Cover Page, Now...

MORE THAN PULP(?):
SCIENCE FICTION AND THE PROBLEM OF LITERARY VALUE

... and Then:

MORE THAN PULP: SCIENCE FICTION

AND THE PROBLEM OF LITERARY VALUE

by

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Signature of Author. . . . .
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Chairman, Departmental Committee on Theses

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About "The M.I.T. Thesis on Science Fiction": How The Webulated Version Came To Be

Note: Between an early, importantish historical datum (boldfaced) and a couple of late, interestingish opinions (also boldfaced), which I'd very much like you to see, there's perhaps more detail about Form here than will be of interest to some readers. Well, OK, make that of interest to more than a very few readers. So if you find things getting dull after you've seen the first boldfaced point, do feel free to hit the End key; but it would be nice if you scrolled back up a couple of screens' worth once you got to the bottom, to see both a brief but pertinent paragraph about the Content and said possibly interesting opinions....

What happened was that on August 8, 2000 Peter e-mentioned that he and John were going to be sponsoring an "sf site". I of course immediately replied:

>
why, then, y'll probably want a copy of the 2nd [*] known academic thesis on s.f. as literature on it.

of c., i don't have a scanner. but maybe if nobody around there wants to send me one [suitable for an elderly mac; i.e., scsi, i suppose] i cld prevail upon bill to make good on his threatxxxpromise to scan his copy in....

[*] it was the 1st known one for around 35 yrs, until i happened across a mention of gunn's having done a master's a yr or 2 earlier. still the 1st m.i.t. thesis on s.f.aslit., of c.
<

[emphasis added, 11/03]   in my usual personal e-correspondence shiftless approach to typing, meant to save a little wearntear on the wristsnfingers (and shoulders ... and, latterly, neck, dammit). Don't worry about exactly who Peter, John, and Bill are at this point, but do be aware that naturally I'd BCC'd Bill.

A week went by with no response from anybody. Then on the 15th I was invited by Bill to FTP the half-a-meg of "caviar.zip". After a grin at the filename (because, as he of course well knew, a large portion

of the thing had to do with a novel by Theodore Sturgeon) and an hour or two of figuring out how to unzip on the "Performa" I'd explicitly gotten so as not to have to confront Whinedopes 95 when I'd needed a new computoy ~4 years previously and a friend had offered me use of the Employee Discount plan at Apple (I viewed it as the ultimate Microsoft-aversion therapy, myself), sure enough it turned out there were all these ".doc" files in it. After sundry misadventures, I even got them all to open, so that I could begin to proofread them.

The next I've-lost-count hours over the next who-knows-how-many days were spent cleansing the scanned files. (For the benefit of any who read this who haven't had to deal with the results of even allegedly pretty good "OCR" software, if you can avoid doing so, do.) In the course of that, I realized I ought to say a few things about how I chose to render the e-ificiation of what had been a manually typed document in its p-youth, in consultation with Bill, who's a skilled amateur typographer, or whatever the Fancy is for printer--though, in fairness to him, it must be noted that I decided not to accept a number of his good suggestions for no better reason than that they ran counter to my arbitrary tastes.

(No, it didn't take three years to finish proofreading--though the Padlipsky's Law which holds "There's always one more typo" dictates that I haven't finished yet, of course. It's just that the "SF site" never happened, and for any number of reasons I didn't get around to doing anything with the results until sometime around October of 2003, when the event sketched in the Corrigendum to the Bibliography prompted me to finally get around to doing a month or more's worth of final polishing and then set about getting permission from M.I.T. to do whatever I wanted with it, including but not limited to putting a copy in/on my "personal web page" ... a permission necessitated by the fact that, as far as I knew then or even know now, back when I submitted it the copyright belonged to the 'Tute.)

Soooooo.... The typeface that seemed to come closest--or at least acceptably close--to the original typing was "Times", so I chose it (except for this section, "obviously" ... unless you've got your "browser" set to enforce your own font choices, and your choice happens to be "Times", anyway, and/or unless it's of a vintage that doesn't deal correctly with the generation of "HTML" I'm using and does things I can't influence w/r/t fonts). But the idea wasn't to do a facsimile. After all, I'd mainly had it retyped in '68 in order to do some clean-up so as to make it submitable for publication, so fixing further typoes and spelling errors still seemed to be fair game, to the extent I

could bring myself to look for them amidst all the de-underlining of spaces and turning right-parentheses back into the commas they started out as and the like.

I even caved-in and went along with Bill's "spellchecker's" view about not doubling final consonants when suffixing, just to be a good sport (although I did draw the line on "advertising" vs. "advertizing", since I still find the former awf'leh Anglofahl and I never was *that* Anglophile even in my Anglophile youth, before all the field trips to Scotland in aid of my real area of research interest led me to become Caledonaphile instead).

And changing from indented paragraphs to "block" ones made double sense: not only wasn't it necessary to save paper by avoiding the doublespaces anymore, but when I did the conversion it was seemingly also the case that "HTML" was shamefully inept at dealing with indents, so it's more convenient to change when the version you're working on is intended to be webulated (especially when the change can be effected for the whole file at once, with relatively little additional risk to the wristsnfingers). Actually, make that triple sense: I also prefer the "look"--which consideration also eventually convinced me to drop the typewriter-necessitated underlining in favor of italics, I should add ... thus perhaps suggesting that I'm not hopelessly Twentieth Century no matter what They say. (Well, OK, at least not *mid-*Twentieth Century....)

There are probably a couple of other "look" points I'm ... over-looking, but aside from noting that

(a) I did decide, albeit somewhat reluctantly, to use "cascading stylesheets" after Bill explained the underlying technotheology to me. ***There are, however, a couple of hidden kickers w/r/t stylesheets:*** As I found out far too late in the game, it turns out you have to be on-line for them to work right; had I known that at the outset I don't think I'dve gone to all the trouble to put 'em in. In the event, I also discovered that older browsers which are supposed to work with stylesheets don't work correctly even if you are on-line, so I proceeded to go to even more trouble to take 'em out. [For some non-thesis-germane ruminations on all this, see, but only if you feel like it, .] [hyperlinked out to in the webulated version, but just stuck in at the end of this non-chapter for ease of pdfification, here]

and that

(b) even more reluctantly as well as quite belatedly, I did decide to

segment Chapters I and III into putatively more "Web-friendly" shorter portions (though not into anything as paltry as the Web-trendy, "post-TV", preadolescent attention span-pandering little snippets that current fashion tries to dictate),

the only other point I choose to make at this juncture is about the Content:

On that score, the points I made in the '68 Prefatory Afterthoughts still hold: for reasons of "historical accuracy" and/or "preservation", and of what must frankly be called laziness, I've left the thesis, per se, alone. With one irresistible exception a few years ago, it also seemed right to leave the Prefatory Afterthoughts alone, even though they were written some eight years after the thesis, per se.

(Time out, before what passes for the big finish, for a just-recalled, moderately germane Treasured Memory, in order to avoid giving in to the temptation to tinker even more with the Prefatory Afterthoughts: Chapter III did see the dark of print in the interim [with permission, of course], in the M.I.T. Science Fiction Society's "fanzine", *The Twilight Zine*, in 1963. Its length had necessitated publication over two issues, actually, which led to my getting to see--in the second issue, which I'd otherwise not have received a copy of, not being a member of the Society--the highly commendatory Letter to the Editor about the first segment that became the Treasured Memory. The author observed that reading the detailed analysis of *More Than Human* had made him realize how much Sturgeon wrote like Faulkner ... or perhaps it was just that Padlipsky wrote about Sturgeon the way "the learned literary men" wrote about Faulkner. I loved it.)

There is one, I dunno, call it a "meta-irony" that does bear mention somewhere, though, and I guess here's the only place for it, especially since it'll let me make a couple of points that I'm itching to make: I really did have to fight to get to do the thesis (well, make that The Thesis, by now--seems fair to me, anyway) in '59, because Science Fiction was deemed to be of questionable "intellectual respectability". Indeed, I even had to agree to alter the title--originally intended to be "More Than Pulp (?): [...]"--to get the Department to let me do it, fond though I was of that parenthetical question mark. By '85, however, when The Book had been published by a "real publisher" (which I have reason to believe paid me royalties on every other copy it sold, b/t/w; "just a little publisher humor"--and reality), and so had an apparently good opportunity to get The Thesis published as well (the publisher being a textbook house), I was told that there was no need for it anymore, since "everybody knows"

science fiction was legit lit. Well, let me say this about that: ***even now, I strongly suspect that almost nobody knows that science fiction is legitimate literature, because almost everybody thinks that the "sci-fi" crap "Hollywood" disgorges is what science fiction is.***

A somewhat Sibylline conclusion, then: On one of the two occasions when I actually got to meet Sturgeon I had the opportunity to ask him whether the Sturgeon's Law story was apocryphal. He said, "No. It's just as you heard it. I really was at a writers meeting and some guy really did tell me I was a fine writer but why did I waste my time on science fiction, didn't I know 90% of science fiction is crap, and I really did reply 'Indeed, 90% of science fiction is crap; however, 90% of everything is crap.'" And so I got to tell him Padlipsky's Corollary to Sturgeon's Law: "Ted, you're an optimist. The Law should be applied recursively: 90% of what's left is no damn good." It earned me a smile. And it furnishes me with if not a similie at least a punchline: ***When it comes to that which is labeled science fiction that's meant to be shown on a screen, Padlipsky's Corollary should be applied recursively, too.***

A Digression on Form and Discontent

  Just as no good deed goes unpunished, a strong case can also be made that no religiously motivated act doesn't wind up punishing somebody ... sometimes more than once.

That insight stems from the consequences of my somewhat reluctant, but on the whole well motivated, decision to allow myself to be talked into using "cascading style sheets" in order to be able to exercise more control over how readers will see the results of all this foolishness. As mentioned in the "About" section, the decision was made because my old friend Bill convinced me that there were good technotheological reasons for doing it. That is, on "Religious" grounds, several *apparent* HTML mechanisms (i.e., insiders such as Bill know it turns out that they aren't real HTML mechanisms, in that they aren't actually approved, official aspects of the HTML specification) that *might* be used to control appearance ought to be shunned because they turn out to have been invented by either the Evil Empire itself (no, sports fans, not the Bronx Bastids; the Redmond Ratfinks, in this context) or one of its onetime competitors and forced on the public in cardtrickster fashion to drum up business for themselves by being incompatible with the competitor's browser,

thus promoting their own browser if and when they're incautiously adopted by "content providers".

(Speaking of theses, there might well be an interesting Business Ethics Master's in the analysis of which is the more sleazy, the HTML sabotage by the software swine or the insertion of "chips" to prevent generic ink cartridges' being used in printers by the hardware swine ... if "Business Ethics" weren't at best an oxydullnormal in first place, anyway. And while I'll resist the temptation to launch into a sermon on the topic of the Evils of defacing other people's art in order to promote one's own profit, those interested might well spend some time thinking about that very point, to their profit, as it were.)

So not wanting to give aid and comfort to the enemy, once that had been explained to me I replied with something along the lines of "Oh, I didn't know it was Technotheological" and wound up going to what turned out to be a great deal of trouble to retrofit cascading style sheets to the HTML version of the thesis that existed at the time. That turned out to be the first punishment.

