qualities.

The nature of the microcosm into which Prendick has been brought with his middle-class scientific sensibility is revealed only gradually to him as Wells exploits the situation he has established for maximum effect by introducing hints of Gothic darkness which Prendick notices piecemeal. At night there are the appalling screams of tortured animals, and by day he begins to see more and more evidence of physical peculiarities and strange disfigurements among the island's other inhabitants. Seeing a group from the distance as he explores the island alone, Prendick records his impressions of them thus:

One was obviously a female. The other two were men. They were naked, save for swathings of scarlet cloth about the middles, and their skins were of a dull pinkish drab colour, such as I had seen in no savages before. They had fat heavy chinless faces, retreating foreheads, and a scant bristly hair upon their heads. Never before had I seen such bestial-looking creatures.

Chapter 8.

Later, as night falls, he flees panic-stricken from a threatening man-like animal, and bursts back into Montgomery's shack to demand the truth about Moreau and the island's many Calibans from him. Moreau's assistant shows immediate concern, and voices his and Moreau's regret that they have failed to 'warn' Prendick about what he laconically calls 'our curiosities' (Chap.10). Prendick learns nothing more that night, but in the morning is able to steal a look at an example of Moreau's work because Montgomery has neglected to lock the shack behind him. The visitor leaps to an aghast conclusion: he is being kept to provide the next of Moreau's experimental subjects - 'Could the vivisection of men be possible? The question shot like lightning across a tumultuous sky. And suddenly the clouded horror of my mind condensed into a vivid realisation of my danger.' (Chap.10) Terrified, he flees into the jungle to escape his imprisonment and the terrible fate he believes Moreau has in store

for him.

At large on the island, Prendick's needs for survival oblige him to contact the strangely bestial inhabitants of a village. He is accepted by them only after he convinces them of his worth by reciting with them a pseudo-liturgical creed, the Law:

We ran through a long list of prohibitions, then the chant swung round to a new formula:

His is the House of Pain.
His is the Hand that makes.
His is the Hand that wounds.
His is the Hand that heals."

.....
'His the lightning flash,' we sang, 'His is the deep salt sea.'

A horrible fancy came into my head that Moreau, after animalising these men, had infected their dwarf brains with a kind of deification of himself. However, I was too keenly aware of white teeth and sharp claws about me to stop my chanting on that account. Chapter 12.

The terrible results of Moreau's attempt to improve on nature by his vivisectionist meddling are brought home fully by Wells's introduction of a grotesquely ironic rhetorical question - 'Not to go on all-Fours; that is the Law. Are we not Men?' (Chap.12)

When Moreau does eventually catch up with Prendick, he explains to him that his aim is the reverse of that which Prendick suspected. He has been working on 'a humanising process', vivisectioning animals to give them human characteristics. Moreau is disgusted that Prendick has wasted so much of his valuable time in having to pursue him, but Prendick, with the memory of the ritualistic social organisation of the Beast People still fresh, retains his both his doubts and his uneasiness.

While there are many evident parallels between the endeavours of Frankenstein and Moreau, there is an important distinction to be drawn here. Frankenstein's creature becomes monstrous because he is neglected by his creator; but Moreau has given the Beast People a

sort of moral code, The Law ('a long list of prohibitions', Prendick calls it), which paradoxically confirms his hubris. He has assumed more than the role of creator of the 'Men'; he also claims to have created their entire Cosmos, with himself as God. Moreau is a megalomaniac, like Frankenstein, but Moreau's aspiration to deification is more encompassing.

There is of course method in Moreau's madness - scientific method. He explains his methods and propositions in a lengthy, detailed, scientific disquisition which at first makes Prendick the scientist ashamed of his failure to recognise the 'triumphs' of vivisection Moreau has achieved.

'Surgery can do better things than that. There is building up as well as breaking down and changing. You have heard, perhaps, of a common surgical operation resorted to where the nose has been destroyed. A flap of skin is cut from the forehead, turned down on the nose, and heals in the new position. This is a kind of grafting in a new position of part of the animal upon itself. Grafting of a freshly obtained material from another animal is also possible - the case of teeth, for example. The grafting of skin and bone is done to facilitate healing. The surgeon places in the middle of the wound pieces of skin snipped from another animal, or fragments of bone from a victim freshly killed. Hunter's cockspur - possibly you have heard of that - flourished on the bull's neck. And the rhinoceros rats of the Algerian zouaves are also to be thought of - monsters manufactured by transferring a slip of the tail of an ordinary rat to its snout, and allowing it to heal in that position.'

'Monsters manufactured! said I. 'Then you mean to tell me --'

'Yes. These creatures you have seen are animals carved and wrought into new shapes. To that - to the study of the plasticity of living forms - my life has been devoted. I have studied for years, gaining in knowledge as I go. It lay in the surface of anatomy years ago, but no one had the temerity to touch it. It's not simply the outward form of an animal I can change. The physiology, the chemical rhythm of the creature may also be made to undergo an enduring modification...'

Chapter 14. (21)

Throughout Moreau's visionary assertion of his own skills, admiration and suspicion vie in Prendick's mind. When the vivisector goes on to

speak of psychological adaptation, the spell is broken and Prendick is reminded forcibly of the extent of Moreau's conceited audacity:

But I asked him why he had taken the human form as a model. There seemed to me then, and there still seems to me now, a strange wickedness in that choice.

He confessed to me that he had chosen that form by chance. 'I might just as well have worked to form sheep into llamas, and llamas into sheep. I suppose there is something in the human form that appeals to the artistic turn of mind more powerfully than any animal shape can. But I've not confined myself to man-making...'

Chapter 14.

Small wonder that Prendick was not convinced by Moreau's disingenuous profession of an aesthetic preference for 'man-making' rather than transfiguring other forms; after all, he has already encountered Moreau's worshipful Beast People, who differ psychologically from their original natures to a far greater extent than llamas do from sheep. His Beast People give Moreau a chance to play at being God, a role he covets to the point of having allowed his fascination with it to dominate his endeavours:

'Then I am a religious man, Prendick, as every sane man must be. It may be as I fancy I have seen more of the ways of this world's Maker than you - for I have sought his laws, in my way, all my life, while you, I understand, have been collecting butterflies. And I tell you, pleasure and pain have nothing to do with heaven and hell. Pleasure and pain--Bah! What is your theologian's ecstasy but Mahomet's houri in the dark? This store men and women set on pleasure and pain, Prendick, is the mark of the beast upon them, the mark of the beast from which they came. Pain! Pain and pleasure - they are for us, so long as we wriggle in the dust...'

Chapter 14.

The singular irony of Moreau's representation of himself as a 'religious' man is that his way of praising the world's Maker is to try to promote his own ascetic but profane religion by trying to reinforce in other creatures what he admires in himself - to recreate them in his own image. His efforts will receive a grim, mordantly ironic vindication.

Even Moreau's scientific values have been distorted by his obsessive, egocentric drive to shape other beings to his will:

'You see I went on with this research just the way it led me. That is the only way I ever heard of research going. I asked a question, devised some method of getting an answer, and got - a fresh question. Was this possible, or that possible? You cannot imagine what this means to an investigator, what an intellectual passion grows on him. You cannot imagine the strange colourless delight of these intellectual desires. The thing before you is no longer an animal, a fellow-creature, but a problem...'

Chapter 14.

All this is finally too much for Prendick - 'But,' said I, 'the thing is an abomination--'. Moreau's first response is that ethics are but sentimentality - 'To this day I have never troubled about the ethics of the matter. The study of Nature makes a man at least as ruthless as Nature', though of course natural philosophy has not changed Prendick's sensibility to anything approaching Moreau's mad obsessiveness, as Prendick is there to testify, albeit mutely most of the time.

Rationalism and sanity are of course not synonymous, and human nature is not purely intellective; and, for all his single-mindedness, Moreau cannot achieve an enduring transformation of his creatures. Nature will out: 'I have gone on, not heeding anything but the question I was pursuing, and the material has....dripped into the huts yonder...' The innate nature of the creature adapted by Moreau has always re-asserted itself eventually:

'So for twenty years altogether - counting nine years in England - I have been going on, and there is still something in everything I do which defeats me, makes me dissatisfied, challenges me to further effort. Sometimes I rise above my level, sometimes I fall below it, but I always fall short of the things I dream. The human shape I can get now, almost with ease, so that it is lithe and graceful, or thick and strong; but often there is trouble with the hands and claws - painful things that I dare not shape too freely. But it is in the subtle grafting and re-shaping one must needs do to the brain that my trouble lies. The intelligence is often oddly low, with unaccountable black ends, unexpected gaps.

And least satisfactory of all is something I cannot touch, somewhere - I cannot determine where - in the seat of the emotions. Cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange hidden reservoir to burst suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature with anger, hate, or fear. These creatures of mine seemed strange and uncanny to you as soon as you began to observe them, but to me, just after I make them, they seem to be indisputable human beings. It's afterwards as I observe them that the persuasion fades. First one animal trait, then another, creeps to the surface to stare at me... But I will conquer yet. Each time I dig a living creature into the bath of burning pain, I say: this time I will burn out all the animal, this time I will make a rational creature of my own. After all, what is ten years? Man has been a hundred thousand in the making.'

Chapter 14.

Moreau's rationalistic attempt at what he considers to be human perfectibility - by demonstrating his own divine attributes - is cut short when he falls victim to his own creatures, as Frankenstein did. Again like Frankenstein, who laboured in his 'workshop of filthy creation' to improve on God's handiwork, Moreau aspires to emulate the divine creativity he covets by the mundane means of surgically transforming the bodies and minds of animals into human forms and humane consciousness. These would-be rivals of God fail because, however effectual their scientific practices might be, they themselves are imperfect, a traditional notion which their proud, progressive sensibility will not concede:

The biblical authors...did not succumb to naive illusions about man. They were quite aware that though goodness and value might be the deepest stuff of existence, they do not go unchallenged. They recognized all too well that man's creative capacities and tendencies are assaulted by their negative counterparts; that man is beset by painful disharmony within himself, by bitter conflict with others individually and socially, and by antagonistic resentment of his God. In portraying this proclivity for destruction, they also projected it into the past. If there is something amiss with man now, it is because something went wrong at the beginning. From the first, the human race has been afflicted by a proneness to evil, by "original sin." Still, evil is less "original," less fundamental than goodness.

22.

In Frankenstein's case, this becomes clear when he spurns his own creature; in Moreau's, it is forcefully apparent in his inability to perfect his attempted re-creations of animals, all of which sooner or later revert. Ironically, what seems to Moreau to be a deterioration is in fact an amelioration of their condition, as their natural selves recover from the crippling surgical disfigurements to which they have been subjected by this deranged scientist. Their natural state may be less exalted than man's, but it is more wholesome and balanced than the terrible deformations Moreau inflicts in the name of science.

Temperamentally, the scientists of Wells and Mary Shelley are also alike in many respects. Like Frankenstein, Moreau is not a promethean figure, he is a faustian one, 'fallen under the overmastering spell of science' as Prendick suspects (Chap.7), a scientist whose aspirations destroy the objectivity of his calling, so that his science becomes reduced to merely being a means to a selfish if visionary end, in much the same way that Marlowe's Faustus exploits demonic power to serve his whims and to feed his appetite for personal power. Also, for Moreau, as much as for Frankenstein and Faustus, 'the fruits of experience are disillusionment', to borrow Levin's phrase(23); significantly, though, it is to Prendick - self-assured, positive-thinking Prendick - that the real lesson is left. The only surviving human on the island, he watches the Beast People devolve into merely disfigured beasts, and when he can stand it no longer, he constructs a raft to try to return to "civilisation". The success of his arduous voyage is blighted by the experience he carries with him because he is now persistently disturbed by his new perception of other people, who will always seem

to him to be suppressing the beast within:

I feel as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the islanders will be played over again on a larger scale. I know this is an illusion, that these seeming men and women about me are indeed men and women, men and women for ever, perfectly reasonable creatures, full of human desires and tender solicitude, emancipated from instinct, and the slaves of no fantastic Law - beings altogether different from the Beast Folk. Yet I shrink from them... Chapter 22.

Prendick's recourse is to solitude, a studious, religious isolation which indirectly confirms the moral theme of the novel. 'There is, though I do not know how there is or why there is, a sense of infinite peace and protection in the glittering hosts of heaven.' He cannot be certain, he can only hope, that the retribution which overtook Moreau and Montgomery when they were destroyed by their own perverse creations is symbolic of a cosmic order which gives meaning to human existence, one which in creating human nature endowed men with 'shining souls' by design rather than by accident. Despite being 'a very pessimistic book'(24), The Island of Doctor Moreau ends on the note of Prendick's earnest hopefulness that there is an active if obscure Providence which orders the human universe; and at the outset determined that rational, spiritual humanity is the pinnacle of evolution. Recollecting his sharp denial when Moreau described him in Chapter 14 as a materialist, this soteriological conclusion accords well with his given character even if to the sceptical reader it seems absurd and sad.

Wells's own point of view of course could accommodate both Moreau's and Prendick's, but trying to assess which he was more inclined to is challenging(25). On the one hand, as a scientific rationalist himself he undoubtedly understood the attractions of the absorbing, compelling principles of scientific endeavour which, for

individuals who have the (mad) single-mindedness of a Moreau, reduce the world to a single, monolithic problem awaiting a logical, affirmative solution. He himself once believed that the world should be given over to scientists to be managed more effectively(26). On the other hand Wells also invented the agonizingly slow-witted Prendick, the wide-eyed, incredulous narrator who takes so long to put two and two together, and the ingenuous survivor of a boatful of would-be cannibals (including himself, of course, even if he never does class himself with the rough types in the lifeboat). We recall how he introduces himself to the man who saved his life with polite superiority: 'I told him my name, Edward Prendick, and how I had taken to natural history as a relief from the dullness of my comfortable existence.' (Chap.3) A "respectable" dabbler in science, Prendick can no more earn our respect (27) than become a second Moreau. Wells has drawn him as a bloodless caricature of a mannered conservative, a middle class, dilettante scientist whose liberal outlook (28) stands in the novel for what is reasonable rather than rational, and whose composure is so disturbed by the strenuous trials Wells puts him through that he retreats from the phenomenal, human world. Prendick's bourgeois complacency and his ideas of fair play and faith in the essential gentility of human nature have been riven beyond repair.

When I lived in London the horror was well-nigh insupportable. I could not get away from men; their voices came through windows; locked doors were flimsy safeguards. I would go out into the streets to fight with my delusion, and prowling women would mew after me, furtive craving men glance jealously at me, weary pale workers go coughing by me, with tired eyes and eager paces like wounded deer dripping blood, old people, bent and dull, pass murmuring to themselves, and all unheeding a ragged tail of gibing children. Then I would turn aside into some chapel, and even there, such was my disturbance, it seemed that the preacher gibbered Big Thinks even as the Ape Man had done...

Chapter 23.

This evocative and compelling description of how the city strikes Prendick on his return from Moreau's island shows how the man of means who had hitherto not noticed the squalor and hardship around him sees all too clearly for comfort. He has lost the partial vision produced by that "comfortable" social existence he once enjoyed. While then he was content in his privileged ignorance of the social experiences of his most of his contemporaries, now he must seek seclusion to preserve his own sanity. Having grown in self-awareness and having painfully acquired a dire vision of human existence, nothing around Prendick can ever again seem to him as it once did: the stars gleaming distantly are the only points to which his haunted, paranoid soul can look for constancy.

The Island of Doctor Moreau takes the form (after Frankenstein) of the terrifying story of the fate of a scientific hubrist who aspires to wield superhuman power and so seem god-like to a species re-created in his own image. However, Wells's presentation of this reflects his own values, and there is also finally more than a hint in his 'exercise in youthful blasphemy' that he found conventional religious belief unappealing. No doubt some of his like-minded readers would have relished the mordant wit of his unflattering allusion to the preacher who 'gibbered Big Thinks even as the Ape Man had done'.

Science, well-spring of the change which had outwardly altered the landscape and social relationships so greatly in the virtually uncontrolled upheaval of the Industrial Revolution, is symbolically represented as also being the source of a chronic disturbance of human attitudes and perspectives which is problematic but must be accommodated. If Moreau the extremist was 'hounded out of the

country' by the popular response to his experiments, Prendick, the Establishment man, has been forced into a form of self-imposed internal exile, unable to come to terms with his intense, morbid new awareness of society and human relationships. As Aldiss realises, 'If the characters are in part cliché, this is in part because they serve symbolic roles, and there is a symbolic quality about the whole that gives it the quality of Poe or of the French writers.'⁽²⁹⁾

Wells of course does not approve of either protagonist very much, and in so far as he had an obvious reason for casting them as he did, he was astutely⁽³⁰⁾ exploiting the popular view of scientists as either madmen or polite dabblers, a view which ironically this novel does much to reinforce. Nevertheless, a truer picture of his actual attitude towards contemporary science is revealed if the book is seen as being structurally a sort of dialectic between the two stereotypes of the popular image of the scientist. A sophisticated scientific sensibility, he appears to suggest, embraces something of Moreau's visionary extremism and of Prendick's restraint - rationalism mediated by reasonableness, or, as Shaw put it some seven years later in The Revolutionist's Handbook(1903), 'The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself..' However he, perhaps more perceptively than Wells, saw that the audacity of hubris, that desire to 'boldly go where no man has gone before,' (to adopt Star Trek's time-worn generic cliché) with the rest of us in tow, is an essential if worrying or uncomfortable part of the progressive urge: 'Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.' Of course, in trying to decide what is "reasonable" and what is not, we face the riddle of the Sphinx; and in the end Wells is seemingly unable, or unwilling,

to speculate about the matter. The thematic concerns of The Island of Doctor Moreau seem to conform to James Gunn's general description of the emergent naturalism so characteristic of some of the more memorable science fiction of the first half of this century, but arguably that confirms more than contradicts the limited nature of the moral vision of which the book is in some sense a product:

Under the influence of naturalism, science fiction adopted a view of man as an animal selected by environmental pressures for intelligence, aggressiveness, possessiveness, and survival; from the scientific optimism of the times, science fiction saw man also as an animal whose passions, aspirations, and understanding had given him a tragic nobility: he might not be divine but in his hubris and understanding he partook of divinity - he had eaten of the tree of life and of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; he was a creature who could dream of greatness and understand that it was only a dream.

31.

Wells's abiding interest in the moral complexities of evolutionary humanism broke new ground and sustained a debate about materialistic ethics which dominates philosophical science fiction written between the First and Second World Wars. Moreau anticipates the aloof Utopians of his 1923 Men Like Gods (discussed in Chapter 5). Olaf Stapledon's Odd John Wainwright of 1935 is their spiritual brother.

Darwinism, moral vision and the limits of human development are concerns which are brought together and explored in a very graphic way by Stapledon in Odd John(1935). Stapledon's science fiction does bear a debt to Wells's(32), none more obvious than in his handling of the evolutionary, cosmic time scales of works such as Last and First Men(1930) and Star Maker(1937; see Chapter 5 below). Odd John, however, is one of a pair of interesting novels (the other being Sirius, 1944; 33) which are written in what for Stapledon was really a less innovative narrative form than the more speculative medium of the 'cosmic' novels (like Star Maker) and for which he is more highly

regarded by some writers.

In Odd John we are given a speculative essay in which an individual with Moreau's disdain for human ethics and morality is presented as a superman, the next stage in the chain of human evolution. Greatness, to borrow James Gunn's term from the quotation above, is much more than a dream for 'Odd John' Wainwright - it is his birthright and his reality. In this novel, Stapledon playfully explores the 'Urbemensch' contentions of Neitzsche by giving them a "biological" credibility.

In the novels of Mary Shelley and Wells vivisection or surgical adaptation is as important thematically as structurally: Victor Frankenstein's hubris drives him to the creation (strictly, the re-creation) of a being only physically superior to himself; and Moreau's genius is bent towards improving on nature by transforming animals into people who will revere him and satisfy his egotistic divine madness. Odd John and his fellows are Nature's answer - Stapledon suggests not altogether seriously(34) - to those dual enigmas which have teased many of our best literary, scientific and philosophical minds: our place in the grand scheme of things which daily pushes the phenomenal world ever nearer the end-point of Nature; and whether Homo sapiens, with all our religious, ethical and scientific paraphernalia, truly are the earth's ultimate landlords, or merely tenants who will be evicted sometime by the superhumans who will inherit the earth in their turn.

The novel is an account of the life and opinions of 'Odd John' Wainwright, a lusus naturae, a prodigious genius whose development as a child and activities as a young adult are as offbeat as they are plausibly "superhuman". As his biographer records, even John's early

physical development is peculiar - he is brought into the world prematurely after his mother had to have an eleven-month pregnancy obstretically ended in order to survive it, and then he remains in an incubator for a year. His intellect is soon revealed to be quite unusually powerful and independent, so much so that he allows himself several bouts of self-indulgently deviant behaviour. Learning more and more about his superiority, John knowingly plays fast and loose with the moral conventions about property, sex, and even murder which are the basis of 'civilised' British social behaviour. John, though, is more than non-conformist. Rather than simply ignore the aspects of his native culture which he despises, he sets out to fulfil his personal dream of establishing a community of fellow mutant super-beings to foster Homo superior. To this end, he exploits the economic and financial institutions of Britain and the rest of the world to provide himself with the needed resources by inventing new devices or introducing technological processes for which he holds the patents.

Two aspects of John's early years (which can hardly be called his "childhood") are particularly relevant to the present⁽³⁵⁾ discussion of the role of hubris and rationalism in science fiction - his natural drive for dominion over others; and his rationalism, something which, like Moreau's 'sanity', is very distinct from reasonableness, as John's explanation to his biographer of his murder of a policeman shows.

Taking the former first, however, his relationships with friends of his own age and his experiences of adults are used by Stapledon to establish John's personality in those early years during which he gropes towards an understanding of the world. His precociousness and

the staggering wealth of knowledge he accumulates at first haphazardly are resented by his co-evals and disliked by their parents. John uses knowledge to oppress one ('beastly cocky little freak' p.26), and to impress the other, especially after a chastening fight with Stephen, an older lad ('John's a dear these days. He's lost all his horrid freakishness and conceit.' p.28).

Ironically, John is deceptively quiet, for he is preparing studiously to win his next encounter with Stephen and sweep away the humiliation he has suffered after the other boy has given him a hiding for daring to make improvements to his father's motormower. First he studies of anatomy and physiology, aided by his father, a doctor; then, he applies body and mind to become expert in the martial arts; finally, he takes up gymnastics and exercise for strength and stamina. In the meanwhile, this prodigy has been to school for three weeks and then been excluded, being 'subnormal' and 'too disturbing'. The outcome of this preparation is a fight in which John quite overwelts the stronger lad, Stephen, 'the most formidable of his acquaintances':

We stood bewildered by this unexpected turn of events. John looked around, and his eye met mine. Never have I seen so arrogant, so hideous an expression of the lust for power as on that childish face.

Odd John, p.30

The point of view here is the narrator's, John Wainwright's biographer, a childhood friend who overcomes his shock at learning at first hand that there is an unexpected cruelty in John. He becomes so enthralled(36) with this rather unattractive being that he stays with him until John dies, showing only occasional feckless irritation when John calls him 'Fido'. Even if the narrator is supine, he is not unperceptive, and he notices a subtle change in John after the fight,

('Well, John got what he wanted. And having got it, he saw in a flash and once and for all, right through it and beyond it.') though he leaves us to guess at what this may be. In fact, John has learned two things: firstly that knowledge will bring him power which he can then use to gain the respect of humans who presently despise him. John, of course, has contrived the whole fight to test the validity of this hypothesis, but also perceives that the application of that knowledge to chastisement or forcible persuasion of the reluctant demeans both himself and his victim.

Concerning the murder, John again learns something about himself from it, for, as he later calmly explains to his human acolyte who recalls it for posterity, he was 'in a bad mess mentally in those days.'(p.43) Perhaps anticipating a reaction of bewilderment or horror from his servile amanuensis, John further explains,

'I can't possibly make you understand the horrible muddle I was in, because after all your mind doesn't work along the same lines as mine. But think of it this way, if you like. I found myself in a thoroughly bewildering world. The people in it had built up a huge system of thought and knowledge, and I could see quite well that it was shot through and through with error. From my point of view, although so far as it went it was sound enough for practical purposes, as a description of the world it was simply crazy. But what the right description was I could not discover. I was too young. I had insufficient data. Huge fields of experience were still beyond me. So there I was, like someone in the dark in a strange room, just feeling about among unknown objects....'

Odd John, pp.43-44.

The way forward for John is to acquire sufficient means to allow him to learn everything anew, from first principles. Understanding the world through personal experience, he integrates his discoveries about it to form a more authentic view of it to replace the 'crazy' if 'practical' one accepted by everyone else he knows. To this end, he commits a series of clever burglaries which baffle the police, to

the point where they have to mount guard on individual properties they think will prove tempting. This does not worry John over-much, but it is to be the occasion of his hideously cold-blooded murder of an amiable neighbourhood policeman whom he knows well. Moved not so much by an instinct purely of self-preservation but by the realisation of what hangs in the balance, John becomes but judge, jury and executioner - or so he would have us think:

An idea toward which I had been long but doubtfully groping suddenly displayed itself to me with complete clarity and certainty. I had already, some time before, come to think of myself as definitely of a different biological species from Homo sapiens, the species of that amiable bloodhound behind the torch. But at last I realized for the first time that this difference carried with it what I should now describe as a far-reaching spiritual difference, that my purpose in life, and my attitude to life, were to be different from anything which the normal species could conceive, that I stood, as it were, on the threshold of a world far beyond the reach of those sixteen hundred million crude animals that at present ruled the planet. The discovery made me feel, almost for the first time in my life, fear, dread. I saw, too, that this burglary game was not worth the candle, that I had been behaving very much like a creature of the inferior species, risking my future and much more than my personal success for a cheap kind of self-expression.

Odd John, p.46.

In that moment of quasi-theophany, of his sobering perception of his true nature with near-divine clarity and certainty, John becomes not the patriarch of his species (his attempt fails, and therein lies his own tragedy) but the forerunner of a legion(37) of secular messiahs whose transfigurations are the very stuff of the transcendental science fiction of the nineteen-seventies and eighties. Nevertheless, John's remorse is not the sort we are accustomed to think of in such situations - he is revolted by the act which his newly found sense of responsibility forces upon him, and though the callousness of his act carries with it self-recrimination about the immature conduct which has produced this awful moment, his distaste is aesthetic rather than

ethical. Indeed, his cold-bloodedness comes across particularly forcefully in his almost off-hand reference to that 'inferior species' to which we all belong. For all that, he does feel compelled to justify his crime further, though his profoundly selfish motivation has also to contend with what is made to seem like 'immature' guilt:

How could I do it? Well, it just had to be done, there was no way out of it. I thought of killing myself, and getting out of the whole mess that way. But I couldn't do that. It would be sheer betrayal of the thing I must live for. I thought of just accepting Smithson and the law; but no, that, I knew, was betrayal also. The killing just had to be. It was my own childishness that had got me into this scrape, but now - the killing just had to be. All the same, I hated the job. I had not yet reached the stage of liking whatever had to be done. I felt over again, and far more distressingly, the violent repulsion which had surprised me years earlier, when I had to kill a mouse.

Odd John, p.47.

'You must have felt pretty bad on the way home,' says his biographer sympathetically; 'As a matter of fact,' John replies, 'I didn't. The bad feeling ended when I made my decision.' This decision of course is to act responsibly henceforward, always with self-preservation determined according to his coolly rational lights well to the fore. John Wainwright thus becomes a sort of sardonic lesser god, capable nonetheless of dispassionately exercising ultimate authority on earth over the lives of mankind, the inferior race whom he will permit to share the world with himself and his fellows.

It is a mark of Stapledon's narrative skill and the sophistication with which he handles his theme that despite all this he can later bring us to see that the plight of John's kind is tragic, and later still induce us to feel some pity, perhaps, or regret, for the manner of his dying. There is, however, another indication of the bizarre nature of John's moral vision to be gleaned from this episode, showing that he can be touched by the plight of others, if

in a startlingly un sentimental way. John knows that the constable's wife is alone at home in great pain, racked with cancer; and since he also knows that she will be 'heart-broken' when she is told her husband has been murdered, he decides that he will 'take one more risk and put her out of her misery.' She escapes his tender mercies because she is awake, and the house is lit too brightly for him to make his way in to her. John consoles himself with a kind of fatalism, a sort of resignation to the demands of his newly-discovered stature - 'what must be, must be,' but there is more than a touch of a mischievous irony introduced here by Stapledon which undercuts the sombreness of the crime, and makes it seem almost illusory.

Judging the moral position of John, or indeed of his author, in this story "between Jest and Earnest" is difficult, not least because of the mock-ironic note which every now and then filters through to the reader. Call the narrator an abject creature if you will, decry him for an infatuated, infuriating traitor, but at last recognise that he retains enough honesty and independence of spirit to know himself for what he is, and has the sense to resent John's demeaning jibes; and something of the complex relationship between the sonorous and the ludicrous in this subtle(38) novel emerges. Stapledon has contrived a quite self-consistent if far-fetched situation in which complex moral issues are derived from familiar human passions and prejudices and contrasted with the values of John's awesomely superior outlook. The factor which clinches this for Stapledon is that he has endowed John with an ethical sensibility which is convincingly un-human rather than inhumane (none of the superhumans are gratuitously cruel), and his actions are justified to make it seem that there is a terrifying logic to every decision he takes, however

crucial. The eugenics programme using humans much as a scientist would use laboratory animals(39) is a good example, one which at least one critic has earnestly protested:

How strange that Stapledon, who believed in absolute rather than in utilitarian ethics, has his supermen commit utilitarian murders without, apparently, questioning seriously what they are doing. Perhaps Stapledon is writing a monster story, but how does this story fit with the story of beings who are more fully awake than we are? Experimentation with human beings against their will is one of those obscene subjects about which one ought not to write without being very clear about why one is doing so; such experimentation is much too close to what has happened and does happen.

40.

However we feel about the propriety of Stapledon's subject-matter, it would be wrong to think of John as amoral in the conventional sense as his sensibility is literally inhuman. Smith concedes, 'I must not be too critical of Stapledon. It is impossible to write a superman story, every bit as impossible to write cosmic stories. Supermen have faculties and purposes beyond human understanding. Almost by definition, then, supermen cannot be described in an altogether understandable way.'(41) This avoids the issue; if supermen, and their motivation, cannot be adequately described by a human author, if they act in accordance with 'higher' moral imperatives which we cannot hope to comprehend, why has this particular kind of story retained its popularity? One answer, suggested by Damon Knight in another context, is illuminating:

Science fiction exists to provide what Moskowitz and others call 'the sense of wonder': some widening of the mind's horizons, no matter in what direction - the landscape of another planet, or a corpuscle's-eye view of an artery, or what it feels like to be in rapport with a cat... any new sensory experience, impossible to the reader in his own person, is grist for the mill, and what the activity of science fiction is all about.

42.

While this explains the imaginative aspect of stories like Staple-

don's very well, another which is just as important is their presentation of ethical satire. John Wainwright's utilitarian, self-centred moral perspective is very much in character; and it convincingly conveys, too, what we might, in our worst nightmares, expect a superhuman or alien being to see in us. Furthermore, it is satirical; John's Homo superior outlook is an instrument or device for exposing contemporary moral values and social complacency to scorn. Stapledon is here more effective than Wells in The Island of Doctor Moreau because he makes better use of psychology. The seeming weaknesses of the moral values accepted by society are revealed by holding them up to extreme reason, in the full knowledge that the reader can be relied upon to see such ethical principles as John's as "mad" or "inhumane", much as Shaw asserted in describing the durability of prevailing moral and ethical ideas:

That the real Superman will snap his superfingers at all Man's present trumpery ideals of right, duty, honor, justice, religion, even decency, and accept moral obligations beyond present human endurance, is a thing that contemporary Man does not foresee.

43.

However, Stapledon's irony shows he knew that the excessive rationality which determines John's response is itself a form of dogmatism, perceived by the reader to be just as "crazy" to Everyman as the morality John has decided to ignore before killing the policeman. The whole point of the endeavour, of course, is to entertain and to engage. Drawn into the novel, we find ourselves seeing things from a different angle, so that aspects of our personal moral vision are challenged, and confirmed - or, perhaps, reassessed; some of the less inspiring aspects of Neitzschean ideas are exposed for us thereby.

Neither Moreau nor Odd John are truly Faustian figures in the sense that they must defer to a higher, supernatural order which en-

sures the propriety of human endeavours. Shaw could just as easily have spoken for Wells and Stapledon when he wrote this about his Man and Superman:

Even the more abstract parts of the Don Juan play are dilapidated past use: for instance, Don Juan's supernatural antagonist hurled those who refused to repent into lakes of burning brimstone, there to be tormented by devils with horns and tails. Of that antagonist, and of that conception of repentance, how much is left that could be used by me...?

44.

In effect their authors have developed for them unconventional views of the world and its morality to which both figures are bound by what appears to be an innate compulsion to order their experience according to some kind of ultimate principle. Moreau convinces himself of the soundness of scientific rationalism to the point where he became lost within it so that human concerns and emotions become virtually devoid of meaning or consequence. On the other hand, while Odd John's biographer argues that John is not arrogant, he is certainly a law unto himself, quite literally, pursuing his own objectives with single-mindedness until his colony is achieved. In their different ways both protagonists crave deification: 'hom.sap.' Moreau sought, with Frankensteinian enthusiasm, to create a race of beings to worship him; and Odd John betrays, in the pleasure he takes in being adored by 'Fido', a similar appetite. This is why we reject them in the end, no matter how mad, noble or dedicated they seem, as surely their literary creators knew we would.

Verne's Providential Universe and Wells's Dispassionate Cosmos.

If The Island of Doctor Moreau is indeed 'a very pessimistic book' then Wells's first novel, The Time Machine, is utterly melancholy. Wells's novel is related in many respects to a well-established

shed genre of predictive fiction which includes(45) S.Madden's The memoirs of the twentieth century: being the original letters of state under George the Sixth...(1733); and Mary Shelley's gloom-ridden vision of the annihilation, towards the end of the twenty-first century, of the people of Europe, The Last Man(1826) (Aldiss(46) thought it 'no more than Gothic'). More recent examples are A crystal age, by W.H.Hudson (1887), and Edward Bellamy's 1889 projection of an 'organized and socialistic future world,' Looking backward, 2000-1887, a very influential book which was translated into most European languages....it provoked William Morris so much that he wrote his own idea of a better future, News from nowhere(1888)'(47). Clearly Wells did not lack audacity in embarking on his career as a novelist in such a controversial genre and in such celebrated company; his success in achieving recognition with an "apprentice" novel can be understood readily even today, for the power of its ultimate vision of the end of our existence as a species is undiminished. This chilling, haunted desolation recalled by the Time Traveller will signal the last stage of the cooling of Earth:

'The darkness grew apace; a cold wind began to blow in freshening gusts from the east, and the showering white flakes in the air increased in number. From the edge of the sea came a ripple and a whisper. Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives - all that was over. As the darkness thickened, the eddying flakes grew more abundant, dancing before my eyes; and the cold of the air more intense. At last, one by one, swiftly, one after another, the white peaks of the distant hills vanished into blackness. The breeze rose to a moaning wind. I saw the black central shadow of the eclipse sweeping towards me. In another moment the pale stars alone were visible. All else was rayless obscurity. The sky was absolutely black.

The Time Machine, Chapter 11.

Wells's bleak vision of a depopulated world, 'conveyed with a poetic intensity he was never to recapture' as Bernard Bergonzi, one of his most recent biographers, notes(48), evokes those "sublime" feelings of awe and dread of the absolute which were first associated popularly with science in Frankenstein. Nevertheless this entropic projection of the future of humanity was something new to contemporary readers who probably had encountered visions of apocalyptic catastrophe in Scripture, but never before in a "scientific" context. It retains its remarkable power even at this distance, with the decades since Wells crowded with the disaster novels of such successors as Wyndham(The Day of the Triffids); Christopher(No Blade of Grass); Stewart(Earth Abides); and Vonnegut(Cat's Cradle); not to mention the real or imagined threats we have come to accept as a part of everyday living such as nuclear accident, biological or nuclear warfare, and "nuclear winter". Wells's terrible image remains vivid and dire as ever because it is a dramatic, ratiocinative rebuttal of the cosy assumption that human social and personal development will naturally continue much as before. As a mid-nineteenth century social theorist, Herbert Spencer, saw it, 'Progress, therefore, is not an accident, but a necessity... It is part of human nature.'(Social Statics, 1850)

The Victorian Positivism championed by Spencer was a blend of socio-economic ideas and the technocratic scientific outlook encouraged by the successes of the Industrial Revolution. Its central tenet of social progress depended upon a view of human development (personal and social) which was essentially linear. This in turn accorded with a Christian view of life as being a sort of "pilgrim's progress"; one in which the history, present and future of humanity were between Eden and the Last Judgement(49) somewhere along

the infinite time-scale fore-ordained by God. The Positivists and Western racial supremacists everywhere asserted that with or without divine intervention, evolution had determined that an exclusive group should occupy a position which permitted them to exercise dominion over the world. Swinburne might contend that 'Man is the master of things', but Wells implied that there was an end-point to human growth after which the race would regress. Moreover, this was no less ineluctable, under certain conditions, than that evolutionary process which had brought civilisation into being. Undoubtedly the singular effectiveness of Wells's novel derived from its creative tension with the self-assurance of optimistic Victorians. Above all, hadn't the Time Traveller who relates his adventures to an audience of comfortable clubmen (and of course the reader) - hadn't he actually been there, as the flowers he brought back from the "human" world of 802,701 seem to vividly attest?

Before examining how Wells's fin-de-siecle(50) novel portrays the decline of society on that long, straight road to human extinction, it might be of value to review the more conventional view of Progress promoted by Wells's rival(51), Jules Verne (1828-1905).

Verne was an unashamed popularist. His fiction fairly crackles along with incident piled on incident - interrupted now and then, of course, by a rapt description of the huge machine central to the story - so that the pell-mell pace of his adventure stories is unimpeded, largely, by attention to character development or sophisticated analysis of situations or relationships. The Begum's Fortune(1880; published in 1879 as Les cinq cent millions de la Begum) is not exceptional in any of these respects save one - Verne's depiction of science and technology as at least potentially dangerous

in the wrong hands. This feature apart, judged even by the standards of some of today's popular fiction, it would be considered a childish, dull novel(52). Yet this novel, written by Verne in his early fifties, is of some interest here because, however ingenuously, it conveys the ambiguity of the prevailing popular view of science and scientists one may also infer from Taylor's 'occasional moments of alarm':

Victorians generally tended to regard the fruits of science as an unmixed blessing, in spite of occasional moments of alarm. Jules Verne's science fiction was 'the almost archetypal expression of nineteenth-century romantic interest in science and technology.' 53.

While attending an international scientific conference, Dr. Sarrasin has learned that he has unexpectedly inherited a vast fortune. He immediately writes to his son Otto, expressing his misgivings about the change it may bring to their dedicated pursuit of scientific research (54): 'In the modest position of pioneers of science we were content and happy in obscurity. Shall we continue to be so?' (Chapter I). The 'worthy' Doctor answers his own question: 'I doubt it - unless - perhaps - (could I venture to mention an idea which has just flashed across my brain?) unless this same fortune were to become in our hands a new and powerful engine of science, a mighty tool in the great work of civilization and progress!' Since Verne has already equated money with power, Sarrasin's unexpected windfall has of course saved Verne the trouble of contriving a halfways-plausibly lucrative invention. Thus provided with ample resources, our philanthropist invites his astounded audience to join with him in exercising this power to change the world for the better:

"Yes, gentlemen, it is true that a large sum of money,.. appears to be legally my property. I consider myself simply as a steward, entrusted with this wealth for the use and benefit of science..." (Immense sensation.)

"This treasure belongs, not to me but to humanity - to progress!"

"I declare..that the twenty-one million pounds placed in my hands belongs not to me, but to science! Will you, gentlemen, undertake the management and distribution of it?"

The Begum's Fortune, Chapter III.

It is striking that this scientific vir bonus, Dr. Sarrasin, uses terms like "humanity", "science" and "progress" so freely that they appear to be virtually synonymous.

To the general acclamation of the Brighton Conference, Sarrasin reveals his plan to build a model city, Frankville, which will provide a perfect haven for refugees and fugitives from urban or industrial slums. Now that Verne has established the character of his paternalistic if staggeringly benevolent scientist, he introduces the absurdly villainous Prof.Schultz of Jena as his rival(55). Having been drawn from the preparation of his latest treatise; 'Why are all Frenchmen affected by different degrees of hereditary degeneracy?' - the bad Prof. realises that he has a claim to half of Sarrasin's inheritance. By the end of its third chapter the novel is verging on naive self-parody, but we shall bear with it. In Chapter IV it is decided, once a conniving "Anglo-Saxon" solicitor has bilked them for half a million pounds each, that the remaining twenty million should be shared equally between them, and so Schultz resolves, to prove the ascendancy of the Fatherland, to construct a city which will crush Frankville: "I hope," he added, "that the experiment we shall make will serve as an example to all the world!" Five years later, Stahlstadt - Steel Town - stands in Oregon, and the obnoxious Schultz, reaping profits from the manufacture of armaments in his regimented city, is preparing the largest-ever cannon, with which he plans to level the thriving, happy city of Frankville, only 30 miles distant:

The happy city of Frankville was prospering, its beneficent institutions favouring each and all, and giving a new horizon of hope to a disheartened people. Max had no doubt that in the face of such a triumph of the Latin race, Schultz would be more than ever determined to make good his threats. Stahlstadt and his factories were a proof of that.

The Begum's Fortune, Chapter VII

Max, a student friend of Otto (Octavius) Sarrasin, acts both as an agent provocateur and fifth-columnist, and manages to frustrate the plans of Schultz, whom he loathes. A brilliant engineer, Max is given the task of overseeing the design of the huge cannon by Stahlstadt's vicious founder. He takes the opportunity to save Frankville by ensuring that when the cannon is fired, its projectile will simply go into orbit, leaving the gun ruined beyond repair. He then takes himself off to Frankville, where he joins forces with Sarrasin and his people to defend their town. In the meantime, though, Schultz's business has collapsed after his apparent disappearance. The unfortunate workers, whose trials have been colourfully described through several preceding chapters, are left by Schultz to their own devices. The redoubtable Max, accompanied by Otto, sets out to discover what Schultz has been up to. They find Schultz, killed in his secret laboratory by his last evil invention, frozen in the moment of death while signing the order for a new attack on Frankville. Verne makes the association with Frankenstein virtually explicit when, after hearing of Schultz's fate, Sarrasin sums up his end in the novel's only distinctive allusion to God:

"Yes," returned Doctor Sarrasin, "here we see the justice of God! It is because he indulged in his hatred against us, and urged on his attack with such boundless rancour, that Herr Schultz has perished." Chapter XVIII 56.

The homily is continued into a very brief concluding chapter wherein Verne reports, from a point of vantage a year or two later, that the moral protagonists have successfully set Stahlstadt back on its feet,

restoring the fortunes of all those who had stood to lose.

Verne's novel suggests that science and technology could be misapplied to oppress rather than enlighten and liberate(57). Also, though he ascribes Schultz's downfall to the unstinting and somewhat improbable efforts of a young hero, he also invokes divine retribution as the ultimate vindication of Max's betrayal of Schultz. While Verne thus absolves himself of seeming to endorse the merely pragmatic destruction of Schultz, if the logic of this is taken to its conclusion it suggests that he has cast Max not just as hero, but as the very instrument of God. On the other hand, as Brian Aldiss notes(58): 'In Verne...we find descents, even to the earth's core. The symbolic significance is nil.' - being generally simple, Verne's narratives do not offer many opportunities for searching interpretation since his style is expository and melodramatic.

If, true to form, Verne neglects religion as a social institution in The Begum's Fortune (the only other religious reference, to the Cathedral and chapels of Frankville, is made en passant in a German report on the principles of town planning which dictates the city's construction) he exploits Christian ethics freely to reinforce his ideas about wholesome science and pernicious science. Wells seems to go further by invoking Darwin's evolutionary theories in The Time Machine when he depicts humanity corrupted by its own nature regressing steadily to extinction in an universe seemingly devoid of divine involvement in human affairs.

The Time Traveller has stepped from his conveyance into the intriguing future world to which it has carried him. The thunderous noise of his arrival has attracted some of the apparently inoffensive locals, and he discovers that he can only communicate with them in

sign-language. He confronts his misgivings - 'What if in this interval the race had lost its manliness, and had developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful? I might seem some old-world savage animal...a foul creature to be incontinently slain.'(Chap.3), - to have them allayed, ironically, by their first question:

The question had come into my mind abruptly: were these creatures fools? You may hardly understand how it took me. You see I had always anticipated that the people of the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand odd would be incredibly in front of us in knowledge, art, everything. Then one of them suddenly asked me a question that showed him to be on the intellectual level of one of our five-year-old children - he asked me, in fact, if I had come from the sun in a thunderstorm! It let loose the judgement I had suspended upon their clothes, their frail light limbs and fragile features.

A flow of disappointment rushed across my mind.

The Time Machine, Chapter 4

By evening the Time Traveller has shared a meal with these people in their vast hall, learned a few of their words, and formed a theory about events during the many centuries which separate his society and this one. He decides that these strangely languorous, fruit-eating people are decadent Communists. While he does not resent the commensalism of their social organisation, he cannot help thinking of them as having gone to seed. Their ancestors had overcome the competitive pressures caused by overpopulation and provided an innocuous, salubrious environment free from insect nuisance and the threat of disease. With nothing left to contend against, he concludes, there has been a marked and regressive decline in the active principle of human nature. Though he has made a reasoned assessment of their circumstances, based on the evidence, among other things, of the huge, ruinous and enigmatic buildings(59) around them, as he later acknowledges to his select audience, 'Very simple was my

explanation, and plausible enough - as most wrong theories are!'

One thing in particular puzzles him, for he can see no trace anywhere of the productive technology needed to provide the food and clothes of the Eloi.

The several big places I had explored were mere living places, great dining-halls and sleeping apartments. Yet these people were clothed in pleasant fabrics... Somehow such things must be made... There were no shops, no workshops, no signs of importations among them. They spent all their time in playing gently, in bathing in the river, in making love in a half-playful fashion, in eating fruit and sleeping. I could not see how things were kept going.

Chapter 5.

The Time Traveller discovers more of the truth about the nature of society in this post-scientific world when he is forced to recover his time machine from the hideous, disturbingly brutish creatures who live underground, the Morlocks. He forms a more elaborate theory to take into account the 'bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing' which he sees scuttling to safety down a well 'like a human spider.' He decides that what he has seen represents a subterranean humanity, the other element produced by an evolutionary process which has consolidated and emphasised the dualistic nature of his society ('the Haves' and 'the Have-nots', as he quickly characterises them) so that two divergent strains of human beings have been created as the situation prevailed down through the millenia.

'At first, proceeding from the problems of our own age, it seemed clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the present merely temporary and social difference between the Capitalist and the Labourer, was the key to the whole position. No doubt it will seem grotesque to you - and wildly incredible - and yet even now there are existing circumstances to point that way. There is a tendency to utilise underground space for the less ornamental purposes of civilisation... Evidently this tendency had increased till Industry had lost its birthright in the sky... Even now, does not an East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the surface of the earth?

'Again, the exclusive tendency of rich people - due, no doubt, to the increasing refinement of their education, and the widening gulf between them and the rude violence of the poor - is already leading to the closing, in their interest, of considerable portions of the surface of the land. About London, for instance, perhaps half the prettier country is shut in against intrusion. And this same widening gulf which is due to the length and expense of the higher educational process and the increased facilities for and increased temptations towards refined habits on the part of the rich - will make that (marital) exchange between class and class, that promotion by inter-marriage which at present retards the splitting of our species along lines of social stratification, less and less frequent. So, in the end, above ground, you must have the Haves, pursuing pleasure and comfort and beauty, and below ground, the Have-nots; the Workers getting continually adapted to the conditions of their labour. Once they were there they would, no doubt, have to pay rent, and not a little of it, for the ventilation of their caverns; and if they refused, they would be starved or suffocated for arrears. Such of them as were so constituted as to be miserable and rebellious would die; and, in the end, the balance being permanent, the survivors would be as well adapted to the conditions of underground life, and as happy in their way, as the Upper world people were to theirs. As it seemed to me, the refined beauty and etiolated pallor followed naturally enough.

The Time Machine, Chapter 5.

Much has been made of the Time Traveller's explanatory theories by critics seeking to establish Wells's view of contemporary society. One of the most persuasive is Bernard Bergonzi, who has convincingly argued that the novel is a vehicle for an ironic myth (60) cleverly fashioned by Wells.

While searching in vain for his machine in the claustrophobic galleries of the Morlocks, the Time Traveller discovers that the creatures are carnivorous. He finds this puzzling - 'I remember wondering what large animal could have survived to furnish the red joint I saw.' (Chap.6) - but the truth conflicts so greatly with his second theory, and goes so much against the grain of his sensibility, that its final emergence is devastatingly ironic, especially since he must also overcome the preconceptions he has formed about Weena, one

of the Eloi with whom he has formed a romantic liaison of sorts:

Then I thought of the Great Fear that was between the two species, and for the first time, with a sudden shiver, came the clear knowledge of what the meat I had seen might be. Yet it was too horrible! I looked at little Weena sleeping beside me, her face white and starlike under the stars, and forthwith dismissed the thought.

The Time Machine, Chapter 7.

Nevertheless the thought is too disturbing and insistent to be so easily ignored. He recognises at last that at some point in the dim, obscure, cumulative collapse of the mighty civilisation whose ruins (such as those of the vast neglected museum, the Palace of Green Porcelain) lie like inscrutable memorials everywhere, a degenerate mankind - 'these inhuman sons of men' - began preying on their fellows as food had run short, and, as the Traveller will later remark with as much composure as he can summon, 'These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon - probably saw to the breeding of!' (Chap.7) The Time Traveller's cultural expectations have been quite overturned by his perception of the real nature of the relationship between the two groups; the Morlocks, descendants of the workers who once maintained society's affluent, comfortable aesthetes, now have the upper hand. He had been mistaken in thinking them exploited, forced to live underground in discomfort and gloom; rather, they have long since chosen to continue to pursue their habitual way of life, though now they exploit the Eloi(61). If we contrast Wells's conclusions about the outcome of the scientific innovation so important to many Victorian idealists with how Verne portrays the Golden Age of Reason to be ushered in by Dr. Sarrasin and his like, the depth of the despair, of the humanistic pessimism with which Wells viewed the human response to science, is apparent:

'The great triumph of Humanity I had dreamed of took a different shape in my mind. It had been no such triumph of moral education and general co-operation as I had imagined. Instead, I saw a real aristocracy, armed with a perfected science and working to a logical conclusion the industrial system of today. Its triumph had not simply been simply a triumph over nature, but a triumph over nature and the fellow-man.

The Time Machine, Chapter 5.

The Time Traveller's revulsion at the Morlock's utilitarian solution to their food problem is humanistic, not religious. Then again, he does occasionally implore God for help, but only in desperation; so God and Christian values seem to be quite absent from this future which belongs to the soulless Morlocks and enervated, pathetic Eloi. Wells, of course, has excluded religion quite deliberately. Wells characterises intelligence and initiative as extremely important human resources in creatively adapting the natural world (the hubristic, i.e., 'the rebellious', are among the first to perish among the Morlocks' ancestors). The other human attribute he sees as indispensable to balanced development is a humane (emphatically not utilitarian) form of scientific materialism, a sort of rational morality.

Parted from Weena during a confused struggle with the nightmarish Morlocks, the Traveller next day discovers that they have set a trap for him, baiting it, to his grim delight, with his Time Machine. They spring the trap on him, but of course he merely operates the machine and it carries him even further into the future. So it is that by setting his controls the wrong way in his haste, he comes to find himself on that desolate beach where, moved by 'a strange fascination', he continues on in millennial bounds through time until after travelling more than thirty million years into the future he is forced to turn away from that last terrifying eclipse of the dying

sun, and return to the time from whence he set out.

Wells's story becomes a paradigm of humanistic despair when the Time Traveller looks at the swollen, dying sun, and flinches from the cold emptiness which is all he can discern there. If God exists, Wells seems to suggest, it is as a depressingly remote, utterly indifferent Deus absconditus whose intervention in supporting a chosen race or species cannot be ascertained, the complete converse of Verne's coincidental Providence which ensures that the good win in the end over the impure or malicious. In Verne's fiction, God may be said to work in mysterious ways; in Wells's, God is conspicuously absent. Frankville has its churches (mosques and synagogues do not feature, for all Verne's vaunted cosmopolitanism); but in Wells's fiction the clergy fare less comfortably. To take a relevant example, in The War of the Worlds (1898) the Martians destroy virtually the entire district of Weybridge in Surrey, but for the demented curate the real loss lies in the destruction of his newly-rebuilt church and the reduction of all his efforts with the Sunday School. Seeing that the curate's faith has deserted him in the aftermath, Wells's pragmatic narrator tries to brace him with the challenge, 'What good is religion if it collapses under calamity?' The curate cannot or will not answer; but the Time Traveller certainly could have advised the narrator of how little evidence there was in 802,701 A.D. that religion survives the degeneration of mankind or prevents the decline of society, just as he himself cannot find much solace in religious philosophy when he sits in on the death of the Earth. Thus religion, to answer the narrator, will not stand the test of time.

The Time Traveller and Prendick have a similar response to cold, unremitting logic, for both reveal a dread of extremes, of

'Necessity' in the one case, and scientific rationalism in the other. The Time Traveller also emulates Prendick's more obvious alienation from his kind; he returns to his own time to tell his story and recuperate, but, as the narrator of The Time Machine makes plain in the Epilogue, he can see perhaps better than anyone the pernicious divisiveness in contemporary society which might one remote day result in the 'inhuman' world of the Morlocks and Eloi, and after it again, would prove humanity to be an evolutionary blind tunnel, a dead end. As the narrator recalls, 'He..thought but cheerlessly of the Advancement of Mankind, and saw in the growing pile of civilisation only a foolish heaping that must inevitably fall back on its makers in the end.' Accordingly, he sits again within his machine, and disappears with it. In doing so, however, he is not attesting an authorial fatalism about humanity, because Wells emphasises that the decline of mankind will be caused by that luxurious degradation of human initiative and intelligence - perhaps even a flight from responsibility - which is an inevitable consequence of the 'Advancement of Mankind' pursued with the intrinsic class and other divisions of his day accepted as necessary features of a 'progressive' perspective. So much for the satirical component of this novel(62); but Wells goes further. Carol Murphy writes of Fate or Providence as contradicting a purely humanistic description of the nature of human existence:

Man can help to make the meaning of his own situation. But we cannot rest with a purely humanistic explanation. Man's situation has elements beyond his control which go to make up his own meaning. There is our own finitude, and beyond that the Fate - or Providence - which is beyond the reach of man's sin or virtue.

63.

Wells construed in The Time Machine a moral fantasy in which human

aspiration is our sole resource for challenging our finitude, and he linked it to an original, bleak perspective of human failure. The physical world - even time itself - acquires meaning and significance from human activity for there is no Fate or Providence imposed or issuing from any other entity or supernatural provenance; even chance can be accommodated as probability. Wells's recognition of the idea of individual choice, exemplified in the narrator's reluctance to accept all of the Time Traveller's revelations, preserves him from the charge of simple determinism. The individual seems still to have some freedom of will and of action, though the appalling prospect of the end of the world and the failure of our species to continue its upward evolution reduces the narrator's concluding resolve to 'live as though it were not so' to little more than an obdurate refusal to be overwhelmed by the inevitable. If Wells can be said to allow any hint of a saving grace it is in that simple resolve of the narrator not to surrender himself to fatalism. Indeed, in terms of the moral vision of The Time Machine, Wells's theme is that surrender, in the form of neglect, apathy, or abdication of self-determination, is the straight road to perdition for our kind.

Wells - not surprisingly for a former student and admirer of T.H.Huxley - was a supreme rationalist and believer in science and the scientific method, a Francis Bacon reborn. And so for Wells, as for one of his Utopians in Men Like Gods, there was no way out of the cages of life but by knowledge - knowledge of man himself and of man in relation to the things about him.

64.

Hillegas is right to emphasise Wells's commitment to the scientific perspective for, as shown in the foregoing discussion, Wells was profoundly sceptical of supernal intervention in human evolution and destiny. Yet even had he valued scientific utility above all else as Hillegas suggests, it would still surely be inappropriate to overlook

the misgivings about pure materialism of the author of Moreau, misgivings as strong as ever three decades later in Men Like Gods. To do so is to overlook the important metaphysical dimension of Wells's vision.

Wells, an avowed evolutionist, believed that human development is a product of the creative, self-extending interaction between challenging necessity and rational intelligence. In early works, divine purpose is a religious delusion, and, more perilously, a self-delusion. This assertion of rational humanism is central to his view of human nature and purpose. Deformations to the individual sensibility and social order thrive in stagnation. Man may respond to the chilling indifference of the empty universe in two distinct ways (a third, apathy, is for Wells quite prior to consideration) - constructive engagement with the phenomenal world whatever it reveals or self-serving materialistic zeal. The latter only fosters obsessive confrontation with one's frustrations; but constructive engagement is progressive because it supports the hope of growth, even of a transcendental possibility akin to that promised by religion otherwise denied by the entropic teleological demise scientific rationalism foresees. These metaphysical contentions are explored in Men Like Gods, together with theosophical ideas like those Stapledon dramatises in Odd John. It is clear that for Wells the invigorating, enabling materialist outlook is the only humane principle. Yet it is the paradox of Progress that when the limit of human achievement is reached these formative interactions will cease and human development will reach a plateau stage which will precede a decline, a decadent degeneration probably imperceptible to those who experience it. Hillegas has linked Wells's apocalyptic vision to the prevailing

attitudes of contemporary society which he detested (65); but he also discerns the influence (T.H.Huxley's 'cosmic pessimism') of the evolutionary and cultural ideas of his mentor in the early romances like The Island of Doctor Moreau and The Time Machine:

In Huxley's philosophy of evolution there is an element of grave doubt about the outcome of the cosmic or evolutionary process - his 'cosmic pessimism' - which exactly suited Wells's aesthetic and didactic purposes in the stories and scientific romances written in the 1890's. And it is this 'cosmic pessimism' which inspired the details in the scientific romances that are repeated in the works by Forster, Zamyatin, Huxley, Orwell and others that make these romances by Wells something like the first modern anti-utopias.

66.

As Hillegas has shown, these ideas - in some degree conveyed through the medium of Wells's fiction - have been enormously influential. Having established the sublime character of Wells's apocalyptic vision, we may postpone further discussion of his teleological ideas and proceed to examine how his dualistic view of aspiration and his humanist principles are reflected in the 'anti-utopias' of some of the contemporaries and successors identified above.

An Inhumane Future: Utilitarian Ethics and Technological Servitude.

If Wells can be said to have presented in The Time Machine a bleak projection into a remote future of the consequences of human degeneration, Orwell did the same sort of thing(67) in the near-future setting of Nineteen Eighty-Four, arguably an even more pessimistic book because of its immediacy and author's conviction that totalitarianism was a genuinely possible outcome of history. The unattractive protagonist, Winston Smith, is provoked by his illicit desires (love, truth, liberty) into contravening the dictates of the Party, led by Big Brother, which rules Airstrip One of Oceania, the

totalitarian Britain in which Winston is an Ordinary Party member. Fear, betrayal, enforced conformity, and material deprivation affecting the lives of everyone except the Inner Party members like O'Brien are the means by which all are kept dedicated to the Party and B.B. Deviants are betrayed by their fellows, trapped by the Party like Smith, or self-incriminated through the ubiquitous telescreens:

Orwell's satire gave shape to one of the familiar terrors of our time: the opportunity that technology provides for achieving the complete domination of human beings. The logic of the Party's desire for absolute power can only lead to the conquest of the world. Consequently the three super-states of Eurasia, Oceania, and Eastasia must be organized to wage a war without end, for the great advantage of war is that by using up the products of technology it most effectively keeps down the standard of living. In this way it is possible for the totalitarian state to maintain an unshakeable hold on its helot subjects.

68.

Correction, as Winston discovers at first hand, includes brain-washing and torture, the object being to secure from the offender a complete recognition of the necessity, and value, of Big Brother, and an abject self-abasement, for individualism and Ingsoc are mutually antagonistic. Since the State determines the truth - and alters it where necessary - logical thinking is considered subversive, and only after an admission of guilt or complicity is followed by successful re-education in Doublethink, the State's own system for reconciling apparent contradictions, can the restored individual be executed. Only when Winston admits to O'Brien that he truly loves B.B. and says that 'Two and two make five - and mean it', can O'Brien have him shot. True to the novel's premises, there is no escape for Winston.

Tragic though Winston's final abjuration of self is, the novel's pessimism is absolute because the totalitarian state is self-perpetuating and irreducible.

In Nineteen Eighty-Four Orwell had created a myth for the epoch of Himmler and Beria. It is the story of a secular fall and the consequent expulsion from the promised paradise of everlasting progress. By means of memorable slogans - 'progress in our world will be progress towards more pain' - and by his ability to convey meaning through symbolic situations - Winston in the Ministry of Love - Orwell was able to present our world with the image of its fears. The real terror in the story, however, was that Orwell presented no hope of any redeemer. Man is completely and irrevocably a fallen creature.

69.

Aspiration, except in respect of becoming more involved in the Party, is subversive; and the ethical system is no more than a purely utilitarian code which the Party can alter at will. Surmounting all is the dark figure of B.B., a malevolent surrogate 'god'(70) who demands absolute faith and obedience. While it is clear that the Party comes to power because the people support it at first, when they are incapable of opposing it there is no foreseeable end to its dominion. As O'Brien puts it to Smith, 'If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face - forever.' Having once surrendered the right to make a decision for oneself to the Party, the prerogative can never be regained, because the single aim of the Party is the acquisition of even greater power.

Orwell's is an utterly uncompromising vision of a society in which expediency is given the form of moral imperative; as the fiction discussed in the following chapters shows, more orthodox didactic fiction also has a distinctive contribution to make to the arguments levelled against purely utilitarian 'Progress', albeit from a religious rather than sceptically humanistic point of view.

Nonetheless, the world of Nineteen Eighty-Four is surely among the most terrible of all possible visions of the future, as I.F. Clarke concludes: 'Orwell's projection of the seemingly inevitable into a certain future was an unconditional, and in the last

analysis, a nihilistic and despairing vision.'(71) To attain this grim determinism Orwell ignores the creative, beneficial side of human resourcefulness to show the direst consequences of allowing free rein to the destructive potential of human nature.

Yet Orwell's hell-on-earth has been criticised because of its very success in presenting a picture of the ultimate in totalitarian oppression. Raymond Williams has complained that 'Orwell goes further, cutting out the spring of hope. He projects an enormous apathy on all the oppressed: a created mood, if ever there was one. Eighty-five per cent of the population are seen as an apathetic mass, and proles, as a description of them, seems more than Party jargon. ...Of the many failures in Nineteen Eighty-Four this is perhaps the deepest. All the ordinary resources of personal life are written off as summarily as the proles.'(72) But surely this was the very effect Orwell wished to achieve. Reacting to the degradation and awful blood-letting of the war, and the monstrous posturing of fascism which had so effectively been transformed from rhetoric to dire actuality, he set out to project the mood of his times. The war seemed to confirm the sombre truth suggested by the previous "war to end all wars", that there was something pernicious hidden in human nature; and science expedited its emergence and fulfillment.

Whatever its inspiration, Orwell's austere novel conveys more than simple fatalism or pessimism. In depicting a situation without hope, without any redeeming features whatsoever, he shows how a totalitarian regime can systematically apply technology to the single end of oppression, so that the spirit of initiative and humanity can be crushed by supporting the inhumane logics of remorseless utility and pure expediency with the resources of science. It is doubly

effective as a cautionary projection because Orwell includes no secular deliverance or humanist affirmation; the malign surrogate god who rules Oceania cannot be subverted, and, as Winston's failure shows, apostasy is futile. The ethics of the society of 1984 are rigorously derived from perverse utilitarian values intended to benefit a tiny social group, the remote oppressors of the masses. They are the ethics of the abattoir.

Some four years after American readers were presented with Orwell's novel as "Book of the Month," Kurt Vonnegut's first novel was published. Vonnegut deploys gimmickry and ironic wit in Player Piano, a novel which fairly crackles with narrative energy. Superficially at least, Vonnegut's book is quite different from Nineteen Eighty-Four, but both are remarkably similar in a number of major thematic and symbolic respects, and Player Piano undoubtedly belongs to the same dystopian genre as Orwell's novel.

Vonnegut's book is not evidently concerned with deprivation, and lacking the gloomy austerity of Orwell's scenario, it seems almost blithe by comparison. For all that Vonnegut is out to entertain (hence Player Piano seems the more readable, if slighter, of the two), it is obvious that he is no less intent on decrying the organised oppression of a centralised State. Both also work so well because their authors make full and highly effective use of the familiar dystopian device of showing how remorseless logic can be used to consolidate such a centralised power. Again, both are alike in presenting as inescapable the ironic situation in which humans have surrendered their autonomy so that they have become dependent upon that which efficiently oppresses them. Indisputably, in these respects the novels reflect the concerns and images of highly-

regarded predecessors such as Wells's When the Sleeper Wakes (1899 - 73); We (1924), by the Russian emigre Yevgeny Zamyatin; and Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932 - 74). Moreover, where Orwell depicts Britain in 1984 under the iron rule of Ingsoc and the Party, Vonnegut does the same for his native United States by seizing upon what was in many respects very much an American view of technology. With their markedly positivistic attitudes to scientific innovation already well known to generations of ordinary Americans including the growing popular readership of the science fiction pulp magazines, American corporate business empires were an apt choice for technocratic satire.

Yet, Vonnegut's novel ('brilliantly satiric,' declared Mark R. Hillegas⁽⁷⁵⁾), 'the best of all the science-fiction anti-utopias') explores human attitudes to life in a determinedly materialistic society with singular force because he is able to present it all with compelling, but detached, irony - his particular genius. This can be seen in his astute choice of the automatic player piano as a symbol of the extent to which human spontaneity and creativity have been supplanted with merely mechanical surrogacy; it is a most memorable image, evoking the self-serving aims of consumer society. Indeed, this is precisely what Kurt Vonnegut wants us to think about. For all the novel's consumer gimmickry ('radar', i.e., microwave cookers) and huge automated manufactories which sate the burgeoning appetites of contemporary America, Vonnegut's real aim is to bring us to a recognition of the system's more general shortcomings (grasped only rarely even by Wells) - principally, that people do not want to be merely passive consumers.

The story is set in the near future against a background of

global small-scale warfare persisting in the wake of World War III. Though America has emerged as more affluent than ever due to the automation of 'the Second Industrial Revolution', the impetus given to the economy by the war has been lost, so that the whole of the excess capacity of the American economy has been given over to domestic production. This marvel of social planning in its complex entirety is overseen and managed by a giant computer, EPICAC XIV. When, in Chapter Twelve, the visiting Shah of Bratpuhr is shown EPICAC, he asks it an ancient riddle which can only be solved by a redeeming messiah who will one day put an end to all human suffering. Incensed by the computer's failure to give any sort of response to the riddle he has voiced, the Shah hands down his contemptuous verdict on it - "'Baku!" This is a 'false god', Vonnegut explains disingenuously, made by the primitive tribesmen of Bratpuhr in their own image.

Vonnegut portrays America in the future as more like Stahlstadt than Frankville. The otherwise unemployed American masses are either enlisted for twenty-five years into the Army, or recruited into the Reconstruction and Reclamation Corps, which Vonnegut witheringly abbreviates into the 'Reeks and Wrecks.' Thus, the State seeks to maintain its control by regimenting these acutely frustrated men, so that their lives seem to have some purpose, however ephemeral or illusory. Appropriately for a society so dependent upon everything mechanical, sabotage is the equivalent of treason or sedition; the crime covers any damage to property or machinery. Finally, in one of the clearest parallels with Nineteen Eighty-Four, the State acts against its mavericks by reclassifying them, which effectively strips the transgressor of his privileges and livelihood, as Paul Proteus

discovers at first hand. Until one re-registers with the authorities, one becomes a sort of non-person, since the State accords its people everything, even the acknowledgement of their existence:

He didn't have to be anywhere at any time any more - ever, he supposed. He made up his own reasons for going somewhere, or he went without reasons. Nobody had anything for him to do anywhere. The economy was no longer interested. His card was of interest now only to the police machines, who regarded him the instant his card was introduced, with instinctive distrust.

Player Piano, Chapter 27; p.226.

In strictly material terms, 'We've never had it so good,' could have been the catchphrase of this consumerist earthly paradise, but "'Give the friggin' worl' back to the friggin' people,'" is the more evocative expression Vonnegut actually attributes to the disgruntled lump-enproletariat of his satire. Their industrialist masters(76) ensure that the output of the factories is maintained - indeed, increased - so that their prestige and power in the land is preserved. Preferring not to see themselves as conservatives, with their institutionalised outlook a mainstay of the corporate state which in turn maintains and rewards their dedication, they like to think of themselves as progressives, selflessly working for the common good:

Kroner turned his back to Paul, assumed a ready stance with the shotgun, and picked off an imaginary bird flushed from behind the desk. "Kaplowie!" He ejected an imaginary shell. "These are dangerous times - more dangerous than you'd suspect from the surface. Kaplowie! But it's also the Golden Age, isn't it, Paul?"

Paul nodded.

Kroner turned to look at him. "I said, isn't this the Golden Age?"

"Yessir, I nodded."

"Pull!" said Kroner, apparently imagining clay pigeons now. "Kaboom! There have always been doubters, criers of doom, stoppers of progress."

"Yessir. About Finnerty and the pistol, I - "

"Behind us now, forgotten," said Kroner impatiently. "The slate is clean. As I was about to say, look where we are now, because men went right ahead and took forward steps with stout hearts, in spite of the people telling them not to."

"Yessir."

"Kaplowie! some men try to make light of what we're doing, what men like your father did, by saying it's just gadgeteering, blind tinkering. It's more than that, Paul."

Paul leaned forward, eager to hear what this extra quality might be. He'd felt for some time that everyone else in the system must be seeing something that he was missing. Perhaps this was it, perhaps the beginning of an overwhelming fervor like his father's.

"It's a sight more than gadgeteering, I'll tell you, Paul."

"Yessir?"

"It's strength and faith and determination. Our job is to open new doors at the head of the procession of civilization. That's what the engineer, the manager does. There is no higher calling."

Dejectedly, Paul let his spine sag back in the chair.

Player Piano, Chapter 12; p.114

For all their vaunted benevolence, Kroner and his privileged fellows are far from being selfless: 'Player Piano depicts an automated twenty-first century America controlled by a hierarchy of technical and managerial Babbits, arrogant, stale and humorless, leading affluent, segregated, near-pointless lives....even for the elite in their comfortable suburbs, automated America is a jungle of toadyism, backbiting, childish sloganeering, executive meetings, and fear of being automated into the dump of the superfluous.'(77) Since they are really running America to suit themselves, their aims and purposes are more like those of Faustus than Prometheus.

What lies beneath the apparent calm of the society run by the managers and engineers is a growing underground movement comprised of many secret societies working together to overthrow the system which oppresses them. These societies, such as the Ghost Shirt Society, are formed initially for fellowship and to create a collective sense of purpose, but they inevitably become focal points of a rising groundswell of popular resentment. The pent-up hatred of the system which has deprived the conspirators of meaningful work is destined to explode in a nation-wide orgy of Luddite destruction, but the

managers have one last chance to avert it. After the State has declared him an outlaw in another of Vonnegut's biting ironies, Paul Proteus, the disillusioned manager of the Ilium Works, infiltrates the Ghost Shirt Society. But Proteus remains uncommitted to their cause until he is arrested after a police raid. Sick of Kroner's cynical manoeuvres, Paul at last takes a stand and declares for the Ghost Shirts.

As the revolution gathers momentum, Paul is sprung from his televised showcase trial to witness the destructive culmination of the efforts of the secret societies. The son of the founder of the Ilium Works, Paul's value to the rebels has already been discerned by one of the more colourful ringleaders of the conspiracy, the Rev. James J. Lasher:

"In the past, in a situation like this, if Messiahs showed up with credible, dramatic messages of hope, they often set off powerful physical and spiritual revolutions in the face of terrific odds. If a Messiah shows up now with a good, solid, startling message, and if he keeps out of the hands of the police, he can set off a revolution - maybe one big enough to take the world away from the machines, Doctor, and give it back to the people."

Player Piano, Chapter 29; p.246.

However, just when they have won the initiative, the rebels throw it away. The leaders of the revolt in Ilium have resolved to sit out the blockade imposed by the authorities, with the aim of returning Ilium to an exemplary Utopia in which the balance between Man and Nature is restored in an ideal agrarian paradise, replete with fulfilling tasks and achievements. But ironically, they give up their half-formed plans having witnessed a fundamental truth about human nature being unconsciously revealed by a group of rebels (led by the compulsive amateur designer Bud Calhoun) innocently trying to repair one of the vending machines they have themselves destroyed. To Proteus and the

other leaders, Bud's attempt to salvage a working machine from the wreckage manifests that very desire for technological tinkering which had brought the machine civilization into being. In a sense, this gift for creative adaptation, so fundamentally a part of human nature as to seem almost an instinctive response to the world, is at once the saving grace and the fatal flaw of mankind. For after all, the hated machines are our own creations, and it is Mankind's desire for comfort and luxuries which may result in this enfeeblement, which is the outcome of our over-dependence on machines. The rational, planned society of a modern 'Golden Age' is presented in this, as in many other equally humanist novels (among them Olaf Stapledon's earlier Star Maker, discussed in the next chapter), as being subtly pernicious and, paradoxically, damaging to human nature. Its imputed immorality is born of its tendency to distort human relationships and weaken or repress human aspiration; not least because of its soullessness, it is countered in the science fiction of aspiration by humanistic apostasy, a liberal subversive impulse.

REFERENCES and FOOTNOTES

1. Lucian was a second-century Syrian philosopher whose Icaromenippus was an account of a journey to the Moon in which the voyager reaches his destination having solved for himself the matter of the design of his conveyance. (In another such tale, his True History, Lucian's traveller had found himself accidentally transported to the Moon; some see this as a crucial distinction, the Icaromenippus being regarded as "scientific" rather than "providential", as I suppose this could be put.)

Aeschylus's drama, as it stands, is out of contention for this distinction if one requires of science fiction that it be in some obvious way concerned with science, the scientist, and the scientific sensibility, or the consequences thereof for the rest of us. While I prefer to keep these in view, I would not exclude, generally speaking, any text which is in some way related to science or technology, and in which the scientific element of the story has a convincing measure of self-consistency. I do also find science fiction of the nineteenth and the present centuries more absorbing, as a rule, than that of earlier times.

2. J.O.BAILEY, Pilgrims through Space and Time: Trends and Patterns in Scientific and Utopian Fiction, Argus Books, Inc., New York, 1947; pp.35-36.
3. James GUNN, The Road to Science Fiction, Vol.I; New American Library, New York, 1977; p.162.
4. Jack WILLIAMSON, writing in 1974 towards the end of a schismatic, protracted struggle between the (mainly) young standard bearers the New Wave (Ellison, Merrill, Ballard, Aldiss, Delany, et al) and the conservative voices of science fiction such as the magazine editors like Campbell who had exercised such tremendous influence in the 1950's and for much of the 1960's, summed up his view of the contemporary issues as follows:

The history-minded critic can trace the cultural split we have seen in current science fiction back at least to the Renaissance, when modern science was born. Once upon a time - so the story goes - man lived at the centre of a simple world, one created for his own comfort and and maybe to test his fitness for heaven. Materially, by today's measures, he was disadvantaged. Spiritually, he wore the image of God. Shakespeare and John Donne were among the last literate inhabitants of that good world, before satanic science divided it into a sphere of knowledge and a sphere of faith. The two spheres are Snow's two cultures, still at war.

'Science Fiction, Teaching and Criticism,'
from: Science Fiction, Today and Tomorrow,
ed. R.BRETINOR; Harper & Row, New York, 1974; p.328.

5. H.Bruce FRANKLIN, Future Perfect: American Science Fiction of the Nineteenth Century; Oxford University Press, New York; Revised Edition, 1978; pp.116-117.

6. Brian ALDISS, Billion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction; Weidenfield and Nicolson, London, 1973; p.52.

Still, Aldiss is surprisingly reluctant to number Poe among the predecessors of modern science fiction writers, arguing that, 'those stories which are most like science fiction are least like stories, more resembling essays or conversations, and often tumbling into the facetious....as if he found his material intractable;' and, 'There are excellent stories which are kin to science fiction...;' having acknowledged that, 'Certainly Poe was interested in science, in the future of science, and in the effects of science on society.' Aldiss's reluctance seems somehow qualitative; he argues that 'Poe's best stories are not science fiction, nor his science fiction stories his best.' On the other hand, he is happy to entertain the idea that Milton's Paradise Lost may include science-fictional elements:

'...Paradise Lost, Book II, with Satan crossing that vast vacuity between his world and ours, looks suspiciously like the pure quill!'(p.10). Since Milton's deep and abiding interest in science has not been recorded, Aldiss's equivocation about Poe's fiction seems to smack of the double standard.

In Trillion Year Spree(1986), Aldiss again closes on 'intractable' Poe in an attempt to establish Poe as a writer who straddles an indefinite generic boundary which lies between two conceptual zones of Gothic, and modern scientific fiction, noting that Poe 'was no subscriber to scientism'(p.58) (but then, neither are many contemporary writers whose post-modernist fictions might be considered 'the pure quill,' Doris Lessing, for example) and, having examined the 'failure and success' of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, concludes that, 'Poe pre-empted a science fictional content, particularly its transcendental content, yet mishandled its form, owing to perverse qualities in his own temperament. Far from being the Father of Science Fiction, this genius bodged it when he confronted its themes directly. Yet he brought off some of its best effects, more or less when looking the other way.'(p.63) Perhaps Aldiss here compounds the double standard with the subjectivity of hindsight.

Poe certainly succeeded in creating a plausible tale, as Harold BEAVER records in his Commentary on 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar' for the Penguin Books' 1976 edition of The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe:

So generally was "M.Valdemar" accepted as a scientific description of a real event that Poe had eventually to fend off fan letters with "the facts". "'Hoax' is precisely the word suited to M.Valdemar's case," he replied to a Scots admirer from Stonehaven. "Some few persons believe it - but I do not - and don't you." (30 December 1846). "'The Valdemar Case' was a hoax, of course," he informed a young medical student from Brunswick, Maine(11 March 1847).

(Beaver, op.cit., p.394)

7. P.B. MEDAWAR, Advice to a Young Scientist; Harper & Row, New York, 1979; p.71.
8. See Franklin, op.cit., 'Edgar Allan Poe and Science Fiction .'
9. Franklin, ibid., p.131.
Incidentally, this later story shows that Poe was aware of the limitations of both the Baconian and the Aristotelian scientific approach:

Do you know that it is not more than a thousand years ago since the metaphysicians consented to relieve the people of the singular fancy that there existed but two possible roads for the attainment of Truth!
.... Aries Tottle...introduced...what was termed the deductive or a priori mode of investigation.
Aries Tottle's mode, in a word, was based on noumena; Hog's on phenomena.
The savans now maintained that the Aristotelian and Baconian roads were the sole possible avenues to knowledge.

'Mellonta Tauta', FRANKLIN, ibid., p.127-128.

Of course Poe himself preferred to see science as a sort of visionary endeavour, and his 1829 poem "To Science" suggests how impatiently he looked upon the deplorable advance of Cartesian rationality, as he thought of it, and the mortifying mechanisms of contemporary science and technology.

To Science

Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!
Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?
How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise,
Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,
Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
To seek a shelter in some happier star?
Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
The elfin from the green grass, and from me
The summer dream from beneath the tamarind tree?

The poem is like nothing so much as a fanciful, lengthy list of indictments in which science is charged with having rapaciously deprived the poetic imagination of some of its most charming imagery. Incidentally it also suggests how thoroughly science had by then eclipsed magic as a source of wonder amongst many of his contemporaries, though he affects horror at this. Nonetheless, his fiction exploits the potential of science for creating visionary tales or horrid fantasies with consummate skill to meet a popular taste which is at least as strong today as it was in his heyday.

Intriguingly, perhaps what Poe longs for so plaintively in his sonnet is now recognised in some scientific quarters as the "Kantian" scientific outlook. This intuitive approach posits forces and effects which exist somehow in tandem with the mechanistic forces manifestly at work in our surroundings.

'This experiment succeeds as well as could be desired,' Kant complacently remarked, and it led him to formulate his well-known opinion that a priori knowledge - knowledge independent of all experience - can exist; he reasoned that both space and time are forms of sensory intuition and as such are only 'conditions of the existence of things as appearances.'

P.B.Medawar, op.cit., p.74.

Prof.Sir Geoffrey Warnock, discussing Kant's philosophy with Bryan Magee (in one of a series of dialogues published as The Great Philosophers, BBC Books, 1987), makes this point more clearly:

...by making clear the distinction between the world as appearance, as an object of experience, and the world of things-in-themselves, he is in a position to say that, on the one hand, there is the world of appearances, and the physical sciences in principle give us the whole truth about that - as he believed that they did. He had no doubt that Newton had got it absolutely right, and that a physicist's description of the world as an object of possible experience was essentially correct and could be exhaustive. But, he says, bear in mind that we are there talking of the world of appearances. There is also, on the other hand, the topic of things in themselves, and there is room there, so to speak, for other sorts of concepts altogether: of free will, of rational agency, right and wrong, good and bad, the soul - there is room for these concepts....outside the world of appearance. Of course he saw that, on his own principles, he would have to say that these other matters couldn't be topics of knowledge. Had you said to him: 'Do you know that there is such a thing as free will?' he would consistently have said: 'No, I do not know any such thing. All I know is that there is room for that possibility.' He claims no more.

Op.cit., pp.182-3

Kant's philosophy would have attracted Poe's interest because while it is conspicuously logical, it admits of other concepts and possibilities which cannot be physically delineated. Ultimately Poe's disaffection with science follows from his conviction that science was forcing human sensibility into accepting ever more narrow, materialistic rather than meta-physical perspectives.

10. Beaver, op.cit., p.xiv.

11. While noting the gimcrack style of 'Mellonta Tauta,' Bailey contrasts Poe's extrapolative futurism with the rusticated utopias of Thoreau and Emerson:

Edgar Allan Poe was likewise a maverick, at least in his attitude toward the back-to-nature movement in New England. He frequently designed more than he executed, publishing fragments not fully worked out. His 'Mellonta Tauta' (1849) seems to be such a fragment. It is partly satire, partly historical romance of the future, and partly an array of advanced machines for an instrumental utopia.

Pilgrims Through Space and Time, p.50.

However, Beaver (op.cit., p.417) offers a more compelling view of the story, seeing it not as an "instrumental utopia" with Bailey but rather as a frantic, totalitarian dystopia where machines and the seething population dominate life:

His future is totalitarian and overcrowded. The key is population control. Men as individuals are abandoned; epidemics and wars, welcomed. The sea swarms with ships; the very sky, with balloons. At hundreds of miles per hour hundreds speed by on an aimless excursion cruise. Poe's millennial "Amricca" (am rich, am rich, am rich) is his final send-up - a Fool's day calculus of suicidal, doomsday collapse.

12. Franklin, ibid., p.99
13. V.S.PRITCHETT, 'The Scientific Romances'; in H.G.Wells: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Bernard BERGONZI for Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey; 1976; p.33.
14. In his Science Fiction, Its Criticism and Teaching (Methuen & Co., London; 1980), Patrick PARRINDER writes on the subject of Wells's rigorous and consistent development of a single fantastic premise, taking his cue from Wells's oft-quoted 1933 discussion of his 'scientific romances':

In his account of these works he contrasts the purely speculative nature of the hypotheses on which they are based with the rigour with which he pursues the consequences of these hypotheses. The initial premise requires of the reader no more than the willing suspension of disbelief; as the narrator of The Time Machine says to his hearers, 'Take it as a lie - or a prophecy. Say I dreamed it in the workshop.' Though backed up by a display of scientific patter, the premise...is comparable to the traditional marvels of magic and fairy tale.

Parrinder. op.cit., p.11;

'Logical speculation: H.G.Wells'.

Wells projects himself as a sort of logical, cognitive fantasist, contrasting himself in this respect to the more anticipatory, extrapolative vision of Verne. Few would see this as an important

distinction nowadays, though, not least because some of Verne's flamboyant guesses - seen with the privilege of hindsight - seem the more fantastic. However, this may lead us to overlook the perhaps unusual care Wells took in establishing his initial premise in The Island Of Doctor Moreau (see also 22, below). While it would be foolish to neglect Wells's own description of many of his initial premises as "magic tricks",

'As soon as the magic trick has been done the whole business of the fantasy writer is to keep everything else human and real.'

Wells's science fiction is, as its author intended, impressively self-consistent, so much so that Hugo Gernsback, who hoped his his new 'scientifiction' magazine Amazing Stories would help to popularise science in an entertaining way, counted Wells among three writers whose work he would use (the others were Poe, the American; and, Verne the French writer of inspiring epics of man and machine.) (Gunn, op.cit., pp.382-383).

Damon KNIGHT questioned the point of the partisan debate which raged for decades in the editorial and letter columns of the popular American science fiction pulp magazines and elsewhere about the nature of "true" or "pure" science fiction, as distinct from science fantasy:

Heinlein is one of those who draw a firm line between science fiction and fantasy; they are, as he says in his introduction (to Tomorrow, The Stars) 'as different as Karl Marx and Groucho Marx.' It's a pleasure to be able to disagree, for once, with a writer I admire so strenuously. Heinlein goes on:

Fantasy is constructed either by denying the real world in toto or at least by making a prime basis of the story one or more admittedly false premises - fairies, talking mules, trips through a looking glass, vampires, seacoast Bohemia, Mickey Mouse. But science fiction, no matter how fantastic its contents may seem, always accepts all of the real world and the entire body of human knowledge concerning the real world as the framework for the fictional speculation.

Granting that the aims of "pure" fantasy and "pure" science fiction differ, are they two rigid compartments, or only the ends of a continuous spectrum?

In Search of Wonder, Advent Publishers, Chicago, 1967; p.117.

Clearly Wells benefitted from his preoccupation with the cognitive ethic even in structuring his fiction(see below,17&22). However, it may be stretching the point to suggest that:

Similarly, H.G.Wells's 'romances' express a scientific philosophy, and their narrative framework is underpinned by a direct intellectual appeal to the reader, rather than by psychological allegory and symbolism. Their affinities are as much with the satire and the realistic novel as with the romance proper.

Parrinder, op.cit., p.10.

It is hard to recall any fiction which is as empty of symbolism or as free of any kind of allegory as this suggests, since these often are there inherently in the relationships between characters, or between them and the conventions of society (as in The Island of Doctor Moreau) or present as themes, whether consciously or not.

James Blish (who also published criticism under the pen-name of William Atheling Jr.) placed Wells and Verne in a broader literary perspective:

In the nineteenth century, virtually every writer of stature, and many now forgotten, wrote at least one science fiction story.

Jules Verne, in short, was just plain wrong in assuming he had invented a wholly new kind of story. It had been in existence for decades; indeed, it was almost commonplace, and widely accepted. ...By about 1860, the science fiction story was a fully formed and highly visible literary phenomenon in English; Verne was merely the first author working in the form of another language to catch the public eye.

These writers did not call what they did 'science fiction,' or think of it as such; the term was not invented until 1929. When H.G.Wells published his early samples of it in the 1890's - and in the process showed that such pieces could also be works of art - he first called them 'fantastic and imaginative romances,' and later, 'science fantasy' (a term which has now been degraded to cover a subtype of it in which the science content is minimal, and what little of it is present is mostly wrong.) Most of its producers never bothered to give it a label, nor did editors feel the lack; it was considered to be a normal and legitimate interest for any writer and reader of fiction.

'The Tale that Wags the God: The Function of Science Fiction,'
American Libraries, 1970; p.1029.

15. Bailey comments:

By 1871 science had begun to fulfill some of its promises; the earlier agonies of industrialisation were passing, the burst of inventions, such as those of Edison in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, showed the Machine Age on the horizon; and the theory of evolution suggested not only an ancient past, but a limitless future, in which there might be racial self-direction.

(op.cit., p.50)

16. Gunn, for example, sums up Wells's contribution thus:

By his techniques and by the number and excitement of his ideas, Wells broadened the audience for science fiction, just as Verne had done before him. Wells, with his critical mind and his superior writing skills, carried science fiction to heights it had never reached before and would seldom afterward.

(Gunn, op.cit., p.382)

17. Pritchett, op.cit., p.37.

18. Pritchett, ibid., p.36.

19. Wells wrote in his 1933 Preface to his science fiction:

They are all fantasies; they do not aim to project a serious possibility; they aim indeed only at the same amount of conviction as one gets in a good gripping dream. They have to hold the reader to the end by art and illusion and not by proof and argument, and when he closes the cover and reflects he wakes up to their impossibility.

With the telling end of The Island of Doctor Moreau in mind, of which Aldiss wrote,

The ending has a sombre strength. As with the climax of The War of the Worlds, it comes not just as a surprise but as a logical culmination. Wells has subtly prepared us for it, so that it is revelation rather than punch line....
(op.cit., p.141)

this strikes one as a singularly odd disclaimer, not least because Aldiss is surely right in speaking of the 'logical culmination' of this novel. The truth, it seems to me, whatever were Wells's hidden pretensions to a particular sort of talent attested by the 'arts and illusions' of the whole canon of his science fiction, is that after the initial premise is accepted by the reader, the themes are developed, and illustrated, by 'proof and argument,' however imaginatively dressed up or highly coloured these might have been.

20. I have used an anthology of the scientific romances, H.G.Wells, published by William Heinemann, London, which includes the 1933 Preface quoted above.

21. The scrupulous attention to detail and factually expository style of Moreau's description of his modus operandi contrast markedly with Wells's own 1933 description of Frankenstein's 'magical' animation of his creature:

Frankenstein even, used some jiggery-pokery magic to animate his artificial monster. There was trouble about the thing's soul. But by the end of the last century it had become difficult to squeeze even a momentary belief out of magic any longer. It occurred to me that instead of the usual interview with the devil or a magician*, an ingenious use of scientific patter might with advantage be substituted. That was no discovery.

All this is further reason to be cautious about Wells's remarks in his essay, given the almost textbook clarity and detail of the 'scientific patter' of Chapter 14. Robert M. PHILMUS concurs:

The statements that H.G.Wells gave out in the twenties and thirties about his early "scientific romances" or "scientific

fantasies," as he alternately called them, are not sympathetic to the spirit of these works, the best of which he had written before the turn of the century. In general, he makes them out to be slighter in substance and tendentious in tone than the serious reader coming upon them now is prepared to find them.

'The Logic of Prophecy in The Time Machine'
in H.G.Wells, A Collection of Critical Essays,
ed. BERGONZI; (op.cit.) p.56.

*Something which Wells should have known doesn't figure in Frankenstein. Kingsley AMIS did see through what I can't help but think of as Mary Shelley's 'alchemical patter':

The notable thing about Frankenstein the character is that, far from being possessed of supernatural powers, he is a physiologist with academic training...

'Starting Points'
in Science Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays,
ed. Mark ROSE; Prentice-Hall, Inc., New Jersey, 1976; p.22.

Even so, Brian ALDISS can still find ample evidence in The Island of Doctor Moreau to support his contentions about the importance of 'the sublime' in modern science fiction:

...Moreau's science is only vaguely touched on; the whole business of brain surgery, on which the novel hinges, has none of Wells's usual clarity. We can infer that he wanted to leave this area sketchy, so that we know no more know about what goes on in Moreau's laboratory than in God's. vagueness, by increasing our horror and uncertainty, is a strength rather than otherwise.

Trillion Year Spree, p.125

22. J.Norman KING, 'Theology, Science Fiction and Man's Future Orientation;' in Many Futures, Many Worlds (pp.237-259), ed. Thomas D.Clareson; Kent State University Press, 1977; pp.242-243.
23. Harry LEVIN, Christopher Marlowe, The Overreacher; Faber & Faber, London, 1954; p.140.
24. Pritchett, op.cit., pp.32-33.
25. Brian ALDISS observes blithely that:

Nobody has quite decided what Moreau is, apart from being a splendid and terrifying story. But it is clear that Wells has something more in mind, something larger, than a thrilling adventure.

Billion Year Spree, p.138

Trillion Year Spree, p.124

and goes on to claim, 'yet it is not difficult to see what he intended...(p.124) It is clear that Moreau, at least in one sense, speaks against transplant surgery(p.125);' one feels able to offer one's own conjectures about the moral nature of

the book and how this is conveyed structurally in terms of the respective scientific sensibilities of Moreau and Prendick, which therefore does not rely on divine ordinance quite as much as Aldiss's reading of Moreau, in which it is nonetheless correctly linked with Frankenstein: 'Moreau is intended to stand for God. Moreau is a nineteenth-century God - Mary Shelley's protagonist in his maturity - Frankenstein Unbound.' Ibid.

26. As one of his biographers, Montgomery BELGION, noted:

...It is in that year (1884) that he seems to have formed an unbounded belief in the potentialities of science. That is presumably what led him later on to call for all power and control in the world to be vested in scientists.

H.G.Wells,

Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1953; pp.25-26.

It may be helpful at this stage to clarify what we may take the idea of what a scientist is and does - as distinct from the diverse varieties of outlook and motivation already discerned (Aristotelian, Baconian, Kantian and so on) - while on the subject of Wells's depiction of the modern scientist. Wells, while undoubtedly a scientific enthusiast, did not particularly promote the later, distinctively American popular view of the scientist-as-hero fostered by Campbell's influential 'pulp' school of writing in succession to Gernsback. It is true that in his later extrapolative future histories he does create scientific oligarchies - the Airmen, the Samurai, etc., but they are advanced not as impulsive or obsessive heroes but as a - transitory - class of idealistic social engineers, an elite of supreme scientific materialists who can disabuse us of our dangerous social, religious and other illusions in time to save us from ourselves, protect our birthright and preserve our special potential. Yet, he also portrayed scientists in a fair range of contexts as individuals susceptible to the usual weakness and everyday clumsiness of ordinary people - one thinks of the scientists of The War of the Worlds ingenuously trying to investigate the crashed Martian projectiles and their fell cargo; or the original absent-minded professors, Mr. Bensington and Prof. Redwood, whose extraordinary discovery quite overwhelms their ability to control it. For Wells, scientists as a collectivity are - usually - eminently trustworthy and humane; but as individuals, have the same potential to be selfish, deranged or obsessive as anyone. However, for a concise, lucid description of the activities of the professional scientist, I should like to turn to that offered in his last work, Literature and Science (1963), by Aldous Huxley. Huxley draws a very clear distinction between the 'idiographic' concerns of literature and the 'nomothetic' activities of scientists, based on a most perceptive awareness of both literary and scientific disciplines:

As a private individual, the scientist inhabits the many-faceted world in which the rest of the human race does its living and dying. But as a professional chemist, say

a professional physicist or physiologist, he is the inhabitant of a radically different universe - not the universe of given appearances, but the world of inferred fine structures, not the experienced world of unique events and diverse qualities, but the world of quantified regularities. Knowledge is power and, by a seeming paradox, it is through their knowledge of what happens in this unexperienced world of abstractions and inferences that scientists and technologists have acquired their enormous and growing power to control, direct and modify the world of manifold appearances in which human beings are privileged and condemned to live.

Op.cit., p.11.

27. Prendick is certainly not there for us to identify with, any more than the Invisible Man is. His shallowness, his lack of understanding for Montgomery, his lack of sympathy for the Beasts, is perhaps a mark against the book - the darkness of any painting can be enhanced by a highlight here and there. Or perhaps it is just that Prendick is a commonplace little man, as Gulliver was a commonplace little man and Alice a commonplace little girl.

Brian Aldiss, Billion Year Spree, pp.140-141.

28. W.W.ROBSON believes (Modern English Literature, Oxford University Press, 1970; pp.8-9) that Wells was motivated by a strongly-felt sense of 'impatience' with traditional English gentility, past and present:

The driving-force in his thought was the dislike of the English governing class. He grew up when thinkers like Darwin and Marx were altering the whole outlook of educated men. But their ideas made little impact on the traditional humanism of the English upper class. All his life Wells was impatient with the old classical education. This, he kept reiterating, was the age of science.

29. Aldiss, op.cit., p.137.

30. ...Wells's main effort in his early work was frankly directed towards commercial success. He achieved it because he wrote on a topical subject: the practical applications of science.

Robson, op.cit., p.9.

31. Gunn, 'Science Fiction and the Mainstream'; in Bretnor, op.cit., p.191.

32. So much so that Bailey saw him as in some ways Wells's successor:

The successor to H.G.Wells in the disciplined use of science for romance is Dr. Olaf Stapledon, lecturer in Liverpool University, England, on literature, industrial history, psychology, and philosophy, and author of various books on philosophical and ethical topics. Stapledon's romances deal not only with evolution, but with the new space-time revealed in twentieth-century mathematics and

astronomy. His scientific imaginations are carefully worked out, but it is clear that he is not interested in them alone. He is interested with the philosophic meaning that is expressed in them.

Bailey, op.cit., p.138.

As Bailey doubtless knew, they were in fact contemporaries, Wells dying in 1946 aged 80, and Stapledon in 1950, aged 64. Though his view seems odd, especially since Wells continued his literary activity until as late as 1945, many critics concur with Bailey in regarding the early 'scientific romances' as amongst his finest work, the later work being characterised by an increasingly didactic, hortatory tone - at the expense of the energy of the early 'scientific romances' and the comic protagonists of his 'mainstream' fiction. Thus Robson:

From The New Machiavelli onwards there is little but a documentary interest in Wells's fiction. His books discuss politics, education, and (in and out of season) free love. But it is all discussion. The truth is that Wells's heart was not in fiction.

Robson, op.cit., p.11.

For Brian Aldiss, an unabashed admirer who describes Wells as 'the Prospero of all the brave new worlds of the mind, and the Shakespeare of science fiction' (Trillion Year Spree, p.133), this emphatic re-orientation of Wells's work is explicable in terms in of his prominence as an international public figure, which he sought to exploit in order to promote the realization of his own visionary idealism:

During the thirties, Wells the novelist faded out before Wells the World Figure. He was a famous man, busily planning a better world, chatting with Gorki, feuding with George Bernard Shaw, flying to the White House to talk to Roosevelt, or to the Kremlin to talk to Stalin. Remembering the muddle of the London of his youth, he visualized a World State as the tidiest possible way of governing mankind for its own happiness.

Trillion Year Spree, p.129.

Having noted that, after The World Set Free (1914), 'his books are no longer novels but gospels,' Aldiss reminds us that, 'It was Wells who said, "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe."' (p.132)

33. Although nine years separate these novels, there are very strong resemblances between them, as Curtis C. SMITH observes:

The similarities between Odd John and Sirius are apparent. Sirius, a dog with intelligence at a human level, is as estranged from humanity as is John. In each book Stapledon uses estrangement for satirical purposes. ...both John and Sirius are misanthropes. Stapledon gives no way of evaluating John's misanthropy, no reliable critique of it...

from: 'Olaf Stapledon's Dispassionate Objectivity' in, Voices for the Future, Vol.I, ed. T. CLARESON; Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, Ohio, 1976; p.59.

34. While the authorial concerns of Odd John are in many respects readily accessible (even explicit) in the text, critics have come to see Stapledon's attitude towards his story differently. Aldiss thought it 'a pleasant superman tale.....the mood of the of the book is light and cheerful.'* (op.cit., pp.235-236); while Scott saw it as a short satiric tragedy, perhaps 'a monster story,' perhaps something else - his honest difficulty arising from what he perceived to be the lack of an obvious, unifying authorial moral perspective(op.cit., passim). J.O.Bailey also took the novel more guardedly than Aldiss, and on the whole I am more inclined to follow Scott and Bailey:

No summary can do justice to Odd John....Stapledon's subtitle reads, 'A Story between Jest and Earnest.' The story, let us say, is a jest; but the attempt is earnest enough of grapple with the problem of human inadequacy and to show that the wisest and most spiritually intuitive in human thought is everywhere impeded by the worst and finally overwhelmed.

