

With Sober, Estranged Eyes (1998)

Note 2020: This was my Afterword to the book edited by Patrick Parrinder, Learning from Other Worlds: Estrangement, Cognition and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia (the title was, I think, my suggestion). It was a collection of essays for my 70th birthday, that was to have been a Festschrift until at the last moment a commercial director from Liverpool UP opined (wrongly) that this would be a death-kiss for sales, so it sailed into the world without that subtitle. The occasion explains the autobiographic references.

And then all of a sudden this evidence appears, on the one hand, that I no longer have time to try several lives. I have to choose my last life, my *vita nuova*; and on the other hand, I have to leave this tenebrous state where the wear and tear of repeated work and mourning have conducted me.

Barthes, 1978

A passing emperor saw once a peasant planting dates and oculating a date tree, though this bears fruit only after 100 years. The emperor was amazed and asked the peasant, Little man, in whose interest are you planting? The poor peasant answered, Your Grace, for god and those born after.

Anon. 16th-C German anecdote

1. Through the Deepening Shadows

Whatever is stable and established evaporates, whatever is sacred is desecrated, and people are finally forced to consider with sober eyes their position in life and their mutual relationships.

The Communist Manifesto, 1848 (transl. modified)

I.I. If You Read This Book in Three Hours, 40 Jumbo Jets Have Crashed in That Time

Last night I couldn't sleep and on the well-supplied TV set of my rented Berlin apartment I found a strange channel where usually there was blackout. Its news reported that 300 jumbo jets, mainly occupied with women and children, crashed that day with total loss of life. And to horrify me further, it commented that its researchers had found out this has happened every day for the last twenty years or so, and yet has never been reported on the other 60+ channels on the wonderful satellite web ...

Of course I assumed this was a hoax akin to Poe's newspaper ones or Orson Welles's radio hoax where *The War of the Worlds* Martians came a-landing in the USA. But one look into the most trustworthy international sources showed me that my phantom channel was in all that matters (number of deaths) right, though the deaths were not by most advanced technology but only by its most ancient effect when used for class and other domination: hunger. These sources estimated in the mid-1980s that some forty million people die from hunger each year (make your own division to get to my jumbo crashes); and – I don't know which is worse – that in 1996 “[n]early 800 million people do not get enough food, and about 500 million are chronically malnourished” (Drèze-Sen, *Hunger* 35 and *Human* 20). The notoriously too optimistic World Bank has similar estimates, which conclude that more than a thousand million people (yes, one billion!) were in the 1980s living below the poverty line of US\$370 a year (*Poverty, World*, and cf. Altvater, *Future* 19 and passim). This agonizing mass torture and murder spree, in comparison to which a swift death by airplane crash seems merciful, has been getting worse ever since the mid-1970s but I have been unable to get full up-to-date numbers.

If you will, as I beg you, meditate on this overwhelming fact, whose brute pressure and brutal thrust clearly overshadows anything else happening in our wondrous new Post-Modernist or better Post-Fordist times, you may forgive me if I think it is not merely nor even, I trust, primarily the approaching biological cessation of one's ridiculously brief life – I have griefs not only with society but also with the universe, or at least our little sector of it – that roots my stance in a sense of profound urgency. Some of

you may even grow inclined to attribute my sticking to Marx's horizon of intelligent indignation at this unnecessary massified cruelty less to a personal aberration of an old (but not Old) Leftist than – as in the belatedly awakened Derrida – than to a reasonable conclusion that central elements of the classical Marxian diagnosis are cognitive (rational and emotional) instruments our age cannot do without: that is, until their ends are fulfilled in some way undreamt of Marx himself.

1.2. Orwell, Thou Shouldst Be with Us at This Hour

But might not the hungry after all revolt? I would if I were. You might think that (in spite of the Zapatistas) revolt has died out with Leninism. But the ruthless rulers above us do not.

A compassionate friend helped me this Spring to take off the Web an illuminating and frightening text, "An Appraisal of Technologies of Political Control," written by Steve Wright of the Omega Foundation (UK), presumably from the work of a group. It is a realistic – indeed, given its semi-official status as a working document of a European Parliament organ, rather underplayed – glimpse into the future literally in store for us by all the armed powers of political control, and I could and probably ought to devote this whole Afterword to discussing it and a few other such glimpses, which are after all largely consubstantial with the efforts of the best "awful warning" SF (from Zamyatin, Orwell, and the "new maps of hell" through Bester, Le Guin, Russ, the Strugatsky Brothers, to Gibson, Cadigan, and so forth), and leave the reader of this volume to place all contributions into the perspective opened by such texts. But this would not only trespass against our by now obsolete professional standards of isolating culture from politics (as the *SFS* editors' Csicsery-Ronay, Evans, and Hollinger message to me at the end of 1996, when refusing my article "Novum Is as Novum Does," complained, it would deal more with politics than with SF – as if the two can deep down be sundered). More to the point for me, it would sell short this volume's contributions and what I have learned from them; and so I shall only focus briefly on (and take all quotes from) Wright's "electronic pages" 34–37, dealing with some "incapacitation weapons" already waiting for us.

Wright first reveals that even the “first generation incapacitation weapon” of pepper gas was widely adopted by the FBI – and subsequently by the policing forces of a host of other countries, from Australia to India, and of companies from Spain to the UK – on the basis of the OK given by the head of the FBI’s “Less-than Lethal Weapons Programme” (how’s that for Orwellian doublethink?); one example is the use against striking workers at Decatur IL (Stabile 147). Wright comments, “It has subsequently been revealed that [he] took a \$57,000 bribe from a pepper gas manufacturer to give the product Capstun the all clear” (35), so that the matter is now being pursued by the ACLU. Pepper gas has, however, been reported as the source of death, subsequent to police or prison authorities’ spraying, of probably hundreds of people in the USA. It is lethal especially for people taking other drugs or subject to medicinal or physical obstruction of breathing passages; since I gather “other drugs” means here anything from Aspirin on, while most police strangleholds entail obstruction of breathing, these two categories seem to cover most of us before and after contact with the policing forces. The US army concluded in a 1993 study that pepper gas has “mutagenic effects, carcinogenic effects, sensitization, cardiovascular and pulmonary toxicity, neurotoxicity ...,” so that, recently, companies have noted with dismay its “potential for litigation” (Wright 34–35).

The second-generation weapons are, as we might expect from technology run wild in service of repression and without any democratic control from below, not only more diverse but also much more frightening. They are driven by the US programs in the 1990s – begun after a series of widely publicized glitches with outright killings, including the Waco mass deaths and the Somalia debacle – for fighting internal conflicts “non-lethally.” The new policy of “civil” – and of overall – militarization is avidly pushed by Right-wing radicals in the US army as well as by SF or SF-connected propagandists in outright or masked fiction such as Jerry Pournelle, Ben Bova, Harry Stine, Alvin Toffler or Janet and Chris Morris,¹ and officially

1 Chronologically: Possony and Pournelle, 1970; Bova, 1984; Stine, late 1980s; Toffler, 1994; Chris Morris and Janet Morris, 1990; Chris Morris, Janet Morris, and Baines, 1995. Cf. also the critical comments in Gray, Disch, J. William Gibson (both titles), and Franklin.

solicited by the US “Defense” and “Justice” Departments to the tune of millions of \$ per year. These weapons, classified as kinetic, chemical, optico-acoustic, microwave, disabling, and paralyzing technologies, are pursued with full speed in labs such as Oak Ridge, Livermore, and Los Alamos. They have come up with pilot systems, which are being lobbied for hard and where possible patented by powerful companies of the military-industrial-media complex. A short list takes a page and a half in the Wright-STOA document; it registers the emphasis on pinpointing individuals in a crowd, and includes (I give only some samples):

- ultra-sound or microwave systems that cause disorientation, vomiting, and beshitting oneself;
- high intensity strobes and other visual techniques that induce epileptic fits;
- an extensive range of pain-causing, disabling, and paralyzing chemicals with quick skin penetration, so that they work with one touch only;
- human capture nets, electrified or laced with chemical irritant;
- “lick’em and stick’em” technology (e.g., a foam gun) gluing the target’s hands and feet to the pavement;
- laser weapons and radiator shells using gaseous plasma to cause blinding;
- thermal guns working through a wall and raising body temperature to 107° Fahrenheit;
- magnetosphere guns delivering magnetic field blows to the head (brain).

Corporate USA is enthusiastically responding to such projects with conferences of experts and accelerated Research and Development (does anybody remember Leon Stover’s Right-wing definition of SF as the literature of R&D?). Nobody is much concerned with the fact that permanent disablement is no better than killing, or indeed that predicting when such a weapon will kill is in many cases scarcely possible. Pulling back its punches in a report that has to use diplomatic language, the STOA conclusion is “The work done so far has led to dubious weapons based on dubious research, strongly influenced by commercial ... considerations” (37).

In short, our main choice lies between total repression or (more realistically) a series of technologically fortified enclaves in Festung Western-and-Central Europe and Festung North America with ports and airlift bridgeheads on the poorer continents (especially where indispensable raw materials obtain). As can be seen in Piercy, Spinrad or Butler: a prime icebreaker of such newly cognitive SF, William Gibson, rightly remarked that we are “living in an overlapping batch of SF scenarios ... [W]e live very deep in a strange fault-line of history and ... big big things are going down.” (talk at NYC August 26, 1997, cited in Barr 2–4) I shall attempt at the end to sketch in why the potentialities of SF, as a part of an oppositional public opinion and domain, could be used to arrive at less gloomy scenarios.

1.3. *Women Workers*

The four whales who hold up the corners of heaven:
Women, workers, the learners, the loving.

The Long March, 1984

I have not yet found a way to foreground the lovers in my essayistic writing (as different from my verse or short stories), but let me in this section at least join the women workers to the learners, to be learned from. As women and workers, they are doubly vulnerable, and doubly representative (as the great socialist tradition from Marx and Engels to Bebel to Brecht rightly has it) of the exploiting face of any society. The young Marx characterized the representativity thus in “Private Property and Communism”:

The direct, natural, and necessary relation of person to person is the relation of man to woman ... From this relationship one can therefore judge man’s whole level of development. It follows from the character of this relationship how much man as a species being, as man, has come to be himself and to comprehend himself ... It therefore reveals the extent to which man’s natural behaviour has become human ... (Tucker ed. 69).

What then is the extent of our not “nature-bound,” not merely pre-human behavior in finally untrammelled Post-Fordist capitalism?