Skip ahead to a day or two before I'd planned to do the mass mailing to announce that The Thesis was at last available for viewing. That's when Bill discovered that in the particular browser he was using for checking out the final version (at my request, as a "beta test"), things didn't look right at all. Lines were squnched together, italicized words were overstruck and messy in general, and something funny happened to most of the margins, to name only those glitches which come to mind at the moment. To run close to the ragged edge of being the sort of person who bites heads off chickens as part of his circus act, what happened was he was using Netscape 4.70 [or maybe 4.73] as one of his testing tools, whereas I had been using Netscape 4.79 as one of mine, and the latter, while it didn't exactly do the style sheets stuff right, didn't make things look ridiculously bad, so I was willing to settle.

Figuring out what to do about that occasioned me a great deal of concern and wasted a fair amount of time until I got lucky and discovered once I fired up an older version of Netscape I happened to have around, "for completeness", that if JavaScript were not enabled--which is, in fact, the state I usually keep it in, having been against JavaScript on religious grounds well before I was converted to the cascading style sheets persuasion--the bad behavior ceased. So you might think the principle should merely be that few religious acts don't wind up punishing somebody, but it turns out that there were other anomalies that even turning JavaScript off didn't "work

around" and I wound up having to remove the stylesheets after all. Second punishment. And then, of course, there was one more anomaly that required putting a highly abbreviated stylesheet back in, at the cost of still more time, energy, and stress on both sundry body parts and what's left of my mind. Third punishment.

Who knows whether I've fixed all the funnies. By Murphy's Law, almost certainly not. At any rate, aside from presenting the opening philosophical insight, the other reason for bothering with this digression is a desire to let you know that I know that "your smileage may vary", as I like to paraphrase the techie cliche'. In other words, I've done all I could bring myself to do to smooth things out, but your quality of viewing experience will depend a great deal on which browser you're using. You probably should already know that browsers matter, I daresay, but since not everybody who reads The Thesis will be an experienced computer user, it seemed worth stating explicitly.

Semifinally, as might but shouldn't go without saying, I do of course offer my apologies to those of you who turn out not to have a browser that does let you see the document in a reasonably clean fashion. Here's hoping, though, that the resulting viewing experience won't wind up being too unsatisfactory for too many readers.... (Note well that I'm only talking about your reactions to the Form; nothing I can do about how you react to the Content other than to remind you The Thesis itself was written more than 43 years ago, as I digress in December of 2003.)

And as perhaps could and should go without saying, if you have a fairly "new" browser, presentation sorts of things should work out all right. But as is in fact quite well worth saying, if it's an "Internet Explorer" version you're using, new or old, other, non-presentation, things might well work out very badly ... since security flaws in "IE" are arguably the most-exploited avenues of attack by "hackers". So think about that, too. (I call it Innernut Extorter, myself; but I did check The Thesis out--while not connected to the 'Net, of course-- with a copy of IE5, I guess it was, I never got around to deleting, and another "beta-tester" used IE6, and at least those two cybersieves do appear to give the "look" I want, finally ... even though it was for Innernut's sake that I had to reintroduce the skeletal stylesheets--as what I dearly hope will prove to be the final punishment for the original religiously motivated action.)

Not to leave you with the wrong impression, though, please don't get me wrong: Some technotheological Holy Wars *are* worth fighting,

irrespective of punishment. The Us (righteous adherants of TCP/IP-based internetting, rooted in the sacred, properly Descriptive, ARPANET Reference Model--a/k/a the Old Network Boys) vs. Them (deluded worshippers of the diabolical, obscenely Prescriptive, "ISO Reference Model"--a/k/a the ISORMites) one comes immediately to mind. Even if I would have made a lot more money off The Book (despite only getting royalties on every other copy sold) if I'd been able to bring myself to sup with the Devil....

But we digress from the digression.

Prefatory Afterthoughts

When I write these afterthoughts, some eight years have elapsed since the rather lengthy paper to which they apply was "submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science." The only reason why my vanity was sufficiently reawakened to prompt me to turn to the old thesis again is rather simple: one of our secretaries asked me if I had any "outside" typing for her to do, and I suddenly remembered that not only had I thought once or twice in the past about "getting the thing published," but an average of 1.5 friends and acquaintances per year had expressed an interest in seeing the M.I.T. thesis that was about science fiction. So with a market of at least a dozen assured, I decided to go back to it and see what it was like. The results follow.

With the exception of these notes, the paper is largely unchanged. Although the prose sometimes borders on scholarly parody, it would simply be an exercise--and a tedious one at that--to attempt to alter the style significantly. Besides, it's a faintly amusing style, and it includes several of the most outrageous puns I ever made; so it's probably worth preserving. And as to the argument, I will stick with it, by and large. That leaves only the question of whether to offer additional readings, of some of the last eight years' worth of science fiction which I found noteworthy. Perhaps it would be a good idea. However, although the exercise of altering the style would present no difficulties to one who has practiced the largely linguistic trades of teaching Freshman Composition, doing technical writing/editing, and programming computers in the intervening years, the performing of close readings is a skill which I am not convinced I could reacquire.

So it stands largely as was--with exceptions. For example, one could scarcely have taught Freshman Comp for two and one half years and not clean up the odd comma problem or untangle the odd syntax, every so often. Some embarrassingly consistent spelling errors were also attended to along the way. And then there are the retractions, revisions, and desired alterations in emphasis; these I do here.

Perhaps the major point to make about science fiction from the vantage point of 1968 is that popular critical misconceptions of the field seem to have abated a good deal since Sputnik *et seq.* sunk into the common knowledge of the critics. This consideration tends somewhat to diminish the "need" for a defense/explanation/ justification/plea for science fiction. That it does not diminish the need too greatly is illustrated by the fact that my old

high school, which had refused classroom space for an after-hours course in the calculus in my day (on the grounds that the project was "undemocratic"), is now offering a genuine college-prep math course--on the grounds that we must catch up with Them technologically. No, doing the right thing for the wrong reason is not quite good enough.

Then there are the changes I would have made to the contents had I not been amused by the notion of preserving my views as a college senior, for some sort of "historical" reasons. For one thing, in the light of later experience, I think I was far too kind to the so-called social sciences throughout; this bias is based upon having seen too much of the way in which so-called social scientists abuse electronic data processing, among other, less tangible, factors. I also feel that I was not harsh enough to Mr. Amis; his book came out while I was in the middle of writing the thesis, and I didn't really have the time to evaluate closely. What else? Well, I was rather surprised to see how upbeat I was eight years ago: humanism, optimism, and all manner of upbeat notions. That I am a far cry from that sort of thing now is perhaps best witnessed by the fact that I cannot understand why I apologized for the kiddy divorce court; it's a splendid idea. But it does remind me of the one regret I have over not being up to adding new readings: Robert Heinlein has written some absolutely superb books in the last eight years; it is no longer the case that "and of course there's Heinlein" is what one says after listing a few of one's favorite authors: there's Heinlein, and then there are the others. He still doesn't write "pretty" prose, but he's the best storyteller, and he tells the best stories.

{The one irresistible addition [8/00]: Go get the as-written ("original uncut", ©1991) version of "Stranger" if you haven't already. Compare it to the as-published (1963) version. Before you've finished with the first page, and certainly by the time you finish the first chapter, you should realize that his prose was, in its natural state, far, far more attractive than we've been led to believe**.** Indeed, when I first performed the exercise, I threw the as-published one into the air and screamed, "I hate copyeditors!" after only a few paragraphs' worth of p. 1. I later learned that Heinlein had done the cutting himself, at the publisher's behest since they didn't want to invest in so "big" a science fiction book in the then-current state of the market, but having become a published author myself during the interval between the two publications, I still hate copyeditors. [There's also an as-written version of "Puppet Masters" available. The differences between it and the as-published version are nowhere near so striking as is the case with "Stranger", but since the book figures in Chapter III, it seemed worth mentioning here.] **}**

Aside from that, there are no particular apologies to be made. I still feel, my

thesis advisor to the contrary notwithstanding, that a basically deductive approach was the only one to take in an undergraduate thesis. He still feels that I should have taken the same sort of inductive approach which he took in his Ph.D. dissertation on Restoration Comedy, but that was, after all, for the doctorate--and from Harvard. To me, 25-28,000 words is more than one really should say for a mere Bachelor's degree.

To conclude these afterthoughts as I began the thesis, with Theodore Sturgeon. There is attributed to him a sublime natural law, known as Sturgeon's Law, of course. When told that 90% of science fiction is crap, he replied, "Of course it is. 90% of *everything* is crap." Perhaps apocryphal, but the best and onlie true conclusion to the following.

M.A.P.

Cambridge

March 1968

{and a wee bit from Lotosland, August 2000}

Abstract

Science fiction has been considered by many critics to be strictly a "pulp" field, containing works which are designed solely for entertainment and of no serious literary value. I contend that science fiction is *more* than pulp; the contention is supported as follows: The existing criticism of the field in general is surveyed and cross-criticized, with the conclusion that the content of science fiction is acceptable, but the literary form must be investigated in particular works as generalizations on the subject are profitless. The criteria for making literary judgments are briefly treated, in order to determine the conventional indicators of "literary merit." Finally, five "close readings" are offered, three of which support the claim that science fiction works *do* possess literary merit, and two of which further support the conclusions as to the content of science fiction reached in the first part.

Introduction: Of "Pulps" and Respectability

Originally, I decided to write a thesis "about science fiction" because too much reading of the stuff in my youth had impelled me to enter M.I.T., in hopes of becoming a physicist. Finding literature much more to my liking, I thought that I could do a thesis which would, in a way, be "interdisciplinary" by applying literary criticism to science fiction works. When I suggested this project to my thesis advisor, I was warned that science fiction was of dubious "intellectual respectability," and that to convince the powers-that-be of the worthwhileness of such an undertaking would not be easy. Accordingly, I turned to the task of bibliography, expecting to find a very few articles by critics who thought it a great lark to say nasty things about science fiction; I assumed that I could dispense with them in a very few pages and then turn to my intended task of criticizing several pieces of science fiction, most of which I had already picked out.

Much to my chagrin and dismay, I discovered that literally dozens of critics had felt the necessity of airing their views about science fiction. Although most of the criticisms were as silly as I had anticipated, there were so many of them that I felt compelled on grounds of intellectual honesty to criticize the criticisms in some detail and give the scoffers their day in court before I could turn in good conscience to any original criticism. Finally, the thesis shaped itself into its present form: an endeavor to dispel the illusion that science fiction is still the "pulp" medium which it admittedly was before the last War, with the original criticism included subordinately, only included to prove certain points about the larger question of whether or not science fiction has "literary value"--in the broad sense of being valuable literature. That science fiction has outgrown the days of the pulps, whose contents were characterized quite clearly by the buxom girls in cellophane spacesuits being menaced by Bug-Eyed Monsters (bems, to the initiate) which appeared on their covers, I shall attempt to show. Some pulps still exist, and some "pulp" stories appear even in the better science fiction publications, but stories worthy of serious consideration also appear, and in great enough number that serious literary critics would be well off to stop thinking of science fiction as a field barely one step from the comic books, and worthy of no more attention.