(op.cit., p.170.)

My only quibble with Bailey is that he refers, perhaps confusingly, to 'human thought' in making a remark which seems meant to be read in terms of John's 'superhuman' outlook.

*Unchanged in Trillion Year Spree.

Stapledon engages in a kind of cognitive game with determinism throughout the novel, and his mock-ironic attitude towards this and other aspects of Odd John, particularly the relationship between John and the narrator (so self-effacing that very little is revealed about him anywhere in the novel), betray his drollery.

35. James GUNN reports that the book was 'acclaimed the definitive treatment of the superman theme' (op.cit., p.199) by contemporary readers).
36. Meredith CARY writes of Odd John:

Science fiction would seem willing to restore to us even the love of God. ...the glory of a happier time when God walked the world at large among His creatures is recalled when science fiction offers homo sapiens the daily personal contact enjoyed by a faithful dog with a mentally inaccessible but tenderly patronising homo superior. For example, Olaf Stapledon's Odd John is unmistakably such a god. Almost before he has entered his teens, Odd John has understood and belittled all the proudest works of 'homo sap.' from philosophy to finance. Yet he is in his own way a fulfillingly accessible god for whose companionship his chosen 'Fido' can gladly sacrifice career, girl friend, and pregnant wife.

'Faustus Now', in Hartford Studies in Literature, Vol. 4 (1979); p.169.

While recognising that Cary was engaged in a more general discussion of science fiction than is indicated above, I have to take issue with the idea of Odd John as a benevolent deity which is introduced in the context of the relationship between John and his biographer. Undoubtedly John has a 'soft spot' for 'Fido', but his attitude to the rest of humanity is quite unsentimental, and the relationship with the biographer is wholly untypical. I confess I can see little fulfilment in waiting hand and foot upon such an arrogant being as John can be, but Cary is right in suggesting that science fiction has more attractive, beneficent messiahs, Michael Valentine Smith of Stranger in a Strange Land perhaps being one such.

37. Recent science fiction has spawned many secular messiahs, some benevolent, others not; some of the more well-known of both kinds are, for instance, Karl Gogauer of Behold the Man; Ransom of That Hideous Strength; Bowman of 2001: A Space Odyssey; Paul Atriedes of Dune; and Charteris of Barefoot in the Head.

38. While I can cite Messrs. Scholes and Rabkin for this (op.cit., p.33), another key to this view of the novel is the authorial remoteness which Stapledon adopted. Were he too concerned, after all, with explicitly didactic moralising the almost capricious note his style possess, and which I believe rather deceived Aldiss (see 34, above), would surely have been impossible to sustain.

39. ...Delicate experiments were being carried out on the germ cells of molluscs, fishes and specially imported mammals. Still more difficult work was in progress upon human ova and spermatazoa, both normal and supernormal. I was shown a series of thirty-eight living embryos, each in its own incubator. These startled me considerably, but the story of their conception startled me even more. Indeed it filled me with horror, and with violent though short-lived moral indignation. The eldest of these embryos was three months old. Its father, I was told, was Shahin, its mother a native of the Tuamotu Archipelago.

The unfortunate girl had been seduced, brought to the island, operated upon, and killed while still under the anaesthetic. The more recent specimens, had been secured by milder methods.

Odd John, p.168

This 'short-lived moral indignation' which the narrator recalls seems to be further proof, were any needed, that we should see the biographer as also having been beguiled by John, and that again Stapledon's provocative spirit is at work.

40. Scott, op.cit., pp. 57-58.

41. Scott, ibid.

42. Damon KNIGHT, In Search of Wonder; Advent Publishers, Chicago, 1967; p.12.

43. George Bernard SHAW, Man and Superman;
'The Revolutionist's Handbook, IV. Man's Objection to His Own Improvement'; p.225 of the Penguin Books edition (1946;1977).
44. Shaw, op.cit., Epistle Dedicatory, p.13.
45. I am indebted here to I.F. Clarke's comprehensive survey of predictive fiction, The Tale of the Future from the Beginning to the Present Day (third edition); London, The Library Association, 1978.
46. Aldiss, Billion Year Spree, p.37.
47. Clarke, op.cit.
48. Bernard BERGONZI, 'The Time Machine: An Ironic Myth;' from H.G.Wells, A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Bernard Bergonzi for Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1973; pp.53. (Twentieth Century Views series)
49. Angus M.Taylor, 'Science Fiction: The Evolutionary Context' from The Journal of Popular Culture, Vol.5; p.858.
50. Bergonzi, op.cit., pp.45 & 46.
51. Who began this celebrated argument is unclear, but both authors defended themselves against the slights of the other. Verne, the established writer, seems to have scorned Wells's fiction for being too far-fetched or fanciful, slating Wells's invention of a substance having incredible gravity-defeating purposes, Cavorite, to take his explorers to the moon in The First Men in the Moon, as merely expeditious. He declared his own two novels about moon voyages, written before Wells's, to be the more realistic (hence satisfactory) since he had actually calculated the size of charge required to blast his projectile and its occupants to escape velocity. I think it was James Blish, himself always careful to provide a most plausible scientific framework in his stories, who mischievously pointed out that it was really as well that Verne's explorers had intended to circle the moon rather than land there for had they made such an attempt they would have been reduced to a colourful puree distributed uniformly all over the passenger compartment as the projectile hit the moon, thanks to Nature's insistence on the conservation of momentum!

One suspects that Well's later insistence upon his fiction being seen as 'scientific romance' was at least partly inspired by a determination to avoid being classed with Verne. I find his work much more interesting than Verne's because though his fiction may require a donnee of some kind it then proceeds in a gratifyingly consistent way. Verne's fiction does not bear the same close scrutiny, however:

From the Earth to the Moon(1865) and Round the Moon(1870) are not without science and invention. In fact, Verne invents a new means of travelling to the moon and works it out in detail; and he loads his books with scientific

theories, facts and figures. But the mood is rollicking; some of the adventures are absurdities. The two features are simply sandwiched together, a slice of science and a slice of fun, in random widths.

Bailey, op.cit., p.47.

52. There is a good deal which would create offense were it not so easy to dismiss Verne's impulsive, casual bigotry, much of which is an artless expression of patriotic and male chauvinism. There are, for instance, those presumptuous notions of his about Western, particularly Latin, racial supremacy:

...the influx of Chinese coolies into western America had...caused much perturbation in the labour market. The building of Frankville came just in time to save them from perishing... The wages were deposited every week in the great Bank of San Francisco, and every coolie was warned that when he drew it out he was not to return. This precaution was absolutely necessary to get rid of a yellow population, which would otherwise have infallibly lowered the tone and standard of the new city.

The Begum's Fortune, Chapter X.

While admittedly this is quoted from the German article about the construction of Frankville on model principles, and Verne probably hated the Germans more than any other foreigners in the wake of their successful invasion of France, this contrasts oddly with Sarrasin's avowed intention to "invite visitors from every nation" "and offer it as a home and refuge for honest families forced to emigrate from over-populated countries"(Chapter III).

53. Taylor, op.cit., p.859. Taylor quotes Mark R. Hillegas.

54. Verne's chauvinism was not merely patriotic; women, where they figure in his novels at all - are portrayed as obedient creatures who support the domineering, patriarchal role of the Victorian father in a disturbingly self-effacing way, as Madame Sarrasin proves on hearing - via her son - of the bequest:

When Madame Sarrasin had read her husband's letter again, she felt that this great sum was his, that he would take all the responsibility of deciding what she and her children were to do, and she speedily regained her usual composure.

The Begum's Fortune, Chapter II.

I was puzzled initially by Sarrasin's decision to write to his son before telling his wife, until further reading convinced me of the utterly peripheral role given to women in the novel. Brian Aldiss includes More's explanation of this characteristic of Verne's fiction:

Although a misogynist, Verne had the sense to marry well.. One of Verne's critics, Marcel More, has argued that behind Verne's industrious and bourgeois facade lay a more anguished personality, the key to which is the way the novels concern only masculine relationships and where women, the few there are, are mere cyphers.

Billion Year Spree, p.107.

55. The modern reader's sense of proportion is likely to be offended by Verne's amazingly contrived introduction of Schultz as another heir to the Begum's millions. Schultz states his claim thus: "I am the grandson of the elder sister, Theresa Langevol, who married in 1792 my grandfather, a surgeon in the army of Brunswick; he died in 1814."(Chapter IV) Since we have earlier been told that Sarra-sin is connected via his paternal grandmother with that Jean Jacques Langevol who inherited his wife's fortune when she, The Begum, died in 1814, the whole thing becomes - clear? It would be as well not to baulk at this, though, for, as James Gunn has noted, coincidence in Verne's fiction had an important function:

Verne wrote simple stories about uncomplicated people... His plots consisted of abductions, searches, mysteries, and ambitious undertakings; the events of the stories were often marked by accident and coincidence (which he considered to be evidence of divine intervention in human affairs).

Gunn, op.cit. Vol.I, p.254.

56. Brian Aldiss detects behind Verne's outward Catholic respectability a more complex personality. Noting his misogyny, he goes on to remark on the striking evasion or neglect of religious 'feeling' which is a consistent feature of Verne's work as a whole:

More amazing than the lack of women is the lack of religious feeling; throughout the great turbulent landscape of the novels, there is scarcely a priest or a church to be had. In extremities, the protagonists utter only a conventional cry to Providence. True, Milliard City has a church, St.Mary's. Milliard City is the capital of Une ville flotante(1871).... a man-made island four and a half miles long and three broad, which travels about the oceans like a piece of floating geography. As with Verne's other machines, it works like mad. But no one visits the church. Verne is a utilitarian, a French Gradgrind.

Trillion Year Spree, p.104.

Indeed, much the same can be said of The Begum's Fortune. On the other hand, perhaps Verne was concerned to avoid being accused of profaning his Church by boldly depicting it in this popular genre; or wary of brooking the misapprobation of the Vatican by falling foul of a casuistical construction of some work which might, perhaps, be seen as heretical or schismatic. This would serve just as well as an explanation of his circumspection in matters of a moral or liturgical nature; Aldiss's inference that Verne was as utilitarian in matters of belief as he was in matters of sociology may be too sweeping.

57. Marc ANGENOT argues that science has a clearly-defined role in Verne's fiction:

The referent of Vernian discourse is the effect of science, as the successive projection of discrete inventions on the social body. This effect is essentially a quantifiable acceleration. Science is thus at once the guardian of the social status quo, and the means of its immanent transcendence.

'Jules Verne: the last happy utopianist'
in Science Fiction, A Critical Guide,
ed. P.Parrinder; p.29.

M.Angenot's case is to that extent supported by The Begum's Fortune. However, he is at odds with the whole drift of this novel in earlier claiming that, 'Science, for Verne, is at the same time exterior to social vicissitudes, innocent of society's contradictions and completely understood in its effects.' I.F. Clarke's synopsis more reliably reflects the basic plot, 'The virtuous Frenchman, Dr.Sarrasin, and the wicked Professor Schultz of Jena construct their ideal cities in North America.' (op.cit.) While Verne ultimately depicts the triumph of Sarrasin's "moral" science over Schultz's "immoral" science, he does reveal some awareness of the potential for oppression inherent in scientific innovation. Verne also seems to have sought to acquire a degree of moral significance for his novel, as his concluding words suggest, by having it stand as a sort of entertaining popular homily:

We may be assured that the future belongs to the efforts of Doctor Sarrasin and Max Bruckmann, and that the example of Frankville and Stahlstadt, as model city and industrial town, will not be lost on future generations.
The Begum's Fortune, Chapter XX.

58. Aldiss, Trillion Year Spree, p.103.

59. James Gunn (op.cit., pp.211-212) has described Poe's 'Mellonta Tauta' in terms which, when seen in the light of Wells's novel, suggest that while Wells brought the geological time scales of evolutionary theory into science fiction, the credit for introducing the 'future historical' perspective is Poe's:

'Mellonta Tauta' may be the first true story of the future. Dated one thousand years from the time Poe wrote it, the story incorporates an important recognition that the future will be so different that it will have forgotten us almost completely, and what it remembers will be confused and often wrong. The novel effect on the reader is the intellectual counterpoint between our knowledge and 'Mellonta Tauta's' understanding, and our recognition of why these differ.

Of course The Time Machine is a much more complex and I think memorable fiction. I.F.Clarke (Voices Prophesying War, pp.54-55) has argued convincingly that Darwinian evolutionary theory helped provide a more topical if perhaps deterministic framework for the predictive tale of the future; it was,

the final mechanism required for the smooth functioning of the tale of the future, since it brought the apparent certainty of scientific law to the general conviction of progress. And so the interest that followed on the publication of the Origin of Species in November 1959 had the effect of providing a biological explanation for the constant technological progress and social struggle that all knew to be going on around them.

Darko SUVIN's analytical discussion (he explains his methodology as 'structuralism...as a synthesising medium,' to distinguish himself from orthodox structuralists) describes his view of Wells's usage of T.H.Huxley's speculative theory of convergent evolution as a source of ideas for the degenerate species of animals which the Time Traveller encounters. See 'The Time Machine versus Utopia as a Structural Model for Science Fiction' by Darko Suvin; Comparative Literature Studies, Vol.X (1973); pp.334-352.

60. Bernard BERGONZI, 'The Time Machine: An Ironic Myth;' op.cit., pp.39-55.
61. The Time Traveller describes his most refined theory as follows:
'So, as I see it, the Upper-world man had drifted towards his feeble prettiness, and the Under-world to mere mechanical industry. But that perfect state had lacked one thing even for mechanical perfection - absolute permanency. Apparently, as time went on, the feeding of the Under-world, however it was effected, had become disjointed. Mother Necessity, who had been staved off for a few thousand years, came back again, and she began below. The Under-world being in contact with machinery, which, however perfect, still needs some little thought outside habit, had probably retained perforce rather more initiative, if less of every other human character, than the upper. And when other meat failed them, they turned to what old habit had hitherto forbidden.'
(Chapter 10).
Wells suggests that the decline in human society was produced by intellectual degeneration and a disappearance of initiative among the privileged surface-dwellers, exacerbated by their neglect of the workers who provided for them.
62. Further confirmed by another of Wells's comments on his science fiction in which he characterised it as, "the vivid realization of some disregarded possibility in such a way as to comment on the false securities and fatuous self-satisfaction of everyday life." Quoted in Footnote 3, Suvin, op.cit., p.349.
63. Carol MURPHY, 'The Theology of Science Fiction;' Approach, 23 (1957); p.4.
64. Mark R.HILLEGAS, The Future as Nightmare: H.G.Wells and the Anti-Utopians; Oxford University Press, New York, 1967; pp.14-15.
65. Attributing something of the 'darkness and pessimism' of the scientific romances to prevailing social conditions, Hillegas has

characterised contemporary English society thus:

..we must remember that they were written against the background of grave social injustice and economic distress, socialist agitation and labor unrest. Fifty years after Disraeli had written of 'the two nations,' England still chiefly consisted of the rich and the poor. At the bottom of the social heap were the exploited multitudes of the industrial proletariat, who..... still led horribly deformed and meaningless lives. Above them were the energetic and upwardly aspiring middle class, cramped by the conditions of their existence only at the bottom levels of the class. At the summit, the 'unpremeditated, successful, aimless Plutocracy' led sterile lives of unproductive leisure. The middle and upper classes....managed, in the face of worsening conditions during these last years of the nineteenth century, to hold to their faith in "progress," managed to believe that things were somehow improving. In his scientific romances and stories written at this time, Wells set about vigorously to attack this late Victorian complacency, for in his opinion there was no greater enemy of progress than a belief in inevitable progress. He launched this attack....from what is best described as the 'cosmic pessimism' of T.H.Huxley.

The Future as Nightmare, p.18.

66. Hillegas, The Future as Nightmare, pp.19-20.

67. Hillegas quotes Orwell's personal acknowledgement of the extent to which he felt Wells had influenced him:

Thinking people who were born about the beginning of this century are in some ways Wells's own creation. How much influence any mere writer has...is questionable, but I doubt whether anyone who was writing books between 1900 and 1920, at any rate in English, influenced the young so much. The minds of us all, and therefore the physical world, would be perceptibly different if Wells never existed.

'Wells, Hitler and the World State'
in Dickens, Dali and Others;

(quoted by Hillegas in The Future as Nightmare, p.6)

68. I.F. CLARKE, Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984; Oxford University Press, London, 1966; p.181.

69. Clarke, Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984, p.182.

70. Mary WEINKAUF, 'The God Figure in Dystopian Fiction;' Riverside Quarterly, 4 (1971); p.267.

Since immutability is assumed of most gods, Winston Smith's department sees to it that although rations are lowered instead of raised and war is with Eastasia instead of Eurasia, the records still show Big Brother's unchangingness. Changing written records to correct earlier

predictions and to reconcile past policies with present contradictory ones, Big Brother is the god of time and history. The past is destroyed, and those inconvenient persons who disagree with the state are not only killed, but become "unpersons," never having existed.

71. Clarke, Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984, p.182.
72. Raymond WILLIAMS, Orwell; Fontana/Collins, 1971; pp.78-81.
73. Wells seems to conclude in this projection that even the most well-intentioned, humane schemes of government are liable to become oppressive and pernicious.
(See also 75, below.)
74. To be discussed at length in Chapter Four.
75. Mark R. HILLEGAS, The Future as Nightmare: H.G.Wells and the Anti-utopians; Oxford University Press, New York, 1967; p.159.
76. The scenario of Player Piano is, in this and other important respects, strikingly similar to that Wells uses in When the Sleeper Wakes. Graham, the turn-of-the-century Socialist thinker in whose name a council of twelve men rule the world in 2100, awakes from a trance into which he slipped in 1897 to discover his expectations tragically disappointed, as Mark R. Hillegas describes:

Instead, (Graham) finds that history has taken a much different course than Socialists like himself had expected. Because of "the moral decay that had followed the collapse of supernatural religion," the "decline of public honour and the ascendancy of wealth, it had been a natural evolution of affairs during the period 1900-2100 for political power to fall into the hands of the small group of extremely able 'bosses' who, in Graham's name, literally own the world and are so secure in their control that they have even thrown off the pretence of democracy and rule ruthlessly with the help of such enforcement agencies as the Labour Police.

The Future as Nightmare, p.42.

77. Harold L. BERGER, Science Fiction and the New Dark Age; The Popular Press, Bowling Green University, Ohio, 1976; p.17.

CHAPTER FOUR

'Screams of Horror?': The Intemperate Moral Climate of the Brave New World

In some of the books discussed in this chapter one perceives a sense of gloomy disquiet about the future of religion; in others, the issue is rather one of concern about an ethical code cited as its replacement, and (as much after Huxley's Brave New World as anything by Mary Shelley or Wells) the worth and validity of the new norms. Bearing in mind the reservations of orthodox moralists like Alfred Noyes (whose novel The Last Man is discussed below) who reject the idea of moral relativism, the central problem could be stated as 'a modern popular disaffection with, or loss of faith in traditional mores which derive their standing and influence from a time-honoured religious provenance.' J. Norman King, noting that 'Man's current existential orientation is focused upon the future,' has provided an explanation:

...one of the central theological problems of recent years has arisen because we no longer share the language and thought-forms of that earlier culture which elaborated its beliefs and values over a period of centuries. These convictions strike us today not as false but as unreal, as unconnected with our everyday life and experience. If they are to retain any living meaning for us, they must be translated into concepts and words which speak to our experience; that is to say, which reflect our new orientation. ...theology and science fiction meet in this concern for the future and, through it, in the consideration of the ultimate issues of life and its meaning.

1.

Some of the novels, then, are vehicles for quite explicit authorial homilies on what new moral codes characterised by expediency and social utility might mean. Others introduced here will offer speculative explanations as to why religious morality is so often a target for scornful, dismissive criticism when it is seen in the light of an

emphatically materialistic society. Morality besieged by materialism is a central theme of some of these novels, and in others, morality under seige has long since succumbed to expediency and hedonism. Yet, as Walter M. Miller's marvellous novel A Canticle for Leibowitz suggests, the Philosophia perennia of Christian humanism will always have advocates.

Behind the entertaining futuristic trappings of these science fiction stories there is evidently some genuine concern about the consequences for religious moral precepts of the sweeping social change characteristic of technological societies. With the exception of Walden Two the novels are imaginative tracts against moral expediency and the domination of the interests of the individual by those of technology and materialism centralised as state policy.

In the early 1960's a public argument arose between two leading advocates of different opinions about the standing and importance of science in the modern world. It was C.P. Snow, physicist and author, who, in his 1959 Rede Lecture(2), revived a controversy which had long been occupying authors of science fiction (3). Snow argued that science was of far greater benefit to mankind than the aesthetic culture (the world of the traditional humanities encompassing art, literature and history, music and philosophy) acknowledges, and that a selective blindness prevailed which contributed to the divide which he alleged lay between them and the 'culture'(4) for which he believed he was speaking. This divide was abysmal, he alleged, because both factions were blind to the merits of the other.

Snow contends that the aesthetic culture is decadent, remote, self-regarding, and surviving on an anachronistic repute to which it is no longer entitled. For him its literary spokesmen are 'natural

Luddites' as unable to grasp the import and promise of the contemporary scientific revolution as their predecessors had been unable to comprehend the Industrial Revolution. He continues in what he clearly thought was an humanitarian vein, though the unalloyed scientific materialism of his proposals betrays their simple positivism.

Evidently stung by the smug, even arrogant tone of Snow's polemic, F.R. Leavis counter-attacked in his Richmond Lecture(5). But as James Gunn notes, for all its rancour and ferocity their exchange was not unprecedented: 'The Snow-Leavis debate was virtually identical with a similar disagreement in the 1880's between T.H. Huxley and Matthew Arnold and in the second decade of the twentieth century between Wells and James.'(6) The 'Two Cultures' wrangle is perhaps most significant in that it shows that the central problem of the standing of science in relation to the rest of the modern world still seems intractable. Gunn traces the origin of the crisis of confidence in science to the mid nineteenth century ('somewhere between the Industrial Revolution and World War I'(7).

Leavis is assiduous in countering his opponent; not content with merely debunking Snow's tendentious promotion of 'the scientific revolution' and what he had depicted as its culture, Leavis launched a blistering personal attack upon Snow, the 'spiritual son of Wells'. In answer to his central question - 'Who will assert that the average member of a modern society is more fully human or more alive, than a Bushman, an Indian peasant, or a member of one of those poignantly surviving primitive peoples, with their marvellous art and skills and vital intelligence?' - one could cite the programme (from Player Piano, 1952) of Vonnegut's subversives as testimony supporting Leavis's contention that, contrary to appearances, the life of urban

man is no more rewarding than that of a tribesman. The 'Ghost Shirt Society' have dedicated themselves to the restoration of humane values in a technocratic America of the near future which has succumbed to its own appetites and drifted into oppressive decadence:

"Again, let me say we are all in this together, but the rest of us, for what we perceive as good, plain reasons, have changed our minds about the divine right of machines, efficiency, and organization...

"During the past three wars, the right of technology to increase in power and scope was unquestionably, in point of national survival, almost a divine right. Americans owe their lives to superior machines, techniques, organization, and managers and engineers. For these means of surviving the wars, the Ghost Shirt Society and I thank God. But we cannot win good lives for ourselves in peacetime by the same methods we used to win battles in wartime. The problems of peace are altogether more subtle.

.....
"I hold, and the members of the Ghost Shirt Society hold:
"That there must be virtue in imperfection, for Man is imperfect, and Man is a creation of God.

"That there must be virtue in frailty, for Man is frail, and Man is a creation of God.

"That there must be virtue in brilliance followed by stupidity, for Man is alternately brilliant and stupid, and Man is a creation of God.

Player Piano, pp.254 & 255 (abridged).

This does presuppose that God exists, but look what follows from it: that Man is not perfectible, scientifically or otherwise. It is obviously a conventionally pious line of reasoning, as those who wrote it acknowledge - albeit almost by default, ironically:

"You perhaps disagree with the antique and vain notion of Mans' being a creation of God.

"But I find it a far more defensible belief than the one implicit in intemperate faith in lawless technological progress - namely, that man is on earth to create more durable and efficient images of himself, and hence, to eliminate any justification at all for his own continued existence.

Ibid.

The inference might be that our state of futile ignorance predicates faith in God. One suspects Leavis would reject the stalemate which Vonnegut mockingly contrives in Player Piano, for as his closing

affirmation in a humane future makes clear, he is too astute to permit his views to be dismissed as reactionary: 'But I will come to the explicit positive note that has all along been my goal (for I am not a Luddite) in this way: the advance of science and technology means a future of change so rapid and of such kinds, of tests and challenges so unprecedented, of decisions and possible non-decisions so momentous and insidious in their consequences, that mankind - this is surely clear - will need to be in full intelligent possession of its full humanity.' Nor should we overlook his forthright rejection of merely conventional wisdom, 'I haven't chosen to say that mankind will need all its traditional wisdom; that might suggest a kind of conservatism that, so far as I am concerned, is the enemy.'

Undoubtedly Snow makes himself an easy target for Leavis; and while their debate may be less than compelling and, however provocatively conducted, less than thought-provoking, even Leavis's thundering excoriation cannot quite obscure the significance of Snow's allegation that there has always been a prevailing, growing crisis in Western values - the inevitable result of the struggle for ascendancy of the two cultural factions he has identified.

This chapter will suggest the main features of the traditional, religious morality which Wells, Stapledon, Clarke et al. have confronted in some of the genre's most highly-regarded novels, by reviewing some equally notable novels by authors whose promotion of religious morality is unmistakable. Not surprisingly, then, there is another variety of science fiction which shows (often polemically) that not everyone is convinced of the virtues of reason over faith, however strongly others may advocate secular rationalism. Indeed, the leading question for this chapter could be put as follows: If

'Progress' can bring genuine improvements to the material circumstances of life, why are some moralists so unhappy about it? A striking characteristic which appears repeatedly in their tales (both by allusion and explicitly) is the Scriptural story of the Fall, which is customarily used to convey a ritual prohibition against 'ophidian rationalism' and hubristic aspiration.

While there are those who would argue that all these authors are regaling us with a hoary tale of only allegorical significance, it is important to realize that for many of them these writings are testaments of their personal faith and convictions. Additionally, to try to strike a balance, arguments from sceptical authors who have a professed antipathy for conventional morals will be adduced. For all their relative obscurity, the two texts chosen to begin this discussion do present very plainly one central assumption shared by all these writers: ethics and religious beliefs are intimately associated. They also show that the alarm had been given by moralistic science fiction writers long before Leavis took on Snow.

The Devout Tradition and the Philosophia Perennia.

In 1859(8) a rather unusual volume was published in London which purported to be an eye-witness account of the end of the world. This odd little novel, A Dream of the Day that must come (Anon.; attributed Mrs. Penny), was not just one more vehicle for the much more popular fictional speculations about the next European war, but was in fact a late, hybridised example of a species of fiction which described fin-du-monde through the eyes of the last survivor. Mary Shelley, for instance, had herself written such a story, The Last Man, seventeen years before in 1826, some eight years after Frankenstein

had met with its phenomenal success. Yet while Mrs. Penny's slim novel concludes in that vein, it begins very differently. Cast as a dream projection, yet insisting on its reality and thus falling very awkwardly between the two generic poles, fantasy and realism(9), it is in many ways a contemporary version of Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress(10). Like Bunyan's story, A Dream is both allegorical and imaginative, but where Bunyan's narrative skills are well able to convey the intensity and scope of his vision, those of Mrs. Penny were often overwhelmed.

This novel is nevertheless of interest and relevance to the present discussion of attitudes to morality and religion, particularly because the authoress makes her own position as a committed Christian so explicit (albeit through the medium of her male narrator); and because her principal theme is that of the modern decline in morality. The world Mrs. Penny depicts - her contemporary world - is one seemingly in the grip of a logical positivism drawing its values and vigour from scientific innovation, which she alleges is change at its most disruptive(11). Progress has worked visible changes upon the landscape, and wrought even more telling ones within the human sensibility:

As we approached London, but still at the supposed distance of about twenty miles, I could not help observing to my fellow-travellers, how much the face of the country had changed, since I had been that way. Mansions and villas and manufactories were seen on every side. An intelligent looking man, who sat opposite me, agreed that these indications of national opulence were indeed remarkable, but that if I had not visited London for some time I should be much more surprised with what I should see there: that there the proofs of the rapid progress of national wealth and power were everywhere conspicuous, and so many objects of taste and magnificence in all that related to architectural embellishment, and indeed in all the arts and refinements of social life, that it seemed impossible to carry them to a higher pitch of excellence. "And it would be well" added

an elderly gentleman by his side "if the same spirit of improvement had extended to the moral as well as to the physical condition of the people. But what a contrast! As we have advanced in luxury, we have receded in everything belonging to religion and morals."

A Dream, pp.2-3.

Mrs. Penny casts her narrator as a provincial family man whose reluctant journey to London is the means whereby she can establish at the outset of her story certain premises: that society is susceptible to accelerating change; that the religious commitment of humankind is inconstant and readily corrupted by worldliness and materialism; and that the morality of mankind is linked profoundly with religious conviction, especially Christian faith. These are the very concerns and associations which turn up again and again in the religious science fiction of Lewis, Blish, Miller et al, her modern successors.

Though the narrator is impressed by the quality of the fine new buildings he sees everywhere - again the benefits of Progress are at least implicitly acknowledged - he is struck by the absence of any new ecclesiastical buildings: 'All indeed for some purpose of social luxury, and all gorgeous, but not one apparently for religion. There were indeed a few old churches, but they wore a melancholy and dilapidated appearance, and seemed...as though they belonged to some by-gone superstition.'(12). The ubiquitous modernism is materialistic; he has already heard that this decline in the fabric of churches has been matched by a decay in religious belief and practices (so much so that St.Paul's Cathedral - except for its chapel - has become a commercial exchange). This prospect arouses in the worthy narrator these bitter reflections on the low esteem presently accorded religion:

This corresponded with the observation which had been made on my journey as to the fallen state of religion. The church, as a national institution had, it seemed,

been long since set aside by Act of Parliament, and the voluntary principle introduced in order to revive religion. But the measure did not seem to answer; a regard for religious observances, and afterwards for religious doctrines, and then for moral obligations of every kind, had gradually decreased: infidelity was the fashion of the day; religion was laughed at, and barely tolerated.

A Dream, p.6.

However Mrs. Penny's aversion is not restricted to the decay in orthodox religious observance, as the ironic consultation between her narrator and his urbane lawyer reveals. An appointment with this solicitor has been the reason for the narrator's journey; and the worthy provincial is aghast at the lawyer's professional cynicism and his lack of moral scruples. "But truth, Mr.S., and integrity?" (he asks in naive amazement) "Bah!" retorted the hopeful disciple of the new school of law and ethics, "what is the use of truth or integrity in these days? Depend upon it, honest dealing can never be a match for knavery, least of all at this time, when nobody in their senses thinks of making any further pretension to virtue than may serve their private ends - as a cloak to conceal their real purpose, namely, to take advantage of those they deal with." The visitor feels compelled to question the propriety of this glib avowal of purely utilitarian principles:

"But is this right? Does it justify you or me in departing from the path of honour and religion?"

"It is expedient" rejoined my legal adviser, "and it is fair, for all act upon the same principle, and all expect it."

"Mr.S.," I replied, "until now I took you for an honest man."

A Dream, pp.7-8.

Mrs.Penny asserts that in this "dream-time" London, this contemporary Babylon, 'truth and integrity' are as old-fashioned as the Christian ethics which incorporated these qualities. Her pious traveller is so horrified by the cynicism and professional duplicity of 'Mr.S.' that

he decides to take his brief elsewhere. Ironically, the expeditious lifestyles of the hedonists and materialists is to endure for only a while longer, and soon after leaving the glib lawyer's office the narrator is an incredulous witness of the first hint of an approaching cataclysm. As he stands looking out over this unnerving new London 'lost in meditation at the progress of luxury contrasted with the decline of religion,' he is aghast to hear a trumpet pealing from the heavens - a 'fearful portent' to a 'guilty world,' as he immediately construes this astounding event. He at once sets out for home, to find there the twin consolations of the company of a devout wife and family and of prayer.

His story continues with a second phase of dreaming in which he is to witness the failure of mundane science to explain or control the progress of a dense black cloud which advances inexorably throughout these last days of Man's stewardship of the world. While this second section of narrative is principally taken up with Mrs. Penny's visions of the frantic preparations to flee from the cloud, she takes the opportunity to scorn a last folly before the narrative is wholly given over to matters spiritual. Significantly, the object of her censure is science.

In what is clearly an instrumental opposition, the narrator carefully relates the futile efforts of scientists in the face of this supernatural disaster, even when this means that the author must contrive obviously the circumstances wherein he gains such a privileged insight into their ostensibly private thoughts and misgivings. For Mrs. Penny, discrediting human science is undoubtedly a central concern, one which over-rules her commitment to narrative realism.

The immediate aftermath of the strange trumpet blasts from the heavens is dominated by the attempts of rationalists to account for the phenomena. London is alive with speculation and theories, and, in an authentically modernistic touch, the narrator reports that the most common recourse is to the men of science rather than to the clergy: 'All were anxious to learn what others thought and felt, and especially what were the opinions of those who were most in esteem as men of science and talent.' Yet Mrs. Penny depicts the scientists as deceitful, vain figures ('these sagacious persons') whose unwillingness to acknowledge publicly their private confusion and alarm means that many trusted with informing the public 'persevered in a peevish resistance of the truth' rather than emulating those few journalists who, turning once more to religion, 'resolved to make all reparations in their power by warning men of the wrath to come':

But in truth these sagacious persons were more perplexed than others. The night was passed by most of them in sleepless anxiety to explain by the operation of natural causes an undeniable fact so much out of the usual course of nature. Their conjectures and speculations, which savoured more of the feverish excitement of their minds than of philosophical penetration, were speedily spread abroad by some newspapers which, in consequence of the importunity of the populace, were issued at a late hour in the morning and eagerly bought up. The columns of these newspapers were filled with details of the singular event which had engrossed public attention. A few writers who had before shewn no favor to religion, at once acknowledged their error, and even resolved to make all the reparations in their power by warning men of the wrath to come. Others, however, persevered in a peevish resistance of the truth; they eagerly seized and exhibited the crude and impossible theories of scientific men. The favorite hypothesis was built on the possibility of sound being carried from a great distance, perhaps from the moon, and falling on the ears of the inhabitants of this country in the manner experienced.

A Dream, pp.23-24.

Whatever the shortcomings of her own insights into the extent of contemporary scientific knowledge, Mrs. Penny further pursues her goal of

discrediting the scientists whose influence she so clearly mistrusts - and resents, for there is a merely implicit acknowledgement of science as beneficial or constructive. Mrs. Penny's scientists are no Sarrasins, whose good character is proclaimed by their author; in her eyes, their humanism is materialistic, godless and amoral, irreligious and hedonistic. Having characterised them, and the journalists who disseminate their conclusions to the public at large, more or less as scriptural false prophets, she ends by representing their efforts to investigate the enigmatic black cloud as being either fatally foolhardy, or completely fruitless:

As I walked slowly along the terrace I overheard relations of many extraordinary scenes which the bystanders had witnessed. A body of scientific men still had the hardihood to maintain that the dark vapour was the product of a very singular combination of natural phenomena.

An enormous wreath of volcanic smoke, replete with fine and light ashes was said to be the cause of the darkness. In the daytime it advanced, because the particles were intermixed with vapour, and being rarified were thus carried forward by a light breeze in the upper strata of the atmosphere; but at night, the cloud being more dense, it diminished in altitude, and was not moved by the breeze. So convinced were some of the truth of their hypothesis, that they offered to form a party which should enter the cloud, and make such observations as would settle the point. The speaker had witnessed this rash attempt. As no horses would move in the direction of the cloud, the experiment was tried on the northern railroad: one carriage was filled with the philosophical party, and others followed which were to be detached when they came nearer the cloud. The leading carriage, after being separated from the rest, was to proceed alone at a slow rate. But after a short time, from some unknown causes the speed was accelerated, the men at the engine seemed to have lost all command over the machinery, the whole party were hurled forward and in a few minutes were lost in the darkness, from which, of course, none returned.

A balloon had also ascended with three or four bold adventurers above the height of the cloud, and then descended safe. They reported that the darkness seemed to spread many miles, and beyond it there appeared smoke of a dark ruddy colour which extended as far as the eye could reach. They could discover nothing further.

A Dream, pp.45-46.

With this symbolic humiliation of the scientific establishment a veritable turning point in the novel is reached; science and its adherents are seemingly of no further significance, and the authoress's primary concern becomes the metaphysical pilgrimage of her narrator - a quest for redemption rather than knowledge, demanding self-abasement and mortification rather than self-assertion and endeavour.

(13)

If in Mrs. Penny's outlook the scientist is ultimately a far less threatening figure than Frankenstein (whose power-fantasies of being the creator of a super-race dedicated solely to him were no less pernicious, or selfless, than Faustus's profane appetites), the science fiction of the present century abounds with much more terrifyingly mad scientists. Alfred Noyes's Mardok is a prime example - his amoral ruthlessness and egotism cannot exceed that of a Moreau or John Wainwright, of course, but his author has endowed him with a prolific, purely malign inventiveness. The sheer topicality of the threat his kind are held to represent exploits another, thoroughly modern dimension of terror which even now exercises its uniquely disquieting influence couched in Newspeak terms like 'overkill' and 'mutually assured destruction'. As J.O. Bailey reflected soberly in 1947, 'Manpower and military strategy decided old-fashioned wars; machines and industry decided recent ones. Science will decide the outcome of any wars from now until the blackout. It may be blackout, because the latest weapon of science is the fundamental discreative force of the universe.' (14)

Alfred Noyes's tale of a scientific apocalypse, The Last Man (15), was published in 1940 at the height of a global conflict which saw the general use of weapons with a scientifically-refined capacity for

destruction, and, with the advent of the atomic bomb, the debut of one with an unsurpassed efficiency. Noyes's sardonic discussion of the state of the contemporary world, in which he takes a side-swipe at both the odious, simplistic tenets of the 'social darwinism' espoused by the extreme right, and the sophisticated cynicism, capriciousness and moral inconstancy of the avant garde, might even suggest that the intervening century saw the fulfillment of Mrs. Penny's worst fears about moral decline:

For over a hundred years, the leading nations had been discovering more and more deadly poison-gases, more and more subtle ways of disseminating disease-germs among their rivals, with a view to the survival of the fittest. The naive question - "fittest for what?" - was no longer asked by intelligent men and women. In the meantime, the mind and spirit of the whole race had been profoundly affected by the great discovery that the old distinction between right and wrong had no absolute foundations, as the more unsophisticated followers of outworn creeds had supposed; and that, in the eyes of the intelligentsia, right and wrong had long been regarded as entirely "relative". Indeed, for a large section of modern art and literature, in which the souls of nations are supposed to express themselves, the absolute imperatives of the moral law had become merely "public conveniences".

The Last Man, p.6.

Although there are very significant narrative differences, Noyes and Mrs. Penny do share certain themes and issues. The wartime moralist is no less a devout or committed Christian than his Victorian predecessor; like her, he believes that there are 'absolute imperatives of the moral law'. These undoubtedly help to shape both novels, for both writers begin by including a description of what they believe are the very visible symptoms of a general decline in moral standards. Both novels are characterised by a quite discursive mis-en-scene in which the author's point-of-view intrudes fairly frequently. Even more apparent, though, is a shared distrust - indeed, disdain - for the professional scientists of their day.

Noyes refuses to absolve from the inventors of the weaponry the opprobrium earned by Grumkow, the Hitlerian leader who unleashes the Satanic device which virtually destroys the human race. Not yet the faceless man the scientist will become in later science fiction, Noyes credits Professor Hammerstein of Bonn with the actual discovery of the '(immensely serviceable and curiously symbolical) all-pervasive aethereal wave which would instantaneously stop - not the engines of motor-cars and aeroplanes - but the beating of the human heart.' His fullest contempt, however, is reserved for Professor Muck:

Professor Muck, who had been Professor Hammerstein's chief laboratory assistant, had surreptitiously copied the records of his invention, and sold them separately to agents of the British, French, Italian, American, Soviet, Turkish, Japanese and Chinese Governments, at a thousand marks a time.

It was a small sum for a secret so important; but Professor Muck was a modest little man, and a great admirer of the English poet, Wordsworth, whom he often quoted in praise of "plain living and high thinking". His only other pleasure was angling, which is not an expensive sport.

The result was that all the combatants, in all parts of the world, possessed a secret weapon so formidable that, to do them justice, most of them would have shrunk in horror from using it, except - and this was the fatal reservation - except in the last resort.

The Last Man, p.9.

Having thus established the nature of the threat and its source, Noyes goes on to attribute even the dictator's fatal decision to carry out this ultimate threat, to the logical precepts of science: 'To the protagonist on this occasion the "last resort" was merely the correct and perfect application of science. It was the highest kind of "Real-politik" to wipe out your enemies as completely as you would wipe out a hornet's nest. As soon as hostilities began, therefore, Herr Grumkow decided to use the formidable means at his disposal.'

(p.10) I.F.Clarke has claimed for Noyes a notorious accolade; his is 'the doubtful distinction of having written the first account of

instant warfare in the history of this literature' (16). Clarke then identifies a central theme of Noyes's story, which, in the context of the present discussion, is worth exploring in more detail:

In contrast to the many solutions put forward by authors of imaginary wars, in Noyes's view there can be no easy solution to the spiritual problem at the heart of war and political folly. A ban on bombing planes, the control of machinery, even a return to a state of nature have nothing to do with the problem. Man has to reform himself from within according to the ideal pattern of Christianity.

'The most tragic thing of all', he writes, 'was that the complete answer to all those tragic disputations and conflicts was there all the time in the philosophia perennia of Christendom.'

Ibid.

With the second chapter, the novel becomes the story of the experiences of Mark Adams as he searches for fellow survivors. He owes his own preservation to having been held prisoner in an enemy submarine when the lethal wave was simultaneously unleashed by a number of the opposing powers. Though the foreign crew were killed when they left their vessel, Adams was unable to escape his bonds for a time and so did not fall victim to the ultimate weapon. The eponymous Adams wanders alone through a dead England, piecing together the story of the tragic event by gleaning details from a variety of sources, many of which carry the poignant message, OUR CONSCIENCES ARE CLEAR, the ironic refrain of the third chapter. As Mark makes his way, Noyes castigates politicians, aristocrats and celebrities, further reinforcing his opening depiction of a decadent society. While the author's compassion for the millions of ordinary dead whose chalky rather than corrupting corpses litter the streets where Mark passes seems rather perfunctory, Noyes cannot resist wringing the withers over the deaths of a few celebrated, moral men like the Prime Minister or the dead physician whose frozen features reflect a highly principled - and conservative - humanism, which for

Noyes is the only acceptable face of science:

In another (room) the wondering faces of children looked up with a peaked and curiously old wisdom and truthfulness into the compassionate face of the physician. Wherever he looked, Mark saw here, or thought he saw, an integrity of mind and will that might have gone far towards the redemption of the race. In the very nature of things, a good doctor had no use for lying reports (physical, intellectual or political). He could not play modernistic monkey-tricks with his cases. There was no room for Dadaism in diagnosis, or Gagaism in treatment. Nor would the most "advanced" of his patients have been anxious for surrealist methods in surgery to be practised by a "sub-conscious" mind on his own body. Law, the lamp of knowledge and absolute precision, were the creed here, if nowhere else. It was apparent in the fine intellectual values, the look of self-control and keen efficiency, the firm lines of character, in face after face among the healers.

The Last Man, p.49.

Noyes's depiction of this august physician contrasts sharply with his presentation of the leading lights of the 'Unity Movement', whom Mark encounters next. As their minutes reveal, the Executive Committee had apparently been debating the current crisis when events overtook their well-intentioned deliberations. Here Noyes seems to give way to his compulsion to castigate. His satire at the expense of several obvious celebrities (including Wells, by association, and George Bernard Shaw!, by caricature; both of whom were - before fascism enacted a terrible realisation - to a greater or lesser extent intrigued by the Übermensch philosophy of Nietzsche so loathed by Noyes) deteriorates into heavy-handed facetiousness. The 'movement' seemingly cannot agree upon anything, even a name. Noyes's own opinions are conveyed authoritatively in the form of the sage comment of a Roman Catholic Cardinal whose letter had been under discussion:

2. A definite belief (as I call it) or dogma (as you call it) is essential to any serious movement, secular or religious, for the betterment of the world.

3. A definite belief, no matter how small, necessarily rules out everything (no matter how big) which is in direct contradiction to it.

The Last Man, p.50.

Quite against the run of Noyes's argument, the discussion of the group (however muddled, contradictory and ridiculous Noyes has tried to make them look) seems more constructive than the parched prescriptions and definitiveness of the prelate, for they are at least prepared to scrutinize their own assumptions as readily as they criticize opinions they reject. Using extracts from their minutes, Noyes readily identifies the group's majority progressive humanism with scientism, atheism and materialism:

According to the minutes one opponent had replied that he could see nothing very spiritual about the bombs of the I.R.A. and that, in any case, he was a materialist and did not believe in the existence of spirits at all. The sharp-nosed spinster... had apparently supported this. She had pointed out that "Wells, long ago, had shown the astronomical inadequacy of a 'Friend for little children, above the bright blue sky.' Surely," she had appealed, "we can't go back to that!"

A thoughtful little man had replied that these considerations were hardly relevant to the scientific conclusions of Christian writers like Harnack, and that Origen, nearly two thousand years ago, had--

At this point, for some reason, the atheist had ejaculated Pshaw! in a tone that had led to a general squabble about manners, and the writer of the minutes had lost himself in the battle. The Last Man, p.51

Here Noyes also suggests the modernistic proliferation of philosophies, and alleged moral confusion, which his belief in constant moral precepts avoids. The ideas he supports are presumably open to the criticism of being old-fashioned; indeed he has gone on the offensive with a will, trying to show the disarray and inconclusiveness of new-fangled ideas. He does, however, show himself informed enough about certain aspects of them to be able to send them up, however fatuously; and he has by no means finished his attack on modernism(17).

Nonetheless, Noyes has as it were painted himself into a corner because these ideas and debates belong to the world now ostensibly dead, and consequently of little further interest. Likewise, his story of *The Last Man* has reached a point where all the obvious narrative prospects have been exhausted, other than in following his survivor's experiences to the end of his celibate, lonely days. Accordingly, Noyes broadens the scope of his tale by introducing a fellow-survivor, *The Last Woman*, and when their romance is well established, *The Last Villain*, Mardok.

As we have seen, Noyes has, in the shape of Hammerstein and Muck, already identified science and the scientist as the real threat, rather than materialism in the abstract. Once Mark has left England, we are introduced by degrees to Mardok, who is a personification of the potent evil of scientific materialism. Noyes has postulated that the two world-views represented at the Unity Movement meeting by the secular opinions of the Committee members and the prelate's letter ('A definite belief...necessarily rules out everything which is in direct contradiction to it.') are mutually exclusive. The young couple's struggle with Mardok is an explicit dramatization of the conflict between these ideologies. Of course, Noyes has nothing good to say about Mardok, who is portrayed as a quintessential (and for me, quite unconvincing) villain. Mardok is a caricature of a Neitzchean superman, full of an egotistical and obsessive will-to-power, a scientist who pursues his malicious ends in a moral vacuum devoid of 'standards':

Mardok might be frightening as a gangster might be frightening to a helpless victim. He was incalculable, not because of the genius which Antonelli attributed to him, but because he had no standards. Power was in his hands, and he was unfit to use it. He had the explosive energy of an epileptic, and it was mistaken for strength, just as the

fixity of his ideas was mistaken for strength of will and purpose. Their force was derived from the narrowness of the mental channels in which they ran, and this narrowness was, in some ways, the most frightening thing of all.

The Last Man, p.128.

In Chapter XVII Mark finally catches up with the elusive "E" he has pursued from Paris to Rome since finding her purse in the Louvre, and learns from her that she has survived because Mardok, who had anticipated the disaster, invited her (through Signor Antonelli) to accompany him on a trip to the sea-bed in his unique diving-bell. As Evelyn reveals to Mark, this comic-book scientific bogey-man turns out to have a lust for power no less enormous than Frankenstein's obsessive compulsion to be as God to a new race of Übermenschen, but all his plans depend on his ability to compel her participation. Evelyn has been established by Noyes as a rather high-minded young American who responds to Mardok's predictable overtures with an equally predictable revulsion:

Signor Antonelli had warned her that this remarkable personage disliked and did not understand women. In other circumstances, if Mardok had merely praised her sense of humour she might have been flattered; but to tell her that he wanted her for his mistress because she amused him would have been altogether too Oriental in taste for a young American. In the horrible circumstances it was an atrocity. Moreover, he went on to explain that her health and excellent physique would be invaluable factors in the founding of his dynasty. Their descendants would be super-men and super-women; and, though their development would be fostered by scientific means, it was essential that they should spring from a sound mother. Cold-blooded as he seemed in his ophidian rationalism, his eyes riveted her attention as a snake is said to hold its prey spellbound; and then, with a strange passion, he began to paint the age to come as he saw it. It was to be a world from which the soul had vanished. Science and mechanism, in the hands of an autocrat, would solve all problems and control everything and everyone except the controller himself. But there were to be no more morals, or "taboos", as he called them; for science would replace the primitive inhibitions of conscience, and make it possible to enjoy many things which formerly were regarded as forbidden fruit. They would be gods, above good and evil. Religion would be abolished.

The Last Man, pp.131-132.

While neither Mardok nor this utterly contrived situation would disgrace a penny-dreadful, the anxieties about rationalism which have prompted Noyes to invent this scenario are genuine, and as we have already seen in Chapter 2, are shared by more proficient writers. In reviling Mardok's 'ophidian rationalism', Noyes deliberately associates the agent of Mankind's late disaster with the infernal architect of Mankind's Fall from Edenic Grace. Whatever its failings as literature, this episode in the novel shows that Mary Shelley's scientific Faustus, with his dreams of divine power, retains a strong appeal (even to so conservative a religious outlook as Noyes's), as a potent emblem of perverse human aspiration.

After Mardok is shown in what we are supposed to accept are his true colours by his sacrilegious destruction of the altar-light which Evelyn has faithfully tended in the little church at Ravello, he makes a successful attempt to kidnap her which ends in his own death. By now Mark and Evelyn have consecrated their love in a form of matrimony which then allows them to consummate their affection decorously. True to form, Mardok is unmoved by this sort of thing and takes Evelyn from her little church. She has left clues for Mark, however, and he tracks them. Meantime, she feeds Mardok's conceit with outrageous flatteries and tricks him into becoming trapped in the Blue Grotto of Capri. When Mark arrives, they escape together. Hot in pursuit, Mardok is killed by his own bad driving - retribution, no doubt. Ironically, though, having fled towards Assisi, they discover there a surviving community of the faithful who had been at Mass in the crypt chapel of San Francesco at the fatal hour.

With Mardok dead and the lovers re-united, Noyes provides an answer for his initial 'naive question' - "fittest for what?" (p.6) -

by admitting the possibility for a new world, the emergent city of God whose citizens are, in their humility, the inheritors of the earth. The Catholic inhabitants of this new world, providentially spared the fate of their less pious fellows, are fittest, in their godliness, for the orthodox role of divine worship. As Noyes has hinted earlier, his youthful hero and heroine are no second Adam or Eve:

"It's very odd, isn't it, that your name should be Evelyn."

"The second syllable saves it; but do you realize that I don't know yours at all?" she said.

"Mark Adams," he muttered, suddenly conscious, rather sheepishly, that this was odder still.

It was now her turn to laugh; but they made a duet of it. From that moment on, in fiction, they must inevitably have begun to call each other Adam and Eve. In this more veracious history, they merely called each other Mark and Evelyn.

The Last Man, pp.124-125.

Thus, Evelyn's moral fortitude in resisting Mardok, and Mark's conversion (due to her redemptive influence 18) are both rewarded by their inclusion in this new community of faith whose symbol, the Cross, epitomises for Noyes, in its mute eloquence and unique dignity, not only the antiquity of the philosophia perennia, but also its mystical complexity and abiding virtue:

It belonged to an order of reality higher than "brute nature", an order to which at one time the spirit of man was able to aspire. Its full meaning then was too deep and universal to be expressed physically in anything but a very simple and abrupt hieroglyph. It symbolized all the real values of Christendom - chivalry towards the weak, the dignity of womanhood, the broad stone of honour, the beauty of holiness, and the splendour of that justice whose eyes are unbandaged, and whose sword is laid before the mercy-seat of God. It symbolized not worldly success, or the petty triumphs of materialistic science, but a supernatural victory accomplished, even in defeat, by "the broken heart and the unbroken word."

In the neo-paganism of recent generations, all these things had gone....utterly out of fashion....

The Last Man, p.79.

Structurally, Noyes's novel is a farrago of didacticism, acclamation of faith, and romantic thriller after Buchan (if that is not to do Buchan too great a disservice). If it has any lasting value, it is as a testament to the peculiarly bigoted, highly conservative antagonism its author felt towards modernism. In the last analysis, Noyes meant to depict the exemplary morality of Adams and Eve as bringing about a triumph for the philosophia perennia over evil, which promises a new beginning for Mankind, a spiritual rebirth succeeding the materialistic and philosophic Enlightenment which eventually spawned all the vileness of the modern world.

Each in their different ways emblematic tales of virtue rewarded, both Mrs. Penny's Dream and Noyes's religiose novel indicate quite clearly that the science fiction can be adapted to convey a devout perspective as readily as it can be used to advocate rationalistic scepticism. In this study, the fiction of other writers whose moral discourse is similarly based upon Christian ethics will be related to what may be called - reflecting its doctrinal character - "the devout tradition". 'Prometheus' (19), a story by Philip Jose Farmer is a more recent example of fiction which continues this tradition; and being replete with Farmer's wit, it well illustrates how ingenious and entertaining this sort of science fiction can be, while yet remaining thought-provoking.

The story has a setting which the casual positivism of a host of modern science fiction story and screenplay writers has made commonplace. Farmer takes us into a future when Mankind has acquired the means of travelling across vast distances of space. There are galaxies to explore, and unknown species are encountered whose unfamiliar customs challenge our own notions of intelligence and

ethics. In inventing Feral and its aliens, the author proves to have had a pleasingly consistent way with the material he has drawn from such sciences as zoology, anthropology and archaeology. Moreover, he also has fielded two credible characters in the persons of Carmody and Holmyard, whose conversations present a kind of dialectic between faith and scientific scepticism.

The protagonist, John Carmody, is a monk-explorer who is on his way to a new posting when he is beset by a female horowitz who, to his utter discomfiture, lays an egg on his chest. These horowitzes are an alien race generally presumed to be without intelligence; the one which so inconveniences Carmody is in a zoo on Earth. Her action means that Carmody is now a reluctant surrogate father to her growing offspring because the egg has become attached to his chest by means of tendrils through which the embryonic creature draws its sustenance. Soon after, Carmody finds himself seconded to a scientific expedition led by Dr. Holmyard which is studying the ecology of Feral, the native planet of the horowitzes (so named after the man who first encountered them). Holmyard's audacious plan is to have Carmody disguise himself as a horowitz and join a group of the native creatures so that their behaviour and motivation can be more fully understood by the scientists. For all his misgivings, Carmody (who is stranded there, in any case, for several months until he can be rid of his 'baby') manages to become accepted into the group. What transpires astonishes both Carmody and Holmyard.

The horowitzes, large avian creatures whose wings have atrophied so that they have come to resemble the terrestrial ostrich, inhabit a planet without mammalian species. Feral's fauna are all derived from reptilian or avian primitive ancestors, and the anthropocentric human

explorers do not expect to find any intelligent species. However, as Carmody discovers, the horowitzes do use rudimentary tools and there is a distinct tribal hierarchy within the group he is studying. These alone are not adequate evidence of the creatures' intelligence, for terrestrial avian species exhibit similar traits, among them the "pecking order". More compelling is his discovery that not only do the horowitzes possess a limited ability to speak to one another, but they are also very rapid learners. Having unwittingly allowed a youngster to overhear a radio conversation with Holmyard, he is staggered to find that the young horowitz, Tutu, has picked up a few words of English. He begins to coach Tutu and a few of her fellows in very basic English, and a means of communication is thus quickly established thanks to the creatures' remarkable capacity for learning. But Carmody is tiring, and, feeling increasingly out of his depth, requests permission from his Catholic superiors to leave, which they refuse to grant. The same message includes further interdicts:

"They inform me that I must live up to my contract and cannot leave here until the egg is hatched. But the day my contract expires, I must leave. And, furthermore, I am not to give the horowitzes any religious instruction at all. They must find out for themselves. Or rather, they must have their peculiar revelation."

Other Worlds, Other Gods, p.144.

The monk has already taught Tutu and the other young horowitzes some basic technological skills and mathematics; his request to be allowed to confer upon them the rudiments of religious belief and ethics is prompted by his awareness that his aid to the horowitzes has raised profound issues with which, in his humility, he feels ill-equipped to cope ("I'm confronted with the theological question the Church raised some centuries before interstellar travel became possible," he tells Holmyard, "At what moment did the ape become a man? At what

moment did the ape possess a soul..."). On the other hand, Holmyard the scientist (while acting as a sort of materialistic 'devil's advocate'), supports Carmody's general endeavour of educating the horowitzes, which the monk has now decided to continue. He wishes to lead the group to a distant area possessing natural resources like iron ore, so that the horowitzes can make better use of the knowledge of fire he has conferred on them. He hopes that they will then be able to produce more efficient tools and thereby provide for a much larger community.

Carmody's long-term aim is to stabilize the population growth of the group so that they no longer have to eat the eggs of the unborn young in those times of dearth which are a consequence of their nomadic dependence on a highly variable source of food. This anthropophagic recourse of the horowitzes' strikes a horrified Carmody as an extreme form of birth control, but it is less easy to get the aliens to move than he at first imagines. In the end, he has to resort to two drastic measures to induce them leave the small settlement with its stockade and planted crops which they have laboriously constructed under his guidance. He has to force the issue by taking on the role of leader and disturbing their social structure, one which he has been at pains to preserve in view of his intention to leave. When even this proves to have been pointless, he decides on an even more radical course of action. At his request, the expedition's vessel destroys the settlement's stockade and crops with its rocket exhaust, and this demonstration of his ability to enlist the aid of apparent demons persuades the horowitzes to obey him. However, as Holmyard points out, the act possesses potentially far-reaching consequences:

"You have thrown the fear of God into them," said Holmyard.

"Now, Doc," said Carmody, "You're not suggesting that they think I am God. If I really believed that, I'd dis-abuse them."

"No, but they believe you're his representative. And maybe a demigod."

Other Worlds, Other Gods, p.152.

As Carmody discovers on his return, Holmyard's prediction was not far wide of the mark, for the horowitzes now treat him with a fearful, distanced respect. He responds by trying to teach them as much science as he can, a group of scribes noting down what he dictates. He describes to them the fundamentals of chemistry, physics and electrical principles, biology, and even automotive engineering, and all with diagrams. Yet while before he was able to convince himself quite easily that the know-how he was giving them would not be misapplied, now he is sure that, in the absence of any kind of ethical guide, the information he is conveying to them might easily be put to destructive uses. At another of his meetings with the expedition leader, Carmody voices these misgivings which, he acknowledges, are about the future spiritual development of the aliens:

"But what bothers me most of all is that though I've done my best to give them all I can to enable them to deal with the material universe, I've done scarcely anything to give them an ethics. And that is what I should be most concerned with."

"Let them work out their own."

"I don't want to do that. Look at the many wrong, yes evil avenues they could take."

"They will take the wrong ones, anyway."

"Yes, but they will have a right one which they can take if they wish."

Other Worlds, Other Gods, p.154

However much he might like to take Holmyard at his words, ("Do something about it") Carmody has his superiors' prohibition to obey. Furthermore, time is now running out, for his contract to the expedition terminates in one month (a fortnight after he is due to "give birth")

and then he must leave, perhaps having failed to lead the horowitzes to that 'Promised Land' of the valley with the iron ore.

In these last weeks of his stay on Feral, however, two important developments take place. The first is that when the chick Carmody has been sustaining does hatch, it has blue eyes rather than the brown eyes characteristic to individuals in Tutu's group. Although Carmody himself knows that the youngster's blue eyes have a different cause than that to which Tutu delightedly attributes them ("But him have eyes just like you eyes. You make him blue eyes so us know him you son?"), he doesn't trouble to refute it despite being surprised himself by this peculiarly symbolic legacy.

Carmody sees the second development as much more significant. The night before he is due to leave Feral, the group are resting near the valley to which he has guided them. Having slept for a time, he is awakened by a very distressed Tutu who relates this dream to him:

"Me father come to me, and him wake me up! Him say, 'Tutu, you wonder where us horowitzes go after death! Me know, because me go to the land of beyond death. It is a beautiful land; you no cry because John must leave. Some day, you see him here. Me allowed to come see you and tell you. And you must tell John that us horowitzes like mans. Us have souls, us no just die and become dirt and never see each other again.'" Other Worlds, Other Gods, p.157.

In this dream, perhaps the "peculiar revelation" Carmody had hoped would come to the horowitzes, there is that most profoundly moving of all prophecies, the promise of life eternal after death. Tutu insists that the experience was not a dream, but a waking vision. Furthermore, Carmody knows that he has scrupulously avoided passing on to the horowitz anything remotely suggestive of mystical beliefs such as those she has described innocently to him. This incident seems to him quite conclusive, and the monk decides - whatever his superiors have already said about it - to leave the horowitzes a parting legacy. He

assembles them in the valley which will be their new environment and before the starship arrives to take him aboard, he instructs them in the most sacred ritual:

"Each day at noon, when the sun highest, a male or female choosed by you must do this before you and for you."

He took a piece of bread and dipped it in the water and ate the piece, and then he said, "And the Choosed One must say so all able to hear,

"With this water, from which life first comed, me thank me Creator for life. And with this bread, me thank me Creator for the blessings of this world and give meself strength against the evils of life. Thanks to He."

Other Worlds, Other Gods, p.160.

Committing the horowitzes of Feral to the care of his, and (he is now sure), their God, Carmody takes his leave of them. However, he still has to face Holmyard's shrewd, sceptical questions once aboard their vessel. Their discussion deserves to be quoted in full, to do justice to Farmer's awareness of the issues his story has raised:

"Tell me, do you really believe that that little ceremony you instituted will keep them on the straight and narrow?"

"I'm not all fool," said Carmody. "Of course not. But they do have correct basic instruction. If they pervert it, then I am not to blame. I have done my best."

"Have you?" said Holmyard. "You have laid the foundations for a mythology in which you may become the god, or the son of the god. Don't you think that, as time blurs the memory of these events you initiated, and generations pass, that myth after myth and distortion after distortion will completely alter the truth?"

Carmody stared at the dwindling globe. "I do not know. But I have given them something to raise them from beasts to men."

"Ah, Prometheus!" breathed Holmyard. And they were silent for a long time.

Other Worlds, Other Gods, p.161.

The recognition which Holmyard half-mockingly gives Carmody in the closing paragraph - "Prometheus" - is ironic but is appropriate enough. In striving to safeguard the aliens' spiritual awakening and promote their further technical progress, he both intervenes in the course of their evolution, and defies the judgement of his ecclesiastical masters. The activities of the little monk, for all their

hopeful benevolence, are every bit as 'promethean' as Frankenstein's. Yet, the essential humility, forbearance and spiritual generosity his author astutely confers on him so efface the least hint of an even vestigial self-interest that he can hardly be thought of as another Faustus. Ultimately, Carmody is not simply a technological messiah, for it is by means of the technology he shows them that they attain broader moral perspectives. Indeed, Holmyard's view is that it is that ethical system, codified in religious terms, which is the more ambiguous promethean gift:

"...I'll see to it that your successor has no religious affiliations," said Holmyard. "Forgive me, John, if I seem anticlerical to you. But I do believe that the horowitzes, if they develop a religion, should do it on their own."

"Then why not their speech and technology?"

"Because those are tools with which they may deal with their environment. They are things which, in time, they would have developed on lines similar to those of Earth."

"Do they not need a religion to ensure that they do not misuse this speech and technology? Do they not need a code of ethics?"

Other Worlds, Other Gods, p.144

Whatever Carmody's intentions are, Holmyard believes that his ethical legacy will be distorted in any case by an inevitable, pernicious deterioration; thus it will ultimately become a burden of superstition which will hamper rather than promote the further development of the alien race, perhaps by "shorting out" their own potential.

Significantly, whether or not we sympathise with the priest, and assume that the technical knowledge the horowitzes possess (and that which they will acquire) will continue to be mediated by Carmody's gentle spirituality, science and technology are not attended in this story by a neo-Gothic, sublime awe or horror. Rather, they are presented as the prerequisites of progress, creating broader moral perspectives and stimulating metaphysical (or transcendental) speculation. Science and technology are thus depicted as sources of enlightenment

rather than of an ineluctable doom in Farmer's story, and while their potential destructiveness is acknowledged, the reckless positivism or egocentricity of the Baconian visionary is completely absent. As in some finely-crafted novels of this period to be discussed later, the alien encounter generates theological or metaphysical argument about such issues as the idea that religious beliefs are products of the mythopoeic genius of primal but intelligent creatures, and whether or not such bewildering species have souls. However, to follow up the point made about Farmer's sanguine attitude to the moral ambiguity of science and technological innovation, we may consider Ray Bradbury's early short story, 'The Flying Machine' (20).

Bradbury's science fiction is, generally speaking, more evocative than literal, reflecting his penchant for tales of magic and eerie fantasy. While a significant proportion of his entire work is unmistakably science fiction - in that it is set in the future, like Fahrenheit 451 (1953) or, like The Silver Locusts (1950), deals with the exploration of space and alien encounter - it is only one aspect of his work, rather than being the mainstay of what he produces, which is usually magical or fantastic. Yet, in utilising the topoi of science fiction, Bradbury speaks with a unique voice. In 'The Flying Machine', a story written soon after two atom bombs brought the Second World War to its ominous close, the usual trappings of science fiction are foregone, but the moral concern of the writer with militarism and the disruptive impact of half-understood inventions is presented in the form of an original parable of technology. A most damning indictment is laid against the inventor of 'The Flying Machine': "'Here is the man who has made a certain machine...and yet asks us what he has created. He does not know himself. It is only

necessary that he create, without knowing why he has done so, or what this thing will do." Scientific creativity, ordains the sage, is most dangerous when it is most self-indulgent. Essentially, Bradbury's story poses one fundamental question - is it better to preserve the status quo, or venture it upon the promise of innovation?

The early morning serenity of the Emperor Yuan is disturbed by the excited cries of his servant, who professes to have seen a miracle. The Emperor, a shrewd old man, is not impulsive. He insists that his servant share his tea while he deliberates upon this remarkable claim, and eventually condescends to go with the servant to a nearby hillock to view the flying man, where he duly sees the truth of the servant's claim for himself. The flier is called down, and the Emperor interrogates him about his invention:

The flying man alit with a rustle of paper and a creak of reeds. He came proudly to the Emperor, clumsy in his rig, at last bowing before the old man.

"What have you done?" demanded the Emperor.

"I have flown in the sky, Your Excellency," replied the man.

"What have you done?" said the Emperor again.

"I have just told you!" cried the flyer.

"You have told me nothing at all." The Emperor reached out a thin hand to touch the pretty paper and the bird-like keel of the apparatus. It smelled cool, of the wind.

"Is it not beautiful, Excellency?"

"Yes, too beautiful."

The Golden Apples of the Sun, p.53

The unsuspecting flier accompanies the Emperor and his servant back into the fifth-century palace by the Great Wall, talking exuberantly about this first flight. Suddenly, the Emperor summons guards, and condemns the man, who is swiftly executed despite his eloquent pleading, for although the Emperor appreciates the beautiful thrill of flight, he fears "'another man'" who would misuse this wonderful machine:

"But there are times," said the Emperor, more sadly still, "when one must lose a little beauty if one is to keep what little beauty one already has. I do not fear you, yourself, but I fear another man."

"What man?"

"Some other man who, seeing you, will build a thing of bright papers and bamboo like this. But the other man will have an evil face and an evil heart, and the beauty will be gone. It is this man I fear."

"Who? Why?"

"Who is to say that someday just such a man, in just such an apparatus of paper and reed, might not fly in the sky and drop huge stones upon the Great Wall of China?" said the Emperor.

No one moved or said a word.

"Off with his head," said the Emperor.

The executioner whirled his silver ax.

The Golden Apples of the Sun, pp.54-55

Consoling himself with the thought, "What is the life of one man against those of a million others?" the Emperor acts to preserve the peace and contentment of his people, and the invention perishes with its maker. Yet given the 400 A.D. setting, the implicit answer to Bradbury's fundamental question ('Progress or the status quo?') is that the progressive urge cannot be stifled forever.

At its best, Bradbury's science fiction is both ingenious and subtle. However, more frequently science fictional tricks simply provide the speculative setting. The authentic voice of Bradbury's work is rapturous, as in his millenarist poem 'Christus Appollo' which anticipates the Second Coming of Christ after the long Eighth Day of Man and the Eighth Day of God:

We cargo holy flesh
On stranger visitations,
Send forth angelic hosts,
To farflung worlds
To tell of our walking on the waters of deep Space,
Arrivals, swift departures
Of most miraculous man
Who, God fuse-locked in every cell
Beats holy blood
And treads the tidal flood
And ocean shore of Universe,

A miracle of fish
We father, gather, build and strew
In metals to the winds
That circle Earth and wander Night beyond all Nights,
We soar, all arch-angelic, fire-sustained
In vast cathedral, aery apse, in domeless vault
Of constellations all blind dazzlement.

Christ is not dead
Nor does God sleep
While walking Man
Goes striding on the Deep

To birth ourselves anew
And love rebirth
From fear of straying long
On outworn Earth.
One harvest in, we broadcast seed for further reaping.
Thus ending Death
And Night,
And Time's demise,
And senseless weeping.

21.

His moral concern and lyrical anticipation of a millenium in which humane technology supports the full flowering of human spirituality is much in the same vein as the vision of his eminent peer Aldous Huxley, who encouraged Bradbury to write poetry and who himself later wrote in his last book, Literature and Science(1963), that 'Man cannot live by contemplative receptivity and artistic creation alone. As well as every word proceeding from the mouth of God, he needs science and technology.'

Brave New World and Walden Two; Twin Visions of the City of Man.

While Farmer's 'Prometheus' may present a more evenly balanced view of science, it is clear that for writers like Mrs. Penny and Alfred Noyes science is the means whereby materialism and amorality are advanced in society. Both include images of societies wholly given over to pleasure-seeking, and both are quite certain that science is at the root of the social changes - especially in morality

- which have encouraged a great many people to prefer the pursuit of self-indulgence to religion.

Mrs. Penny's story depicts moral decline in terms of the mass desertion of religion and focusses on drunkenness as the very worst outward sign revealing the faithlessness and wantonness within. She also notes that the majority of people, being 'the slaves of habit', found consolation and defiance in the bottle: 'he had but to turn his eyes from the doors of the church to the many ostentatious buildings where the incentives to drunkenness were sold....Never were these temples of iniquity thronged by such an incessant succession of votaries; never was the excitement of intoxication so generally sought.' Alfred Noyes also associates a decline in public and private morality - reflected in the extravagant behaviour and self-indulgence of so many - with materialism and rationalism.

Aldous Huxley, Noyes's contemporary, explores this meeting-point of social change and ethics in four science fiction novels. The first two, Brave New World(1932) and After Many a Summer Dies the Swan(1939) antedate The Last Man and reveal a different attitude toward science than the others, Ape and Essence(1949) and Island(1962), both of which reflect post-war dissatisfaction with 'Progress' and simple materialism.

Huxley's first science fiction novel, an extrapolative satire, is certainly the best known and arguably the most audacious of the four. Huxley's sardonic "utopia" is a projection of the contemporary influence of scientific materialism on society. It offers an interesting contrast to B.F.Skinner's Walden Two(1948), a more conventional utopia. Moreover, since Skinner follows Huxley's example and provides a discussion of his equally controversial novel ('Walden

Two Revisited';1976) any examination of these novels can exploit the explicit statements made by their authors. More importantly, as it will become apparent, both authors seem to share a view that what Huxley called 'the sciences of matter' be accorded a supremacy over 'the sciences of life'. In the long term, an unbalanced emphasis on materialism will produce a world in which forces no longer controllable by individuals will determine quality of life and ethics. Huxley poses the question in 1932 of the form the future we create should take and explicitly rephrases it again in 1946; Skinner suggests a "wholesome" answer - Walden Two - the balanced, rationalistic society he described in 1948.

Brave New World is a memorable novel (22). Huxley wrote in a foreword penned some fourteen years later ('Brave New World Revisited', 1946 23) that 'its defects as a work of art are considerable', but that he had resisted the temptation to change it lest its faults be improved at the cost of its merits. Huxley was equally unambiguous about what he wished to deal with in the novel, stating in this foreword that, 'The theme of Brave New World is not the advancement of science as such; it is the advancement of science as it affects human individuals.' This theme is worked out in two distinct ways: the projection of a plausible image of a society dedicated to, and built upon, the obsessive fulfillment of appetite; and, the delineation of a conflict between materialism and a more traditional humanism which Huxley personifies in the (noble) Savage, John. Clearly, Huxley's highly original vision of the world as it would be in the year A(fter) F(ord) 632 has a place in any discussion of how modern novelists have explored these controversial issues, not least because Huxley's 'utopia' is partly a deliberate satire on

Wells's Men Like Gods of 1923, the archetypal scientific, materialist utopia of modern (as distinct from post-modern) science fiction.

We have seen how a decade later in 1942 Noyes depicts the contemporary world as a godless Babylon doomed by its own ethical shallowness and utilitarianism, "It had lost the religion of Christendom. You could see the tragedy of it in my own country, by picking up any book that gave a realistic picture of young America in its cups. It was more or less the same all over the world; degradation; brutality; and cheap insidious propaganda against every code of honour in private life....they were convinced that 'morality' itself was as out-of-date as the novels of Charlotte M. Yonge." asserts his redemptive heroine Evelyn, whose rather priggish views are endorsed readily by Mark ("Exactly."). However, this rhetorical condemnation of worldliness of the times already had been surpassed by Huxley's more graphic depiction of a world in which the sole aims of life are consumption ('Ending is better than mending. The more stitches, the less riches.') and hedonism:

Lenina shook her head. 'Somehow,' she mused, 'I hadn't been feeling very keen on promiscuity lately. There are times when one doesn't. Haven't you found that too, Fanny?'

Fanny nodded her sympathy and understanding. 'But one's got to make the effort,' she said sententiously, 'one's got to play the game. After all, everyone belongs to everyone else.'

Brave New World, p.45.

Christianity has foundered in the five centuries or so between this global society (whose triple axiom COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY reflects its three governing principles) and ours in which Christian ethics are given such a prominent and influential place. As the Controller, his Fordship Mustapha Mond explains to a group of awe-struck students, 'There was a thing, as I've said before, called Christianity. ...All crosses had their tops cut and became T's. There was also

a thing called God.'(pp.52-53) Of course, Huxley goes further than simply predicting the demise of Christianity in this agnostic society, this futurist 'paradise'.

Although the Christian God is of no more account in Brave New World than in Walden Two, Huxley's satire is not strictly godless, for religion has not been abolished, as Mardok might have wished. Much else he would have swept away has been, though, suggesting that Noyes knew of Huxley's first sustained attempt at science fiction(24). As Orwell would in 1949, Huxley presents a religion which in many ways is a savage inversion of Christian values. As Mond further explains, 'We have the World State now. And Ford's Day celebrations, and Community Sings, and Solidarity Services. ...There was a thing called Heaven; but all the same they used to drink enormous quantities of alcohol. ...There was a thing called the soul and a thing called immortality. ...But they used to take morphia and cocaine.' In this future, Huxley decides they will take soma, which has 'All the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects.' The World State also has a secular surrogate for the discredited religion, ostensibly to preserve whatever personal and social rewards accrue from religious experience. But Huxley's real intention is to shock: these 'advantages', as Mustapha Mond terms them, are gained from participation in 'religious' rituals of a quite pagan licentiousness. Take for instance the Solidarity Service (perhaps an orgiastic forerunner of the Two Minutes' Hate?) which Bernard Marx attends (on 'alternate Thursdays') in Chapter V. Here we are graphically shown how the Controllers solve the problem of, as he later put it, 'making the people love their servitude' by exploiting religion:

And all at once a great synthetic bass voice boomed out the words which announced the approaching atonement and

final consummation of solidarity, the coming of the Twelve-in-One, the incarnation of the Greater Being. 'Orgy-porgy,' it sang, while the tom-toms continued to beat their feverish tattoo:

Orgy-porgy, Ford and fun,
Kiss the girls and make them One.
Boys at one with girls at peace;
Orgy-porgy gives release.

'Orgy-porgy,' the dancers caught up the liturgical refrain,In their blood-coloured and foetal darkness the dancers continued for a while to circulate, to beat and beat out the indefatigable rhythm. 'Orgy-porgy....' Then the circle wavered, broke, fell in partial disintegration on the ring of couches which surrounded - circle enclosing circle - the table and its planetary chairs. 'Orgy-porgy...' Tenderly the the deep voice crooned and cooed; in the red darkness it was as though some enormous negro dove were hovering benevolently over the now prone or supine dancers.

Brave New World, p.75.

With this drug-heightened ritual of atavistic sexual congress, Huxley explicitly rededicates religion to that very promiscuity Fanny and Lenina discuss so matter-of-factly. Perhaps this defamatory association of religion with flagrant fornication is, notwithstanding the extinction of the philosophia perennia, or the lack of the least hint of an improving moralitas, of all things that most likely to outrage a conservative Christian sensibility:

Perhaps the most sustained and, for some, the bitterest irony occurs in the delineation of the Solidarity Service, which, of course, parodies Holy Communion, perhaps at a Revival meeting. The significance of twelve in each group, of holding the service on Thursday, of the invocations -- "I drink to my annihilation" and "I drink to the imminence of his Coming." -- is obvious.... Notice the echo of Anglican and Presbyterian hymns throughout the service; notice the despair Bernard feels when he 'foresaw for himself yet another failure to achieve atonement.' How out of place seems the word atonement.

25.

Indeed there is in all this excessive sybaritism a great deal of irony, for paradoxically, Brave New World is more about repression than licence. However provocative or diverting it may seem, Huxley's main intention is not to purvey salaciousness for its own sake, but to present a plausible vision of how a 'soft' consumerist totalitari-

anism would function, as is clear from his retrospective discussion:

There is, of course, no reason while the new totalitarianisms should resemble the old. Government by clubs and firing squads, by artificial famine, mass imprisonment and mass deportation, is not merely inhumane (nobody cares much about that nowadays); it is demonstrably inefficient - and in an age of advanced technology, inefficiency is the sin against the Holy Ghost. A really efficient totalitarian state would be one in which the all-powerful executive of political bosses and their army of managers control a population of slaves who do not have to be coerced, because they love their servitude. To make them love it is the task assigned, in present-day totalitarian states, to ministries of propaganda, newspaper editors and schoolteachers. But their methods are still crude and unscientific.

...The most important Manhattan Projects of the future will be vast government-sponsored inquiries into what the politicians and the participating scientists will call 'the problem of happiness' - in other words, the problem of making the people love their servitude.

...The love of servitude cannot be established except as a result of a deep, personal revolution in human minds and bodies. 'Brave New World Revisited', pp.12-13.

Like Noyes a decade later - but to completely different effect - Huxley presents religion as being the central, organising structure of the other values of the society. Yet, however important, it is only one aspect of Huxley's complex projection.

Huxley postulates that a society committed in this way to luxury and the gratification of the senses will require to be stratified socially with the aspirations of the individual quite strictly circumscribed, where not ordained utterly. But this regimentation is surreptitious, for only by managing the desires of the individual, can the State be confident of ensuring that they are fulfilled. One means of achieving this is to create the individual; and in Brave New World this is effected by a combination of strict population control (all women who might become mothers wear a 'Malthusian belt' replete with contraceptives); a form of cloning (anticipated by Huxley as the 'Bokanovsky process'); carefully controlled gestation in vitro rather than in utero (producing 'bottle' babies who are not born, but

'decanted'); and, behavioural conditioning involving aversion therapy, hypnopaedia and instilling a greater or lesser degree of soma-dependence. This formidable array of scientific techniques (which would be the envy of another Frankenstein) produces the optimal social mix: enough Epsilons and Deltas to do the most menial work, and the appropriate number of Gammas, Betas and Alphas to ensure that consumer demand never flags, but is always balanced:

At the end of the room a loud-speaker projected from the wall. The Director walked up to it and pressed a switch. '...all wear green,' said a soft but very distinct voice, beginning in the middle of a sentence, 'and Delta children wear khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They're too stupid to be able to read or write. Besides, they wear black, which is such a beastly colour. I'm so glad I'm a Beta.'

There was a pause; then the voice began again. 'Alpha children wear grey. They work much harder than we do, because they're so frightfully clever. I'm really awfully glad I'm a Beta, because I don't work so hard. And then we are much better than the Gammas and Deltas. Gammas are stupid. They all wear green, and Delta children wear khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They're too stupid to be able...'

The Director pushed back the switch. The voice was silent. Only its thin ghost continued to mutter from beneath the eighty pillows.

They'll have that repeated forty or fifty times more before they wake; then again on Thursday, and again on Saturday. A hundred and twenty times three times a week for thirty months. After which they go on to a more advanced lesson.'

Brave New World, p.33.

The result - COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY bolstered by pleasure, which replaces the nightmarish mass deprivation endured by the workers of Fritz Lang's Metropolis and Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-four, and deprives the masses in the Brave New World of a reason for the revolutionary confrontation which arises in Jack London's The Iron Heel and Vonnegut's Player Piano. Indeed, the world of A.F.632 is the result of a historical process in which such possibilities (represented, with a touch of Huxley's characteristic sportiveness, by the culture fans and the Simple Lifers) have been assimilated or

suppressed in the aftermath of a terrible war: 'The Nine Years' War, the Great Economic Collapse. There was a choice between World Control and destruction. Between stability and...' (p.48) As Mustapha Mond further explains in the third chapter, the society of which he is Controller is the product of deliberate management by his predecessors: 'In the end...the Controllers realized that force was no good. The slower but infinitely surer methods of ectogenesis, neo-Pavlovian conditioning and hypnopaedia...Accompanied by a campaign against the Past; by the closing of museums, the blowing up of historical monuments...by the suppression of all books published before A.F.150.' (collated from pages 48-50) The consolidation has included only selected elements of the past such as Henry Ford's consumer-oriented, mass production technology and the latest developments in such disciplines as Freudian psychology and bioengineering. As for the rest, 'History is bunk' asserts Mond (quoting Ford for authority 26), and in a rare intervention, Huxley's narrative voice describes the old world which has produced this over-blown orchid, the philistine culture of Our Ford and Our Freud:

'Stability,' said the Controller, 'stability. No civilization without social stability. No social stability without individual stability.' His voice was a trumpet. Listening, they felt larger, warmer.

The machine turns, turns and must keep on turning - for ever. It is death if it stands still. A thousand millions scabbled the crust of the earth. The wheels began to turn. In a hundred and fifty years there were two thousand millions. Stop all the wheels. In a hundred and fifty weeks there are once more only a thousand millions; a thousand thousand men and women have starved to death.

Wheels must turn steadily, but cannot turn untended. There must be men to tend them, men as steady as the wheels upon their axles, sane men, obedient men, stable in contentment.

Crying: My baby, my mother, my only, only love; groaning: My sin, my terrible God; screaming with pain, muttering with fever, bemoaning old age and poverty - how can they tend the wheels? And if they cannot tend the wheels... The corpses of a thousand thousand thousand men and women would be hard to bury or burn.

Brave New World, p.44.

Huxley's main point is that for all Mond's insistence on its historical necessity, the world which succeeded the crisis-ridden world of the early twentieth century is not sane. In the second part of his novel, which begins with Lenina and Bernard Marx's visit to the Savage Reservation, he explicates this by providing another cultural perspective to counter the assumptions and cant of the Brave New World.

John, retrieved by Marx from the reservation for his own ends, has had none of the 'advantages' conferred by growing up in England in the seventh century A.F. Instead, John has had to cope with being the despised son of Linda, stranded in the Reservation by an unscrupulous lover (he, incidentally, is now Marx's boss at the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre). Linda herself has been held in universal contempt in the Reservation for her Freudian promiscuity and Fordian appetite for the disposable and the fashionable. John provides a contrasting moral sensibility to further illustrate, and thus deprecate, the workings of the 'Brave New World', as John, who has taught himself to read from The Complete Works of William Shakespeare and The Chemical and Bacteriological Conditioning of the Embryo, calls the amazing community into which he is brought at Mustapha Mond's direct command. To the Alphas, Betas and Gammas John is simply 'the Savage', a freak, an amusing spectacle born obscenely - 'viviparously'. Nonetheless he becomes a disturbing presence because, whatever its strange provenance, his is an essentially moralistic sensibility which is at first bewildered, then outraged, by the values of the people of Our Ford, with their everyday philistinism and self-indulgent childishness ('Adults intellectually and during working hours....Infants where feeling and

desire are concerned,' declares Marx, whose infatuation with Lenina makes him more and more disaffected with the ephemeral nature of human relationships in his own society.) For all his early hopes, John cannot take to their way of living, as Lenina discovers to her bewilderment; and Huxley steps in to describe his isolation: 'In the taxicopter he hardly even looked at her. Bound by strong vows that had never been pronounced, obedient to laws that had long since ceased to run, he sat averted and in silence. Sometimes, as though a finger had plucked at some taut, almost breaking string, his whole body would shake with a sudden nervous start.'(p.138) John's moral outlook may not be Christian but it does include a few traditional virtues which of course only serve to convince the scornful, effete hedonists who now surround him that his soubriquet, 'the Savage', is wholly appropriate.

John eventually erupts when he is maddened by the casual way in which Linda is allowed to kill herself with the soma she has longed for while an unwilling resident in the Reservation, a grim place in New Mexico where the brutality of the Indians' religious worship of Jesus and Pookong reflects the primitiveness and violence of their way of life. John goes on the offensive against a social system which he now realizes exploits the material aspects of life in order to repress or subvert its spiritual or metaphysical side. Aided by Helmholtz Watson (but not by a prevaricating, craven Marx), he causes a riot by trying to liberate a group of Delta workers from the soma ration with which their toil is rewarded. 'Do you like being slaves?' he rails at them, 'Do you like being babies? Yes, babies. Mewling and puking...' (27)

The insults bounced off their carapace of thick stupidity; they stared at him with a blank expression of dull and sullen resentment in their eyes. 'Yes, puking!' he fairly shouted. Grief and remorse, compassion and duty - all were forgotten now and, as it were, absorbed into an intense overpowering hatred of these less than human monsters. 'Don't you want to be free and men? Don't you even understand what freedom and manhood are?' Rage was making him fluent; the words came easily, in a rush. 'Don't you?' he repeated, but got no answer to his question. 'Very well, then,' he went on grimly. 'I'll teach you; I'll make you free whether you want to or not.' And pushing open a window that looked on to the inner court of the Hospital, he began to throw the little pill-boxes of soma tablets in handfuls out into the area.

Brave New World, p.171.

The three are arraigned before Mustapha Mond, and it last becomes clear to John that science has made the system unassailable. In this penultimate episode, Huxley embarks on a sustained discursive examination of the relationship between science, religion and social stability.

Naturally, the urbane Mond has all the answers. Liberty is relative; people, even the helot Deltas and Epsilons, are content to accept a limited horizon if their limited aspirations are all they have ever possessed. Not everyone can be an Alpha, after all, for as the Cyprus Experiment has shown, such visionaries, dreamers and seekers after knowledge are not particularly skilled at providing for themselves or disposed to consensus. 'The optimum population,' he asserts, 'is modelled on the iceberg - eight-ninths below the water line, one ninth above.' What about the menial work the Deltas and Epsilons unprotestingly carry out to support their privileged masters? Mond answers John by admitting that while it would be possible to improve it, they would be so burdened by their extra leisure time that they would merely consume more soma: 'The Invention Office is stuffed with plans for labour-saving processes. Thousands of them.' Mustapha Mond made a lavish gesture. 'And why don't we put

them into execution? For the sake of the labourers; it would be sheer cruelty to afflict them with excessive leisure.' More importantly, such a change would carry with it the risk of upsetting the whole apple-cart; and in a revelation which astounds even Helmholtz Watson, Mond exposes how contrived and deceptive is the popular faith ('It's a hypnopaedic platitude' points out Watson) in scientific progress:

'Every change is a menace to stability. That's another reason why we're so chary of applying new inventions. Every discovery in pure science is potentially subversive; even science must sometimes be treated as a possible enemy. Yes, even science.'

'It isn't only art that's incompatible with happiness; it's also science. Science is dangerous; we have to keep it most carefully chained and muzzled.'

Brave New World, pp.180 & 181 (abridged).

It is in order to preserve that cherished stability that Marx and Watson must be banished, though, as Mond makes clear, for all Marx's terror of leaving his familiar surroundings, their exile has held attractions - long since disavowed - even for him. In symbolic terms, if the Savage Reservation is a mundane kind of Purgatory whose denizens are obsessed with ritual expiation of the sin of their existence, then the self-regulating, stiflingly-homeostatic global society is a man-made Limbo, as free of genuine experience as it is empty of pain. This is not a full triptych, however; for Heaven is not delineated, only alluded to by quasi-Mephistopheles Mond as the bright prospect he had declined in favour of his preferred role as keeper of the gates, with all the sweeping temporal power it has brought him. Mond, who has exchanged his soul for power, is in fact another Faustus:

'One would think he was going to have his throat cut,' said the Controller, as the door closed. 'Whereas, if he had the smallest sense, he'd understand that his punishment is really a reward. He's being sent to an island. That's to say, he's being sent to a place where he'll meet the most interesting set of men and women to be found anywhere in the

world. All the people who, for one reason or another, have got too self-consciously individual to fit into community-life. All the people who aren't satisfied with orthodoxy, who've got independent ideas of their own. Everyone, in a word, who's anyone. I almost envy you, Mr. Watson.'

Brave New World, p.182.

Conventional wisdom has it that the most effective satire is launched from a moral stance which, even when implicit, is nonetheless systematic and carries conviction. Mond's appreciative observations about the islands where the non-conformists are sent to dwell among kindred spirits ('the most interesting set' of people in the world) further confirms the line of Huxley's satiric argument, which again anticipates Leavis's, this time in terms of the need for a modern society to entrust the preservation and onward transmission of important cultural values to an elite of luminaries. For Leavis the university is the fittest repository of this important trust; Mond allows it to be developed by the banished thinkers in a sociocultural laboratory vessel.

After Helmholtz Watson has chosen (with what sublime, unwitting irony!) the Falkland Islands as a place of exile where he will write better because the climate is bad, John and Mond are left to discuss the issues further. John again demands that the Controller explain his reasoning when, having acknowledged that both art and science have been sacrificed, Mond admits that revealed religion too is part of the price of stability. One reward for choosing to manage, rather than desert his community is arcane knowledge of prohibited ideas and books such as The Imitation of Christ and The Holy Bible ('A whole collection of pornographic old books...God in the safe and Ford on the shelves.') When John indignantly asks why this knowledge is not freely available, Mond first asserts that while God may not change, the religions of mankind are relative, being deeply bound up with

what people need at the time; then, after quoting favourable passages from Cardinal Newman and Maine de Biran, he adopts John's characteristically Shakespearean idiom momentarily to propound his most telling argument for the redundancy of Christianity:

'One of the numerous things in heaven and earth that these philosophers didn't dream about was this' (he waved his hand), 'us, the modern world. "You can only be independent of God while you've got youth and prosperity; independence won't take you safely to the end." Well, now we've got youth and prosperity right up to the end. What follows? Evidently, that we can be independent of God. "The religious sentiment will compensate us for all our losses." But there aren't any losses for us to compensate; religious sentiment is superfluous.

.....
What need have we of repose when our minds and spirits continue to delight in activity? of consolation, when we have soma? of something immovable, when there is the social order?'

Brave New World, p.187.

The ironic paradox is that, just as Noyes required, Mond and everyone else do share a 'definite belief', but in the permanence of the State, and in the desirability of what it offers them, rather than in Providence. For all John's naive questioning about God and his advocacy of self-denial, chastity and 'living dangerously', the 'religious sentiments' of this global community are directed to, and fulfilled by, the surrogate, orgiastic worship of Our Ford. True to form, John remains unconvinced by Mond's relativistic arguments, and ends by reclaiming his independence:

'But I like the inconveniences.'

'We don't,' said the Controller. 'We prefer to do things comfortably.'

'But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin.'

'In fact,' said Mustapha Mond, 'you're claiming the right to be unhappy.'

'All right, then,' said the Savage defiantly, 'I'm claiming the right to be unhappy.'

'Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to

live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind.'

There was a long silence.

'I claim them all,' said the Savage at last.

Mustapha Mond shrugged his shoulders. 'You're welcome,' he said.

Brave New World, p.192.

John resists this catalogue of temptations and blandishments, but, now the subject of Mond's 'experiment', he is not permitted to leave with Watson and Marx. His integrity drives him into a self-willed exile - seclusion in a disused lighthouse tower. There he tries to become wholly self-sufficient, but instead rediscovers his personal well-spring of guilt; and his violent, obsessive mortification of the flesh brings out mass media reporters, duly followed by hordes of spectators. Even in his hermitage, the reclusive savage remains more of a freak than a celebrity. Though he has a broader ethical perspective than the moral tunnel-vision of those who mock him, his self-destructiveness disproves any assumption that he is sane and they are not. As Huxley later confirms in his foreword, 'The people who govern the Brave New World may not be sane (in what may be called the absolute sense of that word); but they are not mad men...'

John may engage our sympathy to a greater extent than any other figure in the novel does, but Huxley does not require us to accept his perspective as the definitive moral sensibility any more than he would have us concur with the aloof, sardonic Mond, who has now emerged as John's jailer. Huxley's is a satirical rendering of this problem, and as I read it, his point is made when John's failure becomes clear at the end of the novel. For when this savage, would-be liberator at last finds the messianic role he has craved, the people of Our Ford and Our Freud not only reject him and his message, but they (unlike Mond, the advocatus diaboli) cannot even begin to

comprehend him. His values are certainly deeper than those of his tormentors, but, by their standards, their lives are appreciably more comfortable and rewarding - and, almost without exception, uniformly stable, utterly secure.

Amid this human debris it is perhaps tempting to call the Savage heroic and feel he represents Huxley's point of view. To do so exposes our own conditioning rather than a close reading of the text. In any society in which he attempted to live, the Savage would commit suicide; even had he lived as a solitary in the hills near Malpais or at the lighthouse, eventually he would have tortured himself to death.

28.

Though Thomas Clareson may be placing an exaggerated emphasis on the psychological in attributing the Savage's suicide simply to the inevitable wish-fulfillment of a masochist trying to cope with an awesome Oedipal complex, he is right to eschew reading Huxley's attitudes into his abject protagonist. So what, if anything, does Huxley express in his extravagant masterpiece? John's death is not so much a sacrificial, Christ-like act of redemption for a depraved world, as a poignant if demented recognition of the futility of his short-lived attempt to reinstate old-world values; and, as a fulfillment of Huxley's premises, it forcefully demonstrates the opinion he then held that 'sanity is impossible'. The power of Huxley's novel is that it presents a plausible depiction of how science can be exploited - in the majority interest, naturally - to disguise how pointless life can be in modern consumer society. As Harold L. Berger has noted(29), the citizens of the Brave New World are unable to recognize the extent to which their dependence has diminished their essential humanity: they seem "less than human."

In contrast to Huxley's depiction of the demented world which scientific materialism can give rise to, B.F. Skinner's Walden Two(30) is a description - in fact virtually a prototype - for what he

envisages as a rationalistic 'Golden Age'. As his principle spokesman, Frazier, emphasises to Burris and Castle, two visiting academics, Skinner believes that the means to create a modern ideal community already exist:

"...I'm referring to a detail which distinguishes Walden Two from all the imaginary Utopias ever dreamed of. And a very simple thing, too." He continued to look at us, but we were completely at sea.

"Why, the fact that it exists right here and now!" he announced at last. "In the very midst of modern civilization!" He watched for the effect upon us, but it could not have been very marked.

"The Utopias have tended to be a bit out of things," said Castle at last, a little doubtfully, but beginning to get the point.

"Out of things! I should say! Why, 'Utopia' is Greek for 'nowhere,' and Butler spelled 'nowhere' backwards! Bacon chose a lost Atlantis, and Shangri-La is cut off by the highest mountains in the world. Bellamy and Morris felt it necessary to get away by a century or two in the dimension of time. Out of things, indeed! It's the first rule of the Utopian romance: 'Get away from life as we know it, either in space or time, or no one will believe you!'

"The one fact that I would cry from every housetop is this: the Good Life is waiting for us - here and now!...It doesn't depend on a change in government or on the machinations of world politics. It doesn't wait upon an improvement in human nature...." Walden Two, pp.179-180.

The 'Good Life' Frazier has established in Walden Two is another version of the same utopian heresy, the scientific earthly paradise. The citizens have the benefit of a model educational and welfare system, in return for a minimum of Adamic toil which they may arrange to suit themselves. Their time is otherwise their own, and is spent in a variety of community and cultural pursuits: "The Good Life also means a chance to exercise talents and abilities. And we have let it be so. We have time for sports, hobbies, arts and crafts, and most important of all, the expression of that interest in the world which is science in the deepest sense. It may be a casual interest in current affairs or in literature or the controlled and creative efforts of the laboratory - in any case it represents the unnecessary

and pleurably selective exploration of nature." (p.148) Walden Two is no frantic Brave New World, but however different their conclusions about where modern scientific materialism will take the world, Huxley and Skinner begin with similar premises.

Significantly both Brave New World and Walden Two have neither a Wellsian "friend to little children above the sky" or a Providential, Christian God; in their different ways, they are both about what their authors consider to be(31) a credible picture of the absolute capability of rational Man. To Frazier, the founding genius of Skinner's behaviourist community, Jesus is no more than an early pioneer of their science:

"We've all seen countless instances of the temporary use of force, but clear evidence of the effect of not using force is rare. That's why I insist that Jesus, who was apparently the first to discover the power of refusing to punish, must have hit upon the principle by accident. He certainly had none of the experimental evidence which is available to us today, and I can't conceive that it was possible, no matter what the man's genius, to have discovered the principle from casual observation."

"A touch of revelation, perhaps?" said Castle.

"No, accident. Jesus discovered one principle because it had immediate consequences, and he got another thrown in for good measure." Walden Two, p.245.

When Frazier speaks of "the experimental evidence which is available to us today", he does not simply mean that centuries of Progress have provided a scientific approach which Jesus did not have. Frazier's reference is more immediate, for like Huxley, Skinner takes us into Walden Two in order to persuade us of the consistency of his speculations; the community Frazier has founded is repeatedly advanced as an experimental proof. Thus, Skinner's description of his Utopia substantiates his argument in the same graphic manner as Huxley's depiction of the consumer 'paradise' of the future adds force to his very different conclusions. Sadly Skinner failed to foresee how his

earnest book would be received(32).

In fact, one does not have to look very deeply into Walden Two to discern its many correspondences with Huxley's earlier Brave New World (here and there Skinner even makes ironic allusions to it). Skinner's Planners perform a very similar role to Huxley's Controllers in regulating society; and Frazier himself echoes Mond's Fordian disregard for history, which is "...honored in Walden Two only for entertainment. It isn't taken seriously as food for thought." (p.106). More elliptically, Frazier seems again to follow Mond in asserting that "Governments which use force are based upon bad principles of human engineering." (p.181).