“Female labor is cheaper than male labor everywhere. . .,” notes Miyoshi’s discussion of our new global dispensation (740; cf. also Elson and Pearson, Frobel et al., Mellor 159–65, Mies, esp. chapters 3 and 4, Mitter, Sen and Grown, and Sklair). Using the same proceeding of emblematic exemplarity as in 1.1 and 1.2, I shall take my inductive evidence mainly from Harvey, who has the great advantage of literally bringing home this problem. No doubt, just as crass examples have been found in similar occurrences in China, jumpstarting the primitive accumulation of its “Confucian capitalism” under the absolutist rule of the misnamed Communist Party (irony of sly history!) in lieu of the Tudor monarchist bureaucracy, and they could also be found to somewhat different degrees in the sweatshops of New York, Montréal, Los Angeles, and almost every major world city or industrial zone. But Harvey’s report – on September 3, 1991, “the Imperial Foods [chicken-processing] plant. . . caught fire. Many of the exit doors were locked. Twenty-five of the 200 workers employed in the plant died and a further 56 were seriously injured.” (335) – has the shocking advantage of referring to events in Hamlet, North Carolina, 85 miles from the State capital and the “research triangle” of Raleigh-Durham, 350 miles from Washington DC, seat of the great righteous propounders of human rights to the whole world. The workers at this particular unit of the very profitable “broiler belt” agribusiness, stretching from Maryland to Texas and deeply involved in the career of a certain Arkansas governor named Clinton, are drawn from the countryside poor who find even the wage of between \$4.25 and \$5.60 per hour – which does not get them over the official poverty line unless it’s a second job of the family – literally the only game in town. Though no statistical breakdown of the 200 workers at this particular plant by gender or by race were available to me, most of them seem to have been women.

The conditions within the chicken broiler industry are described by Harvey and Struck² as typical for the industry, which means godawful:

2 I have been unable to check the Struck item and one or two other sources of Harvey’s in the time at my disposal and take my information from it at second hand; they are therefore in my text cited as “in” Harvey.

Salmonella contamination is an endemic danger, pollution problems are rife ... The workers of the Imperial Foods plant describe the demeaning conditions with few benefits and no job security. They were routinely cursed by bosses, the employees say. They were allowed only one toilet break from the processing line. A single day off required a doctor's permission. Any infraction was noted as an "occurrence" and five occurrences would get a worker fired. "The supervisors treated you like nothing, and all they want is get their chicken out," said Brenda MacDougald, 36 ... "They treated people like dogs," said a bitter Alfonso Anderson. Peggy, his wife of 27 years, died in the fire ... "Around here, you have to take some stuff and swallow it to keep a job," he said, fighting back tears. (in Harvey 335-36)

The "friendly business climate" of most US Southern states, including union-busting legislation, "translates into not enforcing laws on occupational health and safety." Federal guidelines were openly flouted by the State as well as by Federal personnel who between them had not inspected the Hamlet plant for eleven years prior to 1991, though fires were common in other plants and the occupational injury rate in this industry was nearly three times the US average. In the Imperial Foods plant, there were no fire extinguishers, no sprinkler system, no safety exit doors: "most of the Imperial workers died ... pounding desperately on locked or blocked fire doors ... This is a ... recently established industry whose employment conditions could easily be inserted as a description into Karl Marx's chapter on 'The Working Day' in *Capital* (published 1867)," concluded Harvey (all quotes from 336).

But, as different from Marx or the attention focused at the same time on the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court nomination hearings, only a few labor groups and Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition got publicly involved in the Hamlet plant fire. There was no mass outrage, say from the splendid intellectuals I know at nearby Duke and North Carolina universities; probably the overwhelming majority of them never heard what was happening an hour or so away – I certainly did not hear about it until I read Harvey. Yet this occurrence seems to me more horrifying than the NASA space shuttle explosion, caused as it is by human malevolence rather than human negligence (though both were based on the same profit motive); and had the media wanted to foreground women's endurance and heroism, they would have had the best part of 81 stories instead of NASA's one schoolteacher.

So would the feminist organizations, whose networking surely must have caught this event but who focused all their energies on Professor Anita Hill and her complaint of sexual harassment against Clarence Thomas (cf. Harvey's comment on 358). While the role of media information "filtering" should not be undervalued, it would also appear that concentrating on gender in isolation (or vaguely in conjunction with race) seemed more interesting than concentrating on gender indissolubly intertwined with the working class. None of this speaks at all against the wronged lawyer Anita Hill or the perished schoolteacher Christa MacAuliffe; but it speaks against self-defeating separatisms within groups who consider themselves "progressive," since we shall finally hang together or hang separately. Harvey agrees with Lynn Segal that the huge gains made in the USA by a tiny percentage of upper-tier women dwindle "by a life of increasing frustration, impoverishment, and powerlessness for the rest," so that overall US women have gained less than in any other country of the affluent North of the globe (Segal 90–91, Harvey 359–60). The one-seventh of people officially under the poverty line in the USA (which, given the way official statistics go, means probably one-fifth, or ca. fifty million people) is disproportionately constituted of women and some "ethnic" and age groups: the good old ruling class strategy of "divide and rule" entails the feminization of poverty. Post-Fordism is in some ways the return to the nineteenth-century Pre-Fordism, rightly notes Harvey: Disraeli's "two nations" are knocking on all our doors. They have fully arrived in "liberated" Eastern Europe and the rest of the South. The clearest way to understand this is to look at the condition of women today as opposed to twenty-five years ago in Russia, or the Moslem world, or China. Or in Hamlet, North Carolina, and all such hamlets of the US South.

1.4. *With Sober Eyes*

I have devoted much time to schooling myself in the dry language of statistics and political economy these last years, and I could go on about the blinkers which we wear (which have been put on us). After all, isn't the best SF about clairvoyance – literally, clear seeing – of what's

hidden yet advancing upon us (like the second generation paralyzing, etc., weapons above, or like media-cum-computer-constructed personalities in Gibson's *Idoru*), of "the baby figure of the giant mass to come" (Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida*, a meditation on stupid wars led by blind elites, with truth as the first casualty – on which I wrote my final B.A. paper, adopting Thersites's stance)? This is also often accompanied by blindness to what's already here, if obfuscated by Maya (our illusions). Philip Dick, say, had an extra share of both, and I believe people like me rightly praised him loudly but also deplored his large blind spots. (He reciprocated by denouncing us to the FBI as Moscow agents.) And no doubt all of us have our own clairvoyances and blindnesses. But at any rate I am now faced with writing in rather quickly the afterword to what I am told should for overriding commercial reasons by no means be called a Festschrift but something functionally analogous to it (as gills are to lungs). Thus, I can only respectfully refer you to my recent or forthcoming works (e.g., "Novum"), and in the rest simply apply my strong feeling that it is high time for a sober look – as in Marx's epigraph to this section.

The bourgeois surgical cruelty quite non-ironically praised there is the midwife of a new condition Marx too confidently expects, where the illusion of holiness and the false, drugged euphoria to which it gives rise, as well as the concomitant illusion of permanence and fixity, are "profaned," exposed to the eyes of people who rediscover the clear outlook of sobriety. It should be underlined that Marx is here speaking of the heroic phase of the bourgeoisie as a class that is productively revolutionary; I've elsewhere argued how its (say) post-1848 ideological history is the history of that same occulting which Marx here also splendidly identifies, but now grown more complex by several historical turns of the mystifying screw (Suvin-Angenot). Thus "sober" does not in Marx at all imply – nor would I wish to use it in the sense of – non-impassioned, it implies non-drugged, de-intoxicated, or in his or Brechtian terms de-alienated, estranged. It is particularly mandatory today, in the rampant "man is wolf to man" Post-Fordism, whose necessary pillar is illusionist brainwashing induced by the relentless barrage of all the media (see my "Utopianism").

2. On This Work and on My Preceding Work

What is the meaning of a book? Not what it argues, but what it argues against.

Barthes, 1975

You may back off from the world's woes, you're free to do so and it lies in your nature, but perhaps this backing away is precisely the only woe that you might avoid.

Kafka, "Reflections on Sin, Woe, Hope, and the Way"

2.1. *On and Around a Philosophical History*

I'm grateful that the essays in this book stimulated me to think of what I "really" intended to do in my dealing with SF. I'm not sure I have the proper name for it, and anyway there may be many names depending on the stance of the beholder, but today it seems to me I've been trying to lay some fundamentals for a philosophical history of SF. This is – I realized later – most akin to Walter Benjamin's reconstruction or montage of historical material as philosophy (cf. Buck-Morss 55), which also, and supremely, means the philosophy of bodies living together usually called politics.

Immediately, many misunderstandings of this stance come to mind. Let me deny four of the most important and frequent ones. *First*, this is not pure theory: though I recall being dubbed a theory virtuoso by an *Extrapolation* commentator, and I confess there is a certain delight in the as it were zero-gravity acrobatics of theory, I've simply been forced to invent a theoretical toolkit in order to deal with SF history. I agree with Vico and Marx that the only science we may have (in Vico's sense of *scienza*, knowledge or cognition) is the science of history.

Second, I have spent much of my younger days arguing – within first the Titoist movement I belonged to and then the New Left I solidarized with – that the wild profusion of longer range cognition, such as art, is necessarily in tension with the garden-variety or spear-point politics of

getting things done right today or at the latest tomorrow. One can find this tension in Piercy's undeservedly forgotten *Dance the Eagle to Sleep*, Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, or some Strugatsky Brothers works; and today at greatest length and with new insights in K.S. Robinson's great Mars trilogy, analyzed with such acute sympathy in Fred Jameson's contribution to this volume. The tension is potentially very fruitful, and the medieval Catholic theology was forced to theorize it in its distinction between the "triumphant" and "militant" Churches. Art – movies, literature, even comics – always tends to use long range or "triumphant" horizons (which are not at all necessarily positive but only extreme, the triumph of death is also possible, e.g., the fact that the horizons of liberation are for the present generation mainly closed). Thus it's essential to keep constantly in mind the criteria constituted by a look backward from one's furthest horizons, while at the same time not forgetting the imperfect but imperious needs of militancy to use all the possible chinks in the System right now – chinks never wholly absent, Benjamin's omnipresent "weak messianic power" (e.g., the Zapatistas today). But if perverted into a dictatorship of Plato's wise philosopher-king or the dictatorship – in practice much more frequent – of the security police, the tension is brutally flattened out.

Thus, I note with some horror Parrinder's recall of Patrick Moore's advocacy of a scientific "thought police" to vet the orthodoxy of SF, which of course proceeded from the impulse that animated many other similar restrictions, from the Positivistic family-fare publishers of Verne and Heinlein to the zealous Communist bureaucracies Brecht and Bloch had to fight. But I must say that attempts by hostile critics to equate Marxism or Socialism (e.g., my critical writings within those horizons) with a call for police repression have always elicited a wry smile from somebody who in the mid-1950s wrote leading articles, as an editor of the student weekly in an officially communist state, pleading (say) for a publication of 1984 so that a proper discussion and critique of it may be publicly done in Yugoslavia (the publication happened later, the discussion did not). My dealings with the State security forces in this cruel century have, surprisingly, resulted only in two years' internment (as a boy with my parents) by the lax and corruptible Italian army on an Adriatic island: I have been lucky. For I have, as a somewhat prominent anti-Stalinist and anti-Zhdanovian, been on

the KGB's blacklist from my tender days in 1948, and in the CIA-FBI files from about 1951 as a student activist engaged in international contacts. The potentially very damaging delation by P.K. Dick can be forgiven by repeating Jehoshua's realization "they know not what they do," but I still look with much more askance at the somewhat more hypocritical – but at least open – use of the same running-to-Big-Brother trope ("Boo-hoo, he's a Yugoslav Marxist") by Jack Williamson in the debate we had in *College English* when I criticized a book by his friend Claeson. I think I've very few lessons to learn in this field (let us call it international ideologized politics), and none from people who don't know anything about it.