The critical objections break down into two areas: there are objections to what is being said in science fiction--what is called "content" in some critical circles--, and there are objections to how things are said--"form" in those same critical circles. In Chapter I, I deal with the general objections to

content by means of cross-criticism and the injection of my own opinions where necessary. The problem of content is only part of the problem of literary value, however, and nowadays it seems to concern critics a good deal less than the problem of form. In the latter case, there are certain general claims and counter-claims which are deserving of note, and these I mention in the second half of my first chapter. The only fair test of the formal aspects of science fiction stories is in the analysis of individual stories themselves, however, for the generalizations of the critics and my general rebuttals have a very tenuous grounding in demonstrable reality. It was this, perhaps more difficult, analytical task which I had originally set myself, and hence I am able to turn with some pleasure to a few close readings in Chapter III, although they are nominally only intended to justify the conclusion that works of science fiction can be presented in an "artistic" style.

The basic endeavor of this thesis, then, is to determine whether or not science fiction can reasonably be considered as "*more* than pulp"-- and if not, to consign it back to the rubbish heap of mere entertainment. That science fiction *is* entertaining few dispute; indeed, one of the arguments I have encountered most frequently in speaking with avid science fiction readers (called "fans" by themselves, "addicts" by such institutions as *Time Magazine*) is the argument that too much cerebrating about science fiction by people like me is ruining science fiction for them--by "taking the fun out of it." All I can say before commencing to do so is that such "cerebrating" puts more fun into it for me, and in theory it also does so for any serious literary critic. Fun is where you find it.

Chapter I: Of Critics and Crabs, A Survey of Science Fiction Criticism

Now that *Time* has promoted science fiction addicts from the class of "such pariahs as matchbook collectors, astrologers, dog breeders... " to "the social level of horse players ($50 and $100 windows), opera lovers, physicists, bridge careerists and sportscar nuts,"[1] perhaps one can ask no more. Also, if Mr. Kingsley "(*Lucky Jim*)" Amis had, in his *New Maps of Hell* which *Time* was reviewing when it expressed the above "approval," suitably demonstrated the worth of science fiction,[2] we might not need to consider science fiction criticism in general but could turn directly to the works. However, neither of them has given us "the answer." Amis is mainly dealing in apologism and rationalization, pitched in terms of the "true confessions of an addict." His major contribution is a detailed analogy between science fiction and modern jazz, which is helpful, but unfortunately leaves the impression (which he later expresses overtly) that science fiction is something different from the rest of literature. *Time*, on the other hand, is being clever.

Science fiction, of course, does not exist. This is an assumption, and as such I shall not attempt to elaborate upon it to too great an extent. My point is purely that we must realize before proceeding that in the field of literature as a whole there are many works which share the common science fiction characteristics of being either future-projected or taking place in a non-"historical" past or present, and which are not fantasy because they entail no contravention of the known laws of the universe. The only apparent reason for a critic to call a work of this sort "science fiction" is to trade upon the pejorative value of the term (or if he is a "fan," to trade upon the approbative value). Mr. Kenneth Methold, who has independently stated my feelings, makes the next logical step, after pointing out the error of making science fiction into a "genre" of the same sort as the "Western":[3]

> Eighty percent of science fiction may be rubbish [what we are calling here "pulp"], but this is little justification for ignoring the worthwhile twenty per cent... It is, in fact, time that science fiction was released from the "novelty corner" and included in that class of writing known simply as "fiction" where it would receive the attention and respect that any serious and competent novel deserves.

And this is the other assumption I wish to make. However, its justification

will be more involved than the simple semantic argument against the employment of "science fiction" as a blanket pejorative (and the consideration of works like *Brave New World* as "something else"--i.e., as "too good to be science fiction"). The justification leads us perforce to the problem of what reasons the critics offer for condemning or praising science fiction in general. We must consider such reasons before we can in good conscience consider Methold's and my assumption that science fiction is deserving of serious criticism to be acceptable.

The first aspect of the problem of science fiction criticism is that of definition and classification, which most try--but none really manage. Let us concede that, as in all areas of literature, the task of definition is more trouble than it is worth--the boundaries are simply too fuzzy. Mr. Damon Knight, a science fiction author *cum* critic whose book of science fiction criticism (done as straight literary criticism--the only such work I have come across), *In Search of Wonder*,[4] I shall refer to again, resolves things admirably by saying of science fiction that "like the 'Saturday Evening Post', it means what we point to when we say it."

Classificatory schemes run rampant through the body of science fiction criticism, probably because once you say "science fiction" is like "Westerns" or "detective stories," or better still "it's all gadgetism and escapism," you double your pejorative punch. The range is amusing, from fourteen year old Tom Pulvertaft' s "Five Types of Science Fiction"[5] (which *Spectator* apparently printed because they don't care too much for science fiction and because young Tom wanted money for a typewriter) to Dr. Zoe Treguboff's intelligently-conceived dozen types in her doctoral dissertation, which was a content analysis of science fiction.[6] Though science fiction author Jack Williamson called it "Science Fiction in a Robot's Eye" in an *Astounding Science Fiction* article, "content analysis" can be quite useful for our purposes. It entails the questioning of a panel of readers to determine their reactions as to what was "in" a group of randomly selected stories, hence furnishing a rather solid statistical basis for argument. Dr. Treguboff used 103 samples chosen from the 1951-1953 issues of *Astounding*, *Galaxy*, and *If: Worlds of Science Fiction* at random. I shall refer to her statistical findings as the need arises.

For the sake of novelty, as well as because it is not a useful enterprise here, I shall refrain from offering my impressions as to the categories into which science fiction stories break down. I should like to point out, however, a possible misassumption of, among others, Mr. Amis's. One should not be deluded by the fact that science fiction has a virtual corner on today's satire market into thinking that all science fiction is satire or satirical even in a broad sense of the term. Aside from brave new worlds, the legitimate

province of science fiction also includes such works as *More Than Human* and *The Puppet Masters* (both discussed in Chapter III) which respectively deal, ultimately, with the progress in the future, and the special talent in the "present", of humanity. As a simple polarity to satire, and leaving out some other types, science fiction *also* actively advocates points of view--as opposed to criticizing ones which are felt to be bad. Amis's discussion is so largely in terms of the values of social criticism that the "other" breeds of science fiction tend to be obscured.

Speaking of breeds of science fiction, I should like to mention that I am dealing here strictly with modern science fiction, and for that matter modern criticism, both post-1946. I must admit that I agreed wholeheartedly with Professor Norbert Wiener, whose opinions are doubly to be esteemed--both as one of the country's most renowned scientists, and as an occasional author of science fiction (as "W. Norbert")--, when he urged upon me the importance of the older members of the canon. Much can be gained if only in the way of understanding from looking at writers from Verne and Wells through all the utopians, and Swift and Voltaire, all the way back to Lucian of Samosota--or even to Plato. However, it is today's science fiction which is subjected to the critical denigration which, as Patrick Moore says, Verne, for example, was not: Verne's work was treated on its own merits by his critics, but the intervening pulps gave science fiction a black eye which critics today seem loath to let heal.[7] The black eye must be healed before the mascara of such issues as Wiener's discussion of "The Need for Interdisciplinary Thinking in Science and Literature" can be appreciated. I repeat, then, that what we are about is a just investigation to determine whether science fiction is *more* than the "pulp" of what I take to be the middle period. To quote Mr. Amis:[8]

> It is hard to believe that anything likely to interest a grown man could lie under a cover-picture of a multi-armed alien Santa Claus, an ASF cover of a year or two ago, which I thought fairly amusing, or within a journal called *Fantastic Universe* or *Astounding Science Fiction*, but I hope to establish that these natural suspicions are often unjustified.

A. "Silly" Arguments

The most fatuous and annoying attack on science fiction, though compensatingly the easiest to rebut, is what I call the "kid stuff" approach. There are two forms, one of which consists of the journals' persistence in reviewing science fiction as juvenilia. The worst offender is *Library Journal*, which relegates science fiction to its "Junior Libraries" section.

One L. Bulman[9] reports that he rejected Heinlein's *Star Beast* in his library because of an episode in a "divorce court" wherein children divorce their parents, and decries "the vast amount of bad science fiction ground out even by good authors who seem to be groping fruitlessly for new ideas." In case no one has told him, such "new ideas" are the life-blood of literature in general, and of science fiction in particular. (The title of the article, by the way: "Using Science Fiction as Bait"--to get the kiddies into the library, so that they will get around to the better stuff.) Following Bulman, science fiction anthologist Groff Conklin indulged in a bit of apologism called "What is Good Science Fiction?" which spoke, per contra, of the "moral" value kiddies can derive from the good stuff.[1O] Still in the Junior section, though even more out of place because grown-up himself, H.A. Webb stresses the prevalence of social philosophy and the tracing out of the impacts of science in science fiction.[ll]As bad as Bulman's is an article in *The Horn Book* ("of Books and Reading for Children and Young People") , in which we find a New York librarian declaiming, "We have steered clear of questionable ethics, morals, and philosophies and have selected stories which meet our standards for good fiction."[12] I trust she keeps *Lolita* out of her juvenile book shelves also, although it would seem that it has exactly the same claims for inclusion as most of the science fiction books which suffer the fate--and that is simply the age of one or more of the major characters.

The apparent reason for assumedly serious, intelligent individuals missing the point of such devices as divorce courts for children (it's an "off-beat" idea, hence satire; it's not a suggestion, hence subversive as juvenile fiction) is that the "product-image" or popular stereotype of science fiction is too much in terms of "Flash Gordon" or "Superman" comic strips--hence they expect science fiction novels to be juvenile, and if they contain juveniles as characters they *must* be intended for children. To the same depth of analysis, *Lolita* has dozens of analogues in *Saturday Evening Post* stories about step-fathers who win the love of their precious but bewildered little adopted daughters. John W. Campbell, editor of *Astounding* since the 30's , has pointed out that Buck Rogers is precisely as representative of science fiction as Dick Tracy is of detective stories; both fields are amenable to sophisticated, serious works, but the successes of both have been capitalized upon by the real "pulps"--the comics .[13]

The next most silly attacks are found in the "clever" English periodicals. Of the three I shall mention (four, if you count Master Pulvertaft), the most egregious is one A.C.B. Lovell who took it upon himself to issue a "Counterblast to Science Fiction."[14] His most notable comment is in regard to *Astounding*, of which he declares, "The very title ... is repellent." Mr. J.B. Priestley, the professed "historian of Western Literature" displays a

lamentable literary blind-spot in a pair of *New Statesman* articles. His extensive readings, he says, have led him to see three types of science fiction, Western, Gadget, and Human:[15] The value judgments are built in, only the "Human" story can ever be any good for him. He claims that "No civilized men are wanted in the age of space. No art, no philosophy, not [sic] wit and humor, no passion and tenderness." Perhaps the examples mentioned in Mr. Amis's book will serve to disabuse him of this notion, which seems to come from reading too many pulps picked up in railroad stations. His criticism of "escapism," in "Who Goes Where," is effectively scuttled by his own admission that one of his favorite science fiction novels is *Occam's Razor*, which I would point out deals quite literally with escapism--into another "time-track."[16] Finally, one A. Staggers staggers through a good deal of double-talk allegedly parodying the pseudoscientific jargon he has encountered in science fiction.[17] The overall point is that these men are writing "humor"--or perhaps what they think is satire. We must recognize this fact, and not expect a reasoned critique. I think what they are doing can be legitimately branded as reactionary, and after having duly mentioned its existence I shall pass on to more reasonable arguments. I mention such "criticism" simply to impress upon the reader just how much hostility has been mobilized against science fiction only because it has a "bad name," and not even on the pretence of keeping literature "pure."