If on this basis the novels could seem almost complementary, important differences separate them. Perhaps the most noteworthy success of Huxley's novel is his anticipation of how scientific social engineering, hand-in-hand with scientific consumer manufacturing, can usher in a new human era of stability and fulfillment. Of course, Huxley's approach is ironic; in his perverse golden age, stability really means covert repression and fulfillment is reduced to a compulsive gratification, allegations which in Walden Two are made by Castle, to be rejected by Frazier. Conversely, Skinner is earnest about the benefits of scientific social engineering (which he later calls 'the design of cultural practices'), and his purpose, crucially, is to show that sanity is possible - 'Something like a Walden Two would not be a bad start,' he concludes.

Skinner's technique is deliberately straightforward: Burris, an academic psychologist, and Castle, a philosopher, accompany four young people who are going to see Walden Two. They have been invited by Frazier, a former student of Burris. The novel spans a week or so,

during which the reader is allowed to share Burris's thoughts about what the visitors see, but more importantly, what they discuss. While Castle, shrewd and not a whit less disputatious than Frazier, acts as devil's advocate, Burris is privileged to act as a sort of arbiter whose values and responses are made known to the reader. Given his reserve and self-awareness, his conclusions are meant to seem more measured than Castle's; and, since he is the most engaging of the three main characters, we are presumably meant to accept his decision to join Frazier's community.

All the same, since he is more interested in getting his message across than in entertaining, Skinner's fiction generally has more to do with philosophical arguments than character, incident or feelings. Politics, sociology, psychology, economics, and to a lesser extent, engineering, art and building technology dominate Frazier's 'exposition', as even he calls it. The same is true of the supporting narrative episodes with which Frazier's harangues and lectures are illustrated; the style is distinctively that of his acknowledged nineteenth-century predecessors: Morris, Bellamy and Butler. Whatever drive or narrative force the novel possesses is derived from the exchanges between Frazier, Castle and Burris, supported by two perfunctory attempts at a 'human interest' sub-plot. The first concerns Frazier, who is depicted as strangely sullen and irritable from time to time, whereas the other is a merely conventional depiction of the relationships between the four young people. Both situations are exploited for whatever slight suspense or interest they hold. Clearly Walden Two is above all a behaviourist manifesto, and as such, it is perhaps best discussed at the level of Skinner's theories, which are now well-known. A main theme (recalling Thoreau) is the need to opt

out of a socio-economic and political system which, Frazier insists, is unscientific and hence inefficient:

"I'm not arguing for no government at all, but only for none of the existing forms. We want a government based on a science of human behaviour. Nothing short of that will produce a permanent social structure. For the first time in history we're ready for it, because we can now deal with human behaviour in accordance with simple scientific principles. The trouble with the program of anarchy was that it placed too much faith in human nature. It was an offshoot of the philosophy of perfectionism."

"But you yourself seem to have unbounded faith in human nature," I said.

"I have none at all," said Frazier bluntly, "if you mean that men are naturally good or naturally prepared to get along with each other. We have no truck with philosophies of innate goodness - or evil, either, for that matter. But we do have faith in our power to change human behavior. We can make men adequate for group living - to the satisfaction of everybody. That was our faith, but now it's a fact."

Walden Two, p.182.

Walden Two, with its free love and atheism, may seem to be an explicitly materialistic promotion of the idea of Man at the expense of that of God. Yet it is not an amoral community, as Skinner explains to Castle, a traditionalist: "'I'm not going to be trapped into taking a pragmatic view of morals....Moral law would be moral law even if a mechanistic view of human behavior proved to be more expeditious in achieving the Good Life.'"(p.161) Rather, as Castle anticipates, the Walden Code by which the inhabitants live is, from Frazier's point of view, "'an experimental ethicsworked out for the common good"'; a relativistic, existentialist system in which the revealed truths of religion are accorded very little significance. In fact Skinner - unlike Huxley - takes pains not simply to parody Christianity, but, as far as is consistent with his principles, to assimilate it selectively, as the Sunday 'services' demonstrate; these are preserved for their therapeutic and recreational value, rather than ecclesiastical virtue.

Of course, the weakness in Frazier's "experiment" is its systematic basis, one indeed to which social conformity is as indispensable as it would be in any Huxleyan Brave New World. Yet, recalling Huxley's all-pervasive, homeostatic society with its exploitation of the pleasure principle, the citizens of Skinner's utopia do appear to have a greater degree of self-determination. They can choose how to make their contribution to the communal economy, and, as Frazier tells Burris, "'a man's room is his castle.'" (p.231) More importantly the greatest concession to a common social code they must make is in recognizing the familial ascendancy of their benevolent elders, to whose mature judgement they incline in everyday matters. Since there is no rigid social hierarchy, and people are not exploited to a greater or lesser degree according to their social standing, Walden Two is a community in which the relative importance of individuality is generally upheld as a prerequisite of personal dignity. Still, for all the idealistic connotations of his title, it is quite likely that Skinner's 'co-operative' (as opposed to communist) society would fail to impress Thoreau, an individualistic, reclusive non-conformist.

"A modern, mechanized, managerial Machiavelli -- that is my final estimate of you, Mr.Frazier," he said, with the same challenging stare.

"It must be gratifying to know that one has reached a 'final estimate,'" said Frazier.

"An artist in power," continued Castle, "whose greatest art is to conceal art. The silent despot."

"Since we are dealing in 'M's,' why not sum it all up and say 'Mephistophelean'?" said Frazier, curiously reviving my fears of the preceding afternoon.

"I'm willing to do that!" said Castle. "And unless God is very sure of himself, I suspect He's by no means easy about this latest turn in the war of the angels. So far as I can see, you've blocked every path through which man was to struggle upward toward salvation. Intelligence, initiative - you have filled their places with a sort of degraded instinct, engineered compulsion. Walden Two is a marvel of efficient coordination - as efficient as an ant-hill!"

Walden Two, p.237.

Naturally Frazier has anticipated and already countered Castle's latest thrust in his earlier discussion of how progress is seen in *Walden Two*: "What we are trying to achieve through our cultural experiments...is a way of life which will be satisfying without propaganda and for which, therefore, we won't have to pay the price of personal stultification." Just as he redefined Baconian science in *Walden Two* as "the unnecessary and pleasurable selective exploration of nature", Progress is cleansed of its Positivistic connotations to become "an alert and active drive toward the future" (p.194). Thus, Skinner's utopia is preserved from the charge that it is merely static or regressive society; but naive or not, his ideas have not been without admirers and converts.

Frazier strongly promotes the efficacy of his social principles: "What is emerging at this critical stage in the evolution of society is a behavioural and cultural technology based on positive reinforcement alone." p.244; and their millennial aim: "Frazier's movement was essentially a religious movement freed of any dallying with the supernatural and inspired by a determination to build heaven on earth. What could stop him?" (p.289) The case Skinner makes hinges on whether or not we accept two or three central assumptions.

Skinner seems to argue in Walden Two that sanity is a condition which is to a certain extent self-evident - he and Frazier both are fond of extolling "common sense" - and that people can be conditioned in the interests of social stability and the common good to accept certain restrictions upon their wishes ("There are some things we can't offer you" Frazier concedes to Burriss, "But they aren't important..." p.232). So his primary proposition is that behaviourism is a potent and yet inoffensive means of controlling

the individual. Allied to this is the second, that a wholly rationalistic society is not only possible but desirable. Finally, he argues that ethics are relative, not immanent or immutable. Conformity, in the last analysis, is to be accepted by the individual member of Frazier's society as a moral imperative even though it is an expeditious way of ordering society. But who has set these wholesome, pragmatic social norms; who tells Castle what things "aren't important"? Another theme familiar from Huxley's novel, but far, far older still, also emerges towards the end of Skinner's novel.

Whatever else he may be, Frazier is not lacking in his own tortured brand of humility. Just as he spurned Castle's attempt to "pigeonhole" him as a monopolist - indeed, a fascist - he is quick to reject Burris's ingenuous acknowledgement of his genius. Whether or not we respond sympathetically to Castle's outbursts, it is later made plain that Frazier has been toying with him. Burris is privileged to learn the full extent of Frazier's conceit, which goes further than Castle has guessed. Skinner finally reveals the cause of the fundamental disturbance in Frazier's oddly unpredictable sensibility; he is at the same time the creator of this exciting community and an alienated being who has been surpassed by what he has brought into being: "But God damn it, Burris! Can't you see? I'm-not-a-product-of-Walden-Two!"(p.233) Following precedents quite different from those utopian conventions to which he has repeatedly alluded, Skinner endows Frazier with a shadowy Faustian aspect which owes more to Frankenstein than Prometheus. Though he has achieved his dream of creating a society (a "world of your own making", as Burris recognises) Frazier is depicted not as another Mardok, but rather as a sort of scientific Wounded God, afflicted by his own success

because ironically it has deprived him of the recognition he craves. He lives on the very brink of madness, as Burris fearfully realizes when he and Frazier are alone in his solitary vantage point ('the Throne'). He is not without a certain grandeur, though sadly Skinner rather overdoes things in essaying a last tragic note which emerges more as mawkishness:

"There's another point of similarity," he said at last when he saw I was not going to speak. "I don't know whether you'll understand this, Burris. I expect you'll laugh. But try to forget your professional cynicism."

He dropped the telescope and hesitated for a moment. Then he flung his hand loosely in a sweeping gesture which embraced all of Walden Two.

"These are my children, Burris," he said, almost in a whisper. "I love them."

He got to his feet and started back along the ledge. I followed carefully. He turned into the underbrush and waited for me to catch up. He was embarrassed and rather confused.

"What is love," he said, with a shrug, "except another name for the use of positive reinforcement?"

"Or vice versa," I said.

Walden Two, p.282.

In his later discussion of his novel, Skinner asserted that 'A state defined by repressive, formal, legal, social controls based on physical force is not necessary in the development of civilization, and although such a state certainly figured in our own development, we may be ready to move on to another stage.' In depicting what he thought that next stage should be, he eschewed both the optimistic Vernean, and pessimistic Wellsian, visions of the machine age. For Wells, machines offer mankind great promise provided mankind does not become seduced by their power and productivity, and thence decline prematurely (he expects the ultimate evolutionary regression of man but foresees a premature degeneration into a vitiated travesty of the intelligence which had invented the machines). Skinner considers that it is not only possible but crucial that mankind develop away from

repressive totalitarianism and what Bailey calls 'the standardization of the Machine Age'; but his view of man as an essentially virtuous or constructive creature rejects the depressing (Leavis rightly called them 'unintoxicating') possibilities inherent in modern consumerism which Huxley sends up so effectively.

Of the two futures which materialism seems to offer mankind, Skinner remains convinced that Walden Two would be a more acceptable alternative to the world of AF632. This might have seemed so on paper; but it also strikes one as the result of sustained wishful thinking. To most commentators Skinner's deterministic 'utopia' merely suggests another dimension of scientific threat, however well-intentioned Skinner's dispassionate meddling with human nature may appear. Of course, his depiction of an idealized rationalistic society (which exalts the temporal attributes and appetites of human nature and virtually ignores what religious writers would identify as the spiritual, and some materialists the "human" aspect of human nature), confirms for them the shallowness of scientific materialism. Yet this is ironic, since it is not so much the 'Machine Age' view of human life which they are attacking when they criticize Skinner - who as we have seen has little time for machine technologies - but the scientific notion (to which Skinner does seem to subscribe) of man as a 'soft machine' and a perfectible one at that. Indeed, it could be inferred from the absence of any but the most rudimentary machines in Skinner's horse-and-buggy utopia that his scientific materialism, while distinctly progressive, is not positivistic; Skinner argues that modern city life diminishes us. Bailey characterises this lack of faith in the ability of humanity to adapt psychologically to science as pessimism:

Man may escape the standardization of the Machine Age if, as the utopian writers suggest, he controls machinery and uses it to supply his wants without bending to its pressure for a mechanical pattern of life. The pessimists reply that man is himself too limited for any sane adjustment. To the contention that human nature may be changed and the race improved, they reply that man is basically an animal who will always be ruled more by passion than by reason.

33.

Whether or not they would agree to be classed as pessimists in this way, most writers of religious science fiction would surely reject this pessimistic materialist view that man is merely an animal whose aspirations are betrayed continually by "passion". Instead, while asserting the spirituality of man, they would add the important qualification that human potential is limited by design. More than a heretical delusion, human deification is to them an ontological impossibility. Often they illustrate the ease with which man's religious impulse can become humanist rather than deist (i.e. centred on man himself, his achievements and destiny) in a thoroughly secular society devoid of religion and hence conscience. The devout tradition of science fiction possesses a sobering counterpart to Wells's "cosmic pessimism".

Modern Parables: the Religious SF of Lewis, Miller and Blish.

The sheer opprobrium Skinner's Walden Two has attracted suggests the strength of feeling aroused by the heightened impetus of scientific innovation after the Second World War. One recalls the axiom of Vonnegut's Ghost Shirts that if science and technology are allowed supremacy in order to preserve the nation, "We cannot win good lives for ourselves in peacetime by the same methods." (Player Piano, p.254); "good" here meaning 'richer' though not simply more affluent. Contemporary scientific confidence, its pragmatic values, and the

wartime ascendancy of a new, unmistakeably secular scientific establishment is viewed with considerable concern in texts by two of the three authors discussed below; Miller and Lewis seem more acutely anxious about science than Blish. Indeed, for Scholes and Rabkin, Lewis's is the most vociferous and effective rebuttal of the values of modern science in the field:

Much of the impulse behind science fiction in the twenties and thirties came from the need to express and articulate whatever values might be found in science itself, and this is true not only of a philosopher like Stapledon but of the more popular American or Gernsbackian kind of science fiction as well. Perhaps it was inevitable that such a development would provoke the sleeping giant of religious fantasy. For the purposes of our history this anti-science-fiction movement may be considered primarily in the work of a single writer, its most vigorous champion, who met the challenge of both Stapledon and Gernsback head-on: Clive Staples Lewis.

34.

The novels of Lewis and Miller show that science fiction can be used to carry a narrative which for all its religious character assimilates the Wellsian scientific thinking the pioneering generic magazine editors like Hugo Gernsback and John W. Campbell demanded of writers. Although Blish professed agnosticism, his novel, like the others, uses a "perennial" religious philosophy as an exemplary source of the moral vision which mankind needs to restrain science - and the scientist. This excerpt from the first part of Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz, with its substitution of Fallout for Death as the Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse, suggests how great was the apprehension felt by those writers who viewed with pessimism, if not despair, the awesome power which they saw unleashed on one losing nation in the last days of the Second World War:

"A spiritu fornicationis,
Domine, libera nos.
From the lightning and the tempest,
O Lord, deliver us.

From the scourge of the earthquake,
O Lord, deliver us.
From plague, famine and war,
O Lord, deliver us.

"From the place of ground zero,
O Lord, deliver us.
From the rain of the cobalt,
O Lord, deliver us.
From the rain of the strontium,
O Lord, deliver us.
From the fall of the cesium,
O Lord, deliver us.

"From the curse of the Fallout,
O Lord, deliver us.
From the begetting of monsters,
O Lord, deliver us.
From the curse of the misborn,
O Lord, deliver us.

A morte perpetua,
Domine, libera nos.

A Canticle for Leibowitz, pp.14-15.

C.S.Lewis, the renowned critic and a prolific author both of moral discussion and religious fiction, casts materialism as the evil aspect of a modern version of the Manichaeian Divide between good and evil in his famous science fiction trilogy. Out of the Silent Planet (1938) was the first of these novels; Voyage to Venus followed in 1943, with the third, That Hideous Strength, being published in 1945. Harold L.Berger concentrates on what he takes to be Lewis's central objectives:

In his space trilogy... C.S.Lewis combines anti-scientism with religious moralism to argue seriously and vigorously that the supernatural Satanic powers of the universe are attempting to establish a reign of evil incarnate on earth and are using the scientific community as the principal instrument of their grand design. The above does not overstate Lewis's position; he has invested the trilogy with enough partisan force, artistic integrity, and intellectually exciting debate to raise it far above a "mad scientist" tale, and he has exposed in fantasy what he believes to be humanity's real moral and physical crisis.

35.

Lewis's style is both didactic and allusive; it becomes more

elaborate in the later work, culminating in an erudite masterpiece of synthetic eclecticism. He ranges freely and assuredly between an allegorical richness and an emblematic simplicity throughout the trilogy. Lewis advances Christianity as the most compelling sublunary creed, an assertion which is substantiated by the wisdom and power of the more-than-human cosmic beings (the 'eldila' or 'macrobes') Ransom encounters on other worlds(36). His Anglo-Catholic creed and its values being beyond reproach are never criticized. The only issue is the commitment of its human champions: the future of humanity depends on their strength or feebleness, their dedication or fallibility, their constant faith and their continual self-doubt.

In Out of the Silent Planet Lewis introduces both the exemplary, diffident figure of Ransom and the spiritual cosmology which is to figure in the later novels. Ransom is kidnapped by the brilliant scientist Weston and his backer, Devine. Both are intent on making a fortune by exploiting the natural resources of Malacandra, the planet of the sorns, 'spindly and flimsy things' with strangely humanoid faces 'thin and unnaturally long, with long, drooping noses and drooping mouths of half-spectral, half-idiotic solemnity.' As Ransom learns on Malacandra, his captors plan to give him to these creatures as a sort of placatory sacrifice. Things do not go just as Weston and Devine have planned, though, and Ransom escapes. After living for a time among the hrossa (who come to accept him as a hnau - a rational, humane creature like themselves), Ransom follows the instructions of one of the superior spirits of Malacandra, the eldila, to recommence his journey because Weston and Devine are pursuing him. He is befriended by a sorn, who takes him to appear before Oyarsa, the supreme being of this strangely beautiful world.

Ransom has to answer Oyarsa's questions about Earth, or Thulcandra, as the Malacandrians call the planet which has fallen under the sway of the Bent One: "'Tell me all. We know nothing since the day when the Bent One sank out of heaven into the air of your world, wounded in the very light of his light.'"(p.143) This interrogation is brought to an end by the arrival of Weston and Devine who have been captured and brought before Oyarsa. To the evident displeasure of Oyarsa, they have killed three of the hrossa who were sent to bring them.

When the creatures of Malacandra have performed their moving obsequies for their dead, Weston, Devine and Ransom each have to explain their actions. Devine only wants Malacandrian gold - 'sun's blood' - and he will be delighted to go. Weston's aspirations are more grandiose, and Ransom has to translate for him; here Lewis's depiction of scientific materialism as a destructive force is made explicit by the juxtaposition of Weston's positivistic assertions and Ransom's Malacandrian paraphrase:

'Life, of course,' snapped Weston, '...has ruthlessly broken down all obstacles and liquidated all failures and today in her highest form - civilized man - and in me as her representative, she presses forward to that inter-planetary leap which will, perhaps, place her forever beyond the reach of death.'

'He says,' resumed Ransom, 'that these animals learned to do many difficult things, except those who could not; and those ones died and the other animals did not pity them.'

And he says the best animal now is the kind of man who makes the big huts and carries the heavy weights and does all the other things I told you about; and he is one of these and he says that if the others all knew what he was doing they would be pleased. He says that if he could kill you all and bring our people to live in Malacandra, then they might be able to go on living here after something had gone wrong with our world. And then if something went wrong with Malacandra they might go and kill all the hnau in another world. And then another - and so they would never die out.'

Out of the Silent Planet, p.159.

Once again, science and materialism are in the dock, and the expected verdict is duly handed down: Weston's scientific positivism is insane. His plans to colonise Malacandra are pointless since the planet is dying, and Devine's greed has destroyed his hnau - his obsession with gold has made him spiritually dead. Before they are to be returned to Earth with a stern warning never to return to Malacandra, Oyarsa reveals to Ransom that the shallow materialism which afflicts people like Devine and Weston is a consequence of the deviance of the great cosmic spirit which oppresses rather than protects Earth, the 'Silent Planet' Thulcandra. Finally, Oyarsa makes a secret promise and prediction to Ransom, who has been guilty merely of fearfulness, rather than evil:

'...you must watch this Weston and this Devine in Thulcandra if ever you arrive there. They may yet do much evil in, and beyond, your world... Be courageous, fight them. And when you have need, some of our people will help... The year we are in now...has long been prophesied as a year of stirrings and high changes and the siege of Thulcandra may be near its end. Great things are on foot. If Maledil does not forbid me, I will not hold aloof from them. And now, farewell.'

Out of the Silent Planet, p.166.

In the sequel, Voyage to Venus, Ransom is summoned to Perelandra. In a beautifully evoked episode Ransom undergoes a complex test in an edenic setting: having befriended the charming Green Lady, he loses her innocent company when his old antagonist, Professor Weston, arrives on Venus. Weston, still pursuing his aspiration of inter-planetary conquest in the name of Man, has acquired a new line in devious rhetoric. He tries to get Ransom to accept his new perception of the Holy Ghost as merely a personification of the active principle of his quasi-imperialistic kind of human evolution: "I mean that nothing now divides you and me except a few outworn theological

technicalities with which organised religion has unhappily become incrustated. But I have penetrated that crust. The meaning beneath it is as true and living as ever." (p.82).

Weston goes on, in his conceited way, to lecture Ransom about the contiguities between Ransom's creed and his new scientific spiritualism. What has so excited Weston seems to be the notion that the whole cosmos is moving towards an ultimate condition: "The final disengagement of that freedom, that spirituality, is the work to which I dedicate my own life and the life of humanity. The goal, Ransom, the goal: think of it! Pure spirit: the final vortex of self-thinking, self-originating activity." William A. Quinn has analysed the theosophical issues of this dialectic:

If Ransom accepts Weston's premise, as he is sorely tempted to do, he must also accept its implications regarding man's alleged immortality. The antagonist's untheology is itself a thoroughly self-consistent, logical alternative to Ransom's own, and it must be recognized as such. 'That whole view of the universe which Weston (if it were Weston) had so lately preached to him, took all but complete possession of his mind...Reality lived - the meaningless, the un-made, the omnipotent idiocy to which all spirits are irrelevant and before which all efforts were in vain.' It seems curious that Ransom restates Weston's apparent deism in terms far more closely associated with existentialism. Lewis might even be suggesting that the most logical extrapolation of Weston's premise results in nihilism. And, as far as the question of individual salvation is concerned, the distinctions to be made between such deism, atheism, existentialism, nihilism, and solipsism do become purely academic. According to the rules of theological logic, Ransom must reject such a false First Principle - as such - and does so: 'Apparently it had all, even from the beginning, been a dark enchantment of the enemy's.'

37.

Since as a Christian he believes that God, the primum mobile, the Alpha, is also the Omega, Ransom is not persuaded by Weston's harangue and quietly decides to take a different tack. Is this force in any way personal? he asks Weston in his diffident way. The deluded

scientist confirms his guess with alacrity: "'Chosen. Guided. I've become conscious that I'm a man set apart. Why did I do physics? Why did I discover the Weston rays? Why did I go to Malacandra? It - the Force - has pushed me on all the time. I'm being guided. I know now that I am the greatest scientist the world has yet produced.'"(p.83) Weston, mad by Malacandrian standards, is now evidently wholly under the sway of the diseased spirit of Thulcandra. He rants on, until in the course of his own peculiarly self-centred logic (wherein Luciferian pride meets ophidian rationalism) he makes a fatal, if defiant, gesture:

"Idiot," said Weston. His voice was almost a howl and he had risen to his feet. "Idiot," he repeated. "Can you understand nothing? Will you always try to press everything back into the miserable framework of your old jargon about self and self-sacrifice? That is the old accursed dualism in another form. There is no possible distinction in concrete thought between me and the universe. In so far as I am the conductor of the central forward pressure of the universe, I am it. Do you see, you timid, scruple-mongering fool? I am the Universe. I, Weston, am your God and your Devil. I call that force into me completely..."

Voyage to Venus, p.86.

At this point Weston becomes literally possessed by the Bent One and is reduced from being the willing instrument of the dark Force to just its zombie; his Faustian hubris has finally brought him annihilation, not emancipation and power. The stage is again set for Ransom, representing the forces of Good, to contend against the Force of Evil.

The contest is scriptural; Weston is determined to tempt the Lady of Perelandra - another Eve - to defy the wisdom of Maledil, the Supreme Cosmical Spirit. One admirer of Lewis's fiction writes glowingly of his treatment of this Edenic storyline:

...Lewis daringly tells the story of a new temptation. The continuance of this beautiful world where innocence and experience need not be incompatible and where thought, action, and emotion are one, depends on the

decision of its two inhabitants. It can vanish, as did Eden, with the wrong choice of a reasonable being, bound only by a single commandment of love. The drama is focussed on the Queen Mother and her ability to observe the simple injunction laid upon her, as Weston...now irrevocably lost to grace, plays the role of tempter, and with every specious argument from the appeal to intellectual pride to a plea - so familiar to modern ears - for a relative Morality, tries to destroy the goodness from which it has now become his very nature to recoil. Ransom, on the other hand, aware of the tragic consequences of second Fall, plays the good angel in these discussions with the Perelandran Eve.

38.

Despite Ransom's best efforts, Weston persuades her to be assertive, envious and vain; but fortunately she quickly rejects his temptations. The conflict now moves to another plane: Ransom, so named for his mission as an aspect of Maledil who, in another time, has made an ultimate sacrifice as Jesus, has to contest the issue physically with 'Un-man', as he now thinks of Weston. After an epic struggle for ascendancy in which his determination and resilience are proved, he succeeds in killing Weston and thus preserves this prelapsarian world from the taint of an Original Sin. In his last pages, the novelist turns seer; and if this impulse is quintessentially the science fiction author's, the aspiration which is conveyed is manifestly devout:

The final chapter of Perelandra (i.e., Voyage to Venus) ...is explicitly teleological. The discussion of the 'ends' that await both Perelandra and Thulcandra and - by analogy - each of their respective occupants is eventually clarified...through the comments of the eldila.

39.

As the eldila Malacandra and Perelandra, the archons of Mars and Venus, confirm: "'The world is born today. Today for the first time two creatures of the low worlds, two images of Maledil that breathe and breed like the beasts, step up that step at which your parents fell, and sit in the throne of what they were meant to be. It was never seen before.'" (pp.182-183) Recognised as Friend and Saviour by

the Adam and Eve of this new world, Tor and Tinidril, Ransom has achieved a new understanding of the real spirit of the Cosmos, and before he is returned to Thulcandra more sensitive, astute, resourceful, and wise about the purpose and meaning of life, he learns that his native world must be redeemed or it will be swept away as a flawed creation.

That Hideous Strength relates how Ransom and a small band of acolytes thwart the shadowy, corrupt, and fascist scientists of the N.I.C.E., 'the first-fruit of that constructive fusion between the state and the laboratory on which so many thoughtful people base their hopes of a better world.'(p.13) By calling up among other things the chivalric, heroic spirit of old Christian England personified by the resurrected Merlin, Ransom and his company are able to defeat those who labour under the dark influence of the Bent One. Characteristically, Lewis manages to make the contest at the heart of this, the final novel of the series, no less gripping or poetic than its predecessors. Still more Gothic in tone than the contest between the Un-man and Ransom, Lewis manages to make this seem Ransom's most desperate confrontation yet. That Hideous Strength also includes another inventive and pointed attack by Lewis on scientific materialism. Though in his Preface to the abridged, better known edition of 1955 he acknowledges the fantastic aspects of his "'tall story' about devilry", he is also quick to claim that "it has behind it a serious 'point'". In describing the central unifying theme of the trilogy, Scholes and Rabkin identify that serious point Lewis claims for this and, we may suppose, other stories:

The challenge that Lewis mounted was not simply a challenge to Gernsback & Co. It was a challenge to science itself, and the modern technological culture based upon science, to produce an ethic worth living and dying for.

It was also, clearly, a challenge Lewis felt could not be met. For him, ethical theory was capable of no development and needed none. What Christianity provided was sufficient.

40.

In this marvellous conservative tale (which quite outshines Noyes's The Last Man), Lewis again reviles the hubris of a scientific positivism whose ultimate aim is the advent of the New Man, the era of "Man Immortal and Man Ubiquitous", as the crazy Italian physiologist Filostrato reveals to Mark Studdock halfway through the novel. The polemic is again directed against this vision of all-conquering scientific Man, always contending for even greater mastery of the universe and its subjugation to heroic human will.

This time the setting, Bracton College, is nearer home than Mars or Venus, and the threat Lewis pits Ransom against has a topicality which adds force to his theme. Wartime centralisation has allowed the development of powerful secular organisations such as the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments. This scientific body (enthusiastically supported by the College's 'Progressive Element') is growing in power, influence and size at the expense of older institutions such as the College, from whom it acquires land, including Merlin's Well, for its new laboratories. It also enlists a new cadre of radical intellectuals such as Mark Studdock, an ambitious College sociologist who is recruited by Lord Feverstone ostensibly as a propagandist. The ends and means of the N.I.C.E. programme (as explained to Mark by Feverstone, prime mover behind the College's acceptance of the N.I.C.E. offer for Bragdon Wood) have aspects not just of the Brave New World or Walden Two but indeed the Third Reich:

"As I said, the interplanetary problem must be left on one side for the moment. The second problem is our rivals on this planet. I don't mean only insects and bacteria. There's too much life of every kind about, animal and vegetable. We haven't really cleared the place yet. All that is to be gone into."

"Go on. This interests me very much."

"Man has got to take charge of man. That means, remember, that some men have to take charge of the rest."

"What sort of thing have you in mind?"

"Quite simple and obvious things, at first - sterilisation of the unfit, liquidation of backward races, selective breeding. Then real education, including pre-natal education. By real education I mean one that makes the patient what it wants infallibly: whatever he or his parents try to do about it. Of course, it'll have to be mainly psychological at first. But we'll get on to biochemical conditioning in the end and direct manipulation of the brain. A new type of man..."

That Hideous Strength, pps.26-27.

If we consider Brave New World as science fiction, as opposed to science fantasy, we may surely view That Hideous Strength in the same way, not least because it deals with the very same subject - the effects of scientific advances on people - and because its author takes few if any liberties with his theological premises. An important observation must be made here, however. It would be quite wrong to allow Lewis to persuade us that the precepts of the N.I.C.E. offend us because they are heretical - which they are - since they outrage the ethics of humanism not one whit less. These hopes are profane because they are totalitarian, not because they are irreligious or hubristic.

The "interplanetary problem" which Feverstone mentions is a retrospective allusion to Weston's failure to defeat the eldila and their representative, Ransom, in Voyage to Venus. Weston may no longer have any value to Lewis as a materialistic villain, but he has a whole crowd of malign successors led by Prof. Frost and the D.D. (ironically, "Depute Director" rather than Doctor of Divinity). "Fairy" Hardcastle (a sadistic bisexual 'policewoman'), Filostrato,

Straik (a psychotic clergyman who repudiates the "damnable doctrine" that only Heaven can be perfect) and the cynical, duplicitous Devine (now Lord Feverstone) - whatever their peculiarities, all who are involved with the N.I.C.E. have one attribute in common, power-lust. Frost and Wither can afford to allow them temporal power, because these Faustian twins aspire to a superior, infinite power.

Outwardly, the N.I.C.E. is an organisation created for the systematic investigation of how to gain the maximum possible national advantage from positivistic innovation. No less than the Ilium Works of Player Piano, it is an ironic tribute to national greed. However, the Inner Circle controlled by Frost and Wither are given to believe that it has a clandestine purpose. Science is to be the means of establishing a nasty new brand of totalitarianism - in the name of racial preservation: "'humanity's at the cross-roads...it is the main question at the moment: which side one's on - obscurantism or order. If Science is given a free hand it can now take over the human race and recondition it: make man a really efficient animal. If it doesn't - well, we're done.'"(p.25). The young sociologist is adroitly manipulated by Feverstone, Hardcastle and the D.D., Wither, into surrendering his Bracton Fellowship in exchange for a very precarious existence in the Inner Circle of the N.I.C.E. as their principal propagandist. Lewis, ever eager to illustrate the Christian doctrines about sin and personal responsibility, identifies the moment when Mark goes over to the enemy:

This was the first thing Mark had been asked to do which he himself, before he did it, clearly knew to be criminal. But the moment of his consent almost escaped his notice; certainly, there was no struggle, no sense of turning a corner.

That Hideous Strength, p.79.

Ironically, Mark has not been recruited for his own sake, as he

vainly believes, for the N.I.C.E. actually want his clairvoyant wife. However, to keep him in their camp, Mark is shown Belbury's most secret project - the Head. Alcasan has been guillotined for murder, but his head is being used for a gruesome experiment in artificial intelligence and life-support. Here Lewis draws on a source of Gothic horror which goes back through The Island of Doctor Moreau at least to Frankenstein. Vivisection and scientific interference in the usual processes of life and decay have prevented the murderer's head from corrupting, and then have brought his brain to an unnatural level of development, as Jane Studdock - herself a clairvoyant - recounts:

"I thought I saw a face floating in front of me. A face, not a head, if you understand. That is, there was a beard and nose and coloured glasses, but there didn't seem to be anything above the eyes. Not at first. But as I got used to light, I thought the face was a mask tied to a kind of balloon. But it wasn't, exactly...I'm telling this badly. What it really was, was a head (the rest of a head) which had had the top part of the skull taken off and then...then...as if something inside had boiled over. A great big mass which bulged out from inside what was left of the skull. Wrapped in some sort of composition stuff, but very thin stuff. You could see it twitch. I could remember thinking, 'Oh kill it. Put it out of its pain.' But only for a second, because I thought the thing was dead, really. It was green looking and the mouth was wide open and quite dry. And soon I saw that it wasn't floating. It was fixed up on some kind of bracket, and there were things hanging from it. From the neck, I mean. Yes, it had a neck, but nothing below: no shoulders or body. Only these hanging things. Little rubber tubes and bulbs and metal things."

That Hideous Strength, p.107.

Jane Studdock has been having nightmares which have greatly distressed her. Fearing she is going mad, Jane visits a psycho-therapist who invites her to join Ransom's household in St. Anne's -on-the-Hill because this evidence of her unique gift will in time also betray her to the Inner Circle of the N.I.C.E. The scientists and fascists must prevent her joining Ransom's company, who are also preparing for the coming titanic struggle between the Oyeresu like

Maledil and the Bent One. Modern-minded Jane initially rejects the invitation; the gentle community, led by the Director, Ransom - who is coincidentally the last Pendragon, and the contemporary Master of Merlinus Ambrosius - strikes her as an oddly old-fashioned, other-worldly lot. Still, having fallen briefly into the clutches of the Fairy who, oblivious to her real importance, delightedly tortures her, Jane joins the Company who will contend against Frost, Wither and the N.I.C.E. to save mankind from itself. Ransom's explanation conflicts with that later advanced to account for the N.I.C.E.'s adaptation of Alcasan's head: "...if this technique is really successful, the Belbury people have for all practical purposes discovered a way of making themselves immortal. It is the beginning of what is really a new species - the Chosen Heads who will never die. They will call it the next step in evolution. And henceforward all the creatures that you and I call human are mere candidates for admission to the new species or else its slaves - perhaps its food."(p.117) The association of evolution and anthropophagy may be coincidental, but recalls The Time Machine.

Even Ransom does not know the real nature of the threat to the world; "humanity" (ultimately meaning not just the race but even the essential qualities of thought and conduct we can exhibit in our best, most gracious moments) is to be replaced by 'Technocracy'; and modern scientific warfare - which spares the scientist alone - is to be the means of attaining a profane totalitarianism after the spiritually weak are not just reduced to servility but destroyed. Frost tells Mark that "The masses are therefore to disappear. The body is to become all head. The human race is to become all Technocracy." (p.157). The Inner Circle are simply useful dupes.

Jane and Studdock in their different ways each represent "ordinary" humans whose weaknesses are symptomatic of what Lewis calls contemporary evils. Lewis is less harsh in reproaching Jane, but his contempt for her independence, and Ransom's insistence on her (sexual) submission to the (mystical) religion of Christ to 'cure' her of alleged marital - and hence, personal - inadequacy (p.194), is to say the least unfortunate; it would doubtless infuriate many readers who do not share Lewis's appreciation of St.Paul's ideas about the inequality of the sexes. On the other hand, Lewis simply reviles 'Modern' man, represented by Mark:

It must be remembered that in Mark's mind hardly one rag of noble thought, either Christian or Pagan, had a secure lodging. His education had been neither scientific nor classical - merely "Modern". The severities both of abstraction and of high human tradition had passed him by: and he had neither peasant shrewdness nor aristocratic honour to help him. He was a man of straw, a glib examinee in subjects that require no exact knowledge...

That Hideous Strength, p.109.

Much praise has been lavished on Lewis's novel, but it is important - and not just to be able to place him in a correct generic tradition - to recognise that the work is imbued with values which are not always as humane or liberal as Lewis insists. The forcefulness of Lewis's rhetoric and his own moral certitude may be compelling, perhaps even in some respects admirable; but they are also - inarguably - tendentious. Mark Studdock is "Modern" not simply because Lewis wants to portray the susceptibility to evil of contemporary young people who have rejected Christian values and have no time for traditional virtues or scholarship, but because Lewis wants to allow scope in his fiction for his ideas about the insidious changes in human nature which would result in 'the Abolition of Man' (41). Mark, a modern man, is also to a fair degree already an 'abolished' man.

Later, it becomes clear that both Jane and Mark are of greater significance than most of their N.I.C.E. tormentors realise. The Head is deceptive; far less even than the mundane version of life eternal (as Filostrato and the Inner Circle are led to believe) it is merely a sort of cosmic telephone through which Frost and Wither communicate with their dark overlord, as Frost explains to Mark: "'The vocal organs and brain taken from Alcasan...have become the conductors of a regular intercourse between the macrobes and our species.'"(p.156) This of course is a grotesque travesty of the role which Jane performs for Ransom's company; the dripping, gruesome oracle is materialism's answer to her providential gift. Jane's clairvoyance helps Ransom deprive the N.I.C.E. opposition of the great power of Merlin, who lay suspended in a 'parachronic trance' in his tomb at the heart of Bragdon Wood.

Merlin is acquainted with the facts by Ransom, and he departs to do battle with the progressive scientific establishment in defence of the time-honoured religious values and liberties he symbolizes. Coincidentally, Lewis achieves a mystical lineage for his chosen creed which, by association, he takes back beyond the Tudor Reformation which actually established it. Both Mark and Jane are vital to its continuation, Merlin reveals, because they are the last carriers of the genes of the noble house of Logres.

In the closing chapters of the novel Lewis allows his gift for derisive irony free rein as he lampoons the would-be conquerors of humanity. Merlin, invested with preternatural powers by the angelic macrobes who long ago on Mars took Ransom into their confidence, is admitted to Belbury as an interpreter for the tramp whom Frost and Wither believe to be the resurrected mage of the Dark Ages. Mark,

meantime, has declined to join Frost and Wither as the third N.I.C.E. potentate; he has been unable to desecrate a crucifix as part of his initiation into their infernal magistracy. In a cruelly comic, bitter setpiece enlivened by the veritably scriptural confusion of tongues Merlin conjures up, the Inner Circle and their guests are massacred after a sumptuous dinner by the tortured beasts which Merlin has released from the vivisectionists' animal houses adjoining the Banquet Hall at Belbury. Retribution (in the form of justice of a bloodily poetic kind) also falls on the three chief scientists Filostrato, Frost and Wither before the earth simply swallows up the whole of Edgestow - Belbury, Bracton College and Bragdon Wood.

As one might expect from a writer with such pronounced religious convictions, the keynotes of Lewis's final chapter are providence and redemption. Even Curry, the last survivor of the College which has been subverted so easily by the N.I.C.E., is not immune. He believes he has found a new vocation:

Curry always in later life regarded this as one of the turning-points of his life. He had not up till then been a religious man. But the word that now instantly came into his mind was "Providential". He'd been within an ace of taking the earlier train: and if he had... The whole College wiped out! It would have to be rebuilt. There'd be a complete new set of Fellows, a new Warden. It was Providential again that some responsible person should have been spared. The more he thought of it, the more fully Curry realised that the whole shaping of the future college with the sole survivor. It was almost like being a second founder. Providential--providential.

That Hideous Strength, p.245.

However, the signs are all there. With admirable, practised facility Lewis ironically and subtly exposes Curry's post-lapsarian mentality - the vanity, the ambition, the desire to recreate and transform into one's own image, and thereby propagate that image: these are the scars of Man's Fall from Grace which disfigure humanity. Only at St.

Anne's-on-the-Hill is there truly hope for a new beginning, but even that, as Ransom has already revealed to his little band of the elect, will have to endure in the face of a threat of extinction which will persist as long as humanity wears its materialist aspect. Lewis adopts a sociopolitical metaphor for this penultimate revelation, which is taken up by the exemplary Christian scholar Dimple, who gives a broader exposition of Ransom's description of England as the outcome of the contending energies of Logres, and Britain:

"..if one is thinking simply of goodness in the abstract, one soon reaches the fatal idea of something standardised - some common kind of life to which all nations ought to progress. Of course there are universal rules to which all goodness must conform. But that's only the grammar of virtue. ...The whole work of healing Tellus depends on nursing that little spark, on incarnating that ghost, which is still alive in every real people, and different in each. When Logres really dominates Britain, when the goddess Reason, the divine clearness, is really enthroned in France, when the order of Heaven is really followed in China - why, then it will be spring. But, meantime, our concern is with Logres. We've got Britain down, but who knows how long we can hold her down? Edgestow will not recover from what is happening to her tonight. But there will be other Edgestows.

That Hideous Strength, pp.242-243.

While this seems less than propitious, Ransom finally conveys to them the significance of their victory before he returns to his beloved Venus: "Perelandra is all about us, and Man is no longer isolated. We are now as we ought to be - between the angels who are our elder brothers and the beasts who are our jesters, servants, and play-fellows."(p.248) On this note - the gravity of which is somewhat diluted by the comic intrusions of love-smitten animals who are enjoying noisy assignations all around Ransom's headquarters - Lewis concludes his elaborate parable with a dash of lyrical eroticism. Mark and Jane, rehabilitated and purified by their participation in the struggle against evil, are reconciled as Christian lovers; and a

prospect is opened up to Mankind of a devout fulfillment from which the transgression of Adam and Eve had barred all their descendants.

Lewis's promised millenium might well seem 'unintoxicating' (to use Leavis's word) to all sorts of readers, but perhaps especially to materialists, atheists and other scientific sceptics. In the prefaces of Out of the Silent Planet and Voyage to Venus, Lewis explicitly repudiates any suggestion that any character is to be identified as H.G.Wells, perhaps the supreme contemporary champion of agnostic and atheistic rationalism, even going so far as to make his enjoyment of Wells's stories a matter of record: 'The author would be sorry if any reader supposed he was too stupid to have enjoyed Mr. H.G. Wells's fantasies or too ungrateful to acknowledge his debt to them.' (Out of the Silent Planet) Yet the treatment of rationalism in That Hideous Strength and the other two books shows Lewis as a committed opponent of scientific materialism. When Ransom hopes to see "the goddess Reason, the divine clearness...really enthroned in France" he means 'reasonableness' rather than rationalism.

Walter M.Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz(1959) shares a major theme of Lewis's trilogy, that of an individual's moral responsibility not only for his own actions, but for the wider activities of any organisation to which he belongs:

Thon Thaddeo knew the military ambitions of his monarch. He had a choice: to approve of them, to disapprove of them, or to regard them as impersonal phenomena beyond his control like a flood, famine, or whirlwind.

Evidently he accepted them as inevitable - to avoid having to make a moral judgement. Let there be blood, iron and weeping...

How could a man thus evade his own conscience and disavow his responsibility - and so easily! the abbot stormed to himself.

But then the words came back to him. For in those days, the Lord God had suffered the wise men to know the means by which the world itself might be destroyed...

He also suffered them to know how it might be saved,
and, as always, let them choose for themselves.

A Canticle, p.176.

Miller's novel possesses the same devout principle which informs Lewis's trilogy, the need for individual commitment and sacrifice to preserve mankind from self-destruction in a welter of materialist delusions about our unique importance and right to dominion over the world and beyond. Yet in most other respects they are rather different. A blend of anecdote, reportage and chronicle, Miller's style may be less conspicuously erudite and colourful than Lewis's, but his seems to advance the more compassionate view of human nature. In any case his novel does also attest Miller's familiarity with both scientific and ecclesiastical history, both of which are used to excellent effect in his story of a new Dark Age, Renaissance and Fall. While in their different ways the books are absorbing and thought-provoking, Miller's novel has always struck this reader as the more disturbing and profound.

The focal point of Miller's novel is the monastery of St. Leibowitz, somewhere in the American desert. It is the setting for the theological and cultural dilemma of each of the novel's three parts, Fiat Homo, Fiat Lux and Fiat Voluntas Tua. The novel as a whole forms an account of a renewed cycle of social evolution following a nuclear catastrophe, and in it Miller takes the philosophia perennia thousands of years into the future and ultimately into space.

The Roman Catholic Church is depicted as the final bastion of a traditional religious humanism, and the Order of Blessed Leibowitz is its archive of ancient secular knowledge. The Brothers collect and lovingly preserve scraps of information left after the destruction of our high-tech world, though usually they are unaware of the signifi-

-cance of their finds. The Memorabilia contains the relatively few remaining writings which have escaped the holocaust of the twentieth century and the Simplification - an orgy of vengeance when the outraged survivors destroy scientists and their texts. It would be quite wrong to assume with Thon Thaddeo in Fiat Lux that the Memorabilia is preserved simply because knowledge is man's birthright and, whatever the myths about a primordial Fall from Grace may suggest to the contrary, is the means whereby men can exert dominion over their world. Rather, the information the monks have garnered for the rebirth of learning is morally neutral, as Frank D. Kievitt (for whom the novel is 'a third testament that interprets religious truth in a way that makes it more real and immediate' for contemporary mankind) has also observed:

The most precious treasure that the monks guard is the Memorabilia, a series of documents preserving the secrets of nuclear power. The double purpose of the monks reflects Miller's themes; man needs religion, but he also needs science and technology. Miller does not see religion and science as in any way antithetical. If man allows himself to be directed by his spiritual side and uses technology in accord with divine revelation, it is a good that must be both preserved and defended. ...Man is far beyond any nineteenth century dichotomization of science and religion into conflicting and competing systems; they are both integral to man's nature and inheritance and, as such, must be equally cultivated and cherished.

42.

Kievitt's reading is too sanguine, however. It is, of course, the use to which the knowledge is put, and the attitudes which govern its application, which involve moral or ethical values, no less for Thon Thaddeo than for Faustus or Victor Frankenstein. Moreover A Canticle for Leibowitz concludes with the world once again destroyed through Man's moral failure. As Russell M. Griffin argues, the heart of the matter is whether the scientist is actually capable of acting responsibly enough to be able to eschew the temptation to exploit

knowledge recklessly and ruthlessly:

The central quest of the novel, then, becomes the search for a leader of sufficient spiritual strength and wisdom to transcend technology's control of man and to direct technology toward some kind of moral good, a man who can subordinate scientia to sapientia.

43.

Unfortunately, since our present interest has more to do with the second and final sections, one can make only the briefest allusion to the first section of this fine novel, and its two main characters, the irascible Dom Arkos, Abbot, and Brother Francis, the self-effacing, honest novice who is denied full admission to the order for years because he discovers the Fallout Shelter controversially held by some of his fellows to be the last resting place of Emily Leibowitz, wife of the order's founder. The ecclesiastical wrangle which dominates this section hinges on whether Emily was dead before the Blessed Leibowitz became a holy book-keeper and suffered martyrdom. The Order wish to have their patron canonised, but the Abbot is mistrustful of Francis's insistence that he was shown the Shelter by a mysterious, wizened traveller who left him a cryptic message in Hebrew. After the documents found by Francis have been inspected separately by the official promoter of the Order's case and by the Advocatus Diaboli, the Pope announces Leibowitz's canonization. Miller has taken Francis to New Rome to attend the ceremony and receive the Papal Blessing, but on his journey home the patient monk is killed and eaten by mutant bandits.

Unless one is prepared to assume that he has gone to a heavenly reward, Francis's fate seems a poor return on his years of dedicated labour and integrity: perhaps he is thus spared the temptation to personal vanity which, as the instrument of the canonization, he would meet if he did return to the monastery with his great news.

Yet to read his life thus would not be in the spirit of the novel:

...in a dark sea of centuries wherein nothing seemed to flow, a lifetime was only a brief eddy, even for the man who lived it. There was a tedium of repeated days and repeated seasons; then there were aches and pains, finally Extreme Unction, and a moment of blackness at the end - or at the beginning, rather. For then the small shivering soul who had endured the tedium, endured it badly or well, would find itself in a place of light, find itself absorbed in the burning gaze of infinitely compassionate eyes as it stood before the Just One. And then the King would say: "Come," or the King would say: "Go," and only for that moment had the tedium of years existed. It would be hard to believe differently during such an age as Francis knew.

Brother Sarl finished the fifth page of his mathematical restoration, collapsed over his desk, and died a few hours later. Never mind. His notes were intact. Someone, after a century or two, would come along and find them interesting, would perhaps complete the work. Meanwhile, prayers ascended for the soul of Sarl.

A Canticle, p.68.

Centuries pass and the world is becoming a technological place again as scholars and scientists re-invent the learning lost with the fiery passing of the old world. Brother Francis is now revered as the Venerable Francis of Utah and the village of Sanly Bowits, which has grown up near the monastery, can boast an uniquely high literacy rate of 8% thanks to the efforts of the monks. Yet Fiat Lux begins in the court of Hannegan, perhaps the most powerful of the princelings whose states have grown up amid the debris of the past. It is the year 3174, and since Hannegan is bent upon the conquest and political reunification of the continent, New Rome is represented at his court by Marcus Apollo. The prelate's mission is to keep his superiors informed so that they can prevent the Church becoming involved in the wars which they expect will accompany Hannegan's empire-building. Apollo has an immediate problem, however, in the shape of the brilliant, anti-clerical scientist Thon Thaddeo, the bastard son of Hannegan's father. Thaddeo represents the new breed of scientist, and his scepticism is

a familiar challenge to Christian ethics:

Thon Thaddeo was peering at something in the street below. He beckoned to the priest. "Come here a minute. I'll show you why."

Apollo slipped from behind the desk and looked down at the muddy rutted street beyond the wall that encircled the palace and barracks and buildings of the collegium, cutting off the mayoral sanctuary from the seething plebeian city. The scholar was pointing at the shadowy figure of a peasant leading a donkey homeward at twilight. The man's feet were wrapped in sackcloth, and the mud had caked about them so that he seemed scarcely able to lift them. But he trudged ahead in one slogging step after another, resting half a second between footfalls. He seemed too weary to scrape off the mud.

"He doesn't ride the donkey," Thon Thaddeo stated, "because this morning the donkey was loaded down with corn. It doesn't occur to him that the packs are empty now. What is good enough for the morning is also good enough for the afternoon."

"You know him?"

"He passes under my window too. Every morning and evening. Hadn't you noticed him?"

"A thousand like him."

"Look. Can you bring yourself to believe that that brute is the lineal descendant of men who supposedly invented machines that flew, who travelled to the moon, harnessed the forces of Nature, built machines that could talk and seemed to think? Can you believe there were such men?"

Apollo was silent.

"Look at him!" the scholar persisted. "No, but it's too dark now. You can't see the syphilis outbreak on his neck, the way the bridge of his nose is being eaten away. Paresis. But he was undoubtedly a moron to begin with. Illiterate, superstitious, murderous. ...Look at him, and tell me if you see the progeny of a once-mighty civilization? What do you see?"

"The image of Christ," grated the monsignor, surprised at his own sudden anger. "What did you expect me to see?"

The scholar huffed impatiently. "The incongruity. Men as you can observe them through any window, and men as historians would have us believe men once were. I can't accept it. How can a great and wise civilization have destroyed itself so completely?"

"Perhaps," said Apollo, "by being materially great and materially wise, and nothing else." He went to light a tallow lamp, for the twilight was rapidly fading into night. He struck steel and flint until the spark caught and he blew gently at it in the tinder.

"Perhaps," said Thon Thaddeo, "but I doubt it."

A Canticle, pp.105-106.

The secular philosopher has heard something of the work of the Order and is keen to assess their scientific archive for himself, but he is not willing to cross the continent to inspect their treasures at the abbey. However, since the monks will not accede to his request he reluctantly makes his way there two years later. Mistrusting their motives, the Order is wary of allowing the scientists of the new era access to their Memorabilia, as the Abbot Dom Paulo confides to Benjamin, the Wandering Jew who showed Francis of Utah where the Fallout Shelter was hidden, and who later buried him after the buzzards had finished with him. Benjamin is an interesting and unusual character. A sort of anti-Mephistopheles, he figures in all three sections as a cynical kind of oracle. He claims to have lived from the time of Christ, and the sole purpose of his existence seems to be to witness the Second Coming. All this makes the archaic wisdom of his counsel rather hard to credit, even on those rare occasions when clerics like Paulo are prepared to listen, however sceptically, to his uncompromising pronouncements: "'I have no sympathy for you. The books you stowed away may be hoary with age, but they were written by children of the world, and they'll be taken from you by children of the world, and you had no business meddling with them in the first place.'"(p.144)

Still, ever hopeful that the mistakes of the past will not be made again, and aware that the probable consequences of further refusal would entail the loss of the Memorabilia, Dom Paulo receives Thaddeo cordially. Neither the abbot or his guest know that the greatest scientist of his day is in for a couple of unpleasant surprises thanks to the activities of one Brother Kornhoer.

Unlike his brethren, Kornhoer is no mere copyist; in fact he is

as much a new breed as Thaddeo, whom he admires. Kornhoer is an experimenter whose catchword "Progress!" is a defiant answer to the Keeper of the Memorabilia's cry of "Perdition!" The locus of their confrontation is the vaulted basement Library where much against Brother Ambruster's wishes Kornhoer has been allowed to construct a dynamo to power the first electric arc-light made in centuries. Thus, there are signs within the Order, too, of the restoration of lost knowledge and skills, and there is talk of a Renaissance; into this comes Thon Thaddeo, whose first discovery is that Kornhoer has outstripped him in the practical application of his own theorems:

"CONTACT!" said Brother Kornhoer, as Dom Paulo, Thon Thaddeo and his clerk descended the stairs.

The monk on the ladder struck the arc. A sharp spffft!-- and blinding light flooded the vaults with a brilliance that had not been seen in twelve centuries.

The group stopped on the stairs. Thon Thaddeo gasped an oath in his native tongue. He retreated a step. The abbot, who had neither witnessed the testing of the device nor credited extravagant claims, blanched and stopped speech in mid-sentence. The clerk froze momentarily in panic and suddenly fled, screaming "Fire!"

The abbot made the sign of the cross. "I had not known!" he whispered.

The scholar, having survived the first shock of the flare, probed the basement with his gaze, noticing the drive-mill, the monks who strained at its beams. His eyes traveled along the wrapped wires, noticed the monk on the ladder, measured the meaning of the wagon-wheel dynamo and the monk who stood waiting, with downcast eyes, at the foot of the stairs.

"Incredible!" he breathed.

The monk at the foot of the stairs bowed in acknowledgment and depreciation. The blue-white glare cast knife-edge shadows in the room, and the candle flames became blurred wisps in the tide of light.

"Bright as a thousand torches," breathed the scholar. "It must be an ancient - but no! Unthinkable!"

A Canticle, p.156.

Delightfully inventive though this episode is, Miller is not content to merely serve up to the reader re-runs of great moments in the history of science, or metaphoric dramatizations of experiments from the pages of some primer in electrostatics. Rather his design is to

suggest that ironically the obscure monk is in many respects the equal of his famous, privileged co-devotee of natural philosophy and the lore of the ancients, as he implies in describing Thaddeo's shocked reaction - 'But there was no balm to soothe an affront to professional pride - then or in any other age.'(p.157) There is another, more sombre irony in the allusion to the birth of light which is the threshold to another scientific era doomed to fiery self-extinction.

Kornhoer will find himself caught, however briefly, between his faith and his interest in natural philosophy, for Thaddeo covets his workmanship almost as much as the secrets of the Memorabilia. His dilemma is symbolic of that facing the Order at large, for with this late rebirth of science and scholarship the order's role is becoming less crucial, and the monks' stark choice is between themselves becoming progressive investigators and innovators or keeping to their traditional purpose, which will become less and less important and meaningful. But as Kornhoer's decision attests, their dedication is neither self-seeking nor profane; as he prefers the demands of his faith over the rewards of pursuing his own interests, so does the Order's ancient religious discipline require it to remain independent of secular princes and their whim.

While the scientist resides in the monastery its community can serve him as it was ordained to, and the impending challenge the Order faces remains vague; but as Paulo perceives, it is both inevitable and profound. The long and patiently awaited moment when the outside world will use the knowledge held in the Memorabilia has arrived; and while the question which perplexes Paulo is the world's ethical readiness for it, he has no choice but to release it to Thon

Thaddeo. However, when war at last breaks out as Hannegan pursues his strategies to achieve hegemony, the central issue (never far from the surface) re-emerges, as this exchange shows:

"Keep science cloistered, don't try to apply it, don't try to do anything about it until men are holy. Well, it won't work. You've been doing it here in this abbey for generations."

"We haven't withheld anything."

"You haven't withheld it; but you sat on it so quietly, nobody knew it was here, and you did nothing with it."

Brief anger fired in the old priest's eyes. "It's time you met our founder, I think," he growled, pointing to the wood-carving in the corner. "He was a scientist like yourself before the world went mad and he ran for sanctuary."

....Shall I read you a list of our martyrs? Shall I name all the battles we have fought to keep these records intact? All the monks blinded in the copyroom? for your sake? Yet you say we did nothing with it, withheld it by silence."

"Not intentionally," the scholar said, "but in effect you did - and for the very motives you imply should be mine. If you try to save wisdom until the world is wise, Father, the world will never have it."

"I can see the misunderstanding is basic!" the abbot said gruffly. "To serve God first, or to serve Hannegan first - that's your choice."

"I have little choice, then," answered the thon. "Would you have me work for the Church?" The scorn in his voice was unmistakeable.

A Canticle, pp.184-185.

Though Miller takes a gentler line with science and the scientist than did Lewis or Noyes, he is by no means ready to present them as faultless, objective, disinterested men of superior intellect. Indeed, however brilliant, Thaddeo is by turns arrogant, petty, vain and humourless. Yet Miller's clerics are occasionally shown to be just as fallible, so one is left with the impression that Miller's depiction of science and the scientist is more balanced than that of his predecessors. For instance, Thaddeo is not without honour, as his decision to give the abbot the plans of the monastery's defences prepared by the officers of his escort shows, and in this he surpasses Lewis's conceited scholar, the opportunistic and self-seeking

Curry. For all that, Miller no more exempts the scientist from culpability for the use to which his inventions are put than did Noyes before him:

When confronted by evil, this well-meaning but hypocritical scientist merely closes his eyes. He ignores, for the sake of convenience, his clear moral duty to oppose evil in any way that he can.

....Thon Thaddeo is connected with the scientists who, by disclaiming their responsibility, paved the way for the destruction that has already occurred and for that which will occur in the final chapter of the novel; and all of them together are identified with Pilate, who washed his hands to symbolize that he was free from any guilt in the death of Christ. But Pilate could not rid himself of the blame for Christ's crucifixion, nor can the scientists squirm out from under the burden of responsibility for the crucifixion of mankind on a nuclear cross.

44.

The flaws in the thon's personality emerge most fully as the second section of the novel draws to a close. "...you sat on (science) so quietly, nobody knew it was here", he accuses Paulo - for what Thaddeo cannot face is that his own victories, won painstakingly in the Collegium laboratory, are but the reiteration of what was once known and proved. Thus, his feelings have been hurt where they are most sensitive - his vanity and pride. Miller exploits this to the full at the climax of the second section. Such is his admiration of the people of the past that he can suggest - in fulfillment of his author's ironical twist - that contemporary mankind may not be their descendants: "I only offer the conjecture that the pre-Deluge race, which called itself Man, succeeded in creating life. Shortly before the fall of their civilization, they successfully created the ancestors of present humanity - 'after their own image' - as a servant species." The thon has at last gone too far for the abbot, as Miller shows in a vivid, uncompromising confrontation between them which suggests how diverse - even exclusive - their per-

spectives really are. The angry exchange culminates with the abbot's denunciation of the thon's motives:

The scholar shrugged helplessly. "You see? I knew you would be offended, but you told me-- Oh, what's the use? You have your account of it."

"The 'account' that I was quoting, Sir Philosopher, was not an account of the manner of creation, but an account of the manner of the temptation that led to the Fall. Did that escape you? 'And the serpent said to the woman--'"

"Yes, yes, but the freedom to speculate is essential--"

"No-one has tried to deprive you of that. Not is anyone offended. But to abuse the intellect for reasons of pride, vanity, or escape from responsibility, is the fruit of the same tree."

"You question the honour of my motives?" asked the thon, darkening.

"At times I question my own. I accuse you of nothing. But ask yourself this: Why do you delight in leaping to such a wild conjecture from so fragile a springboard? Why do you wish to discredit the past, even to dehumanizing the last civilization? So that you need not learn from their mistakes? Or can it be that you can't bear being only a 'rediscoverer,' and must feel that you are a 'creator' as well?"

The thon hissed an oath. "These records should be placed in the hands of competent people," he said angrily. "What irony is this!"

A Canticle, pp.192-193.

In a symbolic gesture with a wealth of implicit meaning, Kornhoer himself takes down the arc-lamp which has replaced the crucifix. But it is the abbot who returns the cross to its former place, declaring "Who reads in this alcove henceforth, let him read ad Lumina Christi!" Miller determines that the return of secular enlightenment into the world cannot eclipse the Light of the World and an older humanism; yet if the philosophia perennia prevails, so do the buzzards who grow fat off the bloody consequences of human conflict which provide a telling end to each section of the novel.

The closing section, Fiat Voluntas Tua ('Let Thy Will be done') is set in the thirty-eighth century A.D.; Lazarus, the anchorite, still roams near the Abbey of the Order of Saint Leibowitz in the city of Sanly Bowitts, and the Order of bookleggers and memorizers

still preserve the Memorabilia and have the cure of souls. However, much has changed since the days when a dying Dom Paulo of Pecos kept the Order from falling under the sway of Thon Thaddeo or a like-minded scientific successor of his. The Order has become the Church's college of former astronauts and has acquired a thoroughly modern role.

Even their patron saint's traditional reputation has not escaped change, Dom Zerchi ruefully reflects as he struggles with an undependable Autoscribe: 'in recent centuries (he) had come into wider popularity as the patron saint of electricians than he had ever won as the founder of the Albertian Order of Saint Leibowitz...' (p.206) The persistent unreliability of Zerchi's machine ironically symbolizes that even now technology is not faultless. Still, this is an age of space travel (and New Rome has another Holy Office, that of Cardinal Hoffstraff, Vicar Apost. Extraterr. Provinciae), electronics and info-tec, missiles, mass media, satellites and wholly automated interstate road traffic - and Quo peregrinatur grex. The political stakes are higher, too, with the Christian Confederacy vying on a geopolitical scale with the Asian Coalition in much the same way as Hannegan once schemed against Hongan Os, Chief of the Plains, for continental hegemony. In some respects, this is the most forceful section of the novel.

In part three, 'Fiat Voluntas Tua,' the will of God is made manifest in the destruction of the world by the union of science and technology, which has placed all the benefits of technology at the disposal of Lucifer.

45.

The Church's worst fears are to be confirmed. It has been powerless, tragically, to prevent the revival of a pernicious, progressive moral expediency which leads once again to a nuclear holocaust on

earth. Abbot Zerchi and Brother Joshua construe the signs and portents of the coming disaster, realizing that 'Lucifer is Fallen!' soon after the first two missiles are launched. As they pray for the preservation of the world, immediate measures are being considered in New Rome, and so they are given Hoffstraff's momentous command to 'reactivate Quo peregrinatur.' Consequently a missionary colony is despatched under the leadership of Father Joshua, just before the first missile strike of the 'Hot War' hits, to re-establish the Order on another world to serve the far-flung human colonies which will be all that remain of Mankind.

Quo peregrinatur grex may well appeal to the excitable reader who loves to be regaled with the images and symbols of Mankind's space age intelligence and prowess, but Miller has already reduced to absurdity these sources of pride and prestige in the very first page of Fiat Voluntas Tua: 'It was a species which often considered itself to be, basically, a race of divinely inspired toolmakers; any intelligent entity from Arcturus would instantly have perceived them to be, basically, a race of impassioned after-dinner speechmakers.' He continues in this satirical vein, 'It was inevitable, it was manifest destiny, they felt (and not for the first time) that such a race go forth and conquer the stars. To conquer them several times, if need be, and certainly to make speeches about the conquest.' (p.199) The "Church in Space" element of this last section is not developed at the expense of Miller's main preoccupation, the ineffable propriety of absolute moral values, and the redundancy of pragmatic ethics; and we may note the similarities between the new era inferred in Miller's novel - summed up by Russell M. Griffin - and those of Noyes, and Lewis, as well as of Farmer's short story:

Joshua, charged with the preservation of the Memorabilia and the Apostolic Succession, becomes the new Everyman, charged with the duty to preserve and somehow reconcile scientia with sapientia so that man may be free at last of the old order which set morality against science, and may begin again within the limits of enlightened morality. 46.

The fatal flaw in the worlds of Ford, Frazier and Thaddeo lies in their inability to leaven scientia with sapientia. Miller's novel paints a bleak picture of the self-extinction of man on Earth, but he introduces a muted note of hope. Joshua's mission is to lead the clerical expedition to a new colony world, and his hope is that there people may grow without the terrible blight which causes the catastrophic cycle on earth:

The closer men came to perfecting for themselves a paradise, the more impatient they seemed to become with it, and with themselves as well. They made a garden of pleasure, and became progressively more miserable with it as it grew in richness and power and beauty; for then, perhaps, it was easier for them to see that something was missing in the garden, some tree or shrub that would not grow. When the world was in darkness and wretchedness, it could believe in perfection and yearn for it. But when the world became bright with reason and riches, it began to sense the narrowness of the needle's eye, and that rankled for a world no longer willing to believe or learn. Well, they were going to destroy it again, were they - this garden Earth, civilized and knowing, to be torn apart again that Man might hope again in wretched darkness.

A Canticle, pp.235-236.

Miller's perspective is a religious version of Spengler's theory of cyclical collapse. Human perfectibility is impossible; the nearer we approach a perfected world the more it seems to elude us, and we consume ourselves with frustration at the unattainable prospect. Convinced of the need for acceptance to balance aspiration, Joshua hopes that another world will offer Man a new beginning with a chance to grow properly in the light of the knowledge of our limitations. Only in Farmer's story can Everyman also be a defiant Prometheus, and

even then only because his conscience speaks to him more compellingly and correctly than the orders of his superiors.

Before the final curtain is rung down on Earth's second nuclear age, Zerchi becomes involved in two situations which intimate the essential qualities of Miller's religious sensibility. In the first, Zerchi challenges the legitimacy of the euthanasia being dispensed by a doctor at a tented emergency centre to victims of deadly radiation sickness.

The ethical question is not by any means a new one, and Zerchi's hostility is credibly full-blooded and angry; but his furious denunciations do not prevail against the persuasive force of the painless death offered by the modern medic to those who have been condemned to a lingering, hideous death. Both the doctor and the priest offer a species of compassion; but the medic's fell, if palpable variety cannot in any sense lessen the enormous responsibility borne by his fellow scientists for the disaster. For all his materialistic benevolence, Doctor Cors is in effect simply increasing that burden of responsibility by facilitating the deaths of the afflicted. The priest's compassion is quite different. He counsels acceptance to the dying, quite aware that this will probably not diminish their physical suffering one whit - indeed, it will extend it for most. But his standards are fixed by divine revelation and, to cull a phrase from Noyes, 'a higher order of reality'. Neither Cors or Zerchi can offer physical healing, but the priest is able to hold out the promise of salvation where Cors can only offer a painless end. For Zerchi there is no easy reconciliation possible between human suffering and the will of God, whatever it may be; all of us, even the new-born, must bear a measure of painful atonement. Only at the

end of his life does Zerchi experience something so mystical and moving as to confound the materialist, but the sign is for him alone. Kievitt has construed its end as follows: 'In the concluding section of the novel...man becomes united with God in the via unitiva by the rediscovery of prelapsarian innocence through the magnificent paradox of faith; man is destroyed, but it is only in his destruction that he is at last made whole.' (47) Miller's conclusion is apocalyptic.

Mrs.Grales, a mutant and now a social outcast on that account, repeatedly begged the abbot to baptize the other of her two heads, the one which since birth remained inert. Perhaps because it would create a canonical difficulty (two souls inhabiting the same mortal frame? which, if any, bears the burden of the sins committed by 'their' body?) Zerchi has always resisted her pleading. But lying in the radioactive ruins of his church in the wake of a nuclear attack, Zerchi is astounded to see her other head, Rachel, apparently come to life:

...the two-headed-woman wandered into sight around a heap of rubble. She stopped and looked down at Zerchi.

"Thank God!" Mrs.Grales! See if you can find Father Lehy--"

"thank god mrs.grales see if you can..."

He blinked away a film of blood and studied her closely.

"Rachel," he breathed.

"rachel," the creature answered.

She knelt there in front of him and settled back on her heels. She watched him with cool green eyes and smiled innocently. The eyes were alert with wonder, curiosity, and - perhaps something else - but she apparently could not see that he was in pain. There was something about her eyes that caused him to notice nothing else for several seconds.

But then he noticed that the head of Mrs.Grales slept soundly on the other shoulder while Rachel smiled. It seemed a young shy smile that hoped for friendship. He tried again.

"Listen, is anyone else alive? Get--"

Melodious and solemn came her answer: "listen is anyone else alive-" She savored the words. She enunciated them distinctly. She smiled over them. Her lips reframed

them when her voice was done with them. It was more than reflexive imitation, he decided. She was trying to convey the idea: I am somehow like you.

But she had only just been born.

And you're somehow different, too, Zerchi noticed with a trace of awe.

A Canticle, p.274.

Rachel is no Frankenstein's monster; her Otherness is not threatening but redemptive, as Zerchi perceives when she spurns his attempt to baptize her, because she then offers the dying priest Communion, and afterwards, with a word she has not learned from him in their simple dialogue, she gives him a mystical parting benediction which can only be understood in the context of Zerchi's faith in the Life Eternal - "Live." Now the symbolism of Joshua's puzzling nightmare also becomes clear. During the first night of the war, he had seen himself struggling to save her from amputation. He heard Rachel identify herself as the Immaculate Conception (p.228) - a signal blasphemy - but his efforts to save her from the surgeon's knife are unavailing. Since the Brothers do not spurn Mrs. Grales or seek to correct her seeming deformity (as a well-intentioned doctor might) the apocalyptic potential Rachel embodies is preserved and the hope that the catastrophic cycle can be broken is revealed.

Zerchi dies, convinced that God has somehow sent a holy presence into the world at the time of man's worst crisis, a messenger "born" free from the taint of original sin:

The image of those cool green eyes lingered with him as long as life. He did not ask why God would choose to to raise up from a creature of primal innocence from the shoulder of Mrs.Grales, or why God gave to it the preternatural gifts of Eden - those gifts which Man had been trying to seize by brute force again from Heaven since first he lost them. He had seen primal innocence in those eyes, and a promise of resurrection. One glimpse had been a bounty, and he wept in gratitude. Afterwards he lay with his face in the wet dirt and waited.

Nothing else ever came - nothing that he saw, or felt, or heard.

A Canticle, pp.276-277.

The decision to assign to A Case of Conscience by James Blish a fairly prominent place in this discussion of devout science fiction may seem strange given Blish's opening disavowal of religious conviction 'The author...is an agnostic with no position at all in these matters. It was my intention to write about a man, not a body of doctrine.'(48) This is all very well, except that - as was the case with the novels of Lewis and Miller - without the body of doctrine the interest the reader takes in Blish's man is quite depleted, for he is a Jesuit priest for whom Christian revelation is a touchstone, a goad and a guiding light. Ramon Ruiz-Sanchez S.J. is another of the legion of scientist-priests who, like the anonymous Father of 'The Star' or the missionary of 'An Alien Agony' - and big-hearted, bumbling John Carmody - find themselves thrust into impossible situations on unfamiliar planets tailor-made to test their faith and creed. As Ramon reflects shrewdly in complete and ironic innocence of his impending trial, 'An alien planet is not a good place to strip a man of his inner defences' (p.11) - unless, of course, that is the author's very intention.

That test has been constructed with considerable attention to detail, because for all his well-known opposition to John W. Campbell's insistence on absolute adherence to known science in predicting science, Blish shows in this novel (as in many others) that he can accommodate even such pedantic critics as Campbell. In a gesture which would do credit to Wells, the pioneering genius of self-consistent science fiction, Blish provides not only a plausible line passim, but an appendix describing the astrophysics, flora and fauna of Lithia, and - lovely touch - an opening 'Pronunciation Key' advising the reader on the phonetics of the speech of the Lithians.

Yet the novel succeeds on more than this instrumental level, as Harold L. Berger notes: 'so subtly does Blish build his plot and illuminate his characters that the mystery of evil transcends the mystery of cause.'"(49).

Fr. Ruiz-Sanchez is a member of a survey team studying Lithia to decide whether the planet can be declared safe for human access. The mineral-rich planet is enormously attractive to resource-starved Earth, whose Shelter economy is in a state of self-inflicted siege. The problems which afflict Earth in the mid-21st century are mainly the consequences of two familiar evils - world overpopulation and the debilitating struggle of nations not to lose their place in the global arms race. The outcome of the survey is of vital importance to Earth, because as it turns out its only worthwhile resource is bombs. Blish treats the subject in another three novels loosely linked by theme to each other and to this(50), and he shows that this sort of self-interested, quasi-Baconian scrutiny of nature by men is a promising arena for exploring the crucial meeting-place of morality and expedient exploitation. Baconian discovery has always been portrayed in the genre, even since its earliest days, as conferring great power upon the discoverer, and the surveyors are predictably excited. Only Ruiz-Sanchez seems unwilling to take Lithia at face value.

From the outset Blish focuses on the clash of materialism and faith in the deliberations of the four-man commission whose members he characterises as being either materialistic or religious. Where Miller was content to show Man as simply being whatever emerged from the genetic maelstrom of the Diluvium Ignis Blish advances two almost distinct sorts of modern man - scientific man (materialistic and

sceptical) and spiritual man, who rarely may also be a scientist. This accords with his purposes, since his story is not about humanistic aspiration after Faustus or Prometheus, but is instead clearly a story portraying the conflict between two contending visions of life.

...Christianity first recognized the theological threat of this idea and still refers to it as Manichaeism. Unlike polytheism, this dualism does offer a reasonable alternative to the logic of Catholic apologists. And sf's most sophisticated consideration has been, without question, A Case of Conscience.

51.

This conflict will be very much a personal issue for the priest, who ultimately is the only member to dissent from the team's recommendation to open the planet. For Ruiz-Sanchez, the problem is not merely one of how proper it is to waste another world to meet burgeoning terrestrial demands, or even whether the enslavement of the gentle Lithians as a workforce is an acceptable way of preserving Mankind; the Jesuit casuist must first be convinced that Lithia is not too good to be true:

Since Lithians are completely rational, completely ethical, and completely atheistic, only their lack of a covenant with God suggests any secret compact with the Other. But the Lithians themselves seem indifferent to all such supernatural matters.

Obviously, Ramon did not have to travel all the way to Lithia to discover proponents of such rationalism (i.e., atheism), and Ramon can reject its first principle as such. But the very apparent perfection of Lithian society invites Michelis to ask "'A question'...and his voice was painfully gentle. 'To set such a trap, you must allow your Adversary to be creative. Isn't that - a heresy, Ramon?'"

52.

The question facing Ruiz-Sanchez is, for him, crucial: is Lithia, for all its paradisaal appearance, an instrument of the devil, or is it genuinely a part of the original Creation and therefore not a trap for grasping, materialistic mankind? The Lithians are gentle

beings, their society, in stark contrast to its terrestrial counterparts, a paradigm of enlightened rationality. Yet Ruiz-Sanchez is sceptical:

It was probably just as well that the commissions's report on Lithia was about to fall due. Ruiz-Sanchez had begun to think that he could absorb only a little more of this kind of calm sanity. And all of it - a disquieting thought from somewhere near his heart reminded him - all of it derived from reason, none from precept, none from faith. The Lithians did not know God. They did things rightly, and thought righteously, because it was reasonable and efficient and natural to do and think that way. They seemed to need nothing else.

Did they never have night thoughts? Was it possible that there could exist in the universe a reasoning being of a high order, which was never for an instant paralysed by the sudden question, the terror of seeing through to the meaninglessness of action, the blindness of knowledge, the barrenness of having been born at all? "Only upon this firm foundation of unyielding despair," a famous atheist once had written, "May the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built."

Or could it be that the Lithians thought and acted as they did because, not being born of man, and never in effect having left the Garden in which they lived, they did not share the terrible burden of original sin? The fact that Lithia had never once had a glacial epoch, that its climate had been left unchanged for seven hundred million years, was a geological fact that an alert theologian could scarcely afford to ignore. Could it be that, free from the burden, they were also free from the curse of Adam?

And if they were - could men bear to live among them?

A Case of Conscience, pp.42-43.

The seeming ease with which Blish is able to manipulate the complex scientific and moral issues at the centre of the novel is attested in his confirmation of the priest's theological mistrust by a perception which only his secular calling allows him - each Lithian undergoes a recapitulative gestation and embryonic development which provides dramatic proof of Darwin's principle that 'Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.' Still, one suspects that clever though this is, the real basis of the case against the Lithians - perhaps even for Blish the 'agnostic' - is the priest's shocked appreciation of what their apparently innocuous lifestyle implies about the conventional moral

outlook of his Church, as Berger states: 'For intelligent life to have arrived at the unprovable moral axioms of Christianity through reason rather than faith constitutes, says the priest, "the most colossal rebuke to (the Church's) aspirations that we have ever encountered: a people that seems to live with ease the kind of life we associate with saints alone."' (53)

The priest decides that, against the verdicts given by his colleagues, he must vote to restrict access to Lithia because it is "a sending of the devil"; in other words, the whole planet is an artefact designed to trap Mankind by the world's oldest and most powerful Adversary.

Before consideration is given to the equivocal ending which Blish contrives in order to leave the "case" apparently unresolved, it is worth noting that he also brings attention back to earth in a lengthy central section which paints a grim picture of a Huxleyan - or worse - future. Since the moral arguments associated with dystopian writing after Huxley have already been rehearsed elsewhere, we may attend more closely what happens when a young Lithian is sent into Earth's hedonistic, amoral and completely irresponsible Shelter societies. Egtverchi, the Lithians' "ambassador" to earth, is both corrupter and corrupted:

Egtverchi makes his debut as citizen at the gala staged by the wife of Lucien le Comte des Bois-Averoigne. This party to which Egtverchi goes is juxtaposed to the Lithia from which he comes. Behind him in Lithia are reason, order, moderation, graciousness, beauty. In the "underground mansion" of le Comte there is, as the location would suggest, a hell of chaos, excess, brutality and horror. The scene recalls the most ostentatious and excessive moments in The Satyricon... 54.

It is arguable that Egtverchi comes to Earth not, as Jo Allen Bradham goes on to suggest, as a sort of moral messiah but, conversely, as

the representative of the forces of a far deeper evil than even the hedonists of Earth can attain. This is evident from the perverse delight Egtverchi takes in orchestrating a disastrous global mutiny which collapses into simple violent anarchy when he makes his escape back to Lithia. Blish spells out Egtverchi's role much earlier even than this, however, when Ramon Ruiz-Sanchez is in Rome. His reaction when he hears a broadcast by the Lithian expatriate is surely not open to much misinterpretation:

To Ruiz, at least, Egtverchi's voice came through. The accent was familiar and perfect. And this for an audience full of children! Had any independent person called Egtverchi ever really existed? If so, he was possessed - but Ruiz did not believe that for an instant. There had never been any real Egtverchi to possess. He was throughout a creature of the Adversary's imagination, as even Chtexa had been, as the whole of Lithia had been. In the figure of Egtverchi He had already abandoned subtlety; already he dared show Himself more than half-naked, commanding money, fathering lies, poisoning discourse, compounding grief, corrupting children, killing love, building armies --

A Case of Conscience, p.153.

The novel's deliberately equivocal conclusion is further evidence of Blish's nimble reasoning and interest in the ways in which an event can be construed differently by partisan observers. Ramon has been ordered by the Pope to pronounce an exorcism on Lithia which he believes will result in the destruction of the world. At the same time - indeed, we are given to understand that it is in the very instant when the liturgical condemnation is uttered - Cleaver, one of the original members of the survey team, is running a very dangerous, speculative experiment on Lithia. When the world blows up, we are left to decide whether the world has been destroyed by the Wrath of God or by the hand of Man, for either fits Blish's premises equally well. Yet however dangerously close the conclusion comes to seeming a casual contrivance, it does show that Blish is still playing his game

by the rules. He is astute enough to realize that for the devout, Providence is the answer to Positivism.

The first section of Blish's novel is clever and original, but it lacks the conviction of others discussed here (and whatever its shortcomings as literature, even Noyes's story lacked nothing in that respect). This does filter through the other stories as an unmistakable intensity of argument and moral certainty, at its best, and at its worst, a moral self-righteousness. Not simply because Blish has publicly declared himself to be uninterested in doctrinal quibbles - even professing himself an agnostic - one may discern a quality about the novel which reveals his detachment. Perhaps what he does not manage to evoke could be described as the spiritual passion which gives a distinctive energy to the stories of devout writers like Miller whose science fiction is a personal testament of faith, or committed ones like Skinner who believe in human perfectibility. Blish's detachment is seen in an exaggerated care to show the awe Ramon feels towards the Pope, and in the facility with which he collates and advances his line of reasoning about the human consequences of Original Sin - by no means a more or less intellectual matter to the devout. Whether or not one is inclined to see this as a weakness, there can surely not be any doubt that Blish has demonstrated an impressive ability to manipulate the central concepts deftly.

More significantly, Blish's cerebral novel recognizes that an understanding of moral perplexities is contingent uniquely upon the religious ethics with which most ideologies - be they personal or social - are imbued. In this, he implicitly acknowledges the propositions of the devout tradition which are criticised by anti-clerical materialist writers like Wells and Moorcock.

REFERENCES and FOOTNOTES

1. J. Norman KING, 'Theology, Science Fiction and Man's Future Orientation'; in Many Futures, Many Worlds ed. by Thomas D. CLARESON, Kent State University Press, 1977; p.238
2. C.P. SNOW, The Two Cultures and A Second Look; Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1963.
3. Jack LONDON, judging by his 1907 novel, The Iron Heel, was no less interested in the nature of contemporary scientific and philosophical schools of thought. Here is the redoubtable Ernest Everhard, having asserted that science (by which, probably after Marx, he means materialism) has done more to benefit mankind than any other philosophy, trying to discredit Dr. Hammerfeld and Dr. Ballingford:

"There is another way of disqualifying the metaphysicians," Ernest said, when he had rendered Dr. Hammerfeld's discomfiture complete. "Judge them by their works. What have they done for mankind beyond the spinning of airy fancies and the mistaking of their own shadows for gods? They have added to the gaiety of mankind, I grant; but what tangible good have they wrought for mankind? They philosophised, if you will pardon my misuse of the word, about the heart as the seat of the emotions, while the scientists were formulating the circulation of the blood. They declaimed about famine and pestilence as being scourges of God, while the scientists were building cities and draining marshes. They builded gods in their own shapes and out of their own desires, while the scientists were building roads and bridges. They were describing the earth as the centre of the universe, while the scientists were discovering America and probing space for stars and the laws of stars. In short, the metaphysicians have doing nothing, absolutely nothing, for mankind. Step by step, before the advance of science, they have been driven back. As fast as the ascertained facts of science have overthrown their subjective explanations of things, they have made new subjective explanations of things, including explanations of the latest ascertained facts. And this, I doubt not, they will go on doing to the end of time. Gentleman, a metaphysician is a medicine man. The difference between you and the Eskimo who makes a fur-clad, blubber-eating god is merely a difference of several thousand years of ascertained facts. That is all."

The Iron Heel, pp.12-13.

Everhard waxes lyrical in denunciation when Ballingford smugly observes that "the thought of Aristotle ruled Europe for twelve centuries."

"Your illustration is most unfortunate," Ernest replied. "You refer to a very dark period in human history. In fact we call that period the Dark Ages. A period wherein science was raped by the metaphysicians, wherein physics became a

search for the Philosopher's Stone, wherein chemistry became alchemy, and astronomy became astrology. Sorry the domination of Aristotle's thought!"

Naturally neither of these cardboard academics are astute enough to quibble with the breathtaking hindsight Everhard - a blond beast out of Neitzsche(idem. p.8) - allows himself; still I suppose one must make exceptions for "supermen" who have the author's indulgence.

4. Snow's observations on the nature of the cultural group he claims to speak for seem rather casual, even ill-considered.

They may or may not like it, but they have it. That was as true of the conservatives J.J.Thomson and Lindemann as of the radicals Einstein or Blackett: as true of the Christian A.H.Compton as the materialist Bernal: of the aristocrats de Broglie or Russell as of the proletarian Faraday: of those born rich, like Thomas Merton or Victor Rothschild, as of Rutherford, who was the son of an odd-job handyman. Without thinking about it, they all respond alike. That is what a culture means.

p.10

It is hard to believe that such a celebrated, even feted, author could display such staggering naivety in defining such a disparate group as a "culture" by seizing upon - as their only shared characteristic - something as narrow as their psychological response to a particular theoretical challenge within the natural sciences. However outstanding their own special contribution to a generally-accepted understanding of the universe, Snow ignored expeditiously all their individuality in thus lumping them together. One wonders, in trying to swallow Snow's outrageous sequel, how many scientists would be content to be depicted as the out-and-out, indeed deliberate, philistines as he suggests:

They have their own culture, intensive, rigorous, and constantly in action. Their culture contains a great deal of argument, usually much more rigorous, and almost always at a higher conceptual level, than literary persons' arguments...

Remember, these are very intelligent men. Their culture is in many ways an exacting and admirable one. It doesn't contain much art, with the exception, and the important exception, of music. Verbal exchange, insistent argument. Long-playing records. Colour-photography. The ear, to some extent the eye. Books, very little....

p. 12 & 13.

I may say that I am not persuaded by Snow that scientists are such simple, even philistine creatures. Snow's nonsensical oversimplification of what one might well call - in his terms, of course - 'the scientific animal' - would be laughable had he not made it in such utter seriousness, and so self-confidently.

5. F.R.LEAVIS, 'Two Cultures? The Significance of C.P.Snow'; Chatto & Windus, London, 1962.

6. James GUNN, The Road to Science Fiction Vol.II; New English Library, London, 1979; p.35.
7. Idem., p.34.
8. According to its introduction, the novel was in fact written in 1843 though it wasn't published, by Wertheim, MacIntosh and Hunt, until 1859 - the same year as Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species.
9. I was soon transported to the world of visions and found myself engaged in scenes and actions, which presented themselves before me, as was not usual in my sleep, in the vivid colours and mesh of the connected progress of real events. Their very similitude became more striking by seeming to connect themselves in time and place with my actual condition.
 Methought it was morning, and I rose early as if to fulfil my intention of setting out on my proposed journey...
A Dream, p.2.
- Despite some initial success with the dream device, which in the early stages is used in an uncomplicated way, as the novel progresses Mrs. Penny clearly became less interested in apparent veracity or reportage, at one point even suggesting that the narrator's facility with dreaming was such that he was able to manipulate reality according to what he dreamt, a literally fantastic idea which she later discussed at some length in her Introduction.
10. As the closing reference to Pilgrim's Progress of the Introduction indicates.
11. For all its oddly forced topicality (there are trains and some other evidence of the awareness of the effects of Progress - chiefly in the form of astronomical or other allusions to splendid architecture rather than anything more specific like, for example, Poe's 300 m.p.h. trains), we cannot be really sure whether dream-time is much in the future, or strictly immediate. As the successive phases of dreaming occur, dream-time does pass into the near future, but in general the world seems a progressive rather than futuristic place. Perhaps this suggests how bewildering was the rate of change in contemporary society to those who experienced it.
12. One is reminded of the overgrown machine-halls and museums which Wells's Time Traveller found in the world of the Morlocks and Eloi, though there the author's tragic theme was of the abandonment of science rather than, as here, the evident triumph of technology and the decline of religion.
13. Further reference to Mrs.Penny's intriguing little book is made in Chapter 7.
14. J.O.BAILEY, Pilgrims Through Space and Time; Argus Books Inc., New York, 1947; p.321.
15. Alfred NOYES, The Last Man; John Murray, London, 1940.

16. I.F. CLARKE, Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984; O.U.P., London, 1966; p.176.

17. Another symbolic confrontation between Noyes's "two cultures," as it were, forms the basis of Chapter XIV, which is basically a key disquisition on the virtues of Renaissance humanism. Noyes's target is unmistakably avant garde modernism - futurism - which he slated in a comparison with Renaissance art; the Bolsheviki also attracted his ire. Note particularly his devout vision of the Christian faith and its moral values (personified as 'Christendom') as a truly progressive ideal; this is one of the book's most lyrical passages.

An odd claim to "distinction" and "significant form" had been made for "The Abortion", on the ground that it was an "abstraction". But in actual and precise fact, this "abstraction" was a fairly accurate representation of the embryo of an ape. It was laid, like the head of Baptist John, on a large platter of "Art" pottery. It had a surgical instrument on each side of it, like a knife and fork; and round it there was a garnishing of sufficiently representative "phallic symbols".

.....In the journal which Mark now held in his hands ("The Bomb") all the poor old commandments...were derided as the taboos of an ancient and ridiculous bourgeoisie. But, in a leading article, on the political situation, the writer's country was still described as "Christian"; and the breaking of political pledges by foreigners was denounced with hypocritical smugness, as a violation of precisely those "bourgeois" principles which, according to almost every other page and certainly in every other book praised by their literary columns - could have no possible justification in reality. And all this while Christendom - if only they had

- * known it - was waiting with her replies to all their bewil-
- * derment; replies infinitely deeper and more complete than
- * they had ever dreamed of; replies that embraced the depths
- * and heights of the philosophia perennia, and carried with
- * them a thousand subtle and true possibilities of really new
- * discovery in art, thought and life.

Over them [dead art critics], the deep eyes of Raphael's "Mother and Child" looked through the ages, with that spiritual glory of which the human race had caught one fleeting glimpse, and then lost it for ever. But it had been no remote glory. It was a discovery of the essential worth and dignity of the individual human soul, where man - after his long evolution - had emerged into a higher order of reality, and recognized his own relationship to the spiritual world and to God. Every earthly mother, in that recognition, shared the hallowed secret of the Magnificat. Raphael had seen it shining in the quiet eyes of the Italian peasant girl - his Madonna - whose child was her king, and would lead the nations into the ways of peace.

The Last Man, pp.102-104.

18. Evelyn's redemptive influence appears most strongly in her pious bearing and devout observance of the Commandments, but

is also attested by her success in bringing Mark, a non-believer, to appreciate the virtue of her creed, and become a Catholic. This is a symbolic reversal of Eve's temptation of Adam, the direct cause of his Fall from Grace and expulsion from Eden.

19. Included in Mayo MOHS'S anthology of religious science fiction short stories, Other Worlds, Other Gods; Doubleday & Co., New York, 1971.
20. From his 1953 short story anthology, The Golden Apples of the Sun, which contains, amongst a wide range of other sorts of fantastic and mystery fiction, a number of quite famous science fiction stories such as 'Embroidery', 'The Pedestrian', 'Powerhouse', and 'A Sound of Thunder'.
21. A passage from his lengthy "Cantata" included in I Sing the Body Electric, another anthology of short stories published in 1970.
32. It is easy to discern in the Alphas of Brave New World, the engineers and managers of Ilium, and O'Brien in his urbane fore-runner Mond.
Whatever its flaws, Huxley's novel has achieved a deservedly impressive reputation among genre critics; such is its stature and enduring influence that no serious study of the genre has neglected it. SCHOLLES and RABKIN include it in their 'Brief Literary History of Science Fiction' associating it thus with Zamyatin's We, and (I infer) with Walden Two:

Before turning from the social and philosophical fiction of Europe to the pulp magazines of America, we should consider one more writer whose influence on later science fiction was profound. Aldous Huxley, the grandson of H.G.Wells's biology teacher, produced in 1932 a work of dystopian future projection so lively and so appalling that it has never been out of print. ...Where Zamyatin had painted a vivid picture of oppressive totalitarianism, Huxley gave us a society run by benevolent behaviourists, which proved almost as terrifying.

Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision; p.33-34

Brian ALDISS has called Brave New World 'arguably the Western world's most famous science fiction novel' and noted that it retains its 'pleasing originality' (Billion Year Spree, pp.215 & 217); Patrick PARRINDER (in Science Fiction, Its Criticism and Teaching) considers it to be an archetypal novel: 'The debunking of Utopia exemplified by Aldous Huxley's Brave New World remains the representative expression of twentieth century anxieties.' (p.78) For Thomas CLARESON Huxley's novel is simply 'The Classic', a yardstick, as it were, he would promote as an index against which the qualities of other generic novels could be assessed:

The continued recognition given Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, including its widespread use in the classroom, certainly suggests that it be regarded as the classic anti-utopian novel. Yet it is seldom referred to - at least in general academic

circles - as science-fiction. Perhaps a close examination of the novel will allow us to see how it transcends "mere" science-fiction and becomes a modern classic. In view of its success, such an examination may provide, if only implicitly, some standards by which may measure the artistry of any science-fiction.

'The Classic: Aldous Huxley's Brave New World';
Extrapolation 2 (May 1961); p.33.

I would in passing draw attention to Claerson's clear preoccupation with the 'central problem' ("ever-popular vexed question" might be a more accurate reflection of this perennial debate) of evaluating the merit and standing of generic science fiction relative to 'the mainstream'. The customary questions address issues like the nature or definition of science fiction: is it a literature of 'cognitive estrangement', as Darko Suvin has contended; is it more helpful to see it, with Scholes and Rabkin, as possessing particularly splendid or pure examples of 'structural fabulation'; or should it be seen as a species of fantasy, devoid of significance as realistic fiction; or Trivialliteratur, Tendenzroman or high-minded speculation about the future, projection, prediction - even prophesy - or, simply 'The Literature of Ideas'? Of course, the single answer is that science fiction can be any of these; the most appropriate label being a matter of evaluating a given work's premises - as Damon Knight argued pragmatically (in A Sense of Wonder) science fiction 'means what we point to when we say it.' Nonetheless Claerson's concern is revealing; as most science fiction critics I have read agree, a generic novel may well be undervalued because it reflects a genre of fiction which is not well-regarded widely. Recalling his own youthful interest in science fiction, C.S.LEWIS wrote (in 'On Science Fiction') of the 'double paradox' which attends the stories which claim a place in the genre:

I had read fantastic fiction of all sorts ever since I could read, including, of course, the particular kind which Wells practised in his Time Machine, First Men in the Moon and others. Ten, some fifteen or twenty years ago, I became aware of a bulge in the production of such stories. In America whole magazines began to be exclusively devoted to them. The execution was usually detestable; the conceptions, sometimes worthy of better treatment. About this time the name scientifiction, soon altered to science fiction, began to be common. Then, perhaps five or six years ago, the bulge still continuing and even increasing, there was an improvement: not that very bad stories ceased to be the majority, but that the good ones became better and more numerous. It was after this that the genre began to attract the attention (always, I think, contemptuous) of the literary weeklies. There seems, in fact, to be a double paradox in its history: it began to be popular when it least deserved popularity, and to excite critical contempt as soon as it ceased to be wholly contemptible.

'On Science Fiction.'

Reprinted in Science Fiction, A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Mark ROSE for Prentice-Hall's Twentieth Century Views.

Lewis further observed tellingly that, 'to devise a definition (of the novel) for the purpose of excluding either The Waves in one direction or Brave New World in another, and then blame them for being excluded, is foolery.' While he does condemn those stories which 'leap a thousand years to find plots and passions which they could have found at home', he asserts in general that, however they are to be defined, 'they are to be tried by their own rules.'

23. This retrospective discussion of his own novel is included with it in the Panther edition (London, 1979).
24. Note how strikingly like the Brave New World is Mardok's dark dream, the creation of an amoral, behaviourally-conditioned society with himself occupying its apex and enjoying divine privileges and power:

Science and mechanism, in the hands of an autocrat, would solve all problems and control everything and everyone except the controller himself. But there were to be no more morals, or "taboos," as he called them; for science would replace the primitive inhibitions of conscience, and make it possible to enjoy many things which formerly were regarded as forbidden fruit. They would be gods, above good and evil. Religion would be abolished.

The Last Man, p.132.

25. Clareson, op.cit., p.36.
26. Thus, another durable theme is established, one used by many writers, especially Orwell who recast it as one of the most chilling principles of Ingsoc and Doublethink, 'the mutability of the past'.
27. Here John echoes D.H.Lawrence's angry exhortation, "For God's sake let us be men, not monkeys minding machines." Aldiss argues persuasively (in Billion Year Spree, p.216) that John is the most obvious weakness of the novel:

The weakness of the book...lies in the character of the Savage, whom Huxley introduces to symbolize the world of the spirit which the Ford-founded utopia has banished. The Savage is never credible... The Savage is a wise young man who quotes Shakespeare too much and never ceases to be a twenties stereotype of untrammelled youth drawn by a man who had known D.H.Lawrence personally.

Huxley himself remarked on this problematic characterisation of John in 'Brave New World Revisited'. At the distance of some fourteen years, he makes the interesting observation that 'For the sake, however, of dramatic effect, the Savage is often permitted to speak more rationally than his upbringing among the practitioners of a religion that is half fertility cult and half Penitente ferocity would actually warrant.' Clearly Huxley intended the Savage to be the torn embodiment of two contending ideologies which make quite different demands upon his sensibility: one affective and mystical, the other cognitive and rational.

While these two contending ideologies - materialism and spirituality - are not quite congruent with the two alternatives facing John ("an insane life in Utopia, or the life of a primitive in an Indian village, a life more human in some respects, but in others hardly less queer and abnormal"), they are obviously related to the mystical/rational dichotomy which Huxley built in to his alienated champion of individuality. (See also 31, below)

28. Clareson, op.cit., p.38.

29. Harold L.BERGER, Science Fiction and the New Dark Age; Bowling Green University Popular Press, Bowling Green, Ohio; 1976. Berger identifies the ubiquity of 'synthetic' experience, embracing both the vicarious and the surrogate forms Huxley contrived to give credibility and force to his hedonistic earthly paradise, as the recurrent symbol of the shallowness of the lives led by the citizens of the world of Our Ford/Our Freud:

The synthetic experience assumes several forms. What marks them all is an obliterated or diminished awareness of the self and the significance of experience by needless complication or mechanism, which excludes or distracts the self from reality and full participation in its own life... The synthetic experience of Huxley's society empties life so thoroughly that only the most perceptive suffer in the void...
p.38.

30. B.F.SKINNER, Walden Two; Macmillan Publishing Co., New York; 1976.

31. Yet, for all his emphasis on the cognitive or rational, Huxley never wholly rejected religion, as he makes plain in his retrospective discussion of how he could improve Brave New World, were he minded to, shows. This is of particular interest in view of the rationalistic ideal world Skinner described in his novel, published some two years later:

...If I were now to rewrite the book, I would offer the Savage a third alternative. Between the utopian and primitive horns of his dilemma would lie the possibility of sanity - a possibility already actualized, to some extent, in a community of exiles living within the borders of the Reservation. In this community economics would be decentralist and Henry-Georgian, politics Kropotkinesque and co-operative. Science and technology would be used as though, like the Sabbath, they had been made for man, not (as at present and still more in the Brave New World) as though man were to be adapted and enslaved to them. Religion would be a conscious and intelligent pursuit of man's Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos, the transcendent Godhead or Brahman. And the prevailing philosophy of life would be a kind of High Utilitarianism....

'Brave New World Revisited', pp.8-9.

While it is tempting to speculate that Skinner's vision of a sane utopia could have been partly an attempt to depict Huxley's ideal society (the 'sane alternative' never open to the Savage in Brave

New World itself), we may be certain that the prophylactic sort of religious experience described in Walden Two would not have been seen by Huxley as genuine or worthwhile. This sets him apart from the iconoclastic sceptics who reject all religion as primitive or conservative mystical fantasy.