Third, if my stance is one of a philosophical history, it certainly is not a philosophy of anything (even of history). I'm not a philosopher but on the contrary very suspicious of what I might call "the silkworm theory of reasoning," that is, drawing ideas or concepts from out of ideas or concepts in order to form a self-validating system – obviously irrefutable if the founding concepts are accepted, but also obviously inapplicable to any brute, recalcitrant relationships those concepts cannot encompass. I began doubting the closed system as cocoon, including scientific cognition proceeding asymptotically toward absolute truth and knowledge, very early on. This is largely why I left my science studies (I have a six-year science degree, equivalent to an M.Sc.) at the age of 21 for the arts.

2.2. On and Around Philology

Last but not at all least: like Nietzsche, I have sometimes thought that the inscription on my grave (if anybody needed one) should be "DS, Philologist." I chose to study literature – for there were no theater or media studies in my antediluvian time – because I was and permanently am fascinated by and at ease with the "thick worlds" of fiction. I'm a sucker for a good story: stories are a great invention of mankind, on a par with images, fire, and the wheel. Which is why I cannot stand Post-Modernists, who are telling one initially startling but by now rather boring story while denying they tell any. Or why, despite some impressive facets in his major series, I cannot follow the semantic and diegetic

contortions of Gene Wolfe, fleeing the Master Narrative. One of the most important items of SF criticism, I've always thought, is Heinlein's early essay on the Little Taylor and other patterns underlying SF, and I shamelessly confess I prefer a good story by Heinlein, Cherryh or Gwyneth Jones to most philosophies, since they show me worlds with actions, resistances by described agents, and psychozoa for whom both mean something. This does not mean that a story cast from second-rate molds of Westerns and thrillers, or the pile-'em-up-high actions without resistances of Doc Smith, are better than one paragraph of Barthes or Wittgenstein or Dewey or Merleau-Ponty (to name some I've been trying to graft on Marxian growths): indeed the corruption of the potentially best is the worst (Lucifer). And so one of my greatest career regrets is that my historical analyses, say the whole second part of *Metamorphoses of SF* or the detailed correlation of the UK textual production and consumption 1848–85 in *Victorian SF* (a book which I believe to be my methodologically highest achievement), have with rare exceptions – such as Brian Stableford – right up to today failed to excite the imagination of critics dealing with anybody from Lucian through Chesney to Čapek: for the proof of the pudding is here.

At any rate, ever since I discovered the Russian Formalists, translated and published (as also Zamyatin) by my friend Aleksandar Flaker in the heady early 1950s' days of anti-Stalinist Titoism, I have held that art consists of shapes (what a "content" is I do not to this day understand, and I mortally offended influential Zagreb University professors by saying so loudly). Any critique, philosophy, politics or revelation to come out of art must come out of the shapes (forms), or it won't come. I was therefore amazed that one of the early, seemingly benevolent reactions to my work in *S-F Studies* was a little dialogic parable by R.M. Philmus, opposing Philologos (himself) to Ideaphilos (guess who). If Bob had listened to the original Greek, he would have discovered that Philologos means not only lover of speech or word but also of the *logos*, the transcendental Word, a philosophical idea I would never entertain. Meanwhile the "lover of ideas" can be opposed to "lover of word" only if one believes that words are polluted by the concepts that inevitably organize them; or that ideas exist outside of words, a Platonically worded idea I've spent my life in combating. Anyway, "ideas" are in such

taboo debates always a codeword for “political ideas,” and more precisely for “explicit political ideas this critic disagrees with” (for if politics is the way people can live together, say without mass hunger or mass repressive lesions against the hungry, surely this is what SF, as all art, is about, and even more surely SF criticism cannot but be imbued with value notions about what its object does). As Nietzsche put it, “I would not know what sense could classical philology have in our time, if not the sense of acting in this time in an untimely way, that is, against the time, and thus on time and, I hope, in favour of a coming time” (*Werke* I: 210).

Thus I’m led to amplify the little quote from p. 84 of my 1979 Novum essay whose compression may have led Patrick Parrinder to misunderstand (and therefore object to) it: when I said that SF suggesting a flight from the author’s social spacetime is “an optical illusion and epistemological trick,” I never for a moment doubted that in any concrete textual analysis such an illusion is not only highly significant but also constitutive. But when theorizing about a whole corpus of say a couple of thousand books, it seems reasonable to generalize the supposition that *The First Men in the Moon* or *The Dispossessed* or Delany’s overcoded strange cities are, for all their welcome playfulness, finally about tendencies in contemporary England or USA. To coin a phrase: esthetic autonomy, yes; esthetic apartheid, no. In sum, to play off concern for form against concern for ideas or function (as Bob Silverberg – whom I’ve found of the utmost courtesy when dealing with the SFWA, and whose central-phase writings I read with much interest precisely because they had a new function – seems to have done at the famous MLA SF meeting of 1968 described by Edward James) is a charge I cannot make sense of. Let me turn it around: assuming (but not conceding) I were dealing with ideas primarily, whence this allergy to them? I think it can arise only if any dragging out of implicit value constellations in the stories is considered by itself as obnoxious, as destroying the mindless absorption into them. But surely there are other, I’d say higher, forms of enjoyment when a story can be read without the reader’s having to repress her critical bump when picking up the text?

Yet of course, the witty essay by Edward James in this volume (yes I read all those precursors) is in a way right: Marxians are conservative, we want to conserve some good old bourgeois – or indeed medieval and Hellenic and

Buddhist – values destroyed by the rotting bourgeoisie. Only the market admen need to tout a “revolution” for each new year’s brand of otherwise unnecessary consumption articles. Socialism is the only hope of tradition.

2.3. *On Mythical Pseudo-history*

Once the umbrella-concept of History, whose agents are exclusively human forces, arises to supplant Fate, whose agents are superhuman forces inflicting their will on humans, the most pertinent antonym to philosophical history becomes the hybrid of mythical history (which denies any value to history). Since myth is one of the most confusing bricks in the present Tower of Babel confusion, I tried already in *Metamorphoses* to explain that by this I do not mean long-duration shapes of figuration and narration (e.g., Aristotle’s *mythos*). As anybody fascinated by history, I’m very interested in these shapes, though in desperate straits – as in the present – I believe we should be even more interested in how synchronous needs modify these stories, adapting them to what given social groups need today. The sense of “myth” I reject is the airtight explanation of ahistorical sense by fixed, static, fate-driven patterns, which deny any human agency toward or possibility of radically significant change (as in Jung or Joseph Campbell), and thus everybody’s responsibility in determining our common destiny:

Myths give answers to why the world is as it is when an empirical cause and effect cannot be seen, or when it cannot be remembered [or especially when it is hidden by organised obfuscation, note DS]. Although they satisfy the desire felt by human beings for a meaning-filled world, it is at the high price of turning that world back upon them as inescapable fate ... Science as well as theology, rationalism as well as superstition can claim that events are inexorably determined. (Buck-Morss 78)

An example: I find much to interest me in the first parts of Rafail Nudelman’s essay, which focus on Lem’s underlying pattern of the cognitive hero descending “into the labyrinth’s epistemological centre.” This bold generalization, steered away from talk about history by the terrible experiences of Nudelman’s generation with history, splendidly explains much about Lem, including why I have always been so partial to his horizons (so

that I regret he largely stopped writing stories in favor of however splendid pastiches). Indeed my friend John Clute once taxed me, in his engagingly extremist way – which I wish he would extend from stylistics to politics – with defining SF as a “menu for writing like Lem ... challengingly useful (though bats) ...” This is not the place to discuss the reason he gives for his friendly vituperation, and which I think I could dispute; though Niels Bohr used to ask about a hypothesis, “Is it crazy enough?” Rather, to return to Nudelman, I then find his equally splendid culmination is to discuss Lem’s best late story, *The Mask*, by rightly allotting the central explanatory place to a mythopoetic symbolism “continuously and mockingly cancelled out by modern details.” Nudelman’s philologically proper and indeed mandatory reading of a story as it actually unfolds (as epic syntagmatics) and not as a handed-down paradigm of eternal repetition is what I was driving at in my *Positions* essay on epic vs. mythic storytelling (cf. also Moylan’s “‘Look into the dark’: On Dystopia and the *Novum*” in Parrinder), but it does not present what Jungians would recognize as a myth.

2.4. Off the Track: Descriptive Versus Prescriptive

One discussion that keeps to my wonder coming up time after time in connection with my work is that it is not only descriptive but also prescriptive. Guilty m’lud – but not really: the accusation makes no sense. Let me call to my help Carl Freedman’s bold and sweeping attempt to strike a balance between history and philosophy, with which I have much sympathy as I struggled with the same problem in Part 2 of *Metamorphoses*, and he is attempting to do it in even less space than I had. For he rightly sets up the Great Trinity of the English SF tradition – More, Swift, and Wells (with the beautiful but, as I’d agree, somewhat narcissistic *News from Nowhere* in between the latter two) – not only as genetic fountainheads for SF-cum-utopia but above all as yardsticks for them (it). I must say that one of my regrets is that the historian Edward James doesn’t seem to find compelling the 100+ pages or whatever of detailed analysis in the just mentioned section of *Metamorphoses* on how More subsumes the medieval and Antique tradition of Other Worlds, how Swift (as every M.A. in Eng. Lit. knows) centrally derives from More and (as every M.A. in Comp. Lit. ought

to know) from Cyrano, and how Wells (as even people who only write SF criticism probably know) centrally derives from both of them plus – as they too did – from the lower plebeian genres of storytelling: perhaps Professor James listened to the acidulous Mr Westfahl too assiduously?

Thus, the SF which doesn't know it derives from More and Swift – however many other confluents the industrial age has added – is like a severely short-sighted person both of whose eyeglass glasses are thickly pasted over by historical pollution, blinding it to utopia and satire, the better half of the SF mix. Wells thought he was a One-Eyed Man in the Country of the Blind (the best that any of us poor worms writhing in our clod can manage to be). What is left for him who – it's usually a male writer, unless it's Janet Morris – doesn't even know that he's one-eyed? Well, only the Frankenstein and the Doc Smith components of the mix. We have SF theories to match this type of vision: Aldiss's and Westfahl's. Perhaps I should add that it seems to me the status of Mary Shelley is in some ways incomparable to – that is, much higher than – Doc Smith or van Vogt: for the Gothic or Romantic mode is in SF almost always (from E.T.A. Hoffmann to any good Aldiss story, say the one about the continent-sized creature fallen onto Earth) accompanied by the grotesque, which relates to it as satire does to utopia in the Enlightenment couple. Brian Aldiss thus has the ineluctable focus of a writer-theoretician, establishing the noble pedigree of his own SF and fending off competing pedigrees (Delany does this much less graciously in his attack on Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, which finally boils down to saying she does not write about or understand sexual polymorphy the way he does). The adventure is then simply the necessary narrative stratum undergirding all four above modes, and I have argued in *Metamorphoses* that its unalloyed, boy-scout use is cognitively exhausted midway through Jules Verne, whose unwittingly parodic pastiche we encounter then in the slam-bang Gernsback tradition of SF for White male teenagers in an upwardly mobile middle class.