Bordering between the former ridiculous and latter sublime, however, are three issues which are both "silly" and, in a sense, "philosophical": In the first place, there is the whole issue of the science fiction-Western parallel. The most common claim is that science fiction is composed of "space operas" in which spaceships have been substituted for horses and rayguns for sixguns. Now, granted there are numerous works (mostly from the '30s) which are guilty of this charge. However, 1.) they were strictly for entertainment--as Westerns were before the new "psychological" binge--, and 2.) they aren't being written anymore. The same overall answer which holds in regard to Westerns also applies to the "it's all gadgetry" and "escapism" charges--the objectors simply haven't read enough science fiction. This is especially true of Clifton Fadiman, who rather breathlessly expostulated in *Holiday*, "Begotten by Imagination on the body of Technology there springs forth the wild child, Science Fiction, grasping in his hand--the gadget..."[18] He also speaks of it as an "outlet for our daydreams." The works I treat in Chapter III, by no means uniquely isolated examples, should dispel the above "that's all there is" type charges.

The question of "gadgets" deserves further treatment. Clearly, the link between science and technology means that "science" fiction will frequently have recourse to the introduction of technological changes into stories. However, it is folly to assume that "they are all 'about' gadgets." There are

stories, granted, which exist solely to have fun with the extrapolation of a new "gadget." A good example is the "Lewis Padgett" (he's a known pseudonym, and it just occurred to me that maybe he is a pun on "*g*adgett") series about Gallagher the genius-only-when-inebriated and his narcissistic robot, Joe. Or go back to Hugo Gernsback, who is considered to be the father of modern science fiction; in his epoch-making (not good, mind you, just epoch-making), early twentieth century *Ralph 124C4l*, among other things, like Huxleyian hypnopaedia, he also coined the word "television." Let's not hold him responsible for the result, let's just realize that science fiction gadgets can be interesting and they can also play integral parts in the development of a story, especially a satire. "Classic" examples are the two-way television in *1984* and the Hatchery (to name just one) in *Brave New World*; but even a more recent, less renowned, book (Shepard Mead's *The Big Ball of Wax*) employs a gadget dubbed XT (which transcribes and transmits experiences--including sex, naturally) as the means by which the admen achieve the ultimate in captive audiences. Our moral is that gadgets are necessary for the construction of "serious" satire. As well, I might add, they are functional in serious investigations of human nature; e.g., Isaac Asimov's robotics stories, one of the most interesting of which deals with a professor's attempt to discredit a robot which reads proof--and makes corrections which the professor (humanistically though) resents ("Galley Slave" in the December, 1957 *Galaxy*).

B. "Philosophical " Arguments

I am unable to resist picking on Mr. Priestly once more, for contrary to his notions about the lack of "philosophy" in science fiction there is a very large amount of discussion by other critics about the philosophical content and the philosophical implications of science fiction, as well as discussion of the content of science fiction in general. I am calling all such objections to content and its implications "philosophical," in order to distinguish it from the "artistic" objections--those which take issue with *how* the content is presented, not *what* it is saying. The broad problem has been given the rather catchy label of "Idea as Hero" by Amis. The importance of ideas in science fiction is well-taken, especially if we keep his two provisos more firmly in mind than his emphasis would require: first, that the idea need not be a technological advance; second, and more important, that the class of stories which have ideas as heroes does *not* comprise the whole of science fiction. Satire, adventure for the sake of adventure, and even concern with individuals as people in future-projected milieus, all fall outside the grouping.

One aspect of "idea as hero" is the notion that the extrapolations found in science fiction can be of value. Campbell is so concerned with science fiction as "prophecy" that he thinks that "classical literary values do not touch on" science fiction because it is "so concerned with prophecy."[19] He is more temperate elsewhere, speaking of science fiction's providing a "practice area" for manipulating ideas which are "no practice" in the real world (e.g., world-annihilating nuclear weapons).[20] Here the value can be detected: Amis speaks of the solving of future problems on the last page of his book; Campbell says, "Since something's going to happen [in the future], we might as well take a little trouble and see what 'somethings' might happen, and select one that suits us."[21] As usual, the point does not apply to all science fiction, but is simply one of many points which can be raised in defense of the notion that it has value, in this case an intellectual, "cognitive" value. And Campbell to the contrary, the value of science fiction as prophecy can be distinctly enhanced by conforming, wherever possible, to "classical literary values," as witness the great impact of *Brave New World* on readers in general. Granted the Huxley "name" has something to do with it, but he got the name somewhere, and the somewhere was from critics who decided that he did conform to the normal critical criteria. The point is that there could well be authors for whom their association with science fiction, and the field's bad critical odor, are the only barriers between them and similar critical acclaim. The value of ideas for the future is not inconsiderable--especially when they can be applied to the present. To present a classical literary claim, I would urge the consideration of the science fiction author in his just-discussed role as problem-solver and idea-generator as fulfilling Shelley's dictum that the poet/artist is the unacknowledged legislator of mankind.

Another aspect of ideas as heroes is the issue of satire. Most of the critics admit that science fiction is a common vehicle for satire; in his article cited below, though, Michaelson claims that he finds the satire "too pessimistic." In opposition to his view, Treguboff found social criticism in 68 per cent of the stories in her sample, and solutions offered in 64 per cent, so the satire would seem to be non-pessimistic, in the general or "average" story. When pessimism *is* found, it is not without certain philosophical justifications to commend it: In the first place is the issue of simple verisimilitude; for instance, the captive audience of *The Big Ball of Wax* is something which could happen; the death of the Savage in *Brave New World* is something which would happen in the circumstances described--and they are, in turn, quite possible on the basis of affairs of today.

The second justification of "pessimistic" satire is the question of the moral consequences of satirical science fiction: A sufficiently frightening description of the future consequences of present folly may serve as a

deterrent to the folly; witness *On The Beach*, a novel about the ultimate doom of the human race in the after-radiation of an atomic war: the Boston showing of the movie version was picketed by people sufficiently aroused by it to want to protest nuclear testing. As a further note on the subject of pessimism, poetess Rosalie Moore objects to the "downbeat" quality of so-called mainstream writing, and finds science fiction to be far more optimistic.[22] Her generalization comes closer to being accurate, I have the feeling, than many of the ones in regard to science fiction, both pro and con--not that any generalization holds completely, but some cover more cases than others.

Pessimism aside, let us return to satire in general. Satire can be a valuable thing. In the Brettnor symposium, Asimov plumps for what he calls "social science fiction," which amounts essentially to what I have been calling satire. (He claimed in a recent straight science article that all his puns are intentional so I imagine we can read in a pause after social or run it on into social science as we prefer.) His point is that the "branch of literature which is concerned with the impact of scientific advance upon human beings" can make the contribution to society "of accustoming its readers to the thought of the inevitability of continuing change and the necessity of directing and shaping that change rather than opposing it blindly or blindly permitting it to overthrow us."[23]

Sociologists S. Finer and Oscar Shaftel[24,25] are examples of friendly trend hounds. Finer finds only a small proportion of social criticism, but being English he is not reading exactly the same market Treguboff sampled. He even finds a "high degree of social significance in the mere fact that a large number of people today like ingenuity for ingenuity's sake," the "display of intellectual ingenuity" type being his second category of stories-- "simple adventure" the first. Shaftel, writing in "A Marxian Quarterly," has more obvious vested interests and says that the "greatest service" of science fiction is satire, of which there is little to be found elsewhere. Even Amis, elsewhere calling vociferously for an "invasion from above" (implying, no doubt, that we will shortly be graced by an Amis science fiction opus) and concluding with the observation that there are a few competent "minor writers" in the field who should serve as examples to bring "into existence the figure of real standing" (himself?), puts in a good word here and there for satire.

Campbell points out in *Saturday Review* (note 19) that the projected societies are not necessarily endorsed by the authors. "A mother can tell her child exactly what will happen if he sticks his hand in the fire [aha! a Moses myth]; that doesn't mean she *wants* it to happen." Unfortunately, by taking satire and social criticism to heart, too literally, some people's feelings are

liable to get hurt. Just as the Marxian "outs" are delighted to find criticism of any sort because they believe that constructive criticism must run in their direction, the vested interests of the "ins" are joggled by satire of existing trends, or, even worse, institutions. It is little surprise, then, to note that the major attack on science fiction as purveyor of Scientism appeared in *Catholic World*.[26] The title was "The Cult of Science Fiction" and the argument was, in essence, that science fiction preaches Scientism and Scientism is terrible stuff. Now perhaps any non-devotional literature is a bad thing to some people, but science fiction doesn't seem all that much worse than most. In the first place, Scientism may not even be there. Treguboff's figures show 59 per cent of solutions to social criticisms as being accomplished through the social sciences, and as I remember it the physical sciences are the ones which are supposed to be the hotbeds of Scientism. Further, Arthur S. Barron, in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, [27]thinks that scientists read science fiction primarily for the "glamorization of the scientist" they find, *but also* because science fiction is a "protest against the use of scientific knowledge and technology for anti-human ends, " *and finally* to find a "reaffirmation of basic values" (Intellect, orderly universe, and universality of scientific method). Curious values, perhaps, but scarcely an attack on the church in the vein of a Voltairian "*ecrasez l'infame*" feud. Even such a stolid pillar of society as Mr. Fadiman speaks hopefully of science fiction's coping with (not proselytizing for) the problems of what Asimov called the impact of scientific advance. The whole Scientism issue seems to be simply a question of where one's vested interests lie.

Claire Holcomb summed matters up on the subject of what I have been calling, quite broadly, the satirical aspects of science fiction, saying that "When dignified by time, literary prestige, or philosophical pretension, critics call this kind of science fiction [prototypified by More, Swift, Butler, Huxley, etc.] --if optimistic--utopian, if pessimistic--satire."[28]

A far more agreeable charge than that of Scientism was made by Finer. He detects a uniformity of the objects of attack:[29]

> Caste societies governed by closed ruling cliques...They [the science fiction writers] invisage docile populations...unlike Huxley and Orwell, their stories end on an optimistic note; but their fears are the same. Indeed, their common characteristic is liberal humanism.

The important notion is that of "liberal humanism," of which the optimistic or "upbeat" endings he also notes are a concomitant. In my analysis of *More Than Human*, I indicate the overt brand of humanism which is a theme of the book. The motivating, covert brand which Finer, and even Amis among

others, refers to, is a factor in stories like "Disappearing Act"--which, as we shall see, condemns anti-humanism quite vigorously. Now, although science fiction author Miriam Allen De Ford is a contributing editor of *The Humanist*, most of what I am calling the humanism of science fiction is not of the almost religious type of the American Humanist Association. The "faith" which impels the large class of optimistic stories comes closer to a rational Enlightenment, or perhaps even Renaissance, world-view. Although Amis refers slightingly to "the pieties," I'm sure the Church, at least, would be relieved to find that "the scientists" aren't as cold and hard-hearted as they are sometimes thought to be.

On the basis, then, of many critics' observations, there is some sort of humanism afoot in science fiction. But, it does not encourage deleterious moral consequences for the most part, and those stories which contain features currently unaccepted (e.g., Heinlein's court where children divorce their parents) must stand or fall on the rationale which the author offers for them. The apparent main-streamer's value judgment that unreasoned hopelessness is superior to reasoned hopefulness seems to me frankly to be the view of a closed mind which is quite alien to mine, exposed as it was to science fiction since age ten.