32. Harold L. BERGER has written (op.cit.) a very valuable discussion of Skinner's novel; while his concerns and my own in assessing the novel differ somewhat in emphasis and scope, I would direct the attention of the interested reader to his commentary, especially for his perceptive analysis of the arguments with which Joseph Wood Krutch countered Skinner's line, and rejected Walden Two, in The Measure of Man. Berger prefaces his discussion of Walden Two (the centrepiece of 'Ignoble Utopias', the second half of a sweeping first chapter, 'The Threat of Science') with a summary - which I have abridged - of the often hostile reception Skinner's novel was given:

Then Skinner (a Professor of Psychology at Harvard, author of the influential Science and Human Behavior and Beyond Freedom and Dignity, and most respected spokesman for 'behaviorism' in the field of psychology) reveals, with a touch of personal hurt, 'To my surprise, the book was violently attacked.' The attackers: Life Magazine, Glenn Negley and J. Max Patrick, Joseph Wood Krutch, and others. In a rabid denunciation Life called Walden Two a 'menace,' presenting as desirable a society whose engineered 'Skinnerites' are as free as Pavlov's dogs. 'Such a triumph of mortmain, or the dead hand, has not been envisioned since the days of Sparta.' Its allusion to Thoreau is 'a slur upon a name, a corruption of an impulse.' Negley and Patrick confess that they found Skinner's utopia so absurd that they read half through the convinced that it was a masterful satire on 'behavioral engineering.' When they realized Skinner was serious, they declare, 'not even the effective satire of Huxley is adequate preparation for the shocking horror of the idea when positively presented. Of all the dictatorships espoused by utopists, this is the most profound...' ... 'Nauseating,' 'a nadir of ignominy' is the verdict of Negley and Patrick.

.....
.....

The impact of Skinner's book is now history. No modern utopist's vision has stimulated a greater reaction than Skinner's, and that reaction has been largely and heatedly negative. Macmillan's 1966 paperback printing acknowledges on its back cover that Skinner's 'modern utopia has been a centre of raging controversy ever since its publication in 1948.' It excerpts some critical comment: 'An extremely interesting discourse...' (The New Yorker); 'A brisk and thoughtful foray...' (Charles Poore, New York Times); but it also quotes the acid verdict of Life and the barb of Orville Prescott (New York Times) - 'Alluring in a sinister way, and appalling too.' One can add liberally to the list of critics who find, as Prescott, the 'engineering' of Walden Two sinister and appalling, or who, without mentioning the novel, are disturbed by Skinner's views and what behaviorism portends

for the human race. Joseph Wood Krutch, Donald C. Williams, Andrew Hacker, Carl R. Rogers, George Kateb, Karl Popper, and Arthur Koestler share the fear that something essentially and preciously human is threatened by the techniques of behavioral science. Indeed, they fear that humanness itself is in jeopardy. They must recoil from the arrant optimism of Robert L. Schwitzgebel, who pronounces, 'Behavioral engineers are lucky, I think. They are preparing to invite men to a feast of new sounds and sights and feelings so powerful, wonderful and compassionate that the word 'men' will not adequately describe them.' But this is precisely what many of the 'invited' are afraid of, they want to remain "men."Clearly, if man now takes charge of his own evolution, a few men, the Skinners and Schwitzgebels, will play creator in a new Genesis. Yet the old order hangs on tenaciously in act and word....

Abridged from: Science Fiction and the New Dark Age;
pp.51-54.

33. Bailey, op.cit., p.311.
34. Scholes and Rabkin, op.cit., p.43.
35. Berger, op.cit., p.10; somewhat confusingly, while he writes here of Lewis's 'anti-scientism', he asserts on the next page that 'Lewis does not oppose science as such or modern technology.' The line he takes does reflect something of Lewis's own explicit antipathy to materialistic expediency:

What he does oppose is the idea that man's power to shape confers the right to shape and abrogates human, natural, and divine right and law. Carried to the extreme this idea only allows one right and law: the right and imperative of power to more power. To be sure, not science alone, but state, church and individual are susceptible to such corruption; but since science alone, by its own ethos, can admit no resting-place in the search for knowledge, it is least able to resist converting knowledge into power, power which can become its own motive force.

but I fear his earlier observation really is the more sensible, especially since Lewis clearly was capable of 'anti-scientism' for the very reason Berger advances in his attempt to prove Lewis did not 'oppose science as such' but merely the scientific ethic, that is, science is the means whereby man experiences the temptation, and indeed appreciates what is understood to be the benefit, of abrogating other moral or ethical codes.

36. Mayo MOHS, in the introduction to his collection of religious science fiction short stories, 'Science Fiction and the World of Religion' (Other Worlds, Other Gods: Adventures in Religious Science Fiction, pp.11-17), cast Lewis's trilogy as a paradigm of imaginative orthodoxy:

Indeed, some of the most imaginative of religious science fiction, if that is the term, has been built on the very rock of orthodoxy. For C.S.Lewis, the worlds of fantasy and science fiction were not at all incompatible with deep and conservative Christian faith - a contention he demonstrated handsomely in his literate trilogy... His Perelandrans, for instance, were simply creatures who had not fallen from primordial grace and thus retained special powers (Thomas Aquinas called them 'preternatural gifts') which sinful humans had lost with Eden.

There are, however, dangers inherent in over-stressing the orthodox character of Lewis's fiction in this way, as Paul L. HOLMER reminds us repeatedly in his monograph, C.S.Lewis: The Shape of his Faith and Thought:

Lewis though it odd that anyone should read poetry with the intent of ascertaining thereby the poet's state of mind. He called that The Personal Heresy. Equally, something of the same can be said of Lewis's religious literature. It is not confessional or even a profession of his beliefs. Instead, it is at one and the same time argumentative and persuasive. It ought to be noted that Lewis's Christian literature is both sophisticated, in that it supports highly developed thoughts, and popular, in that it appeals to a wide range of readers. ...On the other hand, it is not as though his literature hides his personal commitments, whether theological, philosophical, or literary.

Op.cit., p.9.

37. William A.QUINN, 'Science Fiction's Harrowing of the Heavens'; The Transcendent Adventure, ed. By Robert Reilly (pp.37-54); p.42.
38. Margaret R.GRENNAN, 'The Lewis Trilogy: A Scholar's Holiday'; from Catholic World 167, (July 1948), p.341.
39. Quinn, op.cit., p.42.
40. Scholes and Rabkin, op.cit., p.45.
41. As Margaret R.Grennan has also noted,

That Hideous Strength is more clearly a novel with a thesis. Fortunately, however, Lewis had already written a brilliant exposition of the them in the Riddell lectures given in 1943 and published recently under the title The Abolition of Man.

.....
As for the individual, everything will be done to eliminate what is personal, emotional and imaginative. We will become "Men without Chests," as Lewis states in the first lecture of The Abolition of Man, - creatures with minds and viscera, but no hearts. The fantastic experimentation of the Bilbury group and their attempt to prodce and prolong life in a decapitated head, is the extreme expression in modern allegory of an educational philosophy that is all too familiar, and the pursuit of which will result in a generation cold,

mechanistic, incapable of spirituality, and convinced of the impossibility of ever knowing truth here or anywhere. When such a view becomes the active, organising principle of men, self-destruction is inevitable, and unintelligibility, symbolized by the confusion of tongues at the Belbury Banquet, makes of the world a new Babel, "hideous in its strength". Op.cit., p.343.

42. Frank David KIEVITT, 'Walter M. Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz as a Third Testament'; The Transcendent Adventure, ed. Reilly, p.171.
Kievitt underrates the significance of the dichotomy central to 'Fiat Lux' where the representatives of religion and science compete for control of the Memorabilia.
43. Russell M. GRIFFIN, 'Medievalism in A Canticle for Leibowitz'; Extrapolation pp.111-125; p.115.
44. M.A. BENNETT, 'The Theme of Responsibility in Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz'; English Journal 59, (April 1970); p.486.
45. Kievitt, op.cit., p.172.
46. Griffin, op.cit., p.124.
47. Kievitt, op.cit., p.173.
48. This Foreword by Blish accompanies the novel in my 1975 Arrow Books edition; interested readers may also wish to read his own critical review of his novel ('Cathedrals in Space') penned as William Atheling and included in The Issue at Hand.
49. Berger, op.cit., p.132.
50. The novels are Doctor Mirabilis, Black Easter and The Day of Judgement; with A Case of Conscience, they are collectively called After Such Knowledge.
51. Quinn, op.cit., p.43.
52. Quinn, idem.
53. Berger, op.cit., p.131.
54. Jo Allen BRADHAM, 'The Case in James Blish's A Case of Conscience' Extrapolation 16 (1974); pp.67-80.

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.	1
Abstract.	2
Contents.	4
Introduction.	5
References and Footnotes.	25
Chapter 1: <u>Four Auspices</u>	29
References and Footnotes.	50
Chapter 2: <u>A Legacy of Aspiration and Satire</u>	51
References and Footnotes.	106
Chapter 3: <u>Rationalism and Hubris: Some Science Fictional</u>	
<u>Views of "Progress"</u>	117
Objectifying the Sublime	118
Verne's Providential Universe and Wells's	
Dispassionate Cosmos.	148
An Inhumane Future: Utilitarian Ethics	
and Technological Servitude	165
References and Footnotes.	176
Chapter 4: <u>'Screams of Horror?': The Intemperate Moral Climate</u>	
<u>of the Brave New World</u>	197
The Devout Tradition and the <u>Philosophia Perennia</u>	202
<u>Brave New World and Walden Two</u> :	
Twin Visions of the City of Man	230
Modern Parables: The Religious Science Fiction	
of Lewis, Miller and Blish.	257
References and Footnotes.	301
Chapter 5: <u>Anticlericalism and Satire in the</u>	
<u>Factitious Religions of Science Fiction</u>	313
Rationalistic Scepticism: Religion as	
Immature Mythopoesis.	316
Orthodox Opiates: Theocracy,	
Aspiration and Sceptical Humanism	375
The Prophet of Futility and the Royal Faustus.	422
References and Footnotes.	442
Chapter 6: <u>Apostate Visions: from Man to Messiah, and Beyond</u>	457
The Consecrated Man: Theophany and Apotheosis	
in Science Fiction.	472
'A Sudden Surge': Synergy and	
The Teleological Transfiguration of Man	526
'GOD IS NOWHERE / GOD IS NOW HERE': Salvation	
and 'the prime aberration of the human mind'.	566
References and Footnotes.	597
Appendix: Wells's View of the Social Role of Religion.	602
Fiction Bibliography.	607
Note: Fiction is listed alphabetically by author	
with chapter reference(s).	

CHAPTER FIVE

Anticlericalism and Satire in the Factitious Religions of SF

In Oscar Wilde's novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891) the capricious, amoral - 'poisonous' - Lord Henry Wotton characterizes fin-de-siecle England as the product of 'Beer, the Bible and the seven deadly virtues.' Charles Kingsley, a more earnest critic of religion, might be surprised at the extent to which his famous observation about contemporary religion has been popularized by - among others - modern science fiction authors. Kingsley wrote 'We have used the Bible as if it were a constable's handbook - an opium-dose for keeping beasts of burden patient while they are being overloaded.' The nature and effects of religious influences upon us is of real interest to the progressive secular humanist who finds suppression and fatalism intolerable, lacking even the remotest possibility of the religious justification a devout writer like Lewis or Miller might discern in it. But for devout authors, as we have seen, a purely scientific or technological orientation of the humanistic ethic is seen as dangerously superficial and inadequate. Devout authors present the moral force of religion - based on revealed truths - as an essential counter to the amorality of pure scientific utilitarianism or the relativistic morals and expedient ethics of progressive scientific materialism.

This chapter presents evidence of a corresponding impatience or resentment amongst sceptics about the traditional standing of religion. Moorcock's Monica tells Karl Glogauer in Behold the Man that 'Science is basically opposed to religion... Who needs the ritual of religion when we have the far superior ritual of science to

replace it? Religion is a reasonable substitute for knowledge. But there is no longer any need for substitutes...Science offers a far sounder basis on which to formulate systems of thought and ethics.' Clearly one impulse to deride religion stems from an unwillingness to concede that the right to decree an authentic, enlightened definition of ethics should remain the prerogative of the religious. Religious faith is thought by the sceptic to be a particularly naive response to human existence within a universe about which more than ever is known, including some quite uncomfortable modern conclusions about the futility of trying to placate an utterly indifferent cosmos.

The sceptical and brazenly impious associations between religion on the one hand and deceitful oppression on the other which feature prominently in many factitious religions clearly are intended to expose or incriminate actual religions. Orthodox religion is depicted in many novels as a conservative institution promoting a reactionary moral consensus, exploiting, distorting or oppressing the innate spirituality of man. 'The Church has appropriated God for its own ends,' as Machiavelli bluntly complained centuries ago, and so there is clearly nothing new in the complaint itself. Yet the secular power enjoyed by Christian religions has declined and they no longer may assert an exclusive proprietary right to divine (or absolute) moral understanding, exemplified by ideas such as papal infallibility and Calvinistic election. Why then are they the target of so much modern sceptical satire? Religious aspiration and humanistic aspiration lay rival claim to the same role - fostering ethical development in individuals and society, and validating it.

Science fiction's secular humanists are engaged no less than religious thinkers by questions of personal growth, commitment and

responsibility and the danger of re-crudescence, or moral, intellectual or physical degeneration. Huxley, writing in 1937 on 'Religious Practices' (1) 'from a humanistic point of view,' concedes that if 'Attachment to traditional ceremonies and belief in the magical efficacy of ritual' would help most who have 'neither the desire nor the capacity for enlightenment to behave a little better than they otherwise would have done', then the rational idealist 'may accord them a certain qualified favour'. While Huxley (who attacks utilitarian ethics in Brave New World) recognizes the moral force of religious belief and practices, he sees their negative potential. Indeed, the attitude he expresses in the same essay about the broad effect of religions in general is still more clear-cut. Speaking of the rituals of organized religions as 'impediments' which stand in the path of enlightenment, he also attacks their pernicious ethical teachings:

...by no means all the doctrines and practices of the existing religions are calculated to ameliorate character or heighten consciousness. On the contrary, a great deal of what is done and taught in the name of even the most highly evolved religions is definitely pernicious, and a great deal more is ethically neutral - not particularly bad, but, on the other hand, not particularly good. Towards this kind of religion whose fruits are moral evil and a darkening of the mind the rational idealist can only show an uncompromising hostility. Such things as persecution and the suppression or distortion of the truth are intrinsically wrong, and he can have nothing to do with religious organizations which countenance such iniquities.

2.

Brave New World, discussed in detail in the last chapter as an example of humanist rather than religious unease about scientific materialism, could also justify a place in the present discussion for its sybaritic religion (a profane, synthetic travesty of Christianity) as this chapter examines the themes, contentions and conclusions

of a range of novels in which some of the acutest and most comprehensive hostility to all sorts of religions, real and imagined, is apparent. A factitious religion like Huxley's is one of most common vehicles for sceptical criticism.

Factitious religions are usually shallow analogues, designed really to do no more than serve their author's polemical purposes and lacking the force of religious conviction exhibited in the works discussed in the last chapter. But there are exceptions, notably Keith Robert's Pavane, and Moorcock's Behold the Man. Examples which are distinctly anti-clerical are used in the following discussion to introduce the rhetoric and general features of this sceptical satirical device. The discussion will move forward with a survey of works which attack theocracy; in them, religion is presented as inimical to human aspiration. Whatever their contentions, they present factitious religions and so are linked structurally and thematically with those discussed below. Their litanies, creeds and hierocracies are eclectic satirical devices, used in "radical" exposes to underpin a stylized, determinedly modernistic iconoclasm. Reversing the current of exploitation, these factitious religions may also be used to promote a new, positivistic or utilitarian view of religion as a potentially valuable means of achieving the evolutionary transformation of human nature, rather as Wells does in Men Like Gods.

Rationalistic Scepticism: Religion as Immature Mythopoesis.

Men Like Gods offers a revealing insight into the most cherished social vision of one of the century's most imaginative and prolific writers, H.G.Wells; Stapledon's Star Maker adopts its anticlerical

gnosticism, and Moorcock's Behold the Man (probably the most provocative of the three) has been acclaimed for uncompromising iconoclasm which not so long ago would certainly have brought it vociferous general condemnation. While recalling Butler's earlier satire of institutionalised religion in Erewhon, we may most usefully carry forward the examination of anticlericalism in science fiction by looking first to Wells's writings as an influential popular source of theme and discourse. Wells's qualified faith in science is well known:

From his earliest published essay....until his death in 1946, Wells was deeply concerned with the promise of science to help man understand and improve his environment. In his first essay, 'The Rediscovery of the Unique'(1891), he compares science to a match. Man has struck it with the hope and expectation that it will light up the dark room in which he stands, but he finds that it throws only a flickering and momentary glow on his hands and face, leaving the rest of the room in almost complete blackness. In more florid pieces like A Modern Utopia(1905) and The Shape of Things to Come(1933), science is not so much a flickering match as a beacon. However, the attitude towards science that appears in Wells's pronouncements on it, taken in bulk, is faith in it as a good tool, but faith moderated by skepticism about man's ability to obtain a knowledge of final reality with this tool or any other now available to him.

3.

In Men Like Gods(1923) H.G.Wells projects his most idealistic (yet, also his bleakest) vision of the human future. The 'god-like' Utopians are indeed masters of the physical sciences, and thus have complete control of their world. Yet they are later discovered to be using science to go beyond even their relatively exalted existence to somewhere Barnstaple, their human 'guest' from this world, cannot even conjecture. At the same time, Wells uses this novel as a vehicle for probably his most sustained attack on orthodox religious belief; and there is plenty to suggest that it was the stimulus for the later anti-scientific satire of Aldous Huxley and devout authors like C.S.Lewis, as well as George Orwell's parody in Coming Up for Air(4).

For all that, it is also an oddly neglected novel(5), perhaps because the flair, artistry and originality which distinguished the earlier 'Scientific Romances' is displaced in Men Like Gods by simple didacticism(6). Indeed, Wells's many didactic concerns may be examined here only insofar as they bear upon the present discussion of the cultural nature of religion and what Wells clearly thought of as the habitual conservatism of the religious perspective.

In many of his science fiction novels and stories, Wells presents a fundamentally pessimistic view of the nature of the universe and the inferences which may be drawn about the ultimate destiny of the race itself. In The Time Machine, the time traveller reports that the mindless, monstrous crabs, having outlasted even Mankind, are the only recognizable creatures in the terminal landscape he has discovered in the future. One feels that describing this sensationally apocalyptic vision as 'anti-utopian' is somehow inadequate, but Wells's fiction reaches this pitch of deep gloom about the future of man at least partly as a negative reaction to the utopias of Bellamy and Morris with their insistence that the technologies of the Industrial Revolution and their modern successors really are pernicious. Wells himself recognizes these problems - in The Time Machine and elsewhere - but he does not accept that humanity might dispense with the odious machines and return to wholesome, rustic societies. To Wells, technology offers a sacred hope, that through it - assuming mankind will not instead degenerate - mankind may transcend the limitations of human nature, attaining a Titanic, supernal ascendancy over the world and ultimately the entire Cosmos. Yet this is no merely Vernean fantasy of Man the Inventor heroically transformed by his mastery of awesome machines, but a millenarist

vision born of a more sophisticated yet qualified faith in scientific, secular man.

Butler foresaw this debate, lampooning in his idiosyncratic style the aspirations of the rustic utopians in the shape of the mechanical museums of Erewhon and the injunctions against possessing machinery which land Higgs in jail for owning a pocket watch. However, where Butler is quizzical(7) in presenting his view of technology, Wells is definite. For Wells, the future of mankind is caught up with technological progress, whatever the consequences - the genie, out of the bottle, may not be returned to it without the attendant disadvantage of a decline in social standards. In fact, the emergent necessity he perceives is the challenge of creating a positive modus vivendi with the ambivalent potential of the mechanical progeny of human ingenuity, an issue he addresses in Men Like Gods. Yet, since this novel is devoid of huge Vernean machines (and even of the awesome devices like the Martian fighting machines which feature in some of his early fiction), Wells's interest unmistakably lies in the sensibility of the 'Utopian' Titans he portrays in it; given the concerns of the present study, a most happy contingency.

The novel's initial premises are straightforward enough. In order to expose the inadequacies and vices of contemporary society, Wells invents another into which a range of current opinions are introduced for contrast. Where Butler, and before him Swift, found a single adventurer sufficient, Wells throws an assortment of 'modern' characters through a dimensional lacuna into what he calls simply 'Utopia'. Now an old hand at the game (the Time Traveller of The Time Machine having preceded the collection of Twenties men and women, among them mordant caricatures of Winston Churchill ('Catskill'),

Lord Balfour ('Cecil Burrell') and the newspaper magnate Beaverbrook - 'Barralunga' - dispatched this time), Wells creates tensions within the 'modern' perspectives which he is setting against those found in Utopia. However, it is important to recognize the notional distinction between the earlier novel, with its gloom-ridden, even apocalyptic vision of the future of the human race, and the situation which Wells contrives in this novel. Drawing his 'scientific pattern' from the most speculative theories of the brilliant physicist Einstein, Wells invents a world which is a possible future, rather than the 'actual' future which he has already depicted pessimistically. Such niceties are important, as George Hay explains:

Thus may we learn something of our country's political and social past, by looking through a magic window at an alternative future, created in the past. 'Alternative world' I mean, not future; this science-fictional device, now so well-used as to be almost banal, was used here, early and to excellent effect, to present a possible future, rather than a straight prediction.

8.

Still, the correspondences with The Time Machine are too many to ignore, and perhaps Wells intended readers familiar with his earlier work to notice the many allusions, especially the obvious one at the end of Men Like Gods. After his return, Barnstaple treasures an other-worldly flower as a symbolic memento of his amazing adventure, much as the Time Traveller produced a similarly exotic bloom as evidence of the veracity of his account of his expeditions into the future. It is tempting to think that Wells's later novel represents an attempt, however ill-conceived, to build upon in some way his earlier work. Indeed, Men Like Gods is viewed generally as being a sort of sequel to Wells's earlier work, A Modern Utopia (1905):

Perhaps the most notable way in which the Utopia of Men Like Gods differs from that of A Modern Utopia, which was only a little way ahead of us, is that all government has

withered away. Instead of judges and legislators and rulers, there are only experts doing their jobs scientifically and rationally. Instead of our confusions and conflict, there are only people living together in order and peace because they have been educated to do so.

.....
Indeed, Men Like Gods differs from A Modern Utopia in being much more of a dream vision, much less a detailed blue-print. In part it is a kind of hymn to a world incredibly more lovely, orderly, healthy, energetic...

9.

However, to see Men Like Gods purely in the light of its utopian predecessor may obscure three important new aspects of the idealized vision of the human future which Wells conveys in the later novel.

The first important innovation which Wells includes in Men Like Gods is his answer to the problem posed so tellingly in The Time Machine, namely, that over-dependence upon science and technology will stultify and stifle the very creativity with which human inventors establish new technologies and bring about the decline of the race. Mr. Catskill and Urthred (the Utopians' spokesman) discuss the problem of technological over-dependence, and Catskill is permitted to open the exchange polemically in terms very reminiscent of Weston, Lewis's later anti-hero:

For I take it, sir, that it is now a proven thing that life and all the energy and beauty of life are begotten by struggle and competition and conflict; we were moulded and wrought in hardship, and so, sir, were you. And yet you dream here that you have eliminated conflict forever. Your economic state, I gather, is some form of socialism; you have abolished competition in all the business of peace. Your political state is one universal unity; you have altogether cut out the bracing and ennobling threat and the purging and terrifying experience of war. Everything is ordered and provided for. Everything is secure, sir, except for one thing...

'I grieve to trouble your tranquillity, sir, but I must breathe the name of that one forgotten thing - degeneration! What is there here to prevent degeneration? Are you preventing degeneration?

Men Like Gods, p.79.

Urthred has Promethean answers which Wells advances in his own ultimate argument against the merciless, unrestrained positivism in which Darwin's theories about natural selection justify a particularly base, grasping and shallow materialism. The less scrupulous positivists were still advancing this reading of 'The Origin of Species' as a rationale to disguise a mercenary readiness to exploit the poor, the unfortunate and the oppressed:

'These Earthlings do not yet dare to see what our Mother Nature is. At the back of their minds is still the desire to abandon themselves to her. They do not see that except for eyes and wills, she is purposeless and blind. She is not awful, she is horrible. ...She made us by accident; all her children are bastards - undesired; she will cherish or expose them, pet or starve or torment them without rhyme or reason. ...There must be good in her because she made all that is good in us - but there is also endless evil. Do not your Earthlings see the dirt of her, the cruelty, the insane indignity of much of her work?

.....
'We have, after centuries of struggle, suppressed her nastier fancies, and washed her and combed her and taught her to respect and heed the last child of her wantonings - Man. With Man came Logos, the Word and the Will into our universe, to watch it and fear it, to learn it and cease to fear it, to know it and comprehend it and master it. So that we of Utopia are no longer the beaten and starved children of Nature, but her free and adolescent sons...

Men Like Gods, pp.82-83.

The single word 'adolescent' hints at the second main innovation Wells made. The Utopians at first seem like gods to the 'Earthlings,' but they quickly deny that they are. They are, however, clearly very different from their visitors, and they aspire to even greater achievements in shaping themselves physically and mentally to be capable of becoming a different species. Catskill is wrong in assuming that the Utopians are complacent and hence decadent. They have set their sights collectively upon a new challenge, something the ancestors of the Eloi and Morlocks failed to do, for they aspire literally to surpass themselves: "'We have taken over the Old Lady's

Estate. Every day we learn a little better how to master this planet. Every day our thoughts go out more surely to our inheritance, the stars. And the deeps beyond and beneath the stars.'"(p.83) The third innovative element Wells introduced was an anticlerical polemic. The humane variety of positivism advanced as the dominant ideology of his Utopia is confronted with a dogmatic, reactionary counterpart.

Significantly, Wells seems at the same time to have become somewhat more inclined towards a kind of mysticism. More precisely, he moved from a position of exclusively experimental rationalism with its emphasis upon the immediate and the tangible - the 'real,' if you will - to develop an outlook which, while being no less rationalistic, is markedly less single-minded about evolution and the limits of development. Furthermore, he expended considerable energy (and risked not a little of his considerable reputation as a free-thinking radical) upon three "mainstream" works in which he appears to take a less sceptical line towards conventional religion. God the Invisible King(1917), The Soul of a Bishop(1917) and The Undying Fire(1919) form a 'Manichaeian trilogy'(10) presenting his personal theological ideas and speculations.

These books, written during the First World War, delineate the unorthodox religious views of their author and suggest that Wells's contemporary position on these questions was not unlike Butler's, the "devout sceptic." The fact that Wells was less than happy with this philosophical position is borne out fully in Men Like Gods, a dialectical novel which may now seem straightforward enough but which provides striking evidence of its author's disillusionment with the progressive capability of orthodox religions. It marks a watershed in Wells's personal philosophy. The modified utopian themes of this, the

only major work he produced in 1923, suggest that he was striving to square the findings of his recent excursion into theological issues with his contempt for ecclesiastical conservatism and his perennial faith in science and reason. Here Wells snipes at reactionary religious ideas, rather than launching the all-out attack Moorcock does in Behold the Man.

Although Wells's materialism is as scientific as ever, it has acquired a new streak of idealism evident in his promotion of an updated and refined Comtist cult of Man. However Wellsian humanism is in fact theistic, not atheistic, for he simply endows man with what are conventionally regarded as divine attributes. For Wells, the greatest of these is Reason. In Men Like Gods he sets out to illustrate, in an optimized setting, his version of progressive scientific humanism.

Wells's assortment of characters find themselves involuntarily transported into a strange landscape which is bafflingly unlike anything they have ever seen before. The reader follows the mild, middle-class protagonist Mr. Barnstaple into the new world, and there discovers quickly that he is not alone, for the fatal experiment which has brought him through in his car without a scratch has also brought through two other, rather more expensive vehicles, their wealthy passengers, and - naturally - their respective chauffeurs. While their minds are still reeling from the disconcerting experience of crossing between two worlds while travelling along an otherwise unremarkable stretch of road towards Windsor, the loquacious Mr. Burleigh provides a characteristically indefinite sketch of the scientific and philosophical context of the incident:

'Einstein might make it clear to us. Or dear old Haldane might undertake to fog it up with that adipose Hegelianism

of his. But I am neither Haldane nor Einstein. Here we are in some world which is, for all practical purposes, including the purposes of our week-end engagements, Nowhere. Or if you prefer the Greek of it, we are in Utopia. And as I do not see that there is any manifest way out of it again, I suppose the thing we have to do as rational creatures is to make the best of it...'

Men Like Gods, p.30.

Wells's displays his gift for irony in setting out the central theme of the novel when Burleigh continues in negligently damning terms: "'And watch our opportunities.'" In a nutshell, this is the the moral weakness Wells intends to expose. His twentieth-century characters (except Barnstaple) call themselves 'rational' but regularly display a narrow opportunism. However, in Utopia - a 'world of subjugated nature', as Wells puts it - advanced rationalism has dispensed with both privileged individualism and mores based upon religious revelation. There man's overlordship of the world is technological, not Providential. The first of the travellers to register (in no uncertain terms) his disapproval of this world of Reason rather than Revelation is the cleric.

Father Amerton is one of the most uncompromising and unattractive of the clergymen in Wells's work. Wells's antipathy to these 'men of God' found an early expression in The War of the Worlds, written some twenty-five years before. The hapless, pathetic curate who construes the devastating Martian attack upon Weybridge as a divine punishment, and the Martians themselves as angels of death carrying out God's work, is contrasted most unfavourably with the rational narrator, an amateur scientist whose resourcefulness and determination helps him survive when the demented, raving curate betrays himself to the ruthless, dispassionate, exterminating Martians. Since the reader knows why the Martians have come to earth, and the narrator himself has begun to grasp that ecological problems

have prompted the Martians to launch their attack across space, the futility and illogicality of the curate's behaviour and attitude is manifest. By contrast the vicar in The Food of the Gods(1904) really is little more than a part of the landscape, as Wells himself explains:

Cheasing Eyebright had of course a vicar. There are vicars and vicars, and of all sorts I love an innovating vicar, a piebald progressive professional reactionary, the least. But the Vicar of Cheasing Eyebright was one of the least innovating of vicars, a most worthy, plump, ripe, and conservative-minded little man. ...He matched his village, and one may figure them best together...

The Food of the Gods, Bk.2, chap.2

Shortly after Mr.Barnstaple and the occupants of the first of the other vehicles come to their senses, the priest's vocational intuitions come to the fore. Father Amerton is struck by the physical beauty of the more or less naked Utopians, but is puzzled by the absence of what he terms any 'sign of maternity' among them - "'The most beautiful and desirable young women,'" he remarks to Barnstaple, "'most desirable; and not a sign of maternity!'"(p.39)

As the story progresses, it becomes quite clear that the world which the 'Earthlings' have taken for 'Utopia' is a rationalistic paradise whose inhabitants are in every way superior to their visitors, except where the emotions are concerned (though since they are telepathic, their outward calm and stoical acceptance of death may hide any more personal emotions which they may be reluctant for the 'Earthlings' to observe). Their philosophy seems to be materialist, and though they call themselves 'men', they do seem to Barnstaple and the others to be aloof and dispassionate to the point of coldness. They are commensalist socialists whose ancestors discovered 'the need and nature of the limitations of private property' (p.53); and incidentally, one is reminded at once of the behaviourist

'paradise' Skinner would depict twenty-five years later in Walden Two. As Burleigh observes to Urthred, their society is a marvel of harmony, yet the individual may exercise a considerable degree of autonomy. It all works because these are Apollonian rather than Dionysian 'gods' whose society is kinetic rather static - an important premise overlooked by virtually all of Wells's predecessors and not a few of his successors, including Skinner.

Amerton's observation is the pretext for an account of Utopian social development for their guests' benefit, for Utopia is here born through social upheaval (especially during the 'Age of Confusion', which is duly recognised by the Earthlings as being the closest historical parallel to their own epoch). Utopia has history, of course, and in a rather old-fashioned way Wells exploits it to extend the parallels with Earth which he has established: Utopian socialism after Morris (Looking Backward) and Bellamy (News from Nowhere) is propounded at length, and at the expense of incident and character development. However, before long Wells's anticlericalism coincides happily with his skill at catching the essence of human behaviour in relieving the dry exposition of Utopian history and values with Amerton's increasingly outraged interruptions.

The priest has already noticed an absence of the outward signs of a thriving religion - there are neither spires nor churches in Utopia. During Burleigh's discussion with Urthred Amerton suddenly understands how the Utopians are able to manage their society so effectively:

A gasp of horror came from Father Amerton. He had been dreading this realization for some time. It struck at his moral foundations. 'And you dare to regulate increase! You control it! Your women consent to bear children as they are needed - or refrain!'

'Of course,' said Urthred. 'Why not?'

'I feared as much,' said Father Amerton, and leaning forward he covered his face with his hands, murmuring, 'I felt this in the atmosphere! The human stud farm! Refusing to create souls! The wickedness of it! Oh, my God!'

Men Like Gods, p.56.

Leaving aside the prurience of Amerton's remarks, a Catholic theologian could not find much else to quibble with in his aghast denunciation, for (as a recent Vatican announcement has re-affirmed) the Catholic doctrine of the inseparability of the conjugal act from procreation is absolute: science may not intervene in any way, either through effective contraception or, in the contrary case, in vitro fertilization. Like the Lithians of Blish's A Case of Conscience, the rationalistic Utopians are, in Amerton's judgement, at best unconsciously beastly, at worst consciously satanic.

Here Wells exploits the fundamental point where science comes most acutely into conflict with religious conviction: permitting or prohibiting human fertility is a divine prerogative, and if it is hubristic to aspire to proscribed knowledge, it is profane to apply it. However, Wells is far from finished with Christianity, for Utopian history has a further shock in store for Amerton:

Propositions that had seemed, in former ages, to be inspired and exalted idealism began now to be recognised not simply as sober psychological truth but as practical and urgently necessary truth. In explaining this Urthred expressed himself in a manner that recalled to Mr. Barnstaple's mind certain very familiar phrases; he seemed to be saying that whosoever would save his life should lose it, and that whosoever would give his life should thereby gain the whole world.

Father Amerton's thoughts, it seemed, were also responding in the same manner. For he suddenly interrupted with: 'But what you are saying is a quotation!'

Urthred admitted that he had a quotation in mind, a passage from the teachings of a man of great poetic power who had lived long ago in the days of spoken words.

He would have proceeded, but Father Amerton was too excited to let him do so. 'But who was this teacher?' he asked. 'Where did he live? How was he born? How did he die?'

A picture was flashed upon Mr. Barnstaple's consciousness of a solitary-looking, pale-faced figure, beaten and bleeding, surrounded by armoured guards, in the midst of a thrusting,

jostling, sun-bit crowd which filled a narrow, high-walled street. Behind, some huge, ugly implement was borne along dipping and swaying with the swaying of the multitude....

Men Like Gods, pp.59-60

Wells continues in this homologic manner (the whole passage is presented as Appendix I), making deliberate correspondences between the Utopians' ancient religion and the Gospels' account of the life and death of Christ, until Amerton is told by Urthred that while the prophet and teacher is respected for the virtue of his ideas, no-one now has faith in him as a religious saviour or redeemer; nor have they had for ages past. The priest is quite overwhelmed by this realization that the Utopians' martyr has come to be seen as less significant than the ideals and values he once preached and that these have become so revered in a seemingly agnostic world - "'I don't understand this...It is too terrible. I am at a loss. I do not understand.'"

For Amerton, Wells seems to imply, Christ's testament is valuable because it carries with it the promise of redemption and because it is revealed knowledge. Without Christ's divine authority, the message would be merely worthy; sanctioned by Christ, it has absolute moral force. What he cannot comprehend, as he repeatedly hints, is that although Utopia has had its parallel revelation, whatever may be admirable about its strange people - their beauty, scientific power, and supreme rationalism - has been attained even though the sacrifice upon the Wheel and the sacred message of its messianic victim has been ignored or accorded the significance of purely secular wisdom.

There are of course further implications from Amerton's point of view: if the revelation of this ancient prophet is true, then each human world may have its own saviour. Of more immediate significance,

however, is the matter of whether the Utopians are right merely to esteem, rather than worship their own redeemer. It is fair to say that Wells does not allow him any thoughts on this question, it being a foregone conclusion in view of his calling. The priest, staggered by what he has learned of the history of religion in Utopia, remains silent until he has summoned the resolve to condemn the utilitarian ways of the Utopians once again, to Mr. Burleigh's evident alarm:

'I wish you would not press this matter further just at present, Father Amerton. Until we have learned a little more. Institutions are, manifestly, very different here. Even the institution of marriage may be different.'

The preacher's face lowered. 'Mr. Burleigh,' he said, 'I must. If my suspicions are right, I want to strip this world forthwith of its hectic pretence to a sort of health and virtue.'

'Not much stripping required,' said Mr. Burleigh's chauffeur, in a very audible aside.

Men Like Gods, p.68

Amerton is unaware - or ignorant - of the ironic incongruity of the role he is ready to assume. Wells has indicated beforehand that the 'humans' are, in many respects, socially and ethically inferior to the Utopians. Still, since Amerton believes his moral authority is god-given, he ploughs on. Staggered by the Utopians' equanimity about birth control, Amerton feels compelled to denounce their 'universal scientific state' and its evil, materialistic practices - and things go from bad to worse, as even the suave parliamentarian Burleigh suddenly realizes.

It was clear to Mr. Barnstaple that Father Amerton was not in complete control of himself. He was frightened by what he was doing and yet impelled to do it. He was too excited to think clearly or control his voice properly, so that he shouted and boomed in the wildest way. He was 'letting himself go' and trusting to the habits of the pulpit of St. Barnabas to bring him through.

'I perceive now how you stand. Only too well do I perceive how you stand. From the outset I guessed how things were with you. I waited - I waited to be perfectly sure, before I bore my testimony. But it speaks for itself - the shamelessness of your costume, the licentious freedom of your manners! Young

men and women smiling, joining hands, near to caressing, when averted eyes, averted eyes, are the least tribute you could pay to modesty! And this vile talk - of lovers loving - without bonds or blessings, without rules or restraint. What does it mean? Whither does it lead? Do not imagine because I am a priest, a man pure and virginal in spite of great temptations, do not imagine that I do not understand! Have I no vision of the secret places of the heart? Do not the wounded sinners, the broken potsherds, creep to me with their pitiful confessions? And I will tell you plainly whither you go and how you stand. This so-called freedom of yours is nothing but licence. Your so-called Utopia, I see plainly, is nothing but a hell of unbridled indulgence. Unbridled indulgence!

Mr. Burleigh held up a restraining hand, but Father Amerton's eloquence soared over the obstruction.

He beat upon the back of the seat before him. 'I will bear my witness,' he shouted. 'I will bear my witness. I will make no bones about it. I refuse to mince matters, I tell you. You are all living - in promiscuity! That is the word for it. In animal promiscuity! In bestial promiscuity!'

Mr. Burleigh had sprung to his feet. He was holding up his two hands and motioning to the London Boanerges to sit down. 'No, no!' he cried. 'You must stop, Mr. Amerton. Really, you must stop. You are being insulting. You do not understand. Sit down, please. I insist.'

Men Like Gods, pp.69-70.

Ironically, it is the priest's 'testimony' which the more eloquently 'speaks for itself', for Wells effectively allows Amerton to condemn himself. Everything Amerton asserts confirms the reader in the opinion that the priest is an ingrate; his reactions to what Wells advances as a species of earthly paradise, based as they are upon the priest's merely vicarious appreciation of the very things he affects to condemn, make him seem to be inconsiderate, disrespectful, bigoted, prurient, and reactionary. His notions about the vileness of the Utopians' promiscuity are unconvincing - even embarrassing, for they serve only to underline his own inadequacy. However, they are not without genuine significance in the context in which Wells has presented them, as he uses this to expose the latent authoritarianism of the clergy. Quite simply, Amerton holds that marriage sanctifies sexuality - in other words, God sanctions certain kinds of sexual behaviour, and the clergy presume to know which.

This is yet another of those confrontations between reason and materialism on the one hand, and orthodox religious belief on the other which have become a distinctive feature of modern science fiction. As in a host of novels and shorter fiction, the cleric speaks for traditional morality and defends virtue against the rationalistic onslaught of materialistic progress. But there is no argument offered to counter Amerton's denunciation, for Utopia also speaks eloquently on its own behalf to the reader. It seems to be the very embodiment of humanistic aspiration for a secular earthly paradise completely adapted to the wants of reasonable beings. Wells's Utopians therefore do not need to give an account of themselves, or to advertise their virtues too strenuously. Theirs is, after all, a society which has surpassed its human parallel; Amerton and his fellows are the primitives come to London, as it were. Whatever they may desperately wish to believe, they are less sophisticated than their hosts.

Nonetheless the essential irony is that 'the London Boanerges' has sought to take upon himself the role of senior arbiter of the mores of both worlds, and advances his as the better. Indeed, he speaks with his own form of licence in expressing this arrogant hostility towards his hosts and vilifying their ways, which they have not sought to have him adopt. Hence even the broad-minded Utopians take exception to his tirade, and in the most dramatic instant of this entire passage of discussion of the differences and correspondences of both human worlds, Amerton is told: "Sit down and hold your peace...Or you will be taken away." Burleigh intercedes for him, and the priest remains, though he is unrepentant. His egotism and proscriptiveness are not lost on the Utopians, whom Wells allows

to voice his own attitude, apparent, in any case, from the beginning of Amerton's dogmatic sermon. "'Manifestly this man's mind is unclean,'" states the Utopian spokesman Urthred. "'His sexual imagination is evidently inflamed and diseased. He is angry and anxious to insult and wound. And his noises are terrific. To-morrow he must be examined and dealt with'" - a promise sombre enough to quell the priest's passionate flood of invective against the moral values of the Utopians, and perhaps lose Wells the reader's sympathy. Utopian force is a convenient force majeure which relieves Wells of the tedious, even difficult obligation of advancing the Utopian line of reasoning.

After Catskill has made his contribution to the visitors' criticism of Utopian life and culture by suggesting that they have sacrificed natural human vigour and creativity in attaining their scientific paradise, Urthred answers him and Amerton indirectly, rather as if he is conversing with his peers about a lower species which they have all, momentarily and regrettably, taken for their equals:

'Why does he say degenerate? He has been told better already. The indolent and inferior do not procreate here. And why should he threaten us with fancies and irruptions from other, fiercer, more barbaric worlds? It is we who can open the doors into such other universes or close them as we choose. We can go to them - when we know enough we shall - but they cannot come to us. There is no way but knowledge out of the cages of life... What is the matter with the mind of this man?

'These earthlings are only in the beginnings of science. They are still for all practical ends in that phase of fear and taboos that came also in the development of Utopia before confidence and understanding... The minds of these Earthlings are full of fears and prohibitions, and though it has dawned on them that they may possibly control their universe, the thought is too terrible for them to face. They avert their minds from it.

Men Like Gods, p.81

Urthred's is a key statement of Wells's own attitude towards what he always depicted as the two most persistent cognitive constraints upon genuine progress: reluctance to face the truth about life and the unthinking acceptance of 'taboos' and 'prohibitions' such as those advanced by moral spokesmen like Amerton. This vision of human nature struggling to throw off its inadequacies and shortcomings in trying to attain the knowledge necessary to escape from 'the cages of life' may sound inspiring, and again confirms the argument being developed here about the relationship between knowledge and power, but Wells is astute enough to concede that some of what the Utopians countenance is of doubtful ethical propriety. The first assertion Urthred makes above - "'The indolent and inferior do not procreate here'" - begs all sorts of questions, and has an authoritarian ring which almost eclipses even Amerton's wildest proscription. Thomas Molnar's polemical study of utopian writing, Utopia, The Perennial Heresy, depends upon this repressive aspect of Utopian social projection:

...the utopian...visualizes the globe as having become one powerful dynamo from the integration of all its natural and human potentials and launched upon the conquest of other globes, planets, solar systems - and God himself. ...power over things and men - the will to be God - is the ultimate objective of both. Observed H.G.Wells in A Modern Utopia:

The Utopia of a modern dreamer must needs differ in one fundamental aspect from the Nowheres and Utopias men planned before Darwin quickened the thought of the world. Those were all perfect and static States, a balance of happiness won forever against the forces of unrest that inhere in things. But the Modern Utopia must not be static but kinetic, must take shape not as a permanent state but as a hopeful stage, leading to a long ascent of stages.

To understand, with the utopian, that human freedom jeopardizes these prospects, these states of happiness and this long ascent of stages injects incalculability into the march of things and accounts for the differences between one man and another, is also to understand why it is of relatively little importance for the utopian to deprive mankind of these instruments of freedom. The transition period toward utopia

is, then, the process of removing and abolishing certain of these instruments of freedom. Granted, in every age these instruments change and the utopian, child of his age, concentrates on those which in his eyes are the most obstructive of common happiness, yet, even though some of these instruments are permanent, they are still denounced with passion or by cold logic throughout the pages of utopian literature.

11.

If, however, Wells is prepared to hint that there is an unattractive, inhumane side to the Utopian temperament, he does not condone Amerton's position. When the priest seeks to enlist Barnstaple's support the next day, he is given a less sympathetic reception than he expects. Amerton begins on what he considers to be the safe ground of irrefutable moral logic: "'The Laws of Morality hold good for every conceivable world.'"(p.90) Barnstaple, we later learn(p.98), is not the friend to religion which Amerton has assumed. He is not willing to accept the priest's assertion that moral values are absolute - the counterparts of scientific constants. He seeks to expose the fallacy of Amerton's position by advancing a scientific case which suggests that moral values are relative rather than absolute, asking "'But in a world in which people propagated by fission and there was no sex?'" But the priest is adamant: "'Morality would be simpler but it would be the same morality.'"

With what seems to be uncharacteristic bitterness, Barnstaple, a genial middle-class everyman, privately wishes that Amerton ('a bore') could be discarded as readily as litter or a cigarette butt. When the cleric, full of his mission to "'recall them to the One Thing that Matters'" describes Utopia as "'this Hell of sensuous materialism'", Barnstaple turns on him at last:

'I want you to understand that I am entirely out of sympathy with all this stuff of yours. You seem to embody all that is wrong and ugly and impossible in Catholic teaching. I agree with these Utopians that there is something wrong with your mind about sex, in all probability a nasty twist given to it

in early life, and that what you keep saying and hinting about sexual life here is horrible and outrageous. And I am equally hostile to you and exasperated and repelled by you when you speak of religion proper. You make religion disgusting just as you make sex disgusting. You are a dirty priest.

Men Like Gods, p.92

However, when Barnstaple extends his criticism of the priest to include the creed he represents, Wells reveals a perhaps unexpected degree of circumspection, allowing Barnstaple to present a line of reasoning which is anti-clerical certainly, but not irreligious:

'What you call Christianity is a black and ugly superstition, a mere excuse for malignity and persecution. It is an outrage upon Christ. If you are a Christian, then most passionately I declare myself not a Christian. But there are other meanings for Christianity than those you put upon it, and in another sense this Utopia here is Christian beyond all dreaming. Utterly beyond your understanding. We have come into this glorious world, which, compared to our world, is like a bowl of crystal compared to an old tin can, and you have the insufferable impudence to say that we have been sent here as missionaries to teach them - God knows what!'

Idem.

The tenor of Barnstaple's reproach is righteous to the point of seeming conventionally devout, and there also is an implicit acknowledgement that religious faith may not be entirely valueless. Albeit in the most general terms, Wells here introduces the seemingly radical idea of a religion of Man. His portrayal of a humanistic creed, notwithstanding Barnstaple's ingenuous, ready approbation and more or less immediate conversion, is not as inventive as it may appear. In fact Wells is giving pride of place in Utopian philosophy to logical positivism with a spiritual orientation, for Urthred's Logos, "'the Word and the Will'" - the unique product of the human mind - is its central principle.

Barnstaple, then, is acting as a spokesman advancing the virtues of positivist religion very much like that of the French rationalist Auguste Comte who, in the first half of the nineteenth century, had

even established a Church of Humanity with a Positive Catechism - Comte himself being High Priest of this 'sociological' cult he had founded. Principally through the medium of Wellsian fiction, Comte's vision of an anthropocentric religion founded upon Western values has remained influential, emerging in one guise or another even in recent fiction, though Victor Frankenstein should certainly be counted as an early prophet and martyr. Nevertheless, however ostensibly spiritual, Wells depicts a religion which is no less utilitarian than anything else about Utopia and its people: like Butler's Erewhonians, his Utopians are moral pragmatists.

Having repudiated Amerton and his values so emphatically and revealed, coincidentally, how much he admires the Utopians, Barnstaple now emerges as the nearest the novel offers to a central character of a Faustian disposition. He has gradually become estranged from the other visitors, but since the Utopians suddenly find themselves with an epidemic on their hands because, like the Martians in The War of the Worlds, they have no resistance to the sort of pathogens with which twentieth-century man is infected, he is quarantined with the others in a ruined castle atop a remote crag while the Utopians are trying to contain the spread of the illnesses which the 'Earthlings' have carried into their world. One of the party, Lady Stella, confides to Barnstaple that she has misgivings about how they will now be treated, introducing the main theme of the second part of the novel ('Book Two, Quarantine Crag'). Whereas in the first of the novel's three sections the 'humanity' of the visitors is weighed, and indeed is found wanting, it is the 'humanity' of the Utopians themselves which will be apparent in how they respond to the 'inferior' visitors whose presence has proved to

be problematical.

No sooner are the members of the Earth party installed in the ruined fortification in the second 'Book' than they start to react to the happenstance humiliations with which they have had to cope virtually since their arrival in Utopia. Disturbed by the apprehension of an inferiority they are loathe to acknowledge, they organize themselves into a pathetic armed band, constituted along military lines and with the vaguest of objectives. Burleigh and Catskill take charge of the others and Barnstaple, being not much in tune with their ways, finds himself dragooned into a menial role. He reflects ruefully on the effect his various compatriots have had since their arrival, the weakness of his own vacillation, and the motives behind their present course of action:

But how miserably had he and his companions failed to rise to the great occasions of Utopia! No one had raised an effectual hand to restrain the puerile imaginations of Mr. Catskill and the mere brutal aggressiveness of his companions. How invincibly had Father Amerton headed for the role of the ranting, hating, persecuting priest. How pitifully weak and dishonest Mr. Burleigh - and himself scarcely better! disapproving always and always in ineffective opposition. ...Women, he thought, had not been well represented in this chance expedition, just one waster and one ineffective. Was that a fair sample of Earth's womankind?

All the use these earthlings had had for Utopia was to turn it back as speedily as possible to the aggressions, subjugations, cruelties and disorders of the Age of Confusion to which they belonged. Serpentine and Cedar, the man of scientific power and the man of healing, they had sought to make hostages to disorder, and failing that they had killed or sought to kill them.

They had tried to bring back Utopia to the state of Earth, and indeed but for the folly, malice and weakness of men Earth was now Utopia. Old Earth was Utopia now, a garden and a glory, the Earthly Paradise, except that it was trampled to dust and ruin by its Catskills, Hunkers, Barralongas, Riddleys, Duponts, and their kind. Against their hasty trampling folly nothing was pitted, it seemed in the whole wide world at present but the whinings of the Peeves, the acquiescent disapproval of the Burleighs and such immeasurable ineffectiveness as his own protest. And a few writers and teachers who produced results at present untraceable.

Men Like Gods, p.166.

Barnstaple has already decided, however, that though this entire enterprize is an ill-conceived, mad gesture of defiance, Catskill and the others are capable of injuring the unsuspecting Utopians. Ashamed at the barbarity of his fellows, he resolves to interfere at a crucial moment. While he thus exhibits more of a conscience than any of the others (Amerton included), Barnstaple is not made of the stuff of heroes, and his plan is only partly successful. The hack-turned-adventurer cannot escape immediately from the towering crag and consequently has to endure the anger of his thwarted compatriots, who not surprisingly regard him as a traitor. He does have sufficient courage to attempt a risky escape, which nearly costs him his life; but he survives the vengeance of the others and, now separated from them, is left in Utopia when the Earthlings' former hosts cast them out again into the dimensions whence they came (along with the entire top of the crag the Earth party had garrisoned so ineffectively.)

The Utopians have decided, without any consideration of the consequence of their act upon the primitive people they are rejecting so casually, that the 'Earthlings' are now too much of a nuisance to be borne; in doing so, they demonstrate a marked lack of compassion or mercy, for they do not care what happens to these creatures. Their merciless act shows them to be, by human standards, amoral. However, Wells for a time maintains the integrity of his vision - to face up to the awful truth, as he might have seen it - for their action does not recommend them to the reader. Here Wells is being true to his purpose, for he intends to depict in an appropriately unsentimental way the kind of supremely rational mind he anticipates, perhaps even hopes, will evolve from, and succeed, 'confused' contemporary Man. Wells's Utopians are, in fact, the Martians of The War of the Worlds

in human guise; the fore-runners of Stapledon's Odd John Wainwright and his fellows(12), John Wyndham's 'chrysalids', Arthur C. Clarke's Overlords of Childhood's End and the Star Child of 2001:A Space Odyssey, and indeed the legion of science fiction Übermenschen unconstrained by merely human ethics. Of course, this amorality raises unique problems of narrative and moral vision, aspects of which are addressed in the final chapter of this work. Wells's solution to the technical part of these new problems, which really merits no more than passing attention, is advanced in the third book of his novel, wherein it is also revealed that the apparently omnipotent Utopians have retrieved the Earthlings they cast out into the void, restored them to life, and returned them to their native surroundings, though Barnstaple is allowed to remain among them for some time.

Perhaps more notably than any other of his utopian, or, as he preferred to say, 'sociological' novels, Men Like Gods is open to the charge of advancing a naive, idealistic attitude to the ethics of Progress and the moral problems innate to this sort of fictive projection of a better society. Book Three of the novel, in which Barnstaple wanders about in Utopia, the sole representative of our kind privileged to observe the Utopians engaging in quotidian life, is indeed a sort of panegyric of the world Wells clearly thought might be ours if the humans of 'Old Earth' could lose their aggressiveness, spite, wilfulness, bigotry, and sexual inadequacy and embrace "reasonable" mores and behaviour. Yet a more than superficial reading brings one to a fuller appreciation of the central, daunting inference about human nature Wells would draw even more explicitly in his last works. Anthony West has made a convincing case for

recognising a resurgence of the "cosmic pessimism" of the celebrated 'Scientific Romances' in these later works, with which he also linked

Men Like Gods:

For some years after his death I reacted angrily to the criticisms of the quality of his thought which made so much of the pessimism of his last writings and utterances. These were, and still are, being represented as an abandonment of a superficial optimism in the face of those realities of which his coming death was a part. The suggestion is made that they were some kind of final admission that he had been wrong about the nature of things for the greater part of his life.I cannot now agree that his final phase of scolding and complaining at human folly represented any essential change in his views at all. What happened as his powers declined from 1940 onwards was that he reverted to his original profoundly-felt beliefs about the realities of the human situation. He was by nature a pessimist, and he was doing violence to his intuitions and his rational perceptions alike when he asserted in his middle period that mankind could make a better world for itself by an effort of will.

13.

West subsequently confirms the significance of Men Like Gods within the canon of Wells's science fiction, and attests that it is more than a facile day-dream:

...the idea of a change in human nature is the sine qua non of his utopias, and in the end Wells conceded that such a change was not within the realm of possibility. His much-parodied Men Like Gods is the point of concession, and it is odd that those who have criticized the book as representing the unpracticality and unreality of his idealism in its extreme form have not noticed the fact. The ideal beings which inhabit its Utopia exist in a free zone which is not within the realm of human reality.

14.

The difference can be drawn succinctly in comparing this later novel with its generic predecessor, A Modern Utopia, for where that depicts the sociopolitical transformation of a world 'somewhere beyond Sirius' (but which is indubitably this one) Men Like Gods depicts a society working for its own evolutionary apotheosis, a species striving for their ultimate spiritual fulfilment. However valid his observations about Wells's native pessimism, West's reading leads him

to overlook the special hybrid quality of the novel under discussion here.

In this novel Wells visualizes the possibility of human self-transcendence through a collective, conscious effort of the will presented as the communion of a natural religion of man. In so doing, he goes beyond the sterile impasse of the two mutually-antagonistic social forces which is repeatedly presented in this genre. The Wellsian resolution is both visionary and synthetic: the Utopians revere their own positive attributes and the potential they possess; they practise a humanistic pseudo-religion which exalts reason rather than uncritical faith and fervour. Barnstaple feels dwarfed by them: 'He went a little in awe of these people and felt himself a queer creature when he met their eyes. For like the gods of Greece and Rome theirs was a cleaned and perfected humanity, and it seemed to him they were gods' (pp.187-188). Wells's Utopian Apollos, so admired by Barnstaple, are in many ways the rationalistic counterparts of the sorns and eldila of Lewis's later Ransom trilogy. The crucial difference is that the quasi-divinity of the Utopians is essentially humane rather than supernal, self-sought rather than Providential.

Yet however eager Barnstaple is to accept them as gods, they are reluctant to be seen as such. They see their enterprise as a continuing effort to promote their own evolutionary development to an end they can perceive. Alas, nowhere is one afforded the sort of insight into Utopian perceptions which has become one of the principle foci of interest in more recent science fiction of aspiration. Indeed, Wells neglects the teleological implications of the 'Utopian' sensibility, an aspect of the theme of human evolution which would interest later writers of this specialized kind of fiction.

By this means, Wells avoids having to deal in any detail with the moral issues raised in the course of their programme; Barnstaple quite simply avers his general ignorance of their Icarian activities which, given their atheism, cannot be called hubristic as there is no divine order for them to challenge. However, Wells does exploit the ironic potential of the situation he has created to emphasize his own tragic view of human reality. This emerges in the novel in two ways, in Barnstaple's recognition that real Utopian existence will always be beyond his reach, and in his poignant decision to return to his own world. While he could have remained amongst the Apollos of Utopia whom he so much admires, he returns to 'Old Earth' with a stronger determination to oppose all the base things which stifle even the faintest stirrings of rationalistic progressive materialism, the key to true human development.

Yet there is no convenient, transforming formula for mundane Man. Wells does not allow Barnstaple his proxy, to return to tell how the era of Homo superior could be brought forward, and preach the abjuration of religion, greed, hypocrisy, aggression and the adoption of Reason as a vital guiding principle. The central, obdurate point is paradoxical: human nature is usually incapable and at best only just capable of coping with the demands of this reasoning life, and therefore cannot consciously will it to come into being. Barnstaple begins to understand this, if only dimly, when he sees how the Utopians' telepathy, a faculty cultivated eugenically for generations, facilitates their act of collective will. This, he knows, is presently beyond the attainment of our race; and there, implicitly, is the latent germ of Wells's pessimism, a realization that to bring to fruition the ideal human state, that divinity to which mankind

aspires and which orthodox attitudes and religion preclude, demands more-than-human qualities:

'The minds of these Earthlings are full of fears and prohibitions, and though it has dawned upon them that they may possibly control their universe, the thought is to terrible yet for them to face. They avert their minds from it. They still want to go on thinking, as their fathers did before them, that the universe is being managed for them better than they can control it for themselves. Because if that is so, they are free to obey their own violent little individual motives. Leave things to God, they cry, or leave them to Competition.'

'Evolution was our blessed word,' said Mr. Barnstaple, deeply interested.

'It is all the same thing - God, or Evolution, or what you will - so long as you mean a Power beyond your own which excuses you from your duty. Utopia says, "Do not leave things at all. Take hold." But these Earthlings lack the habit of looking at reality - undraped.

Men Like Gods, p.81

According to Urthred, there is a compelling reality which exposes the relative shallowness of all the other doctrines to which people have been drawn in seeking truth, or at least reassurance. Naturally, since Urthred is Wells as he might like to be, and Barnstaple is Wells as he disingenuously pretends to be in order to maintain the dialectic exposition, this exchange takes him to the heart of the crisis of faith in the future of mankind.

In the final analysis, Wells must have perceived that he would not be able to maintain even his own commitment to this most personal vision throughout the novel. Indeed, his confidence seems to falter, perhaps because his utopian vision has reached a point where it is in danger of becoming more fantastic than speculative. Two features of the novel contribute most to this failure to remain compelling: the Utopians' telepathic consensus; and the very vagueness of their goals. In effect, Wells relies upon the selflessness and resolute nature of their aspiration to excite and sustain the reader's interest. Yet however inspiring or noble their dedication to humane

progress, it all ultimately seems like wishfulness. 'Men Like Gods is in reality an altogether pessimistic book,' argued West (15), and the depths of that pessimism are indeed profound. Wells's abiding intuition about the indifference of the universe to man, his dreams, and his potential reasserted itself forcefully in his last days, eclipsing the humanistic Weltanschauung he had come close to formulating in 1923, and for which, ironically, he would lampooned by Huxley, Noyes, Orwell, Leavis et al, who would reject his quasi-gnostic scientism.

Olaf Stapledon was probably his most sympathetic fellow author. In Star Maker (1937) he depicts a journey to the central organising consciousness of the universe and confronts the same problem Wells could not resolve, namely, credibly treating the inscrutable will of the eponymous higher life form. Stapledon's Star Maker is a metaphysical tour-de-force. The mood moves from scepticism through apocalyptic awe to angry apostasy. If Odd John was an ironic "tribute" to Nietzsche's ideas of the rejection of conventional mores by the Übermensch, then Star Maker illustrates the more speculative areas of Kant's philosophy. In its final tragic realization of the finitude of human experience and the denial of the key teleological hope of the science fiction of aspiration, Stapledon's novel also develops Wells's pessimistic premise. Stapledon's traveller understands ultimately that like many other species, mankind is not ready - may never be - to join the universal consciousness.

It would be easy to claim too much for Olaf Stapledon's celebrated novel which abounds with contentions about religion and humanity, but at least it should be recognised that in it apocalypse and aspiration complement one another particularly well.

There is a remarkable profuseness of ideas, many of which parallel, indeed anticipate, arguments featured in the works by Orwell and Vonnegut already discussed, as well as those by Arthur C. Clarke yet to be discussed in Chapter Six. Stapledon's narrator earnestly hopes to gain answers to ancient ('grave') teleological questions as his journey, enlarged thus into a quest for cosmic enlightenment, progresses:

Was man indeed, as he sometimes desired to be, the growing point of the cosmical spirit, in its temporal aspect at least? Or was he one of many million growing points? Or was mankind of no more importance in the universal view than rats in a cathedral? And again, was man's true function power, or wisdom, or love, or worship, or all of these? Or was the idea of function, of purpose, meaningless in relation to the cosmos? These grave questions I would answer. Also I must learn to see a little more clearly and confront a little more rightly (so I put it to myself) that which, when we glimpse it all, compels our worship.

Star Maker, Chapter 2.

Collectively, these issues and questions have imbued much of the science fiction of the twentieth century with something approaching a consistent philosophical preoccupation; they come up again and again in different situations. What should not overlooked is the fact that to ask such momentous questions about Mankind's role in the grand scheme of things - are we a phenomenon of real significance to anyone other than ourselves, or of much importance 'in the universal view' - is to indicate a dissatisfaction with such answers as are offered in scripture - Talmud, Holy Writ, the Stone Tablets of the Commandments, the Koran, even the Word of God personally communicated by His Son - revealed knowledge in its many manifestations. Yet balancing his scepticism, there is also a willingness, even a desire to revere 'that which, when we glimpse it at all, compels our worship' evident in this narrator's reflections; which perhaps is why this seems such

a compelling view of the human dilemma, echoing the ages-old plea of the troubled spirit - "I believe, O Lord, help Thou my unbelief." The central question is, in what should we believe? Undoubtedly Stapledon wrestled with this very question for decades, and his books are deeply personal explorations of his own faith which, never orthodox in its allegiance to any creed, was variously placed in the Christianity of childhood, scientific materialism, Marxism, and finally a species of ecstatic, Gnostic Christianity(16).

When the narrator begins his fantastic journey, he has initially little real conception of what is happening to him, though he is aware that his imagination has played some vital part in precipitating his transcendental vision. Nor can he think of an explanation of how it is happening, still less where it will lead. Yet to his astonishment he finds himself embarked, apparently, on a journey first beyond Earth and then deep into space. His apprehension for his family and, more immediately, his own safety are at first very great, but he resolves 'not to be unduly alarmed by this mysterious change', and is determined that his perceptions of this unique experience will not be impaired needlessly: 'With scientific interest I would observe all that happened to me.' Leaving behind the Earth, this cosmic Gulliver is affected by a novel, magnificent perception of his native planet:

The spectacle before me was strangely moving. Personal anxiety was blotted out by wonder and admiration; for the sheer beauty of our planet surprised me. It was a huge pearl, set in spangled ebony. It was nacrous, it was an opal. No, it was far more lovely than any jewel. Its patterned colouring was more subtle, more ethereal. It displayed the delicacy and brilliance, the intricacy and harmony of a live thing. Strange that in my remoteness I seemed to feel, as never before, the vital presence of Earth as a creature alive but tranced and obscurely yearning to wake.

Star Maker, Chapter 1.

Enthralled by this apocalyptic vision of his home world (anticipating Lewis, if only by a year) as 'a creature alive but tranced and obscurely yearning to wake', his outlook has undergone the first in a series of upheavals it will have to accommodate as his cosmic journey progresses, and when he next sees Earth his feelings for his former life will be very different. Like Prendick and the Time Traveller, what he alone of all terrestrial men will witness leaves him withdrawn from his fellows, less ready to appreciate what before seemed fulfilling, important and wholesome, for in the light of his discoveries about the nature of consciousness and about the Cosmos itself, the familiar blessings of home and community will be less certain touchstones.

Peering, the mind could see nothing sure, nothing in all human experience to be grasped as certain, except uncertainty itself; nothing but obscurity gendered by a thick haze of theories. Man's science was a mere mist of numbers, his philosophy but a fog of words. His very perception of this rocky grain and all its wonders was but a shifting and lying apparition. Even oneself, that seeming-central fact, was a mere phantom, so deceptive, that the most honest of men must question his own honesty, so insubstantial that he must even doubt his very existence. And our loyalties! so self-deceiving, so mis-informed and mis-conceived. So savagely pursued and hate-deformed! Our very loves, and these in full and generous intimacy, must be condemned as unseeing, self-regarding, and self-gratulatory.

Star Maker, Epilogue: Back to Earth.

The narrator finds new, twentieth-century contentions to illustrate themes as apocalyptic as anything in Ecclesiastes. However this existentialist despair is redeemed by the thought of his marriage, 'The one rock in all the welter of experience.' He realizes that both the essential, close-grained reality of his life and love, and the inexorable equilibria of the stars and their Maker which he calls the 'hypercossical apparition,' have a complementary integrity in which inheres the true being of 'man' - whatever the species. Accordingly,

he resolves to once again engage the dilemmas and trying if ephemeral problems of his life rather than shun them as Prendick does.

After only this first step on his great peregrination, his nascent cosmic detachment is already working the subtle, cumulative restructuring of his sensibility which will afflict him on his return. As he leaves, his thoughts turn briefly to human nature, prompted by the invisibility of 'the huge industrial regions, blackening the air with smoke' and 'teeming masses' which he knows lie far below him: 'No visiting angel, or visitor from another planet, could have guessed that this bland orb teemed with vermin, with world-mastering, self-torturing, incipiently angelic beasts.' 'Vermin,' a strange choice of word with which to denote one's own kind, suggests that his narrative is retrospective, though it is presented as a chronicle of his voyage of the spirit.

The first planetfall the narrator makes is in a distant galaxy, on a world he calls 'the Other Earth.' He spends many (apparent) years among the Other Men, a species not unlike ours in many ways, but with some few highly distinctive differences:

Perhaps the most striking example of the extravagance of the Other Men was the part played by religion in their more advanced societies. Religion was a much greater power than on my own planet; and the religious teachings of the prophets of old were able to kindle even my alien and sluggish heart with fervour. Yet religion, as it occurred around me in contemporary society, was far from edifying.

Star Maker, chapter 3.3

The narrator has little time for the religious beliefs of the Other Men, whose sanctimonious predisposition he contrasts unfavourably with that of Mankind, who seem to him to be comparatively better integrated, better balanced, and possessed of a greater degree of native common sense. After an anthropological description of the emergence of primitive tribal cults in which his own scepticism is

revealed, he describes some of the seemingly absurd grounds and issues which have created the unedifying religious factionalism of contemporary religion. The central difficulty subsists in the flavour of God (the Other Men have a highly developed gustatory sensibility, but despite this 'there seldom had been any widespread agreement as to the taste of God.') Of course, Stapledon, like Swift before him, is in good earnest. Despite his choice of something as absurd as gustatory appreciation and the connotations it has for these exquisitely discerning aliens, his only thinly-disguised satirical targets are the religious tenets, practices and ecclesiastical history of Mankind:

Religious wars had been waged to decide whether he was in the main sweet or salt, or whether his preponderant flavour was one of the many gustatory characters which my own race cannot conceive. Some teachers insisted that only the feet could taste him, others only the hands or mouth, others that he could be experienced only in the subtle complex of gustatory flavours known as the immaculate union, which was a sensual, and mainly sexual, ecstasy induced by contemplation of intercourse with the deity.

Star Maker, ibid.

When Stapledon further warms to his theme, his pretence of reporting the quaint religious notions of the people of the Other Earth is virtually dropped and his anticlericalism emerges fully:

Some ten or fifteen centuries earlier, when religion, so far as I could tell, was most vital, there were no churches or priesthoods; but every man's life was dominated by religious ideas to an extent which to me was almost incredible. Later, churches and priesthoods had returned, to play an important part in preserving what was now evidently a declining religious consciousness. Still later, a few centuries before the Industrial Revolution, institutional religion had gained such a hold on the most civilized peoples that three-quarters of their total income was spent on the upkeep of religious institutions. The working classes, indeed, who slaved for the owners in return for a mere pittance, gave much of their miserable earnings to the priests, and lived in more abject squalor than need have been.

Star Maker, ibid.

This mannered polemic recalls the reportage of Butler's Higgs when he

functions as Butler's mouthpiece in Erewhon. In contemporary times, though, Stapledon's narrator finds himself and his other-worldly companion Bvalltu, (with whom he communicates telepathically) caught up in a raging economic war which threatens to cast all the people of the Other Earth, regardless of nationality or religion, into a cyclic, ineluctable catastrophic fall from advanced civilization into atavism. His description reminds one of parallel ideas presented in later novels like Player Piano and Childhood's End, and also involves a similar ideology of social decadence and vitiation to that masterfully illustrated by The Time Machine(17):

Again and again the race would emerge from savagery, and pass through barbarian culture into a phase of world-wide brilliance and sensibility. Whole populations would conceive simultaneously an ever-increasing capacity for generosity, self-knowledge, self-discipline, for dispassionate and penetrating thought and uncontaminated religious feeling.

Consequently within a few centuries the whole world would blossom with free and happy societies. Average human beings would attain an unprecedented clarity of mind, and by massed action do away with all grave social injustices and private cruelties...

Presently a general loosening of fibre would set in. The golden age would be followed by a silver age. Living on the achievements of the past, the leaders of thought would lose themselves in a jungle of subtlety, or fall exhausted into mere slovenliness. At the same time, moral sensibility would decline. Men would become on the whole less sincere, less self-searching...Social machinery, which had worked well so long as citizens attained a certain level of humanity, would be dislocated by injustice and corruption. Tyrants and tyrannical oligarchies would set about destroying liberty. Hate-mad submerged classes would give them good excuse. Little by little, though the material benefits of civilization would smoulder on for centuries, the flame of the spirit would die down into a mere flicker in a few isolated individuals. Then would come barbarism, followed by a trough of almost subhuman savagery.

Ibid.

This idealised vision of 'humanity' - Other Men - in the Golden Age, the supreme flowering of human nature, is important. For here Stapledon reveals those faculties and innate qualities he most esteems: moral integrity, spiritual magnanimity, intellectual brilliance,

social responsibility and mutual consideration - and, least secular of any of these - 'uncontaminated religious feeling.' The only real humane aspiration is both evolutionary and spiritual, a racial rather than self-centred desire for transformation. Periodically the nemesis of the human sensibility (which, being itself mutable, can find within itself no absolute, positive criteria) makes its mark, and the moral, material and spiritual perspectives of men become clouded with unwholesome, egocentric concerns. Consequently, the dominant orientation of human nature swings from humaneness towards primitivism.

Yet again the cause of this racial dissipation is over-dependence upon machines, the most ubiquitous products of human creativity. Too much complacent comfort encourages a general decline in humaneness, which on an individual basis is marked by a decline in moral sensibility and the waning of the 'flame of the spirit'. Stapledon does not trouble to include at this point the effects upon religious faith and practices of this cyclical social collapse, but having selected it for a fuller exposition, later deals with it at greater length.

A tiny minority concerned about the deteriorating ethics of the times seek to promote ancient principles for the common good. While the narrator applauds their idealism, they are scorned or condemned roundly by everyone else, except those caught up in 'radio-bliss,' an appalling pseudo-nirvana the broadcasters provide to those wishing to have 'recumbent,' wholly vicariously lives. The eleventh hour pleading of this group is swamped by the unrestrained self-indulgence and burgeoning violence afflicting the nations of this Other Earth:

...there was in each country a small and bewildered party which asserted that the true goal of human activity was the creation of a world-wide community of awakened and intelligent creative persons, related by mutual insight and

respect, and by the common task of fulfilling the potentiality of the human spirit on earth. Much of this doctrine was a re-statement of the teachings of religious seers of a time long past, but it had also been deeply influenced by contemporary science. This party, however, was misunderstood by the scientists, cursed by the clerics, ridiculed by the militarists, and ignored by the advocates of radio-bliss.

Ibid.

As the narrator will realize during later stages of his travels, the derided attitudes of this minority are the nearest apprehension to cosmic principles and propriety the Other Men - except Bvalltu - ever will achieve. The significance is plain, for the Other Men are satiric figures of mankind. Stapledon temporizes the implicit question of what makes the minority groups so distinctly more 'awakened' than their orthodox fellows but the clear inference is that their eclectic sapientia in which fundamental revelation, spirituality, scientific awareness and mutuality achieve a harmonious balance is enlightened and progressive. The climactic irony is that the Star Maker affords them neither providential succour nor even recognition; species achieve cosmic communion unassisted, or perish in derangement.

Accompanied by Bvalltu, one of the Other Men who has proved to be literally a kindred spirit, the narrator resumes his voyage, which has now turned into a joint quest to discover the nature of the awareness which created the Cosmos itself, and all its creatures - the Star Maker. One recalls a similar quest by Christian and Faithful in Pilgrim's Progress; while piety is their impulse, enquiry and adoration sustain Stapledon's travellers.

The novel moves into an entirely different phase, with Stapledon allowing free rein to his imagination, yet always trying 'to domesticate the impossible' so that the observations and inferences

he draws in the philosophical vignettes of consciousness and environment, however mystical, metaphysical or visionary they might be, seem credible. Although the scientific context of the novel becomes more and more speculative, Stapledon customarily works outward from what is known in coherently presenting the recondite or fantastic aspects of his vision. His novel is replete with interesting astronomical, biological and anthropological ideas, for instance.

During his quest for the Star Maker, the narrator encounters 'worlds innumerable' and their inhabitants, many sapient, some vegetative, and others who are 'mad', i.e., lost in pernicious or obsessive collective pursuits which distract them from, or obscure the cosmic enlightenment which would otherwise be within their reach, and which vitiate any cosmic qualities they already possess. In this discursive lengthy section of the novel, the rationalistic attack on ecclesiastical and institutionalised religion remains a central aim, but having tackled it so comprehensively in the third chapter in the setting of the Other Earth, Stapledon now makes only the occasional explicit reference to religion:

By means of chemical treatment in infancy the two kinds of organism were more interdependent, and in partnership more hardy. By a special psychological ritual, a sort of mutual hypnosis, all newly joined partners were henceforth brought into indissoluble mental reciprocity. This interspecific communion...became in time the basis of all culture and religion. The symbiotic deity, which figured in all the primitive mythologies, was reinstated as a symbol of the dual personality of the universe, a dualism, it was said, of creativity and wisdom, unified as the divine spirit of love.

Star Maker, Chapter 7.

In the settings of yet other worlds and species, religion is variously associated with obsessional delusions - 'the hunger for true community and true mental lucidity itself became obsessional and perverse, so that the behaviour of these exalted perverts might

deteriorate into something very like tribalism and religious fanaticism...Sometimes their zeal became so violent that they were actually driven to wage ruthless religious wars on all who resisted them' (pp.148-149); selfless stoicism(18); or with haughty imperialism:

They would be quite incapable of conceiving that the native civilization, though less developed than our own, might be more suited to the natives. Nor could they realize that their own culture, formerly the expression of a gloriously awakened world, might have sunk, in spite of their mechanical powers and crazy religious fervour, below the simpler culture of the natives in all the essentials of mental life.

Star Maker, Chapter 13.

These references (which reveal that Stapledon was well acquainted with many diverse expressions of religious feeling) confirm that he views yearning for spiritual communion and religious mythopoesis as fundamental aspects of human nature. Stapledon's view of 'human' nature is not anthropocentric, encompassing many forms of sentience and physical being. While he extols the advance of cosmical development he includes many examples of recrudescence suggesting that the growth of active consciousness throughout the universe is subject to many possible setbacks such as genocidal tragedies and cataclysms. In all its complex manifestations and differing stages of evolution and cosmical development, this 'human nature' striving for 'lucidity' is the Star Maker's vital active principle.

In describing the culmination of the narrator's quest - the 'Supreme Moment' - Stapledon offers his ultimate view of orthodox religion:

And as I fell abject before the Star Maker, my mind was flooded with a spate of images. The fictitious deities of all races in all worlds once more crowded themselves upon me, symbols of majesty and tenderness, of ruthless power, of blind creativity, and of all-seeing wisdom. And though these images were but the fantasies of created minds, it seemed to me that one and all did embody some true feature of the Star Maker's impact upon the creatures.

Star Maker, Chapter 13.

In this moment of theophany, the narrator experiences an omniscience which is the product of the same revelation striking home at once into the minds of the unified cosmos of which he is an aspect(19).

The narrator, now a part of (and at the same time, somehow, all of) a collective cosmical spirit incorporating a host of such 'human' attributes and intellectual faculties, is consequently able to comprehend the enigmatic ultimate being, the Star Maker, and the three phases of the Star Maker's creativity. In the first, the paradoxes of 'Immature Creating' (i.e. flawed creation) are described in Frankensteinian terms and perhaps Odd John Wainwright can be glimpsed in the supernal experimenter dispassionately creating and discarding worlds. In one series of attempts the 'twi-minded' Star Maker invests his created worlds with his own Manichaeian sensibility and observes how these quasi-Christian phenomena evolve; the result horrifies the 'dreaming' narrator:

Again and again he dissociated these two moods of himself, objectified them as independent spirits, and permitted them to strive within a cosmos for mastery. One such cosmos, which consisted of three linked universes, was somewhat reminiscent of Christian orthodoxy. The first of these linked universes was inhabited by generations of creatures gifted with varying degrees of sensibility, intelligence, and moral integrity. Here the two spirits played for the souls of the creatures. The 'good' spirit exhorted, helped, rewarded, punished; the 'evil' spirit deceived, tempted, and morally destroyed. At death the creatures passed into one or other of the two secondary universes, which constituted a timeless heaven and a timeless hell. There they experienced an eternal moment either of ecstatic comprehension and worship or of the extreme torment of remorse.

When my dream presented me with this crude, this barbaric figment, I was first moved with horror and incredulity. How could the Star Maker, even in his immaturity, condemn his creatures to agony for the weakness that he himself had allotted to them? How could such a vindictive deity command worship?

Star Maker, p.243

Deciding that 'this dread mystery lay far beyond my comprehension' the narrator 'salutes' the Star Maker's cruelty because it proves that the Creator is true to his own nature, just as Odd John's biographer can accept superhuman ruthlessness in the Homo superior he serves. Stapledon sardonically resumes his satire of organized religion in proceeding to relate 'the strange evolution of this cosmos':

Since its denizens had mostly a very low degree of intelligence and moral integrity, the hell was soon overcrowded, while the heaven remained almost empty. But the Star Maker in his 'good' aspect loved and pitied his creatures. The 'good' spirit therefore entered into the mundane sphere to redeem the sinners by his own suffering. And so at last the heaven was peopled, though the hell was not depopulated.

Star Maker, p.244

Lest the identification of this with its real counterpart be too direct, Stapledon then affirms that the present is the product of the second phase of creating - 'The cosmos which he now created was that which contains the readers and the writer of this book.'(p.246) Following this phase of 'Mature Creating' the Star Maker conceives and creates 'his ultimate and most subtle cosmos'. The metempsychotic voyage of the narrator is nearly over, but there remains a final moment of compassion and indignation, a spontaneous gesture of defiance, and a blinding lucidity before the narrator is reclaimed by the mundane world whence he has journeyed to this ultimate communion of creator and creation. The final chapter, 'The Maker and His Works', is a triumph of apocalyptic visualization, for by confronting his 'ineffable' creation Stapledon eludes the paradox which Wells in Men Like Gods found intractable. What is even more exciting is that Stapledon restores his narrator's dignity and freedom with a defiant gesture which prompts a Promethean fall from grace. The narrator dares to prefer his own kind to the presence and 'crystal ecstasy' of

the ultimate being:

But to me this mystical and remote perfection was nothing. In pity of the ultimate tortured beings, in human shame and rage, I scorned my birthright of ecstasy in that inhuman perfection, and yearned back to my lowly cosmos, to my own human and floundering world, there to stand shoulder to shoulder with my own half animal kind against the powers of darkness; yes, and against the indifferent, the ruthless, the invincible tyrant whose mere thoughts are sentient and tortured worlds.

Then, in the very act of this defiant gesture, as I slammed and bolted the door of the little dark cell of my separate self, my walls were all shattered and crushed inwards by the pressure of irresistible light, and my naked vision was once more seared by lucidity beyond endurance.

Star Maker, p.235

Lastly we may interpret the religious satire of Star Maker. If Stapledon appears to qualify it in some slight measure, the dismissiveness of 'fictitious deities' and 'fantasies of created minds' is emphatic. What, however, is that 'impact upon the creatures' of the Star Maker the narrator perceives, and what causes his retrospective bitterness towards orthodox religion whenever it is mentioned in the account of his quest?

Ironically Stapledon asserts that cosmic rapture associated with the 'hypercosmical' consciousness is pernicious. Spirituality, the key to infinite communion, is both a human strength, a power for good, and a weakness, an invitation to pointless, self-absorbed contemplation.(p.256) The religious impulse itself creates one of Wells's 'cages of life' for the answers to the narrator's 'grave' questions are negative or absurd rather than exalting or even just comforting. The Star Maker is not concerned with the fate of its creations nor with their redemption from error; and this seeming betrayal fires the narrator's anger and bitterness. As in Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? there is no salvation for those who must

endure and perish. His enlightenment makes the narrator a determined, apostate humanist.

This conceptualization of religion as self-absorbing is given a literal treatment in Michael Moorcock's Behold the Man(1969). Moorcock contrives an almost definitively thorough association of religion with profanity - even to the point where it is made difficult for the sympathetic reader to distinguish between the sacred and the profane; with no constructive focus, the satiric impulse generates invective. Consequently there is nothing uplifting or inspiring about religion in this story of alienation, delusion and perception. In fact, Moorcock's novel offers a searing view of Christianity which completely lacks Butler's wry, even compassionate view of the human capacity for self-deceit. Glogauer encounters no compassion or forgiveness in a ruthless, unsympathetic world where a variety of more or less self-seeking powers contend for supremacy. By wholly ascribing (somewhat after Jung) the origins of the creed to the mythopoeic tendency of human nature, Christianity itself is depicted as a factitious ('syncretistic' - p.88) creed in this jaundiced, provocative, award-winning story(20):

'Christianity is dead.' Monica sipped her tea. 'Religion is dying. God was killed in 1945.'

'There may yet be a resurrection.'

'Let's hope not. Religion was the creation of fear. Knowledge destroys fear. Without fear, religion can't survive.'

Behold the Man, p.60.

Monica also attacks Jung's proposition about the innate spirituality of the individual not simply because Karl finds it so seductive, but because it posits a spiritual humanism not unlike Stapledon's which her own scientific materialism excludes. She goes on to argue sceptically that Christianity's claims to an unique hegemony are

merely fraudulent: "'Christianity is just a new name for a conglomeration of old myths and philosophies.'" She scathingly counsels Karl to take up theology - "'You should have been a theologian with your bias - not tried to be a psychologist. The same thing goes for your friend Jung.'"(p.63) The Swiss psychiatrist represents a post-modern intellectual dissatisfaction with rationalism - and, one may suppose, behaviourism (after Skinner, author of Walden Two) - as the primary organising principle of humanism. We may take this further for Moorcock explicates his reasons for drawing so openly on Jung; the humanistic discourse of the novel is post-modern in its insistence on claiming ontological rather than epistemological understanding for its troubled protagonist:

We Protestants must sooner or later face this question: Are we to understand the 'imitation of Christ' in the sense that we should copy his life and, if I may use the expression, ape his stigmata: or in the deeper sense that we are to live our own proper lives as truly as he lived his in all its implications? It is no easy matter to live a life that is modelled on Christ's, but it is unspeakably harder to live one's own life as truly as Christ lived his. Anyone who did this would... be misjudged, derided, tortured and crucified...A neurosis is a dissociation of personality.

(JUNG, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*)

Behold the Man, pp.72-73

While there is an unmistakably existentialist ring to his dilemmas and confusion (the eighth chapter both begins and concludes with a sequence of empirical existential questions - 'Where am I? Who am I? What am I? Where am I?' p.64 & p.68 21, Karl Glogauer is at the mercy of his own irresistible mysticism and his 'archetypal role'. Indeed, Moorcock's reconciliation of the personality of this pathetic 'messiah' with the scriptural story he inventively exploits and adapts is a particularly interesting feature of his story, for Glogauer 'projects' himself as a messiah and, as Sartre asserted, 'Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.' Intriguingly,

that here entails a 'certain kind of psychic circuit' in complete accord with Jung's idea of the 'collective unconscious' with its spiritual and mystical archetypes which are suppressed in too-rational Man.

If the Gospels provide Moorcock's novel with a storyline and background detail, clearly he owes much to modern psychology and philosophy for his protagonist. Glogauer is a self-centred, neurotic individual morbidly obsessed with his amateur interest in psychology, mysticism and religion, his own suicidal impulses, and his sexuality. A self-destructive impulse is sustained by the pressure of these powerful and often conflicting drives, but his agnostic religiosity predominates and hence is the most paradoxical and distressing.

Mainly due to a loveless, dislocated upbringing (a factor introduced in the novel presumably to deepen the credibility of his neurosis) Glogauer harbours a potentially destructive craving for an all-consuming love he is certain will bring him a sublime fulfilment. Leaving aside the thematic concerns it shares with the other works discussed in this chapter, there is little in the genre to which Moorcock's novel can be related immediately. In generic terms, Behold the Man is that rare thing, a singular novel; it presents the contentions of rationalistic scepticism with unique force and directness while questioning their validity no less than that of the religion which drives Glogauer to an illusionary apotheosis. For all Moorcock's apparent care to establish the persona of this novel's central character in depth, however, his sympathy is not much extended to Glogauer, for the scope of Moorcock's tragic vision is historic rather than individual. Behold the Man is on one level about one (or two) figures, Karl Glogauer/Christ:

In terms of the science fiction theme of a time-paradox, Glogauer merely fulfills what will become history when he plays out the role of Jesus. It is psychiatrically complete, too, because he is by the time-paradox the source of his own Christian neurosis, but he also becomes its solution when he dies on the cross and satisfies his own masochism.

22.

However, on another level it is about Man rather than a man, and the nature and consequence of religious delusion. Given its psychological nature and philosophical emphasis, the most productive comparisons and contrasts may be afforded by modern novels like, perhaps most particularly Sartre's Nausea (1938).

Moorcock's novel shares some marked features of style, structure and premise with the first novel of the French existentialist. Sartre's diarist, Antoine Roquentin, is depleted by daily living to the point where he experiences 'ennui' - a profound feeling of futility. Roquentin craves 'adventure' to give meaning to his life, to take him out of the alienation characteristic of existentialist protagonists, expressed here as a joyless introspective distraction upon the nature and significance of one's existence. So great is his own inward distraction that while he can perceive the needs and difficulties of others, they leave him at best unmoved, at worst disgusted - 'nauseated.'

The central problem confronting Roquentin even seems absurd to the dilettante historian himself: 'I have some money like a gentleman of leisure, no boss, no wife, no children; I exist, that's all. And that particular trouble is so vague, so metaphysical, that I am ashamed of it.' (Nausea, p.153 23) He acknowledges that his interest in de Rollebon, the eighteenth-century adventurer about whom he is writing a scholarly book, has become the single motivating force in his life, as essential and exclusive as Glogauer's passionate inter-

est in the life and death of Jesus Christ. As he resolves in his diary, 'Must not make public the fact that Monsieur de Rollebon now represents the only justification for my existence.'(p.105) When Roquentin finishes his book, he is seized by a sense of panic and dread. Paralyzed by a compelling perception, he is unable to add the final full stop:

Monsieur de Rollebon was my partner: he needed me in order to be and I needed him in order not to feel my being. I furnished the raw material, that material of which I had far too much, which I didn't know what to do with: existence, my existence. His task was to perform. He stood in front of me and had taken possession of my life in order to perform his life for me. I no longer noticed that I existed, I no longer existed in myself, but in him... I was only a means of making him live, he was my raison d'etre, he had freed me from myself. What am I going to do now?

Nausea, pp.142-143.

Moorcock's Glogauer is similarly possessed by an all-consuming, self-annihilating obsession with historical figures. Before his obsession with Christ fully takes hold, Karl has had others:

He had suffered migraines since adolescence. He would become dizzy, vomiting, completely immersed in pain.

Often during the attacks he would begin to assume an identity - a character in a book he was reading, some politician currently in the news, someone in history if he had recently read a biography

The one thing that marked them all would be their anxieties. Heyst in Victory had been obsessed with the three men coming to the island, worrying how to stop them, how to kill them if possible (as Heyst, he had become a somewhat less subtle character than Conrad's). After reading a history of the Russian Revolution, he became convinced that his name was Zinoviev, Minister in charge of Transport and Telegraphs, with the responsibility of sorting out the chaos in 1918, knowing, too, that he had to be careful, otherwise he would be purged in a few years' time.

Behold the Man, p.65

Glogauer's compulsive search for another identity, and the ease with which his imagination is able to bury his own persona under another, is emphasized in Moorcock's novel version for the third paragraph

quoted above is additional material. Moorcock's protagonist truly is 'Modern Man in Search of a Soul', which in Glogauer's case, seems to involve securing a meaning for his existence more profound than the bare fact of that existence itself. Alienated, deeply sceptical, and compulsive, Glogauer seems a symbol of the futility of modern living, and the personification of the distortions which contemporary pressures work upon the human consciousness: but the fact that Glogauer's sense of personal identity is so exaggeratedly ephemeral should not be overlooked - he is a special case.

Setting aside for a moment the classic time-traveller paradox which further compounds the ironies of Moorcock's story, Glogauer's dilemma is similar to Roquentin's: should he allow Christ to exist by giving up his own personality, or should he leave Christ to be 'merely the creation of a process of mythogenesis'? Sartre's novel carries before it this polemical prefatory note quoted from L.F.Celine: "He is a fellow without any collective significance, barely an individual". Ironically, Glogauer's obsession with finding his own identity will bring him a staggering burden of 'collective significance.' As Sartre wrote elsewhere, existentialists argue that the responsibility of 'engaged' existence - which gives rise to the anguish attendant on being and acting - is momentous: 'I am thus responsible for myself and for all men, and I am creating a certain image of man as I would have him to be. In fashioning myself I fashion man.'(24)

It emerges as the story unfolds that Glogauer is a time-traveller who has moved back through time and space to Judea in A.D.28, where he is to witness the Christian Passion. Like the Time Traveller of Wells's novel, Glogauer is fated to receive a disturbing

revelation, though it is to be construed for us in contemporary terms which are at a vast remove from the generally restrained, mannered tones of the Wellsian traveller. Indeed, one could speculate that Noyes would have seen Glogauer as the very embodiment of the modern tendencies he excoriated in The Last Man.

Moorcock uses time-travel to give a final tragic twist to the sensibility of his disturbed protagonist, for Glogauer now has to confront a world which appears vastly different from that he left when he stepped into the time machine. Moorcock's novel develops in three stages and throughout the first stage Glogauer's expectations are shaped by his scriptural knowledge, but he is to discover that even that is not reliable. Consequently he finds himself facing a textbook existentialist dilemma, without any pertinent moral and cultural bearings to help him orientate himself in his new situation. He therefore adopts a self-serving ethic, an egocentric morality which existentialists like Sartre and the modern school of phenomenology alike would criticize, as would Christians.

Heavily psychological, Moorcock's narrative is intended not just to convey how Glogauer's personality reflects his social background, but also to depict how he is drawn into adopting the literal role of Christ even though in his personal past he has found orthodox religion to be empty of significance:

Our Father which art in Heaven...

He had been brought up, like most of his schoolfellows, paying a certain lip-service to the Christian religion. Prayers in the mornings at school. He had taken to saying two prayers at night. One was the Lord's Prayer and the other went God bless Mummy, God bless Daddy, God bless my sisters and brothers and all the dear people that surround me. Amen. That had been taught to him by a woman who looked after him for a while when his mother was at work. He had added to this a list of 'thank-yous' ('Thank you for a lovely day, thank you for getting the history questions

right...') and 'Sorrys' ('Sorry I was rude to Molly Turner, sorry I didn't own up to Mr.Matson...'). He had been seventeen years old before he had been able to get to sleep without saying his ritual prayers and even then it had been his impatience to masturbate that had finally broken the habit.

Our Father which art in Heaven...

Behold the Man, p.12

This seems all the more nugatory when we are told soon after that, like Tommy in the rock opera, Karl 'didn't have a daddy, didn't have any brothers and sisters. The old woman had explained that his daddy was somewhere and that everyone was a brother and a sister. He had accepted it.'(p.12).

Every chapter contains similar passages of Glogauer's reminiscences, together with distinctive authorial observations by Moorcock construing for us Glogauer's present situation in Judea, and conveying his responses to the situation which is unfolding around him. Moorcock thus defines Glogauer's character quite explicitly, and the authorial intentions and perspective also can thereby be apperceived throughout what it is a deliberately disjointed narrative. The New Testament provides additional coherence, for some chapters are prefaced by excerpts from the Gospels upon which the events of the chapter are based. These strike up resonances with Glogauer's past, for he is haunted by rather sordid experiences from his twentieth-century life which have always possessed religious connotations for him despite his scepticism. The Freudian juxtaposition of the sexual with the religious is calculated:

At the end of evening choir practice, Mr.Younger asked Karl to stay behind and Karl was torn between disgust and desire.

Finally, he did stay behind and let Mr.Younger stroke his genitals under a poster which showed a plain wooden cross with the slogan GOD IS LOVE underneath.

Karl began to laugh hysterically and ran away from the church and never went back again.

He was fifteen.

Silver crosses equal women.

Wooden crosses equal men.

He often thought of himself as a wooden cross. He would have mild hallucinations between sleeping and waking where he was a heavy wooden cross pursuing a delicate silver cross through fields of darkness.

Behold the Man, pp.38 & 39

Glogauer has been injured by the impact with which his time-travel ends. He is cared for by John the Baptist's Essene community who regard him as a magus. This community is religiously and politically estranged from the rest of Judean society, and Glogauer shares their ascetic lifestyle while he recovers. He has come to Judea to witness the Crucifixion, and as time passes he grows more puzzled because no-one seems to have heard of Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, John is convinced that Glogauer is a political messiah, come to lead the people against the Roman overlords. As an initial move to inspire his followers, John would have Glogauer baptize him. However, at the appointed time Glogauer experiences a sudden, severe migraine, and John consequently baptizes him instead. Fearing he has failed John, Glogauer runs off into the wilderness wherein he is subject to such extremes of hunger and fatigue that he becomes almost completely disoriented, but he is driven - he must find his way to Nazareth.

The second phase of the novel begins with Glogauer having fled the Essenes, and continues through his wanderings as a madman to Nazareth, where he finds Jesus, who turns out to be an illegitimate congenital imbecile. Glogauer regards this unfortunate creature with a bitter callousness reflected in the choice of pronoun:

The figure was misshapen.

It had a pronounced hunched back and a cast in its left eye. The face was vacant and foolish. There was a little spittle on the lips.

'Jesus?'

It giggled as its name was repeated. It took a crooked, lurching step forward.

Behold the Man, p.98

Moorcock's provocative, calculated disrespect towards Jesus extends to the rest of the 'Holy Family': Joseph is a cuckold and 'a man who never laughs'; and Mary is a fat, sarcastic, promiscuous creature who seduces Glogauer while her husband is at Nain, bringing the second part of the novel to a close. Of course Glogauer's disillusionment is now absolute. The situation he has found underscores this, for he has travelled back through time hoping to experience at first hand, and hence, experimentally verify, the provenance of the Gospels. He has found in mystical Judea only mundane situations and people. Moorcock takes pains to emphasize the ordinariness of everything and everyone in Judea, and his harshly naturalistic style - "warts and all", as it were - is clearly intended to strip away the traditional reverence accorded to the Judean Christians by devaluing or discrediting the scriptural 'record'(25).

The third part of the novel begins with Glogauer established in the Nazareth synagogue as something of a holy man or prophet, but inwardly he is in a state of profound neurotic disorientation. Questioned by the rabbis as to where he is from, he replies in Aramaic: "Ha-Olam Hab-Bah; Ha Olam Haz-Zeh: The world to come and the world that is." Thanks to the time machine, Glogauer can be said literally to be both from the world that is and the world to come, but the statement neatly describes Moorcock's naturalistic depiction of Judea and its society. The world Glogauer has come into has dark similarities with the one he has left. Only its institutions are different, for the people are often as perverse as any in Glogauer's twentieth-century memories.

In this final section of the novel, Glogauer adopts the role of the Biblical Jesus and, as his memories of the world from which he has come fade gradually, his identification with the scriptural Messiah becomes complete. For all that, since Moorcock is careful not to undermine the characterisation by endowing him with irrational or extraordinary powers, Glogauer remains a perverse but notionally 'ordinary' man; and even his 'miracle' cures are given a rational explanation: 'Many he could do nothing for, but others, obviously with easily remediable psychosomatic conditions, he could help. They believed in his power more strongly than they believed in their sickness. So he cured them.' (p.115)

For the first time in his life, Glogauer achieves the fulfilment he has craved. As he knows the Gospels and their story, he can predict what will 'come to pass' - that is, he can predict how the reactions of those around him and in authority will promote the scriptural sequence of events. If the prospect of the death which will consequently overwhelm him fills him with fear rather than exaltation at his 'divine' role and the adulation which he enjoys, he is certain that it is his destiny and cannot be escaped. Significantly, he readily accepts the role of martyr:

There was something more, something that he recognized instinctively rather than intellectually. He now had the opportunity to find at the same time both redemption and confirmation for his life up to the moment he had fled from John the Baptist in the desert.

But it was not his own life he would be leading now. He was bringing a myth to life, a generation before that myth would be born. He was completing a certain kind of psychic circuit. He told himself that he was not changing history; he was merely giving history more substance.

Since he had never been able to bear to think that Jesus had been nothing more than a myth, it became a duty to himself to make Jesus a physical reality rather than the creation of a process of mythogenesis.

Karl Glogauer had discovered the reality he had been seeking.
Behold the Man, p.118

Note the emphasis Moorcock places on 'myth' in referring to scripture, and upon Christ as 'the creation of a process of mythogenesis.' Thus Glogauer - whether, in his passionate desire to bring Christ to life, he acknowledges it or not - is himself the myth-maker.