Back to uses of Freedman: a yardstick is a normative beast par excellence; if your yard is not the same as the platinum one in Paris, you're simply wrong and misleading others. When Parrinder, for example, talks about esthetic failure vs. triumph, he's rightly and unabashedly normative. He notes the failure resides, within SF esthetics, in not knowing how to assess the difference between new and conventional perception: and pray, how does one bisect this into prescription and description? Nohow; for

the Humean agnosticism sundering “fact” from value is simply bad epistemology, bad psychology, and obfuscatory politics mumbling something about freedom (always from, not for). Facts are co-constituted by frames of recognition, any taxonomic naming of them is a hermeneutic, and – as I first learned from Lukács’s super-heretical *History and Class Consciousness*, rejected by both sides of the Cold War, but today can be found in respectable theoreticians of science like Thom (so that it gets boring for me to repeat such by now elementary cognitions) – the dynamic reality is always redefined by the imagination. This clearly does not plead for equally boring cookie-cutter clones, but only for some elementary dialectics: “Norm is based on the fundamental dialectical antinomy [and tension] between an exceptionless validity and a merely regulative, or even merely orienting, potentiality which includes also the possibility of a break. Each norm comprises both of these contradictory tendencies ...” Such normativity is what founds any and every reading contract and thus makes reading or art possible in the first place; neither my *Novum* nor the fans’ *sensawunda* would be a surprising extension unless extending away from the familiar (experimental science from Bacon through Bernard to Schrödinger proceeds by exactly the same method, cf. Thom 609–16 and 631–32). So at the end I must again reverse the spear: if the critics do not read such normative orientations as the above Mukařovský one, isn’t that because they themselves embody an unholy blend of US “me only” narcissism and super-normative conformism? Politically speaking, doesn’t falling into the PoMo nihilism prepare the ground for US fascist “militias”? If so, that is the nihilists’ intellectual but also our collective funeral.

3. What Is to Be Done

Have you stopped beating your spouse?

Example for hidden presupposition in Ducrot

Let us, in the interests of propaganda, compile a list of problems we do not pretend to have solved.

Brecht

3.1. *The Best Laid Plans of Mice and Men*

A caveat: I'm discussing here what I intended to write: what I "really" wrote, how it was read by whom and why, is another story, partly analyzed here by Tom Moylan in terms that I find most appreciative (or, in his vocabulary, annunciative) and therefore believe to be right on. Perhaps my highly compressed and some say idiosyncratic English is also at stake here: though I began to learn English in Montessori kindergarten at age four (yes I come from the enlightened bourgeois intelligentsia grown ashamed of its class's treason to its own ideals), and though at age 13 I was a paid interpreter between English and Italian, while after arriving to North America I've written half a dozen collections of poetry in English, one of which was thought good enough to be published in Toronto – even so, our language judges us in the same breath that we judge others. Judge and ye shall be judged; fair enough: especially when the judge is so sympathetic as Tom, earning my undying gratitude for hitting what I fondly believe is the central wellspring of my work, the line of "communicating vessels" that connects poetry to utopianism (my first book in North America, *Other Worlds, Other Seas*, took its title from Marvell) and our century's bloody politics to resistance by Brechtian narrative images and Kong Fu's rectification of names.

3.2. *Remaining to Be Done: Parable as the Strategic Tool*

Of course I won't compile a Brechtian list here either for SF criticism in general – Marc Angenot and I gave it a shot in "Not Only" (in this book), but this was in another country and the wench is dead – or for mine own. For one thing, it might be longer than the Afterword so far. For another, a single person cannot do it, only a group; and I should stress here that I deeply disbelieve in copyrights and geniuses, so that whatever strengths my criticism may have derives truly from my having – in a doubtless truncated way, dictated by our social (dis)organization – functioned as a focuser and formulator of group debate, incorporating selected hints, insights, scoldings, proposals ... by, say, the co-editors (Dale Mullen, and

then Marc Angenot) and almost the whole board of consultants of *SFS* during my 1973–81 tenure – just as half of the contributions in that *SFS* bear traces of my hands-on editing. I simply wish to indicate the most glaring gaps, which prey most on my mind. One is the matter of Parable, which then logically entails a reconsideration of Fantasy – anyway much overdue for pragmatic reasons.

When Patrick Parrinder and I were discussing a possible title for the volume he was editing, I suggested that instead of “Cognition and Estrangement” it really ought to be “Cognition, Estrangement, the Novum, and the Parable.” This was an only semi-joking proposal, for my (teleologically) final essay in the *Positions* book advances a view of SF that takes a new tack in comparison to the first three terms from *Metamorphoses*, though I trust it is not incompatible with them, in the way that – if small matters may be compared to huge ones – Einstein is not incompatible with Newton: the latter is still mandatory for all physical affairs that don’t approach the speed of light. Nonetheless, new insights and in some cases drastic modifications obtain in Einstein. And this may be taken not simply as immodest name-dropping if we remember the argument from *Metamorphoses* that the best post-Wellsian SF deals with spacetimes (as different from Verne’s spaces and utopian or dystopian futures), so that real mileage may be gotten out of such analogies and variants of allegory. In art rather than science, the nearest analogy may be the “moment of Cubism” – thus Picasso rather than Einstein – which Berger dates ca. 1910–14 but in his sense of a horizon where all was possible I’d extend it to the twenty years after 1917 (to the Left Modernism of Joyce, Chaplin, Eisenstein, and Brecht). It would not be too difficult to correlate this with the debates between the open and closed interpretations of Marx (Bloch’s “warm stream vs. cold stream,” say Luxemburg or Gramsci vs. Kautsky or Stalin), in which the “cold” pole eschewed the scandal of dialectics in favor precisely of the comforting Newtonian predictive element (“iron laws”) inherited but also transcended by Marx.

I take it that this may authorize Angenot’s sad tale, a kind of Erasmanian Praise of Folly, of how the Second International (and in a not too carefully hidden *telos* of Marc’s, the Third International) engaged in dogmatic, static or closed utopianism. It may also authorize Carl Freedman’s short circuit

between Marx and SF, which might be grounded in old Karl's two favorite tropes or image-systems: the fantastic creatures – vampires, zombies, specters, idolatrous fetishes, sorcerer's apprentices, *et j'en passe* – that pululate in his writings; and the gesture of subjecting the enemies' occulting veilings to disclosing unveilings that his critique performs (see for much more my "Transubstantiation" and Suvin-Angenot). I myself am not at all sure that Marx is a theoretician of SF, though the conceit is witty (and he does refer to Frankenstein in a letter); but surely, whatever the yoyos of ephemeral generations of fashion that come and go, his specter will continue to haunt SF (among other fields), and Freedman's essay here is a clear example. As to its invoking of Engels's "scientific socialism," we may have differing opinions: this was excogitated after Marx's death and with little basis in Marx's work. I once buckled down to the agonizing task of reviewing this term in "'Utopian,'" and have lately supplied a detailed argument on Marx's "limited oscillation" about scientificity in "Two Cheers" (a whole mini-library on this matter can be glimpsed in the notes to my essays; a good survey is by Shanin). That demolition was rendered indispensable by the rise of Fascism which was guessed at by storytellers (such as Jack London) rather than predicted or predictable by any system – though Engels's mistakes are usually more instructive than other people's successes. Yet if SF were in an Aristotelian analogy with "scientific socialism," first, this is surely not its whole story, it would be wishful thinking similar to the one I indulged in up to the 1970s not to see SF has many other analogies too, say to the utopian *topos* of the Third Reich (deriving from Joachim di Fiore) to which Bloch devoted a brilliant article, or to Verne's utopian liberalism of circulation, or to Asimov's utopian technocracy; and second, my main conclusion from the socialist analogy would be that perversions of either have to be chastised with scorpions: "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."

I cannot here retrace the theory of parable, as I did at length in the essay "SF: Metaphor . . .," but may only in the most abbreviated way (to be filled in by the kind reader reaching for Chapter 22 here) repeat that the parable has perennially been the privileged genre – and even more: the privileged method, which can therefore extend to stories of any length – of fruitfully marrying textual seduction (in the "vehicle") and cognitive

consummation (in the “tenor”). You’ll note it is a highly affective, nay erotic, way of bringing about what Brecht called “the gentle might/ authority/ violence of reason” (*die sanfte gewalt der vernunft*), the feedback between the universal and the singular that constitutes any cognition. This Way may be sneered at by people who cannot imagine that reason may be seductive – poor they! For they are weighed in the balance against Aristophanes, countless mashal-writing rabbis, Jehoshua of Nazareth, Gautama the Enlightened, Swift, Lessing, and so many other, “I had not thought death has undone so many” (T.S. Eliot).

All very well, I hear the dogmatic Post-Modernists reply, we know Bellamy wrote impressive parables and Wells stories that are narrativized parables (as “The Country of the Blind”), but what has this to do with us in the new dispensation? Well, maybe little with you – though I read much Derrida and Guattari-Deleuze as parables, and the whole PoMo vulgate-text is one mega-allegory of the lovehate at the loss of Master Narrative and of the clever hysteria of Hegel’s Serf without a Master – but a lot with the state of affairs we’re trying to understand today. The parable is the most complex, refined, and populist form of allegory, opposed to the elitist theological combats of Virtues and Vices or *Psychomachia*, those black-and-white exorcisms. The overall horizons of allegory to my mind deal, as I began saying in Chapter 1, with the horizons of the relationships of art to truth, or of narrative and metaphoric imagination to conceptualized, normative doctrine; in other words, allegory has to do with the interplay between what is in social hegemony held to be true (and thus in a way privileged and indeed sacred) and what is held to be feigned (and what has therefore, historically, oscillated uncomfortably between being unholy, just entertaining, or a second mode of privileged cognition). This has become more complex and exacerbated after the capitalist Industrial Revolution, which both installed inescapable social dynamics and yet held fast to the ruling-class traditional belief that history is at a qualitative end, and – in the new bourgeois variant – only quantitative growth remains: as in sports’ records or computer software: faster, higher, quicker, more.

What then is the role of new creativity, which is as it were generically discontinuous from the privileged body of normatively “true” texts, which is fiction or heresy rather than fact or orthodoxy? I have argued in

the brief old text just mentioned that all allegory, verbal or otherwise, is a (more or less admitted) relationship between a new proposition and an existing privileged set of normative and ruling propositions which the allegory reproduces (*egoria*) in a variant and other (*allos*, dare I say estranged?) way; and it might be apparent how discussions of the Novum necessarily intertwine with allegorical horizons (see Suvin, “Preliminary”; and on the Novum now my reconsideration of the *Metamorphoses* essay’s approach in “Novum”). I noted there an inherent tension in a dynamic bourgeois society between piety and creativity, the static tradition of doctrine and the deviating pressure of experience, so that a modern parable can only be faithful after its own fashion: even the most believing creators are uncomfortable allies for priests, I concluded on the basis of my own heretical Titoist experience. Within such horizons, the small forms of proverb, riddle, animal (or Alien) fable, and parable will be more open to a conflict of authority than the “large forms” of mythical and religious systems, which are inexorably drawn into a confirmation of (sometimes new) authority.

Let me then use Jameson’s exegesis (even for him quite unusually brilliant – it tosses off in passing small things such as a new hypothesis on realism) of K.S. Robinson’s recent [Colour] Mars trilogy to make my point by – again – learning from Fred.