Another point in regard to the content of science fiction is that of "sophistication." Though Priestly and Lovell are still my *betes noires*, Amis's comment that science fiction is less sophisticated than other types (i.e., main-stream) and in it we can "doff that mental and moral best behavior with which we feel we have to treat George Eliot and James and Faulkner, and frolic like badly brought-up children among the mobile jellyfishes and unstable atomic piles" (p. 133), leads me to believe that for a very bright young man he has a slight, unfortunate, tendency to be insufferably cute. Granted there can be a case made lamenting the passing of the oldstyle "thud and blunder" space opera. John Christopher, another English writer and this time one who has done science fiction, waxed sentimental (according to his own description) about the subject in the October, 1956, *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. A recent issue of *Saturday Review* also mentioned that the old days were more fun. But few readers today would think they could run barefoot through any of the current science fiction periodicals other than the remaining pulps, which we are blissfully ignoring here; for the pulps do not especially outnumber those periodicals in which, as Claire Holcomb said of *Astounding* in particular, "the quality of its stories, articles, editorials, and book reviews has consistently been far higher than that of its paper"--and we, remember, are attempting to present reasonable grounds for agreeing or disagreeing with the "more than pulp" proposition. Mr. Amis's behavior can perhaps be best explained in terms of "Give an author an image, and he'll take a metaphor."

(As to examples of "sophisticated" stories, I would call attention especially to "Disappearing Act" and "Poor Little Warrior," below.)

The final point I shall discuss on the subject of critics' objections to the content of science fiction appears in rather curiously polarized form: Scientist J.R. Pierce, writing in *Science*, claims that he finds the stories well written (a novel point) but decries the lack of scientific ideas which he wants for the confessed "escape" he is seeking.[30] Critic Joseph Kostolefsky, writing in *Antioch Review*, thinks little of the writing (though he cites a few "good" writers), but decries the need for a special background to read the stuff which is "as esoteric and incomprehensible to the layman as modern poetry ever was"--and although the poetry requires "patience," the science fiction requires "infinite patience...[and a] short course in quantum mechanics."[3l] Assuming that both are honorable men and are reporting what they really found in their reading, the inescapable conclusion is that by some quirk of statistics neither read what the other was reading. Pierce's complaint is of course the result of a vested interest, and the appeal of straight science has a rather limited audience--although one friend of science fiction suggested to UNESCO that the teaching of science could be accomplished by means of encouraging backward peoples to read science fiction. Kostolefsky's complaint is more difficult to explain, but it is not valid statistically: of her 103 stories, Treguboff's analysts found only eleven to be gadget stories (which *might* have been "over-scientific"), and the technical sophistication required by the rest is quite minimal.

To conclude this section on "philosophical" arguments, I should like to point out with pleasure one fact: Unless I missed them in the English periodical articles due to rapid reading from sheer distaste, I encountered none of the cries of "But that nonsense couldn't *happen*" which I had rather anticipated finding. At least the line between fantasy (which logically couldn't happen) and science fiction (which is of greater or lesser logical plausibility depending on the individual piece) is fairly clear in the critics' minds. For that I do not have to recite the arguments in favor of "imagination" and the like, I am duly grateful.

C. "Artistic" Arguments

There being more things in heaven (pun intended) and on Earth (ditto) than our philosophy, let us turn to the broader aspects of the issue of "good" or "bad" writing. Finer observes that "to couple St. Thomas More ... with space fiction ... seems very shocking." The grounds for the shock are the differences in "literary merit" and in "intention"; he "agrees" that there is a difference in the former, but most of the remainder of his article is

concerned with refuting the latter. I shall retain his term "literary merit" to apply to all the arguments which have been raised against the "form" or manner of presentation of science fiction.

One objection frequently encountered is that the ideas somehow "get in the way of the art." The one review in *Spectator* which was fairly friendly to science fiction makes this point; the claim is that the characterization is weak, "each hero is really a sawn-off version of Milton's Adam," and the prose is said to be secondary to the spilling out of ideas.[32] L. Michaelson, in an article entitled "Social Criticism in Science Fiction," maintains in essence that the soapbox is a more highly esteemed vehicle than the "literary" approach, to the science fiction writer.[33] The last I shall mention in this regard is Fletcher Pratt, himself a science fiction writer, who speaks of "this lack of realism in character [which] has led Bernard De Voto, probably the best literary critic in America, to describe it as 'a form of literature which has succeeded in almost completely doing away with emotion.'"[34] Amis, who also mentions the bad writing to be found in science fiction but declares the October, 1958 *Astounding* to contain no stories which are "offensive in style,"[35] manages to strike the mark later on the subject of character. The reason for the lack of "personality" in much science fiction, he points out, is that the characters are simply symbols being employed by a satirist.[36]

The symbolic, as opposed to "realistic," nature of a character in a satire does not acquit the field from the bad writing charge. However, I would point out that even in a hypothetical story where the idea is intriguing but the prose is bad the evaluation of the piece is quite subjective, depending on whether the individual reader holds mental facility to be more important than fastidiousness of prose. (The hypothetical case is not too liable to transpire for, as someone whose identity I can't recall remarked, the authors are professionals involved in making a living selling their stories and would not get away with writing so poorly as the pulp contributors could in the days when the idea of even space travel was so new and exciting that the reader would not be at all bothered by a double negative or a misnomer or two.) It is perfectly possible to attach a higher value to content than to form so much as to be virtually unconcerned with the latter; however, one rarely, if one is a science fiction fan especially, goes the other way. As Isaac Asimov[37] points out, "good writing" does not make for good science fiction; nor, I hope, can a mainstream story be considered good if it offers polished form but a paucity of content. Art alone cannot *generate* ideas, but ideas can be presented unembellished and still affect the reader favorably, though of course embellishment can be an asset. So much for "bad writing."

Arthur Koestler at least does not simply give his opinions as

pronouncements and let them rest on the weight of his reputation, as many of the others seem to do. He offers reasoned arguments for his condemnation of science fiction as art, which we shall now discuss. He claims:

> Science fiction is good entertainment, [but] it will never become good art... Art means seeing the familiar in a new light, seeing tragedy in the trivial event; it means in the last resort to broaden and deepen our understanding of ourselves.

His definition of art is similar to the one Rosalie Moore uses in *berating* mainstream fiction, in the Brettnor symposium: "To put it in the crudest possible terms, the mainstream writer too frequently is concerned with saying, in the most sensitive possible terms, of course: 'Isn't it terribly sad?'." Now although Koestler's argument can be called reasoned in that it states its premises and proceeds from them in a logical fashion, and this is a far more agreeable procedure than the pronunciamenti encountered above, the argument cannot exactly be called reasonable for its premise is, though fashionable perhaps, quite suspect. Koestler has delineated *a* reasonable mode of artistic expression, one which is more or less attractive to an individual reader depending upon his personal prejudices; his mode is not, however, the only one. It seems that every literary discussion must mention Aristotle somewhere, and whatever one thinks of him in general, he still remains a pretty shrewd observer of the factors of art which most affect human beings. So a legitimate complementary view to Koestler's, though also not *the* only mode, can be offered in terms of Aristotle's criteria of importance or magnitude of characters:

The heroes in science fiction frequently have world-shaking powers or positions of importance, although Rice's *The Adding Machine* is one instance of a "science fiction hero" who is a lowly, unimportant bookkeeper. We are treating the general case, however, and Koestler is fairly accurate in inferring that most science fiction is not on the "trivial, everyday" scale (but see "Poor Little Warrior" for another interesting exception). Aristotle dictates kings and other "high" types as heroes, or protagonists if you prefer; now the titles are jettisoned, but the functions are the same as we frequently encounter in science fiction. The reason is clear, for a reader will far more readily identify himself with King Oedipus (if he isn't afraid of being accused of having the complex--but then "Oedipus" himself didn't) than with the sniveling little bookkeeper of Rice's modern play. As Knight says, "Our undiminished wonder at the mystery which surrounds us is what makes us human. In science fiction we can approach that mystery, not in small, everyday symbols, but in the big ones of space and time."

In terms of Aristotle's requirement of "affirmation," and perhaps even

catharsis, science fiction is again far more Aristotelian than most other modern work. The hero doesn't always win; but when, as happens often, he does, there the act is an affirmation, both within the story and to the author, of Barron's "order in the universe" and of Amis's "pieties." Once again, the scale is the grand scale. Compare, for example, mainstream's *The Last Angry Man* to Pohl and Kornbluth's highly praised (even by Amis) *The Space Merchants*. In the former, Thrasher, the advertizing executive, finally returns to the fold of the agency, feebly insisting that he will do his best to inject a small note of dignity and social consciousness into the ad racket, although he admits to himself how little good it will do. In the latter, Mitchell Courtenay, "star class copysmith," falls from his high position, but when he is raised again and even made president of the biggest advertising firm in the country (a position far outstripping that of the president of the United States in the postulated society of the book), he manages to give control of the colonization of Venus to the "Conservationalists", and goes off to Venus with them to develop the planet along the lines of reason which were not followed in the rape of Earth's resources (much of which has happened already, in our real world of the present).

The choice between not even saving one's self, and saving both one's self and a world in the bargain is not a hard one to make. Further, the former book does not have a more reasonable conclusion, based on the premise of the innate depravity of Man; in the latter book, the depravity is there and Earth is abandoned to it--but, men can be better than Man, and the affirmation of the conclusion is not only in consonance with the premise, but all the more compelling because of the necessity of renouncing the home planet (which operates perhaps symbolically, but not, I think, as the rejection of Mother or whatever it is the myth hunters would have us believe; it is perhaps a rebirth, but it is definitely not a regression).

So Koestler's "monadic" view of art as restricted to the everyday is to be rejected even on the grounds that it is not a valid representation of reality, to say nothing of the moral values and audience-responses arguments which could be raised on our Aristotelian foundation. Koestler raised one other objection which would be worthwhile to consider, though he seems to be playing Amis's game of metaphor-making rather than arguing logically. He approves of *Brave New World*, *Gulliver*, and *1984* because of their "social message." They are "great literature because in them the additions of alien worlds serve merely as a background... In other words, they are literature precisely to the extent which they are not science fiction, to which they are works of disciplined imagination and not fantasy." Knight replies to him directly, saying that the objection applies to all fiction and making the excellent point that "science-fantasy is a form: what matters is what you put into it" (p. 2). Granted, I would even say urged, that science fiction is

concerned with *saying* things artistically, as opposed to saying things *artistically*; the problem is not science fiction's functional employment of literature: Rather, the problem is Koestler's suggested alternative approach of the sacrifice of content for form, the practice of almost-infinitely embellishing almost nothing at all; not art, but "artsiness" for its own sake-- in short, the limit which Kostolefsky and I agree modern poetry tends to approach. The limit also toward which Koestler would, paradoxically, seem to be urging us when speaking of the finding of tragedy in trivia (bigger and bigger emotions evoked by smaller and smaller situations, as the artist's "skill" increases), yet against which he seems to be warning us by speaking of "social message" and of "disciplined imagination."

To conclude with Koestler: On the subject of universals versus trivia, I admit that I prefer artists to deal with universals because I have a personal inclination to agree with Shelley about the poet/artist's being the unacknowledged legislator for mankind--this shows that I may be naive, but at least my art's in the right place. Also, if Koestler had read works other than the apparently strictly adventure pulps about which he apologizes for his "occasional addiction," and had read enough in the field to have grounds for his generalizations, he would probably have come across the works indicated in the Treguboff statistics, the Finer "Profile," and the other samples cited above, which he would have found quite similar to *Brave New World* and others which he likes. Had he done so, we would have been spared the last few pages, perhaps. However, we must be duly grateful to him, for the Aristotelian parallel he forced me to discover is a corroboratory point to the "more than pulp" thesis which far outweighs in importance the squandering of so much space on a relatively unimportant article. (Please note, as a parting shot, that the protagonist of Koestler's own *Darkness at Noon* was no mere Party small fry himself; methinks the gentleman saith not as he doeth.)