The turning-point for Glogauer comes, of course, in the Garden of Gethsemane. He realises that he must make a final commitment to his adopted destiny when Judas Iscariot brings the Temple Guards and Roman troops to arrest him. He has time for reflection, however, and his mind returns to another decisive moment from his modern past. Significantly, a familiar twentieth-century concern is presented as a dichotomy. He recalls a conversation with Monica in which his consuming interest in mysticism and religion is as apparent as her contempt for religious conviction. Although he was once an agnostic, Glogauer took to religion as the only meaningful alternative to Monica's faith in science:

'Science is basically opposed to religion,' Monica had once said. 'No matter how many Jesuits get together and rationalize their views on science, the fact remains that religion cannot accept the fundamental attitudes of science and it is implicit in science to attack the fundamental principles of religion....Who needs the ritual of religion when we have the far superior ritual of science to replace it? Religion is a reasonable substitute for knowledge. But there is no longer any need for substitutes, Karl. Science offers a sounder basis on which to formulate systems of thought and ethics. We don't need the carrot of heaven and the big stick of hell any more when science can show the consequences of actions and men can judge easily for themselves whether those actions are right or wrong.'

'I can't accept it.'

'That's because you are sick. I'm sick, too, but at least I can see the promise of health.'

'I can see only the threat of death...'

Behold the Man, pp.136-137

Thus, his rejection of scientific materialism sets motion the train of events which brings Glogauer to a self-willed betrayal in the Garden. True to his own peculiar brand of integrity, Glogauer betrays

himself to the arresting soldiers and the die is cast. The subsequent narrative more or less follows scripture, with quotations from the Gospels interposed throughout the last chapter amid Glogauer's tortured thoughts. His last moments are a painful delirium and memories come and go in his agonised consciousness. At the very last, he perceives what his author has already given us to understand. His death, the completion of 'a certain kind of psychic circuit,' is charged with dramatic irony, for while it has brought him fulfilment, all he has been doing is acting out a role; and his last words testify to his enlightenment: "'It's a lie - it's a lie - it's a lie...'"

Although the crucifixion is the dramatic climax of the novel, Moorcock continues after Glogauer's death in order to make its manifest pointlessness quite plain. There is no triumphant Resurrection, no unmistakeable vindication of the sacrifice, no shining message for the faithful. Moorcock draws his story to a close with a calculated dismissiveness:

Later, after his body was stolen by the servants of some doctors who believed it might have special properties, there were rumours that he might not have died. But the corpse was already rotting in the doctors' dissecting rooms and would soon be destroyed.

Behold the Man, p.143

Religious conviction is clearly given short shrift in Moorcock's novel, which is entirely given over to an uncompromising attack upon such faith. Glogauer, even in his messianic state, is a pathetic, deluded figure: 'It was strange. He was not a religious man in the usual sense. He was an agnostic. It was not conviction that had led him to defend religion against Monica's cynical contempt for it; it was rather a lack of conviction in the ideal in which she had set her

own faith, the ideal of science as a solver of all problems.' (pp.135-136) More importantly, perhaps, his perverse drive for fulfillment which has emerged as a sort of 'martyr complex' ordains, in an authentically existentialist way, the future of thousands of millions. Ironically, his sacrifice accomplishes nothing except his own death and the implied deception of unguessable millions of Christian believers, and Glogauer/Christ's delusions are, in these terms, the well-spring of their oppression. Moreover, Monica's contempt for Christianity now seems justified rather than simply wilful. Christ's mortal cry, "'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' ...My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?"(p.142) acquires a new significance in the special context created by Moorcock, that of the anguish of the modern sensibility which despairs of finding any evidence of divine purpose - or even of divine existence - in an age of scepticism.

However, if Monica and Glogauer are right in assuming that a modern dichotomy exists and that the perspectives each asserts are mutually exclusive, then it is clear that, by virtue of his calculated blasphemy, Moorcock by no means advocates religious faith here. Glogauer achieves self-transcendence, but seems to become aware at the end that it is illusory rather than enduring, and his death is consequently all the more pathetic and disturbing because he realises that his faith has betrayed him. Glogauer is therefore ultimately a victim of a special kind of religious determinism.

The profound scepticism which prompted Moorcock to create, shred and finally destroy Karl Glogauer - for whom even aspiration for spiritual fulfilment is simply another futile delusion - might seem to be the expression of a nihilistic vision of Man. If so, we could

be tempted to assume Moorcock is advancing Monica's attitude, even if only by default: rationalism permits the universe to be comprehended, so that pragmatic decisions - encompassing both the quotidian and the vital - can be made. However, if Moorcock could dramatise this dichotomy between reason and faith so astutely, it can surely be assumed he knew its limitations, and further, that his own attitude is more complex. One wonders if it is reflected in the pragmatic Roman officer's dry observations about the respect the spontaneously spiritual Jews readily accord mystics and aspirants:

'One of their prophets, perhaps,' said the officer, walking towards his horse. The country was full of them. Every other man you met claimed to be spreading the message of their god. They didn't make trouble and religion actually seemed to keep their minds off rebellion.

We should be grateful, thought the officer.

Behold the Man, pp.90-91.

This ties in with Monica's argument against religious faith, which she sees as futile and self-deceptive because it is a naive response to the spontaneous mysticism of the human mind.

Moorcock urges in his title that we 'behold the man', apparently in the spirit of secular humanism which Coleridge decried as "the belief that Christ was only a human person"; but this novel goes much further, for the same scientific materialism is used to introduce and undermine the Scriptures with moral confusion, cynicism, nihilism and alienation manifested as perversion, violence and neurosis. Nor is there anywhere an endorsement of positive human values. Moorcock's surrogate Jesus Christ achieves nothing except his own self-willed destruction: there is no real redemption, for Glogauer or for anyone else. This novel is not merely polemical in the attitude to Christianity it purveys, but it indeed bespeaks an acute hostility towards the creed in its bias towards materialistic, scientific rationalism over

religious belief. Monica speaks throughout the novel for reason and scepticism, and the impression left by the novel's explicit repudiation not just of religious faith but even of Karl's attempt to 'live his own proper life,' is that Christian faith is credulous and redundant.

Monica returned to her attack on Christianity in a letter written to 'get her idea across' to Karl, putting her case against the religion in historic terms:

You make the mistake of considering Christianity as something that developed over the course of a few years, from the death of Jesus to the time the Gospels were written. But Christianity wasn't new. Only the name was new. Christianity was merely a stage in the meeting, cross-fertilization, metamorphosis of Western logic and Eastern mysticism. Look how the religion itself changed over the centuries, reinterpreting itself to meet changing times. Christianity is just a new name for a conglomeration of old myths and philosophies. All the Gospels do is retell the sun myth and garble some of the ideas from the Greeks and Romans.

Even in the second century, Jewish scholars were showing it up for the mish-mash it was!

They pointed out the strong similarities between the various sun myths and the Christ myth. The miracles didn't happen, they were invented later, borrowed from here and there. Remember those old Victorian dons who used to argue that Plato was really a Christian because he anticipated Christian thought?

Christian thought!

Christianity was a vehicle for ideas in circulation centuries before Christ. Was Marcus Aurelius a Christian? He was heading in the direct tradition of Western philosophy. That's why Christianity caught on in Europe and not in the East!

Behold the Man, pp.62-63.

However Monica's attitude towards science is perplexing because it is never made explicit except when she is expressing the mutual antagonism of religion and science as a dichotomy.

In his 1976 Introduction to Moorcock's Book of Martyrs, Moorcock speaks of his writing as an attempt to encourage mutual tolerance between 'those who are of an orthodox disposition and those who are

not, for society...can make good use of both temperaments. The world probably has need of saints and sinners - but I look forward to the day when it will no longer need martyrs of any persuasion.' This is all very humane sounding, but it is difficult to discern in Behold the Man where the compromise, the middle ground between antagonistic dispositions, lies. While it is asserted that knowledge and rationalism actually promote hostile criticism of religion, Moorcock nowhere allows Monica to affirm the positive value of science and declare its virtues, real or imagined. As several of the fictive theocracies discussed in the remainder of this chapter will show, Moorcock's reserve about science is shared by others.

Orthodox Opiates: Theocracy, Aspiration and Sceptical Humanism

The prominent scepticism of religion evident in modern science fiction is the contemporary manifestation of a historic principle. In the second half of the nineteenth century criticism of orthodox religion became more pronounced and common. Nonetheless, the casual disparagement of religious teachings which has become almost a conventional feature of some forms of modern popular culture such as science fiction was rare, for religion and respectability were linked for most people.

Samuel Butler flayed the materialistic hypocrisy of contemporary Anglicanism, which Matthew Arnold half-earnestly lampooned as 'an institution devoted above all to the landed gentry, but also to the propertied and satisfied classes generally; favouring immobility, preaching submission, and reserving transformation in general for the other side of the grave.' Another devout critic, Charles Kingsley, writes of the Bible as 'an opium-dose' for 'beasts of burden.' Karl

Marx, Kingsley's contemporary, came to much the same conclusion. These rejections of current religious values and orthodox ethics are the signs and portents of science fiction's modern rationalistic and materialistic religious scepticism. Marx provided the most sustained and influential ideological impetus of the time towards the complete secularization of ethics.

'Religion...is the opium of the people' is the most famous of Marx's materialistic assertions about religious morality. One could call Marx a 'supra-atheist,' for he not only deploras contemporary religion but argues that socialism is a more direct, positive assertion of the existence of man than atheism, which first requires denial of the existence of God to affirm the actual character of human existence. However in recognizing that religion has a personal element and is something to which people commit their deepest trust, he goes further than depicting it merely as an external imposition:

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

26.

As one of religion's most influential critics understood, it is manifestly both a social phenomenon and a deeply personal one. In 'Dover Beach' (1867), Arnold evokes the decline of religious faith and the bleak growth of scepticism:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

If religion can be a sort of social narcotic, it is one which is not always reviled by those upon whom it is imposed. Organized religions

attract adherents because they offer an authoritative, reassuring perspective on a seemingly unpredictable, inhospitable world, one which:

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Whatever the spiritual rewards and enrichment they gain from their beliefs, the devout, who do believe in the absolute rectitude and propriety of their faith, are also subject to other pressures to remain so.

The life-long loyalty of the faithful is encouraged with promised redress for injustices and mundane suffering in some form of after-life or supernatural existence, or with threats of dire punishments for transgressions. Indeed, some sceptics contend as Marx did that this largely explains its success and popularity, though others depict religion as a wholly oppressive social force, being no more than an instrument for reconciling or inuring people to their servitude and buttressing the power of the cynical masters who exploit them.

In characterising religion as 'the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions' Marx clearly does see in human nature an essentially spontaneous propensity for aspiration, a fact which his less sympathetic critics often ignore. Crucially, religion is for Marx both the manifestation and the product of frustrated humane aspiration.

On the other hand, as the works discussed in Chapter 4 indicate, religious aspiration (for instance, to see the kingdom of God - C.S. Lewis's Logres, for example - re-established on earth) is no less

potent, and cherished, than any secular aspiration. To the devout, their own religious aspiration is more human than any 'humanistic' aspiration. It follows that general attacks upon one's religion can be construed quite readily as attacks upon one's personal ethics and view of the world, particularly if the pre-eminently religious impulse to divine veneration is coldly dismissed by materialists as an ignoble readiness to propitiate, or an addiction to superstitious ritual, or, worst of all, a means of securing self. However, more sophisticated criticisms have been raised against the continuing importance of religion in moral issues.

The central distinction, expressed in the science fiction of aspiration with a singular clarity and forcefulness, is that while the aspirations of the devout are directed beyond man to God and are subject to divine approbation, man is the focus of the secular humanism that reason and science underpin. Enlightenment, a more sophisticated, contemporary version of Baconian knowledge which lacks the latter's materialistic connotations, is a key feature of the science fiction of aspiration, be it sceptical or idiosyncratically religious in its orientation.

Generally speaking, conventional religious conviction is attacked by the materialist both for its social role and its limitation of human aspiration by affirming that man is a lesser creature. Roger Zelazny's Lord of Light, one of the most impressive of these 'science fictions of aspiration', illustrates the arguments most evocatively in relating how 'great-souled Sam' struggles against hedonistic, immortal, technocratic 'gods' to enlighten and emancipate his oppressed fellows and restore to them their technological birthright.

By contrast, the religious humanist recognizes Man as God's creation; science is one of the means people may use to more fully appreciate divine creativity, but it can also subordinate or completely subvert mankind's intrinsic faith in God. At the same time the religious humanist considers man to have innate weaknesses or limitations imposed by an essentially benevolent Providence. However, since science fiction questions everything, James Gunn has argued, and 'religion answers all the questions that science fiction wishes to raise,' science fiction and religion are uniquely and diametrically opposed. Gunn asserts that 'Science fiction cannot be written from an attitude of religious belief' for 'science fiction written within a religious framework..turns into parable.'⁽²⁷⁾ As an opening argument to his brief survey of science fiction which in some way deals with religion, Gunn's statement has the usual limitations of the polemical generalisation; indeed, as is apparent from the works discussed in Chapter 4 (and is certainly the case with Keith Robert's excellent book Pavane discussed below), exceptions exist. However, in describing 'science fiction's religion' as being 'skepticism about faith,' Gunn astutely sums up a dominant generic attitude with epigrammatic force. The well-known misapprehensions of the devout about the "benefits" of man-made, technological change confirm that the well-spring of this scepticism is scientific materialism and 'Progress'. This should not obscure the fact that some sceptics, Kurt Vonnegut for example, are no less wary.

Yet if the idea of materialistic 'Progress' is very often anathema to the religious humanist, it is also unacceptable to the secular or atheistic humanist for ancient, allegedly sham wisdom to prevail over modern necessity, especially when an effort is being

made to realize something of that power which, as an idea projected upon their god, so inspired the ancients. Where devout writers express their frustration by attacking the materialistic excesses of scientific positivism, sceptics generally prefer to castigate religion, characterizing the devout as hypocritical, complacent, fatalistic or short-sighted. Often, they will also emphasize the materialism and corruption, or zealous inhumanity, of the ministers of institutionalized religion. Just as often, these criticisms are pointedly made in the depiction of a theocracy, organized religion in its most extreme form; in its own right, a form of statolatry reviled by the genuine libertarian and humanist no less than the devout writer scorns materialistic utopias and profane oligarchies.

Some Representative Fictive Theocracies.

If Men Like Gods suggests that H.G.Wells found his humanistic vision to be untenable, he never took to conventional spiritualism and orthodox religion. The novels discussed below offer further evidence that his was an early but by no means unique attempt to balance the conflicting virtues and limitations of faith and rationalistic scepticism.

'Johnnie, the nice thing about citing God as an authority is that you can prove anything you set out to prove. It's just a matter of selecting the proper postulates, then insisting that your postulates are "inspired". Then no one can possibly prove that you are wrong.'

'If This Goes On...'; Robert Heinlein
(Revolt in 2100, p.93)

As Heinlein's protagonist seems to suggest in a distinctly cynical aside, the strength of religious teachings is derived from their purported divine provenance. Yet the systematic nature of religious dogma seems to offer the rationalist an irresistible challenge. To

judge by the popularity of science fiction with religious themes, religious ethics have given sceptical science fiction writers all sorts of opportunities for exposing doctrinal inconsistencies and illustrating devout folly. Most follow Wells rather than Butler, for their criticisms go much further than his satirical demands for reform, and many of them clearly would prefer to see the complete demise of the monolithic, institutionalized religions they depict.

This body of literature presents intriguing, quite individual perspectives on the nature of humanism, aspiration, moral vision and religious faith. The dissatisfaction of Vonnegut and Zelazny with contemporary orthodoxies is revealed by their adroit utilisation of factitious religions like those discussed earlier. Anticlericalism, iconoclasm and moral relativism (sometimes depicted as profanation or depravity) are used to expose orthodox religion at its worst - theocracy. Accordingly, even if someone like Keith Roberts seems to approach Wells's position of ultimate despair, a less whole-hearted faith in rationalism (and the determinism which trapped Wells) frees him from the necessity, everywhere apparent in Wells's later fiction, to adopt the inferences of his visionary fiction. Therefore these post-modernist writers can criticize dogma rationalistically while being under no particular obligation to advance pure Reason as a counter-creed. Yet though there is a recognisable pattern in their fabrications, they retain their independence as non-conformists: few contemporary authors would be flattered to be discussed as 'Wellsian,' not least because of the disrepute into which a spurious cult has brought the Comtist brand of positivistic scientific humanism which Wells extolled in Men Like Gods(28). Nonetheless, science is clearly prominent as a possible alternative to dogma in all of the texts

discussed below - and it is equally clear that some of these authors are as wary of the scientific State as they are of the theocratic State.

Perhaps the most obvious place to begin seeking an overview of the many different ways in which authors have used the device of the factitious religion in attacking theocracy is with those novels in which the humanistic spirit is at its most embattled. The authors of Gather, Darkness and Pavane have both chosen a quasi-Medieval setting to allow their depiction of a centralised, absolute religion the widest possible scope and so they present what could be termed the purest depiction of theocracy. In both novels, the church is monolithic, all-pervasive and repressive - the counterpart of the unattractive societies ruled by Big Brother and his like. These two books will be the central focus of a wider-ranging excursion into the themes and contentions of a variety of other works which deal with theocracy.

Like many of the most famous science fiction novels, Leiber's initially appeared as a serialization (in the May-July 1943 editions of Astounding Science Fiction). Its subsequent re-publication clearly reflects its success as popular fiction which has caught the mood of the moment and perhaps of the times. An ingenious tale of technological witchery and centralized oppression, it is in some respects quite like Robert Heinlein's earlier tale, 'If This Goes On,' also first published in an American pulp magazine in 1939. Heinlein's jingoistic, muscular prose undoubtedly reflects the contemporary patriotic fervour and moral self-righteousness of America - belatedly,

perhaps - at war, and it can be dealt with here in passing.

Heinlein's story deals with the successful attempt to overthrow a future theocracy in which Angels on the side of the Prophet strive to extirpate the 'heretical' conspirators of the Cabal. Militarism, a favourite topic of Heinlein's, is imposed on the ecclesiastical hierarchy from the start: "I was young then and not too bright - a legate fresh out of West Point, and a guardsman in the Angels of the Lord, the Personal Guard of the Prophet Incarnate." Indeed everything is given an ecclesiastical flavour: "This on-the-spot cast by the No-Sparrow-Shall-Fall News Service is coming to you under the sponsorship of the finest Associated Merchants of the Kingdom, dealers in the finest of household aids towards grace. Be the first in your parish to possess a statuette of the Prophet that miraculously glows in the dark! Send one dollar..." (Revolt in 2100, p.63) Not for the last time, we may note in passing, will this sort of science fiction seem to have anticipated an ugly side of modern religion.

Still, what may be termed the two species of authoritarianism of this story are distinguished by little more than unmistakable hypocrisy and cynicism on one side, and a generous measure of emphatically right-wing Christian values on the other. Here John Lyle is being evaluated to establish his role in the Cabal:

It seemed to me that, in this business, someone was continually making me face up to facts, instead of letting me dodge unpleasant facts the way most people manage to do throughout their lives. Could I stomach such an assignment? Could I refuse it - since Master Peter had implied at least that assassins were volunteers - refuse it and try to ignore in my heart it that it was going on and I was condoning it?

Master Peter was right; the man who buys the meat is brother to the butcher. It was squeamishness, not morals... like the man who favours capital punishment but is himself too 'good' to fit the noose or swing the axe. Like the person who regards war as inevitable and in some circumstances moral, but who avoids military service because he doesn't like the thought of killing.

Emotional infants, ethical morons - the left hand must know what the right hand doeth, and the heart is responsible for both. I answered almost at once, 'Master Peter, I am ready to serve...that way or whatever the brethren decide I can do best.'

'If This Goes On...' (Revolt in 2100, p.53)

It seems verging on the impertinent to suggest in the face of Heinlein's absurdly self-confident morality that it is actually no less relativistic than any other 'pragmatic' creed. John's willingness to surrender his own moral vision for the brethren's (as long as they prove themselves worthy of it, naturally) is more intuitive than profound, especially since they cannot be any more certain of the propriety of their actions, ultimately, than can the Prophet's inquisitors. Their doctrines and organisation are in the end morally right because God, the Great Architect, has allowed them to triumph. The vindication of their struggle is of 'the end justifies the means' line, rather than being the inevitable consequence of their clear ethical virtue.

In brief, Heinlein presents a sanitised form of revolution as a righteous struggle to re-establish the democratic principles abjured by the corrupt hierophants. Thus it is no more than a mildly original twist to an otherwise conventional treatment of Western values, delivered in the author's distinctively energetic and robust style (29), and full of mayhem and esprit de corps. (Significantly, Heinlein returns to this storyline frequently; two further examples, The Day after Tomorrow, discussed below, and Stranger in a Strange Land are included in this study).

However, though Leiber's Gather Darkness may be derivative, it is clearly the more sustained and sophisticated of these two versions of the righteous struggle against theocracy. Moreover, while Leiber places arcane science and technological 'necromancy' in the hands of

the insurgents instead of Heinlein's military hardware, he is also more explicit in justifying their actions in humanistic rather than theistic terms. What is principally wrong with Heinlein's Supreme Prophet, of course, is that he has broken faith with the Great Architect, whereas the merry band of patriotic fundamentalists who wish to expose the corrupt religious despot are acting from selfless motives and a desire to re-establish the veneration of a real God of a more palatable - indeed, ecumenical - kind. Leiber takes the same road as Heinlein, but goes further in advocating enlightenment, everyone's birthright, against religious embargo, the yoke common to all but a few elect 'techno-theocrats.'

Brother Jarles, like his predecessor John Lyle, has had enough of the corrupt theocracy to which he belongs. Indeed Jarles also betrays himself in a clearly treasonable act. He chooses a very public forum for his denunciation:

"Commoners of Megatheopolis!"

That checked the beginnings of a panicky flight. Eyes turned to stare at him stupidly. They had not yet begun to comprehend what had happened. But when a priest spoke, one listened.

"You have been taught that ignorance is good. I tell you it is evil!

"You have been taught that to think is evil. I tell you it is good!

"You have been told that it is your destiny to toil night and day, until your backs are breaking and your hands blister under the callouses. I tell you it is the destiny of all men to look for easier ways!

"You have let the priests rule your lives. I tell you that you must rule yourselves!

"You believe that the priests have supernatural powers. I tell you that they have no powers you could not wield yourselves!

"You believe that the priests are chosen to serve the Great God and transmit his commands. But - if there is a god anywhere - each one of you, in his ignorant heart, knows more than the mightiest archpriest.

"You have been told that the Great God rules the universe - earth and sky. I tell you the Great God is a fake!"

Gather, Darkness! p.11

The difference between Lyle's and his motivation is made clear at once, for where Lyle's rage that a girl who has caught his eye is being offered to pleasure the epicene Prophet is a peculiarly presumptive and self-serving pretext, Jarles's indignation is provoked more by disgust with the gratuitous forcefulness of a brother priest than by simple gallantry towards a young woman caught in a similar predicament. Above all, though, Jarles's denunciation is hubristic and libertarian rather than merely macho. From the start, Leiber's novel deals with concepts which are presented as inherently rather than symbolically moral, whereas Heinlein sanctifies a relativistic code (murder is sometimes moral, 'skinny-dipping' is not lewd nor is brutality wrong in the service of God and Liberty, and so on) either by wrapping morals in the Flag, mystifying them in Lodge rituals or culling them from the Book. As there is no place for real hubris in his theistic tale, Heinlein never goes beyond insisting that the ultimate justification for moral values is religious; but Leiber immediately insists that "ignorance is evil...to think is good... rule yourselves!"

Throughout Leiber's novel aspiration sustains and vindicates rebelliousness, and oppression is its polar opposite. Rescued from the obvious consequences of his rashness, Jarles joins the underground. Unlike Heinlein's Cabal, they do not have a creed for they prosper by harnessing the powers of nature rather than by deferring to a supernatural master. However, Leiber needs a thematic framework to give coherence to the ethical structure inherent in the book and avoid the charge of advocating moral anarchy as a social principle. In choosing to advance a very scientific form of necromancy he is able to combine aspiration, absolutism, esoteric technological

potency and the resurgent energy of a second renaissance. The New Witchcraft, aided by 'familiar' (telepathic, genetically-engineered homonculi) and possessing the technological secrets of the Golden Age which consumed itself and gave way to the Hierarchy, is pitched against the forces of the symbolic Great God (the idol set up by the prelates). Technology is also exploited by the theocrats to maintain their hegemony over a cowed people. The people hold the key: victory for the underground movement which struggles for their emancipation depends upon inspiring the masses by exposing the priests as charlatans. That in turn will depend upon which side can better use its knowledge of behaviour, devices and forces to vanquish the other. Surprise and military strategy are a formidable combination, particularly when the scientific source of the terror produced is disguised for maximum effect as the legendary, primeval foe of mankind:

...most of the archpriests could only stare helplessly at the ever-mounting chaos around reviewing stand. Long habit had taught them to maintain inscrutable expressions, but now their facial masks concealed nothing but empty stupefaction. It was not physical fear that froze them. They felt that the whole materialistic world on which they based their security was going to pieces before their eyes. Physical science, which had been their obedient servant, had suddenly become a toy in the hands of a dark power that could make or break scientific laws at pleasure. Something had scratched out the first principle of their thinking: "There is only the cosmos and the electronic entities that constitute it, without soul or purpose - " and scribbled over it, in broad black strokes, "The whim of Sathanas."

Gather Darkness, pp.148-9

Once the germ of this breakdown of faith in their own control of the world through science is planted in the minds of the priests, it flourishes and their regime is swept aside by the New Witchcraft in a symbolic victory for humanity.

Heinlein published in 1949 a second version of his righteous-religious-conspiracy-against-oppression plot in which the pronounced

jingoism of 'Revolt in 2100' has been converted expeditiously into simple xenophobia. Alas, the enemy of humanity is no incomprehensible extraterrestrial bug-eyed slimy thing with a penchant for sadistic homicide, but the emperor's 'monkeys', the 'slant-eyed' 'flat-faced' Pan-Asians who have conquered the United States. Perhaps one may discern in his depiction of the underground opposition a minor debt to Leiber, for Heinlein begins with the last viable cadre of the U.S. Army - a mere handful of men - and, endowing them with a scientific genius to do the backroom wizardry, depicts how they win through by impressing their own citizenry and baffling and terrifying the enemy with the technological miracles of a factitious religion. This is how it is explained to an early recruit to the scheme:

The man hesitated, and Ardmore added, 'Damn it- we're white men! Can't you see that?'

The man answered, 'I see it, but I don't like it.' Nevertheless he slowly approached.

Ardmore said, 'This is a piece of razzle-dazzle for the benefit of our yellow brethren. Now that you're in it, you're in it! Are you game?'

The other members of the personnel of the citadel had gathered around by this time. The mountain guide glanced around at their faces. 'It doesn't look as if I had much choice.'

'Maybe not, but we would rather have a volunteer than a prisoner.'

The mountaineer shifted tobacco from left cheek to right, glanced around the immaculate pavement for a place to spit, decided not to, and answered, 'What's the game?'

'It's a frame up on our Asiatic bosses. We plan to give them the run-around - with the help of God and the great Lord Mota.'

The Day After Tomorrow, p.57

Heinlein would no doubt have resented the suggestion that the leader of his six G.I. musketeers had read Leiber's novel for inspiration but it is all there in the trappings of the fledgling sect of 'Mota' - "Atom" in plain English. I pause to condemn the militaristic cant and blase, right-wing 'ethics' advanced in this novel, which leaves one wondering whether the self-righteous gimcrack heroes really are much better, in human terms, than the despots they ultimately

overthrow with the help of their all-American ingenuity and know-how. Heinlein certainly was excited by the promise and power of science, but, whatever his intentions, all he manages to suggest was how dehumanizing these can be. By contrast, John Boyd gleefully achieves the opposite in The Rakehells of Heaven(1969), by suggesting how pernicious religious fervour can be.

Boyd's is not a profound book, or even one in which he tried from the outset to give a form to an idea he considered worth the single-minded shaping behind any great work. In fact in his preface to the 1978 Penguin edition he recalls that he had set out to write a Promethean story, but 'strange things happened on the way to the denouement.'⁽³⁰⁾ The work as it stands is entertaining, irreverent, ribald and jocose - particularly where the pseudo-religious motivation of the two men from earth is concerned - yet it is interesting in its few serious moments, where the reader may glimpse behind the buffoonery an argument about the religious credulity of human nature and the social and psychological distortions which may arise from the unscrupulous exploitation of this human propensity to worship and placate.

Two space scouts, Adams and O'Hara, discover the 'university' planet Harlech and its studious, rational inhabitants. Their next objective is to ascertain whether or not the humanoid Harlechians are truly human, for only if they fail to meet the strict criteria set by the Terran administrators can their planet be colonised and exploited by Earth. Since the two Earthmen are uncertain, they decide to stay to investigate. The Harlechians' comeliness, native intelligence and sexual prowess are initially hard to cope with but the two spacemen adjust, O'Hara more readily than Adams. Rivalry grows between them,

as the exuberance of Catholic Celt O'Hara is initially much more attractive to the Harlechians than the sober reserve of Adams, a Southern Methodist. Soon both men are trying to outdo one another in their respective efforts to build up a following among the students of this campus planet. While O'Hara is intent on popularising himself aided by his near-indefatigable libido and a gift for the theatrical, Adams, fired with missionary zeal, strives to bring the Harlechians to his God.

The young folk of Harlech are highly impressionable, and take to Red O'Hara's populist, showbiz Catholicism with alacrity. Moral controversies arise for the first time in aeons on Harlech, and there is even a murder as the students are deliberately imbued with alien, Terran values by their new mentors. A police force is established, and the revealing garb customary on Harlech is replaced with 'decent' clothing. The credulous, gullible Harlechians are corrupted by the two rivals; each builds up factions in an effort to ensure that his religion, opinions and values eclipse those of his colleague. However, in a satirical denouement reminiscent both of Farmer's 'Prometheus' and Harrison's 'An Alien Agony', O'Hara ends up being crucified (or so Adams concludes, though the novel finishes with doubt being cast upon this assumption) in the most religious media event the literal-minded Harlechians are ever likely to witness. Ironically, O'Hara's roguish influence is sanctified by his martyrdom, and his is the creed which endures:

...I heard the sibilance of prayer arising from the chapel, and when I opened the door the area was filled with worshipers. My Good Friday sermon had been taken over by a lay preacher, Bardo the Lawyer, who was finishing a prayer for the dead. Standing behind the kneeling worshipers, I hear him finish: "And we ask this blessing in the name of Red. There is no Lord but the Lord of Moses and Red was his prophet."

"Wait, Bardo," I cried. "Red was not a prophet. Jesus Christ was the Prophet."

"By law, Bardo answered, "we cannot accept hearsay evidence, and we all know that Red died on the cross and he spoke only of Moses. So we are of the Hebrew faith..."

My brain spinning. I entered my office. There was more to be done on Harlech now than kill a Judas. Slick lawyers were using the rules of evidence on my Scriptures, and jurisprudence was converting my Christianity to Judaism. I had to get the Word straight before I left Harlech, and my time was short. It was one Holy mess!

In my heart I knew what had to be done, but how? I was willing to grant O'Hara sainthood, but I could not grant him co-equality with the Holy Trinity, particularly now that these pagans had pared the Trio to a Duo.

The Rakehalls of Heaven, pp.175-6

Adams's last effort to save the Harlechians from themselves and O'Hara brings him back to Earth after enduring a return voyage at enormous velocity, but his efforts to turn the clock back by creating an Einsteinian time paradox fail. Ultimately, the only clear message which emerges from a welter of off-beat humour, knavery and intrigue is that men make very poor divines, as Wells would surely have agreed.

Keith Robert's Pavane(1968) opens with an 'historical' Prologue in which the reader is offered an explanation of how a novel set in the twentieth century is without so many of the technological wonders which, in Verne's Frankville, Wells's future history, Huxley's Somatic London, Vonnegut's Ilium and countless other less well-known corners of science fiction's multifarious space-time-reality five-dimensional territory, have become synonymous with the modern world as it is and the world to which it will give birth. In Robert's marvellous novel the assassination of Elizabeth the First in July 1588 and the Spanish invasion of a realm divided along religious sectarian lines not only halts the English Renaissance and precludes the Age of Reason, but gives Rome the opportunity to re-establish their Medieval hegemony throughout the Old World and the New, and consolidate their spiritual and temporal interests:

To the victor, the spoils. With the authority of the Catholic Church assured, the rising nation of Great Britain deployed her forces in the service of the Popes, smashing the Protestants of the Netherlands, destroying the power of the German city-states in the long-drawn Lutheran Wars. The New-worlders of the North American continent remained under the rule of Spain; Cook planted in Australasia the cobalt flag of the throne of Peter.

In England herself, across a land half ancient and half modern, split as in primitive times by barriers of language, class and race, the castles of mediaevalism still glowered; mile on mile of unfelled woodland harboured creatures of another age. To some the years that passed were years of fulfilment, of the final flowering of God's Design; to others they were a new Dark Age, haunted by things dead and others best forgotten; bears and catamounts, dire-wolves and Fairies.

Over all, the long arm of the Popes reached out to punish and reward; the Church Militant remained supreme. But by the middle of the twentieth century widespread mutterings were making themselves heard. Rebellion was once more in the air.

Pavane, Prologue, pp.9-10.

Those 'mutterings' symbolize the resurgent, irrepressible and characteristic spirit of Man; and as Roberts's story unfolds, his version is revealed. Note, however, that Pavane appears at first to present the converse of the situation portrayed by Miller in A Canticle for Leibowitz - especially in Fiat Lux - where the Church (i.e. the monks of the Albertian Order of Leibowitz) struggles to advance, and failing that, just to sustain a spiritual perspective in a materialistic, secular world.

Pavane consists of a number of introductory chapters which are really cameos of the main characters, whose lives later become interwoven, and each chapter also establishes a strand of the novel's main theme, likewise spun into a final coherence in the last chapter, and in a final epistolary 'Coda.' Thus in the first chapter, 'The Lady Margaret,' Roberts deftly intertwines narrative, characterisation and background allusion in describing the independent-minded, resourceful haulier Jesse Strange making the year's last trip through the West Country at the wheel of his best steam-driven traction engine:

...but what else could you expect, Jesse asked himself sourly, when half the tax levied in the country went to buy gold plate for its churches? Maybe though this was just the start of a new trade recession like the one engineered a couple of centuries back by Gisevius. The memory of that still rankled in the West at least. The economy of England was stable now, for the first time in years; stability meant wealth, gold reserves. And gold, stacked anywhere but in the half-legendary coffers of the Vatican, meant danger...

Jesse had all the hauliers' ingrained contempt for internal combustion, though he'd followed the arguments for it and against it keenly enough. Maybe one day petrol propulsion might amount to something and there was that other system, what did they call it, diesel... But the hand of the Church would have to be lifted first. The Bull of 1910, Petroleum Veto, had limited the capacity of IC engines to 150cc's, and since then the hauliers had had no real competition.

Pavane, p.14 & p.15.

The hauliers are the middle-class businessmen of this age of steam locomotion and Petroleum Veto, hard-working, relatively prosperous and independent-minded; but the Church's firmness is an effective brake upon their ambition and the growth of their own power. They are tolerated mainly because they are useful - indeed, indispensable - but they are acutely aware of their limited freedom:

He valved water through the preheater, stoked, valved again. One day they'd swap these solid-burners for oil-fuelled machines. The units had been available for years now; but oil firing was still a theory in limbo, awaiting the Papal verdict. Might be a decision next year, or the year after; or maybe not at all. The ways of Mother Church were devious, not to be questioned by the herd.

Old Eli would have fitted oil burners and damned the priests black to their faces, but his drivers and steersmen would have balked at the excommunication which would certainly have followed. Strange and Sons had bowed the knee there, not for the first time and not for the last.

Pavane, pp.25-26.

The only other independent force in this England of 1968 wherein cement is available only through the Church and at enormous expense - it being too useful for the rapid construction of strongholds - is the Guild of Signallers, the subject of the second chapter:

Guildsmen paid no tithes to local demesnes, obeyed none but their own hierarchy; and though in theory they were answerable under Common Law, in practice they were immune. They

governed according to their own high code; and it was a brave man, or a fool, who squared with the richest Guild in England. There had been deadly accuracy in what the Serjeant said; when kings waited on their messages as eagerly as commoners they had little need to fear. The Popes might cavil, jealous of their independence, but Rome herself leaned too heavily on the continent-wide network of the semaphore towers to do more than adjure and complain. In so far as such a thing was possible in a hemisphere dominated by the Church Militant, the Guildsmen were free.

Pavane, p.55.

The Guildsmen and artisans are not the only pragmatists in this parallel world, of course. In the third chapter, wherein Roberts relates Brother John's story, we encounter the least compassionate, the most devious, and the most powerful of the three - the Court of Spiritual Welfare. If the assassination of the Faery Queen has sent this world spinning down a divergent path from that which brought ours into being, then a special kind of ecclesiastical viciousness would flourish as the need became apparent to the Holy See that its secular power could only be maintained at the expense of a ('relatively') little blood. So reasons Roberts, and consequently he clouds the skies above his alternate world with the awful shadow of the most damnable of all the Catholic Church's most misanthropic institutions - the Inquisition. Roberts reviles its sadistic practices by throwing the gentle, gifted, obstinate Brother John into the very midst of its madness. Unlike Leiber, Roberts is not content merely to hint at the extreme behaviour of the zealot, as he does here:

The room in which he found himself was long and wide, devoid of windows except where to one side a line of grilles set close under the roof admitted livid fans of light. At the far end of the chamber an oil lamp burned; beneath it clustered a group of figures. John saw dark-dressed, burly men with the insignium of the Court, the hand wielding the hammer and the lightning flash, blazoned on their chests; a chaplain was mumbling over trays of spiky instruments whose purpose he did not recognize. There were spiked rollers, oddly shaped irons, tourniquets of metal beads; other devices, ranged in rows, he

identified with a cold shock. The little frames with their small crank handles, toothed jaws; these were gresillons. Thumb-screws. Such things then really existed. Nearer at hand a species of rough table, fitted at each end with lever-operated wooden rollers, declared its use more plainly. The roof of the place was studded with pulleys, some with their ropes already reeved and dangling; a brazier burned redly, and near it were piled what looked to be huge lead weights.

Pavane, p.87.

Imagine Wells's Doctor Moreau pacing this grim chamber, and the provenance of one's revulsion in rejecting his superficially humane effort to surgically transform animals into "people" is evident. Yet here one confronts perhaps the deepest, most hideously perverted species of Reason; ironically, though, religious zeal is in the dock, not scientific expediency. For all that, the rationale propounded to John on his arrival at the Court has all the vile logic and composure of a Nazi doctor's testimony:

The priest at Brother John's elbow continued in a low voice the explanation which he'd felt impelled to embark on while crossing the town from their lodgings. 'We may take it then,' he said, 'that as the crimes of witchcraft and heresy, the raising of devils, receiving of incubi and succubi and like abominations, the trafficking with the Lord of the Flies himself, are crimes of the spirit rather than the body, crimen excepta, they cannot be judged, and evidence may neither be given nor accepted under normal legal jurisdiction. The admission of spectral evidence and its acceptance as partial proof of guilt subject to confession during Questioning is therefore of vital importance to the functioning of our Court. Under this head to belongs our explanation of the use of torture and its justification; the death of the guilty one disrupts Satan's attack on the Plan of God, as revealed to Mother Church through His Vicar on Earth, our own Pope John; while dying penitent the heretic is saved from the greater relapse into the sin of subversion, to find eventually his place in the Divine Kingdom.'

Brother John, his face screwed up as if in anticipation of pain, ventured a query. 'But are not your prisoners given the opportunity to confess? Were they to confess without the Questioning--'

'There can be no confession,' interrupted the other, 'without compulsion. As there can be no answering the challenges of spectral evidence, the use of which by definition invalidates the innocence of the accused.' He allowed his eyes to travel to one of the pulleys and its dangling rope. 'Confession,' he said, 'must be sincere. It must come from the heart. False confession, made to avoid the pain of

Questioning, is useless to Church and God alike. Our aim is salvation; the salvation of the souls of these poor wretches is our charge, if necessary by the breaking of bodies. Set against this, all else is straw in the wind.'

Ibid.

Even if Roberts at first merely suggests rather than illustrates the worst of this codex of cold-blooded procedure, he will not eschew the truth - but there is nothing in what follows which seems gratuitously Gothic. The reader is shown the savagery through the medium of Brother John's demented memories. John has been forced not merely to witness the cruelties of the Inquisition, but to record them graphically - for his calling is to art, not to religion. Ironically he has found himself being used as a result of having enjoyed the security of his Order to practise his vocation:

Through the deep channels of his brain noises still echoed. A susurrations, rising and falling like a shrill and hellish sea; the shrieks of the damned, and the dying, and the dead. And the sizzling of braziers, thud of whips splitting flesh, creaking of leather and wood, squeak and groan of sinews as machines tested to destruction the handiwork of God. John had seen it all; the white-hot pincers round the breasts, branding irons pushed smoking into mouths, calf-length boots topped up with boiling lead, the heated chairs, the spiked seats on which they bounced their victims then stacked the lead slabs on their thighs... The Territio, the Questions Preparatoire, Ordinaire, Extraordinaire; sqassation and the strappado, the rack and the choking pear; the Questioners stripped and sweating while the great mad judge upstairs extracted from the foamings of epileptics the stuff of conviction after conviction.. Pencil and brush recorded faithfully, flying at the paper with returning skill while Brother Sebastian stood and frowned, pulling at his lip and shaking his head. It seemed John's hands worked of their own, tearing the pages aside, grabbing for inks and washes while the drawings grew in depth and vividness. The brilliant side-lighting; filming of sweat on bodies that distended and heaved in ecstasies of pain; arms disjoined by the weights and pulleys, stomachs exploded by the rack, bright tree shapes of new blood running to the floor. It seemed the linner tried to force the stench, the squalor, even at last the noise down onto paper; Brother Sebastian, impressed in spite of himself, had finally dragged John away by force, but he couldn't stop him working. He drew a wizard in the outer bailey, pulled apart by four Suffolk Punches; the doomed men and women sitting on their tar kegs waiting for the torch; the stark things that were left when the flames had died away. 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to

live,' Sebastian had said at his parting. 'Remember that, Brother. Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live..' John's lips moved, repeating the words in silence.

Night overtook him a bare half dozen miles from Dubris. He dismounted in the dark, awkwardly, tethered the horse while he fetched water from a stream. In the stream he dropped the satchel of brushes and paints. He stood a long time staring, though in the blackness he couldn't see it float away.

Pavane, pp.89-90.

The Church is profaned here, deliberately and thoroughly; yet while one recoils at the scope of Roberts's depiction, the basic principle of the factitious or fictive religion - that however outlandish, it is in some way a counterpart of an actual religion - is forcefully apparent. Here we must recognize the grim truth of the Catholic Church at the height of its temporal influence; and the essential inhumanity of those agents of ecclesiastical hegemony who could routinely preside over the destruction of their fellows and claim to be acting from the highest moral principles has diminished not at all in the retelling.

However, Robert's harrowing account has a wider significance, for it serves to illustrate that there has always been a distinctive kind of religious moral expediency which parallels the scientific utilitarianism against which the devout writers (discussed in Chapter Four) declaim in tones of the highest moral outrage. Furthermore, history furnishes ample proof, were it wanted, to indicate that inhumane practices have often gone hand-in-hand with the rituals and rules of orthodox religions, a throwback to the long-forgotten practices of ancient cults whose creeds preach sympathetic magic, or vicarious expiation of guilt. The very antiquity of such abominable notions and their persistence even in allegedly civilized times - as Huxley never failed to argue, be it in the form of the Savage's masochistic religious fervour, or in the infanticide at the altar in

Ape and Essence - is undoubtedly one of the most telling indications that human perfectibility can be no less chimerical than the quest for the philosopher's stone, and that the human sensibility, devoid of moral restraint, might be just as likely to deteriorate as to develop. This, too, is part of Roberts's theme: "'I said I knew I was damned because I'd damned myself,'" rages the Lady Eleanor later in the novel, "'I didn't have to wait for any god to do it for me.'" She continues:

'That was the worst of all of course; I only said it to hurt him but I realized afterwards I meant it anyhow, I just wasn't a Christian any more. I said if necessary I'd raise up a few old gods, Thunor and Wo-Tan perhaps or Balder instead of Christ; for he told me himself many years ago....that Balder was only an older form of Jesus and that there have been many bleeding gods.'

Pavane, p.168.

For all her pagan leanings, Eleanor later will have an exemplary moral role. Yet she is not the central figure of this story of aspiration, that distinction being Brother John's.

Cast adrift on a sea of moral confusion by what he sees in the inquistors' dungeon, John is in a state of inner turmoil. Accusing himself of having enjoyed the technical demands of the sordid recording he has been summoned for, he leaves his Order and becomes a raving wanderer in the wilderness, himself now an emblem of the distortion which the maintenance of ecclesiastical conformity and obedience may work upon the human psyche. John's guilt is another burden imposed by his Order.

Barred from prestigious work and the full flowering of his gift by a jealous superior - John being another of those individuals whose usefulness has been recognized by Mother Church (commercial work such as the design of 'sauce bottle labels' being his particular strength) - the artist in John emerged fully in the chamber of horrors. Without

vanity to save him, John's revulsion at his own participation, however indirect, is transformed into the certainty of his own complicity. His insanity, which gives all this so much force, is, like Glogauer's, the outcome of a shattering perception. Where Glogauer encounters a simple child rather than the sublime human incarnation of the divine he has expected, John has been confronted by the Christian Church at its most cynical. Now that he has seen it, he can no longer accept its Rule, and, again like Glogauer, becomes the focus for dissent, a bedraggled prophet whose charismatic madness draws to him the humble folk oppressed by the potentates of the Church.

Before long the following of John the 'renegade' becomes a sizeable threat, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Londinium ('a gourmet in all things temporal,' p.92) decides to dispatch troops to quell the rebellion. John's is not the only voice raised against the Inquisition - the prelate notes with barely suppressed fury the 'heresy' of the Bishop of Dubris ('the rage of a pious and honest man was very plain' in this petition against the 'desecrator of decency and his so-called Spiritual Court'); but John's heresy is the greater since he has rejected the Church and seems to be encouraging multitudes to do the same. Of course the reader knows that John is really only preaching by example, if at all, for like Glogauer, the followers of the prophet read signs into his actions, and credit him with powers and sermons which reflect their own deepest desires rather than his real qualities. To the Cardinal, though, this is all quite beneath his notice. His concern is to restore the status quo as quickly as possible, for administering the Church is a matter of balance, and the evidence is plain to see that, 'The old cry of the Church, to

submit and to adore, was no longer enough; the people were being tempted once more to set up their own spiritual hierarchy, and John or some such figure was tailor-made to head it.'(p.94) The Cardinal, an intellectual potentate, is clearly also a relativist:

The renegade then had attended the last sittings of the Court of Spiritual Welfare; that, thought His Eminence as he re-read facts already learned by heart, was clearly the beginning of the whole ridiculous affair. He shook his head. How explain? ...His Eminence shrugged tiredly. In the history of the world, there had been no power like the power of the second Rome. To hold half the planet in the cup of your hands; to juggle, to balance one against the next forces nearly beyond the mind of man to grasp...The rage of nations was like the anger of the sea, not to be contained with straws. Anglicanism had torn the country once, the history of it was all there in the great books that lined the study walls. Then, England had glowed from her Cornish to to her Pennine spine with the light of the auto-da-fe. Against that set a little pain, a little blood, soon gone and nearly soon forgotten; that, and the mighty wisdom of the Church.

Once too often, mused the Cardinal; the goad, the threat of Hellfire, applied instead of the lure of the Kingdom of Love... Father Hieronymous, mad as he undoubtedly was, had been useful in the past; but this time his gory circus had triggered an uproar that could easily involve all England.... ...His Eminence by nature of his position was economist and politician as much as churchman; in his more cynical moods he seemed to see the whole vast fabric of the Church stretched like a glittering blanket, a counterpane of cloth of gold, across the body of a giant. At times like this the giant moved and grumbled, turned in a restless sleep. Soon, he would wake.

Pavane, pp.94-95.

Since the Cardinal is evidently as much a pragmatist as a visionary, the full force of the Church Militant is brought to bear on the rebellion, with the result that the pressure is relieved, the revolt melts away and order is restored. Yet John leaves his followers with his own vision, one which goes beyond the Cardinal's. No longer under the influence of the Church's conservative dogma, John is able to discern the future in the present, a future which is noble and which offers the promise of human spiritual fulfilment and technological emancipation - Utopia by another name - as an alternative to the

Church's 'lure of the Kingdom of Love':

'People of Dorset...fisherman and farmers and you, marblers and roughmasons, who grub the old stone up out of the hills...and you, Fairies, the People of the Heath, you were-things riding the wind, hear my words and remember. Mark them all your lives, mark them for all time; so in the years to come, no earth shall ever be without the tale...' The syllables rang shrieking and thin, pulverized by the wind; and even the injured girl stopped moaning and lay propped against the knees of her friends, straining to hear. John told them of themselves; of their faith and their work, their lonely carving of existence out of stone and rock and bareness; of the great Church that held the land by the throat, choking their breath in the grip of her brocade fist. In his brain visions still burned and hummed; he told them of the might Change that would come, sweeping away blackness and misery and pain, leading them at last to the Golden Age. He saw clearly, rising about him on the hills, the buildings of that new time, the factories and hospitals, power stations and laboratories. He saw the machines flying above the land, skimming like bubbles the surface of the sea. He saw wonders; lightning chained, the wild waves of the very air made to talk and sing. All this would come to pass, all this and more. The age of tolerance, of reason, of humanity, of the dignity of the human soul.

Pavane, pp.106-107.

John's testament is not quite the Sermon on the Mount but its tone is unmistakably promissory: 'All this would come to pass...' Invoking as it does the prospect of C.P.Snow's scientific benison, the 'Golden Age' John extols to an audience whose experience is of unending toil and scant reward beyond subsistence, is Wellsian. Yet, as John's chapter closes with the peaceable dispersal of his following, one realizes that this rebellion of the humble folk of the West Country can be no more than a precursor, as the structure of Medieval society and the Church's hegemony are too robust to be challenged effectively from below.

In the next chapter, 'Lords and Ladies', we are afforded a glimpse of the mores of the contemporary aristocracy. Margaret Strange is a bystander at her Uncle Jesse's deathbed. Reflecting bitterly, she rails inwardly at the Church and at the aristocratic

lover who has wooed her only to seduce her and cast her aside. She despises the Church, reviling Christianity as a foreign imposition:

The journey and the castle had been in her mind; the tears were real. They ran down hot, wetting her cheek. Is this the best you can do? she asked Father Edwardes silently. To plague this old man with your mumming while I sit here free who've brought the evil and the wrong into this house? Of course, her mind answered itself scornfully. Because he like the Church he serves is blind and empty and vainglorious. This God they prattle on about, where's His justice, where's His compassion? Does it please Him to see dying people hounded in his name, does He snigger at his bumbling priests, is He satisfied when men drop dead chopping out stone for His temples, this twisted little God dying tepid-faced on a cross... She thought, I'll go out and look for other gods, and maybe they'll be better and anyway they can't be worse. Perhaps they're still there in the wind, on the heaths and the old grey hills. I'll pray for Thunnor's lightning and Wo-Tan's justice, and Balder's love; for he at least gave his blood laughing, not mangled and in pain like the Christos, the usurper...

Pavane, p.132.

The old gods, the elemental spirits revered in the pre-Christian era, answer. Their ethereal spokesman chides her gently and, perhaps surprisingly, counsels tolerance, even acceptance of the Church of Christ as a positive response to the inscrutability of a pseudo-Wellsian cosmos:

She tried to speak again, and he stopped her with a raised hand. 'Listen,' he said, 'and try to remember. Do not despise your Church; for she has a wisdom beyond your understanding. Do not despise her mummeries; they have a purpose that will be fulfilled. She struggles as we struggle to understand what will not be understood, to comprehend that which is beyond comprehension. The Will that cannot be ordered, or charted, or measured.' He pointed round him, at the circling stones. 'The Will that is like these; encompassing, endlessly voyaging, endlessly returning, enfolding the heavens. The flower grows, the flesh corrupts, the sun circles the sky; Balder dies and the Christos, the warriors fight outside their hall Valhalla and fall and bleed and are reborn. All are within the Will, all are ordained. We are within it; our mouths close and open, our bodies move, our voices speak and we are not their masters. The Will is endless; we are its tools. Do not despise your Church...'

Pavane, p.134.

Wells might have abjured - indeed ridiculed - such an indiscriminate reduction of the aspiring human spirit to being no more than the gibbering of an involuntary implement of Divine Will, but this perspective of the Universe and the significance within it of human life is Wellsian in its seeming indifference to the fate of the individual. Yet it is also optimistic in its assertion that the Cosmos is not random or arbitrary but is directed and shaped to a purpose beyond the scope of human understanding. While continuing in the historic vein, the novel's resolution proceeds from the further development of this essentially theistic theme.

Three perspectives have now been developed by Roberts, and they are brought together to bear upon the fortunes of Eleanor, the daughter of Margaret Strange and her aristocratic husband Robert, last of the Lords of Purbeck. The youthful Lady Eleanor, chatelaine of Corfe, has her great-uncle Jesse's acumen and determination, her mother's fey perception and impatience with Church pomp and secular power, and a strong streak of the compassion for the oppressed which once drove John to renounce his Order. Of more immediate moment, she also has the power and influence of a feudal seigneur but resents the obligations to the monarchy and to the Church her role involves.

In the Lady Eleanor, Roberts personifies all the qualities and energies of the Bishop of Londinium's metaphorical sleeping giant. Eleanor is certainly a heroine, but not of the conventional sort. She is the focus of the popular pressures for Reform and Reason, and is also the catalyst who initiates the train of events that forces the Church to loosen the bonds with which it had constrained the movements of the giant. The rebellion she leads from Corfe Castle entails a double jeopardy. The Church of Rome's agents and proxies in

Britain seek to use it to embarrass the King, who is visiting the Americas and who is thus unable to manage the crisis though he is sympathetic to a degree with her cause. The Church will also seize upon this pretext to destroy her and her nonconformist demesne.

Aided by her seneschal, Sir John Faulkner, she withstands the worst the Church and its creatures can throw at her, until the King returns to lift the siege of Corfe. She is imprisoned in comfort but bereft of her former power until an escape is arranged and she is able to return to her beloved West Country, where she lives for many years in humble circumstances attended only by her former seneschal. Alas, the memory of Rome is as unforgiving as its reach is long and persevering. For Eleanor this means death at the hands of a Catholic assassin, as her retainer John Faulkner has known from the first it would. For all his Fairy lineage, even he is prompted to seek to revenge her. As she dies, perhaps in atonement for the single treachery she ever committed in long ago ordering the massacre of the Pope's cruel lieutenant in England and his brutal, bloody retinue, Eleanor urges restraint:

He stayed kneeling, breath hissing between his teeth; and when he raised his head his face was totally changed. 'Who did this, Lady?' he asked her huskily. 'When next they cross the heath, then we must know...'

She saw the blazing start at the backs of the strange eyes and reached for his wrist, slowly and with pain. 'No, John,' she said. 'The Old Way is dead. Vengeance is...mine, saith the Lord...' She pushed her head against the back of the chair, parting her lips; blood showed between her teeth...

Pavane, pp.181-182.

In terms of the novel's moral allegory, this proves that she has triumphed over her nature and proved her humanity. How masterfully Roberts combines the paradoxical premises of his story! Aspiration is innately human, but only in controlling our nature are we really humane.

In an epistolary denouement ('Coda') Roberts explicates his moral vision. The hand is John Faulkner's; the recipient, his and Eleanor's son, heir to the modern world of hovercraft and nuclear power which they together strove to foster:

'Here, in this place, began that strange Revolt of the Castles; and here, too, as you have read, it ended. Here began the freedom of the world; if freedom is a proper word to use. The feudal world of Gisevius the Great was shattered; and with it the Church that had conceived it and perpetuated it and brought it to its flowering.

'When the grip of that Church seemed strongest, it was at its most slack. Within ten years of the breaking of these walls the New-world colonies had torn themselves free from Rome.... So Angle-Land became again Great Britain without bloodshed, and without sacrifice. Internal combustion, electricity, many other things, were waiting to be used; all had been held from us by Rome. So men spat on her memory, calling her debased and evil; for many years yet this will be true.

Pavane, p.187.

Here Roberts aims to sum up the Church's role as positively as possible, not vilify it. However, his argument of relative benefit approaches an illustration of the end justifying the means:

'The ways of the Church were mysterious, her policies never plain. The Popes knew, as we know, that given electricity men would be drawn to the atom. That given fission, they would be come to fusion. Because once, beyond our Time, beyond all the memories of men, there was a great civilization. There was a Coming, a Death and Resurrection; a Conquest, a Reformation, an Armada. And a Burning, an Armageddon. There too in that old world we were known; as the Old Ones, the Fairies, the People of the Hills. But our knowledge was not lost.

'The Church knew there was no halting Progress; but slowing it, slowing it even by half a century, giving man time to reach a little higher toward true Reason; that was the gift she gave the world. And it was priceless. Did she oppress? Did she hang and burn? A little, yes. But there was no Belsen, no Buchenwald. No Passchendaele.

'Ask yourself, John, from where came the scientists? And the doctors, thinkers, philosophers? How could men have climbed from feudalism to democracy in a generation, if Rome had not flooded the world with her proscribed wealth of knowledge? When she saw her empire crumbling, when she knew dominion had ended, she gave back what all thought she had stolen; the knowledge she was keeping in trust. Against the time when men could once more use it well. That was her great secret. It was hers, and it was ours; now it is yours. Use it well.

Pavane, p.188.

Unhappily, Roberts ends by compromising the intellectual rigour and integrity of vision which makes his such a notable novel, and as a result his fiction deteriorates almost into an expression of wishful thinking, just as Wells's rigour falters in Men Like Gods. His closing assertions quoted above as a rationale are ethically problematic, if not fallacious. The nub of the problem resides in John Faulkner's uncharacteristically maudlin justification and apology. It would be hard to persuade a victim of the Inquisition - or its fictional counterpart here - that they are only being hanged or burned 'A little'; or that their death is necessary to buy their persecutors time to become more humane. At bottom, the error he makes here reflects a profound faith in the infallibility of the Church, because it assumes that the Inquisitors and those who have sanctioned torture could anticipate - indeed could know - how their inhumanity to nonconformists, deviants and innovators like Leonardo would prevent the atrocities of later epochs, and of other men. Notwithstanding the many other virtues of this evocative and moving novel, one is disappointed that such a perceptive, learned mind could lapse into this apparent condonement of authoritarianism, repression and violence in the name of high idealism.

Kurt Vonnegut's work offers a mordant answer to the contentions and aspirations of the religious humanism of Pavane. Two of his novels are of particular interest in the present discussion, Cat's Cradle and the anarchic The Sirens of Titan. Although The Sirens of Titan is the earlier work, Cat's Cradle(1963) presents a more straightforward exploration of the social role of religion than its predecessor, which is full of deliberate parody and which also has an extra-terrestrial dimension lacking in Cat's Cradle because by then

its author had arrived at a humanistic resolution of the crisis of confidence in religious faith which his novels confront. Thus the later novel presents a clearer picture of Vonnegut's disillusionment with organized religion.

The world is in its cataclysmic death-throes as ice-nine tightens its grip on every molecule of water. This ultimate disaster follows the pattern established ed by Noyes in The Last Man: experimental science has brought man deadly knowledge and a fatal opportunity; ignorant military men and irresponsible politicians seek to maintain their geopolitical role, in this case by finding a gimmick - 'one of the aspects of progress' - which will allow the U.S. Marines to storm ashore and across country without once getting bogged down in mud (mud, not the scientist's protein, is the symbolic Bokononist raw material of corporeal life). The world perishes as a result. This, of course, is the opposite of scientific materialism as seen from the Wellsian Golden Age which comes into prospect at the end of Pavane.

In the last days of life on earth the narrator has found a safe, albeit temporary haven, in which he spends the time reading the cynical wisdom and non-doctrines of Bokonon. Cat's Cradle is John's (31) record of the world's end, and as he reveals on its first page, he eventually decides that Bokonon's creed accords with human life and experience better than Christianity:

When I was a much younger man, I began to collect material for a book to be called The Day the World Ended.

The book was to be factual.

The book was to be an account of what important Americans had done on the day when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan.

It was to be a Christian book. I was a Christian then.

I am a Bokononist now.

I would have been a Bokononist then, if there had been anyone to teach me the bitter-sweet lies of Bokonon. But

Bokononism was unknown beyond the gravel beaches and coral knives that ring this little island in the Caribbean Sea, the Republic of San Lorenzo.

We Bokononists believe that humanity is organized into teams, teams that do God's Will without ever discovering what they are doing. Such a team is called a karass by Bokonon, and the instrument, the kan-kan, that brought me into my own particular karass was the book I never finished, the book to be called The Day the World Ended.

Cat's Cradle, p.7

In another context these ridiculous details could be dismissed as spurious or juvenile; however, this is not a merely facetious parody. Their absurdity is not intended as a cheap jibe at religious belief, but it is implicitly an attack on the sententiousness of dogma. Vonnegut, perhaps the most elusive of all the writers discussed in this chapter, is fond of depicting his targets absurdly but he rarely deploys absurdity casually. In Vonnegut's fiction absurd coincidence often paradoxically represents the most profoundly significant cause and effect, probably because he 'does not choose sides among those he attacks because his technique is the Swiftian one of presenting equally false theses and antitheses'(32). This view of Vonnegut's approach is to some extent helpful but neglects the explicitly moral concerns which underlie the ambiguities of the narrative. Bokonon's writings and philosophy are alluded to passim, but one of the more telling excerpts is read by John towards the end of his chronicle as he sits in the shelter of the converted dungeon while ice-nine wreaks havoc everywhere else:

I turned to The Books of Bokonon, still sufficiently unfamiliar with them to believe that they contained spiritual comfort somewhere. I passed quickly over the warning on the title page of The First Book:

Don't be a fool! Close this book at once!
It is nothing but foma!

Foma, of course, are lies.
And then I read this:

In the beginning, God created the earth, and he looked upon it in His cosmic loneliness.

And God said, 'Let Us make living creatures out of mud, so the mud can see what We have done.' And God created every living creature that now moveth, and one was man. Mud as man alone could speak. God leaned close as mud as man sat up, looked around, and spoke. Man blinked. 'What is the purpose of all this?' he asked politely.

'Everything must have a purpose?' asked God.

'Certainly,' said man.

'Then I leave it to you to think of one for all of this,' said God. And He went away.

Cat's Cradle, pp.165-6

Vonnegut, like his character Bokonon, discerns the absurdity of trying to understand or paraphrase the will and actions of a divine being. Revealed knowledge, the scriptures, theophany are all chimerical, as fictive and fantastical as his own book, which opens with the prefatory headnote: 'Nothing in this book is true' and a quotation from The Books of Bokonon: 'Live by the foma that make you brave and kind and healthy and happy.' In other words, God - if God exists - is inscrutable; religions are factitious delusions, and one may as well live, by one's own lights failing any other agreeable principles and conventions. For surely human destiny is not one of God's main concerns - 'She (an affluent Episcopalian lady) was a fool, and so am I, and so is anyone who thinks he sees what God is doing, [writes Bokonon]'(p.9):

Along the way we are introduced to a religion so ridiculous that it resists being taken seriously, but which nevertheless helps the people create meaning for their otherwise pitiful lives. And at the same time Vonnegut's narrator converts to this religion and writes the book which survives: Cat's Cradle. Of course it's all made up. Just as the Bokonist religion keeps its members aware of the artificial drama they are playing, so too does Cat's Cradle draw attention to its own artifice of form. For each to work, Vonnegut believes, there should be no danger of either worshipper or reader mistaking such activity for bedrock-solid truth.

33.

However, it would be misleading to suggest that Cat's Cradle is without any 'bedrock-solid truth,' for Vonnegut's mockery cannot be written

off as so much nihilism. His purpose is real enough, however much he reveals it through the inconstant medium of his foma, and it absolves him from any suspicion of moral disengagement or abdication:

'What is sacred to Bokononists?' I asked after a while.

'Not even God, as far as I can tell.'

'Nothing?'

'Just one thing.'

I made some guesses. 'The ocean? The sun?'

'Man,' said Frank. 'That's all. Just man.'

Cat's Cradle, p.133.

Yet for all its humane wit, Vonnegut's mordant view of religion is really as much an adverse response to it as an explicitly positive assertion of humanism. Bokonon, the sole enactor of Vonnegut's factitious religion, consistently repudiates or parodies the themes and symbols of conventional religions. Thus, Bokononism (the 'mountebank' creed) really is what its sardonic prophet claims it to be, namely a religion which exists only in its relationship to others, with an accretive, syncretistic catechism whose significance is derived chiefly from its denunciation of human foibles, which is sometimes palliative but more often cruelly capricious. Bokonon's advice to the doomed people of San Lorenzo is the ultimate manifestation of these ideas:

To whom it may concern: These people around you are almost all of the survivors on San Lorenzo of the winds that followed the freezing of the sea. These people made a captive of the spurious holy man named Bokonon. They brought him here, placed him at their centre, and commanded him to tell them exactly what God Almighty was up to and what they should do now. The mountebank told them that God was surely trying to kill them, possibly because He was through with them, and that they should have the good manners to die. This, as you can see, they did.

Cat's Cradle, p.170.

The frozen San Lorenzans are, like the Martian army in The Sirens of Titan, a monumental symbol both of the culpable passivity which permits humans to wink at unpalatable truths about ourselves,

and of passive complicity through inaction in the great and trivial inhumanities we countenance. Turned thus to ice, the corpses of the islanders outwardly reflect the cold, selfish inner consciousness which for Vonnegut is characteristic of modern, venial man. Ice-nine has not only allowed the complete annihilation of human consciousness, but works a figurative, revealing transformation of our inner natures. Ultimately, though, Vonnegut has been making his point every time Bokonon is mentioned, for his is a pivotal - and highly ambiguous - role in the unfolding ethical tragedy. Even he is not blameless. It is Vonnegut's view that we are all agents and victims, and Bokonon the reluctant, world-weary holy man is no exception. His perspective implicitly becomes that of Vonnegut's narrator, John, at the end of the novel; and, like Samuel Butler's Higgs, John himself is no moral vir bonus either, as has been noted by Thomas L. Wymer:

The narrator's errors in love show that he is in his own way as guilty of the dehumanization of others as those he ironically attacks. He can see this in others...But he cannot see it in himself. By blaming "You Know Who," which on one level implies God, he absolves himself of responsibility, flushing himself down a spiritual oubliette. And he does it, in a brilliant metaphoric stroke, by turning himself into a block of ice, reducing himself to an object, a veritable monument to human stupidity, unknowingly showing how all agents of dehumanization ultimately become their own victims. And the ambiguity of "You Know Who" is a final satiric masterstroke: "You Know Who" is both the narrator himself and each one of us. Vonnegut is no modern comic Prometheus, flippantly thumbing his nose at the great S.O.B. in the sky. Like all good satirists his eyes are on the Earth where all posturing is comic and where the folly of man is sufficient cause for the world's evil. 34.

Whatever else Vonnegut thought of formal religion(35), he certainly recognized that it is a powerful popular influence, be it indeed no more than a palliative which helps insulate mankind from the bleak truth about human existence, for there is no special, teleological destiny to be attained. If there is any 'message' in

Cat's Cradle - apart from a general injunction against the 'coarsening of the soul'; and the argument against being a passive agent of inhumanity - it is minimalist. Vonnegut insists that our real purpose is to do what we can for each other, rather than striving to please a putative god whose assumed desires and motives are as absurd and futile as our attempts to meet or fulfill them, and which in fact say much more about our self-conceit than about anything else. While this amounts to a moral argument about responsibility which retains its validity in the absence of the divine sanction religious ethics possess, the field of human endeavour it endorses is limited to that with which Mankind can cope. Yet what is known and in that sense safe is the historic product of trial and error - in other words, vision and risk-taking. However ingenuously, Vonnegut's schema in Cat's Cradle provides no answer other than a fatalistic shrug to the question of humane creativity, the essential conundrum of the science fiction of aspiration.

Evidently religion has had a profound role in shaping the patterns of human thought and behaviour, particularly that distinctively progressive aspiration long ago identified as 'hubris'. Roger Zelazny's Lord of Light (1967) offers an ingenious and quite exotic example (36) with which to close this survey of representative factitious religions. As the challenge of the human hero, Sam, to his 'divine' foes indicates, the basic structure of Zelazny's novel is that already elucidated for 'the science fiction of aspiration':

'The full power of Kalkin?' asked Sam. 'That has never been released, oh Death. Not in all the ages of the world. Let them come against me now and the heavens will weep upon their bodies and the Vedra will run the color of blood! ...Do you hear me? Do you hear me, gods? Come against me! I challenge you, here upon this field! Meet me with your strength, in this place!'

Lord of Light, p.210.

'Great-Souled Sam' is a remarkable figure: warrior; prophet identified as 'the Buddha'; egalitarian hero, as Kalkin, one of the original space travellers who landed centuries before upon this planet; and the eponymous Lord of Light who has refused to become a 'God'; he is essentially a Promethean figure, as his Titanic defiance quoted above shows. Yet symbolically Sam and his side fail in that first terrible conflict, for he once allows anger to overwhelm reason.

In the far future, a colony planet of long-forgotten Terra is governed by an elite who guard their many prerogatives jealously. The Deicrats (or Masters) are a self-centred group of men and women made virtually immortal by their jealous command of technology, who spend their days in diverse pleasures and studiously ignore as far as is possible the subjugated masses over whom they have arrogantly set themselves.

It emerges in the second chapter that the Masters are the crewmen of the original colonist space ship who have harnessed technology to prolong their lives (they simply transfer into a new, specially grown body before old age makes the chance of actual physical death too great) and to control the populace, who are the descendants of the colonists, the "'cargo'" the technical crew brought safely to this planet centuries before. Unwilling to give up their status and prestige, the crew instituted a religious social code and caste system which proved to be highly effective at limiting aspirations and encouraging fatalistic acceptance of the status quo. Not all of the First are decadent "'deities'", however; Lord Yama is sympathetic to the Accelerationist cause, and Mahasamatman ("'Sam'") is the hubristic hero who could break their hold over the people.

Sam (also called Siddhartha) arises to confront these oppressors

having been awakened after many lifetimes asleep in suspended animation because, as Yama mockingly confesses, "'a world has need of your humility, your piety, your great teaching and your Machiavellian scheming.'" Sam defends himself - "'I was one of the First, you know. One of the very first to come here to build, to settle. All the others are dead now, or are gods - dei ex machiniThe chance was mine also, but I let it go by. Many times. I never wanted to be a god, Yama. Not really. It was only later when I saw what they were doing, that I began to gather what power I could to me. It was too late, though. They were too strong...'"(Ibid.)

Initially Zelazny's novel follows the classic pattern of hubristic defiance, as Sam escapes death at the hands of the Lord of Illusion, Mara, thanks to the prowess of Lord Yama. For all its allusions to Hindu divine myth, however, the fiction is, from the start, emphatically rationalistic. Here the maverick Lord Yama is discussing with Tak the archivist the special command Sam, newly resurrected, has over the perverse, powerful elemental denizens from whom possession of the planet was wrested aeons before:

'Then the one called Raltariki is really a demon?' asked Tak.

'Yes - and no,' said Yama. 'If by "demon" you mean a malefic, supernatural creature, possessed of great powers, life span, and the ability to temporarily assume virtually any shape - then the answer is no. This is the generally accepted definition, but it is untrue in one respect.'

'Oh? And what may that be?'

'It is not a supernatural creature.'

'But it is all those other things?'

'Yes.'

'Then I fail to see what difference it makes whether it be supernatural or not - so long as it is malefic, possesses great powers and has the ability to change its shape at will.'

Lord of Light, p.24

Yama's answer confirms beyond any doubt that this is an humanistic novel:

'Ah, but it makes a great deal of difference, you see. It is the difference between the unknown and the unknowable, between science and fantasy - it is a matter of essence. The four points of the compass be logic, knowledge, wisdom and the unknown. Some do bow in that final direction. Others advance upon it. To bow down before the one is to lose sight of the three. I may submit to the unknown, but never to the unknowable. The man who bows in that final direction is either a saint or a fool. I have no use for either.

Ibid.

Lord of Light has an epic flavour which is not merely the result of Zelazny's astute borrowings from Hindu myth. The typical images and ideas of the fiction of aspiration also have an unique power and generate their own excitement. These the author imbues quite masterfully with the lyricism of the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, which give this saga its form, if not its theme. Like Moorcock in Behold the Man and Frank Herbert in Dune before him, Zelazny prefaces each of the lengthy chapters of his work with quotations from sacred writings (37). Zelazny's impressive talents as an inventive writer are most apparent when he unites ancient and modern myths so that they complement each other (38). The bloody struggle of the faction led by Sam (the 'Accelerationists') against the Deicrats has a familiar ring:

'If we win, Siddhartha, toppling the Celestial City, freeing man for industrial progress, still there will be opposition. Nirriti, who has waited all these centuries for the passing of the gods, will have to be fought and beaten himself...

Lord of Light, p.205

Nirriti turns out to be one of the most ghoulish figures of the novel. Like Sam and the Gods, he is one of the First, but his primary attribute is indeed a strange one, for Nirriti is in fact another Mardok, a Frankenstein who creates zombie warriors to advance his own cause, the overthrow of the Deicrats and the religion they have established. Yet he and Sam are poles apart. Nirriti, the First expedition's chaplain, is driven by his calling, and would see the

"true" faith - Christianity - instituted at any cost. Ironically, it is only as a result of the fanatic's struggle against the deicrats that the Accelerationists finally manage, after a fifty years' conflict, to overthrow the despots, resulting in the emancipation of the people and the unshackling of knowledge and technology to play a part in instituting a more humane social order. It is a humanistic victory nonetheless, for Nirriti and his soulless legions are annihilated in breaking the power of the 'Gods' he despises, ultimately leaving the victory with the libertarians. The conflict consists of vast battles, full of carnage and resulting in inconclusive, usually pyrrhic victories. However, before Roberts's closing argument in Pavane (that the Church's oppression prevented slaughter by keeping science from the people) attracts any spurious merit by default, it should be recalled that Zelazny's terrible epic battles are paper ones of only allegorical significance, whereas Roberts's 'Court of Spiritual Welfare' has a real counterpart, which itself failed to suppress knowledge 'until men would be ready for it', though its persistent efforts cost many lives.

While there is much more in this award-winning novel which invites discussion, in the present context the focus necessarily must be upon how adroitly the author wove ancient Upanishad and modern symbolism together to produce a compelling allegory of aspiration and dogmatic religious oppression. Hypocrisy and oppression may not be the most striking aspect of Hinduism, which after all has not quite had the centralised role of the Medieval Christian Church and some of its Protestant offspring, but in most other respects - above all in that of religious elitism, there called 'election' and here 'caste' - it is just as open to cynical exploitation as these others. Hinduism

offers its own counterparts to those of Western beliefs which have so dominated the works already discussed in this study, there being, for instance, enlightenment for knowledge, nirvana for transcendental attainment, karmic burdens to be expiated, and so on. Fittingly, it is Buddhism, rather than any Western Christian creed, which here provides the "liberation theology" used to counter the autocratic Brahmanism adopted by the First. Ultimately, though, even Buddhism is little more than a religious means to a humane end, as Sam indicates in rejecting emphatically the recognition "'Buddha'" which the faithful would have conferred on him, though he is also known passim as "'Siddhartha.'" Thus, in Lord of Light, no religion - Hindu, Buddhist or Christian - contributes to the theme conventionally, as its actual counterpart might, a clear confirmation that they are used as sources of myth and images in telling a story wherein aspiration is more highly valued than dogma or orthodox religious conviction. One feels that there is also at least a hint of Wellsian religious utilitarianism present - "fashion the religion for yourselves which will help you get on", as it were - for Sam's kind of Buddhism has little of the gentle tranquillity of real Buddhism; rather, it is an instrument of social reform, a 'smokescreen for his actions,' as Joseph V. Francavilla has put it(39).

With their technical control of the wholly commercialized process of spirit (atman) transfer from old body to new, the Deicrats may now extend their hegemony completely. As Jan explains to Sam, not even one's thoughts (Winston Smith's last resort in another, older book) are wholly secure:

The old religion is not only the religion - it is the revealed, enforced and frighteningly demonstrable religion. But don't think that last part too loudly. About a dozen years ago the Council authorized the use of psych-probes on

those who were up for renewal. This was right after the Accelerationist-Deicrat split, when the Holy Coalition squeezed out the tech boys and kept right on squeezing. The simplest solution was to outlive the problem. The Temple crowd then made a deal with the body-sellers, customers were brain-probed and Accelerationists refused renewal, or... well..simple as that. There aren't too many Accelerationists now. But that was only the beginning. The god party was quick to realize that therein lay the way of power. Having your brains scanned has become a standard procedure, just prior to transfer. The body merchants are become the Masters of Karma, and a part of the Temple structure. They read over your past life, weigh the Karma, and determine your life yet to come. It's a perfect way of maintaining the caste system and ensuring Deicratic control. By the way, most of our old acquaintances are in it up to their halos.'

'God!' said Sam.

'Plural,' Jan corrected. 'They've always been considered gods, with their Aspects and Attributes, but they've made it awfully official now. And anyone who happens to be among the first had bloody well better be sure whether he wants quick deification or the pyre when he walks into the Hall of Karma these days.'

Lord of Light, pp.52-53

This factitious theocracy, however outwardly exotic, follows the familiar pattern: the divine attributes of the Hindu pantheon the crew have assumed are furnished by technology in a war between humanity and their 'gods', who are more Dionysian than, for instance, Wells's Apollonian Utopians. Moreover, though the religious morality of this Eastern faith is manifestly different from that of Christianity, its social role has been presented in significantly similar terms, and not just because the First brought occidental values with them in their ship, 'The Star of India'. The religious ethic and scriptures of this world are effectively another, colourful version of Kingsley's 'constable's handbook.'

This observation begs the question, however, of whether this occurs because all the main religions of the world are homologous, or because Zelazny is taking up, consciously or not, an established line of generic scepticism about the social role of religions, and about man's special propensity to worship. Both are, one suspects, to an

extent the correct interpretations of his outlook - assuming, of course, that he is not simply writing foma to earn a living, but is more deeply engaged in his own epic:

Though the whole book shows the Hindu Gods manipulating people, events, and demons, Sam is "a man of destiny," as Yama calls him, who, after a long struggle, seems to have graduated from being a pawn in someone else's game to a king in a game of his own devising.

Again, Sam does not believe in his sermons, his Buddhism, or his own godhood. He repeatedly rejects the idea that he is Buddha, and yet is worshipped by men as such.

40.

Indeed, one special feature of Lord of Light is the distinction Zelazny makes between ambition and aspiration. Before leaving this colourful novel, though, it is certainly worth weighing up how he presents the respective characteristics of man-as-god, and man-as-hubrist. Here Yama is trying to, in Milton's words, 'justify the ways of God to men':

'You are wrong, Sam. Godhood is more than a name. It is a condition of being. One does not achieve it merely by being immortal, for even the lowliest laborer in the fields may achieve continuity of existence. Is it then the conditioning of an Aspect? No. Any competent hypnotist can play games with the self-image. Is it the raising up of an attribute? Of course not. I can design machines more powerful and accurate than any faculty a man may cultivate. Being a god is the quality of being able to be yourself to such an extent that your passions correspond with the forces of the universe, so that those who look upon you know this without hearing your name spoken. Some ancient poet said that the world is full of echoes and correspondences. Another wrote a long poem of an inferno, wherein each man suffered a torture which coincided in nature with those forces which had ruled his life. Being a god is being able to recognize within one's self these things that are important, and then strike the single note that brings them into alignment with everything else that exists. Then, beyond morals or logic or esthetics, one is wind or fire, the sea, the mountains, rain, the sun or the stars, the flight of an arrow, the end of a day, the clasp of love. One rules through one's ruling passion. Those who look upon gods then say, without even knowing their names, "He is Fire. She is Dance. He is Destruction. She is Love." So, to reply to your statement, they do not call themselves gods. Everyone else does, though, everyone who beholds them.'

Lord of Light, p.145

However inspired and impassioned Yama's theme, Sam is not prepared to accept this answer to what Wells saw as the paradox of human godhood, replying scornfully: "'So they play that on their fascist banjos, eh?'" The amoral 'Gods' of the pantheon determine the morals and circumscribe the aspirations of their caste inferiors. Thus the elitism of Wellsian logical positivism, implicitly rejected by Bokonon, is just as speedily dismissed for its shallowness and arrogance by Sam.

In the novel's action, the gods maintain power by concentrating on some part of themselves and clinging to it forever, world without end, but in doing so they become so wrapped up in themselves as they were that they cannot cope with the present. Trying to preserve a static, peaceful society, they organize increasingly cataclysmic battles. Their accomplishment, finally, is folly. Sam does not take himself so seriously - except when he is overcome by hubris during the battle for Keenset - but he practices more wisdom. He is not sure exactly who he is or what he can do; however, he is free to improvise brilliantly on new opportunities and new abilities he finds in himself. The novel's overall action demonstrates the deadly sterility of refusing to change, and the ultimate viability of accepting natural growth. Sam's way finally works.

41.

Why, then, does Sam value his humanity more than Yama's counterfeit godhood? Not merely because he knows how contrived that status is; for he also actively prefers the frustrations as well as the triumphs of authentic human experience:

'It is because I am a man who occasionally aspires to things beyond the belly and the phallus. I am not the saint the Buddhists think me to be, and I am not the hero out of legend. I am a man who knows much fear, and who occasionally feels guilt. Mainly, though, I am a man who has set out to do a thing, and you are now blocking my way. Thus you inherit my curse - whether I win or whether I lose now, Taraka, your destiny has already been altered. This is the curse of the Buddha - you will never be the same as once you were.'

Lord of Light, p.125

And again:

'...all men have within them both that which is dark and that which is light. A man is a thing of many divisions, not a pure, clear flame such as you once were. His intellect often wars with his emotions, his will with his desires...his ideals are at odds with his environment, and if he follows

them, he knows keenly the loss of that which was old, but if he does not follow them, he feels the pain of having forsaken a new and noble dream. Whatever he does represents both a gain and a loss, an arrival and departure. Always he mourns that which is gone and fears some part of that which is new. Reason opposes tradition. Emotions oppose the restrictions his fellow men lay upon him. Always, from the friction of these things, there arises the thing you called the curse of man and mocked - guilt!

Lord of Light, p.127

Sam, as the reincarnation of Siddartha the Enlightened One, speaks with authority. In many respects a sceptical sort of Ransom, Lewis's allegorical Christian leader, Sam's personal fate is of teleological significance because he strives to change Man, to promote a general emancipation and the fuller development of humanity. Technophilic self-transcendence is not genuine metempsychosis, but only allows one some of the prerogatives of divinity, wielding power - however responsibly - not being synonymous with godhood. Zelazny clearly proves how well he appreciates the essential flaw in the anti-humanistic obsession with power of Victor Frankenstein, Mardok, and their unscrupulous successors, these selfish, decadent 'gods' he invented for Lord of Light. Mahasamatman's humanistic sensibility attracts Zelazny's fullest commitment:

Zelazny's flawed protagonists nevertheless exemplify what is noble, admirable and divine in man. Zelazny's gods and godlike heroes vastly extend the range of experiences and the potential of humanity; Zelazny is defining 'human' in terms of the 'divine,' showing the qualities of gods that can be imparted to man.

42.

Consequently, Zelazny preserves the possibility of genuine human self-transcendence (which for many humanists carries the force of an ethical commitment) for in his terms "aspiration", as Sam's rejection of 'Godhood' shows, is not the same as "ambition". The role of an enlightened one is the subject common to the fiction which falls to be discussed next.

The Prophet of Futility and the Royal Faustus.

Vonnegut offers the reader of Cat's Cradle a Bokonist warning that: 'Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either.' Vonnegut's is not by any means an unique view: other authors have used an ironic denouement to expose the credulity of those committed to any such deceitful beliefs, inviting the reader to share the authorial contempt or derision. Of course, Vonnegut's ironic caveat begs an important question: in what way can a religion be 'useful'? Vonnegut's consistent response - in any way or none at all - takes us little further forward. Zelazny offers a humanistic exploitation of religion; in Dune, Herbert follows Heinlein's lead, easily surpasses the very limited achievement of Revolt in 2100, and sweeps forward into the avant garde domain of metempsychotic fiction which is explored in the next chapter. Dune can be seen as a transitional work which passes from the conventional and well-worn into more speculative themes. On the other hand, The Sirens of Titan can be seen as a sophisticated parody of the sort of science fiction of which Dune is widely held to be the unsurpassed exemplar(43).

The Sirens of Titan(1959), like Cat's Cradle, is imbued with Vonnegut's perceptive scepticism. Although the earlier novel is the slighter of the two(44), it is also more polemical about organized religion and the value attached to revealed truth by the devout. In this, his second novel, Vonnegut reveals the beginnings of his disaffection with science fiction despite the success of Player Piano. More importantly, in The Sirens of Titan Vonnegut seems to hold out the admittedly tenuous hope (quite overlooked in most critical discussions of this book) that human nature can be reformed, which

contrasts sharply with the bleak nihilism he would later present in Cat's Cradle.

By setting The Sirens of Titan against the other two novels its most interesting features can be seen. It differs from the others in being slightly less of an exercise in satiric denunciation of vain hope. In Player Piano Vonnegut offers no hint of hope for the reformation of the human sensibility - rebellion fails because the mechanisation of human life has been allowed to advance to the point of no return, and the rebels, not knowing what to do with their meagre opportunity, surrender. Similarly, Cat's Cradle ends with a frozen world and the demise of a human race long since dead in a moral sense after vesting all their hope and faith in an inscrutable and hence quite notional divine being who is not Providential. Vonnegut's God, who is the opposite of Verne's, does not intervene to save Mankind from the consequences of ambition, natural carelessness and irresponsibility. Not unexpectedly, much the same themes run through The Sirens of Titan, but there is also the deceptive prospect of a different order of things:

"To that end, devoutly to be wished," said Rumfoord, "I bring you word of a new religion that can be received enthusiastically in every corner of every Earthling heart.

"National borders," said Rumfoord, "will disappear.

"The lust for war," said Rumfoord, "will die.

"The name of the new religion," said Rumfoord, "is The Church of God the Utterly Indifferent.

"The flag of that church will be blue and gold," said Rumfoord. "These words will be written on that flag in gold letters on a blue field: Take Care of the People, and God Almighty Will Take Care of Himself.

"The two chief teachings of this religion are these," said Rumfoord: "Puny man can do nothing at all to help or please God Almighty, and Luck is not the hand of God.

The Sirens of Titan, p.128

Rumfoord goes on to promote this new creed in the unmistakeable language of modern advertising copy - "Why should you believe in

this religion, rather than any other? You should believe in it because I, as head of this religion, can work miracles, and the head of no other religion can. What miracles can I work? I can work the miracle of predicting, with absolute accuracy, the things that the future will bring.'" Alas for Rumfoord and his victims, he is wrong.

Like Doctor Faustus, Niles Winston Rumfoord has enjoyed everything mundane life can offer, and has grown weary of his privileges. Seeking a new challenge, he embarks on a foolhardy space voyage with his dog Kazak. Vonnegut does not stress the apostate nature of Rumfoord's venture, explaining it instead in terms of 'pure courage,' 'style' and 'gallantry.' This is a central point, for Rumfoord's daring is Promethean rather than Faustian. In the universe which Vonnegut portrays in The Sirens of Titan, God is not so much absent as indifferent or out of the picture, and people are induced to adopt Rumfoord as a surrogate. Malachi Constant's cherished notion that 'someone up there likes me' (which Rumfoord condescendingly calls 'charming') is thoroughly and brutally exploded in the novel. The familiar pattern of divine vengeance inflicted upon an hubristic would-be usurper - Rumfoord being the novel's best candidate for this dubious distinction - is not employed by Vonnegut in an immediately recognizable way. The pattern is made more complex by Vonnegut's insistence that God is indifferent to human actions. Rumfoord is a sort of sceptical Prometheus whose ambiguous gift to mankind is spiritual rather than technological. Moreover, his audacious expropriation of divine prerogatives indicate that, consciously structured or not, the pattern of Rumfoord's story is Promethean however anti-heroic his protagonist is made to seem.

Kazak and Rumfoord become trapped in a spatio-temporal anomaly

(a 'chrono-synclastic infundibulum' or "'time-funnel'"), and must resign themselves to traversing the continuum of space-time, returning only briefly and rarely to their native locus. During this involuntary journeying back and forth through infinity Rumfoord visits Titan and there encounters Salo, a Tralfamadorian messenger who supplies him with a quantity of 'Universal Will to Become.' Thus equipped, Rumfoord may do anything he pleases. Unlike Faustus, Rumfoord seems determined to use this 'UWIB' benevolently. Also, all Salo wants of Rumfoord is friendship while he waits to resume his interrupted journey; but while there may not be a Mephistophelean contract in the background, Rumfoord is himself destined to be the victim of a truly cosmic irony.

Rumfoord believes that through having been 'chrono-synclastically infundibulated' he has actually become quasi-divine, and unique knowledge and power is his to wield. His cynical manipulation of "lesser" mortals marks him as an anti-hero. He establishes 'The Church of God the Utterly Indifferent,' exploiting his understanding of the fore-ordained future to earn himself the kudos of godhood, which his religion-ridden sublunary fellows readily accord him in recognition of his manifest ability to foretell the future. For all that Vonnegut insists that Rumfoord is only a showman, 'passionately fond of great spectacles' and that 'he never gave in to the temptation to declare himself God or something a whole lot like God' (p.169), he relishes the role and seems as much an omnipotent character as Orwell's O'Brien.

Vonnegut figuratively belittles religious belief by including vivid if whimsical sketches of Rumfoord's cult. He also caricatures a more conventional American creed (the Love Crusade led by the Rev.

Bobby Denton); and since Rumfoord himself (a man of only 'very moderate greatness' as Vonnegut calls him at one point) is allowed to play God, Vonnegut satirizes credulous spirituality. Ironically, Rumfoord is not in fact a deity, sardonic or otherwise, for even he is as helpless to change the course of events as anyone else. However, he is sure that he knows what is happening, and why, and therefore is the beneficiary of an uniquely complete perspective of everything that happens:

"I can read your mind, you know," said Rumfoord.

"Can you?" said Constant humbly.

"Easiest thing in the world," said Rumfoord. His eyes twinkled. "You're not a bad sort, you know," he said, "particularly when you forget who you are." He touched Constant lightly on the arm. It was a politician's gesture - a vulgar public gesture by a man who in private, among his own kind, would take wincing pains never to touch anyone.

"If it's really so important to you, at this stage of our relationship, to feel superior to me in some way," he said to Constant pleasantly, "think of this: You can reproduce and I cannot.

The Sirens of Titan, p.17

Nor is Rumfoord an agonized or sacrificial Redeemer, for his own suffering is, if anything, merely that of corporeal separation from a world he has symbolically rejected with a journey into space. Rather, he is a prophet of the futility of human theosophy who facilitates the unfolding of the course of events and exploits the guilt and suffering of others - Vonnegut describes him as being 'genially willing to shed the blood of others'- in order to effect an agnostic but spiritual reformation of Man, so that "'Earthlings might at last become one people - joyful, fraternal, and proud.'"(p.127) Of such importance is this justification of Rumfoord's motives that Vonnegut virtually spells it out in explaining why he has assembled and then had destroyed his pathetic army of Martian invaders (Earth's casualties 461 killed, 223 wounded and 216 missing; Martian casualties

149,315 killed, 446 wounded, 11 captured, and 46,634 missing).

It was Rumfoord's intention that Mars should lose the war - that Mars should lose it foolishly and horribly. As a seer of the future, Rumfoord knew for certain that this would be the case - and he was content.

He wished to change the World for the better by means of the great and unforgettable suicide of Mars.

As he says in his Pocket History of Mars: "Any man who would change the World in a significant way must have showmanship, a genial willingness to shed other people's blood, and a plausible new religion to introduce during the brief period of repentance and horror that usually follows bloodshed.

"Every failure of Earth leadership has been traceable to a lack on the part of the leader," says Rumfoord, "of at least one of these three things."

"Enough of these fizzles of leadership, in which millions die for nothing or less!" says Rumfoord. "Let us have, for a change, a magnificently-led few who die for a great deal."

The Sirens of Titan, p.124

Rumfoord's consistent response to grief is to shrug it off. In his god-game, he is the supreme player. None of his millions of pawns have much, if any, choice. Of course, he does have an overall game-plan, which is revealed towards the end of the novel in a sort of early denouement in which he holds up a mirror for Man to see himself as he really is. The occasion Rumfoord chooses for this self-righteous revelation is the return of Unk, the Space Wanderer (alias Malachi Constant), which fulfills his main prediction. The Job of the story, Malachi Constant is reduced from being a fortunate man whose unflinching luck has brought him enormous wealth and a reprehensible lifestyle to symbol for the worst excesses of hedonism, greed and moral corruption. Rumfoord himself attends to ensure that the moralitas of his living parable - 'When Rumfoord staged a passion play, he used nothing but real people in real hells.' (p.168) - is not lost on those present, and delivers an authoritative sermon in which he denounces Constant vehemently before deporting him to Titan to live out his remaining years:

"We are disgusted by Malachi Constant," said Winston Niles Rumfoord up in his treetop, "because he used the fantastic fruits of his fantastic good luck to finance an unending demonstration that man is a pig. He wallowed in sycophants. He wallowed in worthless women. He wallowed in lascivious entertainments and alcohol and drugs. He wallowed in every known form of voluptuous turpitude.

"At the height of his good luck, Malachi Constant was worth more than the states of Utah and North Dakota combined. Yet, I daresay, his moral worth was not that of the most corrupt little fieldmouse in either state.

"We are angered by Malachi Constant," said Rumfoord up in his treetop, "because he did nothing unselfish or imaginative with his billions. He was as benevolent as Marie Antoinette, as creative as a professor of cosmetology in an embalming college.

"We hate Malachi Constant," said Rumfoord up in his treetop, "because he accepted the fantastic fruits of his fantastic good luck without a qualm, as though luck were the hand of God. To us of the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent, there is nothing more cruel, more dangerous, more blasphemous than a man can do than to believe that - that luck, good or bad, is the hand of God!

"Luck, good or bad," said Rumfoord up in his treetop, "is not the hand of God.

"Luck," said Rumfoord up in his treetop, "is the way the wind swirls and the dust settles eons after God has passed by.

The Sirens of Titan, p.177

Through his protracted suffering, Malachi Constant has been taught by Rumfoord, the sardonic master of ceremonies, that accidents, not Providence, have shaped his life. The corollary is that people bear an inescapable burden of responsibility for their actions which they may not avoid by attributing everything to the hand of God. Yet characters like Constant and Bee alias Beatrice have experiences which are not foreordained by Rumfoord, such as when Unk finds Chrono almost as soon as he decides to abscond from Mars with him and his mother. Rumfoord does not ordain every event, and though he tries to stage-manage things to promote the moral regeneration of mankind, he cannot control everything. Luck, accident or Providence plays its part, whatever he says; when Bee and Chrono are the only survivors of their crashed assault ship, who or what sequence of accidents has preserved them?

The regenerative moral standards and vision are Rumfoord's, and are essentially conservative: he condemns hedonistic corruption and by implication promotes idealistic ("imaginative") unselfishness. Being wealthy (as Rumfoord himself was while earthbound) is not necessarily offensive, if the power the money represents is not squandered and somehow contributes to the common good. Of course, this moral perspective is distinctively bourgeois, reflecting as it does the "common-sensical" ethics of liberal capitalist Middle America. Vonnegut exposes Rumfoord's ideals by weaving around them a contrasting narrative imbued with post-modernist uncertainties about the existence of God, the worth of religion, the notion that one may act in accordance with conscience and of one's own free will, the sanctity of the individual, the corporate threat of the technological society, and even, as will be noted later, the very nature and purpose of human existence. Rumfoord's sublime self-assurance is itself ill-founded. Yet however sceptical and iconoclastic Vonnegut's opinions may seem, they belie a profound commitment to commonplace moral standards rather than the positivist, relativistic moral perspective of Wells, Skinner et al.

A ritual scapegoat, Constant is deported to Titan in an inverted parody of the Ascension of Christ so that the whole world may be freed from sin:

"In a few minutes, Mr.Constant," said Rumfoord up in his treetop, "you are going to walk down the catwalks and ramps to that long golden ladder, and you are going to climb that ladder, and you are going to get into that space ship, and you are going to fly away to Titan, a warm and fecund moon of Saturn. You will live there in safety and comfort, but in exile from your native Earth.

"You are going to do this voluntarily, Mr.Constant, so that the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent can have a drama of dignified self-sacrifice to remember and ponder through all time.

"We will imagine, to our spiritual satisfaction," said Rumfoord up his treetop, "that you are taking all mistaken ideas about the meaning of luck, all misused wealth and power, and all disgusting pastimes with you."

The Sirens of Titan, pp.179-180.

Rumfoord is completing his scheme of spiritual renaissance by publicly absolving the whole human race of the burden of wrongdoing and allowing every believer a fresh start. Of course, this act is no more genuine than the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent which was merely an instrument of social and personal reformation; but within the terms of Vonnegut's plot and perverse premises - 'All persons, places, and events in this book are real' (prefatory Dedication, p.6) - it is consistent, satisfying, and in complete accord with his line that all religions and theosophy are factitious, invented in response to the spiritual propensity of consciousness.

Things do not go wholly Rumfoord's way, however. The first hint that something is seriously going wrong with his plans is when Beatrice, the society wife he rejected, condemns him and his Church roundly before leaving with Malachi and their son Chrono for Titan.

"I believe everything you say about me is true, since you so seldom lie. But when my son and I walk together to that ladder and climb it, we will not be doing it for you, or for your silly crowd. We will be doing it for ourselves - and we will be proving to ourselves and anybody who wants to watch that we aren't afraid of anything. Our hearts won't be breaking when we leave this planet. It disgusts us as much as we, under your guidance, disgust it.

"I do not recall the old days," said Beatrice, "when I was mistress of this estate, when I could not stand to do anything or to have anything done to me. But I loved myself the instant you told me I'd been that way. The human race is a scummy thing, and so is Earth, and so are you."

The Sirens of Titan, pp.184-185.

Her defiance is a moral challenge. Once an emblem of affluent decadence, of spiritual emptiness, her misanthropic declaration that everything about the world is "'scummy'" reflects the extent of her suffering on Mars and elsewhere which Rumfoord orchestrated. Her fate

at his hands shows that his motives are ambiguous; one inference is that revenge plays a part in his vendetta against her. He inflicts joyless sexual experience on her in revenge for her hauteur and, more damningly, his own inadequacy. Rumfoord has even personally arranged for Malachi Constant to cuckold him as a vengeful rebuke for Beatrice and the child of that maliciously-motivated union provides the key to Rumfoord's own moral lesson. Ironically, the most serious flaw in his scheme is about to overwhelm his entire arrogant strategy. When Rumfoord returns to Titan, Salo, the stranded interstellar traveller, unwittingly drops a bombshell.

Tralfamadorians usually communicate with one another by telepathy, but on a voyage such as Salo's they must adopt another method. They send "certain impulses from the Universal Will to Become" echoing through "the vaulted architecture of the Universe with about three times the speed of light." The apparatus required is literally monumental, and constitutes an authorial joke on human creativity and endeavour:

The meaning of Stonehenge in Tralfamadorian, when viewed from above is: "Replacement part being rushed with all possible speed."

Stonehenge wasn't the only message old Salo had received.

There had been four others, all of them written on Earth.

The Great Wall of China means in Tralfamadorian, when viewed from above: "Be patient. We haven't forgotten about you."

The Golden House of the Roman Emperor Nero meant: "We are doing the best we can."

The meaning of the Moscow Kremlin when it was first walled was: "You will be on your way before you know it."

The meaning of the Palace of the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, is: "Pack up your things and be ready to leave at short notice."