3.3. *Parable and K.S. Robinson on Mars: Utopianism as Ongoing “Thick” History*

The parable is, then, traditionally a way of intimately relating doctrine to fiction – and vice versa. The traditional politico-religious point of the parable is to open the listener’s ears to the irruption of (often new) understanding, Bloch’s “aha-effect”: “O now I see that the tiny grain of mustard seed growing into the biggest bush of them all is Christ’s Word about the Kingdom of Heavens growing into my heaven-reaching faith in it!” Theoretically, one might expect the parable not to survive the death of God in the twentieth century, the rise of competing macro-godheads and tribal godlets which entailed the slaughters of tens of millions as well as the starving of and psychic terror over – and thus evacuation of

imaginative reason from – hundreds of millions, that have between them irretrievably sullied the alternatives of ideology and the Id. But practice is always slyer than theory, and while Old Nobodaddy might be dead, the parable has managed to survive in two ways, identified with Kafka and Brecht (not counting nostalgic reactions back to reach-me-down Romanticism). Kafka managed to write parables – as Beckett managed to write Mystery-plays – against a backdrop of “zero doctrine,” that is, the painful absence of community values and interhuman sense that was traditionally codified into a more or less religious doctrine, so that his isolated protagonist became a grotesque lone creature (my favorites are the animal fables of “The Burrow” or “Josephine the Songstress” rather than the clearer almost-SF of “The Penal Colony,” but the overt thumbnail sketch is in “The Door of the Law”). Brecht on the whole successfully navigated the whirlpools between the Scylla of nihilism (Kafka) and Charybdis of pseudo-religious Marxism as belief-into-scientific-destiny (not confined to Stalin) to approach a paradoxically experimental doctrine in which it is the method of fitting the sight to the situation seen that matters and not any system. The allegorical Little Man Schweik meets finally the allegorical Ruler Hitler at the end of one of Brecht’s most engaging parables of how to survive despotism, and Hitler fails: he is not prepared for Winter ... Neither is Joan Dark in the slaughterhouses of locked-out Chicago, an awful warning – the first “new map of hell,” in fact – how the unemployed and dispossessed have to stick to each other or miserably die (*St. Joan of the Slaughterhouses*). It’s a cold world, my masters, and you better be prepared – by slyness, wit, and method.³

After Marx and Nietzsche it’s no go for parables (or any other allegories) which trust in the Transcendental Signifier, the doctrinal tenor as soul or static essence, to which is then adjusted the imaged story, the vehicle as sensual body: they cannot satisfy (Silverberg’s objection at the MLA SF session to academic abstractions may derive from such functional

3 I have been worrying at such aspects of Brecht’s since my student days, and a record of my thinking from the 1960s–70s may be found in *To Brecht*, also in later essays; but see now the Copernican revolution in Brechtian studies by Jameson’s *Brecht*.

subordination). If there is to be any soul or essence – I argue in “Two Cheers” that a dynamic, changeable essence is necessarily to be posited in order to speak about anything, so that I was emboldened by reading in Robinson that “Terra sees [in Mars] its own essence” – it can only be decisively co-constituted by the body: in literature, the story with its figures and metaphors. Surely all flesh is grass and in a way perhaps the vanity of vanities, but it’s the last line of defense and offense, delight and memory, left to us. In fact, if the Platonic-Idealist doctrine of two realities is thereby refused – the soul being either a changeable disposition of flesh or nothing at all – it is no longer quite true that the vehicle is concrete (plant) and the tenor abstract (belief in the Kingdom), and we might even pose the question whether this understanding of allegory is not characteristic of German Idealism and Romanticism, a late and degenerate form. Was King Pluto concrete but riches an abstract concept for Aristophanes, was Christ’s Kingdom to Come really abstract for medieval believers? In this intimate interaction, the fact that the tenor is being elicited by such-and-such a Possible World (in Robinson, by all the features consubstantial to the three changing colors of Mars) cannot be simply subsumed by the tenor’s concept or even image and then forgotten, otherwise we’d have to equate any such fictional text to a leading article written against the same horizon. (This is my problem with the useful “discourse theory,” debated for years now with Marc Angenot.) An irreducible surplus is engendered by the humanizing features of World, Figuration, and Narration of their interactions; Jameson names it after Althusser’s “overdetermination,” but I suspect pluricausality is only an important synecdoche for what is happening and at stake here.

To exemplify it by contraries: the contingent grain of mustard seed gives rise to a stout suspicion that whatever tenor is built by means of it may get into trouble once the world of the listener is sufficiently removed from Mediterranean agriculture. A post-industrial Kingdom of Heavens may have to cease being a Kingdom and in Heavens, acquire a dynamic vector, etc. In fact, it may have to become a utopian something to which the Mars Trilogy relates as Dante’s equally outrageous Mount of Purgatory does to his planetary Paradises. Post-industrial cognition can only proceed by experimental construction out of “nature’s” – the

production mode's – constriction, the main constriction or resistance as well as source of strength in capitalism being the money economy (on which Balzac's realism is founded). Thus, science is no doubt Jameson's allegory for human relationships, from which it anyway stems and which it then strongly inflects, but also the philosophical – or better, methodological – model for steering their dynamics.

While Robinson might demur from any such residual triumphalism (utopia is for him indeed the unnameable color on which Jameson zeroes in, approachable only by symbolic detail), what we can clearly see in his *exemplum* is how our bourgeois categories of institutionalizing, fragmenting, and alienating cognition into politics, religion, economics, psychology – the entire organigram of our social science Faculties, against which Marxists and Nietzscheans of all stripes have always struggled – begin to break down here. The ideal equivalent of the rainbow coalition is cognitively debated in the story's interplay of what we poorly classify as ecological, political, economical (Martian and Corporate Terran), ethnic, and even psychological matters (only religion seems to have been displaced into ecological politics on Mars). This is of a piece with the cognitive recovery of History argued earlier in this chapter. Let me call it, as Jameson almost did, “the filling in of King Utopus's trench.” For, in Robinson, the most astounding image and *pars pro toto* standing for it is the space-elevator cable which “wraps itself twice around the planet like a broken necklace” (Jameson): an anti-trench which has always to be reckoned with as an unclean but for this age's horizons unbreakable birth-cord from mega-capitalism, which may yet strangle any attempt at new birth.

(A parenthesis: I was much struck by Jameson's query why I called utopia the “sociopolitical” and not “socioeconomic” sub-genre of SF, for I can't remember why – my reasons were pre-reflexive. He generously rehearses most of the probable reasons, of which I'd retrospectively emphasize that utopia is – in More, whom Marx found so congenial, and as a rule – not so much an alternative political economy but a critique of that very practice and newfangled category, often by suppressing it totally, as in Bacon, Campanella or Morris, texts which therefore today look quaint. And to call it socio-politico-economical – plus maybe a few more adjectives – would have brought me into uncomfortable vicinity of Polonius's categorization of plays.)

Thus, to conclude reading Robinson (largely through Jameson), it becomes clear that he has managed a Herculean feat which we might at first, within SF, call the reconciling of an almost Stapledonian grand sweep with a micropolitics out-Delanying Delany's individualist details. But then, I'd go further, to the highest level: Robinson is giving a new twist to the Kafka-Brecht dilemma. His mega-parable is certainly not nihilist, though it shares with Kafka (or Nietzsche) the refusal of the Law as transcendental signifier. Updating the Brechtian (or Marxian) tension between the need for orderly learning and for productive anarchy, it plumps for nearness to the latter but on the same globe: we could call it the Tropic of Anarchy on the globe of cognition. In those terms, Lem's epistemological labyrinth was on a kind of anti-Tropic of Order: can we understand our position on the globe at all? His *Masks* figure forth a Socratic skepticism: the only thing I may know is that I do not know (better than mythological certainty anyway). Brecht's equidistant Equator seems out of reach today. In storytelling terms, this means no explicit "moral" of the fable or tenor of the parable is imaginable and thus tellable today, unless it be the moral of open-endedness: history does not end, and this is no small matter when all the *gleichgeschaltet* media tell us it's ended definitely (and as we can see, badly). And conversely, the "show" of vehicle is to be much "thicker," much more validated by material(ist) details or "realistic," much more livable-in and seductively ostended, than the usually laconic and somehow reticent, wry European brevity of Brecht's or indeed Kafka's. Both of them knew roughly or precisely what to expect; we today – and Stan Robinson as our story's teller – do not know: we must not believe Kafka, and we cannot believe Brecht (who is politically equivalent to a warm halfway house between Lenin and Luxemburg). Indeed, from where I stand the fact that Lenin is, as Jameson notes, conspicuously absent in Robinson even as a false alternative (which was still there in Piercy's *Dance the Eagle*) seems a serious – dare I say American – gap not well compensated by the utopian optimism of *eppur si muove*. One hopes he will return to this gap, for no serious utopianism can fail to work through the problem of vanguard organization versus bloody defeat. Yet the most important matter remains that in any such ongoing history Kafka's and Brecht's Judgments are inescapable, and the Trial may be upon us sooner than we think.

I have no time to discuss the real problem of Fantasy here except in the most initial way (it is the second SF-related essay on my agenda – together with Weinbaum’s Aliens as emblems, an attempt to delve into the subject here perspicaciously chosen by Peter Fitting). But let me use this occasion to solemnly declare that the anathema against Fantasy pronounced, not without good reasons, in *Metamorphoses* cannot in this age be sustained as given there. First, the brute fact of its vertiginous spread cannot be reduced simply to market perversities: deeper allegories are at work here, alas. Second, if all estranged genres are centrally parables, then each Fantasy text also has a tenor and cannot be simply dismissed because of its vehicle (“End of the wonderful one-hoss shay/ Logic is logic, that’s all I say” – O.W. Holmes). As I’ve just argued for Robinson, this does not at all mean that the often (but not always) unappealing vehicle of Fantasy is irrelevant: I still think something is pathologically wrong with an epoch where we are invited to delight in vampires or zombies, but perhaps we should not shoot the messenger. The beginning of wisdom here, so runs my initial hypothesis, may be to de(con)struct this genre which to me looks rather like a congeries of genres united simply by negation of both realism and SF. Tolkien’s racist Heroic Fantasy not only perverts Morris but it surely has very little to do with the truly indispensable Kafka, if ghost and Gothic stories may be used tellingly by Marx why not by others, while the Horror à la Stephen King seems to me a short circuit from US resentments much more banal than the class paranoias of Lovecraft (whom a pioneering essay by Gérard Klein has shown to be quite amenable to a Goldmannian materialist analysis).

4. The Two Souls of SF: A Colon; With a Happy Ending

Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust

[Alas, I bear two souls in my breast!]

Goethe, *Faust*, 1806

colon, n. Punctuation-mark used esp. to mark antithesis or illustration.

Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1946

4.1. *Potentials and Inflections*

To tell the truth is already a revolution.

Rosa Luxemburg, during World War I

I shall attempt to develop my (at the moment) final group of arguments in the form of a heuristic binary which is, for all good methodological objections against such simplifying procedures, necessary to say anything simply – especially in a kind of balance sheet, based on double-entry bookkeeping. What are the potentialities of SF, how did they get inflected for better or worse? How does it fare between what Jameson calls ideology vs. utopia, and sometimes more precisely manipulation vs. gratification (*Political* 287)?