D. Summary and Conclusion

As advertised, the critical arguments against science fiction break down along the lines of objections to content and objections to form. Through cross-criticism and the injudicious employment of my own observations, I believe that the content aspect has been taken care of as thoroughly as can be managed under the circumstances. As to form, or "literary merit," the general refutations can be made in like manner to the Koestler affair and bandied about as interminably as a mainstream-of-consciousness monologue. However, we have arrived at a point where my original intention of simply digging in and criticizing some specific science fiction stories is necessary to the conclusion of our inquiry. It would seem to be

inescapable that we get down to cases, if we want to reach at all fairly a conclusion as to the literary value of science fiction; for, although the ideas to be found in it are often valuable, literary merit is also a very large factor in the adjudging of literary value--perhaps Koestler would suggest that it is the whole question.

Now, it is impossible to analyze enough science fiction to reach an over-powering, clearcut conclusion here; but, after indicating briefly in the next chapter what literary value and merit are, I shall try to show that the requirements for conventional literary merit are met by some science fiction works. It is then assumed to be incumbent upon the critics to assess other works individually, for they have no excuse to ignore a field which even its detractors frequently call entertaining and which can be shown to have *some* (though probably no more than any other "serious" field) nuggets in it. To a miner intent upon enriching himself with the nuggets he finds, the dirt with which they may be surrounded is of small consequence. Knight's sensible credo is that "science fiction is a field of literature worth taking seriously, and that ordinary critical standards can be meaningfully applied to it: e.g., originality, sincerity, style, construction, logic, coherence, sanity, garden-variety grammar." (p. 1) Even Amis, who had earlier said that "stylistic adequacy is all one need demand from examples of the idea-category, which is not a vehicle for the verbal imagination" (p. 137) and missed the point of the artistic embellishment of ideas making them more effective, finally admits that:

> A new volume by Pohl or Sheckley or Arthur Clarke ought, for instance, to be reviewed as general fiction, not tucked away, as one writer has put it, in something called "Spaceman's Realm" between the kiddy section and the dog stories. Hostile critics from outside the field will make public utterances upon it revealing a degree of ignorance that would never be tolerated if the subject were Indonesian pottery or Icelandic loan-words in Bantu. And, alongside the justifiable skepticism of the otherwise intelligent, considerable prejudice remains. That a badly produced pulp magazine can contain adult writing is a lesson not easy to learn, however often it may be spelled out.
> [pps. 149-50]

Aside from observing that he abuses commas almost as badly as I do, perhaps all I can do is repeat my initial query: is there anything more we can ask?

Chapter II: Of Theories and Reasons, Criteria for Literary Judgments

Without going into a thorough investigation of literary theory, I should like to clarify the difference between "literary value" and "literary merit." This is not merely an exercise in semantic purity, for the distinction is necessary to the discovery of the criteria which we may apply below to some works of science fiction in order to determine if they are possessed of what is commonly called literary merit; for literary merit is the as yet unresolved issue on which a final verdict as to the worth of science fiction as literature hinges.

Literary merit as used above by Finer and others seems to apply solely to the "artistic" aspects of a piece of literature, that is to its form or mode of presentation. Literary value, for the present, can be thought of simply as the measure of the intellectual effects of a work, divorced from how well the ideas are presented by the work. The distinction is along the lines of form as opposed to content, the areas which separately contained the critical arguments discussed in Chapter I. In other words, what I am calling literary merit has its basis in the work itself, without relating what is said to external, real world, values; literary value, on the other hand, is concerned just with the relation of the work to the world.

The best way to get at the criteria for the assigning of literary merit is, I believe, by looking at the reasons which critics have offered for the general value judgment "X is a good piece of literature." By virtue of the above definitions of literary value and merit, the reasons found which do not apply to value will be the basis for our literary merit criteria, for the two have been set up as exhaustive. Now the work of sorting out critical arguments over the ages would be far beyond the scope of this thesis; however, in his book *Aesthetics* (see Bibliography), Professor Monroe Beardsley has done the work for us, and all we must do is report on the types of reasons he cites, and then extract those which pertain to literary merit.

Although only five in number, his grouping appears to be exhaustive. I shall merely list them, ignoring with one exception his arguments as to their efficacy in the critical process.

In the first place, a class of reasons can be given such as:

It is profound.

It has something important to say.

It conveys a significant view of life.

It gives insight into a universal human problem.

Beardsley has labeled these reasons Cognitive Value types, and I have borrowed the phrase for use in Chapter I. Arguments based upon the implicit acceptance of the cognitive value criterion were a major portion of the charges leveled against science fiction in my section on "philosophical" arguments.

A related type of reason could be formulated as follows:

It is uplifting and inspiring.

It is morally edifying.

It promotes desirable social political ends.

It is subversive.

These are obviously based upon a work's Moral Value, and Professor Beardsley so labels the type. The importance of the moral aspects of a work of literature goes back at least as far as the *Poetics*, and forward at least as far as the librarians of Chapter I.

The type of reasons which I shall include only for the completeness of the grouping, but then reject for further discussion, are those which Professor Beardsley mentions as being based on the artist's intentions, his powers of expression, workmanship, originality, or sincerity. These reasons which refer "to something existing before the work itself, to the manner in which it was produced, or its connection with antecedent objects and psychological states" he calls Genetic Reasons. They are less applicable in literature than in music or sculpture, probably, and at any rate the case has been frequently made that the intention of most artists is the continued care and feeding of the artist himself. Professor Beardsley gives two reasons why Genetic Reasons "cannot be good, that is relevant and sound, reasons for critical evaluations." The first is that we cannot know the intention of the author with sufficient exactness to base an evaluation on it. The second, and I believe much stronger, objection is that even if we could determine the intention we would then be judging the worker and not the work.

When a piece of literature is said to give pleasure, to be interesting, exciting, moving, stirring, or rousing, or when it is attributed a strong emotional impact, we are dealing with Affective Reasons. Beardsley says

they refer "to the psychological effects of the aesthetic object upon the percipient." The history of Affective Reasons is long and almost overwhelming: from Aristotle's treatment of catharsis to Pater's "power of being deeply moved by beautiful objects." Although the introduction of virtually any psychology can furnish the grounds for specifying and explaining them (I must confess a distinct partiality to Freud's, myself) and make them quite respectable, Affective Reasons can be appealed to to cover a multitude of vacuous formulations, and for this reason Professor Beardsiey objects to them.

The final class of reasons according to Professor Beardsley are Objective Reasons, which refer "to some characteristic--that is, some quality of internal relation, or set of qualities and relations--within the work itself, or to some meaning-relation between the work and the world." He cites three kinds, or sub-types, of Objective Reasons: Unity, Complexity, and Intensity; he then claims that all Objective Reasons may be subsumed under one or the other of these heads. The types of Objective Reasons are those appealed to, frequently implicitly, by "New Critics," "close readers," "analytical critics" (in Empson's usage), or whatever you choose to call them. Actually, it might be observed, the connotations of "objectivity" are somewhat of a misapellation. The Objective Reasons can probably be viewed as a special type of Affective Reasons, with the general classes of the former being canons abstracted from factors which commonly have psychological appeal. Freud's essay on "Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious, " for example, suggests that the finding of Unity (and especially as a resolution of Complexity) is of universal appeal.

There are apparently no other criteria commonly used in the evaluation of literature. Now, clearly Professor Beardsley's first two types, referring as they do to the content of the work, are the criteria for literary value in the diminished sense of the term which we are tentatively employing. The final two represent the sought-for criteria for literary *merit*, as they refer to formal qualities of the work. That is, the features of unity, complexity, intensity, and "pleasurable" effects are the indicators of literary merit for which we shall look.

We have found four usable critical criteria, then, and have seen in Chapter I that works of science fiction can and do satisfy the first two of them (in regard to Cognitive and Moral Values). Before applying the Affective and Objective criteria to a few science fiction works in order to test their literary merit, I should like to stress the fact that literary merit is not the *sole* criterion for stating that "X is good literature," that is for the finding of literary value as the term is more commonly used, "art for art's sake" claims notwithstanding. It is not "necessary" in the logical sense of the word, for a

value judgment can and has been based solely on, say, the moral value of a work. Nor is it "sufficient," I would claim, for the "literarily valuable" label is not to be applied to works which say nothing, but do so in a literarily meritorious way.

Let us observe, then, that there are no individually hard and fast criteria for literary value, in the broad sense implied by the title of this thesis, as any reason may strike a particular reader as being sufficient in a particular case. However, a work which satisfies *all* the criteria implied by the "reasons" has a very high likelihood of warranting an affirmative decision as to its literary value, even in the broader sense implied by my title. Let us turn to such a work.

Chapter III: Of Sturgeon and Other Fish, Some "Close Readings"

A. Sturgeon

If I had to choose but one work on which to base my claim that science fiction does indeed contain works which possess literary merit, that work would be Theodore Sturgeon's *More Than Human*.[1] As a matter of fact, my original intention was to do a thesis dealing only with close readings of science fiction works, of which the Sturgeon novel was to have furnished roughly half my material. When the issue of the "intellectual respectability" of science fiction arose, my plans were changed; but in view of the necessity of giving examples of literary merit in science fiction in order to complete the argument for the respectability of the field, I have been able to keep the novel in the discussion, if only as a test case.

To illustrate the fairness of my choice of *More Than Human* as representative of good science fiction--that is, to show that it belongs in the discussion for reasons other than the pun it furnishes for my title--I should like to mention what Damon Knight said about it in one of his essays, after quoting the first paragraph: "My God, it's all like that, violins and stained glass and velvet and little needles in your throat" (P. 80)-- this from a man whose difficultness to please is legendary among science fiction fans. The novel won a Hugo--awarded by science fiction fans at their annual conventions after the fashion of Hollywood's Oscars (the name Hugo is in honor of Hugo Gernsback, who introduced science fiction to the American magazines on a regular basis early in the century); it was also picked as the all-time favorite of English and American fans polled in 1956--on the basis of our *Astounding* poll and England's *Nebula* poll, taken on a weighted average.[2] So it's a pretty good work, according to people who are more serious "addicts" than Mr. Amis; and besides, *I* like it.

Although this chapter is supposed to be dealing merely with the demonstration of the literary merit to be found in science fiction, I must admit that I shall "sneak in" some considerations not directly germane to the criteria implicitly based on Professor Beardsley's Affective and Objective Reasons. I crave the reader's indulgence in considering the digressions as further corroboration of the claims I made in Chapter I as to the content of science fiction.