The Sirens of Titan, p.190

All of Rumfoord's high-handed, Machiavellian manipulation is, in these terms, merely the last stage in the process of rushing Salo the spare he needs. His Promethean efforts, then, and the impulses which

inspired them - in common with the whole social history of Mankind - have been in response to esoteric directions designed to produce and deliver the component for Salo's vehicle. If like a Frankenstein he has sought to reform mankind in his own (moral) likeness, this presumption has been rewarded with ironic success for even he has been merely a pawn, a link in a chain of consequences rather than accidents. As it turns out, the final link in that chain is Chrono.

Chrono's good luck piece is the spare part for the spaceship which will allow Salo to continue his journey to deliver the Tralfamadorian message "Greetings". Rumfoord realizes bitterly that he himself has been used, and through him, everyone else. So much for his "humane" idealism, his conviction that some mere hundreds of thousands of his earthbound fellows could be sacrificed to show Mankind the error of their selfish ways. The whole story has demonstrated the futility of trying to understand one's fate:

...the discovery that conventional human identity is a form of cultural imprisonment may be as harrowing for the alien mind as it is for those most directly concerned. ...Kurt Vonnegut in The Sirens of Titan(1959) shows both humans and aliens realising that their supposed identity is a form of conditioning, a literal 'alienation' that has been programmed into them for reasons unknown. Winston Niles Rumfoord disappears after announcing that the goal of human history has been the production of a tiny spare part for a Tralfamadorian spaceship. When Salo, the Tralfamadorian, discovers that the message his grounded spaceship is trying to deliver consists of the one word 'Greetings', he commits suicide. ...In Vonnegut...the viewpoint of the 'alien' is hard to distinguish from that of an alienated humanity.

45.

Vonnegut goes on to suggest that two important developments have occurred. Salo, the mechanical alien, is so moved by Rumfoord's imminent dissolution that he becomes "humanised" and breaks his undertaking not to read the message he carries: "The machine is no longer a machine... This machine's contacts are corroded, his

bearings fouled, his circuits shorted, and his gears stripped. His mind buzzes and pops like the mind of an Earthling - fizzes and overheats with thoughts of love, honour, dignity, rights, accomplishment, integrity, independence" The other twist emerges from Rumfoord's mawkish last testament:

"All I can say is that I have tried to do my best to do good for my native Earth while serving the irresistible wishes of Tralfamadore. Perhaps, now that the part has been delivered to the Tralfamadorian messenger, Tralfamadore will leave the Solar System alone. Perhaps Earthlings will now be free to develop and follow their own inclinations, as they have not been free to do for thousands of years. The wonder is that they have been able to make as much sense as they have."

The Sirens of Titan, p.208.

Rumfoord's attachment to pretending always to have been acting from the highest moral imperatives is exposed as hypocrisy if his role as an autocratic, unsympathetic manipulator is seen in the light of his own response to Salo's revelation. He thinks himself a Promethean provider of self-knowledge to his mundane fellows through the medium of his wholly artificial creed, but Rumfoord's spiritual utopia is as flawed as its architect was fallible. He can forgive himself his self-serving vanity since he considers himself to be the greatest sceptic in the human universe, and believes his 'gift' is worth the suffering it demands and causes. In still striving to sound supernal, he reveals that his vanity is undiminished; he also feels aggrieved, betrayed - unlike Malachi and Beatrice, he has learned nothing. They prove that human nature is capable of change and growth; Rumfoord suggests its immaturity and potential excesses. Seeing our predicament as a tendency to hubristic defiance and self-aggrandizement, Vonnegut's hope for mankind subsists in our recognition of modest moral principles whose merit is self-evident and axiomatic, like Malachi Constant's perception that "a purpose of human life, no

matter who is controlling it, is to love whoever is around to be loved." (p.220) God may seem remote - even absent - but the universe has a transcendent redemptive principle, as Chrono (who does not have 'a sense of futility and disorder') seems to perceive as he stands among Salo's wreckage: 'Sooner or later, Chrono believed, the magical forces of the Universe would put everything back together again.' (p.211) Salo is reconstructed by Constant and in return eases his lonely death by returning him to Earth where he dies believing that he is going to join Beatrice in Paradise, freed from the crippling guilt of having killed his only friend Stony. Salo resumes his interrupted journey having thus performed a modest but important compassionate act which suggests, in a final symbolic refutation of Rumfoord's creed of petulant futility, the workings of Providence and a muted soteriological hope.

Rumfoord declared that, "Any man who would change the World in a significant way must have showmanship, a genial willingness to shed other people's blood, and a plausible new religion to introduce." All three elements of his formula can be found in Frank Herbert's Dune.

A factitious religion, again based upon the personality cult which develops around a charismatic figure is the central unifying principle of Dune. Paul Atreides keeps his major military resource, the ironically-named 'Fremen', under tight control by the inspirational use of his extraordinary personal abilities (he is, amongst other things, a "seer"), his superb technology, and his exploitation of their dependence upon a sacramental drug.

Even a superficial reading of this novel will reveal its humanistic themes and religious symbolisms. There can be little doubt about the centrality of religious themes in a work which includes an

appendix detailing the workings and structure of the factitious creed of the Fremmen. There is also a glossary which distinguishes between 'figh' and 'giudichar' as distinct types of religious lore; explains that the 'gom jabbar' is a 'death-alternative test of human awareness'; defines the 'Panoplia Propheticus' as 'the infectious superstitions used by the Bene Gesserit to exploit primitive regions'; and describes the eclectic scriptures of the future, 'The Orange Catholic Bible', thus:

...the 'Accumulated Book,' [is] the religious text produced by the Commission of Ecumenical Translators. It contains elements of most ancient religions, including the Maometh Saari, Mahayana Christianity, Zensunni Catholicism and Buddislamic traditions. Its supreme commandment is considered to be: 'Thou shalt not disfigure the soul.'

Dune, p.499.

Conceptually at least, the factitious religions of Dune parallell Monica's critique of Christianity as a 'syncretistic' creed in Moorcock's later Behold the Man: "'Christianity is just a new name for a conglomeration of old myths and philosophies. All the Gospels do is retell the sun myth and garble some of the ideas from the Greeks and Romans.'" Again like Moorcock's later hero, Atrides/Maud'dib is assailed by a sense of personal loss in assuming a messianic role, and his predicament and uncertainty are a major theme Herbert explores in the paradox this throws up. In fulfilling his destiny to become Maud'dib, Paul Atriedes will lose himself, for there is a high price to pay in giving the myth its own reality.

Monica argued that Christianity is, due to its eclectic provenance, a cultural phenomenon with little significance outside that context. Clearly some of the religions of Dune reflect such a sceptical view, as they are depicted as vehicles for propaganda intended to support the cynical manipulation of credulous people much

as the ministers of the Butler's musical banks swindle the worthy in Erewhon. Yet in Dune Herbert offers something more, no less than the story of how a charismatic leader becomes a messiah whose powers, unlike Glogauer's, are genuinely miraculous. Paul attains thereby the veneration and power which tempted - and quite eluded - Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein. Paul Atreides, alias Usul, alias Maud'Dib and the Kwisatz Haderach of the Bene Gesserit, is a royal Faustus whose highest ambitions are ultimately realized, but whose corrupting appetite for power grows apace with his emergence as a Fremen leader and their transfigured saviour. The question of his freedom of choice is complicated by the genetic configuration the Bene Gesserit have bred into him. Ambition is a predetermined feature of his character which sustains his noble struggle against the Harkonnens but also slowly corrupts his benevolent intentions into a drive for ever greater dominion.

Although Dune's main narrative describes how the personality cult surrounding a charismatic leader is transformed into a mystical religion, there is much else to this impressive novel besides an exploration of the nature of religion and its social role.

Against the sweeping backdrop of a future intergalactic human society riven by commercial rivalry, adapted men, a savage dynastic conflict and technological ruthlessness, the novel tells the story of how the only son of a noble house involved in a court vendetta emerges as the leader of the redoubtable Fremen of Arrakis. Herbert provides a host of apocryphal 'background' sources which relate the 'history' of the breeding programme of Bene Gesserit, chronicle the Fremen diaspora and refer to the defeat of the Imperium as if the story is historical rather than a projection of a fictive future, and

he includes factual encyclopaedia entries, appendices, and even an extensive glossary which support his narrative. Yet for all the intricacy of the main and subsidiary plots and themes of Dune, and the pains taken by Herbert to give seeming substance to his densely-crafted creation, Dune is a more straightforward novel than The Sirens of Titan. It is enthralling and epic in scale, but unlike Vonnegut's fiction Dune only has one area of sustained ambiguity - Paul's paranormal talents and the moral vision they generate - whereas ambiguity is the dominant principle of Vonnegut's stories.

The story opens as the Atriedes retainers and the family themselves are preparing to leave their native fief Caladan to take over control of Arrakis (otherwise known as Dune) from their powerful enemies, the Harkonnens, at the command of the Emperor. Paul, only son of Duke Leto Atriedes, has survived the Bene Gesserit test administered by the Reverend Mother and so has been established at the outset as a genuine human, possibly the Kwisatch Haderach the breeding programme of the B.G. has sought to create eugenically. After this test, young Paul feels a strange new 'sense of terrible purpose' awaken within him. Also, some of the Reverend Mother's revelations provoke him, for they offend his 'instinct for rightness,' but before long he himself will have been forced to take morally suspect measures in fighting to establish a proper foothold on Arrakis, 'the biggest mantrap in history,' as the Baron Vladimir Harkonnen gloatingly calls the planet the Atriedes must master.

The Harkonnens have prepared their killing ground well before reluctantly giving up their control of the lucrative trade in melange, the geriatric spice unique to Arrakis. Leto is an early casualty, the Caladanians are overthrown, and Paul and his B.G.

mother Jessica escape into the deserts controlled by the mysterious Fremen. Paul and Jessica have been reduced to the status of refugees, but Herbert depicts in the second book of Dune how they are trained by the Fremen to live and fight in the desert. Paul possesses a prescient faculty which allows him to see the future and plan accordingly (much as Rumfoord does in The Sirens of Titan), but he cannot muster Rumfoord's easy assuredness because his visions are cryptic, dark and violent, filled with the shadow of jihad - fanatic, holy war:

'Now, what name of manhood do you choose for us to call you openly?' Stilgar asked.

Paul glanced at his mother, back to Stilgar. Bits and pieces of this moment registered on his prescient memory, but he felt the differences as though they were physical, a pressure forcing him through the narrow door of the present.

'How do you call among you the little mouse, the mouse that jumps?' Paul asked, remembering the pop-hop of motion at Tuono Basin. He illustrated with one hand.

A chuckle sounded through the troop.

'We call that one maud'dib,' Stilgar said.

Jessica gasped. It was the name Paul had told her, saying that the Fremen would accept them and call him thus. She felt a sudden fear of her son and for him.

Paul swallowed. He felt that he played a part already played over countless times in his mind...yet... there were differences. He could see himself perched on a dizzying summit, having experienced much and possessed of a profound store of knowledge, but all around him was abyss.

And again he remembered the vision of fanatic legions following the green and black banner of the Atreides, pillaging and burning in the name of their prophet Maud'Dib.

That must not happen, he told himself.

Dune, p.292

These visions haunt and terrify Paul, but his terror is not purely personal. Again and again he resolves that they must never come to pass, but he does not know how he can prevent his awful prescient dreams becoming a hideous reality.

Two things, apart from their independence and their dignity, are of paramount importance to Fremen: water and the geriatric spice melange, which is produced by the giant sand-worms of Dune. These are

brought together in a sacred ritual, which gives Jessica an opportunity to win acceptance from the Fremen for herself, her unborn daughter, and Paul. By drowning an immature sandworm in the most precious substance on Arrakis, water, the native tribespeople are able to acquire a special form of melange. This liquor is the basis of a prized drug which engenders a sense of mutuality throughout the whole tribe, but in the raw form the drug is quite toxic. It can only be converted by a Reverend Mother's conscious metabolic restructuring. Jessica, herself a Bene Gesserit adept, is more or less compelled to attempt the conversion of the spice liquor because the tribe's Reverend Mother is on the point of dying. What happens takes Jessica utterly aback:

This is a drug they feed me, Jessica told herself.

But it was unlike any other drug of her experience, and Bene Gesserit training included the taste of many drugs.

Chani's features were so clear, as though outlined in light.

A drug.

Whirling silence settled around Jessica. Every fibre of her body accepted the fact that something profound had happened to it. She felt that she was a conscious mote, smaller than any subatomic particle, yet capable of motion, and of sensing her surroundings. Like an abrupt revelation - the curtains whipped away - she realized she had become aware of a psychokinesthetic extension of herself. She was the mote, yet not the mote.

The cavern remained around her - the people. She sensed them: Paul, Chani, Stilgar, the Reverend Mother Ramallo.

Reverend Mother!

At the school there had been rumours that some did not survive the Reverend Mother ordeal, that the drug took them.

Jessica focused her attention on the Reverend Mother Ramallo, aware now that all this was happening in a frozen instant of time - suspended time for her alone.

Why is time suspended? she asked herself. She stared at the frozen expressions around her, seeing a dust mote above Chani's head, stopped there.

Waiting.

The answer to this instant came like an explosion in her consciousness: her personal time was suspended to save her life.

She focused on the psychokinesthetic extension of herself, looking within, and was confronted immediately with a cellular core, a pit of blackness from which she recoiled.

That is the place where we cannot look, she thought. There is the place the Reverend Mothers are so reluctant to mention - the place where only a Kwisatz Haderach may look.

This realization returned a small measure of confidence, and again she ventured to focus on the psychokinesthetic extension, becoming a mote-self that searched within her for danger.

She found it within the drug she had swallowed.

The stuff was dancing particles within her, its motions so rapid that even frozen time could not stop them. Dancing particles. She began recognizing familiar structures, atomic linkages: a carbon atom here, helical wavering....a glucose molecule. An entire chain of molecules confronted her, and she recognized a protein ...a methyl-protein configuration.

Ah-h-h!

It was a soundless mental sigh within her as she saw the nature of the poison.

With her psychokinesthetic probing, she moved into it, shifted an oxygen mote, allowed another carbon mote to link, reattached a linkage of oxygen...hydrogen.

The change spread....faster and faster as the catalysed reaction opened its surface of contact.

The suspension of time relaxed its hold upon her, and she sensed motion. The tube spout from the sack was touched to her mouth - gently, collecting a drop of moisture.

Chani's taking the catalyst from my body to change the poison in that sack...

Dune, pp.336-337.

The mystical inwardness of this experience is balanced by the scientific description of this crucial chemical process. It is the hallmark of Herbert's style, one in which the mystical or spiritual and the technological or scientific are made to complement each other, and this adroit balancing is sustained throughout Dune, though the passage above is an outstanding example.

Jessica is now the Reverend Mother of the tribe - or, will be as soon as she discovers the new dimension to her being which has been imposed upon her without warning, for she is now the beneficiary and host to the consciousness of each Reverend Mother who has preceded her, 'Reverend Mothers within other Reverend Mothers until there seemed no end to them.' As is now apparent, transcendence and paranormal faculties such as prescience are the novel's main symbols of progressive humanism. These present most problems for Paul, whose

determination to avoid either enslaving the Fremmen or unleashing the Jihad is gradually eroded under the pressure of the events related in Book Three of Dune, 'The Prophet'. As it turns out, Paul does prove to be the Kwisatz Haderach, the unique male who can survive raw spice liquor and look into that place in the human mind where the Bene Gesserit cannot see. Having experienced a profound metempsychosis more disruptive even than Jessica's, he becomes a charismatic leader whose inner conflicts between power and responsibility and power and ambition may be discussed in the context of other explorations of the messianic predicament by contemporary science fiction authors reviewed in the final chapter.

REFERENCES and FOOTNOTES

1. Aldous HUXLEY, 'Religious Practices'; Chapter XIII of Ends and Means, Chatto and Windus, London, 1937.
Huxley also offers a penetrating comparative analysis of the psychology of religious ritual and observance to which further reference will be made.
2. Huxley, op.cit., p.225.
3. Robert P.WEEKS, 'Disentanglement as a Theme in H.G.Wells's Fiction,' from H.G.Wells: a Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Bernard BERGONZI; Prentice-Hall, Inc., New Jersey, 1976; p.29.
4. Howard FINK, 'The Shadow of Men Like Gods: Orwell's Coming Up for Air as Parody'; reprinted in H.G.Wells and Modern Science Fiction, edited by Darko SUVIN and Robert M.PHILMUS; Associated University Press, 1977.
5. This is one of Wells's least popular novels - even, it seems, among some of his most well-read critics. For instance, it does not rate a mention in Patrick PARRINDER'S general volume, Science Fiction, its Teaching and Criticism (Methuen & Co., London, 1980), but more disappointingly perhaps, while A Modern Utopia earns a brief discussion in John HUNTINGTON's otherwise comprehensive article on 'The Science Fiction of H.G.Wells' in Science Fiction, a Critical Guide (ed. Parrinder for Longman Group Ltd., London, 1979), Men Like Gods is quite overlooked. However, like Aldiss (see 6, below), whatever its shortcomings as entertainment (and he contrasts it unfavourably with Edgar Rice Burroughs's Pellucidar - though that depends upon what one looks for in judging the entertainment value of science fiction), I consider Men Like Gods to be a substantial, significant work, not least because of what it suggests about Wells's ideas about the future development of Homo sapiens, and the emergence of Homo superior.
6. Brian ALDISS observes:

In short, Wells' is a serious tale, enlivened by a little humour, whose main aim is to discuss entertainingly the ways in which mankind might improve himself and his lot. Whereas Burroughs' story is pure fantasy adventure which we do not for one minute take seriously.

The publishing history of the two novels is also interestingly in contrast. Wells' novel was published in hard-cover in 1923 and only achieved paperback publication forty-seven years later. Burroughs' novel was serialised in All-Story Cavalier Weekly in 1915, to appear in hard-cover in 1923, since when it has made many paperback appearances.

Burroughs, in this novel [Pellucidar], writes about as well as he can write, which is not well but very serviceably, while his fertile imagination pours out lavishly the details of his preposterous world. Wells appears constipated beside him.

Wells' novel is laborious, and, whatever it was in 1923, it takes an effort to read now, whereas Burroughs still slips down easily. With Burroughs you have (moderate) fun; Wells here gives off what Kingsley Amis categorises as 'a soporific whiff of left-wing crankiness.'

So why does one obstinately respect Wells the more? It must be because, whatever else his failings, he is trying to grapple with what he sees as the real world, whereas Burroughs - however expertly, and he can be a mesmerist - is dishing out daydreams.

Billion Year Spree, pp.178-179.
(abridged)

To which one might add, so is Wells, but of a most earnest, most demanding kind - a dream, indeed, which inspires Olaf Stapledon, Arthur C. Clarke, and countless others; and earns the condemnation of C.S. Lewis and other writers of his moral line such as Aldous Huxley:

Many years after writing Brave New World, Huxley told an interviewer for the Paris Review that his famous book had "started out as a parody of H.G. Wells's Men Like Gods, but gradually it got out of hand and turned into something quite different from what I'd originally intended."

Mark R. HILLEGAS, op.cit. (below), p.111.

7. However, Butler's attitude towards machines and industrialism approaches Wells's more sophisticated response more closely than is often generally thought:

The superficial resemblance between [Bulwer-Lytton's] The Coming Race (1871) and Erewhon (1872) made some readers surmise that Bulwer-Lytton had written both books, because Butler...also seemed to warn the Victorians about the terrible dangers of industrialism... He had no quarrel with machinery; Butler was not nervous about the future of industrialism. A comparison with William Morris's News from Nowhere (1890), which envisages the destruction of machinery, reveals the difference between Samuel Butler and a real enemy of the machine.

J.C. GARRETT, op.cit., p.30.

8. From George HAY's introduction to the Sphere Books 1976 edition, to which all subsequent page references are made.
9. Mark R. HILLEGAS, The Future as Nightmare: H.G. Wells and the Anti-utopians; Oxford University Press, New York, 1967; pp.79-80.
10. This description is from the excellent annotated bibliography of Wells's articles and lengthier works which is included in H.G. Wells and Modern Science Fiction, edited by Darko SUVIN and Robert M. PHILMUS; Associated University Presses, London, 1977.
11. Thomas MOLNAR, Utopia, the Perennial Heresy; Tom Stacey Ltd., London, 1971.

Potentially a most interesting study of the philosophical contexts of utopian thinking, Utopia, the Perennial Heresy eventually turns into a tract. Molnar's arguments are consistently and thoroughly orthodox, revealing him to be a most knowledgeable and adroit apologist of the Christian Right. His method subordinates every idea or social tenet he examines to his principle argument that ultimately all utopian thinking is derived from religious traditions or beliefs, and being unorthodox, is thus necessarily heretical per se. Consequently, the ideas of Marx and of Father Teilhard de Chardin founder for similar reasons. In effect, his position is ultra-conservative in that it will admit of no event apart from the Second Coming and Last Judgement which could be of any ontological significance whatever. If one may thereby infer a response to the fiction discussed in the present work, even devout speculative texts such as That Hideous Strength and A Canticle for Leibowitz are quite heretical, the former chiliastic, and the latter millenarist; though Mrs. Penny's devout tract, by the same token, would not be.

12. Early in Men Like Gods Barnstaple describes how the dead scientists' remains are disposed of in a simple ceremony which is carried out in a very unsentimental, quite matter-of-fact manner. A rather similar event occurs in Stapledon's Odd John, when one of the colony of Homo superior euthanizes his lover who had been grievously maimed by a shark. The narrative viewpoint, which expresses conventional horror at the starkness of what happens, is that of John Wainwright's usually self-effacing, human biographer:

During the following three weeks he nursed her constantly, refusing to allow anyone to relieve him. What with her almost severed leg and her mental disorder, she was in a desperate plight. Sometimes her true self seemed to re-appear, but more often she was either unconscious or maniacal. Shahin was hard put to it to restrain her from doing serious hurt to herself or to him. When at last she seemed to be recovering, Shahin was ecstatically delighted. Presently, however, she grew much worse. One morning, when I took his breakfast over to their cottage, he greeted me with a gaunt but placid face, and said, 'Her soul is torn too deeply now. She will never mend. This morning she knows me, and has reached out her hand for me. But she is not herself, she is frightened. And very soon she will not know me ever again. I will sit with my dear this morning as usual, but when she is asleep I must kill her.' Horrified, I rushed to fetch John. But when I had told him, he merely sighed and said, 'Shahin knows best.'

That afternoon, in the presence of the whole colony, Shahin carried the dead Hsi Mei to a great rock beside the harbour. Gently he laid her down, gazed at her for a moment with longing, then stepped back among his companions. Thereupon John, using the psycho-physical technique, caused a sufficient number of the atoms of her flesh to disintegrate, so that there was a violent outpouring of their pent-up energies, and her whole body was speedily consumed in a dazzling conflagration. When this was done,

Shahin passed his hand over his brow, and then went down with Kemi and Sigrid to the canoes. The rest of the day they spent repairing the nets. Shahin talked easily, even gaily, about May; and laughed, even, over the desperate battle of her spirit with the powers of darkness. And sometimes while he worked, he sang. I said to myself, 'Surely this is an island of monsters.'

Odd John, p.164

Ultimately it is this human reaction to supernormal attributes and utilitarian ethics which leads John and his group to take their own lives and destroy everything they had created on their island rather than allow any of it to fall into the hands of the rival Pacific Powers, whose representatives and emissaries are by turn titillated and outraged by the 'amorality' of the free-loving, commensalist, naked, multi-racial, telepathic 'children' they encounter there.

13. Anthony WEST, 'H.G.Wells'; reprinted in H.G.Wells, A Collection of Critical Essays edited by Bernard BERGONZI for Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1976; p.10.
14. Idem., p.20.
15. Idem., p.21.
16. For a concise but informative discussion of Stapledon's life and work, see Leslie G.Fiedler's Introduction to the 1978 New English Library paperback edition of Odd John.
17. Although this conventional Spenglerian idea sustains the novel's early pessimism, Aldiss has noted that the radically meta-physical but sceptical vision central to Star Maker reflects the changing scientific perspectives of the period.

Last and First Men is just slightly an atheist's tract, based largely on nineteenth-century thought... In Star Maker, the atheism has become a faith in itself, so that it inevitably approaches higher religion, which is bodied forth on a genuinely new twentieth-century perception of cosmology. It therefore marks a great step forward in Stapledon's art, the thought unfolding with little sense of strain through chapter after chapter. It is magnificent. It is almost unbearable.

Trillion Year Spree, p. 198.

The power of Stapledon's imagination, and those cogent scientific speculations which so delighted Aldiss, have rarely been equalled, still less surpassed.

18. With difficulty we came to understand the source of this strange equanimity. Spectators and victims alike were so absorbed in cosmological research, so conscious of the richness and potentiality of the cosmos, and above all so possessed by spiritual contemplation, that the destruction was seen, even by the victims themselves,

from the point of view which men would call divine. Their gay exaltation and their seeming frivolity were rooted in the fact that to them the personal life, and even the life and death of individual worlds, appeared chiefly as vital themes contributing to the life of the cosmos. From the cosmical point of view the disaster was after all a very small though poignant matter. Moreover, if by the sacrifice of another group of worlds, even of splendidly awakened worlds, greater insight could be attained into the insanity of the Mad Empires, the sacrifice was well worth while.

Star Maker, p.170.

19. Though Brian Aldiss does not deal with the religious, rather than theosophical, themes of Star Maker in any great depth, and indeed does not recognise this ultimate melding of essences as theophany, he does elucidate what it is about this disembodied cosmic communion which Christians would reject:

The scale increases. The "I" is now part of the cosmic mind, listening to muttered thoughts of nebulae as it goes in quest of the Star Maker itself. This Supreme Creator is eventually found, star-like and remote. It repulses the raptures of the cosmic mind. The created may love the creator but not vice versa, since that would merely be self-love of a kind. This emphasis that God is Not Love was bound to upset Christians such as C.S.Lewis.

Trillion Year Spree, p.197.

20. The version of Behold the Man which is featured here is not the novella for which Moorcock won the 1967 Nebula prize awarded by the Science Fiction Writers of America, but his later, augmented version which was published as a novel in 1969. In his Introduction to the 1976 edition of his shorter fiction, Moorcock's Book of Martyrs, he wrote: 'Some of the "martyrs" of these stories are primarily people who seek to impose a private vision on the world and who suffer accordingly. Some of them...end up creating an orthodoxy quite as extreme as anything they have attempted to overthrow. Both Karl Glogauer and Max File attempt to create a new reality. Both succeed...' (Ibid., p.8) In the novel version of Behold the Man, certain additions have been made which make Moorcock's line of argument even more explicit, as can be readily seen in the following extract from the novel in which the additions and emendations have been underlined:

Perhaps the greatest change in him was that for the first time in his life Karl Glogauer had forgotten about Karl Glogauer. For the first time in his life he was doing what he had always considered himself too weak to do and at the same time fulfilling his largest ambition, to achieve what he had hoped to achieve before he gave up psychiatry.

(orig. he was doing what he had always sought to do as a psychiatrist.)

There was something more, something that he recognized instinctively rather than intellectually. He now

had the opportunity to find at the same time both redemption and confirmation for his life up to the moment he had fled from John the Baptist in the desert.

But it was not his own life he would be leading now. He was bringing a myth to life, a generation before that myth would be born. He was completing a certain kind of psychic circuit. He told himself he was not changing history; he was merely giving history more substance.

Since he had never been able to bear to think that Jesus had been nothing more than a myth, it became a duty to himself to make Jesus a physical reality rather than the creation of a process of mythogenesis. Why did it matter? he wondered; but he would be quick to dismiss the question, for such questions confused him, seemed to offer a trap, an escape and the possibility, once again, of self-betrayal.

(orig. he could not bear to think that)

(orig. It was in his power to make Jesus a physical reality)

So he spoke in the synagogues and he spoke of a gentler God than most of them had heard of, and where he could remember them, he told them parables.

And gradually the need to justify intellectually what he was doing faded and his sense of identity grew increasingly more tenuous and was replaced by a different sense of identity, in which he would give greater and greater substance to the role he had chosen. It was an archetypal role in all senses, a role to appeal to a disciple of Jung. It was a role that went beyond mere imitation. It was a role that he must now play out to the very last detail.

(orig. the very last grand detail)

Karl Glogauer had discovered the role he had been seeking. That was not to say that he did not still have doubts.

Behold the Man, pp.117-118.

Moorcock's alterations to the original version of this important narrative passage, which explains Glogauer's motivation for committing himself to 'the completion of a certain kind of psychic circuit,' generally emphasize his awareness of the personal significance of what he was considering; the inner conflict he perceived between his intellect and his instincts; and his quest for an external justification for his own existence: 'He now had the opportunity to find at the same time both redemption and confirmation for his life...' Moorcock also emphasizes the special nature, in Jungian terms, of the unique role Glogauer is to adopt: 'It was an archetypal role in all senses..')

21. Jean-Paul SARTRE, novelist and philosopher, advances a perspective of existentialism as a later form of positive humanism in his 1945 discussion of Existentialism and Humanism (translated by P.MAIRET for Methuen & Co.; London, 1948). He describes two kinds of existentialism, that of Christian existentialists such as Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, and that of the existential atheists,

among whom he numbers himself. The crucial difference between the two schools resides, according to Sartre, in their response to a fundamental teleological paradox concerning being and becoming. Whereas the Christian school hold that essence precedes existence - 'Thus each individual man is the realisation of a certain conception which dwells in the divine understanding' - the atheistic existentialists contend that 'there is one being whose existence comes before its essence' - man.

This argument, scarcely less paradoxical in Behold the Man, is central to Moorcock's story of Glogauer's imitatio dei:

'Christianity is dead.' Monica sipped her tea. 'Religion is dying. God was killed in 1945.'

'There may yet be a resurrection,' he said.

'Let's hope not. Religion was the creation of fear. Knowledge destroys fear. Without fear, religion can't survive.'

'You think there's no fear about these days?'

'Not the same kind, Karl.'

'Haven't you ever considered the idea of Christ?' he asked her, changing his tack. 'What that means to Christians?'

'The idea of the tractor means as much to a Marxist,' she replied.

'But what came first? The idea or the actuality of Christ?'

She shrugged. 'The actuality, if it matters. Jesus was a Jewish troublemaker organizing a revolt against the Romans. He was crucified for his pains. That's all we know and all we need to know.'

'A great religion couldn't have begun so simply.'

'When people need one, they'll make a great religion out of the most unlikely beginnings.'

'That's my point, Monica.' He gesticulated intensely and she drew away slightly. 'The idea preceded the actuality of Christ.'

'Oh, Karl, don't go on. The actuality of Jesus preceded the idea of Christ.'

Behold the Man, pp.60-61.

Due to the time-travel paradox which permits him to gain the perversely pious fulfilment he craves by becoming 'Jesus,' Glogauer is able to promote his idea of Christ and thus ensure Christ's actuality.

Sartre's discussion of the atheistic orientation of existentialism which he helped to shape suggests that Moorcock's novel may in fact owe as much to Sartre as to Jung (identified as Glogauer's guru by Monica):

Atheistic existentialism, of which I am a representative (wrote Sartre), declares with greater consistency that if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man or, as Heidegger has it, the human reality. What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists,

encounters himself, surges up in the world - and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing - as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism.

Existentialism and Humanism, pp.27-28.

22. S.C.FREDERICKS, 'Revivals of Ancient Mythologies in Recent Science Fiction and Fantasy'; from Many Futures, Many Worlds, edited Thomas D.CLARESON, Kent State University Press, 1977; p.57.
23. This and subsequent page references are to the Penguin Modern Classics edition, translated by Robert Baldick, published in 1965.
24. SARTRE, Existentialism and Humanism, p.30.
25. The following incident is a fair example of what is being presented as Moorcock's picture of the sociopolitical and cultural context Glogauer encounters in the Holy Land:

'Herod's soldiers!' one of the sect cried.

Women were screaming and men were running into the night. Soon most of them had disappeared and only two women and the madman [Glogauer] were left.

The leader of the soldiers had a dark, handsome face and a thick, oily beard. He pulled the madman up to his knees by his hair and spat in his face.

'Are you one of these rebels we've been hearing so much about?'

The madman muttered, but shook his head.

The soldier cuffed him. He was so weak that he fell instantly to the ground.

The soldier shrugged. 'He's no threat. There are no arms here. We've been misled.'

He looked calculatingly at the women for a moment and then turned to his men, his eyebrows raised. 'If any of you are hard up enough - you can have them.'

The madman lay on the ground and listened to the cries of the women as they were raped. He felt he should get up and go to their assistance, but he was too weak to move, too afraid of the soldiers. He did not want to be killed. It would mean that he would never achieve his goal.

Herod's soldiers rode away eventually and the members of the sect began to creep back.

'How are the women?' asked the madman.

'They are dead,' someone told him.

[over...]

Someone else began to chant from the scriptures, verses about vengeance and righteousness and the punishments of the Lord.

Overwhelmed, the madman crawled away into the darkness.
Behold the Man, pp.91-92.

This whole episode first appears in the augmented version of the original short story which was published as a novel.

26. Selected from Marx's Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right by Ernst FISCHER for his anthology, Marx in His Own Words; The Penguin Press, Harmondsworth, 1973. Fischer's opening chapter ('The Dream of the Whole Man') is most illuminating, and another extract Fischer quotes may be of interest here:

Atheism, as a denial of this unreality [the unreality of man and nature], is no longer meaningful, for atheism is a negation of God and seeks to assert by this negation the existence of man. Socialism no longer requires such a roundabout method; it begins from the theoretical and practical sense perception of man and nature as essential beings. It is positive human self-consciousness, no longer a self-consciousness attained through the negation of religion; just as the real life of man is positive and no longer attained through the negation of private property, through communism...Communism is the necessary form and the dynamic principle of the immediate future, but communism is not itself the goal of human development - the form of human society.

from Economic and Political Manuscripts,
(in Bottomore, T.B., Karl Marx, Early Writings).

Fischer observes: "We can see that religion, atheism and communism were, for Marx, stages or features of human development rather than its goal. The goal was positive humanism, the real life of man," and continues: "The existence of the proletariat was the most striking contradiction of such a life; but 'the ruptured reality of industry' did not manifest itself in the proletariat alone" - something borne out by science fiction works as philosophically diverse as Men Like Gods, That Hideous Strength, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Player Piano and The Embedding.

27. GUNN, James, 'That Old-Time Religion;' The Road to Science Fiction Vol.III, New American Library (Mentor), New York, 1979; p.323.
28. L.Ron HUBBARD's cult of 'Scientology' has long been viewed sceptics as a most distasteful example of exploitation masquerading as a bona fide religion. It is a positivistic enterprise with commercial ends, justifying its bilking of the credulous with a creed invented by Hubbard himself, which stresses the importance of progressing through a series of gateways which ultimately give access to a sort of astral plane. The novice who wishes to attain this cosmic enlightenment must purchase a succession of books by Hubbard and undergo 'Dianetic'

confessional sessions monitored by more advanced devotees using a skin-conductivity measuring device said to be an accurate lie-detector. Needless to say, the materials and psychometric sessions involved at each stage become increasingly expensive as the candidate progresses through the whole, lengthy series.

Brian Aldiss has charted the rise and rise of Dianetics/Scientology:

Hubbard was a prolific producer of pulp fiction throughout the thirties and forties, until he published Dianetics: the Modern Science of Mental Health. Dianetics was launched in the May 1950 issue of Astounding with the wholehearted approval of John W. Campbell. Within a year Campbell had cooled in his enthusiasm and backed off. Dianetics became Scientology, a religion, with Hubbard its cult guru. Hubbard's energies were channelled into propagandist work.
Trillion Year Spree, p.393

If Hubbard's ponderous tome Battleground Earth is anything to go by, then the participants in his cult must be less than critical readers of his hastily-written, repetitive, banal prose.

Interestingly, Aldous HUXLEY mentions a contemporary cult in 'Religious Practices' (Ends and Means, 1937) which possesses some parallels with Hubbard's personal cult:

Those who have followed the cult of the negro man-god, Father Divine, must have been struck by the fact that many, probably most, of Father's worshipper's have undergone a striking 'change of heart' and are in many respects better men and women than they were before their conversion to Divinism. But this improvement of character has very definite limitations. Divinists are committed by their theology to a belief in the perfection of Father. The commands of a perfect being should be obeyed. And, in fact, they are obeyed, even when - and this would seem to be the case in certain of the new church's financial transactions - they are not in accord with the highest principles of morality.

Ends and Means, pp.236-7.

29. Robert Heinlein was considered to be the main figure of John W. Campbell's 'Golden Age' because he was so good at writing the kind of narrowly scientific fiction Campbell was eager to print. Full of action and movement, notorious for its stereotypical characters and emotional thinness, Heinlein's prose is crisp and distinctive, but Campbell prized his fiction for its technological plausibility.
30. Quoted from John Boyd's Preface(1978) to the Penguin Books edition of his novel, The Rakehells of Heaven (published U.S.A. 1969).
31. Vonnegut originally wished to identify himself explicitly as the narrator, but adopted 'John' at the insistence of the publisher. (Klinkowitz, op.cit., p.55)

32. Thomas L. WYMER, 'The Swiftian Satire of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr'; reprinted in Voices for the Future, Vol. I, ed. by Thomas D. CLARESON for Bowling Green University Popular Press, Ohio, 1976; p.241.
33. Jerome KLINKOWITZ, Contemporary Writers: Kurt Vonnegut; Methuen, London, 1982; p.53.
34. Wymer, op.cit., p.257.
35. Vonnegut, a professed unbeliever (Klinkowitz, op.cit., p.88) regarded Christ as a historical person with everyday human failings, whose genuine teachings have been corrupted by devout misconstructions and self-serving, cynical exploitation. Jerome Klinkowitz has described how this attitude to Christian faith is reflected in Vonnegut's 1979 novel, Jailbird: 'Christianity can be cruel, especially when left to the devices of those mortals who would use it to absolutize their own relative beliefs; Jailbird reinterprets the Gospels with an eye towards making some allowance for Jesus' meaner days.' (p.82)
Despite having the ghost of Kilgore Trout's son for the narrator of his latest book, Galapagos(1985), and including recurrent references to 'the blue tunnel of the afterlife' every time a character dies, Vonnegut has little to say about religion directly. On the other hand, he finds a good deal to castigate in human nature; all our failings, collectively and as individuals, he ascribes to our 'big brains' and our obsession with useless knowledge and 'turning more and more things over to machines':

To the credit of humanity as it used to be: More and more people were saying that their brains were irresponsible, unreliable, hideously dangerous, wholly unrealistic - were simply no damn good. Galapagos, p.29

The dominant ideas of the novel are agnostic. Human nature is the result of freak, uncontrolled development of the primeval ape-brain which will run its course and end by effecting its own destruction. The few survivors will be the ancestors of a new humanity, unrecognizable to their forebears as human, and possessing relatively small brains, flippers, and other amphibian features. The comedy of ideas is mordant; we have grown too big for ourselves, are unnatural, overblown parodies of what we should be. We cannot cope with our own feelings and drives, and - irony of ironies - a small furry aquatic animal is more truly human than we have proved ourselves to be.

Having witnessed a million years of human "evolution," Trout declares towards the end of the novel that - 'Thanks to certain modifications in the design of human beings, I can see no reason why the earthling part of the clockwork can't go on working for ever the way it is ticking now.' He continues:

If some sort of supernatural beings, or flying saucer people, those darlings of my father, brought humanity into harmony with itself and the rest of Nature, I did not catch them doing it. I am prepared to swear under oath that the Law of

Natural Selection did the repair job without outside assistance of any kind.

Galapagos, p.266

36. One should also say 'typical', according to Joseph V. FRANCAVILLA:

Despite the apparent differences between heroes in Roger Zelazny's science fiction, such as Mahasamatman in Lord of Light, Conrad Nomikos in This Immortal, and Francis Sandow in Isle of the Dead, they all conform to a particular model. With amazing virtuosity, Zelazny has used this model and has produced story after intriguing story, with fresh variations in locale, religious framework, and mythological background.

Zelazny's model is constructed in part from myths of the scarified God-King or Fisher-King, as described in Sir James Frazer and Jessie Weston. In these myths, the death and rebirth of the ailing, divine monarch effects renewal and the restoration of fertility to the land and its people. Zelazny's god-hero begins with a symbolic deficiency or flaw and himself undergoes a parallel renewal and growth in his process of self-discovery and self-realization as he becomes a more perfect representation of a divine spirit and a skeptical prophet, messiah, and savior.

'Promethean Bound: Heroes and Gods

in Roger Zelazny's Science Fiction';

The Transcendent Adventure, ed. REILLY; p.207.

However, Francavilla later attests that in trying to overthrow the Deicrat pantheon and restore altruistically the almost arcane progressive ideals of Accelerationism, 'Sam is even more like the Titan Prometheus than is usual in Zelazny...' (p.219) Joseph's Francavilla's article also provides a most penetrating and informative study of three forms of the Prometheus myth, showing how Percy Shelley developed Aeschylus' classical allegory for Prometheus Unbound, and how in his turn Zelazny was able to turn some of Shelley's material, and indeed his predecessor's, to his own purpose:

Zelazny does not follow Shelley in making the Promethean hero an ideal of perfection. Here Zelazny stays with Aeschylus' conception of the bold hero flawed by hubris. Unlike Aeschylus' Prometheus, Zelazny's hero changes greatly during the course of his adventures and becomes less prideful and arrogant usually through a combination of his love for a woman and his altruistic protection of the race of mortals.

Ibid., p.210

37. Whereas like Moorcock Zelazny quotes actual scripture, Herbert's quotations are clever futuristic apocrypha.
38. Zelazny clearly is greatly attracted to the themes of the science fiction of aspiration, having surpassed both in scope and in

sophistication his earlier short story, 'A Rose for Ecclesiastes' (discussed in Chapter 1), with Lord of Light, for which he won in 1968 the Hugo award presented annually by members of the World Science Fiction Convention. However, a more recent version which bears the same hallmarks as the others is even more recondite, and has not received the same critical acclaim as have the others:

...in the novels since Lord of Light, Zelazny has been working with different combinations of action and fragmentary suggestion, ritual vs. emotional weight. ...Creatures of Light and Darkness (1969) takes Egyptian mythology much further than Lord of Light did Hindu; both the background and foreground are more obscure than in the earlier novel, and though Creatures is a satisfying construct, it remains cryptically unmoving otherwise.

Joe SANDERS, 'Zelazny: Unfinished Business' (p.194), reprinted in Voices for the Future, Vol.2, edited by Thomas CLARESON for Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, Ohio, 1979; pp.180-196.

39. FRANCAVILLA, op.cit., p.218.
40. Idem., p.220.
41. SANDERS, op.cit., p.192.
42. FRANCAVILLA, op.cit., p.220.
43. Dune has received a great deal of critical attention and much well-deserved praise; one of the best-known recent works in the genre, it won both the Nebula and the Hugo awards in 1966.

In 1966 Herbert published a novel which was a considerable departure from the style and content of his previous work. The book was Dune - it had a considerable impact within the s-f community and an incredible impact outside of it. People who had never had a good word for s-f read it and were impressed.

Dune is a massive novel which details the lives of the inhabitants of the planet Dune and the political machinations of an interstellar empire. The plot is based loosely on the life of Mohammed (which may account for the huge popularity of Dune in the mid-East). The story of Paul Atrides is compelling, but the real hero of the novel is the planet itself. Herbert has carefully and exhaustively described Dune's ecology, culture, religion, and technology; Dune has been called the genre's most effectively evoked world.

A Reader's Guide to Science Fiction,
by Searles, Last, Meacham, and Franklin; p.83.

Brian ALDISS has recently provided an account of Dune's magazine serialization which reflects his own high opinion of the Dune and its sequel Dune Messiah, which he goes on to call 'dense and complex books which repay careful attention and impress even on a fourth or fifth reading'.

Dune World...began serialization in the December 1963 large format Analog and ran for three issues, graced with some highly evocative illustrations by John Schoenherr. Many of the ideas were standard Analog/Astounding fare, but Herbert had sewn the familiar threads altogether into a tight, mesmerizing fabric, interwoven with a potent element of mysticism. Political intrigue in a harsh future galaxy was commonplace. so too were strange religions. But somehow Herbert merged the two strands with several new elements - primarily an interest in the eco-system of the planet Arrakis, the desert planet Dune - and produced something that is far greater than the whole.

Although Campbellian science fiction is still present, so, too, is an attention to sensuous detail which is the anti-thesis of Campbell. The bleak dry world of Arrakis is as intensely realized as any in science fiction. The shortage of water, for instance, is presented not just diagrammatically, but as a living fact which permeates all facets of existence.

Trillion Year Spree, p.315

Contrast these views of Dune with Jerome KLINKOWITZ'S discussion of The Sirens of Titan as a deliberate parody of conventional magazine science fiction:

Vonnegut certainly took the opportunity to make a change in his methods. The Sirens of Titan is a considerable departure from the orderly use of science-fiction techniques in Player Piano. It allowed the incorporation of new materials and devices. No longer do we find class notes from the University of Chicago's graduate program in anthropology. Instead, Vonnegut provides space opera, enjoying the unsophisticated carnival of lurid and often self-indulgent pop devices which has made science fiction a true sub-genre (and literary favorite of an identifiable sub-culture); fiction like this is filled with trappings such as ray-guns and invading armies of robots from Mars. Although there is a bit of H.G.Wells here, space opera discards the more thoughtfully based resources of Orwell and Huxley in favor of flashier entertainments. For his own debut, Vonnegut outdoes the genre's silliness, filling his novel with such ridiculous characters as the Space Wanderer, his son who flies off with the Gigantic Bluebirds of Titan, and even faithful Kazak, the Hound of Space. He degrades its pseudo-intellectual pretensions by explaining his own most imposing technological device, the chronosynclastic infundibulum, with an entry from A Child's Cyclo-pedia of Wonders and Things to Do....

Op.cit., p.41.

Klinkowitz's preferences are not wholly shared by me, but it is informative to compare Dune with The Sirens of Titan because the former is among the finest achievements in style and imagination which the genre may boast, whereas the latter offers an ironic, self-indulgent salute to the generic conventions it exploits.

44. Jerome KLINKOWITZ describes the genesis of The Sirens of Titan

as follows:

It was not until 1959 that Vonnegut published his second novel, The Sirens of Titan, and then only because the magazine market was diminishing and an editor offered him better money than he could earn for eight weeks' labor writing short stories. The plot of the book was devised in fully impromptu fashion over cocktails at a party, and the book itself came easily in a period of less than two months. It was indeed a novel for the market, and there was no respectable hard-cover edition at all; The Sirens of Titan was written as a paperback original for Dell's science fiction series, a rather sleazy operation...

Op.cit., p.40.

45. Patrick PARRINDER, 'Characterization in Science Fiction: Two Approaches; 2. The Alien Encounter, or Ms.Brown and Mrs.Le Guin;' Science Fiction, A Critical Guide ed. by P.Parrinder for Longman Group, London, 1979; p.154.
(See also G.K.WOLFE, 'Vonnegut and the Metaphor of Science Fiction: The Sirens of Titan;' reprinted in Journal of Popular Culture, Vol.5 (1972) 964-969. A thoughtful discussion in which Rumfoord's benevolence - termed 'altruism' - may have been overstated (though Wolfe accepts that such altruism may seem 'a bit cynical' since Rumfoord contrives the virtual suicide of the Martian army).

CHAPTER SIX

Apostate Visions: From Man to Messiah, and Beyond...

The science fiction discussed in previous chapters affords abundant evidence of the sustained interest genre writers have taken in the complex ethical and aesthetic relationships between religion, humanism, social change and science. Indeed one may justifiably claim that there are in fact profound conceptual associations between our moral thinking and values, the prevalent ideology of our society, and the nature and scope of our individual and collective aspirations, however reluctant one might be to accept the bald assertion that religious faith is only a special form of human response to the enigmas of life, exemplified, perhaps, by Engels's definition: 'the fantastic mirror image of human things in the human mind'; though, as has been shown, the idea has had its advocates in science fiction.

Consequently, religious and humanistic science fiction present many common features; and as the transcendental themes of some recent novels indicate, revelation of one kind or another has remained an essential feature of the contemporary Romanticism which distinguishes the science fiction of aspiration. However, the quest for knowledge in this fiction is emphatically different from the kind of generally epistemological Baconian or materialistic 'hard' science fiction (exemplified by Asimov's The Gods Themselves) in one major respect: teleological science fiction is concerned more with knowledge of self than of things or systems. The science fiction of final purposes, as we might also characterise it, subsumes iconoclasm in offering visions of transfigured Man, yet remains a profoundly sceptical literature surpassing, at its most inspirational or portentous, the

sort of more or less externalized, cognitive apocalypse discussed by David Ketterer. In a perceptive general study of such themes in American fiction, New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction and American Literature (1974)(1), Mr. Ketterer defines three categories of science fiction: utopian/dystopian extrapolation; the extrapolation of social change following on the 'modification of an existent condition' by scientific or pseudo-scientific innovation (e.g., a marvellous invention of some kind); and,

Thirdly, the most philosophically oriented science fiction, extrapolating what we know in the context of our vaster ignorance, comes up with a startling donnee, or rationale, that puts humanity in a radically new perspective. 2.

There are of course many examples of science fiction which is 'apocalyptic' in Ketterer's third sense: Dune Messiah, for instance, wherein Paul Atreides makes a prescient discovery of the collusion between CHOAM, the Imperium, and aliens which depends on the continuing suppression of humane development to support a cosmic balance of power. In The Sirens of Titan as well, Rumfoord's distressing realization is that all mankind's historical struggle has been directed by aliens to provide the replacement part for Salo's stranded spaceship. Yet Ketterer's use of 'puts' rather than 'offers' in the quotation above is significant. He continues:

...I am going to confine myself to my third science-fiction category, in which a startling rationale is involved, because I find the third type the most significant as an expression of the philosophical sense of the apocalyptic imagination and because this category has not previously been isolated by critics of the genre. 3.

According to Ketterer, 'the apocalyptic imagination..finds its purest outlet in science fiction.' He defines it 'in terms of its philosophical preoccupation with that moment of transformation or trans-

figuration when an old world of mind discovers a believable new world of mind, which either nullifies and destroys the old system entirely or, less likely makes it part of a larger design.' Clearly, the sort of science fiction which Ketterer includes in his category of philosophical work as a sub-set of apocalyptic literature also bears upon the present study of the science fiction of aspiration, as his interest in Vonnegut's The Sirens of Titan indicates. Yet though many of the stories discussed here and in previous chapters are 'philosophical' in his sense in that they 'upset man's conception of his own situation and prompt him to relate his experience to a broader framework,' they also may be considered to be a part of the tradition of humanistic science fiction of aspiration, with its apostate qualities and hubristic archetypes. The literatures described here and in Ketterer's study are, being part of the same general field, essentially complementary strands of science fiction's post-gothic apocalyptic canon. Nonetheless, these contingent varieties are distinct in important ways, even if some authors have built both aspiration and apocalypse into the same work. This can be demonstrated succinctly with Arthur C. Clarke's 2001: A Space Odyssey (which Clarke wryly described as 'the world's first billion-dollar religious movie.')

Ketterer writes, 'But for the appearance of the mysterious slab, the human race would have died out in infancy. The result of entertaining these revolutionary notions is the sensation, however momentary, of a philosophical apocalypse.' An equally significant crux occurs at the end of the novel, when the surviving astronaut of the 'Discovery', Bowman, is transfigured by his contact with the alien creators of the slab and evolves into the 'Star-Child', able to

cross through the void and abort a terminal nuclear war on Earth:

There before him, a glittering toy no Star-Child could resist, floated the planet Earth with all its peoples.

He had returned in time. Down there on that crowded globe, the alarms would be flashing across the radar screens, the great tracking telescopes would be searching the skies - and history as men knew it would be drawing to a close.

A thousand miles below, he became aware that a slumbering cargo of death had awoken, and was stirring sluggishly in its orbit. The feeble energies it contained were no possible menace to him; but he preferred a cleaner sky. He put forth his will, and the circling megatons flowered in a silent detonation that brought a brief, false dawn to half the sleeping globe.

Then he waited, marshalling his thoughts and brooding over his still untested powers. For though he was master of the world, he was not quite sure what to do next.

But he would think of something.

2001:A Space Odyssey, Chapter 47.

This supremely moral act is messianic, and bespeaks not just the transformation of Bowman's vision, but indeed of his entire being. In later excluding 'epiphany' from the scope of his study in order to impose a definitive discipline upon his preferred term(4), David Ketterer reveals that an area of science fiction may not be treated in his study. By elucidating how science fiction authors have approached theosophical and transcendental themes and ideas like theophany, epiphany, and apotheosis in an evolutionary and humanistic context, this work aims to go some way towards providing a more detailed knowledge of the nature and significance of the science fiction of aspiration, though it is not within its scope to satisfy Mr. Ketterer's belated(5) specification - 'the pervasive presence of the Faustian theme and the Prometheus myth in SF suggests that some attention be given to their existence in the very much broader tradition of world literature.'(6) Fully defining their role and broad context within the genre must be a significant first step towards the realization of any such grand objective, for, as J. Norman King has argued:

...science fiction, at least in principle, is a peculiarly apt form of literature to speak both of and to our contemporary existence. It is, therefore, of considerable utility to theology in providing insight into the self-understanding of modern man.

7.

Needless to say, that same 'utility' King speaks of has, in the specific context of the science fiction of aspiration and its teleological concerns, still greater force.

For all its concern with hallucinatory, surrealist experience and the transfiguration of the human sensibility, transcendental science fiction commonly continues the generic traditions of secular polemic, but with distinctly less insistence upon reason as the touchstone of humane behaviour, and this has important implications for both its conventional and emergent styles of literary expression.

Nonetheless, one may explore its unorthodox and humanistic contentions very successfully by elucidating how authors have employed what have emerged as the distinctive elements of the science fiction of aspiration. (Indeed without such a perspective, the motives, sensibility and behaviour of a character like Dr. Andrik Norn of Watson and Bishop's Under Heaven's Bridge might otherwise seem bewildering or senseless.) Essentially, where a Romantic fantasist would create a lyrical paen or irrational hallucination, a writer of this kind of science fiction constructs dramas of godhood and novel symbolic lexicons of aspiration. However supernal or religious these esoteric cosmic schemas may sound, they generally also advance the sceptical iconoclasm of much modern and post-modern science fiction:

If you were many, would you see better? That's what you wondered before.

That's the Godmind's project: to set fire to minds on a hundred worlds, to make a many-fold Ka-lens - and in that moment to try to master time, and being.

The void bubbles. The void breathes.

You once felt that you were on the brink of a transformation. Then the Worm yanked you home. You chickened out.

The void dreams the universe. But the void is unconscious. The universe has consciousness, but it can't control the breath of Being. A strong force, the inertia of normality, rules the universe. So the universe always chooses the same state as before. It sustains itself; limits itself.

In Ka-space, the weak force rules. The force of choice. Yet no-one chooses.

It's said in old myths that wizards could change men into toads, stones into bread. Those wizards must have tapped the weak force. Never for long, always on a tiny scale - because they lived in a universe ruled by the strong force.

The universe is dreamed by the void. It is made out of... grains of choice. Grains of virtual existence.

(Yes, now you're beginning to see.)

These basic grains are...electons. They elect their state of being.

Now look closer. Electons are really tiny dots, consisting of a circle of Ka-space rolled up compactly. Forever they unroll back into the void. Forever other bits of void roll up to replace them exactly. Roll up, roll up! Thanks to the pressure of public opinion in the neighbourhood, the new electons choose to be just the same as the old ones.

All these electons roll-up compactly in the same direction. Thus time flows in one direction, in the universe. In Ka-space the electons aren't rolled up. So there in the never-ever all time is one, and timeless.

A mind, a Ka, must be a mesh of electons which are only partly rolled-up. Thus minds delve into time-past, into memory. Minds resist the flow of time.

That must be why old folk say that time speeds up as you grow older. The more you know and remember, the more your Ka resists. A fish washed along by a stream hardly seems - from the fish's point of view - to be moving at all. A fish swimming against the stream sees the water rush by on all sides...

Each death, each disappearance into Ka-space, removes a fraction of resistance. The forces balance again quickly. New Kas come into existence.

What sort of shock would the death of almost all the minds in the galaxy deal to reality?

Enough to cause a lurch, a melting, a possible re-ordering of things?

Enough to bring about a mastery of time - and mastery of Being - locally, for a few crucial moments?

The Godmind must think so.

from 'All the Tapestries of Time,' Part Three of
Ian Watson's The Book of Being(1985), pp.130-131.

How do we evaluate this kind of science fiction? It may be tempting for some to dismiss it as ingenious nonsense or even mere gibberish - 'Ka-space', 'electons', the implacable, malevolent 'Godmind' and all;

but it clearly addressess profound concerns and for that reason alone it deserves serious attention. However decidedly abstruse and superficially paradoxical (even jocund and 'fake' in the manner of a Poe hoax), the world-view of Watson's protagonist actually has coherence: it is a complex blend of gnostic metaphysics and sceptical yet highly original theosophy. In as much as contemporary authors like Watson have adopted this distinctly philosophical species of science fiction for evoking what he has himself called 'glimpses of the ineffable' (and what Mary Shelley might well have termed 'the Sublime'), this literature may legitimately be viewed as the present culmination of a genre-based but nonetheless sophisticated form of humanism.

Many of the novels which will be discussed in this context deal in some way or other with the messianic role which entices the hubrist. Craving the sublime power and the freedom which will be his when he has overcome the frustrating limitations of the human condition, the hubrist seeks a liberating revelation. In this fiction the transforming insight is more often cast in the form of a scientific perception than a theophany, but with distinctly less reverence for scientific materialism itself. What one encounters, then, is a less stringent species of epistemology, a new sort of natural philosophy which emphasizes experience and perception rather than "objective" scientific pragmatism. Proposing that 'Science fiction began to expand beyond its Enlightenment beginnings in the late 1940s and early 1950s' (considerably later than most critics would now affirm) Thomas L. Wymer concluded a discussion of 'Perception and Value in Science Fiction'⁽⁸⁾ with the observation that, 'certainly science fiction will remain in many ways a literature of ideas...But instead of human beings existing to add drama to the exploration of science,

technology, or the future, these latter elements have come to exist in a more sizable body of literature to heighten and expose a central concern with what it means to be a human being.' While it has been a contention of the present study that science fiction's Gothic legacy has sustained in writers like Wells and Poe an awareness of the limitations of scientific materialism as a controlling factor of the sensibility, we should recognise with Wymer that much science fiction has gone over from 'rather narrow empiricism' and technophilic themes 'in the direction of a radically enlarged and expanded empiricism which recognized the creative element in perception and explored the possibilities of new modes of consciousness and of knowing.' The transcendental science fiction of aspiration, whose precursors have been discussed in earlier chapters, now challenges the more familiar sorts of science fiction for pre-eminence as the characteristic generic expression of progressive humanism.

A prominent interest in faith, sensibility and moral uncertainty distinguishes today's science fiction of aspiration. Its transcendental themes contrast markedly with the sort of technophilic fiction in which machine power is centre stage. "Space" stills confronts the alienated hubrist, but it is much less cluttered with awesome (some would say tedious) machinery than it used to be. Many writers experiment with subjective or inward 'ultralogic', and focus more upon the development of innate human faculties than upon the development of technology and the realisation of its potential power for good. This in turn raises the teleological question at the heart of most of this fiction about the purpose of existence, which eclipses the more familiar ontological theme of the nature of existence and the humane sensibility.

In Herbert's Dune, for instance, more attention has been paid to controlled character development than to expressing hostility to religion. The dual nature of Paul Atreides's human/divine personality is presented effectively and does hold the reader's interest throughout the involved story of his transfiguration. Yet while the problematic nature of the personality of the central character is undoubtedly the main focus of the novel, the portrayal of religion as being some kind of calculated deception is included almost, in fact, as a background assumption. As this suggests, the satire of orthodox religion is less controversial or provocative and has become virtually an everyday theme.

Moreover, even the very nature of "space" has changed, for readers are now as likely to find themselves in inner space as they are among the galaxies. Hallucination, psychosis, derangement and perdition are the surreal products of the human mind which must be overcome before the true potential of our species can be attained. In this context even reason can seem to be no less a delusion than any other form of intellection, as Gene Wolfe's Dr. Marsch belatedly realizes in the third novella of The Fifth Head of Cerberus (1972):

Later. There is a new prisoner, I think about five cells down from mine. Seeing him brought in, has, I think, saved me from losing my mind; for that I do not thank him - sanity, after all, is only reason applied to human affairs, and when this reason, applied over years, has resulted in disaster, destruction, despair, misery, starvation, and rot, the mind is correct to abandon it. This decision to abandon reason, I see now, is not the last but the first reasonable act; and this insanity we are taught to fear consists in nothing but responding naturally and instinctively rather than with the culturally acquired, mannered thing called reason; an insane man talks nonsense because like a bird or a cat he is too sensible to talk sense.

Op.cit., pp.178-179.

In other novels a deranged central character has recklessly sought to know more about the hermetic nature of the cosmos than he can cope

with mentally. The hubrist must adapt his perceptions to a new order of reality or he will be forever lost to himself in a psychotic flight from the knowledge of things as they really are. If he does survive, the rewards could be omniscience, omnipotence and eternal life. Nowadays the protagonist may be not just a second Faustus or Prometheus but a Zeus, Apollo or even Christ.

This has complemented a gradual change in the nature of outer space from a rigid but reassuringly mundane Euclidian four-dimensional frame to the seemingly anarchic, transmutable parameters of Einstein's Relativity - and beyond even that, as the scientists sent on a reconnaissance mission in James White's All Judgement Fled(1969) learn en route:

There was a short silence broken by two bursts of static and an apologetic cough, then a new voice said, "Well now, the subject of this lecture may itself need an explanation and it is this. From our observations of the approach, physical mass and general appearance of the alien ship, we are convinced that some method of faster-than-light propulsion is being used. Since Einsteinian math holds FTL travel to be impossible in this spacetime continuum we must fall back on those vaguer theories which suggest that the physical laws governing this continuum may be in some fashion side-stepped by traveling along or in some highly speculative hyper-dimension. But as things stand you would very probably not know a hyperdimensional propulsion device if it stood up and bit you, and neither in all probability would I..."

Op.cit., pp.12-13.

What then of religion? The moral tenets and world-views of various religions are often presented in this context as rigid codes which proscribe the attainment of our full potential because God is jealous of His prerogatives, and will not have His creatures usurping Him, manifestly a teleological theme. In another less polemical perspective, religion is portrayed as the embodiment of a paternalistic intention to safeguard our limited but growing ability to cope with the world (let alone control it) as it really is, unmediated by the

compassionate, saving Grace of the Creator. In these terms, religion is reduced to being a sort of antique code which claims to afford us a measure of protection from the consequences of our curiosity by counselling us against the aspiration to, in Frankenstein's words, 'become greater than our natures will allow.' The theologian J. Norman King confirms the teleological basis of such themes: 'the technological and behavioral powers born of the new sciences convey the sense of control over the creational process. The idea emerges of man's purposes; of his actively shaping himself, his society, and his history. Instead of enquiring into God's creation of nature and man in the past, attention turns to man's self-creation in the future.' For King, this does not mean that God the creator is a discredited idea, but he does recognize that it makes 'the presence of the creator a less immediate and more indirect question' and it also 'excludes certain concepts of God, especially in the spatio-temporal terms long associated with them.' (9)

By contrast, Marx held that religion precluded humane development, and his view of materialistic humanism - which demanded the revolutionary solution of sweeping away religion and other bourgeois alienating influences - in many respects anticipates the abiding mistrust of many a contemporary science fiction writer of capitalism's ability to create and re-create the means of continuing realistic alienation. Conformity and consumerism vitiate the humane impulse for self-emancipation and self-transcendence, the very essence of Romantic aspiration. Yet another response to religion is to characterize it as the product of an atavistic fear of the unknown which more sophisticated humans can confidently ignore, as redundant as an appendix. Ultimately, never the most popular strain of the science

fiction of aspiration, orthodox religious topoi seem to have become less attractive to writers over the past two decades, and lack proponents like Miller, Blish, Lewis et al.

More common are apostate or sceptical forms of religious feeling and belief. In the context of transcendental science fiction like Childhood's End, religious moral strictures are often presented as being like figurative bars on the windows and doors of our universe. These allow us tantalising glimpses of the transcendental nature of things but they also denies us access to the world as we might make it if we could overcome the superstitious, religious fear we have been "programmed" with or have acquired as a prejudicial pattern of behaviour during the forgotten early days of our long evolution. Brian Stableford has argued that this sort of fiction of ideas sustains a distinctive, speculative sensibility:

Voltaire, it is said, once argued that if God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him. In the reified imaginative universe of science fiction this has proved to be true. A substitute for the functions of the deity, jargonized as an array of "scientific" possibilities or (more crudely) as an alien intelligence, has been brought into the field of play. As time goes by we see more and more substitutes of this nature crossing the boundary of between acknowledged fiction and ostensible fact: Shaverism, Scientology, Velikovskianism and so on. Such beliefs are very largely subject to the same evolutionary forces which shape the demand for science fiction, although science fiction primarily serves the need to think rather than the simpler and less challenging need to believe. The sf reader, it seems, has the strength of mind required to confront ideas as ideas, without the comforting assurance that they are facts. 10.

Whatever its provenance may be, an apostate world-view which advances an alternative ontology and teleology of Man has attained a genuine popularity in post-Victorian fiction, though its core themes - revitalised by the vigorous humanism of the Renaissance and the Age of Reason - are classical, and, malgre Nietzsche or Marx, evolutionary rather than revolutionary. J. Norman King has offered a worthwhile

hypothesis which addresses these very issues:

With the actual development of the natural and social sciences, the earlier interpretation of creation becomes modified, as it were, by its own implications. Through these disciplines, there is unveiled an overwhelming vista of vast ages and distances, of an enormous universe slowly evolving over many billions of years. There dawns, too, a gradual realization of the intricate complexity and wide-ranging possibilities of matter. Although dwarfed against this background, the time of man's appearance on Earth becomes recognized as far greater than previously thought. The evolutionary character not only of man's biological structure, but also of his very human consciousness itself becomes clear. As a consequence, the image of a static, fixed, permanently enduring species is inevitably supplanted by a more dynamic and fluid understanding of all species, including man. The notion of an immediate creation of well-defined beings, projected into the past, no longer appears tenable. Indeed, with the emergence of this more open-ended and indeterminate picture of nature and man, reinforced and rendered vividly real by rapid changes in industrial society itself, the focus of the question of creation alters. The question becomes not "What has been created?" but "What will be created?" It becomes not "What has man been from the beginning?" but "What will man become?" or "What will become of man?"

11.

For the Faustian or Promethean hubrist so popular with modern science fiction writers, secular aspiration is often articulated in mystical terms, even as a profane sort of religious aspiration. Paradoxically, as Mary Shelley illustrates in Frankenstein, the visionary apperceives the attraction of divine powers and prerogatives through the medium of religious vision, but seeks to acquire them by materialistic (i.e., scientific) means. Consequently, secular aspiration is here linked profoundly to religious aspiration, with which, paradoxically, it is locked in a struggle for ascendancy.

Since religious aspiration is literally sacrosanct, the secular humanist may only challenge its hegemony by criticizing its ethics and their implications, or by advancing a novel world-view which fulfills the same role of dignifying human existence and endeavour. Thus apostate or hubristic idealism generates its own versions of

millennial, utopian or transcendental hopes; given the emergent nature of the rhetoric unique to its general vision of man, they tend to be couched in religious symbols or metaphors if pagan classical archetypes do not lend themselves to the author's purposes or themes. Nonetheless these opinions are apostate rather than heretical since, lacking a secular rhetoric which would not seem contradictory or absurd, their proponents are obliged to modify religious discourse to express their visions and ideas even though they abjure the religious world-view. Heresy distorts religious doctrine in constructing its radical argument; apostasy is irreligious even when it adopts the rhetoric of religion. Another religious principle places divine prerogatives by their very nature beyond the attainment of terrestrial man. If utopian thinking is heretical, god-envy must surely be even more damning. On the other hand, since as an institution religion antedates science or materialism, the dogma of religions can readily be interpreted and satirically presented by sceptical writers as conservative proscriptions against hubristic aspiration.

As we have seen, writers have developed the emblematic Faustian and Promethean figures (which respectively symbolize the anti-heroic, and heroic motives of aspiration) to illustrate or dramatize this fundamental conflict. Yet these are not watertight conventions, because writers do exploit these basic formats in very individual ways, according - as has already been shown by reference to some highly influential works, and some of a lesser stature - to their own attitude towards faith and reason. However, as the fiction discussed in this chapter indicates, a third emblematic figure, implicit in Frankenstein, the seminal work of this genre, has subsumed the others: 'Initially my story was based on the myth of Prometheus,'

writes John Boyd, author of The Rakehells of Heaven (1969), 'but my hero was to bring to men not fire but the truth of their origins...' (12). What emerges, not just in Boyd's novel (wherein it is facetiously debased), but in many other contemporary works, and a few earlier classics, is an interest in the most audacious idea of all - hubristic man as mystic messiah.

This line of argument may be further evaluated when commerce and consumerism, twin forms of mercenary as opposed to scientific materialism which turn up in many science fictions of aspiration, are also considered. In so far as it is a form of materialism broadly endorsed by Western religions, commercialism is the pretext for a good deal of the invective aimed generally at religions as social institutions, a generic emphasis which seems to have first emerged as a consistent argument in the 'utopian' novels of Samuel Butler. Here Higgs, the visitor to Erewhon whose elopement with Arowhena Nosnibor in a balloon some twenty years before had given rise to the Sunchild myth, has returned to find that the nimble-minded Erewhonians have taken to heart his every utterance. Everything he said, it seems, has been construed according to their experience and values, and their version carries Butler's satiric message:

"And now tell me, what did the Sunchild tell us about God and Mammon?"

The head boy answered: "He said we must serve both, for no man can serve God well and truly who does not serve Mammon a little also; and no man can serve Mammon effectually unless he serve God largely at the same time."

"What were his words?"

"He said: 'Cursed be they that say "Thou shalt not serve God and Mammon," for it is the whole duty of man to know how to adjust the conflicting claims of these two deities.'"

Here my father interposed. "I knew the Sunchild, and I more than once heard him speak of God and Mammon. He never varied the form of the words he used, which were to the effect that a man must serve either God or Mammon, but that he could not serve both."

Erewhon Revisited(1901),
Chapter XIII.

Consumerism, too, is often maligned as an even more pernicious, peculiarly modern species of commercialism. Authors such as George Orwell and Kurt Vonnegut have argued that it is a covert way of diminishing the independence and options of the individual. Indeed, both themes effectively coalesce in novels like Dick's The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch and Robert Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land. These and their like examined here reveal another side of a broad (if by no means always explicit) consensus derived from partisan perspectives in which humanism, viewed either in purely religious terms, or solely in terms of scientific materialism, is seen as an attractive but too narrow ethical code.

The chapter offers a discussion of the emergence of the transfigured hubrist, apotheosis being arguably the most teleological and exciting theme of contemporary science fiction.

The Consecrated Man: Theophany and Apotheosis in Science Fiction

Having reviewed so many works in which scepticism of orthodox religion is prominent, it may seem surprising to be now about to conclude with a discussion of how the messianic transfiguration of man is treated in some science fictions of aspiration. This topic has featured recently in quite sophisticated and philosophical texts. The genre has to a certain extent absorbed the simple satire of religious attitudes and values as a general convention: each of the five texts discussed below (with the exception of Butler's Erewhon Revisited includes at least two factitious creeds, and among them we encounter Neo-Christianity, the Fosterite Church, the Servants of Wrath, the Fremem jihad, and the Church of All Worlds; and perhaps the appearance of secularized messiahs can be seen as a consequence of

this assimilation.

To recapitulate briefly the findings of chapter five, the basic premise common to all of these sceptical portrayals seems to be that religions are merely the social manifestation of an innate human propensity towards mysticism. In other words, religion is presented as a more or less spontaneous cultural product which is acutely open to hypocritical exploitation. Usually, a powerful group or individual uses a fake religion, often cartelized or consumer-oriented, to maintain their grip over a subject society. With commercialised religion, the consumers are disciples or believers rather than helots, though for some authors such as Philip K. Dick, such a distinction is nominal.

In many such novels these factitious creeds are presented as the means whereby a cabalistic elite is able to reinforce and exploit the sense of inadequacy and insecurity of those they have disadvantaged, and so religion has become identified in some quarters as the social institution which is most antagonistic towards the motives and values of the humanist or hubrist. Vonnegut offers the reader of Cat's Cradle a Bokonist warning that: 'Anyone unable to understand how a useful religion can be founded on lies will not understand this book either,' and this is not by any means an unique view; in other novels the author uses an ironic denouement to expose the credulity of those committed to any such deceitful beliefs, inviting the reader to share his contempt or derision. However, such profound scepticism about religion as it is does not preclude speculation about religion as it could be, or about the divine teleology of Man, however blasphemous or hubristic an idea that may seem. "'Thou art God,'" Smith's acolytes tell each other, while in another context Barney Mayerson at

last begins to comprehend his implacable foe: "'Palmer Eldritch had gone to Prox a man and returned as a god.'"

As its pervasiveness suggests, the messianic idea, whether Faustian, Promethean, Apollonian or Dionysian, clearly is an important theme of modern science fiction. One of the most impressive and sustained treatments given to the theme recently is to be found in Frank Herbert's Dune(1965), already discussed in some detail. However, some credit for shaping the idea into its modern form could be claimed by Samuel Butler, however reluctant he might be to accept what he would certainly see as a dubious accolade.

Butler's sequel to Erewhon appeared almost exactly three decades later, in 1901, but in Erewhon Revisited we are given an account of Higgs's return trip twenty years after. It is a more unified and conventional novel than Erewhon, but, as Butler himself announces in his Preface, the satire has a much narrower focus, being concerned principally with questions of religious faith and the institutional influences which may advance it. If Mary Shelley can be said to have been the author of 'the seminal work of the new genre' of science fiction, and Wells lauded as 'the father of science fiction,' then surely Butler can be allowed the less grandiose distinction of having struck upon the device of the factitious religion so frequently used in the science fiction of aspiration:

I have concluded, I believe rightly, that the events described in Chapter XVIII of Erewhon would give rise to such a cataclysmic change in the old Erewhonian opinions which would result in the development of a new religion. Now the development of all new religions follows much the same general course. In all cases the times are more or less out of joint - older faiths are losing their hold upon the masses. At such times, let a personality appear, strong in itself, and made to seem still stronger by association with some supposed transcendent miracle, and it will be easy to raise a Lo here! that will attract many followers. If there be a single great and, apparently well-authenticated, miracle, others will

accrete round it; then, in all religions that have so originated, there will follow temples, priests, rites, sincere believers, and unscrupulous exploiters of public credulity. To chronicle events that followed Higgs's balloon ascent without showing that they were much as they have been under like conditions in other places would be to hold the mirror up to something very wide of nature.

To the Erewhonians who witnessed Higgs's ascension in the balloon, the event did seem to be just such a 'transcendent miracle', particularly since the heavy rain which began at the same time ended a prolonged drought. Whether intentionally or, more probably, coincidentally emulating Butler, modern science fiction authors have repeatedly fulfilled his prescription for the formulation of factitious religions, some earnestly, and some with deliberate irony. The 'transcendent miracle' varies with its context, but the residual implication is, in terms of Butler's mock-ironic formula, that 'older faiths are losing their hold upon the masses' and that our times are 'more or less out of joint.' These declining 'older faiths' are not simply religious, however. The arcane new principles of Einsteinian Relativity and the appalling effects of misapplied or fatal science which have shaken our confidence in 'real-time' and technology respectively, together with the socio-economic aftermath of Positivism, have all contributed greatly to the characteristic bewilderment and insecurity which afflict the post-modern literary sensibility. As the fore-runner of modern science fiction's troubled human 'gods,' the moral assurance with which Higgs responds to his alleged apotheosis does afford an apposite index against which the less settled moral vision of his generic successors can be discerned and evaluated more clearly.

On his return to Erewhon, Higgs, disguised to avoid capture in case the Erewhonian monarch still has not pardoned his transgression,

is able to observe carefully the unexpected results of his escape, for his arrival in Erewhon nearly coincides with an important ceremony of the new creed of Sunchildism, and the people are full of expectant religious fervour. He does not immediately realize that, incongruously, he is the deus absconditus the faithful venerate, but, listening to his son he is soon made all too aware of how his actions and sayings have acquired the force of divine revelation, for there are many instances of the way in which 'the Erewhonians had caught names and practices from my father, without understanding what they either were or meant':

...as a boy my father had had his Bible well drilled into him, and never forgot it. Hence Biblical passages and expressions had been often in his mouth, as the effect of mere unconscious cerebration. The Erewhonians had caught many of these, sometimes corrupting them so that they were hardly recognizable. Things that he remembered having said were continually meeting him during the few days of his second visit, and it shocked him deeply to meet some gross travesty of his own words, or of words more sacred than his own, and yet to be unable to correct it.

Erewhon Revisited, Chap.IV

To his credit, Higgs, horrified by the fanciful nonsense and deliberate distortions which his aerial departure has occasioned, is determined to set the record straight and debunk all the spurious notions spawned by the Sunchild Evidence Society, the Bridgeford Professors, and the credulous, self-important Mr.Balmy:

"A spiritual enlightenment from within...is more to be relied on than any merely physical affluence from external objects. Now, when I shut my eyes, I see the balloon ascend a little way, but almost immediately the heavens open, the horses descend, the balloon is transformed, and the glorious pageant careers onward till it vanishes into the heaven of heavens. Hundreds with whom I have conversed assure me that their experience has been the same as mine."

Erewhon Revisited, Chap.XIV

All this confirms Butler's standing as a modernist writer ahead of his time and suggests how well he could employ the standard arguments

which would become the stock-in-trade of a whole genre of sceptical scrutiny of orthodox religion. Yet, it must also be understood that he considered himself a religious if unorthodox thinker, rather than an atheist:

Butler considered himself primarily as a philosopher. His hope of continuing to live after his death in the minds of men, rested upon the value of his ideas. Towards the end of The Note Books, he entered under the heading "My Work" what he considered the most valuable "finds" in each of his books: ... (3) The clearing up the history of the events in connection with the death, or rather crucifixion, of Jesus Christ; and a reasonable explanation, first of the belief on the part of the founders of Christianity that their master had risen from the dead, and, secondly, of what might follow from belief in a single supposed miracle. (The Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, The Fair Haven, and Erewhon Revisited.)

13.

Seeking the maximum public audience and impact for his attempt to expose the knavery of the Musical Bankers who seized upon this 'miracle' to re-invigorate their declining popular influence and power, Higgs resolves to identify himself and denounce their fraudulent chicanery at the forthcoming dedication of the new temple at Sunch'ston ("Sunchildston"). Awaiting his moment, he hears how the nascent faith is to be centralized and institutionalized along the lines of the more or less defunct Musical Banks:

"Small wonder, then, that the Sunchild, having come amongst us for our advantage, not his own, would not permit his beneficent designs to be endangered by the discrepancies, mythical developments, idiosyncracies, and a hundred other defects inevitably attendant on amateur and irresponsible recording. Small wonder, then, that he should have chosen the officials of the Musical Banks, from the presidents and vice-presidents downwards, to be the authoritative exponents of his teaching, the depositaries of his traditions, and his representatives here on earth till he shall again see fit to visit us. For he will come. Nay it is even possible that he may be here amongst us at this very moment, disguised so that none may know him, and intent only on watching our devotion towards him. If this be so, let me implore him, in the name of the son his father, to reveal himself."

Erewhon Revisited, Chap. XVI

Despite the Bridgeford professor's goading, Higgs, undeterred by the realization that a trap has been set for him, patiently waits for the best opportunity. Yet there are others who also know of his intention and are determined to prevent him falling into the hands of his enemies, whose interests lie in deceiving the people. When the moment comes, Higgs jumps to his feet and dramatically denounces Prof. Hanky and his sermon - "You lying hound...I am the Sunchild, and you know it." Unfortunately, since he is still heavily disguised, hardly any of the ordinary folk he has hoped to persuade to believe him, but at least his friends are able to ensure his escape, and as he leaves Erewhon by the high pass through which he has arrived, he pauses to discuss with his son the future of Sunchildism:

"If they stick to the cock-and-bull stories they are telling now, and rub them in, as Hanky did on Sunday, it may go, and go soon. It has taken root too quickly and easily; and its top is too heavy for its roots; still, there are so many chances in its favour that it may last a long time."

"(Hanky)...will brazen it out, relic and all; and he will welcome more relics and cock-and-bull stories; his single eye will be upon his own aggrandizement and that of his order...."

"...As in our English body politic there are two parties opposed to each other, neither of which can thrive if the other is unduly weakened, so in our spiritual and intellectual world two parties more or less antagonistic are equally necessary. Those who are at the head of science provide us with the one party; those whom we call our churchmen are the other. Both are corrupt, but we can spare neither, for each checks as far as it can the corruption of the other."

"Then you would have us uphold Sunchildism, knowing it to be untrue?"

"Do what you will, you will not get perfect truth. And if you follow the lead which I believe Dr. Downie will give you, that is to say, get rid of cock-and-bull stories, idealize my unworthy self, and, as I said last night, make me a peg on which to hang your own best thoughts, Sunchildism will be as near truth as anything you are likely to get..."

Erewhon Revisited, Chap. XXV

One commentator has observed that to Samuel Butler it seemed that, 'God cared little for the individual but a great deal for the race' (14), and Higgs's final observations about Sunchildism do seem like

the tenets of the Bokononism of Cat's Cradle (even if as Vonnegut previously suggested in his The Sirens of Titan complete divine indifference is as likely anything else). The gist of this argument is that the potential for social good is much more important than the bearer or agent of the revelation. In Higgs's case, the benign potential of the symbol may even be more precious than the comparatively uninspiring truth, though such an inference for the devout Butler can only have been another diverting flirtation with a fundamentally heretical belief. Pete Sands, the Christian protagonist of Dick and Zelazny's Deus Irae, has a very clear opinion of the propriety of godhood by acclamation or usurpation:

'I believe you,' Pete said. Then, 'I don't know quite how to put this, though, so I will simply be direct: Do either of the two religions involved in this mean anything to you personally?'

A huge stick snapped between Schuld's hands.

'No,' he said.

'I didn't think so, but I wanted to clear that up first. As you know, one of them means something to me.'

'Obviously.'

'What I am getting at is the fact that we Christians would not be overjoyed at seeing Lufteufel actually represented in that mural.'

'A false religion, a false god, as you would have it. What difference does it make what they stick in their church?'

'Power,' Pete said. 'You can appreciate that. From a strictly temporal standpoint, having the real thing - as they see it - would give them something more. Call it mana. If we suddenly had a piece of the True Cross, it would whip up our zeal a bit, put a little more fire into our activities. You must be familiar with the phenomenon. Call it inspiration.'

Schuld laughed.

'Whatever Tibor paints, they will believe it is the real thing. The results will be the same.'

He wants me to say that I believe in the God of Wrath and am afraid of him, Pete thought. I won't do it.

'Such being the case, we would as soon it were not Lufteufel,' Pete said.

'Why?'

'Because we would look on that as blasphemy, as a mockery of God as we see Him. They would deify not just any man, but the man responsible for all our present woes...'

Deus Irae, pp.177-178.

The pattern and themes first treated by Butler in Erewhon and its

sequel do seem to have become perennial - Deus Irae was co-written in 1976 by Roger Zelazny, author of Lord of Light, and Philip K. Dick. Even if they were dissatisfied with the outcome of their collaboration, this is a well-crafted science fiction story of a grim deus absconditus, one Carleton Luftteufel, whose acolytes - 'philothanes' or lovers of death - venerate him as the merciless instigator of the Third World War:

'I have travelled widely...and I have seen much of the world, both before and after. I lived through the days of the destruction. I saw the cities die, the countryside wilt. I saw the pallor come upon the land. There was still some beauty in the old days, you know. The cities were hectic, dirty places, but at certain moments - usually times of arrival and departure - looking down upon them at night, all lit up, say, from a plane in a cloudless sky - you could almost, for that moment, call up a vision out of St. Augustine. Urbi et Orbi, perhaps, for that clear instant. And once you got away from the towns, on a good day, there was a lot of green and brown, sprinkled with all the other colours, clear running water, sweet air - But the day came. The wrath descended. Sin, guilt, and retribution? The manic psychoses of those entities we referred to as states, institutions, systems - the powers, the thrones, the dominations - the things which perpetually merge with men and emerge from them? Our darkness, externalised and visible? However you look upon these matters, the critical point was reached. The wrath descended. The good, the evil, the beautiful, the dark, the cities, the country - the entire world - all were mirrored for an instant in an upraised blade. The Hand that held the blade was Carleton Luftteufel's. In the moment that it plunged toward our heart, it was no longer the hand of man, but that of the Deus Irae, the God of Wrath Himself. That which remains exists by virtue of His sufferance.

Deus Irae, pp.175-176

By a savage act, Luftteufel emulates and thereby attains an apotheosis of Shiva - not merely a grim canonization as a mass-murderer or genocide, but a veritable deification as the ultimate psychopath. While the Servants of Wrath worship him, others, considering that he "'doesn't deserve a neatly dug hole in the ground, let alone worship,'" would confront him with the consequences of his actions and exact from him the ultimate price for his deeds.

The novel relates the experiences of three travellers whose journeys become linked by a common interest in locating Lufteufel. Their motives are very different. Schuld, the hunter, has distinctly murderous reasons for seeking him. Tibor McMaster the muralist is ostensibly trying to fulfill a commission awarded to him by the Servants of Wrath to paint the true likeness of their Deus Irae, but Pete Sands has been directed by his superior to frustrate McMaster's commission. The three meet up after Tibor is marooned when one of the wheels of his cow-drawn cart comes off. The artist is an 'inc' or phocomelic artist whose congenital handicaps are, like the talking meta-bird ('a teilhard de chardin'15), the deranged autofac(tory) and the brisk, loquacious dung beetles (who worship 'Veedoubleyou', a 'god' in their own image) legacies of Lufteufel's technological armageddon. His journey, and by association those of his rescuers, has become a quest through the shattered post-apocalyptic landscape with deliberately religious connotations - a 'Pilg.'

Tibor has already been the victim of the sardonic God of Wrath's abuse. While this theophany or glimpse of god (the centrepiece of Chapter 12) proves that Lufteufel has paranormal abilities and more-than-human powers, Tibor, a former Servant of Wrath on the point of converting to "'the defeated, vestigial religion'" of Christianity, is made acutely aware of the less-than-exalting viciousness of the deified psychopath (16) - an especially vile charisma. Desperately seeking release from the awful prospect of a lingering death marooned in the wastelands, Tibor beseeches both the Christian God and the God of Wrath to intervene. Just as he has given up in disgust at the lack of response - 'To hell with it, he decided. They never come when you want them' - Lufteufel's visage appears monstrously in the sky above:

The disc above him grew into a more formed - but still plastic - state. He could make out features on its surface; eyes, a mouth, ears, tangled hair. The mouth was screaming at him, but he could not make out the words. 'What?' he said, still gazing upwards. He saw now that the face was angry, at him. What had he done to displease it? He did not even know who or what it was.

'You mock at me!' the shifting, vibrating, weepy face roared. 'I am a candle to you, a dim light leading into light. See what I can do to save you if I wish. How easy it is.' The mouth of the face bubbled with words. 'Pray!' the face demanded. 'On your hands and knees!'

'But,' Tibor said, 'I have no hands or knees.'

'It is mine to do,' the great lit-up face said. Tibor all at once found himself lifted upwards, then set down hard, on the grass by the cart. Legs. He was kneeling. He saw the long mobile forms, two of them, supporting him. He saw, too, his arms and hands, on which the top portion of his frame rested. And his feet.

'You,' Tibor gasped, 'are Carleton Lufteufel.' Only the God of Wrath could do what had just been achieved.

'Pray!' the face instructed.

Tibor said, mumbling his words, 'I have never mocked the greatest entity in the universe. I beg not for forgiveness, but for understanding. If you knew me better -'

'I know you, Tibor,' the face declared.

'Not really. Not completely. I am a complex person, and theology itself is complex, these days. I have done no worse than anyone else; in fact much better than most. Do you understand that I am on a Pilg, searching for your physical identity, so that I can paint -'

'I know,' the God of Wrath interrupted. 'I know what you know and a great many more things besides. I sent the bird. I caused you to travel close enough to the worm so that he would come out and try to gnaw on you. Do you understand that? It was I who made your right front wheel bearings go out. You have been in my power all this time. Throughout your Pilg.'

Deus Irae, pp.132-133.

Tibor, overcoming his amazement at suddenly finding himself hale in limb, opportunistically snaps Lufteufel to test the reality of this experience, and to preserve a record of his face for the mural he is to complete. However, the God of Wrath is angered by McMaster's impudence and, after destroying the photograph, once again consigns McMaster to his cart after depriving him of the limbs which, for a few seconds, have made him whole - "'restitution for an entire life led in this useless condition.'" Yet for all his miraculous powers

and awesome, capricious sadism, this "God" seems insecure and vulnerable. Human weaknesses such as vanity, hostility, suspicion and fear of death characterize his exchange with McMaster, betraying the limitations of his assumed divinity:

'Do you see?' the God of Wrath demanded. 'Do you understand what I can do?'

Tibor grated, 'Yes.'

'Will you terminate your Pilg?'

'I - ' He hesitated. 'No,' he said after a pause. 'Not yet. The bird said - '

'I was that bird. I know what I said.' The God's anger softened, momentarily anyhow.' The bird led you close to me; close enough for me to greet you myself, as I wanted to. As I had to. I have two bodies. One you are seeing now; it is eternal, incorruptible, like the body Christ appeared in after the resurrection. When Timothy met him and pushed his hand into Christ's womb.'

'Side,' Tibor said. 'Into his side. And it was Thomas.'

The God of Wrath darkened, cloudily; his features began to become transparent. 'You have seen this guise,' the God of Wrath declared. 'This body. But there is also another body, a physical body which grows old and decays...a corruptible body, as Paul put it. You must not find that.'

'Do you think I'll destroy it?' Tibor said.

'Yes.' The face disappeared, barely speaking its last word.

Deus Irae, p.134

Significantly, at the height of the crisis Tibor begs not forgiveness, but understanding - the distinctive response of post-Renaissance, indeed post-lapsarian Man for whom there are few if any absolute moral touchstones - "'I have done no worse than anyone else,'" he pleads. Whatever is asserted in Heaven, in the confusing sublunary world the only possible moral criteria are comparative - relativistic rather than absolute. This, and its attendant moral uncertainty, are aptly demonstrated by Tibor's reflection on his own inability to strike back at his tormentor ('the bastard,' as he thinks of him):

The God of Wrath had personality; he was not a force. Sometimes he laboured for the good of man, and back in the war days, he had virtually annihilated mankind. He had to be propitiated.

That was the key. Sometimes the God of Wrath descended to do good; at other times, evil. I could kill him if he was acting out of malice...

Grandiose, he ruminated. The pride, hubris. The 'all puffed up' syndrome. It's not for me, he decided. I have always lain low. Somebody else, a Lee Harvey Oswald type, can go in for the big kills. The ones that really mattered.

Deus Irae, p.135.

For all his innate disinclination towards hubris, Tibor is not immune to the visionary despair which has afflicted humanity since time immemorial, mythologised in Christian terms as the Adamic temptation - 'I could be so much more!'(p.136) Whatever else Deus Irae may also be, it is clearly science fiction of aspiration.

The late Philip K.Dick had a long-evident interest in using science fiction to explore religious issues and questions of belief. In Our Friends from Frolix-8(1970), for instance, one learns on page 50 that what is taken for the vast rotting corpse of God has been found floating off a little-visited asteroid. While increasingly apparent in the sequence of recent novels The Divine Invasion, Valis, Radio Free Albemuth and his last novel, The Transmigration of Timothy Archer (1986), this interest in the nature and purpose of human existence - the ontology and teleology of being and aspiration - has long distinguished his fiction. In an extraordinarily direct and candid late discussion of his ideas and career(17), he emphasized his own commitment to apostate rather than orthodox values:

Death makes me mad. Human and animal suffering makes me mad; whenever one of my cats dies I curse God and I mean it; I feel fury at him. I'd like to get him here where I could interrogate him, tell him I think the world is screwed up, that man didn't sin and fall but was pushed - which is bad enough - but was then sold the lie that he is basically sinful, which I know he is not.

His stories often have a distinctly sceptical ambience. In one of his more recent novels, VALIS, he offers the secular theory of theophany discussed later in this chapter; and in his penultimate novel, Radio

Free Albemuth (a sort of sequel to VALIS in which the author appears as "Horselover Fat" - 'Philip') he plays with the idea of author-as-god, intercedes for a friend's life and comically renounces the authorship of his own books! Dick was an agnostic rather than an atheist; his work is always colourful and often autobiographical. Both the frequent scenarios of drug-addiction and the pervasive sense of vulnerability are the products of personal experience heightened by the paranoia his friends recall. His mental distress may have been made more acute by the Federal surveillance he attracted in the 1950s and 1960s, the years of Red witch-hunting, and of anti-Vietnam agitation. In all his fiction, 'the times are more or less out of joint,' as Butler put it. Brian Aldiss pays tribute to the sophistication of Dick's ideas:

Philip K. Dick, for all his pulp origins and pulp trimmings, is an intellectual - one of the Pirandello school. In his novels, things are never quite what they seem. Between life and death lie the many shadow lands of Dick, places of hallucination, perceptual sumps, cloacae of half life, paranoid states, tomb worlds and orthodox hells. All his novels are one novel, a fatidical A la recherche du temps perfide.

This multidextrous work is elegant, surprising, and witty, spilling out disconcerting artifacts, scarecrow people, exiles, street-wise teenage girls, Faberge animals, robots with ill consciences and bizarre but friendly aliens. Dick published nineteen novels during the sixties, many for paperback, and as a result some are hastily written.

18.

Aldiss counts four of these novels among 'the finest novels of the decade', including The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch(1964) in which 'Dick hits the true apocalyptic note'; and Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?(1968) with its bleak soteriological revelation - "There is no salvation." If much of Dick's work is unmistakeably commercial and entertainingly gimcrack, it is also renowned for its wry humour, thoughtful themes, and an interest in commonplace human concerns as well as the grandiose, abstract or cosmic considerations

which are familiar landmarks in the realm of science fiction.

Dick does not always hesitate to postulate the possible existence of an evil deity, but his correlation of form, or organisation (with its connotations of system and harmony), with good, and formlessness or chaos with evil, is consistent. It's the fight against entropy, and Dick sees the enemy everywhere, even in the steady accumulation of 'kipple', or useless objects, like junk mail or empty match folders, in an apartment. In A Maze of Death the antagonist is the Form Destroyer; in Ubik the breakdown of the rational order of the world occurs in a state of "half-life" after death, where a malevolent entity preys on the life force... Life is a function of organisation; the vital, creative force is negentropic, in opposition to the entropic tendencies of the universe at large.

19.

Dick's The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch (1964) affords a contrast which reveals the essential naivety of Butler's mischievous inference that untruths promoted for religious purposes are acceptable means of regulating morality. Dick is fond of probing the weak spots of social consensus in his often devastatingly effective narratives. For instance, in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (filmed as Bladerunner), he depicts a future world threatened by its own synthetic prodigies. The Frankenstein motif is most effectively merged with an anti-utopian story of frustrated aspiration in a world dominated by synthetic or vicarious experience, and an apocalyptic epiphany in which Mercer reveals to Rick Deckard that salvation is not universal.

In The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch Dick offers a fuller depiction than in Deus Irae of the apotheosis of an anti-Christ, the religious aspects of the story being announced by the title and maintained throughout with many religious analogies and allusions. An ingenious novel ('my really insane novel,' he later called it 20) which ambitiously projects surrealistic inner landscapes in seeking to evoke the elusive, abstract quality of a genuinely transcendental

experience, it also deals with ecological disaster, imaginary technologies and interplanetary space travel. Even when his theological concerns prompt the introduction of speculative ideas about mankind's spiritual confusion his fiction retains its clarity and force:

'Is it a curse?' Anne asked. 'I mean, we have the account of an original curse of God; is it like that all over again?'

'You ought to be the one who knows; you remember what you saw. All three stigmata - the dead, artificial hand, the Jensen eyes, and the radically deranged jaw.' Symbols of its inhabitation, he thought. In our midst. But not asked for. Not intentionally summoned. And - we have no mediating sacraments through which to protect ourselves; we can't compel it, by our careful, time-honoured, clever, painstaking rituals, to confine itself to specific elements such as bread and water or bread and wine. It is out in the open, ranging in every direction. It looks into our eyes; and it looks out of our eyes.

'It's a price,' Anne decided. 'That we must pay. For our desire to undergo that drug experience with that Chew-Z. Like the apple originally.' Her tone was shockingly bitter.

'Yes,' he agreed, 'but I think I already paid it.' Or came within a hair of paying it, he decided. That thing which we know only in its Terran body, wanted to substitute me at the instant of its destruction; instead of God dying for man, as we once had, we faced - for a moment - a superior - the superior power asking us to perish for it.

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, pp.194-195

Permanently exiled from Earth, the hapless colonists on arid, infertile Mars live in subterranean dwellings and temporarily escape from the awful reality which surrounds them by taking a hallucinogenic drug, Can-D. Under its influence, they achieve a state of virtual identity with the miniature figures of Perky Pat and Walt ("Barbie" dolls, more or less) which, installed in a suitable layout of models of luxurious terrestrial goods, are imagined pursuing all manner of dazzling and fulfilling, even erotic, adventures. However, there is a special dimension to this vicarious play which the colonists pursue with ludicrous and indeed pathetic dedication. The sense of exaltation they experience when in the trance-like state

induced by the drug is heightened by group participation, and so this idealized conjuration of their former terrestrial lifestyles has become for them a sort of sacramental communion in which at least some are prepared to place complete faith:

'I believe,' Fran said slowly...

'that whether it's a play of imagination, of drug-induced hallucination, or an actual translation from Mars to Earth-as-it-was by an agency we know nothing of -It should be a purifying experience. We lose our fleshly bodies, our corporeality, as they say. And put on imperishable bodies instead, for a time anyhow. Or forever, if you believe it's outside of time and space, that it's eternal. Don't you agree, Sam?' She sighed. 'I know you don't.'

'Spirituality,' he said with disgust as he fished up the packet of Can-d from its cavity beneath the compartment. 'A denial of reality, and what do you get instead? Nothing.'

'I admit,' Fran said as she came closer to watch him open the packet, 'that I can't prove you get anything better back, due to [sexual] abstention. But I do know this. What you and other sensualists among us don't realize is that when we chew Can-d and leave our bodies we die. And by dying we lose the weight of -' she hesitated.

'Say it,' Sam said as he opened the packet; with a knife he cut a strip from the mass of brown, tough, plant-like fibers.

Fran said, 'Sin.'

Sam Regan howled with laughter. 'Okay - at least you're orthodox.' Because most colonists would agree with Fran.

Palmer Eldritch, p.41
(slightly abridged; [] understood)

The colonists' communal transcendental fantasy is in fact more repressive than liberating, for their dependence upon Can-D means that they form an almost literally "captive" market for the cartel which sells both the models and the illicit drug itself. Even if these items are a source of sacred elation for the colonists, they are merely lucrative commodities to the businessmen who work for Leo Bulero. The contraband hallucinogen Can-D and the 'minned' models are exchanged for whatever largesse the colonists can offer, and every opportunity to maintain, indeed extend their commercial exploitation is taken. If the aspiration of a large group of people is rigidly controlled by the U.N. world government who, in trying to cope with a

Malthusian global catastrophe exacerbated by an accelerating, disastrous 'greenhouse effect' have ordered them there, the drug company which cynically exploits their religious sentiments compounds their predicament. Neither the heaven of a privileged life on their native planet which they crave, nor the hell of an unmitigated existence on dreary Mars, but a limbo of vicarious, illusory living is the colonists' lot. This anti-utopian scenario suggests those in Huxley, Orwell, and Vonnegut; but when Palmer Eldritch returns from the Prox system, he brings with him the secret of a similar but more potent drug developed by the aliens. As he calmly tells his arch-rival Leo Bulero, a radical worsening of mankind's difficulty is probably just around the corner:

'In four years on Prox I learned a lot. Six years in transit, four in residence. The Proxers are going to invade Earth.'