Our whole century – and its interesting and promising child SF, in particular – seems to me poised, as an eminent Victorian well foresaw, “between two worlds, one dead,/ The other powerless to be born” (“Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse”). One should add what Arnold could not foresee: that what is dead lives on and rules as a powerful, sly, brainwashing zombie. The “dead” should be taken as a normative, utopian value-judgment rather than as an empirical, dystopian fact: this constellation encapsulates our unhappy consciousness, dissidence, and oppositionality. Gramsci’s formulation adds an important entailment: “The old order is not yet dead, the new order cannot be born. In the half-light monsters rise up.” (Gramsci, cited in Lipietz 59)

Within these horizons, the delightful critique and unmasking of the ideological steamrolling we’re all flattened by has always seemed to me the central point of culture. What I mean by culture is not the sense in which one has (as the Victorians put it) a bit of “parlez vous français and tinkling on the grand piano,” though every little bit of acquaintance with ways of understanding the world different from our hegemonic socialization helps: and in that sense, entering upon an understanding of music or other languages may well go beyond fashionable affectation and become both a part and an emblem of an estranged, heretic stance (which is why humanistic studies are being dismantled today). I mean by culture rather a much less superstructural element, not added onto work and economics but – as Raymond Williams taught us – entering (together with feedbacks

from practical experience) into the very constitution of our categories such as economics, superstructure, and all others: being what we live for and by.

In that sense, culture is what not only poses the question “What for?” but also – simultaneously and consubstantially – does so in uniquely pleasurable ways which in their very sensual reception by our mind’s eye or ear gives a foretaste of the disalienated state its estranging and cognizing questions imply and call up. Looking at the economy a century ago, Nietzsche concluded: “The expenses of each add up to an all-around loss (*Gesamtverlust*): people shrink – so that we do not know any longer what was the reason for this gigantic process. A ‘What for?’, a new ‘What for?’ is what mankind needs.” (3: 629) The only proper timeliness is to be “untimely” in his already cited sense, which poses supremely uncomfortable questions unsettling the supposed “moral majority” consensus. True, Nietzsche somewhat sarcastically added in his *Untimely Reflections* that his critique was only subjective and proved nothing to his enemies, “so long, namely, that is still considered untimely which was always in good time, and is today more than ever in good time and needful: to tell the truth” (1: 207).

And furthermore, within these horizons SF seems to me to have (as most other “popular” genres, most clearly the detective story) the inestimable advantage of a collective schema or generic form-skeleton. A schema is defined by my *Concise Oxford* as “conception of what is common to all members of a class.” However contained by commercialization which touts “originality” and brand-names, SF is technically or productively as collectivist – I almost said communist – as a modern factory (while the “mainstream,” which I selectively also much admire, is productively artisanal, pre-industrial). Now obviously, the artisanal class of psychological novel or avant-garde novel also possesses a schema, but the fetish of originality usually forces it to occult that unoriginal commonality. A complex, because multiple, exception is *Ulysses*; another, clearer one is Brecht, a workshop leader and not isolated genius, comparable to Marion Zimmer Bradley and “The Friends of Darkover”: which is a measure of how both are – to a different degree – significant. I discuss the historical semantics of “original/ity” and its being confined to the individualist capitalist tradition, as opposed, for example, to the East Asian one, in *Lessons*, chapters 3 and 5.

SF foregrounds the generic schema: as any reader knows, a new text is only understandable as a variation on (one of) the canonic schemas of the genre. In bad cases this may mean banality, a loss of cognitive import. In good cases – which constitute also the horizon of SF potentialities within which all cases are collocated, and against which they are willy-nilly judged – the foregrounding allows the schema and its import in any particular story (the relation of its vehicle and its tenor, I'd say today) to be scrutinized by the reader. Does it work? How and why? What does it mean (“what for?” richly contains both why – cause – and to what purpose and in whose interest – effect)? “The schema is healthy,” concluded Brecht in an enthusiastic appreciation of the detective story. “On the day that, for example, our plays will again have some value, they will be similar as one egg to the other. They will have a schema. The schema is the best resistance for a writer.” (Brecht 21: 131) This semi-cynical and, as usual, polemical exaggeration did not prevent Brecht from inventing several new schemas, nor does it prevent the rare epoch-markers in SF from doing that. Most recently, what immediately comes to mind is the schema of the feminist utopia, of cyberpunk (Gibson), of the new open-ended utopian parable (K.S. Robinson), and of such a new combination of feminism, postcolonialism, and (maybe?) English Post-Catholicism stances by Gwyneth Jones that I even don't know how to describe it properly.

Looking upon what I just wrote, a possibly not uninteresting post-scriptum to the normativity debate broached in 2.4 above comes to mind: A tactical failing in my books on SF so far seems to me now – not their “normativity,” for the opposition of description and prescription makes no sense, but – the fact I held it as self-evident it would be clear that I was applying Weberian “ideal types” to SF reality in order to say anything within a couple of hundred pages. An ideal type is a heuristic construct exemplifying and fully embodying the potentialities of a class of existents. I still see no way to talk about SF (or anything else) except to start from the ideal potentialities, themselves mainly induced from readings of SF texts, of any among its sub-forms and to see how any particular instance compares to it – with the important proviso that in modern life, and SF, we often have to do with the contamination of several ideal

types or sub-forms, as was explained in an early pioneering essay on SF by Jameson. True, I tried to foreground this in the chapter on “Narrative Logic,” which I consider of sufficient importance to be reprinted (here as Chapter 21). But I underestimated the Anglo-American empiricist resistance to my Continental European tradition, from Kant to Marx, Simmel, and this century, which operates in a feedback between the particular appearance and the general norm; and there seem to be, for intellectuals like me, stringent sociopsychological reasons to use this approach, pertaining to how and what we may believe in this age (see for a first discussion of these reasons Kracauer 106–18, and cf. also 209–48 on Simmel). This approach seems to me especially unavoidable when looking at new, strange domains – such as SF. How is one to map or indeed negotiate settling in a new land unless one quickly induces from what one has glimpsed some commonalities about its rivers, inhabitants, fauna and flora, climate, and so on? Neither full philosophical abstraction nor empiricist description of singularities tacitly importing norms from the old countries that socialized the exploring eye, this method may mediate between single appearances and generalizing types, without slighting either pole. It thus gives at least some chances of not taking (as Columbus did) Cuba for Cathay or the Orinoco plateau for the Earthly Paradise.

I shall discuss below the negative sense in which science (and technology) are organizing models for SF. But I’m not yet ready to concede science to the life-destroyers. As Stan Robinson has clearly seen, we need – and there is no intrinsic cognitive reason why we couldn’t have – a science in the interest of utopia. Brecht’s practice and reflections are again pioneering in cleansing the methodological model of science so that it may grow again into the utopian tool it was at the outset. This seems to me simultaneously one of the very few tenable senses but also one of the very important senses in which the productive potentialities of SF are after all deep down connected with life-affirming science. Gérard Klein refurbishes the argument of Wordsworth and Coleridge (and of a number of SF critics, e.g., Russ 10) about the ineluctable vocabulary and tropes imposed in a new epoch by pointing out that SF not only uses images of science but that it is the only mode to do so as an avowed fiction. This means (and it seems to me crucial) that SF uses

the metaphors mandated by our new times as a playful experiment shaping a Possible World, to be judged by its fruits, a relational and situational epistemology and not an ontology doctrinally believed in. Utopian playfulness seems to me at the opposite pole from the “time is money” rationalism of profit-making. This is, for example, why I have always been partial to the playful cognitive Surrealism of Marleen Barr’s cross-connections between the apparently most disparate texts, yoked together by her generously indignant womanist gaze. This is also why I share Moylan’s conviction that the lessons of Ernst Bloch still lie in the fundamentals of not only utopian but also SF criticism, however we might want to modify our upper floors: in other words that utopianism is too important to be left to texts calling themselves utopias, some of which do not intersect with utopianism too much or too well (as testified to by Angenot and Pfaelzer).

This kind of “communicating vessels” relation between utopia and science, rather than Engels’s unhappy subsumption of the former under the latter, can give us at least some indications how to deal with the seeming theoretical scandals of time-travel and superluminary speed as narrative devices, which however we just cannot kick out of SF to satisfy scientism. I would then wish to argue that these images and devices are energized within the magnetic field of a more-or-less utopian parable; but much remains to be done in finding out just how this happens. As a first orientation, expanding on what I may call such an epistemological metaphoricality, I would generalize Klein’s point by recalling that I have in the essay on “SF as Metaphor ...” outrageously considered a Kuhnian paradigm to be nothing more or less than a long-duration macro-metaphor or encompassing civilizational image. What seems to me the relevant focus here is the fact that – and the ways in which – SF also may use science as one or more Kuhnian paradigms; this takes place in a confused but also rich situation where (say in psychology, but just as well in physics) you can choose not only between various paradigms in various disciplines or indeed competing streams within the same discipline but also between the roughly Newtonian paradigm of closure and the roughly Einsteinian paradigm of open-endedness.

4.2. *The Destructive Soul of SF: Adolescent Fears, Technological Fix, Violence, and War*

Are you expecting a recipe? There is no recipe ... Enough, if the situation is presented openly.

Kracauer, 1928

How are these potentialities used, within the two souls of SF (and of practically anything else in our alienated lives)? I shall first focus on a very partial delineation of the “bad soul,” and in particular about its overt and covert links with the corruption of science.

From Edgar Allan Poe on (the argument may be found in my *Metamorphoses*), a characteristic of US SF has been its infantile gosh-wow, slam-bang aspect: sensationalism and sentimentality. Now “infantile” is not necessarily a cuss-word, it may have connotations of fresh, naive, innocent, and similar, and it is at any rate more promising than “senile” – a symmetrical cuss-word often flung at Europe by US visitors, Twainian “Innocents Abroad,” horrified by its feudal up-front hierarchies (as Whitman was by Shakespeare). One could argue that most of the most mature US SF was shaped by the awful suspicion, first adumbrated in the Gothic strain and then more precisely in Twain’s *Connecticut Yankee*, that US innocence is withering into a premature senility. The most powerful “new maps of hell,” culminating beyond the 1950s in the horror transmutations of P.K. Dick (*Ubik*, *Three Stigmata*, *Martian Time-Slip*) and then in Gibson’s cyberpunk, belong to this hermeneutics of suspicion. Nonetheless, up to the mid-1960s SF remained almost exclusively “white boy’s fiction” (Koppelman, adopted by Russ 79), and even after the notable influx of first-rate – and then of some not-so-first-rate – women writers and therefore of women readers in the last thirty years, this aspect of SF is sociologically or statistically probably dominant to this day. If we pithily (and therefore somewhat unfairly) associate it with names such as Heinlein and Asimov, and then their degenerate Right-wing descendants of the militaristic ilk such as Pournelle, we shall realize that the main activities of white boys have in the USA traditionally been sports (including gun sports) and science. Sports fans seem not to read much, so that not much is written for

them, and the debate about SF has since its inception (which began with Gernsbackian science popularization) been enmeshed with the somewhat infrared herring of “SF and science.” This is what Joanna Russ has with angry perceptivity seen as “SF and Technology as Mystification” and indeed as the US capitalism’s – Russ would say the patriarchy’s, and I’d say both are correct – addiction to the technological fix (Russ 26ff.). (In parenthesis, I’d myself add to Koppelman’s designation of race, age, and gender also class. It is a nice and unresolved point just which class/es is SF written for, in the commercial and ideological sense. At any rate, it circulates almost entirely within some middle classes of the White North: affluence is not enough – there’s little SF in Taiwan – nor is a scientifico-technological tradition – there’s somewhat more SF in Germany than in Taiwan but no real hard core of readers, unless it is lower-middleclass adolescents in Perry Rhodan fan clubs.)