There are three parts to *More Than Human*: "The Fabulous Idiot," "Baby Is Three," and "Morality." In the first part we meet the Idiot, Lone, who is leading an aimless, drifting, idiot's existence, but who has "something" within him which is not yet functioning. An intangible "call" leads him to the home of Mr. Kew, a madman who has retreated from the world and is bringing up his two daughters in ignorance of it. The Idiot breaks through the wall surrounding the Kew place and meets Evelyn, the younger daughter; though he cannot talk and neither of them know the meaning of kissing, they sit together and are happy, until discovered by her father. The father whips the Idiot and beats his daughter to death; he then commits suicide, leaving his other daughter, Alicia, alone and terrified. A farmer, Prodd, takes the unconscious hulk of the Idiot in, and he and his wife nurse him back to health. They lavish much affection on him because the son they had expected "was never born." While Lone is recuperating, several characters are introduced in tangential episodes: Gerry, who runs away from an orphanage because all he finds is hate; Hip Barrows, a brilliant boy whose disciplinarian father forces him to go to medical school although he is a talented engineer even without schooling; Janie, who is able to move objects telekinetically (by mental power) and hates her mother, Wilma, who is committing numerous adulteries while her husband is in World War II; and a pair of Negro twins who live in Janie's apartment house, and who are teleports (able to move from place to place by mental energy). Some time after Lone is cured and has developed limited telepathic powers so that he learns to speak with the Prodds, the Prodds are expecting a child and so Lone leaves them and builds a hut in the woods. To the hut eventually come Janie and the twins, and Lone takes them in. He also takes in the Prodds' child, a mongoloid in appearance, but able to communicate telepathically with Janie. Baby, as they call him, is akin to a computer which gathers and correlates information. In the course of questioning Baby, Lone discovers that he, Baby, Janie, and the twins comprise a gestalt organism which has far greater powers than the normal human individual.

In the second part, we encounter Gerry again. He is in the office of Dr. Stern, a psychiatrist. After a long interview, Gerry discloses the history of the gestalt organism during the intervening time: Lone had taken him in, and had eventually died. The gestalt, with Gerry as its new "head" went to live with Alicia Kew, who owed them a favor according to Lone. Gerry subsequently kills her because she was ruining the rapport of the gestalt by giving it too easy an environment and trying to mother it. Because of the killing he has gone to Stern, and through Stern's questioning recalls Alicia's memories of her meeting with Lone, at which time he had ordered her to read many books, the contents of which he extracted from her telepathically; in return for her help. Lone had had intercourse with her, which was her unconscious wish to compensate for the horror in which her father had

taught her to hold men. When Gerry had told her that "Baby is three" she began thinking wildly that her baby would have been three if she had conceived, and as Stern explained to him, so overloaded Gerry's latent telepathic faculties with her psychic blast that he suffered an "occlusion" and did not develop the faculties further, until he had overcome the occlusion through recounting it. He goes off to rejoin the kids, and to develop as best he can, though Stern warns him that without a sense of morality the gestalt will be as lonely as Lone was as an idiot. Gerry leaves, uncomprehending.

In the third part, Hip is found in jail by Janie. She bails him out, and ministers to him during his apparent insanity, characterized by a compulsion to get sick and die. Through a working backward process, he eventually recalls that Gerry (whom he remembers as "Thompson," the Air Force psychiatrist who had treated him) had induced the compulsion in him seven years before, when he had come across Prodd's old truck which was buried in an antiaircraft range, and which he discovered because an antigravity device with which Lone had fitted it was causing the proximity fuses of the shells to go haywire. Janie tells Hip that Gerry has become deranged, and takes him to Gerry in the hope of making Gerry ashamed. Hip, thinking it an intellectual exercise for himself, devises a code of ethics for the "superman" which Gerry extracts from his mind and accepts. Hip is incorporated into the gestalt as its conscience, and then the gestalt is accepted by the community of already existing gestalts for it has finally grown up.

1. "Objective Reasons"

The most striking characteristic of *More Than Human* is the series of "incompletenesses" which run through it, not only of characters, but of philosophies, organisms, revelations, and other factors. The most obvious overt references to incompleteness are found in the descriptions of the Idiot, Lone, although we shall see that there are so many other instances that Incompleteness must be looked upon as a theme of the book.

Lone is introduced as being something less than human, an idiot--a man manque, an incomplete person and personality. Further, "Like a stone in a peach, a yolk in an egg, he carried another thing" (pp 4-5), a thing which was useless to him, though: an "inner ear" receptive to "murmuring, sending, speaking, sharing, from hundreds, from thousands of voices." Lone had a potentiality, but it is bottled up inside his idiot self and useless--his functioning is incomplete. Aside from the numerous instances of Lone's lacks and shortcomings (he enters the Prodds' diningroom nude for he has none of the social graces; he can neither read nor drive a truck), perhaps the

most effective means of suggesting his incompleteness is that of not attaching to him a name until he has been the prominent figure of the novel for some twenty-seven pages; then, through the Prodd's ministrations and his own ability to sense what they want of him in a crude fashion at least, he overcomes his lack of speech to the extent of giving himself a name.

Nor are the other characters presented in the first part complete. Mr. Kew has no sense of good; Alicia has no knowledge of the outside world, nor of what outsiders would call Truth; Evelyn "knows no evil at all"; neither daughter has what might be called a complete education for life. The Prodds are parents without a child. Gerry is a child without parents, a child with only hate and no love. Hip has talents but no goals, no aspirations. Janie has power but no control; her mother has no husband, in essence and later in fact. The twins cannot speak. And so on.

The second and third parts follow the pattern. Gerry goes to the psychiatrist because his memories are incomplete, and because his knowledge is incomplete in that he wants to know why he killed Alicia. In Alicia's memories as related by Gerry, Lone says that he is waiting in the woods because he (as gestalt organism) isn't finished, but "I don't mean 'finished' like you're thinking. I mean I ain't--completed yet." (p. 134) Stern tells Gerry he still lacks something--morality. In the third part, it is Hip's memory which is incomplete, and he himself is initially no longer functioning as a human being. Finally it is revealed that the Gerry-gestalt has been incomplete throughout, and only after it had incorporated Hip (as "the small still voice") could it become individually complete and join the community of other gestalts (perhaps a good phrase would be "*über-gestalt*"), and achieve "spiritual" completeness ... there runs throughout the note sounded most overtly at the end of the first part: "'Ask Baby what kind of people are all the time trying to find out what they are and what they belong to.' 'He says, *every* kind.'" "So it was that Lone came to know himself, and like the handful of people who have done so before him he found, at this pinnacle, the rugged foot of a mountain." (p. 76)

The theme of incompleteness exists quite clearly in the work on the foregoing "overt" level, then. The first open test of Sturgeon's artistry is contained in the answer to a question which is a logical consequence of the theory of Chapter II: Does the "form" (the technique, the structure) of the work unify in the same way as the "content" (the plot, the action)? Or alternatively, is there unity of content and form? I believe the answer is yes. There are several different complexes of images and incidents quite directly related to the theme of incompleteness. Probably the most important of them is the complex of barriers.

Two kinds of barriers occur in the book: physical and mental. The first is

the barrier around Mr. Kew's retreat; it is with this that Lone struggles to penetrate, and through the struggle he achieves what amounts to his first "rational" thought: "The fact that the barrier would not yield came to him slowly ... His mouth opened and a scratching sound emerged. He had never tried to speak before and could not now; the gesture was an end, not a means, like the starting of tears at a crescendo of music." (p. 10) Note that through the struggle with the physical barrier, he encounters, and partially overcomes, a mental barrier. Later, Lone is perplexed by the lack of a barrier between himself and Evelyn:

> His bench-mark, his goal-point, had for years been that thing which happened to him on the bank of the pool. He had to understand that. If he could understand that, he was sure he could understand everything. Because for a second there was this *other*, and himself, and a flow between them without guards or screens or barriers--no language to stumble over, no ideas to misunderstand, nothing at all but a merging. (pp. 74-5)

The final synthesis with the *über-gestalt* and the lesser triumph of "bleshing" (the blending and meshing process which is what the individuals in the gestalt do) are anticipated in the rather poetic merging of the idiot and the innocent--which is achieved by the dissolving of their interpersonal (and co-incidently, intra-personal) barriers.

The first barrier and its related obstructions have considerable importance, and illustrate the linking of incompleteness (through their shutting-out power) with the development which results from their dissolution. In the second part of the book, we are dealing with Gerry's personal barriers primarily. In brief, his problem arose because he was unguarded (had no helping barrier) when Alicia was triggered by the phrase "Baby is three" into mentally reliving her experience with Lone three years before, at which time her own physical barrier (literally her hymen) had been broken; the resulting shock caused Gerry to develop his occlusion-barrier. (Indeed, there is a specific reference to "that 'Baby is three' barrier," [p. 143] by Gerry to Stern.) Lone's breaking of Alicia's barrier was a reward to her for reading books and furnishing him with information he wanted. Gerry's consequent occlusion prevented him from using his telepathic powers until the barrier was broken down with Stern's aid. (Miss Kew herself represents a barrier: not only was she the cause of Gerry's occlusion, but she prevents the gestalt from bleshing--even tries to break it up by sending Baby away.) However, his incompleteness in the sense of lacking "morality" leads to the erection of a mental barrier in terms of his loneliness and difference from mankind. Finally, after Hip overcomes his Gerry-induced occlusion/barrier, it is possible to break down Gerry's barrier to "morality" and, in a different

sense, the barrier between the Gerry-gestalt and the *über-gestalt* (which had been one of incompleteness).

A distinct, but related complex of incidents are those relating to what we may call faulty assumptions, which may be looked upon as barriers between the maker of the assumption and reality. These, too, must be overcome before the final obviation of incompleteness can occur. Note Mr. Kew's mistaken notions of the good and evil of the world, for one. Further, the Prodds think Lone has suffered amnesia like Cousin Grace, that he is not (emphatically stated by Mrs. Prodd after looking at his eyes) an idiot, and that (for a time) he is their child. Gerry initially thinks all there is to the world is hate; Hip expects to find his goal in the army; Wilma thinks happiness comes in trousers. Or consider Lone himself. When he starts thinking at all, he first believes himself utterly alone ... and meets Janie, the twins, and eventually Baby. Then, there is his first notion of reality:

> He had believed that Prodd was his only contact with anything outside himself and that the children were merely fellow occupants of a slag dump at the edge of mankind. The loss of Prodd--and he knew with unshakable certainty that he would never see the old man again--was the loss of life itself. At the very least, it was the loss of everything conscious, directed, cooperative; everything above and beyond what a vegetable could do by way of living. [p. 74]

Two pages later he is exclaiming, "And we'll grow, Baby. We just got born!", which is a correction to the one, and in itself another, mistake. For as Baby says, through Janie, they won't grow because the thing they are is an idiot. Later, Stern commences therapy (after thinking Gerry was a kid who had wandered in off the street) by refuting various "thumbnail sketches" of psychiatry. He ends with the mistaken notion that all Gerry needs is morality--mistaken because at the very end of the book the *über-gestalt* explains that the thing which caused completion was something more than ethics, which in turn are something more than morality. Even Gerry's assumption that he has no morality is false, for Lone had rebuked him for taking a bright yellow pen, and he had himself refrained from killing Stern--thinking (or rationalizing) that it was more "amusing" to let him live. Finally, Hip--for all his own mistaken assumptions about "Thompson" (the "Air Force psychiatrist" who was really Gerry), Janie's intentions, and his father's worth--manages to correct Janie's (and the Gerry-gestalt's) mistaken assumption that they're not human, and that humanity's rules don't apply to them.