'You're putting me on,' Leo said.

Eldritch said, 'I can understand your reaction. The U.N... reacted in the same way. But it's true - not in the conventional sense, of course, but in a deeper, coarser manner that I don't quite get, even though I was among them for so long. It may be involved with Earth's heating up, for all I know. Or there may be worse to come.'

'Let's talk about that lichen you brought back.'

'I obtained that illegally; the Proxers didn't know I took any of it. They use it themselves, in religious orgies. As our Indians made use of mescal and peyotl...

Palmer Eldritch, p.70

During the course of the commercial warfare which develops between Bulero's cartel and Eldritch's newly-formed marketing group the former monopolists learn that the new drug 'Chew-Z' is extremely dangerous because it is so effective that only a few doses can bring to its users the conviction that the hypnoid world they enter under its influence is more "real" than the actual world which their bodies remain in; and soon, unable to distinguish between the two, they become trapped in the fantastic, illusory plane. As Eldritch boasts,

his advantage over Bulero is colossal:

'God,' Eldritch said, 'promises eternal life. I can do better; I can deliver it.'

'Deliver it how?' Trembling and weak with relief [after the restoration of normal space-time], Leo dropped to the grassy soil, seated himself, and gasped for breath.

'Through the lichen which we're marketing under the name Chew-Z,' Eldritch said. 'It bears very little resemblance to your own product, Leo. Can-D is obsolete, because what does it do? Provides a few moments of escape, nothing but fantasy. Who wants it? Who needs that when they can get the genuine thing from me?'

Palmer Eldritch, p.80

Once firmly caught up in the surreal universe of the Chew-Z trip, the drug-taker discovers Eldritch's true nature. Far from being the messianic liberator whose stigmata attest his selfless sacrifice, he is revealed to be a traitorous anti-Christ whose tempting drug bestows not the promised exaltation, but damnation and despair. His ambiguous stigmata (steel prostheses which been substituted for his injured eyes, teeth and arm) are the external symbols of his inward deformity, cruel parodies of authentic stigmata and their promise of redemption which allude to Eldritch's own Faustian aspiration and lapse, reminiscent in many ways of Rumfoord's in The Sirens of Titan. The transfiguration Eldritch's Chew-Z brings does seem genuinely transcendental, as a desperately confused Barney Mayerson reflects at a decisive moment of changing loyalties:

If it was good enough for Palmer Eldritch it was good enough for him. Because Eldritch had lived many lives; there had been a vast, reliable wisdom contained within the substance of the man or creature, whatever it was. The fusion of him with Eldritch during translation had left a mark on him, a brand for perpetuity; it was a form of absolute awareness. He wondered, then, if Eldritch had gotten anything back from him in exchange. Did I have something worth his knowing? he asked himself. Insights? Moods or memories or values?

Good question. The answer, he decided, was no. Our opponent, something admittedly ugly and foreign that entered one of our race like an ailment during the long voyage between Terra and Prox....and yet it knew much more than I did about the meaning of our finite lives, here; it saw in perspective. From its centuries of vacant drifting as it waited for some kind of

life form to drift by which it could grab and become....maybe that's the source of its knowledge: not experience but unending solitary brooding. And in comparison I knew - had done - nothing.

Palmer Eldritch, pp.188-189

What Barney is weighing up is the authenticity and value of what seems to be a sort of theophany which he can enjoy while in the surreal drug universe. There is also that 'form of absolute awareness' akin or analogous to divine omniscience which the hubrist has always craved: Faustus, having mastered the sublunary, coveted the cosmic knowledge denied Man by his creator, and his modern literary offspring - evil and humane - have inherited his characteristic thirst for knowledge. The suspension of normal space-time and the intensely-perceived 'reality' which seems more compelling and vivid than that of the diurnal, Euclidean universe left behind by the drug-taker is, as Angus Taylor has noted, almost a hallmark of Philip K.Dick's work:

Beyond the well-charted territory of human experience, then, are realms fraught with danger. If the alien presence is often the manifestation of a higher order, then the higher order, that reality which lies beyond satisfactory human comprehension, is not necessarily hospitable to the human presence. This concept, which plays a prominent role in The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, is made even more explicit and dramatically concise in "Faith of Our Fathers", where God is portrayed as evil, or at least utterly inhuman, and is identified with the forces of destruction. Here Dick is treating the mysterious as grounds for speculation, rather than making any statement of belief. In an afterword to this short story he says, "I, myself, have no real beliefs about God; only my experience that He is present...subjectively, of course; but the inner realm is real, too. And in a science fiction story one projects what has been a personal inner experience into a milieu; it becomes socially shared, hence discussable."

21.

In these indeterminate zones, moral values seem neither absolute nor immutable, but shifting and transitory, even ephemeral. However Anne, the Neo-Christian apologist, is not taken in by Eldritch's offers of

'eternal life' through Chew-Z:

Anne said, 'What met Eldritch and entered him, what we're confronting, is a being superior to ourselves and as you say we can't judge it or make sense out of what it does or what it wants; it's mysterious and beyond us. But I know you're wrong, Barney. Something which stands with empty, open hands is not God. It's a creature fashioned by something higher than itself, as we were; God wasn't fashioned and He isn't puzzled.'

'I felt,' Barney said, 'about him a presence of the deity. It was there.'

'..Don't tell us, Barney, that whatever entered Palmer Eldritch is God, because you don't know that much about Him; no one can. But that living entity from inter-system space may, like us, be shaped in His image. A way he selected of showing us Himself to us. If the map is not the territory, the pot is not the potter. So don't talk ontology, Barney, don't say is.'

Palmer Eldritch, pp.192-193
(abridged)

Barney's final meeting with Eldritch is a denouement; not God, nor even a Mephistophelean tormentor, the entity possessing Eldritch is in fact a sort of alien Frankenstein (or, pace Aldiss, Miltonic Satan²²) capable of creating hallucinatory worlds which it uses to ensnare 'trippers' who then must grant it the veneration and propitiation it craves. "'I'm going to be all the colonists as they arrive and begin to live there [Mars]. I'll guide their civilization. I'll be their civilization.'"(p.181) It is itself an outcast; we may infer that it is itself in thrall to a superior being, a psychotic Prometheus exiled by another Zeus, perhaps, or some other sort of demonic creator, a fellow to Lucifer but one able to create a world of votaries to rival that of the Christian God who decreed that most humbling, even nugatory teleology of Man. The purpose of human life is to love God, God above and to the exclusion of all else, if possible, and be obedient to His Will - anathema to the hubrist, but the cornerstone of Christian devotion. Eldritch's dominion would deprive people of the right even to physical autonomy:

'I'd like to know,' Barney said, 'what you were trying to do when you introduced Chew-Z to our people.'

'Perpetuate myself,' the creature opposite him said quietly. He glanced up, then. 'A form of reproduction?'

'Yes, the only way I can.'

With overwhelming aversion Barney said, 'My God. We would all have become your children.'

'Don't fret about it now, Mr. Mayerson,' it said, and laughed in a jovial, humanlike way. 'Just tend your little garden up top, get your water system going. Frankly I long for death; I'll be glad when Leo Bulero does what he's already contemplating....'

Palmer Eldritch, pp.198-199

In more traditional narratives, moral virtue - whether acknowledged or not - is generally recognizable. The protagonist in Christian fiction can be sure that the truth will be vindicated by Providence. Higgs selflessly recognizes a potentially fatal duty to expose the cynical Erewhonian theosophers' cult of the Sunchild. Indeed, some critics may be misled by the very tentativeness of the moral vision of Dick's work into deciding that it is devoid of any sustained moral drama:

Science fiction usually treats the synthetic experience as dehumanizing. Yet sometimes writers avoid a moral position...

Synthetic experiences are the bricks and mortar of Philip K. Dick's The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch. Earth colonists on extraterrestrial planets (sic) find relief from their painfully boring lives by hallucinating themselves into the playworld of children's dolls. Dick's plot revolves around the conflict between the merchants of the prevailing hallucinogen and Palmer Eldritch, the inventor of a superior one. Eldritch's drug provides the user with virtual immortality, enabling him to leave his body, assume any shape, person, and circumstance for as long he wishes - and then return to his own body without time having passed. ...Dick confines himself to exotica here and does not address himself to the morality of living the unreal... (the book presumes) that man is naturally addicted to escaping himself.

23.

Harold Berger's summation neglects Anne's role completely, and quite misses the point of Dick's oblique approach to moral issues.

Barney, by contrast with the likes of Ransom, for instance, wishes to extricate himself from the welter of surreal cross-currents

which have destabilized his life and threaten his very survival; it is only at the last moment that he apperceives and acknowledges an intrinsic impetus strong enough to overcome his apathy and fatalism and thence re-direct his energies and will to confront the weird pilgrim.

A sort of minimalist moral certainty may triumph in The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, but only after the 'hero' has established what is moral by experiencing a fathomless moral void. Even so, Dick is too astute an author to settle for a pat resolution; the moral vision which Barney has attained is partial and far from reassuring:

Maybe Anne can do something for me, he thought suddenly. Maybe there are methods to restore one to the original condition - dimly remembered, such as it was - before the late and acute contamination set in. He tried to remember but he knew so little about Neo-Christianity. Anyhow it was worth a try; it suggested there might be hope, and he was going to need that in the years ahead.

After all, the creature residing in deep space which had taken the form of Palmer Eldritch bore some relationship to God; if it was not God, as he himself had decided, then at least it was a portion of God's Creation. So some of the responsibility lay on Him. And, it seemed to Barney, He was probably mature enough to recognize this.

Getting Him to admit, though. That might be something else again.

However, it was still worth talking to Anne Hawthorne; she might know of techniques for accomplishing even that.

But he somehow doubted it. Because he held a terrifying insight, simple, easy to think and utter, which perhaps applied to himself and those around him, this situation.

There was such a thing as salvation. But -
Not for everyone.

Palmer Eldritch, pp.199-200

It would be well within the realm of the novel's premises to infer that Barney's conclusion is itself unreliable, and that God is not a jealous, aloof being beyond human ken, though treacherous demi-urges are allowed to test the human integrity and the human will. In fact, part of the success of Dick's novel lies in its very incon-

clusiveness - like the world itself, the novel can be read from a variety of angles, none, not even the hints of an alternative, agnostic teleology, being directly ruled out by the author. The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch is a cosmic comedy - or a cosmic tragedy - with a variety of possible resolutions available to the reader, even if the note of soteriological despair sounded above advances the latter perspective most poignantly. A complex, allegorical work by an author who freely translates or transforms Christian moral tenets in constructing his fictive moral dilemmas and dramas, the novel advances disturbing inferences which remind one forcefully that modern religious belief is as much a matter of faith - often troubled faith, like Anne's - as it is certitude about revelation, salvation and Providence, for despite the imputed immanence of God, the Creator seems recondite and aloof. By contrast, Heinlein's brisk comedy of redemption, Stranger in a Strange Land(1961) seems obvious in its message and morals and simplistic in its theosophy. By comparison with his two rather facile offerings The Day After Tomorrow(1949) and Revolt in 2100(1953) discussed previously, Stranger in a Strange Land is a more sustained essay in religious science fiction. This compendious novel tells of the reception given by American society (as projected into the near future) to the beliefs and activities of Michael Valentine Smith, a 'promethean' messiah born on Mars:

Another recurring myth is the myth of the rebellious angel. In Greek mythology it was Prometheus, who brought fire to man and for this boon was doomed to eternal torment by Zeus. The story of Jesus changed the bringer of the boon to mankind to the emissary, not the adversary of God and his torments were caused by other human beings, jealous of his divinity.

24.

The distinction between Prometheus and Christ is emphasized in the science fiction of aspiration. Not God's emissary, obedient to

his will, but his adversary, rebellious, confident and hubristic, the promethean messiahs of science fiction defy the creator who ordained that they inherit the earth when they aspire to the stars and chafe at the religious injunctions against knowing which the devout accept. Butler's Higgs is not a promethean, and is a messiah in name only - a most convenient and direct authorial strategy. Butler's irony depends on the reader's understanding that Higgs's apotheosis, the result of credulous acclamation, cannot possibly be seen as real. Robert Heinlein's Valentine Michael Smith ostensibly represents an attempt to depict a hybrid, a messiah who seems Christian but is also described as promethean:

Robert Heinlein in Stranger in a Strange Land has put this myth into science-fiction terms. His Christ figure is a human being, Valentine Michael Smith, born and brought up on Mars, who is brought back to Earth where he founds a new religion. Among the religious rites is the baptismal symbol in which people become water brothers and learn to "grok" each other. Smith, like Jesus, has extraordinary powers. He is able to go into a trance, disincorporate himself and other people, and to read with electronic speed.

Smith is referred to as a new Prometheus, who wants to bring a better world to man. Although his superior powers are sufficient to keep him from harm, he permits his crucifixion (by stoning) secure in the knowledge that his disciples will carry on his work.

25.

The device of the factitious religion is used in Stranger in a Strange Land much as it was in the earlier The Sirens of Titan: to create two contrasting parodies of religious sects, one of which is the personality cult which develops around a charismatic messiah and ultimately challenges the dominance of the established, traditional religion. While Vonnegut's is the more original work, Heinlein's made a tremendous impression, chiefly because he eschewed the more complex philosophical issues Vonnegut broached and instead came up with a sensationalistic rather than apocalyptic parable of apotheosis,

presented in his own inimitable style - headlong, incident-ridden narrative sprinkled with cross-grained digressions about values and sense.

No less a luminary than James Blish, author of the acclaimed A Case of Conscience and, as William Atheling, a critic renowned for the balanced appreciation and incisive comment of his reviews, concluded six pages of perceptive discussion of this work with an ambiguous profession of 'satisfaction' that he is not its author, observing that, 'for all its unknowable and/or visible omissions, (it) is as provocative, difficult and outré a science fiction novel as Heinlein has ever given us.' (26) Atheling finds the novel flawed by Heinlein/Harshaw's ubiquitous and intrusive aesthetic discourse, but concentrates on its problematic lack of a coherent metaphysical rationale. Early in his precis Atheling gives up the unequal struggle to summarise Heinlein's novel, which, he has previously noted, 'seems crowded, and for good reason: it is about everything.' Instead, he sets about discussing its central subject-matter:

At this point, I am going to abandon the plot, which has already developed as many knots as a gill-net, and which in any event can be depended upon to take care of itself. It goes, as good Heinlein plots always do, and this is a good one. Now, however, I think I have reached a position from which to characterize the novel: it is religious.

No communicant to a currently established religion is likely to think it anything but blasphemous, but its dominant subject is religion, and its intellectual offerings and innovations are primarily religious too. The sex, the politics, the sciences, the action, all are essentially contributory; the religious material is central. The religion is a synthetic one, of which Smith is the Messiah (or perhaps only the prophet), and the main task of the novel is to show it as sane, desirable and exalting - in contrast to both the systems of large established orders such as Islam and traditional Christianity (toward all of which Heinlein is sympathetic and apparently well informed) and those of highly commercial enterprises like the Californian nut-cults (some features of which, with Smith's Martian assistance, he also manages to view with at least moderate tolerance).

Heinlein-Smith's eclectic religion is a fascinating pot-pourri...it contains something for everybody, or bravely gives that appearance, though by the same token it contains something repulsive for everybody too.

27.

Like Higgs, Smith is a proclaimed messiah, but unlike Butler, Heinlein requires the reader to accept him as such as an opening premise, his apotheosis being behind him when he is introduced to us, though Heinlein illustrates his charisma tirelessly. Michael Valentine Smith, promethean 'messiah' who would reform mankind, begins as a displaced person, becomes a sort of Sancho Panza and then a satiric Gulliver, and ends as the self-immolating scapegoat for mankind's veniality. His uncanny powers - catalepsy, telekinesis, walking on water, volitional euthanasia - are really those of a magical Ubermensch (a cat called Neitzche also enters the story briefly) rather than a hubrist. Smith is more like Faust the cheeky assailant of Popes than a Renaissance Icarus. Nonetheless, it is a tribute to Heinlein's considerable ability to stretch one's idea of the possible and plausibly credible that critics defer to Heinlein's opening scenario of extraterrestrials and rockets and have viewed the novel as science fiction as opposed to gnostic fantasy. His author has endowed Smith with powers which outrage the epistemology of the world which is foregrounded - modern America - without offering much perceptible justification where authors like Vonnegut, Clarke, Dick, Herbert, Bishop and Watson among many others have done. Blish continues:

The final question I would like to raise - not the final one raised by the novel, not by a thousand - is that of the metaphysics of Heinlein-Smith's system....

...it can hardly be deemed unfair to ask of a science fiction writer, who starts from assumptions about the nature of the real world which are as sophisticated as modern knowledge allows (this is not true of most of us, but it is true of Heinlein, at least by pure and consistent intention). In Stranger in a Strange Land he enforces the current acceptances of modern (scientific) metaphysics by beginning every

major section with an author-omniscient review of how these events look in the eye¹⁹⁶¹ of eternity; furthermore, he is scornful throughout of anybody (read, boobs) who does not accept this specific body of metaphysics.

So it is fair to ask him about the metaphysics of his proposed system; and it is, to say the best of it, a shambles. Smith appears on the scene able to work miracles, as is fitting for a prophet; in fact, he can work every major miracle, and most of the minor ones, which are currently orthodox in Campbellian science fiction. [Here gives a very long list of Smith's unusual faculties and abilities.] My point is not that this catalogue is ridiculous - though it surely is - but that Heinlein the science fiction does not anywhere offer so much as a word of rational explanation for any one of these powers. They are all given, and that's that.

The more general features of the system fare equally badly.

28.

One realizes that Stranger in a Strange Land is not a profound book; we have Heinlein at his sunniest and most wry. According to Brian Aldiss, the original title was The Heretic and Valentine Michael Smith certainly does advance what were taken for amoral or subversive ideas about personal conduct and social values, embracing homicide, free love, and ritual cannibalism. It soon became a 'cult' book (having first been an 'underground' success as a harbinger of both the emergent counter-culture, and the decade's 'New Wave' of audacious and inventive science fiction. Heinlein depicts the materialistic American religious institutions of the near future, explaining the mechanism of exploitation in great detail⁽²⁹⁾, as well as offering caustic judgements about the Nation, such as:

The Reverend Foster, self-ordained - or ordained by God, depending on authority cited - had an instinct for the pulse of his times stronger than that of a skilled carnie sizing up a mark. The culture known as "America" had a split personality throughout its history. Its laws were puritanical; its covert behavior tended to be Rabelaisian; its major religions were Appollonian; its revivals were almost Dionysian. In the twentieth century (Terran Christian Era) nowhere on earth was sex so vigorously suppressed - and nowhere was there such a deep interest in it.

Stranger in a Strange Land, p.267.

In the background of Smith's iconoclastic career through mundane institutions and values is a larger scheme, a spiritual hierarchy in which human nature is placed below the Old Ones of Mars and Smith himself, who in turn are somewhat junior in cosmic power to another spiritual realm which 'discorporated' spirits enter after death. In the human realm, Smith may be an heretical iconoclast, but he has nothing negative to say about his Martian mentors. No hubrist he, for he doesn't defy these or any other gods; in the event he turns out to be their proxy - not their prophet, for unusually Heinlein eschews speculation about the future of the world until the last page, when he closes with a trite sentiment about the future of the vigorous human race: '...by the time they would slowly get around to it, it would be highly improbable approaching impossible that the Old Ones would be able to destroy this weirdly complex race.'(p.400) In fact, so benevolent is Heinlein's cosmogony that even the bigoted, asinine Bishop Digby is afforded a place in a Heaven that deliberately resembles a religious corporation. Down on the third planet, the novel's two contrasting factitious sects are the exploitative, materialistic Fosterite Church of Bishop Digby, and the professedly unconventional group who venerate Heinlein's 'man from Mars.'

The orphaned, sole survivor of the ill-fated first expedition to Mars, Smith is adopted and brought up among their own offspring by the enigmatic Martian 'Old Ones' who also school him in their contemplative, rationalistic philosophy-cum-religion while helping him to develop a variety of extraordinary abilities. Throughout the novel, the Old Ones of Mars offer a mature contrast to mankind's cosmic parochialism and relative primitivism. If humanity is excited about the contact between the two worlds, the Martians have more

important events to reflect on, such as how to deal with a work of art made unique by the unexpected demise of the artist:

Mars, geared unlike Earth, paid little attention to the Envoy and the Champion. The events were too recent to be significant - if Martians had used newspapers, one edition a Terran century would have been ample. Contact with other races was nothing new to Martians; it had happened before, would happen again. When another race was thoroughly grokked, then (in a Terran millenium or so) would be time for action, if needed.

.....

On Mars the current event was of a different sort.

By what standards should this opus be judged? It bridged from corporate to discorporate; its final form has been set throughout by an Old One - yet the artist, with the detachment of all artists everywhen, had not noticed the change in his status and had continued to work as if corporate. Was it a new sort of art? Could more such pieces be produced by surprise discorporation of artists while they were working? The Old Ones had been discussing the exciting possibilities in ruminative rapport for centuries and all corporate Martians were eagerly awaiting their verdict.

The question was of greater interest because it was religious art (in the Terran sense) and strongly emotional: it described contact between the Martian Race and the people of the fifth planet, an event that had happened long ago but which was alive and important to Martians in the sense in which one death by crucifixion remained alive and important to humans after two Terran millenia. The Martian Race had encountered the people of the fifth planet, grokked them completely, and had taken action; asteroid ruins were all that remained, save that the Martians continued to cherish and praise the people they had destroyed. This new work of art was one of many attempts to grok the whole beautiful experience in all its complexity in one opus. But before it could be judged it was necessary to grok how to judge it.

It was a pretty problem.

Stranger in a Strange Land, pp.85 & 86.

The abridged passage quoted above typifies the book as a whole, the tone of which slips readily between the comic and the sombre, the pragmatic and the magical, as Heinlein's essay at a transcendental parable strains to be ingenious, entertaining, liberal and yet 'decent' almost simultaneously. The result is that, far from emulating the Stapledon of Star Maker and the Wells of Men like Gods while retaining his own distinctive manner and values, the novelist

rarely engages the reader deeply and sympathetically. Consequently one is left with the impression of a book which, while being genuinely entertaining, is also rather capricious and sprawling and which comes as close to self-parody as parable, with Smith's serenity in the face of daunting dangers ultimately reducing everything to 'a pretty problem' rather than a significant or distressing dilemma. Heinlein's messiah from Mars is, alas, without credentials; Butler's Higgs served as a similar sort of vehicle for authorial moral comment, but where Higgs can worry Smith simply smiles beatifically while occasionally committing magical murders or performing miraculous stunts. If Higgs lacks the charisma this sort of thing provides for Smith, he seems to have some sort of conscience. Whatever its popular success as satire, Stranger in a Strange Land is not an adventurous or radical work in terms of its tradition.

Having been brought to Earth quite against his will by the long-delayed second expedition, Smith is befriended by the garrulous, wealthy, and paternalistic Jubal Harshaw who rescues him from close arrest in a government research centre. Harshaw and his cronies defend Mike's freedom and his extensive financial inheritance (Smith is the sole legitimate human heir to all the mineral riches of Mars) from governmental depredations. Keen to discover at first hand the social reality of the world to which his parents belonged, Smith's encounter with its shady side almost overwhelms him. Yet he does not lapse, and though it is some time before he recovers his equanimity, he goes on to use his exceptional combination of birthrights to establish an utopian community of friends and followers, the beginnings of his Church of All Worlds.

Without Smith's moral endorsement, the counter-cultural life-

style of his group would seem nearly as libertine as that devised by Huxley for his satiric Brave New World, but Smith is a transcendental figure able to sanctify the self-indulgent practices of the community with charismatic utterings and rites. (The parallel can be extended: for though their gospels are inverses of one another, Smith is John's evangelical brother, the outlander advancing truths which the reader views with more sympathy than the dominant ethic of the novel's larger society.) 'Thou art God' is adopted as an everyday greeting by Smith's faithful. Money is stored in bins, and time is devoted to mutual 'grokking;' also, though the group is notionally egalitarian, Harshaw is always referred to as 'Father' even though he is a late convert, and Smith is supposedly the spiritual guru of the group revered by everyone else. This distinction slips, however, and eventually Harshaw, the no-nonsense provider of most of the group's axioms, comes to dominate the narrative, though Smith shares the limelight again towards the end of the novel.

Smith's first utopian group quickly becomes the nucleus of a fast-growing sect committed to combatting what he has declared to be the excessive materialism of human society. The Fosterite Church, set up by Heinlein to be the satirical butt of the novel, exemplifies the garish shallowness and greed Smith abhors.

Black humour and tomfoolery join hands in Mike's visit to the Church of the New Revelation (Fosterite), which bears some resemblance to a commercially resplendent Mormonism. Teenage messengers are "cherubs" with wings who fly by means of "jump harnesses" under their robes. Slot machines give blessings and occasional jackpots - Mike manipulates one to pay off three times in a row for Jubal before Jill stops him - which usually find their way back into the cash registers of the Church. Foster himself has been stuffed and mounted for reverent contemplation, though Mike sees it only as "spoiled food." People are occasionally chosen, like lottery winners, to "go to Heaven" with a "Bon Voyage" party and funeral services held the same night, and their estates go to the Church. And services include snake dances and cheer-

leaders, glossolalia and bar service, stereovision coverage (the big screen shows football games afterward during the season), with hymns sponsored by approved products, door prizes, subsonic vibrations and other electronic gadgetry in a building designed to shake to the foundations for effect when the congregation claps and stamps its approval.

In presenting this scene, Heinlein goes all out, with foreword and afterword by Jubal, explaining, respectively, that churches can get away with anything, and that this one - he fears - might become totalitarian, because it delivers what it promises: happiness here and now. For all that the satirical lash cuts deeply, Jubal is at pains to explain away the outrageousness, reducing the reader's resistance to the unconventional elements that will later appear in Mike's Church.

30.

The clerical hypocrisy described above by David N. Samuelson (who takes the better part of thirty pages faithfully unravelling what he terms the 'farrago' of the novel's wayward structure) is the direct descendant of Butler's Musical Banks of Erewhon; but if Smith is to be seen, as Heinlein himself directed, as a 'new Prometheus', it can only be in terms of the alternative creed - the 'system' lambasted by Blish - which he promotes as a novel, esoteric, humane latter-day Enlightenment or Revelation. The real problem with Heinlein's messiah, of course, is that his revelation is profane, existential and, to a fair degree, quite self-obsessive; Smith's millennial emancipation is from materialism and absurd mores, from guilt rather than its cause, sin. However much Ronald Lee Cansler urges us to see a fundamentalist concern behind Heinlein's invective, Heinlein still cannot be absolved of wrecking most of the Ten Commandments:

One should not assume, however, that Heinlein is mocking all of Christianity. Heinlein obviously admires Christ and has at least some feeling for the message of Christianity: 'Representations of the Crucifixion are usually atrocious - and the ones in churches are worst - blood like catsup and that ex-carpenter portrayed as if He were a pansy... which He certainly was not. He was a hearty man, muscular and healthy. But a poor portrayal is as effective as a good one for most people. They don't see the defects; they see a symbol which inspires their deepest emotions; it recalls to them the Agony and Sacrifice of God'(p.308). What Heinlein is doing is showing a contempt for what he believes to be Christianity's

falling away from the true gospel of Christ. He is also troubled at Man's probable reaction to another chance at a true faith. The name "Michael" means "One who is like God," and Mike becomes a Christ-image in trying to show Man a better way, a religion of truth, self-understanding, and love - salvation. Mike founds a church that is not based on the notion that God is 'something that yearns to take up every indolent moron to His breast and comfort him'(p.400) Instead, Mike sets up a church on a rather pantheistic basis, with the basic creed 'Thou art God,' 'an unafraid unabashed assumption of personal responsibility'(p.400). 31.

This sort of spiritual Workfare is the other side of Heinlein's religious schema, deflecting the charge that Mike's religion promotes indolence and sexual self-indulgence. If Heinlein can claim any sort of Christian impulse for the satire of his novel, we must look for it in the canon of the Church of All Worlds.

Unlike the Fosterite Church, Smith's group has an egalitarian rather than hierarchical structure, a dismissive rather than acquisitive attitude towards money, and a canon of libertarian beliefs which is supposed to be an enlightened combination of the rationalistic sagacity of the Martian 'Old Ones' with human compassion and joy. Moreover, Smith and his disciples enjoy a lifestyle which, in its sexual liberality and indulgence bears a striking resemblance to the institutional, hedonistic religion of Huxley's Brave New World - minus the soma, of course.

Heinlein's sects rarely carry such onerous moral ramifications and questions as this one supports. Clearly contrary to Christian ethics, Smith teaches that morality is really replete with human prejudice rather than reason or sapience. By contrast, the tenets of Smith's sect are grounded in the bedrock of direct messianic revelation. Initiates practice 'grokking essences' reminiscent of 'Boko-maru' of Cat's Cradle, both of which are means of achieving a form of self-transcendence. The key to self-mastery and communion

with others, as well as to mental control over objects and their physical contexts, is understanding the Martian language. Adepts like the inner circle of Harshaw even achieve that most elusive of Wells's Utopian dreams - telepathy - and a variety of other transcendental faculties. Indeed, the inner circle of Smith's immediate friends are allowed a foretaste of heaven; their communal existence is a mundane version of the life-to-come, which is enjoyed among a community of kindred spirits, the ultimate and true destiny of the individual.

The growing popularity of Smith's revelations threatens the dominion of the Fosterite Church. Consequently, the rivalry between the two implicit in Heinlein's thematically polemical opposition of Smith's humanist cult to the corrupt and exploitative Fosterite establishment becomes the major means of carrying forward the narrative. A confrontation ensues between the Fosterites, who, like the rich Pharisees of the Gospels, react to a growing sense of their own insecurity, and Smith's idealistic acolytes. Since the aggression is all one way, Smith's tolerant disciples emerge as the moral victors much as the early Christians exposed the brutality of their persecutors by turning the other cheek.

Smith's claim to promethean stature begins and ends with his ability to liberate his acolytes from their mundane moral sensibility and pass on to them the powers which the Martian Old Ones have conferred on him, their 'alien nestling'. The idea that culture - indeed, language itself - conditions sensibility and faculties is an important one to which further reference will be made in the next section, but in Heinlein's novel it is quite overwhelmed by a torrent of gags, astute moral discourse, gimcrack vignettes, patter and corn-cob philosophy, nearly all of it emanating from Jubal/ Heinlein.

Heinlein, seemingly unable to reconcile the sins and shortcomings of Smith's given character with his symbolic role of divine messiah, simply pares away the humane aspects of Smith's personality until the reader can see only his inhuman purity and the otherworldliness of his Martian values and vision. The reader is meant to take this gradual attenuation of Smith for a gradual apotheosis: ever more aloof and 'cosmically' detached, Smith turns from the pleasures and pursuits of this world in order to prepare for his immolation. Thus, the venial rather than decadent materialism of Smith's acolytes is ratified as being a benign sensual compensation for the vagaries and frustrations of mundane existence, rather as the skinny-dipping and sexual opportunity which goes with participation in the Underground army of Revolt in 2100 is a healthy rather than profane aspect of communal living in distinct contrast to the sybaritic Solidarity Service of Huxley's Brave New World.

More importantly, Smith's apotheosis is really neglected, for Heinlein does not confront the problem of making Smith's transfiguration and assumption seem plausible but expects his reader to simply accept that Smith, selflessly sacrificing himself, is indeed a sort of saviour. He becomes a martyr to save his friends from an angry mob whom he would once simply have 'disincorporated' into oblivion, and it may be that we are to read a measure of Agape for his attackers into this restraint. If so, it is quite undercut by what then happens, as Mike's acolytes enact a gross, literal parody of Christ's Last Supper by making a broth from his mortal remains which they consume to more fully 'grok his essence.' While Heinlein has established the practice of cannibalism as one of the more sacred rites of the 'Old Ones,' the overwhelming bathos of this final,

absurd analogue of a religious doctrine - the idea of communion - taken with Heinlein's closing depiction of Smith's spending his afterlife in the company of both Digby and Foster, at last unambiguously exposes Heinlein's sceptical and ironic response to his comedy of faith. His dilemma is identical to that faced by Stapledon, whose Odd John Wainwright, lusus naturae and dispassionate murderer, creates an island utopia where he and his fellow supermen and superwomen might live according to their own ultra-ethic. While Heinlein's sardonic handling of Smith's messianic role is as studiously sacrilegious as Moorcock's contemptuous portrayal of Glogauer in Behold the Man, he fails to bring us to see Mike's self-sacrifice as profoundly tragic:

Nowhere, perhaps, is Heinlein's inconsistency more irritating than in his refusal to establish a position from which the whole farrago can be viewed... Jubal is clearly unequipped for the kind of commitment Mike wants from him. Mike's adventures on Earth are hardly in keeping with the comic heaven he shares with Digby and Foster. And that heaven and reality as seen by the Martians seem mutually contradictory. The deepening tone as the story goes on suggests taking Mike and his Church seriously, but the makings of his religion are preposterous - and are so labelled within the book - and his own immortality removes any tragic sting from his death.

It is as if Heinlein had been seized by a story with its own inexorable logic, then sought to undercut its effectiveness by devices that might absolve him of responsibility for the story's message. Panshin maintains Heinlein never could end a story right, because he was unwilling to accept anything more meaningful in life than search and survival. The commitment in this story was to nothing less than martyrdom, the myth of the dying god whose demise liberates his followers; but being forced into the position of offering that lesson to his readers seems to have been unacceptable to Heinlein's better judgement.

32.

Stapledon manages to bring one not just to understand Odd John's motives, however much we reject their appalling logic, but indeed to side with Homo superior in their fatal confrontation with the world's battleships; Heinlein sends up his tragic culmination with a finale which is purest escapism, however construed, because it has no

rationale: 'The Old Ones...were not omniscient and in their way were as provincial as the humans.' This finale actually reverses even the single substantiated contention of the general metaphysical system Blish criticized in his review. By contrast, Stapledon's story is coherent and, however unlikely some of his invention may appear, is also genuinely disturbing and thought-provoking; Heinlein's story is wayward, hectic and florid, replete with solipsistic digression and ebullient facetiousness, parapsychological and pseudomystical improbabilities. The former is the product of a genius and the latter, of an impresario. This is perhaps most acutely apparent in Heinlein's reluctance to leave us with the impression that the Old Ones are the ultimate beings: the narrative and moral vision may indeed be 'speculative', as Heinlein thought of the novel as a whole, but its theosophy is essentially traditional.

The macrocosm Heinlein outlines very sketchily supports this, being in fact a reassuringly Ptolemaic one; for behind the Old Ones, transfigured humans (Digby, Foster and ultimately Mike, too) are at work, and beyond them, unseen but implicit, a Providential God runs Head Office. It is quite unlike the sort of thing one meets in Dick, or indeed, in much recent science fiction. If one sees Digby and Foster as archangels, the Old Ones as alien angels and Smith, their saintly prophet of the sublime and the ineffable, as an evangelist of humane ethics furthering the providential Divine Will of an inscrutable God, the Christian Universe is as clearly present as it was in Lewis's trilogy, with its sorns, eldils and hnau.

The key to Stranger in a Strange Land is to see it as an (allegedly) adult entertainment, as is indicated by the author's distinct lack of earnestness about his eponymous messiah (whose sole

charisma, the weirdness of his alien powers and sensibility, are virtually overshadowed by 'Father' Jubal Harshaw, Heinlein's surrogate and the dialectical doubting Thomas to Heinlein's Martian 'promethean' Christ). While no one should decry a novel on the grounds that it is diverting and enjoyable, it is surely not too much to demand of it, with Blish, that it offer us something else besides a solipsistic narrative, bowdlerised eroticism and an anodyne rehash of probably the most widely-commemorated event of Western culture. As science fiction - or even as 'speculative' fiction, as Heinlein preferred this and later work(33) to be called - it may be fairly compared with the response of writers like Wells, Lewis, Harrison and Moorcock to Christ's sacrifice, and found wanting credibility and feeling.

To conclude this section, we may further assess Valentine Michael Smith's messianic role by contrasting it with that of the protagonist of another great 'underground' novel of the early nineteen-sixties, Herbert's Dune, already discussed in the closing section of the previous chapter. Paul Atreides's life-story is told in three books which are cleverly linked together by theme and epic pattern to form a novel charged with religious ideas and symbolism.

Now religion is a subject on which science fiction has regularly come off the rails, mistaking it either for superstition (maybe superstition with some valid factual phenomenon hidden behind it, but superstition for all that), or for miracle-working. And invented religions in sf have almost universally served to spotlight their author's ignorance of extant religions. Yet...religious mysticism permeates the pages of the Dune novels. Herbert has contained within his novel the cynical view ("religion is the opium of the masses" - typified by the Emperor or the Bene Gesserit's manipulations) and the miraculous view (in Paul's fulfillment of the prophecies of the Fremen); but he also has managed to show that he understands the essence that lies much closer to the heart of the religious impulse - that which gives the individual's life significance.

34.

Nonetheless Robert C. Parkinson's germane observations about the religious nature of Dune overlook the aspect of the novel which is of prime interest in discussing the humanistic world-view of modern science fiction, that is, the source of Paul's prescient vision and the form of his messianic role. Is it helpful to see Atriedes as a Christ, Faust or Prometheus - or is he, like his successor Great-Souled Sam the Lord of Light, another apostate humanist champion? If other writers are often more reluctant to offer a clear, definite perspective of their protagonist, in this case we may look to the text confidently for an answer as Herbert's themes are illustrated by means of the experiences of his central character.

As we have seen, Herbert's success with Dune is the product of his mastery of detailed narrative: the imaginary world of Arrakis itself, its peoples and their sociopolitical context, are intricately and compellingly evoked in a visionary narrative which, by virtue of a coherent configuration of complex ontological, transcendental and teleological ideas, happily overcomes the cliches of ray-gun and rocket for which much science fiction is justly notorious. Not that Dune lacks either; but Herbert imbues the hackneyed properties of the 'space opera' with an exotic quality. Yet, however impressive and unique, the ecology and adaptive technology of Arrakis are but the mise-en-scene of a human drama which is genuinely compelling.

From the outset, Herbert highlights his protagonist's human-ness in dramatic fashion. On Caladan, the Atriedes household is preparing to leave their ancestral home world to supervise the Imperial spice commerce based on the barren planet Arrakis. In the midst of things, an ominous guest arrives, the Reverend Mother Helen Gaius Mohiam of the Bene Gesserit sisterhood. Her mission is to administer a

potentially lethal test of character to Paul.

'...If you withdraw your hand from the box you die. This is the only rule. Keep your hand in the box and live. Withdraw it and die.'

Paul took a deep breath to still his trembling. 'If I call out there'll be servants on you in seconds and you'll die.'

'Servants will not pass your mother who stands guard outside that door. Depend on it. Your mother survived this test. Now it's your turn. Be honoured. We seldom administer this to men-children.'

Curiosity reduced Paul's fear to a manageable level. He heard truth in the old woman's voice, no denying it. If his mother stood guard out there... if this were truly a test... And whatever it was, he felt himself caught in it, trapped by that hand at his neck: the gom jabbar. He recalled the response from the Litany against Fear as his mother had taught him out of the Bene Gesserit rite.

'I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain.'

He felt calmness return, said: 'Get on with it, old woman.'

'Old woman!' she snapped. 'You've courage, and that can't be denied. Well, we shall see, sirra.' She bent closer, lowered her voice almost to a whisper. 'You will feel pain in this hand within the box. Pain. But! Withdraw the hand and I'll touch your neck with the gom jabbar - the death so swift it's like the fall of the headsman's axe. Withdraw your hand and the gom jabbar takes you. Understand?'

'What's in the box?'

'Pain.'

He felt increased tingling in his hand, pressed his lips tightly together. How could this be a test? he wondered. The tingling became an itch.

The old woman said: 'You've heard of animals chewing off a leg to escape a trap? There's an animal kind of trick. A human would remain in the trap, endure the pain, feigning death that he might kill the trapper and remove a threat to his kind.'

The itch became the faintest burning. 'Why are you doing this?'

'To determine if you're human. Be silent.'

Paul clenched his left hand into a fist as the burning sensation increased in the other hand. It mounted slowly: heat upon heat...upon heat. He felt the fingernails of his free hand biting the palm. He tried to flex the fingers of the burning hand, but couldn't move them.

'It burns,' he whispered.

'Silence!'

Dune, pp.14-15.

Paul's human spirit is confirmed by the painful duress of the test and this saves him from a death to which his instincts would have

betrayed him. (Indeed there are many hints that the outcome is portentous enough to have compelled even Jessica's reluctant complicity).

The idea of human nature being the most noble form of sensibility, but being constantly vitiated by beastly impulses and drives (exemplified by Wells's Moreau) is an element of the complex thematic patterning of Dune and its several sequels. The Harkonnens are hideous individuals in their own right, sadistic and vindictive; but their administrator, the Governor of Arrakeen, is their equal in cruelty and is regaled with the soubriquet 'Beast'. If the novelist has set a typical conflict between good and evil in the future, this conflict is also presented as the struggle for the humane attributes of man to overcome the atavistic vices of animal cruelty and ruthlessness. The Harkonnens are demonic and bestial, and the idealistic Paul Atrides is humane and redemptive: his eventual triumph over them is a science-fictional Harrowing of Hell (ironically reversed in the sequel, Dune Messiah, with the religious corruption of the Fremen).

Herbert's structuring of the three books of Dune is quite clear. In each, Atrides confronts another challenge which, like the first, demands resilience, courage and imagination. Yet, as one gathers from the first book, Paul Atrides has a powerful prescient talent which offers him unique perceptions of his situation which he may use to preserve himself and further the aims which become increasingly important to him, especially his prime aim of overthrowing the Harkonnen regime which has usurped and killed his father.

In the second book, 'Maud'dib', Paul and Jessica have taken refuge in the Fremen desert enclaves wherein he becomes Usul, water-brother of Stilgar the leader of Seitch Tabr. They are not killed out

of hand for their water as is customary with strangers, but instead are treated with reserved suspicion until Jessica assumes the role of tribal Reverend Mother after catalysing the poisonous raw geriatric spice. At that point, Jessica discovers an aspect of herself which she finds terrifying initially, though like Paul's gift her collective memory will prove to be vital for their survival.

By undergoing her own sort of deadly ordeal, Jessica transcends the limits of her individual sensibility and gains access to the stored memories of all her predecessors. The insights she gains are apocalyptic in both its senses, that is, as historical revelation (in Ketterer's terms); and as her own doom, for her recapitulative experience of the drug catalysis is very nearly fatal. Imagistically, this event embodies all the salient features of metaphysical science fiction, which conventionally depicts human nature as possessing one or more 'superhuman' innate faculties in a latent state or in the process of evolving from within the human consciousness.

As the story of their life among the Fremmen unfolds, it becomes apparent that however remarkable is Jessica's new awareness, Paul's faculty is even more impressive for, when he too risks his life to catalyse the poisonous raw spice into the drug sacred to the Fremmen, the visions he has are both apocalyptic, like hers, and prescient:

He sampled the time winds, sensing the turmoil, the storm nexus that now focussed on this moment place. Even the faint gaps were closed now... Here was the race consciousness that he had known once as his own terrible purpose. Here was reason enough for a Kwisatz Haderach or a Lisan al-Gaib or even the halting schemes of the Bene Gesserit. The race of humans had felt its own dormancy, sensed itself grown stale and knew now only the need to experience turmoil in which the genes would mingle and the strong new mixtures survive. All humans were alive as an unconscious single organism in this moment, experiencing a kind of sexual heat that could override any barrier... This is the climax, Paul thought.

From here, the future will open, the clouds part onto a kind of glory. And if I die here, they'll say I sacrificed myself that my spirit might lead them. And if I live, they'll say nothing can oppose Muad'Dib.

Dune, Book III, 'The Prophet'; p.457

An unexpected consequence of gaining acceptance among the Fremen is the deepening and strengthening of this melange-stimulated oracular talent; and eventually Paul can foretell the likeliest outcome of the possible futures pertaining at any nexus of the space-time continuum. As he quickly realizes, however, this quasi-divine awareness raises immediate questions whose emergent answers entail an awesome responsibility for his actions and their singular deterministic impact on the course of the future:

Prophecy and prescience - How can they be put to the test in the face of the unanswered questions? Consider: How much is actual prediction of the 'wave form' (as Muad'Dib referred to his vision-image) and how much is the prophet shaping the future to fit the prophecy? What of the harmonics inherent in the act of prophecy? Does the prophet see the future or does he see a line of weakness, a fault of cleavage that he may shatter with words or decisions as a diamond-cutter shatters his gem with a blow of a knife?

- 'Private Reflections on Muad'Dib' by the Princess Irulan
Dune, Book II (p.264).

This ability has always troubled him with its insistent, cryptic visions, never more ominous perhaps than that which followed his victory over Jamis in a deadly Fremen duel:

Paul...realized that he had plunged once more into the abyss...blind time. There was no past occupying the future in his mind...except...except...he could still sense the green and black Atreides banner waving...somewhere ahead...still see the jihad's bloody swords and fanatic legions.

It will not be, he told himself. I cannot let it be.
Dune, Book II, (p.294).

However, the converted raw spice liquor the Fremen take in their seitch orgies enhances his prescience to the point where the visions become meaningful. Even as an outcast among the Fremen bereft of seigneurial power, with this faculty - explicitly genetic and thus

inherent (that is, essentially scientific as opposed to miraculous) - Paul seems to be able to steer events so as to effectively drive the present to create the future. He may also use his ability to anticipate events so as to obviate the sort of failings of intuition or understanding which characterize the human condition, extending the awareness and multifarious experience of human nature acquired in his formative relationships:

Paul...challenges each superior being that he meets, extracts the superiority, and adds it to his own. The superiorities are synergistic. The first being to be absorbed is his father; the last is his mother. Unlike his son, Leto, Paul is unwilling to incorporate nonhuman superiors. As he grows more complex, Paul does not forget that all beings differ only in degree, but he gradually discovers that a Supreme, beyond all being, exists. "God" is a pattern of organization.

35.

To the Fremen, Paul seems to have divine powers; and they readily identify him as the eponymous prophet of their sacred lore, the 'Lisan al-Gaib', the long-promised 'Voice from the Outer World'.

Simply by living among them, Paul gives the legend a living presence, and gains power to bend the Fremen to his will. He begins to mold them into a guerilla force with which to win back his dukedom. But already they are more than that, and so is he. He is no longer Paul Atreides, but Paul Maud'Dib, Mahdi of the Fremen and will-o-wisp of the desert, while his followers have become Fedaykin, "death commandoes." The marriage of a charismatic leader and a people who long to be led has begun to bear its inevitable fruit.

Paul does in fact have remarkable powers, but far more important in the end is how the Fremen respond to them. There is a strong, unconscious projection that makes him even more special than he is. Part of this projection depends on the legends planted by the Bene Gesserit and the way they crystallize around Paul, but even more depends on the faculty of his followers for wishful thinking, the unconscious will to believe there is someone out there with the answers they lack. Unable to find adequate strength of purpose in themselves, they look for a truth, a cause, and a leader to supply it. It is the same mutually supportive relationship of leaders and followers which was explored in the feudal setup of House Atreides.

36.

The apotheosis of Paul (the 'Royal Faustus' introduced in the previous chapter) is enacted little by little on two levels, the public and the private, and is signally of more concern to his author than the parallel transfiguration of Smith in Stranger in a Strange Land, whose author conveniently finds in him a ready-made superhuman. Smith has few aspirations. He has superhuman powers, and his self-confidence derives from the cosmic certainty of the martian ethics in which he was raised. Atreides has many personal and political goals, but his aspirations are dogged by contingent moral dichotomies and the violence of his zealous followers.

Yet even if the Fremen may consider him a messiah, Herbert takes pains to ensure that we do not too readily ascribe mystical charisma to Paul. We witness his uncertainties and inner turmoil; we are shown how important is his relationship with his Fremen concubine Chani, who is one of the few who are permitted to know an intimate side of him as he really is rather than as the image circumstances have forced upon him. Thus confronted with Usul's human doubt and needs, we are less likely to view him as a prescient Übermensch (still less a mystical emissary) for we also know that the Fremen religion is a factitious creed established centuries before by the Bene Gesserit to prepare for Paul and present him with an opportunity to command rather than emancipate the Fremen (who, being native, are in many respects his superiors in the vital business of surviving the hostile desert climate of Arrakis). Their cult of the Kwisatch Haderach which takes Paul/Usul/Muad'Dib for its personified icon is viewed with contempt by the Harkonnen lords, who consider it a primitive sort of folly, too ludicrous to warrant suppression:

'Have you heard the latest word from Arrakis?' the Baron asked.

'No, Uncle.'

'They've a new prophet or religious leader of some kind among the Fremens,' the Baron said. 'They call him Muad'Dib. Very funny, really. It means "the Mouse." I've told Rabban to let them have their religion. It'll keep them occupied.'

Dune, Bk.III, p.350.

Like Higgs, Paul is acclaimed as a messiah though readers know he is none, and this creates in Dune expectations and issues of religious ethics much as it does in Erewhon Revisited, generating a narrative tension focussing on the protagonist's motives which hardly rises to anything like the same degree in Stranger in a Strange Land, even if there the likes of Foster and Digby are exposed and sent up for laughs. However, the question which Herbert highlights in Dune by depicting a reluctant 'messiah' being constrained by events to promote a factitious religion bears directly on Paul's humanistic traits of altruism and redemptiveness (without which he would surely be merely another self-interested warlord). Tragically the messianic role which he resents both because it enslaves others and because he knows it subsists in a false belief that he is divine insidiously erodes his freedom of action.

Paul's perpetual struggle is to preserve his personal integrity from the dual erosion of the violent faith of the vengeful Fremens and the Bene Gesserit manipulation of his predestined role as the charismatic warrior-prophet of Arrakis who, they hope, will advance the cause of the Sisterhood against the Landsraad, the Guild and the Imperium. His search is essentially for wisdom rather than scientific knowledge, benign sapience rather than expeditious science (though, given the careful realization of Dune's ecological themes, scientific endeavour is also granted a significant place in Muad'Dib's endeavour to liberate the Fremens).

Paul must use the Fremmen to achieve his aims of overthrowing the corrupt Imperial hegemony, both on Arrakis itself and at large; but his concern is to liberate them rather than enslave them. To his growing disquiet, he discovers that as their incarnate idol he inspires in them a fanatical zeal which knows no moderation and which may only be channelled constructively by exploiting their fanaticism. Theirs is an absolute faith which cannot accommodate any contradiction of its prevalent ethos and ideology.

Although Paul's intuitive impulse is redemptive, as the third book proceeds it is plain that the 'Panoplia Prophetica' of the Bene Gesserit is to some extent actually determining history through Paul's charismatic leadership, for his image more and more constrains his autonomous will. Yet it transpires that he is not their Kwizatch Haderach (the 'shortening of the way' they have tried to genetically engineer through their 'breeding program' and through whom they would be able to exercise temporal power) for he is an usurper born a generation earlier than their authentic intended proxy should be. His prescient gift and situation offer him the chance to commandeer their preparations for the real one. As Timothy O'Reilly has noted, this is an exceptionally well-wrought and sophisticated theme:

....there is one other concept Herbert built on his story that is unique. This is what we might call his genetic theory of history.

Once again, Herbert uses the Bene Gesserit and the inner powers Paul has gained from them as his vehicle. The source of the almost supernatural abilities of the Bene Gesserit is a substance they call the Truthsayer drug, which allows their Reverend Mothers to draw on profound inner knowledge and the accumulated knowledge of the past. But it is only women who can master the inner changes brought on by the drug. It has always been death for a man. The Bene Gesserit have embarked on a centuries-long program of selective breeding to produce a man who can take the drug and live. They call their goal the Kwisatz Haderach, "the shortening of the way." They hope

to open vast new areas to their control - the depths of the active male as well as the receptive female. The crippling flaw in the Bene Gesserit skills is that they must be wielded indirectly. They hope that a man fully trained in their esoteric arts would still be able to wield temporal power in a way that they cannot. It is hoped that Paul may be this figure, but he has been born a generation too soon in the plan and is consequently not completely under their control. He has his own destiny to follow.

37.

Paul Atriedes struggles to avoid giving way to the temptation to become a god - or at least a demigod, for he is a shaper rather than creator - which ironically would also mean being a political puppet, the 'Lisan Al-Gaib', whose strings are pulled by the Sisterhood. Yet Herbert also endows him with an inborn transcendental impulse which sustains Paul's humanistic aspiration - 'There exists no separation between gods and men; one blends softly casual into the other'; as one of the Proverbs of Muad'Dib cited in Dune Messiah attests eloquently.

In Dune itself, Paul's Fremen concubine Chani acts as an index of his success in preserving his identity. His public actions reveal that he has preserved his conscience in circumstances where his evil adversaries the Harkonnens have developed appetite in its place, and so he is a sympathetic, troubled hero - a paradoxical figure - the aristocratic warrior who will lead but will not become a messiah, the apostate redeemer sceptical of his own motives. His agonies are Christian, but transposed into a setting which only science fiction can provide; for Paul, the dilemma is not to drive the divine to overcome the misgivings of the flesh in the tradition of Gethsemane, but quite the contrary - he must strive to preserve his humanity in the face of a personal transformation which is catastrophic and potentially alienating. Herbert views this experience of transfiguration (which has a prominent place in many of his books) as potentially psychotic. Also, the proposition that if mundane power can

corrupt, the charismatic power to inspire and exploit religious devotion may corrupt on a potentially cosmic scale, is central in Dune.

Paul wishes to lead a political-military campaign and free humankind from the exploitation of the Imperium and its associates, but he must at last recognize that his Fremen see this as a crusade against their vile persecutors - a galactic Jihad, a religious war of ruthless bloodletting. His messianic aims smack of prometheanism without being technophilic. He himself is a titan of sorts, one of the mighty aristocrats whose expulsion from the circles of privilege is the consequence of feudal vendetta rather than a personal transgression, but who otherwise fits the role. His motives are noble, his objectives - the enfranchisement of the Fremen, the fulfillment of their dream of converting Arrakis's deserts into water-rich, fertile land, and the restoration of moral values to the realms of man which have been ruled for generations by greed and cynicism - are idealistic and libertarian. Yet therein lies the ineluctable problem which will frustrate the most benevolent of these aims and reduce his idealism to a rueful disappointment in the inability of his fellows to share his moral vision.

The most expedient means is to seize upon and exploit his reputation as a religious figure, but this involves a deliberate deceit which proves to be very pernicious. The Royal Faustus effects a damning trade-off between his deep-rooted desire for personal autonomy and the historical necessity the Fremen's collective aspiration for vengeance creates. Knowing the consequences, Atrides concedes in his struggle to evade the role prepared for his descendent and usurped by himself to further his feud with the Harkonnens; after their victory

on their home world of Arrakis (made by God 'to test the faithful') Fremen legions are unleashed on the other worlds of men to sate their mystical blood-lust in his name. If the successful campaign to overthrow the Harkonnens and destroy the force of Imperial writ on Arrakis is a symbolically redemptive, Paul Atreides's emancipation of the Fremen tribes tragically turns into a ferocious apocalypse which even he cannot restrain without becoming just as cynical as his vanquished foes. His intended ploy, to use the anti-agathic 'spice' unique to Arrakis's austere ecosystem as an effective counter to the forces commanded by the Imperium, turns out to provide only the most precarious of advantages against them. The Guild, Landsraad, Sisterhood and ousted Imperial dynasty almost immediately form a common cause against Atreides's new hegemony, and he is consequently forced to secure his own position by bolstering his image as the god-king of Arrakis in order to maintain the loyalty of his fanatical legions who ironically have emerged as the only means he has of fulfilling his dream of a stable, harmonious humane universe capable of allowing men a chance to develop their - putative - innate potential. One of Paul's most redeeming features is that he believes that mankind in general can one day acquire his special faculty - a millennial, teleological vision indeed.

In the first sequel, Dune Messiah, Atreides's general strategy is to force an advantageous settlement upon the Imperial, alien, religious and mercantile power-blocs which hitherto have controlled the human universe and reform human life and sensibility. To this end, he seeks to use the once-subversive Fremen religion, but he fails because he seeks to institute a stable, benevolent despotism - and this goes not only quite against the grain of human nature, but out-

rages the universal principle of change and growth through evolution he himself wishes altruistically to advance. Finally embittered by his failure to maintain the stability bought at the price of terrible slaughter, revolted by the first signs of decadence and spiritual deterioration he sees even in his most faithful Fremen acolytes, and sickened by the habitual cynicism of the now-powerful clerical establishment he himself helped to create, he goes knowingly to his death in an ambush.

In the final analysis, Atreides has himself been misled - or, giving way to a growing agape stimulated by the loyalty of his Fremen, allowed himself to be. Everything he has initiated seemed to have betrayed its promise as well as the altruistic hope which later motivates his benign manipulations; the final irony is that he discovers himself to have been born of the very hated stock he sought to eradicate - the Harkonnens. In the conventional symbolic terms of the science fiction of aspiration, Faust's gamble, Frankensteinian in its scope, has again proved doomed perhaps even from its very inspiration, dogged by the same nemesis which vitiates the utopian vision of the Wells of Men Like Gods; and yet again it has been betrayed by man's innate follies - passion and fratricidal aggrandisement:

Here lies a toppled god -
His fall was not a small one.
We did but build his pedestal,
A narrow and a tall one.

Dune Messiah, p.96.

This 'Tleilaxu Epigram' is a fitting rejoinder to Goethe's sardonic 'Prometheus', itself perhaps an inspiration for Mary Shelley's post-Gothic classic tale of hubris and nemesis, of aspiration and apocalypse. Indeed in a moment of introspection amid all the welter of plotting and subterfuge of Dune Messiah Paul considers his own vision

in just these very terms:

'Pardon, Sire,' the aide said. 'The Semboule Treaty - your signature?'

'I can read it!' Paul snapped. He scrawled 'Atreides Imper.' in the proper place, returned the board, thrusting it directly into the aide's outstretched hand, aware of the fear this inspired.

The man fled.

Paul turned away. Ugly, barren land! He imagined it sun-soaked and monstrous with heat, a place of sandslides and the drowned darkness of dust pools, blowdevils unreeling tiny dunes across the rocks, their narrow bellies full of ochre crystals. But it was a rich land, too; big, exploding out of narrow places with vistas of storm-trodden emptiness, rampart cliffs and tumbledown ridges.

All it required was water....and love.

Life changed those irascible wastes into shapes of grace and movement, he thought. That was the message of the desert. Contrast stunned him with realisation. He wanted to turn to the aides massed in the seitch entrance, shout at them: If you need something to worship, then worship life - all life, every last crawling bit of it! We're all in this beauty together!

They wouldn't understand. In the desert, they were endlessly desert. Growing things perform no green ballet for them.

He clenched his fists at his sides, trying to halt the vision. He wanted to flee from his own mind. It was a beast come to devour him! Awareness lay in him, sodden, heavy with all the living it had sponged up, saturated with too many experiences.

Desperately, Paul squeezed his thoughts outward.

Stars!

Awareness turned over at the thought of all those stars above him - an infinite volume. A man must be half mad to imagine he could rule even a teardrop of that volume. He couldn't begin to imagine the number of subjects his Imperium claimed.

Subjects? Worshippers and enemies, more likely. Did any among them see beyond rigid beliefs? Where was one man who'd escaped the narrow destiny of his prejudices? Not even an Emperor escaped. He'd lived a take-everything life, tried to create a universe in his own image. But the exultant universe was breaking him at last with its silent waves.

I spit on Dune! he thought. I give it my moisture!

This myth he'd made out of intricate movements and imagination, out of moonlight and love, out of prayers older than Adam, and gray cliffs and crimson shadows, laments and rivers of martyrs - what had it come to at last? When the waves receded the shores of time would spread out there clean, empty, shining with infinite grains of memory and little else. Was this the golden destiny of man?

Dune Messiah, pp.202-203.

However, for all that it is ultimately ground in the dust of the Fremen planet, Atreides's hubris retains its nobility. Far from

seeming despotic in his demise - the final verdict on many a science fictional godling - the hero of Dune and Dune Messiah dies of despair at the fanaticism he has propagated, for it has effectively given the Fremen a set of religious hobbles in place of the Imperial yoke and Harkonnen chains from which he has striven to liberate them.

'I've had a bellyful of the god and priest business! You think I don't see my own mythos? ...I've insinuated my rites into the most elementary human acts. The people eat in the name of Muad'Dib! They make love in my name, are born in my name - cross the street in my name. A roof beam cannot be raised in the lowest hovel of far Gangishree without invoking the blessing of Muad'Dib!'

- Book of Diatribes
from The Hayt Chronicle;
Dune Messiah, p.124.

Herbert's tripartite novel is one of the high points of aesthetic and visionary achievement to be found in the genre, ranking alongside novels like A Canticle for Leibowitz and not too many others as the classics of a burgeoning field. It is also fair to say that Dune eclipses not just its immediate sequel, but indeed the rest of the series, as an integrated, evocative and lyrical tour-de-force. It has also, one feels sure, influenced many contemporary authors within the genre itself and indeed beyond such fairly notional limits. But when one thinks of generic influences, one may identify novels as seemingly diverse as Aldiss's Barefoot in the Head, Zelazny's Lord of Light, Watson's The Martian Inca and Bishop's Stolen Faces, all of which seem to ring with echoes of Herbert's epic work just as it itself reveals a host of allusions and conventional tropes - drug-induced transcendence, the perils of perception and enlightenment, the oppression of dogma - which have contributed to its power. None equal Herbert's achievement in Dune, which is unique(38).

'A Sudden Surge': Synergy and The Teleological Transfiguration of Man

Twenty years ago I.F. Clarke observed that another change was taking place in the prophetic war fiction which was the subject of his classic study. Faced with the redundancy of describing the virtually instantaneous total global war of the nuclear era, writers seemed to be turning from detailed predictions of the circumstances and situation of the next war. He seemed to think that new images and narrative forms would be developed to explore the nature of the crucial relationship between science, progress, and human nature:

Hope for the sake of hope keeps on breaking in with a vision of renewal. For instance, in The Chrysalids, an ideal community of beneficent telepaths has emerged from the ruins; and in one of the most recent stories in this field, Midge by Paul McTyre, there is every hope that the remnants of mankind may learn brotherhood and wisdom from swarms of intelligent, telepathic, and highly moral insects. The tale of imaginary warfare has become a parable for the times.

Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984, p.199.

Perhaps transcendental science fiction is what has emerged most distinctively from the new direction he sensed writers were taking then. Brian Aldiss's Barefoot in the Head (1969) well illustrates the transition between the anticipation of warfare and the transcendental science fiction of aspiration.

As a preliminary to advancing Vonnegut's The Sirens of Titan as an exemplar of the apocalyptic vein of modern science fiction, David Ketterer condemns Barefoot in the Head as a 'pastiche of super-subjective, late Joyce... The problem... appears to be that Aldiss began with a particular style that he wished to imitate and then contrived a plot to allow for the extended use of that style. The result eventually makes for excruciating reading.' While there may well be more than a hint of truth in his inference about Aldiss's methods since the novel was, as Aldiss acknowledged, constructed from

the series he wrote for Moorcock's New Worlds after Harry Harrison had published 'the original chunk' in Impulse, the novel was greeted as a significant work by such respected voices as The Listener and The Daily Telegraph. Ketterer's use of the phrase 'excruciating reading' has an unconscious ironic force, for while Aldiss's style is 'multi-layered, free-associational and stream-of-consciousness' and 'pun-encrusted', his prime object was not so much to 'come up with a plot' to support it but to sustain a style which might effectively evoke the traumatic disorientation of the inflamed post-catastrophe mentality of his characters. Charteris and his acolytes are at the mercy of their own impulses and their own fevered response to the arbitrariness of events: the familiar has been distorted or obliterated by a weapon which has transformed their world into a phenomenological zone where survival and fulfilment are all-consuming existential pressures. By no means the facile or shallow pastiche Ketterer describes, Aldiss's novel is actually an sustained experiment in portraying contemporary obsessions and despair.

Colin Charteris, the uncommitted 'saviour' of the automobile sect, is the very antithesis of Maud'Dib though he too is capable of a drug-induced oracular vision. His precognition is every bit as intense, terrifying and erratic as was Paul Atreides's first perceptual breakthrough and is construed in much the same terms, that is, as a progressive metaphysical faculty unfettered by a traumatic disruption of the controlling logos:

Precognition is a function of two forces he told himself and already wished that he might record it in case the thought drifted from him on the aerosolar light. Precognition. Two forces: mind of course and also time: the barriers go down and somewhere a white-thighed woman waits for me -

These are not my images. Bombardment of others' images. Autobreasted succubae again from Disflocations.

Yet my image the white-thighed, although I have not seen them already familiar like milk inside venetian crystal all the better to suck you by. But my precognitions slipping.

It's not only that mind can leap aside from its tracks but that the tracks must be of certain property: so there are stages I have crossed to reach this point the first being the divination of time as a web without merely forward progress but all directions equally so that the essential I at any moment is like a spider sleeping at the centre of its web always capable of any turn and the white thorn thighs turning. Only that essential Gurdjieffian I aloof. And secondly the trip-taking soaked air of London tipping me off my traditional cranium so that I allow myself a multi-dimensional way.

Barefoot in the Head, pp.56-57

'Zbogom, he asks himself rhetorically, 'what am I now if not more than man, mariner of my seven seizures. More than pre-psychedelic man. Me homo viator.' Even if this personal enlightenment resonates with Orphic allusion it is explicated in the language of aspiration:

In his treadmillrace he was on her thought scent moving along the web taking a first footfall consciously away from antique logic gaining gaining and losing also the attachment to things that keeps alive a thousand useless I's in a man's life seeing the primary fact the sexual assertion that she took wing whoever she was near to these two men.

Then he knew that he was the last trump of his former self to ascend from the dealings at Dover by the London lane and the other caught cards of his pack truly at discard trapped in old whists and wists.

He had a new purpose that was no more a mystery only now in this moment of revelation was the purpose yet unrevealed.

Idem.

In a footnote to Trillion Year Spree, Aldiss sums up his novel thus: '...the entire culture is freaked out after the Acid Head War, and the central character, Charteris, is elevated to the role of Messiah. But such power as he has comes from abnegation and, when he finds himself on the brink of believing in his ability to work miracles, he deliberately throws away the Christ role.'(39) Ketterer seems not to comprehend the point of Aldiss's anti-heroic novel because it fails to match the generally positive criteria for apocalyptic fiction he employs in New Worlds for Old. In fact, Barefoot in

the Head should be better understood as a sardonic allegory of aspiration, an essentially tragic rather than heroic vision of existence and desire.

Setting aside the more conventional messianic features of the novel, two questions are clearly worth pursuing. The first, concerning Charteris's aspirations, is readily disposed of: Charteris travels into the hallucinogenic zone of bombed-out England seeking sex and adventure and little else. However he there acquires self-knowledge through the medium of drug-enhanced precognition, and an obscure but vital purpose. Having supplanted Brasher as the prophet of the Proceed Charteris becomes more reclusive as he works on 'Man the Driver,' his 'gospel' comprising 'Some Gurdjieff, more Ouspenski, time-obsessed passages from some here and there, no zen or that - no Englishmen, but it's going to spread from England out, we'll all take it, unite Europe at last. A gospel. Falling like PCA. America's ready, too. The readiest place, always.'(p.85) Essentially, the profane cult of homo viator preaches liberation from old moral strictures:

You will see. No more conflicts once everyone recognises that he always was a hunter, all time. The modern hunter has become a driver. His main efforts do not go towards improving his lot, but complicating ways of travel. It's all in the big pattern of space-time-mind. In his head is a multi-value motorway. Now, after the Kuwait coup, he is free to drive down any lane he wants, any way. No external frictions or restrictions any more. Thus spake Charteris.

Barefoot in the Head, p.84

Like Higgs, Charteris becomes a messiah by acclamation. Perhaps a latter-day cousin of Conrad's Marlow from Heart of Darkness, he has travelled through the psychotic nations of Europe into the worst affected region, but the immanent darkness in the souls of his acid-head acolytes is eclipsed by the psychedelic mystical light of their

deranged mass faith, for they believe that through their destructive rituals they may evolve under his spiritual guidance. The Escalation, an acid-rock group, provide him with his first large audience and help spread his message with their twisted lyrics extolling the 'catagasmic' interactions of the deranged automotive crusaders.

The second question is undoubtedly the more interesting: why does Charteris finally reject this messianic role? After surviving a cathartic auto-da-fe which culminates in the destruction of Brussels, and the several attentions of the 'mascodistic' trinity of Brasher, Boreas and Laundrei, Charteris reaches his messianic nadir in a Gethsemane meditation. The impulse of the Chartercade is spent, leaving him facing an ineluctable dichotomy:

all the words I have said or spoken were minced of my
blood my semen my moan-barrow of weeping tissue in dis-
inegation

what is I in truth is in their locality not here

trees ruin me too particular

and the specified woman

anonymous

all anonymous that felty well in the languid dark against
thighs of unknown speech and every faculty distended to some
farther shore like aface with nothing personal in it just the
big chemical loot-in of eternal burn-down

in the nerved networks and elastic roadways of me is the
traffic passing for thought but this eternal recurrence of
trees signals me that no decision is possible that decision
is impossible for everything will come back again back to the
same centre

alternatives must be more multi-valued than that I either
go with Kommandant on his hosanno domination or speed with
Angel south but if one crossed martyranny if the other
another series of eitherors with death always the first
choice

somewhere find a new word new animal

transgress

in their heads they have only old words

insisting that history repeats itself

the stale hydrogenes of a previous combustion rolling in an old river and elder landscape footprinted to the last tree gnarled landscape of I stamped flat by the limbous brain

its their behaviour and its geared experience is lessening and cuts me down to sighs morality nostalgia sentiment closure falsight all I have to drive through their old faded photograph of life

how that crumbling nightdream thunderclouds round my orizons

Barefoot in the Head, pp.204-205

His pained reverie is interrupted by a devotee who urges him, "'Speak at the world's megaphone Master. These small strifes are your larger bartlefield or the states your pulpit. Pay the big taxi fare to a Rome address! Talk out the lungs cancer. Rocket right up the lordly astralbahn. Flush the world's motions into your own bowl and I'll back you.'" Angeline, Charteris's pregnant Criseyde, vehemently opposes the idea of Charteris sacrificing himself - "'That's all non-sense. We're trying to turn into human beings first Cass and we don't need your snow-job for aid.'" Charteris himself angrily rebuts the suggestion that he should sacrifice himself to reinvigorate Christianity:

'Listen to the multi-valued answer. All resolved. I had it in my dream turning down the old clothes.' Then mute in his wonderment so she asked him darling?

'Whatever you all think you think you all think in the old stale repeating masadistrick Judeo-Christian rhythm because its in your bloodshed. Your heritage taken or rejected dormant. Be rich as Christ indeed. But Creosus Christ is to me pauperized an old figment and just another capitalist lackey whose had our heads isn't it? It's the histiric recess over and over a western eternal recurrence of hope and word and blood and sword and Creosus vitimizes your thinkstreams.' Continued in this blaspheme of Christ Plutocrat schekelgrabb-ing bled-white christendamn till Cass fluttered.

'I don't believe in him either Master you know that.'

'No difference. History jellied and you can't drip out. You're hooked in his circuit and the current circulates.'

Barefoot in the Head, p.207

"'...say for ever farewell to that crazy nailedup propheteer'" he directs them, and decides to resign his role, rejecting his own passion for a pastoral family life with Angeline, leaving the

'automotive lemmings' and Herr Laundrei's marching military masturbators to their own febrile pursuits. Ultimately Charteris is unable to discover any authentic 'universal patterns', can discern no philosophia perennia in the 'wornout mode' of the 'old Westciv groove'; but only a bleak entropic reality resonating with archaic banalities and futile self-sacrifice. His final message ('holy law okay but spiced with heresy') is decidedly Bokononist:

All possibilities and alternatives exist but ultimately
Ultimately you want it both ways
Barefoot in the Head, p.220

Of course science fiction is, perhaps supremely, the mode of literary expression in which technological man confronts his own nature. If, in the absence of the God whose demise was pronounced by Marlowe, Neitzche et al, men may not readily implore or blame a supreme being, then surely the Infernal Host is by the same token banished expediently, and men must squarely face the moral issues of their own making. Marlowe's Barrabas, The Jew of Malta asserted 'I count religion but a childish toy, / And hold there is no sin but ignorance'; and perhaps humanistic science fiction takes the argument a step further - usually without losing sight of moral imperatives - by revealing the extent of human ignorance not just of the universe, but crucially, of ourselves, of the human spirit however defined. Tom Woodman concluded in a brilliant survey(40) of the whole field of religious science fiction that, 'The idea of transcendence creates a common ground between aesthetic criteria for evaluating science fiction and a degree of theological interest that goes beyond the purely diagnostic.'

What finally links religious aspirations and the best science fiction is a common interest in transcending our present reality. Both have a cosmic dimension. Both have a common focus on the future of man, an interest especially

built into Judaism and Christianity. Cosmic awe, the perspective that comes from contemplating the stars, makes us realize our littleness... Science fiction relates to great cosmic forces. It is the opposite as a genre to what D.H. Lawrence once called 'wearisome sickening little personal novels.' Our earthly viewpoint is bound to be narrow and half-blind, and the epistemological sophistication of modern science fiction confirms this...

41.

Yet however highly metaphysical the transcendental science fiction of aspiration may be, it generally also insists, conventionally, that awareness and experience (or catastrophe) are twinned vectors of humane progress. The pursuit of practicable knowledge does tend to remain an important motivating force, but is allied closely to teleological thresholds which appear unexpectedly (apocalyptically, in Ketterer's terms) in response to frustrated human aspiration. Brian Aldiss in 'Enigma 2: Three Diagrams for Stories - A Cultural Side-Effect' (1974) from his Last Orders (1977) toys disingenuously with the theme of his earlier work Barefoot in the Head, this time stressing the 'otherness' of an emergent species much as Stapledon did in Odd John and Wyndham in The Chrysalids:

Notes on Aliens. Make it clear somewhere that these aliens are not from another planet; that notion has whiskers on it. Make these aliens a sudden surge from the human race in one generation, just as there was a generation of great engineers towards the end of the eighteenth century. But these have been generated by a pharmaceutical error, like the Thalidomide children of the nineteen fifties and nineteen sixties. In this case, the error was a new tranquillizer administered to mothers during early pregnancy. Since it alters only cultural attitudes, the strange side-effect was never detected on research animals. The cultural gene has shown itself to be inheritable.

42.

'Aliens are everywhere. Culture-obsessed' he concludes wryly, confirming in parody the real significance of the science fiction of aspiration, itself now a literary 'gene' which has 'shown itself to be inheritable.'

Gully Foyle's apotheosis in Alfred Bester's Tiger! Tiger! (1955), a futuristic picaresque which Brian Aldiss has called 'a definitive statement in Wide Screen Baroque' (Trillion Year Spree, p.235), is a classic example of teleological science fiction of aspiration. Gully Foyle is transformed by months of suffering aboard a derelict wreck in space from an ordinary "grease monkey" into a vengeful superman who ultimately saves mankind from atomic destruction prompted by demented commercial rivalry. Yet since Bester stresses the contiguous nature of the transformation (Aldiss's 'sudden surge') rather than the intrinsically 'alien' quality of the 'New Man' or Homo superior Foyle becomes, the humanistic implications of his story are universal rather than sectarian or individualistic. In fact Bester suggests that the potential discovered by his anti-hero is innate in human nature generally rather than restricted to genetically-predisposed Übermenschen. Whatever the humanistic vision of his novel, its conventional moral vision is harder to gauge, especially where orthodox religion is concerned. Foyle's world seems anarchic and generally amoral - violent crime flourishes, humanity has invented new forms of perverse self-indulgence, and social order (destabilized by the advent of 'jaunting' or volitional self-teleportation 43) is seemingly inconstant. It is revealed en passant that institutionalised religion has formally been abolished, and that Christianity has again gone underground. Foyle is brisk and dismissive, even contemptuous:

At one side (of the house), they saw the top of a cellar window brightly illuminated and heard the muffled chant of voices: 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...'

'Cellar-Christians!' Foyle exclaimed. He and Robin peered through the window. Thirty worshippers of assorted faiths were celebrating the New Year with a combined and highly illegal service. The twenty-fourth century had not yet abolished God, but it had abolished organized religion.

'No wonder the house is man-trapped,' Foyle said. 'Filthy practices like that. Look, they've got a priest and a rabbi, and that thing behind them is a crucifix.'

'Did you ever stop to think what swearing is?' Robin asked quietly. 'You say "Jesus" and "Jesus Christ", you know what that is?'

'Just swearing, that's all. Like "Ouch" or "Pshaw".'

'No, it's religion. You don't know it, but there are two thousand years of history behind words like that.'

'This is no time for dirty talk,' Foyle said impatiently. 'Save it for later. Come on.'

Tiger! Tiger!, p.140

In fact Bester ignores his own cue and the topic of religious prescription and its justification is not developed further, indicating that it is present merely as a trope rather than as a central concern of the novelist, and suggesting the extent to which Butler's Erewhonian criticisms of institutional religion have been assimilated in the conventions of popular American science fiction of the fifties. However, it is perhaps significant that Foyle's penultimate transformational trauma - a literal baptism of fire - is set in a disused church, the Cathedral of St. Patrick in New York. The last stop for Foyle's travelling circus and entourage, Old St.Pat's is destroyed catastrophically just as Foyle returns to set in motion the final stage of his plan to shock the world out of its apathy and stagnation. He is virtually burned alive but consequently learns how to 'jaunt' through space and time and uses this supernal talent to emancipate his fellows:

Foyle shook himself and abruptly jaunted to the bronze head of Eros, fifty feet above the counter of Piccadilly Circus. He perched precariously and bawled: 'Listen a me, all you! Listen, man! Gonna sermonize, me. Dig this, you!'

He was answered with a roar.

'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 you spend pennies. Got a genius in you and think crazies. Got a heart in you and think empties. All of you. Every you...'

He was jeered. He continued with the hysterical passion of the possessed.

'Take a war to make you spend. Take a jam to make you think.'

Take a challenge to make you great. Rest of the time you sit around lazy, you. Pigs, you! All right, God damn you! I challenge you, me. Die or live and be great. Blow yourselves to Christ gone or come to me and I make you great. Die, damn you, or come and find me, Gully Foyle, and I make you great. I give you the stars. I make you men!'

Tiger! Tiger!, pp. 245-246.

Haranguing his audience in the gutter tongue of the twenty-second century, Foyle's message - a 'sermon' - is a profane Sermon on the Mount. He has distributed throughout the world nine pounds of a deadly new explosive, PyrE, which is detonated telepathically by the Will and the Idea, to the horror of a few powerful men who have sought to procure it. The explosive is in the hands of a few ordinary people, but is no longer shielded. Thus Foyle has literally placed the future in their hands, urging them no longer to be humble but to aspire, to secure control of their own lives and indeed to seek to follow and emulate him. Yet the central theme of his message, whatever the Christian impetus of his excited oaths, is not Christian but humanistic. Fulfill yourselves, he challenges them, live up to your potential. His prophecy offers Everyman not the Earth promised to the humble resigned to their down-trodden lot by Christ but the stars, their real destiny. Or, by default, they can destroy themselves with the PyrE. Science is again the familiar catalyst of man's nascent potential, but here offers the common people ('children' as the powerful see them) a truly Promethean gift.

Lately the transcendental or visionary experience is often presented as being an unsought one, visited upon an individual who has little desire to acquire staggering power or some advantageous scientific insight, and fewer recent writers have drawn upon the theme of human aspiration in this more familiar Promethean vein. As I.F. Clarke affirmed in 1966 in Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984, the

now all-too-familiar perils of the expedient use of scientific discoveries, particularly in furthering the arms race, have brought home to people everywhere the unpalatable truth about the science which underpins the comforting dream of the consumer society with its seemingly incessant progress: 'Two world wars have taught the lesson that modern warfare is by far the most dangerous manifestation of the powers of science. The inhuman logic of science now confirms the analysis made by Wells in 1905; if men want the benefits of technology, they must adjust themselves to meet its dangers.' As Bester's Tiger! Tiger! suggested in 1955, we must somehow meet the responsibilities our continuing pursuit of the terrestrial paradise entails or become victims rather than masters of our own technological inventiveness. Bester and Vonnegut have been instrumental in transmitting the misgivings of Butler, Wells, Huxley and Orwell to their contemporary successors, Aldiss, Clarke, Dick et al.

A new interest in individual as opposed to general or racial human motivation is also apparent in contemporary science fiction, though of course something meaningful about human nature is usually to be inferred from the latter-day protagonist's baptism of fire. Commonly a decidedly unheroic moral vision - ambiguous and initially self-serving in Gully Foyle's case - is the starting-point for the digressions and evaluations of many of these stories, which are unique parables which proclaim the need for a new, sophisticated ethical sensibility to complement their apostate motives. Moreover, though the novels offered here as representative examples share many common features and ideas, they also show a great diversity in style and rhetoric, ranging from Bester's flamboyant picaresque through Asimov's determinedly logical exposition of technological advances

and Aldiss's drug-boosted surrealist symbolism to Dick's phenomenological solipsism.

Commonly, a delirious or bewildered protagonist has traumatically lost all his ethical referents through some personal tragedy or more general catastrophe like the Acid Head War of Aldiss's pessimistic Barefoot in the Head. The grail he pursues (and must retrieve to avoid insanity or moral perdition) is a comprehensive system of moral understanding to complement our knowledge of the physical universe. The key to this is cryptic - an enigmatic problem tests the intelligence, resourcefulness and adaptability of the human mind. Moreover, the challenge must be met by mastering the disturbingly unfamiliar holistic perspectives of the Cosmos, as in Asimov's The Gods Themselves (1972).

Isaac Asimov's novel is tripartite, and takes for its theme Schiller's saying 'Against stupidity the gods themselves contend in vain;' with each section taking its cue from part of this statement. Asimov's simple style suits his determinedly scientific approach to his subject. James Gunn sums up Asimov's achievement:

The spirit of reason that (John W.) Campbell preached and Asimov embodied in his fiction purged science fiction of an accumulated detritus of careless thinking and casual writing. The Campbell-Asimov attack on the irrational and the romantic eventually was attacked in its turn as unfeeling, an infatuation with technology, a naive image of man as a rational being. But while it lasted, it brought a clarity of thought and purity of style that served science fiction well for two decades.

44.

Indeed one might fairly call the first section of The Gods Themselves a story about the contemporary scientific establishment's personalities and their vanities, something about which one may assume Asimov, himself a scientist, is knowledgeable. Alas he displays a surer touch in technical exposition than in creating memorable

characters, for while he convincingly contextualizes his initial scientific premises, all his scientists apart from Ben Dennison seem like functional caricatures. Nonetheless his novel offers what may be thought of as an indirect but telling answer to anti-scientism such as Lewis's Out of the Silent Planet, Voyage to Venus and That Hideous Strength, personified in the former two by Weston, and represented in the third by the scientific establishment as a whole, depicted as the N.I.C.E. Like Wells, Stapledon, Bester, Miller, Clarke et al, Asimov demands maturity of man and then grants ennobled mankind cosmic power and freedom.

The novel begins in a low-key fashion as Asimov weaves physics theory into a plausible tale of professional rivalry among scientists. The donnée is ingenious but simple: a parallel universe is discovered when its intelligent species manages to produce energy by transmuting in our universe a quantity of tungsten into plutonium-186, an unknown, quite improbable element.

In a since famous article in the North American Sunday Tele-Times Weekly, (Hallam) wrote, 'We cannot say in how many different ways the laws of the para-Universe differ from our own, but we can guess with some assurance that the strong nuclear interaction, which is the strongest known force in our Universe is even stronger in the para-Universe; perhaps a hundred times stronger. This means that protons are more easily held together against their own electrostatic attraction and that a nucleus requires fewer neutrons to produce stability.

'Plutonium-186, stable in their Universe, contains far too many protons, or too few neutrons, to be stable in ours with its less effective nuclear interaction. The plutonium-186, once in our Universe, begins to radiate positrons, releasing energy as it does so, and with each positron emitted, a proton within a nucleus is converted to a neutron. Eventually, twenty protons per nucleus have been converted to neutrons and plutonium-186 has become tungsten-186, which is stable by the laws of our own Universe. In the process, twenty positrons per nucleus have been eliminated. These meet, combine with, and annihilate twenty electrons, releasing further energy, so that for every plutonium-186 nucleus sent to us, our Universe ends up with twenty fewer electrons.

'Meanwhile, the tungsten-186 that enters the para-Universe is unstable there for the opposite reason. By the laws of the para-Universe it has too many neutrons, or too few protons. The tungsten-186 nuclei begin to emit electrons, releasing energy steadily while doing so, and with each emitted electron a neutron changes to a proton until, in the end, it is plutonium-186 again. With each tungsten-186 nucleus sent into the para-Universe, twenty more electrons are added to it.

'The plutonium/tungsten can make its cycle endlessly back and forth between Universe and para-Universe, yielding energy first in one and then in another, with the net effect being a transfer of twenty electrons from our Universe to theirs per each nucleus cycled. Both sides can gain energy from what is, in effect, an Inter-Universe Electron Pump.'

The conversion of this notion into reality and the actual establishment of the Electron Pump as an effective energy source proceeded with amazing speed, and every stage of its success enhanced Hallam's prestige.

The Gods Themselves, p.23.

Thus to the evident delight of the world, the process makes available a virtually inexhaustible new supply of energy: 'No major technological advance had ever caught hold so rapidly and so entirely and why not? It meant free energy without limit and without problems. It was the Santa Claus and the Aladdin's lamp of the whole world.'(pp.17-18)

Both humans and their 'para' collaborators gain from working both sides of the 'electron pump'; but a disenchanted young scientist is outraged by the vainglory of the 'discoverer' of the process. Hallam resents Lamont's suspicions about his role in the most exciting scientific find of the century and uses his superior position to stifle his allegations. Yet Lamont clings to his critical inference that the parahumans are technologically more advanced - perhaps even more intelligent per se - than mankind, and thus may be simply exploiting a backward race. Crucially, he reasons with Hallam, they can manage communication and transmission between the parallel universes but man cannot, being thereby virtually a passive partner in the exchange.

Lamont became aware now of the storm of emotion he had raised, but he couldn't understand its cause. Uncertainly, he said, 'That they are more intelligent than we - that they did the real work. Is there nay doubt of that, sir?'

Hallam, red-faced, had heaved himself to his feet. 'there is every doubt,' he shouted. 'I will not have mysticism here. There is too much of that. See here, young man,' he advanced on the still seated and thoroughly astonished Lamont and shook a thick finger at him, 'if your history is going to take the attitude that we were puppets in the hands of the para-men, it will not be published from this institution; or at all, if I have my way. I will not have mankind and its intelligence downgraded and I won't have para-men cast in the role of gods.'

The Gods Themselves, p.26

Apart from the title itself, this is in fact the only other allusion to supernal beings in the entire work. The book as a whole is emphatically materialistic as only a novel written largely as an exposition of a theoretical physical hypothesis and its impact on human behaviour can be. One may well marvel at how scientific learning can be so ingeniously made to serve the narrative credibility of an updated version of the 'chimerical' alchemist's pursuit of the transmutation of lead into gold. An important difference, however, is Asimov's consistent and erudite development of the scientific core of his fiction. One may say with some justice that in The Gods Themselves the rhetoric of speculative science - 'paraphysics' - very closely approaches that of mysticism, but not at the expense of its rigour or fundamental principles of clarity and logical inference. Consequently the work is essentially a science or speculative fiction rather than a science fantasy, a necessary distinction in the light of the author's adroitness in the invention of the aliens depicted in the second section, '....The Gods Themselves....'; and his resolution of the entropic crisis facing mankind in the final section, '....Contend in Vain?'

By the time one has read to the foot of the first page of

chapter 1a of Asimov's section II it is apparent that Odeen, Tritt and Dua are not the eponymous gods of the story, which is in fact materialistic rather than theosophical. The three alien creatures of the para-universe are the focus of this part of the story; and Asimov offers us sympathetic characters whose emotional crises and literally homely preoccupations emphasise a quite human warmth rather than otherness in all but one crucial respect. Dua is an Emotional, Odeen a Rational and Tritt a Parental, three individual beings who synergistically complement one another in the psychosexual melding which allows conception while also giving rise to a gestalt awareness. This special form of congress is of course the evolutionary result of progressive adaptation to the physics and ecology of the para-universe in the same way that human existence is thought to have developed in the real world; but because Asimov has developed his extra-terrestrials from human nature itself they do seem to be abstractions rather than full characters, however engaging. Yet even this formal objection is overcome as the author astutely makes a virtue out of a distinct liability by presenting three more or less distinct narratives in each three-part chapter.

The three beings are the focus of attention because they are, by the standards of their own society, quite unusual. Odeen is told by his mentors, the Hard Ones, that he is considered to be a Rational prodigy; Dua is scorned by her fellow Emotionals as a deviant, a 'Left-Em' who is unusually rational in her behaviour and attitudes; and Tritt the Parental is uncommonly outspoken and determined in his pursuit of the triad's proper generative fruitfulness. Their 'para-world' is in entropic decline, as is their species, which derives its life-energy directly from the light of a dwindling star. In a cal-

culated attempt to avoid extinction the 'Hard Ones' have initiated the inter-universe energy flow in the certain knowledge that it will save their universe but destroy the universe of man. Foremost among the innovators of this last-ditch enterprise is the rather enigmatic figure of Estwald. When Dua eventually infers what is afoot she becomes acutely disturbed:

Dua said, 'If the other laws slow down our Sun and cools it down; don't our laws speed up their suns and heat them up?'

'Exactly right, Dua. A Rational couldn't do better.'

'How hot do their suns get?'

'Oh, not much; just slightly hotter, very slightly.'

Dua said, 'But that's where I keep getting the something-bad feeling.'

'Oh, well, the trouble is that their suns are so huge. If our little suns get a little cooler, it doesn't matter. Even if they turned off altogether, it wouldn't matter as long as we have the Positron Pump. With great, huge stars, though, getting even a little hotter is troublesome. There is so much material in one of those stars that turning up the nuclear fusion even a little way will make it explode.'

'Explode! But then what happens to the people?'

'What people?'

'The people in the other Universe.'

For a moment, Odeen looked blank, then he said, 'I don't know.'

'Well, what would happen if our own Sun exploded?'

'It couldn't explode.'

(Tritt wondered what all the excitement was about. How could a sun explode? Dua seemed angrier and Tritt was confused.)

Dua said, 'But if it did? Would it get very hot?'

'I suppose so.'

'Wouldn't it kill us all?'

Odeen hesitated and then said in clear annoyance, 'What difference does it make, Dua? Our Sun isn't exploding, and don't ask silly questions.'

'You told me to ask questions, Odeen, and it does make a difference, because the Positron Pump works both ways. We need their end as much as ours.'

Odeen stared at her. 'I never told you that.'

'I feel it.'

Odeen said, 'You feel a great many things. Dua - '

But Dua was shouting now. She was quite beside herself. Tritt had never seen her like that. She said, 'Don't change the subject, Odeen. And don't withdraw and try to make me out a complete fool - just another Emotional. You said I was almost like a Rational and I'm enough like one to see that the Positron Pump won't work without the other-beings. If the people in the other Universe are destroyed, the Positron Pump will stop and our Sun will be colder than ever and we'll

all starve. Don't you think that's important?'

Odeen was shouting too, now. 'That shows what you know. We need their help because the energy supply is in low concentration and we have to switch matter. If the Sun in the other Universe explodes, there'll be an enormous flood of energy; a huge flood that will last for a million lifetimes. There will be so much energy, we could tap it directly without any matter-shift either way; so we don't need them, and it doesn't matter what happens - '

The Gods Themselves, p.124.

Of course this confirms the accuracy of Lamont's reasoning and shows Hallam, the 'Father of the Electron Pump,' to be have been quite blind to the possibility that his opportunistic pursuit of kudos could bring such dire consequences. Clearly the eponymous allusion to 'gods' is deceptive and ironic, for the 'para-men' are in an even more wretched situation than their overcrowded, energy-starved human collaborators (there is a suggestion in the first part of the novel that the pressure of overpopulation on Earth is increasing). The 'para-men' are indeed wholly dependent upon the success of the deception they have worked on mankind for any hope of continuing their race, but Dua has developed an uncomfortably acute sense of moral wrongness about her fellows' pursuits and the equanimity with which they can countenance the annihilation of Man:

Dua was filled with anger; so filled she could scarcely sense the Hard Ones. She seemed stifled under the components of the anger, each one filling her to the brim, separately. There was a sense of wrongness that Odeen should try to lie to her. A sense of wrongness that a whole world of people should die. A sense of wrongness that it was so easy for her to learn and that she had never been allowed to.

The Gods Themselves, p.124.

Consequently Dua becomes reclusive - the more so because she learns that in her previous feeding she has been duped by Tritt into consuming energy derived from the human universe - and takes to spying on the activities of the 'Hard Ones'. However, since the trio have managed to produce their third child they may now 'pass on', a

prospect which depresses Dua unnaturally. Before she gives in to this doom, she resolves to disrupt the energy exchange fatal to mankind by communicating the truth to the people of the other universe in the form of the enigmatic messages which confirm Lamont's fears in the first section of the novel. By this means she will cheat Estwald of an immoral scientific triumph:

It was Estwald whom she hated. He was the personification of all that was selfish and hard. He had devised the Positron Pump and would destroy a whole world of perhaps tens of thousands without conscience. He was so withdrawn that he never made his appearance and so powerful that even the other Hard Ones seemed afraid of him.

Well, then, she would fight him. She would stop him.

The Gods Themselves, p.132.

Her efforts to warn mankind of the danger are heavily ironic because one is aware from reading the first section of the reception given to her messages by the world's submissive scientists; yet this too is eclipsed rather abruptly by Asimov's conclusion (wherein Dua learns that passing on involves evolution more than extinction) to the para-universal section of the novel. During their final union, the three individuals coalesce permanently as the youngest and most brilliant of the 'Hard Ones', an event which is underscored by Asimov discontinuing his practice of structuring each chapter of this section as three more or less distinct narratives of events from each character's point of view:

'If what you are saying is true, Odeen,' she gasped. 'If we are to be a Hard One; then it seems to me you are saying we'll be an important one. Is that so?'

'The most important. The best who was ever formed. I mean that ... Tritt, over there. It's not good-by, Tritt. We'll be together, as we always wanted to be. Dua, too. You, too, Dua.'

Dua said, 'Then we can make Estwald understand that the Pump can't continue. We'll force -'

The melting was beginning. One by one, the Hard Ones were entering again at the crucial moment. Odeen saw them imperfectly, for he was beginning to melt into Dua.

It was not like the other times; no sharp ecstasy; just a smooth, cool, utterly peaceful movement. He could feel

himself become partly Dua, and all the world seemed pouring into his/her sharpening senses. The Positron Pumps were still going - he/she could tell - why were they still going?

He was Tritt, too, and a keen sharp sense of bitter loss filled his/her/his mind. Oh, my babies -

And he cried out, one last cry under the consciousness of Odeen, except that somehow it was the cry of Dua. 'No, we can't stop Estwald. We are Estwald. We - '

The cry that was Dua's and yet not Dua's stopped and there was no longer any Dua; nor would there ever be Dua again. Nor Odeen. Nor Tritt.

7abc

Estwald stepped forward and said sadly to the waiting Hard Ones, by way of vibrating air waves, 'I am permanently with you now, and there is much to do - '

The Gods Themselves, p.147

The final section of the novel begins briskly with a conducted tour of Earth's lunar colony, signalling a return to the human side of events. The dilemma has been spelled out; the question of its resolution is now addressed by the author. Strangely, in view of the effort made to realize his alien characters, Asimov simply drops Estwald and we learn no more of him or his 'unique' contribution to the preservation of his species. Another cast appears to occupy the foreground - Selene Lindstrom, 'Moon-girl' extraordinaire; Barron Neville, a possessive lunar astrophysicist; Konrad Gottstein, the Commissioner from Earth; and a time-worn emigre Terran scientist, Benjamin Denison. The intrigues of this story concern the efforts being made to establish an Electron Pump on the Moon.

Asimov's technophilic narrative continues with some modest padding describing life as it might be in the lunar town including an anodyne account of a lunar sport, a rather clumsy exposition of lunar sexual mores and manners stressing the prurience of mundane male interest in the normal nudity of Lunarites and the mammary development of lunar women(45), and, of course, the applied science of the

future - the equipment and systems which might support human life on the Moon. His larger purpose, however, is to construct a notable victory for human scientific endeavour and vision. There is little which one feels is original in the first several chapters: Heinlein's earlier The Moon is a Harsh Mistress, for instance, offers a vastly more vivid account of a rebellious lunar colony seeking to shake itself free from a 'stagnant' Earth, despite this thematic thrust by Asimov as Gottstein meets his predecessor:

'There is something going on here - I don't know exactly what - which may be dangerous.'

'How can it be dangerous? What can they do? Make war against the Earth?' Gottstein's face trembled on the brink of a smile-crease.

'No, no, it's more subtle than that.' Montez passed his hand over his face, rubbing his eyes petulantly. 'Let me be frank with you. Earth has lost its nerve.'

'What does that mean?'

'Well, what would you call it? Just about the time the Lunar colony was being established, Earth went through the Great Crisis. I don't have to tell you about that.'

'No, you don't,' said Gottstein, with distaste.

'The population is two billion now from its six billion peak.'

'Earth is much better for that, isn't it?'

'Oh, undoubtedly, though I wish there had been a better way of achieving the drop....But it's left behind a permanent distrust of technology; a vast inertia; a lack of desire to risk change because of the possible side-effects. Great and possibly dangerous efforts have been abandoned because the danger was feared more than greatness was desired.'

The Gods Themselves, p.161.

Montez continues in this vein, concluding that, 'On the Moon...there is no direction but forward,' in contrast to the Earth which is 'in retreat from technology.' He describes the lunar community to his successor as, 'the only close-knit group of ten thousand human brains that are, in principle and by emotion, science-oriented.' The emerging scenario is one reminiscent of Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz but written by an advocate of scientific rather than religious humanism.

Barron Neville, a leading Lunar scientist who is trying to gain an independent Electron Pump for the Moon, effectively personifies the restless creativity of the Moon's scientific community. He is suspicious of Ben Denison's ostensible purpose for visiting the Moon and it is he who instructs Selene to find out more about the Earthman. Ironically, she comes to prefer Denison to her former lover, partly because Neville becomes jealous and resentful. For his part, Denison enjoys her company and together they make an important discovery which re-introduces Asimov's main theme of the entropic disaster threatening mankind. Despite Hallam's efforts to stifle him, Lamont's persistence has paid off in the long run, with a growing realization among the world's scientists that the Electron Pump's operation may be pernicious. However, there seems to be no practicable alternative without an unacceptably severe retrenchment of the world's use of energy. Fortunately Denison and Selene succeed in working out a means to eliminate the risk to mankind without leaving the para-Universe to its entropic fate. In the process, Selene reveals unwittingly that she is an Intuitionist, which further enrages Neville. Her inborn talent (the unexpected outcome of a long-abandoned and discredited eugenic programme) is for intuitively selecting the relevant details and visualising the solution to a complex problem, however cryptic or obscure it may seem:

'...I do have an idea, a simple idea - perhaps too simple to work - based on the quite obvious fact that the number two is ridiculous and can't exist.'

There was a silence that lasted a minute or so and then Selene, her voice as absorbed as his, said, 'Let me guess your meaning.'

'I don't know that I have any,' said Denison.

'Let me guess anyway. It could make sense to suppose that our own Universe is the only one that can exist or does exist, because it is the only one we live in and directly experience. Once, however, evidence arises that there is a second Universe as well, the one we call the para-Universe,

then it becomes absolutely ridiculous to suppose that there are two and only two Universes. If a second Universe can exist, then an infinite number can. Between one and the infinite in cases such as these, there are no sensible numbers. Not only two, but any finite number, is ridiculous and can't exist.

Denison said, 'That's exactly my reas -' And silence fell again.