When I spoke about science as a potential methodological model for steering dynamic human relationships, I had not yet got to the pragmatic history of science in the last two centuries: for in them, the steering happens in the interest of capitalism (see my “Novum Is”). Indeed, insofar as this science is centrally constituted by turning nature only into concepts, and furthermore into quantifiable or mathematizable concepts, and finally by making a more or less closed system out of these concepts; and insofar as it is based (in capitalist as well as in orthodox Marxist versions) on mastery, a wrong end requiring consubstantially wrong means – the scientific is the political. Perhaps Wallerstein’s argument I’ll now summarize is (I hope it is) one-sided, but it is no less powerful for all that. His long and complex investigation reads global rationality of the “westernizing” type – claiming to be the search for Truth – as deeply complicit with imperial conquest, economic exploitation, and a world cultural framework creating and ideologically disciplining the indispensable cadres for capitalist production (technicians, scientists, and the attendant administrators and educators). The funds used to support this “professional-managerial” class (or classes) came from the global surplus as extracted through companies and States, and in this fundamental sense the interests of this class (most of us) were tied to that of capitalism, at the same time that parts of it were bitterly protesting some historical irrationalities and injustices. Scientific culture

supplied also a language and horizon specific to such cadres, setting it apart both from the upper bourgeoisie and from the working classes. This limits the prospect and extent of rebellious cadres allying themselves to the latter, since they would have to lose not only their relative affluence but also their whole life-style and habitus. “Finally, meritocracy as an operation and scientific culture as an ideology created veils that hindered perception of the underlying operation of historic capitalism. The great emphasis on the rationality of scientific activity was the mask of irrationality of endless accumulation.” (80–85 and cf. *passim*) After a lifetime of eager work as teacher, I must ruefully confess I take seriously Nietzsche’s diagnosis of 125 years ago:

Symptoms of a decay in education are everywhere: ... the contemptible cash and pleasure economy of the educated classes, their lack of love and grandeur ... [The learned classes] become more thoughtless and loveless with every day. – The lower classes of unlearned men are now our only hope. The learned and cultivated classes must be abandoned ...

If a Luther were to appear now, he would rebel against the disgusting mentality of the propertied classes, against their stupidity and thoughtlessness: for they have not the least suspicion of the danger. (Nietzsche, *Philosophy* 102 and 104)

I still remain more optimistic than Nietzsche, for I think that the split being enforced nowadays in the professional classes between well-paid, secure “mercenaries” (administrators, media gurus, most lawyers, top academics, etc.) and the great majority subject to rapid proletarianization may perhaps open the eyes to a number of us – in my very optimistic days, I think 3 percent – about Marx’s great example of dialectics, where poverty is not only poverty but also revolt. *The Iron Heel* may, alas, not be out of date yet.

To treat the orthodox scientific ethos in terms of its semantics: if you want to be Master of your Company, you got to treat profit-making concepts as raw material on the same footing as profit-making laborers and iron ore. These means have proven to be quite adequate to these ends (so much the worse for all of us). In Benjamin’s words:

If the natural utilisation of productive forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural utilisation, and this is found in war. (I: 507)

To speak in autobiographical terms: the two bloody civil wars in Yugoslavia, 1941–45 and 1991–93 (?), the first also a revolution and the second a counter-revolution, have most intimately determined my whole existence: the first my whole adulthood (such as the overriding commitment to anti-fascism and Marxism), the second my present incipient old age. Wars have not ceased to ravage the world in our proud century: only North America and a very few similar places have so far been spared. You'll forgive me if I'm more than a little cynical about the new mega-political units of Europe and North America, and see in them, to begin with, mainly a measure for excluding the indigent South ("illegal" or even legal immigrants already have no or very few rights in them) and keeping the lower classes paralyzed: Heiner Müller has called it "the international solidarity of capital against the poor" (27). Surely it is better to have amity than war across the Rhine and the Oder, but what if this, further, means readying Festung Europa and Festung Amerika for the sharpest competition to come with each other and Asia at the end of the automobile age, not excluding a Third World War (cf. a detailed argument in Wallerstein)? And furthermore, for all the indigenous factors contributing to the carnage in ex-Yugoslavia, I'm persuaded it would not have come about if some influential European – German – banks had not decided to support the separatists.

This is the wholly negative sense in which science and the technological fix are organizing models for SF. This can be openly seen in "mercenary SF," in US "militia utopias" (see Orth), in Norman's *Gor* cycle whose anti-feminism is, logically, also warmongering, and in many (not all) "techno-thriller" novels, comics, and games shaped as perverse educations "transforming boys into men through warfare" (Gibson, "Redeeming" 200); and to my mind it even sterilizes most quasi-liberal "hard SF" of the Benford type. However, I think that indirect influences of the fix to "getting there fastest with the moistest" (gently burlesqued already by Verne in the Baltimore Gun Club) on matters of tone, such as the increasing brutalization pioneered by the media and comics, and of underlying form, such as sensationalist violence, are even more important.

I wish I had here spacetime for a running comment on Russ's great essay on SF and technology as mystification and its most significant central trope of toxic addiction – which would lead me to empathy as the key

psychological process for suppressing critical evaluation and in favor of cathartic sentimentality – but I don't (see now my "Emotion"). The addiction and the fix result in stories which present some variant on John Jakes's candid self-characteristic as "*I Claudius* meets *Dallas*, 600 years in the future" (in Seago), that is, movie, TV, and comics' pap using spaceships instead of horses, Mississippi steamboats or executive suites, and Aliens instead of Injuns, robbers or hostile takeovers. And it is these movies, TV shows, and comics (branching out into games and other commercial tie-ins) that today constitute the bulk of SF, and the bulk of really bad SF (even within new SF books, 1/6 was by 1995 "media novelizations" done mainly for financial reasons by some prominent SF names – cf. Baker). And while masterpieces of SF like Disch's *334* are remaindered, and mostly disregarded by critics, up to 1.5 million was being paid in the 1980s to novels by Heinlein, Asimov, and others reputed to have Hollywood potential (Greenland 43 and 44).

We know today Reagan's Star Wars program was a scientific hoax designed to bankrupt the USSR and enrich the West Coast megacompanies (both of which it very successfully accomplished); however, it is extremely characteristic that the only way the US tax-payers could be hoodwinked into forking billions over to big technological corporations was by using the associations of the black-and-white SF movies and of the whizkid, infantile (sorry – adolescent) fix on technology as salvational ploys. (It is, of course a fake salvation; I shall return to this needful term.) The pedigree goes: Gernsback, Campbell, and Heinlein, to NASA and the SF "Bova" wing, both of these converging into Lucas, and thence to Reagan's advisors. Now Heinlein cannot necessarily be held responsible for all the Heinleinists, to whom he is sometimes as superior as Marx usually is to the Marxists and Christ to the Christians. Nonetheless, Stalin is (however minimally) present in Marx, the televangelists in Christ, and the out-and-out-mystifiers – say, the Star Wars people – in Heinlein, notably in *Starship Troopers*, his shoddiest book (bar the senilia). The argument that the ideological hegemony of Scientism is the central conflict in SF criticism has much to recommend it, and I find it significant that Jordin has suggested it based on an analysis of *Wolfbane* by Cyril Kornbluth and Frederik Pohl. (Pohl was my earliest, I think, correspondent and contact in the US SF community,

with whom and other writers such as Aldiss and Blish I spent memorable summers at the Trieste SF Film Festivals in the 1960s and 1970s, which included watching the first Moon landing; just as I remember watching the Nixon impeachment procedures with Peter Nicholls and John Brunner in the latter's Hampstead Heath home.)

Adolescents have normal age-bound fears about affirmation, sex, identity, and so on. But in capitalism without a human face, the anxieties grow deeper than ever. The "bad soul" of SF batters on and exploits those fears. Let me attempt here only a small addition to Russ, about a characteristic feature often supplementing sensationalism and sentimentality in US SF, which I shall call – stealing a term from performance studies – *surrogacy*, or channeling loves and fears into a wrong political direction. It is most easily identified in Hollywood SF movies: Lucas's *Star Wars*, for example, clearly speaks "to the American boy's love for shiny gadgets, spiffy uniforms, authoritative-sounding technotalk and a hot rod that shoots really cool laser blasts," so that it "certified a new wisdom: megamovies were now the province of the young male" (Corliss). But my example is the earlier and more substantial "paranoid" cluster about malevolent Aliens, centering around the first *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (dir. Don Siegel, 1956). These movies feed on and in turn feed further the real fears during the 1950s of people from their characteristic middle-middleclass suburban locale. The civilian or military authorities to which the citizen should normally look for protection turn out to be malevolent, "alien." In a climate characterized by massive Cold War paranoia, stemming from the military-industrial complex and orchestrated through the subservient media, all democratic control from below was paralyzed after ca. 1947. Scientists on military payroll experimented recklessly on humans (one of many such episodes was later revealed as CIA-funded research on brainwashing drugs at my own McGill University, which wrecked many lives of unsuspecting human guinea pigs); only a few maligned commentators, like the utopologist Lewis Mumford – and the SF from Pohl to Dick and Disch – had the courage and intelligence to suspect the possibility of such Nazi-like experimentation (I take much of my information, including the reference to Mumford's *In the Name of Sanity* [1954] from Hendershot, and the background from Sobchack).

So the fears of the “middle” class, invaded and finally squeezed out of existence by huge, from-the-top-down forces, can now be clearly seen as deeply justifiable, and are being consummated under today’s Post-Fordism in the rapid elimination under way for independent economic or ideological existence of this whole congeries of classes. The basic ploy or trick of such very Freudian nightmare movies is then to take these deep fears of the “outer-directed,” conformist employee of big firms – diagnosed at the time by the new sociological muckrakers like David Riesman and later by critics of the militaristic aspect of SF like Bruce Franklin – and to project them in the best case on some unidentifiable, scary aliens and in the worst case (as in a number of Heinlein’s novels, from *The Puppet Masters* through *Starship Troopers* to *Farnham’s Freehold*, which should have claimed copyright payments from Hollywood) on transparently earthly antagonists, Chinese Communists or Blacks. The commodity fetishists get a taste of their malevolent fetish disguised as Baal and not Jehovah. Their fears are acknowledged, energized, and directed at the wrong enemy – the surrogate or scapegoat (a very Christian figure). I’d expand Hendershot’s conclusion for my own ends beyond her focus on radiation and the military, and allot a central role also to the incipient fears at the first stirrings against the New Deal. Her conclusions then apply with redoubled force: the very power that threatens the small-town citizenry through weird new restructuring experiments is in this topsy-turvy mirror saving humanity: the films “[suggest] that the enemy is really the savior” (36); or even more clearly, “following commentators like Mumford leads me to conclude that many people understood fear of communism as a displaced fear of the American (in)security state” (37).