Denison heaved himself into a sitting position and looked down on the suit-encased girl. 'I think we had better go back to town.'

She said, 'I was just guessing.'

He said, 'No, you weren't. Whatever it was, it wasn't just guessing.'

The Gods Themselves, p.208

The inferred multiplicity of universes leads to another important finding - that universes coexist in different stages of development. Denison's and Selene Lindstrom's solution to the Electron Pump problem is to find a way to tap the power of a primordial or 'cosmeg' universe - one in which all matter and energy is concentrated in a single body (a so-called 'cosmic egg') before its 'big bang' distributes its matter throughout the primordial void - and to transmit a portion of this energy to the para-Universe via the Electron Pump. Consequently mankind at once ceases to be the dupes of the 'para-men' and becomes their saviours; and human intelligence is vindicated fully - the 'para-men' are evidently not 'gods' after all, but human evolution is still proceeding: "'You can build ships, any number. You can move outward at near-light velocities without difficulty, once you transfer momentum to the cosmeg. You can explore the entire Universe in a lifetime.'" This could be the very fulfilment of Lewis's misapprehensions about Man's exploitation of the Cosmos. Yet granting him his idealized marriage of scientific method and the evolving human genius represented by Selene's perceptive intuition (celebrated with a capital I), surely Asimov's vindicating vision of scientific triumph is synergistic, not doctrinaire.

Rehearsed in the quasi-mystic fusion of the aliens he has depicted, Asimov reinforces in the resolution of his story his line about the progressive potency of collaboration, cooperation and unselfishness. He extols the potential of the reciprocating creativity of the scientific (here, rational male) and visionary (intuitive female) progressive impulse, but ultimately, of a longed-for humane reunification of two sceptical and estranged cultures.

The humanism of The Gods Themselves, a novel in which an unmistakably mystical premise - the multiplicity of universes and the transcendental nature of intelligence - is presented as a purely materialistic, even mechanistic phenomenon, is scientific humanism in perhaps its purest, most exalting form. It is nonetheless simplistic, as a comparison with Watson and Bishop's Under Heaven's Bridge shows, for Asimov's aliens conveniently disappear from the reckoning without posing a direct threat, and the rapprochement between two reasoning but competing species is expedient rather than profound - an implicit factor created as much by neglect of its complex possibilities as deliberate authorial fabulation. While it too envisions a scientific encounter with an intelligent alien race on a dying planet, Bishop and Watson's novel differs from Asimov's. While the setting of a planet circling a distant sun assumes that mankind will be able to travel freely about the universe, the novel's insights into human nature are couched in explicitly religious terms; which is why this novel's allegory of human perception and values is of considerable interest.

The Kybers, as the cybernetic-seeming beings are dubbed by their human scrutineers, are indeed a puzzling phenomenon. Machine-like, they move ponderously about their world, organic relicts of their

previous physiology flapping like dead hide from their metallic anatomy. Communication among these awesome beings is apparently telepathic, and they live, seemingly childless, in 'family' groups of seven adults. The professional scientists who man the starship Heavenbridge disagree about the puzzling, impassive, inscrutable beings even though one of them has shown sufficient interest in the human investigators to acquire from Dr. Keiko Takahashi the rudiments of spoken language. The crewman Farrell Sixkiller, for instance, finds them unnerving and ominous:

A hand fell across Keiko's shoulder.

She started, swung about, and found herself confronting a wide-eyed Farrell Sixkiller, his irises marbled with the colours of sunset.

'Dr Norn has one very basic and crippling hang-up,' the floater pilot informed her, not quite whispering.

Keiko instinctively retreated a step.

'I've been with him to the Kyber palaces, you know. He believes the aliens to be a genuine life form.'

'So does Betti, even if she is a cyberneticist. So do I, for that matter. I taught one to speak Translic, after all.'

'No, no, you don't understand, Dr Takahashi. Dr Norn also believes that they embody an answer - maybe the answer - to the riddle of the cosmos.

Keiko laughed.

'I mean it. He thinks them the key to the very meaning of our existence.'

Certain that the man was touched with a peculiarly virulent form of 'decoupling madness,' Keiko stared at Sixkiller.

'It's true,' he declared.

'You're distorting the nature of his involvement, Farrell, mistaking the depth of his commitment for - for I don't know what.'

'He's obsessed with what I told you.'

'So are you, it seems.'

'I don't like seeing anyone search after ultimate meaning in places where there's no blood, no gyzym, no juice. The Kybers are machines - very advanced machines, perhaps, but still machines. Whatever sacrificed its birthright to engineer them has paid the price of extinction for its vanity. Dr Norn refuses to recognize that fact. He thinks the Kybers will be able to tell him who coded the acorn.'

Keiko felt that, mutedly, Sixkiller was raving; none of what he said made any straightforward sense. 'You're a pantheist,' she said, testing the description mentally. 'You're a Shintoist in eagle feathers.'

'Without the goddamn feathers. I see no spirit in these death-worshipping mechanical aliens - except an evil one. Machines have no souls, Dr Takahashi.'

'This from a floater pilot? From a man who has many times entrusted his life to the mercy of the Heavenbridge?'

'Controllable machines, Dr Takahashi.'

'Whereas the Kybers -'

'Are machines that seek to control the organic processes and the organic beings that you and I represent. Therefore, they're our enemies. If he thinks them good fodder for xenological study, Dr Norn is a traitor to life. Meanwhile, Dr Takahashi, the kybers are agents of entropy and death.'

Under Heaven's Bridge, pp.32-34

Sixkiller fears that the Kybers will place mankind in technological thrall (a fate ostensibly worse even than the helotry of Player Piano) and thereby vitiate innate human potential. Perhaps he has allowed their peril - their world is soon to be cast adrift from its customary orbit and projected at an immense velocity perhaps into deep space - to infect his perception of them as sentient intelligences. Certainly they are facing their possible annihilation with an inhuman equanimity. Andrik Norn, on the other hand, has no doubts as to their sentience and is given staggering intimations of their spirituality:

The xenologist pointed skyward. 'You realize that Onogoro is going to decouple from Dextro because of the heavy inner planet? That Laevo may or may not recapture your world? That Dextro will inevitably flare up and eject shells of annihilating gas at huge velocity? You genuinely understand the seriousness of the situation?'

'In all its gravity,' replied the family speaker.

'But you joke, you pun,' cried Andrik, a titbird strutting before Titans. 'The truth of the matter is that your world is doomed and your people with it.'

'In such circumstances,' crooned the Kyber, 'it would seem essential to appeal to a higher power.'

Andrik's expression was incredulous. 'How? By prayer?'

'Orare est laborare. Our prayer is our labour. Oratory in the laboratory of our souls.'

'You're going to pray that some higher power shunts Onogoro into a viable orbit around Laevo? And your prayer is going to bring about the very orbit your people desire?'

'We pray to ourselves, Lady Keiko,' said the alien, ignoring Andrik. 'Each of us is a god in turn. We all worship the septaprime, whom each will become turn by turn in the cycle of our apotheosis.'

'Apotheosis?'

'I speak now not of kybertrance, but of the ordinary social world we share with you at present.'

Confused, Keiko nodded at the aliens lying back to back on their slate-grey bier. 'Are they also gods - intermittently?'

'Even they, who maintain us in underlinkage and psalm in death-sleep a versicle of our people's common prayer.'

'You can't move worlds by psalms or magic,' Andrik protested.

Under Heaven's Bridge, pp.59-60

Andrik Norn's concern becomes obsessive, to the detriment of his relationship with Keiko. He comes to identify his own future - and by extension, that of mankind itself - as being caught up with the doom which the Kybers (or Onogorovans as they have been dubbed by Keiko in a spirit of primal symbolism) are countenancing with incredible calm. The Onogorovans are still treated with profound suspicion by Sixkiller and some others among the people of the Heavensbridge, and Keiko herself remains uncommitted and sceptical, but Norn the xenologist becomes their main advocate and apologist. He believes that their inertness shows them to be caught up in a sort of nirvana, an exotic version of the religious self-annihilating meditative trance. Personally invited to a rare Onogorovan ritual Andrik pursues his objective unwaveringly, for the Kyber who speaks for his inert people suggests the possibility of showing him that which cannot be explained adequately in the human language it has been taught. Keiko has responded sympathetically to his deepening mood of absorption and withdrawal, but when he impulsively reveals his thoughts to her he leaves her shocked:

'Kei,' he said, sitting down on the cart and dropping his hands between his knees.

'Yes?'

'Keiko, I'm sorry that I've been the way I have.'

She cocked her head. 'How have you been?'

'Fine,' he responded. 'How have you been?'

As fragile and uninspired as it so obviously was, this bit of nonsense marked Andrik's first attempt at humour since the

day that Craig Olivant had told them that Dextro was going to flare up. Keiko laughed, and Andrik let his lips approximate a smile. The fire had not gone out of him of late; he had simply put it under bushel and fanned its coals in secret. The smoke from the flames of his personality was bitter, flavoured with wormwood.

'I haven't been able to think about anything but the Kybers.'

'I know,' she said.

'Listen, Kei. What we're abandoning on Onogoro is more important than either you or me, more important than Sixkiller or the captain or anyone else connected with this expedition.'

A small hostility moved in her. 'Why?'

'Because the Kybers have struck through the mask of our illusory reality to what's truly real - '

'Now you sound very much like a Buddhist, Andrik.'

'That shouldn't disturb you, should it? What I'm trying to say is that if Captain Hsi doesn't permit the Kybers to school us in their techniques for achieving a similar breakthrough, he'll be depriving our entire species of its finest chance for the fulfilment of... well, of our spiritual potential.'

'Captain Hsi? By himself? And are you worried about the whole of humanity as much as you are about the soul of Andrik Norn?'

'Of course I'm worried about the individual soul of Andrik Norn!' He squinted at her appraisingly, then got up and strode to the window-lens. 'But just as we expeditionary personnel are representatives of everyone who stayed at home, I'm a stand-in for those same people in our dealings with the Kybers. I want what we all should want, Keiko. To deny me is to deny multitudes.'

She flushed in acute embarrassment - for him. Did he really have any idea what he had just said?

Under Heaven's Bridge, pp.84-85

Norn's excitement is metaphysical rather than scientific. He believes that the aliens hold the key to the discovery of ultimate cosmogenic and ontological truths, and more significantly, he believes that they offer, "'our entire species of its finest chance for the fulfilment of ...our spiritual potential.'" His intuition may be expressed in the rhetoric of religious faith, but it is fed by humanistic enquiry and teleological aspiration. Perhaps Keiko, a fellow scientist, may also sense something even more disturbing than his megalomaniacal obsessiveness. Evidently he has sacrificed his objectivity and scientific scepticism to the promise of the 'truly real.' Keiko's own

scepticism of the Kybers goes deeper than being a matter of habit or professional training, however, for they revive haunting memories of an intense childhood religious experience occasioned by a visit to the temple of Sanjusangendo, home in her native Japan to thousands of statues of Kannon, the Buddhist god of Mercy and Compassion. Struck by an outward resemblance, Keiko resents all the more deeply therefore the impassiveness and remoteness of the Kybers but tries to maintain an open mind as to what they portend. Accordingly she will not participate in or condone Norn's plan to join a Kyber family to observe their ritual awakening but she does not betray his furtive expedition. Later, his colleagues will have to set out to retrieve him before their ship leaves.

At the Captain's insistence, Keiko forms one of the party and on arriving at the labyrinthine dwelling of the Kybers finds that only she is to be permitted to enter to speak to Norn because her erstwhile lover considers her to be less 'insane' than the others. The authors reiterate the nature of Andrik Norn's quest by means of her thoughts when she sees him waiting to meet her again:

Suddenly the corridor opened upon the atrium at whose heart stood Andrik and the only other animate member of the alien family. Keiko hesitated, uncertain what to expect of the man who had broken with her, and with all his fellows on the Platform, without ever really renouncing his native allegiances. Indeed, he had come out here on the pretext of discovering from the Kybers a means whereby humanity could slip its biological and philosophical fetters and attain the sort of perfect awareness available to the Kybers in death-sleep. How that grandiose goal contrasted with the bleak and dismaying reality of these surroundings!

Under Heaven's Bridge, p.108

For all the deliberate exoticism of its oriental/alien religious discourse, the soteriological drama of this futuristic novel is formally Gothic. Norn has made an hubristic pact with supernal creatures; he has pursued his aspirations - 'that grandiose goal' - to an inhospit-

able extreme - 'the bleak and dismaying reality' - where truth may be found. The stage is set for an heroic teleological climax, for Norn desires a transcendental melding quite unlike anything to be encountered in the traditional 'mainstream' fiction of character. Will Norn's Faustian communion cost him existence itself? Does he face personal annihilation, or will he achieve a divine transformation? Is the syzygy which is about to take place, the melding, an assimilation or a fatal consumption? These imponderables generate a tension and a speculative excitement which belies or overwhelms the reader's own scepticism about apotheosized man. Yet the authors introduce disquieting hints of a fell resolution; Norn speaks 'deferentially' to the alien as one might defer to a superior rather than a fellow; and in an attempt to convey his wonder at their unhuman sensibility he babbles excitedly in a welter of contradictory allusions to Lewis Carroll's surrealism:

'Like Alice, they grow and shrink and grow again at will. But that's only out here, up here, where we can see them...But down the rabbit hole of consciousness, down there, deep inside, where it's hell for us to follow - and heaven, too - they're not very much like that little-girl-Alice tourist at all; they're more like Mad Hatters, March Hares, and Cheshire Cats - native to the place. To tell the truth, I don't really know what we ought to call them when they're down there. It's we who are the Alices when we try to follow, we who are susceptible to - '

Under Heaven's Bridge, p.109

The ontological confusion surrounding the aliens is multiplied by their cryptic expression, which seems to mock the interlocutor with riddles: "'Eat me,'" one tells Keiko as it offers her 'kyberflesh' to enhance her perception in a gesture explicitly analogous to sacramental communion. "'This isn't cannibalism or predation, it's holy communion!'" declares Norn excitedly. When she accedes her mind finds itself trying to cope with an apocalypse as her perception and sensi-

bility encounters and enters the gestalt frame of the Kybers:

This place that she, and they, inhabited was a place between Heaven and Hell, a limbo of uncertain possibilities. A noise like the lurching of bump'em cars punctuated the silence of which it was apparently woven: a humming silence connected to that ineffable Somewhere Else still just beyond her grasp.

Nevertheless, energies and auras, the currency of death-in-life, flowed between her and the others in their little diamond of external touching; and she saw in death-sleep a flicker of lightning against the tarnished mother-of-pearl of her inward sky: ****Do you feel pain, Lady Keiko?*** This was from her former student, Alice A, no longer its family's septa-prime. And yes, almost coinciding with its question, she had experienced an ache or hunger for which she could imagine no effective balm or nourishment.

****That's good,**** hummed Alice A, even though she had framed no response either silently or aloud, for a little of that mysterious pain nagged her yet. ****Pain is the First Mover, Lady Keiko, at whose touch we flee the stagnation of complacency and self-righteousness.****

Under Heaven's Bridge, p.113

Keiko and Andrik Norn have entered a realm - 'a gauzy limbo' - where human logic seems to be inadequate, while the surreal thoughts of the Kybers appear portentous. Keiko strains to grasp the significance of their rather tangential utterances despite a mounting sense of panic:

****We are evolving in response to anticipated pain,**** vouchsafed one or both of the Kybers. ****We are evolving at the behest of our own intelligence but in response to our intelligent perception of a control system greater than Kyber self-awareness. This control system is our God.****

****Is it Andrik's, too?***

****Tied end to end, the neuronc axons of the human brain - if the cerebral makeup of your lover is typical of the species - would stretch one and a quarter million kilometres. That is the length of the unitary human mind, Lady Keiko; and as great as that may seem to you, as 'rapidly' as the synapses along that involute network spark and fire, it may yet be insufficient to appraise itself of the God manifest within us as a programme for our own survival.****

Now Keiko was lost not only in the fog of death-sleep but in the briary thickets of Kyber metaphysics. Her eyes were open - her physical eyes - but all she could see, now that her initial pain and fear had subsided, was a kind of photographic negative of the aurora-riven night. No way back, no way forward, no way out.

Under Heaven's Bridge, pp.114-115

With Keiko's synaesthetic and surreal predicament established, the authors introduce further theosophical revelations in this strange epiphany. The alien creatures venerate a 'programme' designed by a Prime Mover which is deterministic and dispassionate. This exists as a continuum which the Kybers apperceive in their deep trance, when their 'lateral eye bulbs' give them a metaphysical perception which replaces the visual sight of their defunct normal eyes. Keiko begins to think along similar lines to Sixkiller's instinctive misgivings about the drone-like beings whose thanatic visions are epiphanic:

Where was Andrik? Keiko wondered again... Then, although she was sure that she had not projected her questions at either of the aliens, Alice B responded:

****We are taking him to God.****

****You see,**** fluted Alice A, in melodic glissando gloss, ****still further below ice-heat, at winter-aphelion, super-conductivity of our prime circuits induces yet another para-cerebral phase-shift, this time to a tempo nearly coincident with that of the Control System governing all that is, and was, and will be.****

God, though Keiko bemusedly. What did this concept of a Prime Motivator and Controller do to the Eastern belief that all beings were related to one another in harmonious hierarchies constituting a vast cosmic pattern? Given a motivator and controller above these manifold hierarchies, you could scarcely attribute either virtue or vice to the beings arrayed within each level - for in such a system behaviour arose from decrees; or from programmes, rather than the inner dictates of each being's special nature.

The negative of an aurora wriggled like breeding black snakes through the gauze of Keiko's kybertrance sky.

How do I escape? thought Keiko, for she rejected the aliens' proof of God as harmful to the health of the fragile human soul. How do I rescue Andrik from the malaise of Kyber 'spirituality'? Or are we the ones who suffer from the malaise...?

Under Heaven's Bridge, p.119

Distrusting the alien theosophy because she realizes that it rewards the abdication of self-hood and the annihilation of individuality with freedom from moral responsibility ('...you could scarcely attribute either virtue or vice to the beings arrayed within each level'), Keiko resolves to rescue Andrik from his ambiguous mystical

commitment. Meanwhile the Kybers and Andrik continue their transcendental siren song:

****Sped to control tempo, or alarmingly thereabouts, our kyberthoughts permit permit epiphany, my sweet Lady Kei. The over-reality manifests itself! We peek into the demesne of control by first having peaked into that of death-in-life and life-in-death.****

Ibid.

The thanatic metaphor of this account indicates that its primary concerns are indeed post-Gothic, being a hybrid of Gothic sublimity and post-modern paranoia in which Poe's 'arabesque reality' delimited with a poetic intensity is imbued with contemporary anxiety about the twin terrors of futile existence and extinction of the self. Yet, as has been seen with other fictions of aspiration such as Men Like Gods, Star Maker, Deus Irae and the metempsychotic Lord of Light, a thorough discussion of this novel does lead beyond Ketterer's 'apocalypse,' entering the arena of epiphany his study neglects.

The 'gauzy limbo' Keiko experiences transcendentially is a zone wherein issues of morality and altruism are irresolvable or redundant. The perspectives pertaining in this zone invoke absolutes; with their 'supranormal eyes' the Kybers "'...see what outlives the flimsiness of time and fleshly bodies.'" in the very nadir of a Romantic rapture. This view of ultimate Nature as a control system to which the sapient resign self-determination as futile frightens Keiko, who values her autonomy (even if only as a delusion, at worst) and intuitively rejects the Kybers' cosmogony. Since Andrik's awareness has gone on to who knows where (leaving one wondering whether he was assimilated or consumed) Keiko is suddenly overcome by a wave of self-preservation when the Kybers offer her the same terrifying invitation to worship their supernal Big Brother, the God-Behind-the-Galaxies. At this most opportune moment, the authors

allow her a moment of reflection and understanding before the Kybers try unsuccessfully to abduct her spirit:

If God was a control system, God was infinitely more alien than the Kybers. You could never attain perfect union with that which lay above and beyond you, outside you, manipulative and dictatorial rather than serenely existent and quiescently complementary. Andrik, a Westerner, might approve the concept of such a god; but how could she - or even the cyberneticist Betti Songa, whose professional expertise encompassed the finer points of programming and control, but whose cultural background denied these same mechanistic tendencies in nature - ever surrender to so impersonal a cosmology?

Under Heaven's Bridge, p.120-121

Never in doubt, Keiko's instinctive preference for humane qualities comes to the fore in her struggle to resist the acquisitive zeal of the Kybers whose 'altruistic' efforts to unite her with the greater consciousness prove very nearly fatal. She has seen the flaw in their logic - '**We discontinuously obtain union, and much more frequently than it is given human mystics to do - because we are designed to approach that state.**' Desperately, she exposes their fallacy, '**Then how may you take Andrik to God? He's not an Onogorovan, and neither am I!**' Their answer is functional rather reassuring:

She had no human voice with which to scream.

We lead you into the presence by hymning in continent-wide chorale the paean of our Way.

I don't want - !

Switches were thrown, circuits were opened, and a sound like the intermittent burr of an overloaded transformer wracked Keiko's body through the conducting channels of her bones. She was blind, mute, deaf, desensitized to nearly every sensation except pain and fear of pain; meanwhile the Kybers were attempting - insanely, altruistically - to augment the tempo of her perception to that of a control system whose suzerainty she would never accept or acknowledge. Thousands of Kyber families poured their 'voices' into the paean lifting her to God, while bereft of Andrik and the world, she braked her burning consciousness and resisted their efforts. Her body writhed blindly between the Kybers crucifying her above the flagstones.

Let her go, crooned Alice A. **Let her go before her brittle body snaps; before, to daub us culpable, her blood spills out.**

Ibid.

Keiko retreats from the communion Andrik sought so eagerly because she sees the proffered relationship between human and seemingly supernal creature in a very different, highly sceptical light. '...the primordial tyrant,' she describes the Prime Mover of the system Andrik has penetrated, 'not a deity but a system, not a unifying consciousness but a programmer.' By implication, Andrik the visionary scientist has found a 'god' in his own materialist image, a transcendent, immanent presence, true, but one whose sensibility is literal and driven by machine logic rather than intuition and wisdom, the ultimate idiot savant. However Keiko's response indicates that the joint authors of Under Heaven's Bridge do not castigate science per se, but only the C.P.Snow positivistic variety vilified by Lewis as venial and pernicious. For as their sympathetic depiction of Keiko proves, Watson and Bishop are critical, not reactionary. Keiko is a linguist, not a physical scientist - though in terms of the novel's argument this distinction diminishes as the story unfolds. While her sensibility is distinctly rational it is also intuitive in ways not discernable in the characters of the other scientific surveyors of Onogoro. Keiko's sensibility is in fact an idealized hybrid, a post-Enlightenment, Second Renaissance paradigm of sapience and humane intellection. The intrinsic force of her own thought processes eclipses the heady but futile elation of the alien syzygy Andrik has welcomed and the entropic epiphany he has been granted:

Maybe Sixkiller had been right. Even if the Kybers were alive by all the standard biological criteria, they were self-confessedly in thrall to...a control system. That made them, yes, machines. Even their intelligence and free will - if you could use those loaded terms - were attributes of the system that had programmed them to know it. The next step in this inescapable chain of reasoning led you to conclude that human beings, despite not having been specifically programmed to know the primordial tyrant dictating the shape of their lives,

were likewise a variety of machine, albeit a less complex or successful variety because incapable of merging unaided with their Controller.

Or else you could assume that the God-Behind-the-Galaxies of the Kybers was not humanity's Controller after all.

This was Keiko Takahashi's instinctive assumption even as she fell back from the kneeling aliens and begged for the world to reassert itself around her...

Under Heaven's Bridge, p.122

As she regains consciousness the desolate truth of Andrik's probable fate sinks in: 'Andrik...stood at last on the threshold of the ultimate Control Room, peering in with astonished inward eyes and longing to take the fateful metaphysical step that would unite him with the Controller even if that step extinguished the life sheltering his own microscopic spark of the divine.' Restored to a familiar environment, Keiko realizes that Andrik, having fulfilled his desire to transcend the limits of his sensibility, is beyond any hope of rescue. Keiko angrily rejects the aliens' clumsy attempt at a teleological justification:

'You are no better or worse than we, Lady Kei,' said Alice A by way of explanation. 'We are the notes of the piano roll of our genetipsychic heritage, after all, and so are you of yours. That which slotted the rolls and plays out our melodies on the upright piano of consensus reality is one and the same composer/performer. Sometimes, however, we Kybers are permitted to slot the rolls and tickle the keys ourselves. You need not fear us simply because we are able to influence the performance more often than you. What we wish to do, Lady Keiko, is.... Show You the Way.'

'Kybertrance is madness,' said Keiko, looking behind her. 'Your death-sleep is insane. Your world view is a vile, melancholy thing. I leave you to your deaths.'

'Our Weltanschauung, our world view, will prevent those deaths, O little teacher, or at the very least permit us to trot foxily around them.'

No longer listening, Keiko shouted again at Andrik, knowing that she would not be able to rouse him. His name - the living word - echoed in the pit, rang against the icy rocks. Tears came to her eyes, salt in her blurred apprehension of the night, and at last she broke and ran.

Under Heaven's Bridge, pp.124-125

Keiko's rejection of the metaphysical para-reality the kybers worship is as damning as it is heartfelt. Later she denounces the decision to

carry back to Earth six of the Kybers, for she believes that they are infiltrators intending "to colonize Earth for a new variety of kyberlife. That's what their survival option amounts to finally: they hope to displace us, replace us, take over - because they have evolved beyond us here on Onogoro, under heaven's bridge, and they see no hope of our ever putting a foot on that span if left to ourselves." However her colleagues receive her arguments with scepticism (one warns against prescribing "standards of ethical behaviour for aliens") and so the meta-machines are duly transported to Earth while their fellows left on Onogoro, and Andrik Norm, are flailed by the radiation of the dying star.

In the final analysis, Andrik's transcendent adventure has proved futile from any conceivable human point of view. In Promethean terms, for instance, his efforts are no less fruitless as they are in Faustian or messianic terms for his transcendence and pain secures no empowering revelation, though as knowledge in the abstract about the nature of the cosmos his experience has significance. Yet these terms may not adequately explain his goal, which is, as Keiko thinks of it, 'trying to give birth to himself;' and his destiny is most readily explained in terms of a religious spiritual communion, creating an unconventional materialistic version of apotheosis given his professedly scientific humanism. On the voyage home, Keiko interrogates one of the aliens and is told that the pursuit of knowledge is the Kybers' single existential concern:

'We wanted you to know that we will survive on Onogoro,' the alien told her aloud. 'Even on a world cut adrift from a fevered sun.'

'And Andrik?'

'Andrik thinks us - prays us - toward that survival, too, by obeying the cosmic process whose purpose is the continuous acquisition of knowledge at the goad of either pain or its promise.'

'To what end? For what reward?' Keiko cried, again aware of the dingy clutter of around her - for the alien seemed to be retreating from her, withdrawing inexorably into the bleak winter light of kybertrance.

'Awareness,' crooned the Kyber. 'Perception of the Presence. These are their own rewards.'

'But will Andrik survive? Will he live through what's happened and what's going to happen?'

'He?'

'His spirit,' Keiko emended. 'His essence.'

'In our offspring saviours, yes. Assuredly. Have no fear.'

Under Heaven's Bridge, p.150

In what seems to be a postscript rather than a closing chapter, Keiko is found again decades later as a retired lecturer who makes her way to Kyoto to view the apparently dead Kyber installed there among the statues of Kannon, to which it bears a striking resemblance. The light from the exploded star has finally reached Earth, and she seems to discern a faint lambent glow in the alien's impassive features; and as the crowd presses her past she inwardly yearns again to share the gestalt communion she experienced on Onogoro - 'She would come again. The promise was there.' Her hope may seem perverse, but the implication is that in the last years of what has been a bleak life she feels the absence of Andrik all the more acutely and yearns to join him in his alien immortality. An intricate and subtle short novel, Under Heaven's Bridge displays its co-authors' mature grasp of idiom, character and motivation.

Yet Under Heaven's Bridge also illustrates another aspect of the uniquely epistemological nature of the science fiction of aspiration. Christopher Marlowe affirmed that knowledge, whatever its provenance, meant power; Mary Shelley also portrayed it as a seductive force and destroyed her hubristic scientist as a warning about human vanity. In the modern era, Wells contended that it was indispensable, there being 'no escape from the cages of life without knowledge.' In response C.S.Lewis condemned the vanity of scientists, asserting that

knowledge, when not the fruit of divine Revelation, must be profane and dangerous. A doyen of magazine science fiction's 'Golden Age,' Asimov celebrates sophisticated science, suggesting in The Gods Themselves that the scientific method itself is more robust than its fallible practitioners and depicting the acquisition of knowledge as a vital, ennobling activity which brings forth discoveries of dependable utility. At the same time, he takes the widest possible definition of science, recognizing the value of cognitive intuition. In Under Heaven's Bridge, Ian Watson and Michael Bishop use a number of long-familiar generic ideas and dreams such as gestalt telepathic communication, inter-racial synergy, the tyranny of the deified machine or computer, and the mutual antipathy of religious and secular world-views. These elements are used to create a scenario in which the relentless acquisition of knowledge seems the ultimate in nihilism. Moreover, they even imply that the ability to exploit knowledge selectively, without becoming its slave, is a distinctly human survival trait. The Kybers are addicted to knowledge, which through generations has become their sole raison d'etre; yet even if multiplex human nature is less evolved - that is, specialised - it is more responsive and possesses a vastly richer Weltanschaaung, the real measure of awareness. In both The Gods Themselves and Under Heaven's Bridge there is a direct assertion of the possibility of intuitive knowing, a human visionary faculty which is contrasted with the mechanistic - and thence partial - principles of science. Indeed in Under Heaven's Bridge even the radical principles of Einsteinian science are condescendingly adopted by the Kybers despite their imputed primitiveness(p.118). Hence in the phenomenological context of some recent science fiction qualities like intuition and

individualism are emphatically positive attributes. Since the Kybers' philosophy effectively indicts them, that 'promise' Keiko discerns in the motionless Kyber invites scrutiny.

Throughout the novel, Keiko's ambivalence towards the aliens is suggests the attraction of venerating an all-knowing, all-powerful supernal being; this is the psychological bedrock of religious devotion, and the precondition of, for instance, both the Christian and Islamic soteriologies. Yet the tenor of the science fiction of aspiration is commonly sceptical - 'apostate' - and so protagonists do not usually place much faith in religious metempsychosis or salvation. The materialistic alternative is a progressive faith in human self-directed teleology, the central sacrament of the Kybers' creed. Keiko may therefore claim some sort of ambiguous justification to partly legitimize her unspoken hope of a metempsychotic reunion with her rapt lover Andrik. Philip K.Dick's VALIS, with which this discussion of religion, moral vision and humanism in modern science fiction will conclude, further illustrates this tension between scientific materialism and spiritual hope.

'GOD IS NOWHERE / GOD IS NOW HERE':

Salvation and 'the prime aberration of the human mind'.

The title of this closing section is composed of two quotations, from VALIS by Philip K.Dick and Childhood's End by Arthur C.Clarke respectively, two key novels published some twenty-seven years apart that offer significantly differing perspectives of mysticism and apotheosis. Before discussing them, it may be useful to try to sum up the main themes and contentions of transcendental science fiction while reviewing some recent additions to the field.

The recent spate of cryptic science fiction novels exemplified by Under Heaven's Bridge reveals how thoroughly scientific humanism, scepticism, Romanticism, and existentialist ideas have become interwoven. Collectively, such books confirm the propriety of the generic term 'science fiction of aspiration' which well describes a significantly large group of texts recent or historic; explicitly religious or apostate. In fact, in his 1965 discussion 'Religion in Science Fiction: Space, God and Faith' (augmented slightly in 1976), Sam Moskowitz cites some thirty or so titles (omitting Dune and its sequels, remarkably) whereas some fifteen years later Tom Woodman was able to include two to three times as many in 'Science Fiction, Religion and Transcendence.' Doubtless diverse factors contributed to this increase in the production of religious science fiction, but two of the most obvious are probably also the most significant: the increase in its popularity among paperback readers; and its improved literary quality and a greater sophistication of ideas which is partly the result of emulation and elaboration, and partly the result of the debate generated by the 'New Wave' polemicists. Recent books by Ian Watson, Michael Bishop and Gregory Benford illustrate this trend.

For H.G.Wells, logic and reason constituted the lingua franca of more-than-human intelligence. The atheistic utopians of Men Like Gods are so dispassionate as to seem almost as remote and alien as the exterminating Martians of The War of the Worlds wherein Wells hypothesised a common ancestry for both alien and human species, an original anticipation of that increasingly popular holistic theme of later science fiction writers, the physical and intellectual kinship of all intelligent life. The recent work of Watson and of Benford is

characterised by just this idea, which Aldiss's Charteris calls an 'essential pattern'. Post-modernist uncertainty has so affected the notion, however, that now human logos tends to be depicted as a reactionary influence obscuring the 'embedded' reality. Explicitly in Watson's The Embedding(1975), a South American forest tribe threatened with extinction by economic development revives a strange mode of thought which is completely at odds with the mathematically-precise epistemology of Western science, but which reveals humanity's archaic kinship with an intelligent extra-terrestrial race. Modern science, the progeny of Enlightenment Utilitarianism and Positivism, has eclipsed the 'embedded' semiotic philosophy. Consequently the aliens are incomprehensible to all except the Xemahoa - and a group of orphans who have been raised in laboratory seclusion and deprived of socialization in an experiment designed to test the premises of psychology and semantics without the possibly distorting or occluding influence of scientific logic.

In The Martian Inca(1977) by the same author, Julio becomes the messianic leader of his oppressed fellows. He leads them in a quasi-religious political crusade against economic imperialism following his traumatic awakening by a Martian bacterium with which he has been infected at the site of a wrecked Russian space vehicle. Julio's ragged crusade reaches a gory culmination when he, like Moorcock's Glogauer, pays with his life for the godhood seemingly conferred upon him. The mystical ambience of Watson's work is continued into The Gardens of Delight(1980), wherein he presents an international space exploration crew with a baffling world which disturbingly resembles the fantastic landscapes of Bosch's painting. Each of the crew experiences metempsychosis, and so develops a deeper perception and

appreciation of the holistic universe. His recent trilogy, The Book of the River, The Book of the Stars and The Book of Being(1985) further exhibit his gift for blending and balancing mysticism and rationalism in transcendental science fiction.

A future global society is verging on collapse in the face of its own environmental pollution, injustices, moral uncertainty and the religious fervour of the fanatics who call themselves 'the Sons' in Benford's In the Ocean of Night(1977). Inadvertently compounding the chaos, an alien starship on a voyage of exploration approaches Earth and the fearful Terran authorities order it to be destroyed. A ship is despatched, but after awesome encounters with the reticent aliens, the humans return having discovered the true nature and extent of the Cosmos from a cryptic alien star chart. During the same year, Benford co-wrote If the Stars are Gods, in which a scientist ultimately succeeds in deciphering a cryptic alien transmission aimed at Earth, having undergone a whole series of mystic experiences in an attempt to discover the key to this crucial message.

In three books by Michael Bishop, A Funeral for the Eyes of Fire (1975), Beneath the Shattered Moons(1973,76) and Stolen Faces (1977), humane protagonists struggle to reform societies afflicted by atavistic rituals sanctified by their 'religious' doctrines and embellishments. In the pessimistic Stolen Faces the administrator of a quarantine camp pays with his life for his attempt to re-educate the 'muphormers' after discovering that their deformities are ritual rather than pathological, inflicted rather than leprous. Like Watson's Julio, Lucian Yeardance ends as their scapegoat when his attempt to re-align their terrible cult of the Flayed God fails. Yeardance's humanistic altruism cannot itself reverse the profound

social conditioning which promulgates their savage faith, and ironically his own death actually serves to strengthen the religion before its proscription and the dispersal of the colony. The central drama may be tragic but it is also exemplary and noble.

As these and a number of works already discussed have attested, teleological character development is triggered in many sceptical science fictions of aspiration by some extraordinary experience. Drugs or trauma disorient the individual and allow an innate divinity to emerge from its suppressed source into the consciousness: apotheosis occurs. Thus, an experience which disrupts the quotidian sensibility is the catalyst which triggers the emergence of hidden traits or hitherto untapped potential, and these distinguish the charismatic individual from his unseeing, mundane fellows. The God of religions might be dead, as Nietzsche asserted, but surely Swinburne's observation, 'But God, if a God there be, is the substance of men which is man' finds at least as many supporters among the authors of this humanistic science fiction with its multifarious varieties of transcendental transformation(46).

At the same time a particular form of iconoclasm is central to the science fiction of aspiration. The idea of human apotheosis enthralls Victor Frankenstein, yet ultimately he concedes that he had sought to 'become greater than human nature will allow.' At its most hubristic the science fiction of aspiration accepts few such constraints upon human nature. 'God' is seen as an ideal, not a being - an end-point rather than a condition of existence which will be attained after a sapient teleological evolution. Indeed, a comparison with the apocalyptic soteriology of traditional Christianity depicted in A Dream of the Day that Must Come reveals significant resonances

between the ostensibly radical teleology of scientific humanism and its Christian counterpart.

Mrs. Penny's narrator attains his epiphany after a distressing journey of atonement, culminating in his death and immediate assimilation into a rapt communion with Godhead. This transcendental soteriology is completely traditional in its allegory, and even its metempsychosis closely parallels Bunyan's conclusion to Pilgrim's Progress, differing only in details. Such Christian moral tales are essentially monitory but also hold out the prospect of the supreme happy ending promised to the devout. Stapledon's Star Maker attacks orthodox religion but describes a similar sort of metempsychosis and theophany (albeit in strictly evolutionary terms) which, as we have seen, the narrator rejects in favour of human concerns and fellowship.

The narrator is taken from the comfortable familiarity of an English market town on a vast journey throughout the Universe culminating in a poignant encounter with the divinely creative Star Maker. Afterwards the narrator believes he has seen God, and tragically knows that it has been an unrepeatable experience. It has so changed his outlook that he feels quite alienated from his fellow humans on being returned to earth. Now he sees everything human as being petty, and also knows that the human race is presently too immature to actually have that special attention of the divine organiser of the Cosmos devoutly assumed to be ours. Arthur C. Clarke, to date Stapledon's most cogent successor, utilises the tragic potential of the idea of divine remoteness or indifference in Childhood's End(1954), wherein religion is also depicted as a vestigial element of an immature society and limited sensibility. The

Overlords turn out to be mentors, and their advanced technology and deliberate remoteness from the people of Earth lend force to the scientific world-view which it is their responsibility to promote, but knowledge beyond human ken supports Supervisor Karellen's utter certainty: "'The Wainwrights fear, too, that we know the truth about the origins of their faiths. How long, they wonder, have we been observing humanity? Have we watched Mohammed begin the Hegira, or Moses giving the Jews their laws? Do we know all that is false in the stories they believe?'" To Karellen, all religions are factitious, their revelations the products of Man's essentially mythopoeic sensibility.

Other disturbing assertions are made in Karellen's reply to the Wainwright's fundamentalist complaints, for he goes on to challenge the credibility, and consequently the integrity, of the world's organized religions. Yet Karellen simply ignores Wainwright's main point about individual freedom, something which is rather eclipsed by Clarke's introduction of a time-honoured rationalistic criticism reflecting an anthropological perspective of Mankind's religious ideas: "'Believe me, it gives us no pleasure to destroy men's faiths, but all the world's religions cannot be right - and they know it.'" He concludes by implying that the repudiation of most human religions is a unpleasant but necessary duty. Virtually all religions are held by the Overlords, in their superior wisdom, to be no more than hindrances to the attainment by a species of its maturity. Then Clarke opportunely adds cryptic suspense to his series of sensational opening premises when the Supervisor tells Stormgren that a revelation which is likely to shatter the faith of many devout people (one is irresistibly reminded of the denouement of 'The Star') is to be

made public when the moment is right: "Sooner or later man has to learn the truth: but that time is not yet."

Indeed, the Overlords remain hidden from sight for over fifty years before they judge that Mankind is ready to learn part of that truth, because their first lesson will require careful preparation.

Fifty years is ample time in which to change a world and its people almost beyond recognition. All that is required for the task are a sound knowledge of social engineering, a clear sight of the intended goal - and power. These things the Overlords possessed. Though their goal was hidden their knowledge was obvious - and so was their power.

Childhood's End, Chapter 6.

The Overlords achieve their twin aims. The world, socially, becomes a more congenial place as their scientific expertise resolves material difficulties which have been long-established sources of conflict: 'By the standards of all earlier ages, it was Utopia. Ignorance, disease, poverty and fear had virtually ceased to exist.' Perhaps more incredible, however, is the ease with which the Overlords effect their other central aim, the destruction of the world's religions; and it is striking how readily Clarke associates the decline of religious conviction with a general improvement in education - only a depleted form of Buddhism survives, presumably because of its emphasis on meditation, self-knowledge, and personal development:

Profounder things had also passed. It was a completely secular age. Of the faiths that had existed before the coming of the Overlords, only a form of purified Buddhism - perhaps the most austere of all religions - still survived. The creeds that had been based upon miracles and revelations had collapsed utterly. With the rise of education, they had already been slowly dissolving, but for a while the Overlords had taken no sides in the matter.

Ibid.

Probably reflecting his acknowledged debt to Stapledon's Star Maker, Clarke alludes to a tiny group who believe in a depersonalized god; they may perhaps be the counterparts of the sad 'awakened minds' of

the mad worlds. (There is another, more obvious similarity - Jan's quest - which dominates the second and final parts of Clarke's novel.)

When he does eventually intervene, Karellen again exploits the science of his race - 'The instrument he handed over on permanent loan to the World History Foundation was nothing more than a television receiver with an elaborate set of controls for determining coordinates in time and space (which) must have been linked to a far more complex machine, operating on principles that no-one could imagine, aboard Karellen's ship.' The impact of this super-gadget for viewing the past is to be enormous, entailing - in terms of the novel's premises - nothing less than the final exposure and abjuration of religion, depicted as one of the most distinctive symbols of the immaturity of the human race:

Here was a revelation which no-one could doubt or deny: here, seen by some unknown magic of Overlord science, were the true beginnings of all the world's great faiths. Most of them were noble and inspiring - but that was not enough. Within a few days, all mankind's multitudinous messiahs had lost their divinity. Beneath the fierce and passionless light of truth, faiths that had sustained millions for twice a thousand years vanished like morning dew. All the good and evil they had wrought were swept suddenly into the past, and could touch the minds of men no more.

Humanity had lost its ancient gods: now it was old enough to need no new ones.

Ibid.

Perhaps in one sense, "Childhood's End"; but, if the religions of mankind are in themselves so inconsequential, if they are essentially merely delusions, why do the apparently omniscient Overlords need to challenge them at all? Clarke has hinted in an earlier chapter that Karellen and his fellows are carrying out some kind of duty for which they have little enthusiasm; and, indeed, that their task is remedial - "We have had our failures," Karellen tells Stormgren at their

last encounter. In what is a well-executed denouement in Chapter 5, Clarke wrings the last drop of suspense from describing the world's intense, speculative interest as humanity awaits their first sight of an Overlord. Karellen has first insisted that two young children are sent aboard his ship; the manner of their return is breathtaking, but not, as Clarke emphasises, calamitous or convulsive:

It was a tribute to the Overlords' psychology, and to their careful years of preparation, that only a few people fainted. Yet there could have been fewer still, anywhere in the world, who did not feel the ancient terror brush for one awful moment against their minds before reason banished it forever.

There was no mistake. The leathery wings, the little horns, the barbed tail - all were there. The most terrible of all legends had come to life, out of the unknown past. Yet now it stood smiling, in ebon majesty, with the sunlight gleaming upon its tremendous body, and with a human child resting trustfully on either arm.

Loc.cit.

However sceptical or iconoclastic Clarke's opinions may seem here, we must be wary of jumping to premature conclusions. Questions remain: Who directs the Overlords? If mankind has a religious propensity, what supplants the discredited faiths?

Their mission to Earth involves overseeing the emergence of a new generation of mankind radically different from their progenitors. The first indications of the real nature of their Directive emerge gradually:

"_ originally contacted him because he has one of the world's finest libraries of books on parapsychology and allied subjects. He politely but firmly refused to lend any of them, so there was nothing to do but visit him. I've now read about half his library. It has been a considerable ordeal."

"That I can well believe," said Karellen dryly. "Have you discovered anything among all the rubbish?"

"Yes - eleven clear cases of partial breakthrough, and twenty-seven probables. The material is so selective, however, that one cannot use it for sampling purposes. And the evidence is hopelessly confused with mysticism - perhaps the prime aberration of the human mind."

Childhood's End, pp.88-89.

This teleological story of the emergence of a newly-evolved species of Man proceeds side-by-side with a generic tale of hubristic aspiration featuring a clever young man with curiosity and determination. Its familiar theme - 'knowledge is power'- is given a mystical context which seems to contradict the precepts of science. Moreover there is a considerable, calculated irony in the Overlords' inability to comprehend the value to their master, the Overmind, of the mystical and intuitive humans in their care. But the Overlords' faith in Reason and Science ironically reveals their own limitations. Jan reveals a measure of this special human quality in his discovery of the Overlords' home planet:

It was an impossible coincidence. NGS 549672 must be the home of the Overlords. Yet to accept the fact violated all Jan's cherished ideas of the scientific method. Very well - let them be violated. He must accept the fact that, somehow, Rupert's fantastic experiment [a seance] had tapped a hitherto unknown source of knowledge.

Rashaverak? That seemed the most probable explanation. The Overlord had not been in the circle, but that was a minor point. However, Jan was not concerned with the mechanism of parapsysics: he was only interested in using the results.

Very little was known about NGS 549672: there had been nothing to distinguish it from a million other stars. But the catalogue gave its magnitude, its co-ordinates, and its spectral type. Jan would have to do a little research, and make a few simple calculations: then he would know, at least approximately, how far the world of the Overlords was from Earth.

A slow smile spread over Jan's face as he turned away from the Thames, back towards the gleaming white facade of the Science Centre. Knowledge was power - and he was the only man on Earth who knew the origin of the Overlords. How he would use that knowledge he could not guess. It would lie safely in his mind, awaiting the moment of destiny.

Childhood's End, p.95

The remainder of the second section of Childhood's End, 'The Golden Age' (47), relates how Jan manages to connive his way aboard a returning Overlord ship and secure a passage to their homeworld. Clarke suspends our interest in what he finds there for the closing chapters of the book; and the middle section of the book concludes with the

Overlords' sombre revelation - "'The stars are not for Man'":

"The stars are not for Man." Yes, it would annoy them to have the celestial portals slammed in their faces. But they must learn to face the truth - or as much of the truth as could mercifully be given to them.

From the lonely heights of the stratosphere, Karellen looked down upon the world and the people that had been given into his reluctant keeping. He thought of all that lay ahead, and what this world would be only a dozen years from now.

They would never know how lucky they had been. For a lifetime Mankind had achieved as much happiness as any race can ever know. It had been the Golden Age. But gold was also the colour of sunset, of autumn: and only Karellen's ears could catch the first wailings of the winter storms.

And only Karellen knew with what inexorable swiftness the Golden Age was rushing to its close.

Childhood's End, pp.118-119

The third section of Childhood's End opens with the description of an island community founded by Salomon to preserve 'the soul of man' from becoming destroyed inadvertently by the altruism of the Overlords. 'New Athens' is a behaviorist utopia, a cross between Walden Two and the New Atlantis managed in Bacon's 'Instauratio Magna' by the founder's sixteenth-century namesake: 'It hoped to become what the old Athens might have been if it had possessed machines instead of slaves, science instead of superstition.'(p.135) Yet the island venture is, in the circumstances, doomed to futility and Clarke uses it only as a suitable cradle for the tenuous interaction of Homo sapiens and the remote Overmind, at whose bidding the Overlords have taken over the world. Now the author returns to the strategy of overthrowing expectations. Two children turn out to be telepathic prodigies, able to undertake transcendental voyages of exploration throughout space and time - they have managed what the Overlords call 'Total Breakthrough.' Still more significantly, they can somehow communicate their talent, but only to minds which do not yet have too much to unlearn, and so the older generation is wholly excluded. Their parents are not to be alone in bearing this burden of

inferiority, however:

"What started this thing?" asked George. "And where is it going to lead?"

"That is something we cannot answer. But there are many races in the universe, and some of them discovered these powers long before your species - or mine - appeared on the scene. They have been waiting for you to join them, and now the time has come."

"Then where do you come into the picture?"

"Probably, like most men, you have always regarded us as your masters. That is not true. We have never been more than guardians, doing a duty imposed upon us from - above. That duty is hard to define: perhaps you can best think of us as midwives attending a difficult birth. We are helping to bring something new and wonderful into the world."

Rasheverak hesitated: for a moment it almost seemed as if he was at a loss for words.

"Yes, we are the midwives. But we ourselves are barren."

In that instant, George knew he was in the presence of a tragedy transcending his own. It was incredible - and yet somehow just. Despite all their powers and their brilliance, the Overlords were trapped in some evolutionary cul-de-sac. Here was a great and noble race, in almost every way superior to mankind; yet it had no future, and it was aware of it. In the face of this, George's own problems seemed suddenly trivial.

Childhood's End, pp.153-154

A yet more cruel eventuality is about to occur, however. Virtually all children under ten are taken from their parents and placed in a protected preserve wherein they will be free to grow together into one true telepathic gestalt.

When Jan returns to Earth more than eighty years have elapsed, though thanks to the time-paradox named after Einstein he is only a few subjective years older. The world is a quiet place, for the last generation of Mankind have died out without increase, and Jan is the Last Man. The evolved children of the last generation are commencing to exercise their awesome paraphysical power and embark upon a cosmic journey to join the Overmind which has spurred their development. The world and everything upon it is consumed in the process, and Jan's last transmission from Earth to the Overlord researchers (who study the phenomenon in the vain hope that they may someday emulate this

'apotheosis' p.179) rings with pride for what mankind has become:

Jan...struggled for words, then closed his eyes in an effort to regain control. There was no room for fear or panic now: he had a duty to perform - a duty to Man, and a duty to Karellen.

Slowly at first, like a man awakening from a dream, he began to speak.

"The buildings round me - the ground - the mountains - everything's like glass - I can see through it. Earth's dissolving - my weight has almost gone. You were right - they've finished playing with their toys.

"It's only a few seconds away. There go the mountains, like wisps of smoke. Goodbye, Karellen, Rashaverak - I am sorry for you. Though I cannot understand it, I've seen what my race became. Everything we ever achieved has gone up there into the stars. Perhaps that's what the old religions were trying to say. But they got it all wrong: they thought mankind was so important, yet we're only one race in - do you know how many? Yet now we've become something you could never be.

Childhood's End, p.188

What makes Clarke's novel so impressive and significant is his projection of a mystical but apostate philosophia perennia which accommodates the scientific aspect of the human mind without displacing its transcendental propensity. This productive synthesis supports images of humane vindication and growth, emphasizing the contingency of intuition and reason in sapientia, but stressing at the same time the value of the modern scientific outlook, as his preference passim for the expression 'paraphysical' at the expense of the more traditional term 'metaphysical' indicates. Karellen's explanation of the Overlords' interest in the human race broadcast to the 'last generation' of mankind illustrates this adroit marriage of metaphysics and science:

"In the centuries before our coming, your scientists uncovered the secrets of the physical world and led you from the energy of steam to the energy of the atom. You had put superstition behind you: Science was the only real religion of mankind. It was the gift of the western minority to the remainder of mankind, and it had destroyed all other faiths. Those that still existed when we came were already dying. Science, it was felt, could explain everything: there were no forces which did not come within its scope, no events for

which it could ultimately account. The origin of the universe might be forever unknown, but all that had happened after obeyed the laws of physics.

"Yet your mystics, though they were lost in their own delusions, had seen part of the truth. There are powers of the mind, and powers beyond the mind, which your science could never have brought within its framework without shattering it entirely. All down the ages there have been countless reports of strange phenomena - poltergeists, telepathy, precognition - which you had named but never explained. At first science ignored them, even denied their existence, despite the testimony of five thousand years. But they exist and if it is to be complete any theory of the universe must account for them.

"During the first half of the twentieth century, a few of your scientists began to investigate these matters. They did not know it, but they were tampering with the lock of Pandora's box. The forces they might have unleashed transcended any perils that the atom could have brought. For the physicists could only have ruined the Earth: the parapsychicists could have spread havoc to the stars.

Childhood's End, pp.157-158

Perhaps this explains why Childhood's End won such praise for its author from C.S.Lewis, who declared, 'There has been nothing like it for years...an author who understands there may be things that have a higher claim on humanity than its own "survival".' Certainly Clarke's sophisticated balancing of the philosophical and aesthetic elements of this powerful composition has created one of the most enduring and effective synthetic fabrications of its genre.

In general, Clarke's science fiction illustrates the sceptical humanist soteriology which in many ways matches devout belief; and as a recent work again shows, even a broadly traditional idea of 'God' may be assimilated. In 2010 Odyssey Two, Clarke's 1982 sequel to 2001, the story of the investigation of the strange monoliths of the first novel continues. As usual Clarke's evolutionary theme is conveyed amid a welter of futuristic, 'hard' science ideas and discourse which give the fiction a realistic, rigorous tone - this author's preferred way of counterpointing the staggering nature of his subject. Although Bowman, transfigured in 2001, has gone beyond

his human form ("All that Dave Bowman really was, is still part of me," he tells his bewildered ex-wife in a fleeting last visit via her television), it is made clear to us that his was an individual experience. The human race must go on along its own path of evolutionary development without any further interruptions. The Cosmos remains a cryptic place, especially since the enigmatic alien beings who intervened to spare the Europeans the potential harm which could accompany human curiosity have again withdrawn beyond human ken.

Clarke's teleological fiction expects humane development through the joint influences of evolution and technology. It is a paradigm of scientific humanism in which positivism is mediated by the sophisticated moral sensibility of transcendental man. Ultimately, the Renaissance mage has re-emerged as the epitome of apotheosized man. This perfect sensibility goes beyond a simple apperception of the limitations of science in its re-integration of science as a valued kind of knowledge about physical reality with mystical religious perception. The resultant awareness recognizes the holistic reality of the universe, having acquired the macroscosmic kind of natural philosophy without which it cannot be fully known.

Throughout this final chapter two strands of teleological science fiction have been discussed concurrently: that in which an external agency or effect synergises an evolutionary transcendence; and the organic, that is, immanent transformation of human nature which is the basis of the depiction of human apotheosis.

In VALIS, the two strands converge to provide a dramatic tale of self-preservation and humane struggle in a situation so bewildering, and yet so allegedly commonplace, that the distinction between sanity and derangement virtually disappears.

The title of Philip K. Dick's VALIS (1981) is an acronym for 'Vast Active Living Intelligence System'. This turns out to be an alien artefact whose telemetred messages come as a bolt from the blue to its startled and disoriented communicants. With his usual taste for irony, Dick keeps the identity of the source of their apparent theophany from his characters, and the book charts the anxiety-ridden decline of several of them through insanity, delusions (often with a religious flavour), and suicide.

The novelist purports to relate the experiences of a close friend, Horselover Fat, who struggles to explain his visions of a cosmic conspiracy to the rest of the world. The early chapters relate how Fat clings to the conviction of the reality of disturbing paranormal events in the face of personal calamity and institutional doubt. Fat's response to the scepticism with which his assertions are met is twofold: he confronts the disbelief personally in direct exchanges with the psychotherapists who try to 'cure' him of the delusional complex which prompts his suicide attempts; and he records his understanding of the cryptic hints he picks up in his waking fugues in his Exegesis or tractate, a clever collocation of Gnostic and Hermetic analysis and contentions. The first paragraphs of the eighth chapter illustrate Dick's typically intellectual, wry and mannered narrative:

I did not think I should tell Fat that I thought his encounter with God was in fact an encounter with himself from the far future. Himself so evolved, so changed, that he had become no longer a human being. Fat had remembered back to the stars, and had encountered a being ready to return to the stars, and several selves along the way, several points along the line. All of them the same person.

Entry *13 in the tractate: Pascal said, "All history is one immortal man who continually learns." This is the Immortal One whom we worship without knowing his name. "He lived a long time ago but he is still alive,"

and, "The Head Apollo is about to return." The name changes.

On some level Fat guessed the truth; he had encountered his past selves and his future selves - two future selves: an early-on one, the three-eyed people, and then Zebra, who is disincorporate.

Time somehow got abolished for him, and the recapitulation of selves along the linear time-axis caused the multitude of selves to laminate together into a common entity.

Out of the lamination of selves, Zebra, which is supra- or trans-temporal, came into existence: pure energy, pure living information. Immortal, benign, intelligent and helpful. The essence of the rational human being. In the center of an irrational universe governed by an irrational Mind stands rational man, Horselover Fat being just one example. The in-breaking deity that Fat encountered in 1974 was himself. However, Fat seemed happy to believe that he had met God. After some thought I decided not to tell him my views. After all, I might be wrong.

VALIS, pp.109-110.

Even the author is unsure of the truth; appropriately, however, for throughout the novel there are points of deliberate convergence when Dick, the real author of Fat's eclectic Exegesis, drops his pretended detachment and candidly becomes his bewildered fictional alter ego, 'Horselover Fat' - Philip Dick. Indeed, VALIS is also Dick's public profession of faith in an obscure but active Providence; but since Horselover Fat and his author coalesce and separate several times, biographical speculation on that score is rather unprofitable.

However idiosyncratic or even eccentric VALIS may seem, it shows thematic resonances with earlier works by Dick and indeed by other writers whose works have already featured in this discussion of the science fiction of aspiration. The Wellsian scientific Apollos of Men Like Gods represent a rationalistic ideal similar to Dick's. Lewis's angelic cosmogony striving to maintain cosmic harmony by defeating the evil intent of the deranged 'Bent One' Maledil is surely reflected in VALIS as it is in Childhood's End in the symbolic guise of the cosmic menace posed by occluded modern man exploring our dispropor-

tionate and ill-managed power. Aldiss's acid-head rock group 'The Escalation' are transmuted into Mother Goose's pro-Christian rock band; the psychomimetic distortions of behaviour which afflict the characters of Barefoot in the Head have their counterparts in the bewildering 'hypnagogic states' which disturb Fat's friends. One could see the central theme of VALIS as a sophisticated version of Behold the Man, for in both an obsessed individual seeks a saviour and ironically finds himself at the end of his quest. Both the cosmic hoax and the time-paradox of The Sirens of Titan have counterparts in VALIS, too, but above all VALIS stands as another example of the theosophical narratives - such as The Divine Invasion published in the same year (a more conventional, gimmicky reworking of the Apocalypse of St. John) - for which Dick has been justly praised.

Taken to its logical culmination, this argument might seem to reduce VALIS to a clever but nonetheless rather derivative synthesis of conventional generic ideas; but that ignores Dick's real purpose and achievement: the formulation of a original holistic gnosis, a fictive unification of all the arcane and diversified sacred tenets and premises of the orthodox, hermetic and apocryphal sources which he welds into a single, coherent mystical Weltanschauung. If the peril of this learned eclecticism is that it very readily slips into mere pretentiousness, Dick's contrapunctual wry humour preserves his Exegesis from deteriorating into the literary equivalent of name-dropping:

Siddhartha, the Buddha, remembered all his past lives; that is why he was given the title of buddha which means "the Enlightened One." From him the knowledge of achieving this passed to Greece and shows up in the teachings of Pythagoras, who kept much of this occult, mystical gnosis secret; his pupil Empedocles, however, broke off from the Pythagorean Brotherhood and went public. Empedocles told his friends privately that he was Apollo. He, too, like the Buddha and

Pythagoras, could remember their past lives. What they did not talk about was their ability to "remember" future lives.

The three-eyed people who Fat saw represented himself at an enlightened stage of his evolving development through his various lifetimes.... I did not tell Fat this, but technically he had become a Buddha. It did not seem to me like a good idea to let him know. After all, if you are a Buddha you should be able to figure it out for yourself.

It strikes me as an interesting paradox that a Buddha - an enlightened one - would be unable to figure out, even after four-and-a-half years, that he had become enlightened. Fat had become totally bogged down in his enormous exegesis, trying futilely to determine what had happened to him. He resembled more a hit-and-run accident victim than a Buddha.

VALIS, pp.110-111

Whatever the excitement of the ideas themselves, Dick never forgets their human context or implications: Fat and his friends are variously exalted, depressed and terrified by their discoveries as their minds try to cope with the emergent reality underlying the concerns of twentieth-century life. As the Rhipidon Society, they are a group of contemporary Everymen, refreshingly venial (exclamatory tetragrammatta seemingly offend no-one) but embarked on the highest spiritual pursuit and ethical in outlook. Their axiom reflects a morality which, in its rejection of violence as a individual right, surpasses the mores of their culture: 'Fish can't carry guns.' Having had the fish symbol of the early Christians linked with the double helix of DNA germ-cell encoding by the enigmatic deity Fat calls Zebra, they adopt it as their own emblem.

Chapter Eight (from which the foregoing quotations have been taken) is a turning point for Fat, who has found a 'divine' purpose to fulfil, a soteriological quest for which he must prepare by committing himself to growth and development (in stark and absolute contrast to his friend Sherri, who has committed herself to death and 'succeeded' in reversing the remission of her cancer).

Fat's obsessive idea these days, as he worried more and more about Sherri, was that the Savior would soon be reborn -

or had been already. Somewhere in the world he walked or soon would walk the ground once more.

What did Fat intend to do when Sherri died? Maurice had shouted that at him in the form of a question. Would he die, too?

Not at all. Fat, pondering and writing and doing research and receiving dribs and drabs of messages from Zebra during hypnagogic states and in dreams, and attempting to salvage something from the wreck of his life, had decided to go in search of the Savior. He would find him wherever he was.

This was the mission, the divine purpose, which Zebra had placed on him in March 1974: the mild yoke, the burden light. Fat, a holy man now, would become a modern-day magus. All he lacked was a clue - some hint as to where to seek. Zebra would tell him, eventually; the clue would come from God. This was the whole purpose of Zebra's theophany: to send Fat on his way.

VALIS, pp.111-112

Given the complexities of his theme and ideas - not to mention the occasional red herring - Dick's reiterative style seems felicitous rather than condescending, apposite rather than erudite. Fat and his fellows (including the author) are intent on pursuing the truth intimated by the theophanic sendings of 'Zebra' - VALIS, actually - and their theosophical method is essentially interpolative; that is, constructing a viable hypothesis by inductive reasoning, and abandoning the hypothesis if new concepts cannot be accommodated as they emerge or are revealed. This dialectic is apostate, for they have agreed that Christian Revelation as it stands is misleading; and it is recapitulative, since the facts as they have them are redeployed in a new schema whenever an hypothesis folds. While the impatient or adventurous reader may play the game for himself by construing the Tractes Cryptica Scriptura Dick provides as an appendix, the story of Fat's struggle for enlightenment is both moving and amusing.

Having convinced his sceptical friends of the truth of his bizarre ideas, they form the secret Rhidipon Society after viewing Lampton's allusive and subliminal film 'Valis'. The next step is to make contact with the film-maker and his group which includes the

avant-garde composer Brent Mini. The author himself effects a meeting between Lampton and the Rhipidon Society, who travel north in a state of general excitement at the prospect of meeting fellow mystics better informed than themselves. The encounter is more momentous - and frightening - than they could possibly have imagined, for the self-styled 'Friends of God' claim to be Promethean Titans - Prometheus plasticator, sapient and ageless as Victor Frankenstein could never have been - the creators of the human world and everything it encompasses. This key episode, which further illustrates Dick's synthetic-apocalyptic style at its most impressive, learned and humane, could only be abridged at the expense of its effect:

Shortly, we were squeezed into the [VW] Rabbit, sailing down residential streets of relatively modern houses with wide lawns.

"We are the Rhipidon Society," Fat said.

Eric Lampton said, "We are the Friends of God."

Amazed, Kevin reacted violently; he stared at Eric Lampton. The rest of us wondered why.

"You know the name, then," Eric said.

"Gottesfreunde," Kevin said. "You go back to the fourteenth century!"

"That's right," Linda Lampton said. "The Friends of God formed originally in Basel. Finally we entered Germany and the Netherlands. You know of Master Eckehart, then."

Kevin said, "He was the first person to conceive of the Godhead in distinction to God. The greatest of the Christian mystics. He taught that a person can attain union with the Godhead - he held a concept that God exists within the human soul!" We had never heard Kevin so excited. "The soul can actually know God as he is! Nobody today teaches that! And, and - " Kevin stammered; we had never heard him stammer before. "Sankara in India, in the ninth century; he taught the same things that Eckehart taught. It's a trans-Christian mysticism in which man can reach beyond God, or merge with God, as or with a spark of some kind that isn't created. Brahman; that's why Zebra - "

"VALIS," Eric Lampton said.

"Whatever," Kevin said; turning to me, he said in agitation, "this would explain the revelations about the Buddha and about St. Sophia or Christ. This isn't limited to any one country or culture or religion. Sorry David."

David nodded amiably, but appeared shaken. He knew this wasn't orthodoxy.

Eric said, "Sankara and Eckehart, the same person; living in two places at two times."

Half to himself, Fat said, "He causes things to look different so it would appear time has passed."

"Time and space both," Linda said.

"What is VALIS?" I asked.

"Vast Active Living Intelligence System," Eric said.

"That's a description," I said.

"That's what we have," Eric said. "What else is there but that? Do you want a name, the way God had man name all the animals? VALIS is the name; call it that and be satisfied."

"Is VALIS man?" I said. "Or God? Or something else."

Both Eric and Linda smiled.

"Does it come from the stars?" I said.

"This place where we are," Eric said, "is one of the stars; our sun is a star."

"Riddles," I said.

Fat said, "Is VALIS the Savior?"

For a moment, both Eric and Linda remained silent and then Linda said, "We are the Friends of God." Beyond that she added nothing more.

Cautiously, David glanced at me, caught my eye, and made a questioning motion: Are these people on the level?

"They are a very old group," I answered, "which I thought had died out centuries ago."

Eric said, "We never died out and we are much older than you realize. Than you have been told. Than even we will tell you if asked."

"You date back before Eckehart, then," Kevin said acutely.

Linda said, "Yes."

"Centuries?" Kevin asked.

No answer.

"Thousands of years?" I said, finally.

"High hills are the haunt of the mountain-goat," Linda said, "and boulders a refuge for the rock-badger."

"What does that mean?" I said; Kevin joined in; we spoke in unison.

"I know what it means," David said.

"It can't be," Fat said; apparently he recognized what Linda had quoted, too.

"The stork makes her home in their tops," Eric said, after a time.

To me, Fat said, "These are Ikhnaton's race. That's Psalm 104, based on Ikhnaton's hymn; it entered our Bible - it's older than our Bible."

Linda Lampton said, "We are the ugly builders with claw-like hands. Who hide ourselves in shame. Along with Hephaistos we built great walls and the homes of the gods themselves."

"Yes," Kevin said. "Hepaistos was ugly, too. The builder God. You killed Asklepios."

"These are Kyklopes," Fat said faintly.

"The name means 'Round-eye,'" Kevin said.

"But we have three eyes," Eric said. "So an error in the historic record was made."

"Deliberately?" Kevin asked.

Linda said, "Yes."

"You are very old," Fat said.

"Yes, we are," Eric said; and Linda nodded. "Very old. But time is not real. Not to us, anyhow."

"My God," Fat said, as if stricken. "These are the original builders."

"We have never stopped," Eric said. "We still build. We built this world, this space-time matrix."

"You are our creators," Fat said.

The Lamptons nodded.

"You really are the Friends of God," Kevin said. "You are literally."

"Don't be afraid," Eric said. "You know how Shiva holds up one hand to show there is nothing to fear."

"But there is," Fat said. "Shiva is the destroyer; his third eye destroys."

"He is also the restorer," Linda said.

Leaning against me, David whispered, "Are they crazy?"

They are gods, I said to myself; they are Shiva who both destroys and protects. They judge.

Perhaps I should have felt fear. But I did not. They had already destroyed - brought down Ferris F. Fremount, as he had been depicted in the film Valis.

The period of Shiva the Restorer had begun. The restoration, I thought, of all we have lost. Of two dead girls.

As in the film Valis, Linda Lampton could turn time back, if necessary; and to restore everything to life.

I had begun to understand the film.

The Rhidipon Society, I realized, fish though it be, is out of its depth.

VALIS, pp.161-163.

Having thus invoked the prospect of a new era of hope and redemption, Dick suddenly embarks on a sombre digression. His characters are deserted by their author midway between Gino's Bar and the Lamptons' home, packed into the VW Rabbit. His style abruptly switches into exposition about how the allegedly dualistic morality of man and the death 'within every religion' can readily convert a religion from light and eros to thanatos, from the worship of Apollo's divine reason and Sophia's 'holy wisdom' to the morbid indulgence of Pan and Dionysos. His tone is utterly grave, without a trace of the flippancy which does here and there threaten to reduce his story to pastiche;

his subject, the awful force of religious conviction and its ability to foster an obedience every bit as oppressive and deadly as any Orwellian nightmare or event of the Inquisition. Evidently, Dick was himself overwhelmed during the composition of VALIS by an appalling topical proof of the commonplace notion that 'truth is stranger than fiction':

But the divine and the terrible are so close to each other. Nommo and Yurugu are partners; both are necessary. Osiris and Seth, too. In the Book of Job, Yahweh and Satan form a partnership. For us to live, however, these partners must be split. The behind-the-scenes partnership must end as soon as time and space and all the creatures come into being.

It is not God nor the gods which must prevail; it is wisdom, Holy Wisdom. I hoped that the fifth Savior would be that: splitting the bipolarities and emerging as a unitary thing. Not of three persons or two but one. Not Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Sustainer and Shiva the Destroyer, but what Zoroaster called the Wise Mind.

God can be good and terrible - not in succession - but at the same time. This is why we seek a mediator between us and him; we approach him through the mediating priest and attenuate and enclose him through the sacraments. It is for our own safety: to trap him with confines which render him safe. But now, as Fat had seen, God had escaped the confines and was transubstantiating the world; God had become free.

The gentle sounds of the choir singing "Amen, amen" are not to calm the congregation but to pacify the god.

When you know this you have penetrated to the innermost core of religion. And the worst part is that the god can thrust himself outward and into the congregation until he becomes them. You worship a god and then he pays you back by taking you over. This is called "enthousiasmos" in Greek, literally "to be possessed by the god." Of all the Greek gods the one most likely to do this was Dionysos. And, unfortunately, Dionysos was insane.

.....
.....

I write this literally with a heavy hand; I am so weary I am dropping as I sit here. What happened at Jonestown was the mass running of panic, inspired by the mad god - panic leading into death, the logical outcome of the mad god's thrust.

For them no way out existed. You must be taken over by the mad god to understand this, that once it happens there is no way out, because the mad god is everywhere.

It is not reasonable for nine hundred people to collude in their own deaths and the deaths of little children, but the mad god is not logical, not as we understand the term.

VALIS, pp.165-166.

The materialistic explanation is simpler by far than his theosophical ideas: he sees the Jonestown tragedy as the consequence of blind faith in a charismatic oppressor, religious 'totalitarianism' by another name. If Dick strains to analyze this fell event within the Gnostic rhetoric and scheme he has adopted, his despair at human folly is plain and heartfelt; clearly an agnostic rather than an atheist, he resentfully accuses: 'You worship a god and he pays you back by taking you over.' As the rest of the novel seems to suggest, the precarious equilibrium of agnostic faith suggested by the Hermetic slogan 'GOD IS NOW HERE / GOD IS NOWHERE' has tipped from millennial joy to agnostic despair.

Dick returns at once to the storyline he has been developing with the party's arrival at the Lamptons' house, but the dominant tone is increasingly sceptical, even hostile. The Lamptons reveal that they and Mini are actually alien beings from Albemuth who have exchanged their titanic faculties - including their third eye - to play a sophisticated reality game within the prevailing conditions on Earth which they claim to have created. The artifact VALIS is an automatic device designed to restore their native rationality despite the derangement the pathological atmosphere of Earth causes; yet before they admit their insanity, the author has realized, 'So that's why you're dying. Your god has killed you and yet you're happy. I thought, We have to get out of here. These people court death.' (p.171) Yet the Rhidipon Society stay, partly because their confidence in their strange hosts becomes stronger once again, and partly because they are offered a proof which could either confirm their doubts or reverse them: a meeting with the Head Appollo's fifth avatar, St. Sophia, the daughter of Linda Lampton and VALIS - the incarnate

'hypostasis of Christ:'

What I had expected was tranquility, the peace of God which passes all understanding. However, the child, upon seeing us, rose to her feet and came towards us with indignation blazing in her face; her eyes, huge, dilated with anger, fixed intently on me - she lifted her right hand and pointed at me.

"Your suicide attempt was a violent cruelty against yourself," she said in a clear voice. And yet she was, as Linda had said, no more than two years old: a baby, really, and yet with the eyes of an infinitely old person.

"It was Horselover Fat," I said.

Sophia said, "Phil, Kevin and David. Three of you. There are no more."

Turning to speak to Fat - I saw no one. I saw only Eric Lampton and his wife, the dying man in the wheelchair [Mini], Kevin and David. Fat was gone. Nothing remained of him.

Horselover Fat was gone forever. As if he had never existed.

"I don't understand," I said. "You destroyed him."

"Yes," the child said.

I said, "Why?"

"To make you whole."

"Then he's in me? Alive in me?"

"Yes," Sophia said. By degrees, the anger left her face. The great eyes ceased to smolder.

"He was me all the time," I said.

"That is right," Sophia said.

VALIS, pp.176-177.

Debating the validity of all this bewildering revelation later, the Rhidipon Society (now numbering three) conclude that the Lamptons and Brent Mini are mad, but Sophia represents absolute reason - wisdom incarnate. Phil resists the latter finding until Kevin and David suggest to him that his cure is the ultimate proof of Sophia's benevolent power - "'You stopped believing you were two people. You stopped believing in Horselover Fat as a separate person. And no therapist and no therapy over the years, since Gloria's death, has ever been able to accomplish that.'"(p.182) They decide to stay a further day to speak once more with the oracular child. Their faith is rewarded with an uplifting humanist vision and they are charged with a holy mission, for the millenium is not yet at hand and must be defended during the last days of morbidity and oppression:

"I gave you your motto," she said. "For your society; I gave you its name. Now I give you your commission. You will go out into the world and you will tell the kerygma which I charge you with. Listen to me; I tell you in truth, in very truth, that the days of the wicked will end and the son of man will sit on the judgement seat. This will come as surely as the sun itself rises. The grim king will strive and lose, despite his cunning; he loses; he lost; he will always lose, and those with him will go into the pit of darkness and there they will linger forever.

"What you teach is the word of man. Man is holy, and the true god, the living god, is man himself. You will have no gods but yourselves; the days in which you believed in other gods end now, they end forever.

"The goal of your lives has been reached. I am here to tell you this. Do not fear; I will protect you. You are to follow one rule: you are to love one another as you love me and I love you, for this love proceeds from the true god, which is yourselves.

"A time of trial and delusion and wailing lies ahead because the grim king, the king of tears, will not surrender his power. But you will take his power from him; I grant you the authority in my name, exactly as I granted it to you once before, when that grim king ruled and destroyed and challenged the humble people of the world.

"The battle which you fought before has not ended, although the day of the healing sun has come. Evil does not die of its own self because it imagines that it speaks for god, but there is only one god and that god is man himself.

VALIS, pp.183-184.

Its apostate character aside, this passage is easily the equal of anything by Wells, Lewis, or Stapledon. Indeed its very unorthodoxy proclaims its uniqueness and genius. Dick's hermetic allegory should therefore be seen not as a pale imitation of their towering achievements, but as a worthy successor in the humane tradition of the science fiction of aspiration which includes so many other impressive allegories of salvation or humane fulfillment. VALIS, as it turns out, has a sort of suspended resolution which refocusses the reader's attention on the human predicament of its protagonists as they await the restoration of the world and their individual salvation. Sophia has been killed by Mini; yet VALIS's subliminal messages continue to come through television advertisements aimed at children. Fat has returned from the limbo to which he was sent by Sophia, but leaves

Phil to seek his Saviour across the world; alone again, 'I have a sense of the goodness of men these days....' Phil reflects; 'The divine intrudes where you least expect it.'

My search kept me at home; I sat before the TV set in my living room. I sat; I waited; I watched; I kept myself awake. As we had been told, originally, long ago, to do; I kept my commission.

VALIS, p.213

As Dick's work has always attested, the progressive impulse which has long been a pervasive theme of modern science fiction now demands of its champions a greater measure of self-awareness, fidelity, and maturity. These new protagonists embody the emergent humanism of contemporary science fiction, with its scepticism about religious moral values which have interdicted progressive yearnings since Eden, and the essentially conservative nature of Religion as a social institution. An additional function of transcendental science fiction is to present topical criticism: where the sixteenth and seventeenth-century satirists thought to expose the truth as they saw it in their bitter 'glas', these contemporary satirists assert that only in a puzzling eclipse can truths be glimpsed, rather in a straightforwardly reflective mirror of the intellect; often such 'truths' confront orthodox religion with its own imputed inadequacies.

In general, contemporary science fiction's cerebral parables assert that moral values are only apparently immutable, and being relative, must not be obeyed unthinkingly. Ethical principles should be defined in the purest interests of mankind, and not sought from some illusory supernatural source. Their moral force should not depend either on allegedly divine authority or proscription, but upon

their sophistication, general acceptability, and humaneness. In this the science fiction of aspiration pleasingly reflects the distinctive idealism and scepticism of the genre as a whole.

A final question may now be answered. If the science fiction of aspiration really is generically 'apostate,' why have writers tended to pay so much attention to concepts like 'faith' and 'salvation'? Bester's hubrist par excellence, the transformed Gully Foyle, grasps their significance in the very instant of his soteriological transfiguration:

He jaunted up the geodesic lines of space-time to an Elsewhere and an Elsewhen. He arrived in chaos. he hung in a precarious para-Now for a moment and then tumbled back into chaos.

'It can be done,' he thought. 'It must be done.'

He jaunted again, a burning spear flung from unknown into unknown, and again he tumbled back into a chaos of para-space and para-time. He was lost in Nowhere.

'I believe,' he thought. 'I have faith.'

He jaunted again, and failed again.

'Faith in what?' he asked himself, adrift in limbo.

'Faith in faith,' he answered himself. 'It isn't necessary to have something to believe in. It's only necessary to believe that somewhere there's something worthy of belief.'

He jaunted for the last time and the power of his willingness to believe transformed the para-Now of his random destination into a real...

NOW: Rigel in Orion, burning blue-white, five hundred and forty light years from earth, ten thousand times more luminous than the sun, a cauldron of energy circled by thirty-seven massive planets... Foyle hung, freezing and suffocating in space, face to face with the incredible destiny in which he believed, but which was still inconceivable. He hung in space for a blinding moment, as helpless, as amazed, and as inevitable as the first gilled creature to come out of the sea and hang gulping on a primeval beach in the dawn-history of life on earth.

He space-jaunted, turning para-Now into...

Tiger! Tiger!, pp.246-247

Be it invested in God, Science, Self or Man - or in all four - faith sustains the sensibility; without it, existence is empty of meaning and aspiration is nugatory, and, to quote Dick's terror-stricken protagonist Barney Mayerson, "'There is no salvation!'" - only

entropy. The unique attraction of the science fiction of aspiration is that it supports so much speculative discourse while celebrating a progressive moral vision of Man. .

REFERENCES and FOOTNOTES

1. David KETTERER, New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature; Indiana Univ. Press, London, 1974.
2. Ketterer, op.cit., p.17.
3. Idem., p.19.
4. Idem., p.38. Epiphany, theophany and apotheosis are significant features of works discussed in this study.
5. David KETTERER's 1976 'coda' to New Worlds for Old, 'Science Fiction and Allied Literature' appears in Science-Fiction Studies, Second Series.
6. Loc.cit., p.95.
7. J.Norman KING, 'Theology, Science Fiction and Man's Future Orientation' reprinted in Many Futures, Many Worlds, ed. Thomas D.CLARESON; p.238.
8. Thomas L.WYMER, 'Perception and Value in Science Fiction'; in Many Futures, Many Worlds ed. Clareson; p.12.
9. King, op.cit., p.241.
10. Brian STAPLEFORD, 'Science Fiction and the Image of the Future'; Foundation 14 (Sept.1978); p.34.
11. King, op.cit., p.240
12. From Boyd's own 1978 Preface to the 1969 Penguin edition of The Rakehells of Heaven, p.vii.
13. From Desmond MacCarthy's Introduction to the joint edition of Erewhon and Erewhon Revisited by J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd.; p.vii.
14. Idem., p.viii.
MacCarthy's discussion of Butler's unorthodox religious views is informative and lucid; further reference will be made to it.
15. Or, a 'forward oddity'; a positively-tending mutation capable of a limited awareness of the 'noosphere', Teilhard de Chardin's heretical conjecture of the ultimate planetary consciousness toward which all creatures capable of consciousness, in however slight a degree, are evolving. Cf. also the discussion of the recondite, transcendental, holistic 'Overmind' of Childhood's End, in 'GOD IS NOWHERE / GOD IS NOW HERE', p.566 et seq.
16. Dick's depiction of a psychopathic god here is not unique, by any means. Another striking example of such an entity was the subject of 'Faith of our Fathers' (1967), written for Harlan Ellison's celebrated (and notorious) 'New Wave' anthology, Dangerous

Visions. A Chinese commissar is being evaluated for advancement. At the same time, the underground movement try to win him over by supplying him with a drug, which he innocently takes. The dose provokes a most terrifying hallucination, in which he sees a vile cyborg on his viewer, rather than the depressingly familiar features of the Party Chairman. As the bad trip passes he assumes that he was given a hallucinogen, but as his girl contact later tells him, he was in fact given stelazine, an anti-hallucinogen. The city's drinking water is treated with a drug which he, and everyone else, has been taking unknowingly for years. The horrid creature he saw was not a hallucination, but the opposite. Still sceptical, Chien accepts another dose to take with him to a social gathering in the presence of the His Greatness the Absolute Benefactor. The meeting turns out to be an apocalyptic epiphany:

I know who you are, Tung Chien thought to himself. You, the supreme head of the world-wide Party structure. You, who destroy whatever living object you touch; I see that Arabic poem, the searching for the flowers of life to eat them - I see you astride the plain which to you is Earth, plain without hills, without valleys. You go anywhere, appear any time, devour anything; you engineer life and then guzzle it, and you enjoy that.

He thought, you are God.

Dangerous Visions Vol.2, p.62.

Chien then tries to take his own life, but is saved by 'God'. After a bitter exchange with this malevolent entity in the course of which it promises him that it will torment him to death and - shades of Nineteen Eighty-Four - 'deprive you of everything you possess or want'; and reveals a 'mystery' - 'The dead shall live, the living die. I kill what lives; I save what has died. And I will tell you this: there are things worse than I'; the encounter ends when Chien strikes out at it. Though he burns for further revenge, 'He thought, I will get you. I will see that you die too. That you suffer, just like us, exactly in every way we do. I'll nail you; I swear to god I'll nail you up somewhere. And it will hurt. As much as I hurt now.', Chien realizes that 'God' - it, the State, its protocols, its agents, devices and lackeys - cannot be defeated. Returning home, he finds a measure of temporary release in Tanya's compliant and healing sexuality, but his estrangement is only a little diminished as he perceives that his death is imminent.

In an afterword to this story, Dick speculated about the possible use of hallucinogenic drugs to allow the scientific study of 'the theological experience'. He continues, 'This appears to me to be a true new frontier...part hallucination but containing other, real components. God, as a topic in science fiction, when it appeared at all, used to be treated polemically, as in "Out of the Silent Planet". But I prefer to treat it as intellectually exciting. What if, through psychedelic drugs, the religious experiences becomes (sic) commonplace in the life of intellectuals? The old atheism, which seemed to many of us - including me - valid in terms of our experiences, or rather lack of

experiences, would have to step momentarily aside. Science fiction, always probing what is about to be thought, become, must eventually tackle without preconceptions a future neo-mystical society in which theology constitutes as major a force as in the medieval period. This is not necessarily a backward step, because now these beliefs can be tested - forced to put up or shut up. I, myself, have no real beliefs about God, only my experience that He is present...subjectively, of course; but the inner realm is real too.'

17. 'The Profession of Science Fiction XVII: The Lucky Dog Pet Store' by Philip K.Dick, Foundation 17 (Sept.1979) pp.41-49.
18. Brian ALDISS, Trillion Year Spree, p.329.
19. Angus M.TAYLOR, 'Can God Fly? Can He Hold Out His Arms and Fly? The Fiction of Philip K.Dick'; Foundation 4 (July 1973); pp.39-40.
20. DICK, Radio Free Albemuth(1985); p.67 (Grafton Books edition).
21. TAYLOR, op. cit., pp.42-43.
22. According to James Blish's argument in A Case of Conscience, the belief that Satan possesses creativity is heretical.
23. Harold L.BERGER, Science Fiction and the New Dark Age; The Popular Press, Bowling Green, Ohio, 1976; pp.41-42.
24. Sheila SCHWARTZ, 'Science Fiction as Humanistic Study'; English Record 22:II (1971) pp.49-55; p.54.
25. Idem., pp.54-55.
26. James BLISH (as William Atheling), 'Cathedrals in Space'; pp.49-70 of his collected reviews, The Issue at Hand; p.70.
27. Idem., pp.63-64.
28. Blish's 'catalogue' of Smith's 'Campbellian' superpowers:

He can control his metabolism to the point where any outside observer would judge him dead; he can read minds; he is a telekinetic; he can throw objects (or people) permanently away into the fourth dimension by a pure effort of will, so easily that he uses the stunt to undress; he practices astral projection as easily as he undressed, on one occasion leaving his body on the bottom of a swimming pool while he disposes of about thirty-five cops and almost as many heavily armored helicopters; he can heal his own wounds almost instantly; he can mentally analyze inanimate matter, well enough to know instantly that a corpse he has just encountered died by poisoning years ago; levitation, crepitation, intermittent claudication, you name it he's got it - and besides, he's awfully good in bed.

Loc.cit., pp.69-70

29. Stranger in a Strange Land, passim, but pp.267-268 especially. (New English Library 1978 edition).
30. David N.SAMUELSON, 'Stranger in the Sixties: Model or Mirror?' in Critical Encounters: Writers and Themes in Science Fiction, edited by Dick Riley, pp.144-175; Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1978; p.162.

Samuelson's essay also describes the phenomenal success of Stranger in a Strange Land, and its adoption by cultists, among them the notorious Charles Manson, 'self-appointed Messiah of Southern California'.

It was not until the Sixties, however - when Heinlein himself was in his fifties - that he became a really popular writer for "adult" audiences, known to large numbers of people outside the science fiction subculture. Perhaps it would be more accurate to observe that a greater proportion of society became initiated, if only minimally, into the science fiction subculture. The growth in Heinlein's sales and reputation was gradual, centering on one book, which shared with Frank Herbert's Dune (1965) the dubious blessing of becoming an "underground classic." Stranger in a Strange Land (1961) sold over a million copies... Far from being a rival of Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke, Heinlein came to compete with Harold Robbins and Jacqueline Susann, although his idiosyncracies made it unlikely he would ever surpass them.

Loc.cit., p.145.

31. Ronald Lee CANSLER, 'Stranger in a Strange Land: Science Fiction as Literature of Creative Imagination, Social Criticism, and Entertainment'; Journal of Popular Culture 5, pp.952.
32. Blish, op.cit.
33. Heinlein evidently wished to claim a new prestige for his work by using the term, which he felt distinguished his later fiction from its antecedent juvenilia and 'hard' science fiction which emphasized rigorous extrapolation of existing scientific knowledge and technological hardware.
34. Robert C. PARKINSON, 'Dune - An Unfinished Tetralogy'; from Extrapolation 13 (Dec. 1971); p.19.
35. David M. MILLER, 'Toward a Structural Metaphysic: Religion in the Novels of Frank Herbert'; The Transcendent Adventure ed. Reilly; pp.146-147.
36. Timothy O'REILLY, 'From Concept to Fable: The Evolution of Frank Herbert's Dune'; in Critical Encounters ed. Dick Riley; pp.49-50.
37. O'Reilly, op.cit., p.50.

38. Brian Aldiss nearly concurs (he rates Dune Messiah more highly than I): 'The first two novels [of the Dune sequence] ... are, it must be said, the best of the series. Complexity of theme in the later novels does not compensate for an absence of mythic depth.' Trillion Year Spree, p.396.
39. Trillion Year Spree, p.471.
40. Tom WOODMAN, 'Science Fiction, Religion and Transcendence'; in Science Fiction: A Critical Guide ed. Parrinder; pp.110-130.
41. Woodman, op.cit., p.128.
42. Aldiss, op.cit., Panther edition, pp.63-64.
43. The 'Golden Age' of American magazine science fiction of the 1950's saw a proliferation of stories with paranormal heroes. Indeed Bester's novels reflect this interest in speculative faculties such as telekinesis, synaesthesia, teleportation (Tiger!Tiger!), and telepathy (The Demolished Man, 1953); in later novels he depicts immortals in a gestalt interface with a supercomputer (Extro, 1975) and the telepathic 'polymorphic' incubus of Golem-100(1980).
44. James GUNN, The Road to Science Fiction Vol.3; p.40.
45. The sexual explicitness of 'New Wave' writers like Moorcock, Aldiss, et al. is arguably more humane than the sort of coy prurience their 'Golden Age' predecessors often would work into their stories, which, being generally chauvinistic or voyeuristic, is no less offensive.
46. Given the impossibility of sustaining a detailed discussion of such a large group of texts, the approach adopted meant selecting those which would represent all the main features of the group as a whole. Many of these novels have been recognised as being among the most sophisticated science fiction stories of their day.
47. Chapter 10 of Childhood's End presents one of the most credible, concise projections of the sociology of a future 'Golden Age' the genre includes. Alas this ultimate phase of human civilization is foredoomed and poignantly short-lived.

APPENDIX I

Wells's View of the Social Role of Religion

This passage, one of the most effective of the many expositions of Men Like Gods (1923), illustrates Wells's central thesis that orthodox religious moral values and their influence upon social development has been exaggerated and harmful. He suggests here that there are Christian ideas which are humane, but also that these have been considered sacrosanct and hence accorded absolute moral force, whereas in fact, since all ethics are relative qualities generated by their cultural context, they become pernicious rather than wholesome if their effect is maintained statically throughout a long period of social change on the basis that they are 'revealed' and immutable.

Wells always held that social change was an inevitable phenomenon, but that it could be a positive force if it was managed scientifically (that is, from a position of knowledge of ends, means and consequences) rather than on a laissez-faire basis. Religious feelings, which he saw as a powerful influence upon popular human attitudes, could be harnessed to bend the will of the people to constructive, egalitarian ends ('a doctrine of universal service'). This humanistic 'religion of Man' does not require divine sanction in the same way conventional religions depend upon the backing of a god for the force of their moral dicta; yet Wells perceived the benefit as well as the danger of endowing the prophet with a divine sensibility and hence, more-than-human significance. The Utopians' creed therefore has a theistic element, although it is strictly atheistic in the conventional sense, because Wells has substituted Man for God by asserting, anthropologically, that some human qualities actually are divine qualities. In Utopia, it there is a God

at all, God was made in the image of enlightened Man - 'A great many people thought that his man was a God. But he had been accustomed to call himself merely a son of God or a son of Man.' In Michael Moorcock's *Judea*, by contrast, while Glogauer does create a God out of his own personality, the drives which compell him to substantiate the Christian scripture - selfishness, insecurity and sado-masochism - ironically are perverted and quite ignoble.

What happened, Mr. Barnstaple gathered, was a deliberate change in Utopian thought. A growing number of people were coming to understand that amidst the powerful and easily released forces that science and organisation had brought within reach of man, the old conception of social life in the state, as a limited and legalised struggle of men and women to get the better of one another, was becoming too dangerous to endure, just as the increased dreadfulness of modern weapons was making the separate sovereignty of nations too dangerous to endure. There had to be new ideas and conventions of human association if history was not to end in disaster and collapse.

All societies were based on the limitation by laws and taboos and treaties of the ancestral man-ape; that ancient spirit of self-assertion had now to undergo new restrictions commensurate with the new powers and dangers of the race. The idea of competition to possess, as the ruling idea of intercourse, was, like some ill-controlled furnace, threatening to consume the machine it had formerly driven. The idea of creative service had to replace it. To that idea the human mind and will had to be turned if social life was to be saved. Propositions that had seemed, in former ages, to be inspired and exalted idealism began now to be recognised not simply as sober psychological truth but as practical and urgently necessary truth. In explaining this Urthred expressed himself in a manner that recalled to Mr. Barnstaple's mind certain very familiar phrases; he seemed to be saying that whosoever would save his life should lose it, and that whosoever would give his life should thereby gain the whole world.

Father Amerton's thoughts, it seemed, were also responding in the same manner. For he suddenly interrupted with: 'But what you are saying is a quotation!'

Urthred admitted that he had a quotation in mind, a passage from the teachings of a man of great poetic power who had lived long ago in the days of spoken words.

He would have proceeded, but Father Amerton was too excited to let him do so. 'But who was this teacher?' he asked. 'Where did he live? How was he born? How did he die?'

A picture was flashed upon Mr. Barnstaple's consciousness of a solitary-looking, pale-faced figure, beaten and bleeding, surrounded by armoured guards, in the midst of a thrusting,

jostling, sun-bit crowd which filled a narrow, high-walled street. Behind, some huge, ugly implement was borne along dipping and swaying with the swaying of the multitude....

'Did he die upon the Cross in this world also?' cried Father Amerton. 'Did he die upon the Cross?'

This prophet in Utopia they learned had died very painfully but not upon the Cross. He had been tortured in some way, but neither the Utopians nor these particular Earthlings had sufficient knowledge of the technicalities of torture to get any idea over about that, and then apparently he had been fastened upon a slowly turning wheel and exposed until he died. It was the abominable punishment of a cruel and conquering race, and it had been inflicted upon him because his doctrine of universal service had alarmed the rich and dominant who did not serve. Mr. Barnstaple had a momentary vision of a twisted figure upon that wheel of torture in the balzing sun. And, marvellous triumph over death! out of a world that could do such a deed had come this great peace and universal beauty about him!

But Father Amerton was pressing his questions. 'But did you not realise who he was? Did not this world suspect?'

A great many people thought that this man was a God. But he had been accustomed to call himself merely a son of God or a son of Man.

Father Amerton stuck to his point. 'But you worship him now?'

'We follow his teaching because it was wonderful and true,' said Urthred.

'But worship?'

'No.'

'But does nobody worship? There were those who worshipped him?'

There were those who worshipped him. There were those who quailed before the stern magnificence of his teaching and yet who had a tormenting sense that he was right in some profound way. So they played a trick upon their own uneasy consciences by treating him as a magical god rather than as a light to their souls. They interwove with his execution ancient traditions of sacrificial kings. Instead of receiving him frankly and clearly, and making him a part of their understandings and wills they pretended to eat him mystically and make him a part of their bodies. They turned his wheel into a miraculous symbol, and they confused it with the equator and the sun and the ecliptic and indeed with anything else that was round. In cases of ill luck, ill health or bad weather it was believed to be very helpful for the believer to describe a circle in the air with the fore-finger.

And since this teacher's memory was very dear to the ignorant multitude because of his gentleness and charity, it was seized upon by cunning and aggressive types who constituted themselves champions and exponents of the wheel, who grew rich and powerful in its name, led people into great wars for its sake and used it as a cover and justification for envy, hatred, tyranny and dark desires. Until at last men said that had that ancient prophet come again to Utopia, his own triumphant wheel would have crushed and destroyed him

afresh....

Father Amerton seemed inattentive to this communication. He was seeing it from another angle. 'But surely,' he said, 'there is a remnant of believers still! Despised perhaps - but a remnant?'

There was no remnant. The whole world followed that Teacher of Teachers, but no one worshipped him. On some old treasured buildings the wheel was still to be seen carved, often with the most fantastic decorative elaborations. And in museums and collections there were multitudes of pictures, images, charms and the like.

'I don't understand this,' said Father Amerton. 'It is too terrible. I am at a loss. I do not understand.'

Men Like Gods, pp.58-61.

By presenting this sympathetic analogy of the Christ's Passion and Crucifixion, Wells sought to show how a Christ-like prophet could exert a benign, temporal influence which would help shape a more humane society, but which would gradually diminish after the critical times as that primary influence became less and less necessary for maintaining the new ethical code.

Wells argues that it is the legacy of the prophet which should be valued, on the basis that it has intrinsic value; Amerton, here representing all Christian believers, venerates the prophet himself as much as his ethics, whose merit proceeds from their source - Christian values are 'revealed'. Compare this argument with Aldous Huxley's rather caustic discussion of the legacy of Christ:

In cases where the adored man is no longer alive, adoration cannot corrupt its object. But even the best human persons have their defects and limitations; and to these, if they happen to be dead, must be added the defects and limitations of their biographers. Thus, according to his very inadequate biographers, Jesus of Nazareth was never pre-occupied with philosophy, art, music or science, and ignored almost completely the problems of politics, economics, and sexual relations. It is also recorded of him that he blasted a fig-tree for not bearing fruit out of season, that he scourged the shopkeepers in the temple precincts and caused a herd of swine to drown. Scrupulous devotion to and initiation of the person of Christ have resulted only too frequently in a fatal tendency, on the part of earnest Christians, to despise artistic creation and philosophic thought; to disparage the enquiring intelligence, to evade all long-range, large-scale problems of politics and economics, and to believe

themselves justified in displaying anger, or as they would doubtless prefer to call it, 'righteous indignation.'

In many cases devotion is directed, not to a living human person, nor to a human person who lived in the past, but to an eternal, omniscient, all-powerful God, who is regarded in some way as a person.

Ends and Means (1937), pp.238-239.

Of course, as he had already pointed out, Huxley was even more sceptical about the effectiveness of the kind of cult of scientific humanism which Wells advocated:

To what effect can rites and formulations, symbolic acts and objects be made use of in modern times? The question has been asked at frequent intervals ever since organized Christianity began to lose its hold upon the West. Attempts have been made to fabricate synthetic rituals without much success. The French Revolutionary cult of Reason and the Supreme Being died with the Thermidorian reaction. Comte's religion of Humanity - 'Catholicism without Christianity,' as T.H. Huxley called it - never took root. Even the rituals and ceremonies devised from time to time by successful Christian revivalists seldom outlive their authors or spread beyond the buildings in which they were originally practised.

While acknowledging the success of 'the cults of nationalism and socialism,' he continues:

To create a ritual, as Comte did, in the hope that it will create a religious emotion, is to put the cart before the horse.

Idem., pp.228 & 229.

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| BENFORD, Gregory | <u>In the Ocean of Night</u> 6 |
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| BOYD, John | <u>The Rakehells of Heaven</u> 5 |
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| LEWIS, Clive Staples | <u>Out of the Silent Planet</u> 4
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PENNY, Mrs.	<u>A Dream of the Day that Must Come</u> 4,6
ROBERTS, Keith	<u>Pavane</u> 5
SARTRE, Jean Paul	<u>Nausea</u> 5
SHELLEY, Mary W.	<u>Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus</u> 2
SKINNER, Burrhus F.	<u>Walden Two</u> 4
STAPLEDON, Olaf	<u>Odd John</u> 3 <u>Sirius</u> 3 <u>Star Maker</u> 5
VONNEGUT, Kurt	<u>Cat's Cradle</u> 5 <u>Galapagos</u> 5 (footnote) <u>Player Piano</u> 3 <u>The Sirens of Titan</u> 5
WATSON, Ian	<u>The Book of Being</u> 6 <u>The Embedding</u> 6 <u>The Martian Inca</u> 6 <u>Pictures at an Exhibition</u> 6 <u>Under Heaven's Bridge</u> 6 (with Bishop)
WELLS, Herbert George	<u>Men Like Gods</u> 5 <u>The Food of the Gods</u> 5 <u>The Island of Doctor Moreau</u> 3 <u>The Time Machine</u> 3
WHITE, James	<u>All Judgement Fled</u> 6
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