4.3. *What for?: Salvation of the Commonwealth*

At quite a few places in this Afterword I have been slipping into the vocabulary of salvation. And indeed my overriding political rule would be the Latin one *Salus reipublicae suprema lex*. The ancient Romans, not having read Machiavelli or Shakespeare, did not distinguish politics and religion, so that *salus* means equally health and salvation; thus “The Health/ Salvation of the Commonwealth is the Supreme Rule.” Why use

semi-religious or seemingly theological language to talk about politics today, as in this subtitle? Well, for one thing the Liberation Theologians have not done too badly in this endeavor. For a second thing, human life differs from the animal by pivoting on belief, the deferral of time between bestowing one's trust – a Credo always on credit – and receiving back (de Certeau). For a third, religion has the great advantage over science of providing digital views (yes or no, 0 or 1) which one cannot do without at all moments of crucial decision, though science is much better at giving us the complex underlying, analog picture. Add to this the serious doubts about science because of its enthusiastic subservience to capitalist destruction of life, and a new look at religion seems indicated. Not, I hasten to add with as much stress as I can muster, that I find any use for monotheism or for propitiating projected unknown anthropomorphic forces or – especially – for the usually quite pernicious clerical apparati (churches as institutions). Yet the scientific no less than the religious fixed Truth is a dangerous illusion or fakery; understanding or wisdom is, at least since the Industrial Revolution, ineluctably a dynamic permeation and interfusion of the known with the unknown; and the unknown will never be finally known since history won't freeze.

I conclude, then, that no impulse toward salvation of communities and individuals (traditionally monopolized by religions and theologies, which both preserved and deflected this impulse) can be heedlessly tossed aside while we are lurching into a most dangerous unknown. The salvational impulse cannot be gainsaid in an age of multiple catastrophes at all levels. Profit as the Transcendental Signifier (Great Satan) means unprecedented and system-immanent quantitative and qualitative destruction of human bodies through wars, drugs, and other poisonings of air, water, food – all of them being normalized and naturalized through objectivism and empathy. Looking at this from the scientific side, we need a salvational science, wresting the impulse away from religion. Looking at it from the side of belief, science needs to be refashioned to cope with qualities (overridingly, the quality of people's lives) and not only quantities. We should use and invert Walter Benjamin's famous image (out of our own Poe) of the automaton chess-player who always wins because a dwarf is hidden in it: Benjamin identified in 1940 the chess-playing Turk

with Marxism and the wizened dwarf hiding his ugly countenance with Theology (“On the Concept of History,” I: 691–704). In 1998 international Marxism is the dwarf banished for his ugliness and a perverted Theology of “give us this day our daily profit” always wins.

I myself, however, prefer to look at our historical constellation as a new animal at the crossroads of millennial catastrophe and a psychophysically viable community or *polis*: as politics in the classical sense. But refurbishing Benjamin’s image would also entail a saner belief in the salvation of our common thing or commonwealth. The indispensable return of socialism (under whatever new name) must be prepared – and can only come about – by grafting new shoots upon the old cognitive tree; for, without the horizon of salvation, Marxism or socialism is scientific dogma, and without politico-economic practice, “theology falls into magic” (Buck-Morss 249): both then fail. However, this has to be a politics that can recuperate (make sense of) Paradise and – alas especially – Hell. An earmark of Hell: its “time doesn’t want to know death” (V: 115; I expatiated on proper dying in *Lessons* chap. 5); Disneyland, the emblem for where we live today, also denies death. An earmark of Paradise: it can give meaning to death.

4.4. *The Cognitive Art: In Praise of Memory and SF*

Only that which doesn’t stop hurting stays in memory.

Nietzsche

One of the worst sins of the PoMo vulgate, accepted as hegemonic by the “soft sciences” but increasingly adopted also by the mercenary media as serving its obfuscating aims, is its rejection of memory and thus of history. Violating often the great US motto (which should be on the \$1 bill as the obverse of “In God We Trust”), Henry Ford’s “History Is Bunk,” SF is much better here. The cyberpunk, for example, of Gibson and Cadigan desperately fights for memory and thus for history, so that in it even the realities of economic power emerge under the illusion of limitless “virtual realities.” But the examples could be extended to most,

or perhaps all, of significant SF: it was Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – which is, for all of its evident weaknesses, the great ancestor of the “new maps of hell” – and his (better) *Animal Farm* that gave us some of the sharpest tools to dissect Nazism and Stalinism, and it was he who noted how falsification of reality is seamlessly welded into obliterating memory. It was the great satirico-dystopian strain of US SF which noted how the invasive dictatorship of technologized PR first under commercial and then under financial capitalism threatened the “common man.” It was Lem and the Strugatsky Brothers who noted how scientific absolutism, in orthodox Bolshevism or in technocratic consumerism, led to the same ends. And not least, it was Russ, Le Guin, and the ensuing waves of women writers who reactualized the old socialist adage alluded to in 1.3, that the position of women (which in literature means, of the agents coded as female) is as it were emblem and tide-gauge of civil society as a whole.

The motto from Nietzsche ought to tell us why memory is one of the strategically central ideological battlegrounds today: a halfway good (never mind radically better) near future is today just not believable. The collapse of the welfare-state visions and practices – Leninist and Keynesian – left the future to be colonized by the think-tanks of the military-industrial complex, promoted from designing weapons systems to whole social systems. Futures became “knowledge commodities” as in that fascinating stock-exchange category on which our economics nowadays hinge, “futures trading,” and “futurologists” from Kahn to Toffler, scouts for the military and financial hit-men (on bourgeois futurology see Ross 172ff.; I'm not sure why he put quotation marks around the adjective “bourgeois”). What Archimedean point can we, then, find to move the seemingly deeply frozen or even rock-solid (but in fact, ocean-fluid) present? The far-off future, possibly. But since it is difficult to make images, or other topological figurations, of situations that anybody today over 40–50 (?) won't see, the only way that faith into a possible way out in the future can be imaginatively entertained is by mobilizing the past: the personal and collective memories. True, nostalgia can be simply useless wallowing, but it can also be, as Alexander Kluge put it, defense against the attack of the present on the rest of the time (quoted in Huyssen 88 as part of an interesting diagnosis of German discussions

about utopian discourse under the onslaught of PoMo ideologies). There is no revolution without Great Ancestors.

Against the PoMo war on memory, that “carnival on the volcano” (Huyssen 173), a cognitive memory – that is, drawing lessons about the open future as against the intolerable present out of a critically reworked past – remains an important part and parcel of that unexhausted, continuing legacy of Enlightenment which was in that great bourgeois cultural revolution formulated by Kant as *Sapere aude*: Dare to know! This is incompatible with the yearly whirligig of commercial fashion, which has, for example, obliterated from the social memory of my students the Vietnam War, never mind Nazism (Stalinism has never been properly understood in the “West,” which also means Zamyatin and Orwell have never been properly read). With the exception of the very top, even the US upper classes, notes Blonsky echoing unwittingly the Nietzsche quote in 4.2, “live ‘mouse lives,’ unable ever to see systems, general social plans or the ideological and social laws revealed by the scattered fragments [of the US image factories] ...” (Blonsky XXXIV). As Brecht noted about his *Life of Galileo*, it is not a piece against Christianity but against a fulcrum of the ruling class at the time, the Catholic Church, and he saw its seventeenth-century cardinals as comparing very favorably with the US senators today ... But then, I have discussed earlier how this applies also to the great majority of the only alternative public voice and stance, that of our professional class(es). Andrew Ross cites against the “silicon positivists” – propounders of virtual reality as new messiah, or of “Athens without slaves” – the opinion we may be instead getting a society of “slaves without Athens” (94). It is good to find that the large anti-cognitive majority responsible for such a threat doesn’t include most of quality SF.

I don’t at all propose that we should return to singing the praises of the good old times before electricity or TV: this is what the past-oriented SF used to be with Bradbury and Simak, and the nostalgia is irrelevant for all of us Harawayan cyborgs. What I mean is rather to be found in the critical testimonies of some writers. Out of many possibilities, I take one which happens to have landed lately on my table, by Suzy McKee Charnas (11–17; see also Russ’s laudation of SF as a noble didactic genre, similar to medieval literature or the plays of Brecht and Shaw, as befits a fellow-alumna of the

Yale School of Drama – in different years than my belated study there). Charnas speaks of her three shared-world SF novels, the well-known and splendid “Holdfast” trilogy, as each being a “reflector” (I’d say a parable) of “a certain moment and level and tone of feminism among middle-class, [W]hite ... feminists ... during the two or three years prior to publication date ... each giving a view of a limited but complex segment of what I saw of the war of the sexes during those years” (7), of a story that’s “still alive as potentiality in our own culture and time ...” (11). She tried to write the first novel, *Walk to the End of the World* (1974), as an adventure story, as a political thriller set in a post-colonial Third World Country, etc.: “But only an SF brand of fantasy offered me both the foothold in reality that meant the story couldn’t just be dismissed as a silly nightmare and the margin of fantasy to push the ideas of the story as far as I saw they could go” (15). These reflections of Charnas’s seem to me an excellent example for the parable nature of SF, and her Trilogy for the narrative cognition such parables can achieve.

I have in other works insisted that my Sorelian and Gramscian pessimism of the soberly looking eyes differs from apocalypticism, but I shall here, in order to close on a quite non-apocalyptically positive note, rather boldface a startling metaphor of Plato’s. In an otherwise not very distinguished dialogue, “The Sophist,” he argues that there exists not only merchandising that sells what serves the body but also one that sells what serves the *psyché* (not quite our “soul”). To this heavenly food, as the Christian tradition will call it, belong the arts (*mousiké*, what the Muses preside over) of show or display (*epideiktiké*) such as painting or prestidigitation, and in general cognitions (*mathemata*), trafficked in and sold for the *psyché*’s entertainment and also for its serious needs (290–93). I rather like the down-to-earth definition of arts as shows sold for the pleasures and needs of the (let us call it) personality, which is alas then immediately forgotten as Plato proceeds to lambaste the sophists who traffic in virtue. But what really cheers me is that the ancient Hellenes saw no contradiction or indeed significant difference between the Muses’ work and cognitions, music and mathematics if you wish. And the Mother of all the Muses was Mnemosyne, Memory; as was to be demonstrated.

A generalizing conclusion at leaving: art, the rendering of “thick” Possible Worlds, has traditionally been the main competitor of religion for wresting the unknown into the known by means of figure and narration; and furthermore for doing this in order to *make living easier*, not only by means of a distance wrested from a world too much with us (escape) but also in guise of a boomerang returning us into that world with possibly new powers – like the bison hunters at Lascaux who could now precisely place the beast’s vulnerable heart. This parable-like function remains for art in the foreseeable future. But it remains pertinent (it will be cognitive) on condition that the parable does not simply illustrate but induces the doctrine that informs it: as I attempted to argue on the traces of Benjamin à propos of K.S. Robinson. Such an inducing, with the prominent role given to bodily stance and experience, means that “The highest art is the art of living” (Brecht): today perhaps by means of the art of training critical citizen-dissenters. This art would today also have to show its ideal dissenter-learners, banding together to collectively help themselves – which is what politics to my mind should be and only too rarely is – that caring for how is the indispensable obverse of caring for why (what for).

Berlin and Montreal, Spring 1998

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