Linked in turn to the faulty assumptions are those factors of the work which involve confusion or muddling of identity. They may be further considered

as barriers between the individual and the world. Already noted in a different context is the fact that the Idiot is nameless for some time. Who "Jack" (the son they had lost) is to the Prodds is not revealed immediately, nor are the roles of Gerry and Hip. Janie has no last name when she is introduced. Later she is to call herself Janie Gerard--Gerard, Gerry's name because she is part of the Gerry-gestalt; this identify is slammed into the reader's attention when the sheriff who is keeping Hip mistakes the name twice. And it is just such a muddling, merging, and confusing of identities which is the mechanism of the formation of the gestalt organism, which in some undefinable but natural way is "I". Getting back to Gerry as "individual," he starts his interview with Stern by refusing to reveal his identity (for which, in another sense, he is actually looking). Stern reminds him of Lone. When he returns to consciousness after breaking through the occlusion it is on "two distinct levels" (as 11 years old and in shock from the ego transference, and as 15 and on Stern's couch), and in the unconscious state he had *been* Alicia Kew. He killed her because of another identity confusion; which is also linked here to the occlusion/barrier:

> You talk about occlusions! I couldn't get past the 'Baby is three' thing because in it lay the clues to what I really am. I couldn't find that out because I was afraid to remember that I was two things-- Miss Kew's little boy and something a hell of a lot bigger. I couldn't be both, and I wouldn't release either one. [p. 143]

Notice also the typical incomplete, stepwise revelation of facts. In the third part, the entire story revolves around the clarification of identity: Hip doesn't know who he is, who Janie is, who "Thompson" is; and meanwhile Gerry has regressed to a childish state, having lost his sense of identity. Also, on an overall basis there is a certain confusion for the reader resulting from the shifts in the "identity" of the narrator: Part One is in the third person with Lone as major character in terms of quantity of description at least; Part Two is in the first person, with Gerry as narrator; Part Three is back to the third person, and Hip is the "major" character. The finishing touch is the confusion as to whether the Gerry-gestalt is an individual unit or a segment of the larger "unit," and of course the resolution of the misconceptions as to what humanity (or mankind) is.

Thus far we have seen three interrelated groups of incidents and images all of which are also related to the theme of incompleteness. Another group can be discovered by noting a peculiar common pattern to the family relationships and the natures of the parents in the book. The families are incomplete, for the most part, and the parents are bad. Mrs. Kew had died, Mr. Kew is insane; the Prodds don't have Jack, but they drive Lone out preparing for him--thus betraying their position as surrogate parents to

Lone; Wilma has no husband, she is adulterous and stupid and soon drives Janie out; Hip's mother is never mentioned, his father disowns him after trying to crush his technical talents in favor of medicine; Gerry has no parents, his surrogate family of the orphanage drives him out with its cruelty and viciousness. The reactions are Alicia's rather pathological desire for a family (she sent Baby away because she couldn't pretend he was her child), Gerry's submission to Lone and need to consult Stern (both men being surrogate parents, and even being confused for one another by Gerry), and Hip's great desire to impress his Colonel and his repeated thinking of himself as "ROTC *boy*" (the Colonel obviously having been taken as "father" to replace the hated doctor). Familial incompleteness is a causal agent, then; it stimulates change, and change leads to progress. At the end of it all is the realization that mankind is the parent of the gestalt, and the resulting "good" progress for the race as a whole which is fostered by a "complete" family.

Incompleteness is usually a passive thing: an idiot remains an idiot in the real world, and a body lacking a part cannot grow it or absorb it from its environment. In *More Than Human*, though, there are active drives and "natural" urges which combat incompletenesses and promote development. The greatest number of them act on Lone, for he is an idiot and needs the most prodding. He goes to Evelyn in response to a call he feels:

> Without analysis, he was aware of the bursting within him of an encysted need ... And bursting so, it flung a thread across his internal gulf, linking his alive and independent core to the half-dead animal around it. It was a sending straight to what was human in him, received by an instrument which, up to now, had accepted only the incomprehensible radiations of the new-born, and so had been ignored. [pp. 9-10]

To become more than human, one must first become human. Lone's drive brings him up against the barrier around the Kew place, and forces him to find a way through it. He feels a similar call from Janie and the twins, but is disappointed when he discovers it is only the sending of some hungry children. Their hunger, another natural drive, brings them to him, though. And he feeds them and takes them in because he recalls Mrs. Prodd's hospitality ("Now you set right down and have some breakfast") and wishes to mimic it. By so doing, he becomes not only more "human," but more nearly complete, for he accepts the kids. It is, finally, his urge to know what he is and what he belongs to (which urge is shared by every kind of people, according to Baby) that leads him to the discovery of "his" gestalt nature.

Hip was driven from his father because of his curiosity; Gerry was driven from the orphanage by the hate which he had come to think of as natural.

Gerry's reason for killing Alicia Kew is to ensure the survival of the gestalt. When Gerry remembers Lone through Alicia's thoughts, Lone mentions another natural drive, "All I know is I got to do what I'm doing like a bird's got to nest when it's time." (p. 134) That is Lone's description of why he stays in the woods, waiting to complete himself. Later, when Miss Kew asks him, "What made you start doing this?" after Lone tells her about the gestalt, he answers "What made you start growing hair in your armpits? ... You don't figure a thing like that. It just happens." (p. 138)

Stern asks Gerry, after he had explained the gestalt organism, "What now?" Gerry replies, "We'll just do what comes naturally." (p. 144) When Gerry implants a drive in Hip (the sickness compulsion, and attendant occlusion of memory), he is himself nearly destroyed as a result. Unnatural drives are not good. On the other hand, Hip's compulsion to prove himself right about the anti-gravity device, though motivated by pride perhaps, is a natural drive, which finally leads to the completion of the Gerry-gestalt. Natural drives are both, good and functional.

The drives lead to development, or progress. Structurally, they may be looked on as the link between the theme of incompleteness and a theme of development, of progress toward the final completion. Also, in the context built up in the book, natural drives combat incompletenesses on the level of content or incidents. Barriers must be overcome, by penetration or circumvention. Identity must be found. Faulty assumptions must be corrected; the incomplete ones must be expanded, just as Hip's "world" expands ("It's as if my whole world, everywhere I lived, was once in a little place inside my head, so deep I could't see out. And then you made it as big as a room and then as big as a town ..." p. 172, to Janie). The formal parallel is the final completion of "factual" revelations which takes place in Part Three.

There are many incidents which depict development. For instance, the development of Lone--his "humanization." He develops volition at the wall around the Kew place. He develops the power of communication with Prodd, both telepathically and verbally. After leaving the Prodds, he becomes aware of time for the first time. Because the Prodds wanted him to leave, he develops the human trait of self-pity; he berates himself for his lonliness. He parallels the development of man by becoming a tool-using animal when he borrows an ax from Prodd to build himself a shelter. He begins the comtemplative thought which caused Gerry to remember him later as "like always, walking along, thinking, thinking." In short, as he realizes, "The Prodds were one thing, and when they took him in they became something else; he knew it now. And then when he was by himself he was one thing; but taking in those kids he was something else." (p. 67) In

Lone as a person we see the process of development, the process of becoming, the process of life.

However, the final development of Lone as an individual is not the final development of his gestalt organism. When he says to Baby "We'll grow!" Baby replies, through Janie, "He says not on your life. He says not with a head like that. We can do practically anything but we most likely won't. He says we're a thing, all right, but the thing is an idiot." (p. 76) When Lone dies, a new head takes over; and the acquisition of Gerry as head is the second step in the development of the gestalt. Gerry's "personal" development requires the catalyst of Hip, though, for the third stage of the gestalt's development to proceed to completion. Gerry must kill Miss Kew in the meantime to remove the threat to his potential development; he has also become aware of himself as a biological development, employing metaphors involving Neanderthal and Peking man in the course of his personal "development" (actually a cure, a return to normal from abnormal) with Stern.

It is as natural for a "child" to develop as it is for an idiot endowed with telepathic talents and sensitivities. Hence, Hip's reduction to a childlike state is a rich source of developmental incidents. His first step forward is when he shows concern for Janie's well-being and has her eat the breakfast which she had prepared for him, thus exhibiting an "adult" independence and sense of responsibility. We have already noted the expansion of his "world," which may be looked on as development from circumscribed foetus to "space-binding" (Korzybski's term) adult. On a structural note, when Hip gains recall of his memories the same phrase is used which had terminated the passage about him in Part One: "It was on the anti-aircraft range that he found an answer, a dream, and a disaster."

Still on the subject of development, it is a logical development to Hip that Homo Gestalt should have evolved. He becomes more mature, and develops an understanding of Man as an ethical creature. (The book's development of the idea of Man reflected in gestalt being is quite neat: Lone is the tool-user, Gerry the environment-conqueror, and Hip the giver of laws). Hip explains what he calls the "ethos" to Gerry, and the penultimate step in the development of the Gerry-gestalt is accomplished in the incorporation of Hip as the "still, small voice." Almost immediately, the ultimate step is accomplished: they are incorporated into the community of gestalts. As a final touch to the development pattern, Gerry learns that the *über-gestalt* (which considers itself a part of humanity) is responsible for many of the acts of human progress. "Here was one who had whistled a phrase to Papa Haydn, and here one who had introduced William Morris to the Rossettis . . . [and he saw] a drowsy Ford with his mind suddenly lit by the

picture of a line of men facing a line of machines." (p. 232)

A quotation above suggests a connection between the forming of "alliances" and the process of development--the Prodds took in Lone and became "something different;" Lone took in the kids and became "something different"; the use of "took in" is quite suggestive itself. The culminating alliance, or taking in, is the incorporation of the Gerry-gestalt into the *über-gestalt*. The theme of development is abetted, however, by a series of shifts of alliances--with anything around that happens to be wearing pants, for instance. Others are helpful, though partial, expedients--Janie, and the twins' running away, for instance. The very number and the progression of the alliances furnish a forceful picture of the process of development: First were Lone and Evelyn, ill-fated but a start for Lone toward further alliances; after being beaten by Mr. Kew, Lone is taken in by the Prodds; Lone eventually becomes aware of a sense of membership with them; Lone takes in the twins and Janie, then Baby; he learns from Baby about the desirability of the idiot-innocent merger; finally, for Lone, there is the alliance with Alicia Kew wherein she furnishes him with information, and he furnishes her with physical gratification (the alliance with Gerry is told by Gerry, hence not too important in the Lone scheme). Hip's alliance with the Army turns out to be unsatisfying, but Janie's with the twins is the first one in the book which leads to a feeling of happiness for the allies. Gerry forms a temporary alliance with Stern, which proves to be a curative one; the gestalt he reveals himself to be is, of course, the alliance which leads to the best end, and was even good when Lone, the kids, and Gerry were in the woods "bleshing". ("Lone said maybe it was a mixture of 'blending' and 'meshing,' but I don't think he believed that himself. It was a lot more than that." p. 94) The kids' alliance with Alicia is dangerous to them, mainly because she is so selfish--wanting them to "be" her children; even worse was the brief telepathic alliance Gerry formed accidentally with Alicia, which led to his "Baby is three" occlusion. Finally, Janie takes Hip in, and Hip is cured; then the gestalt takes Hip in and it is cured. The culmination has been mentioned, the grand alliance of gestalts.

The merger of Hip into the Gerry-gestalt has been prepared for skillfully by means of a Gerry-Hip parallel which operates in terms of both form and content. They were introduced at the same time in Part One, and both dropped after one passage, each to receive a whole part about him subsequently. Both were rescued from dirt and hunger. (They both even get sick after being fed the first time by Janie.) Both have mental occlusions. Hip learned when he was a child that "I was useless and the things I wanted were by definition useless" (p. 213); Gerry just wanted to do what comes naturally--both lacked "values." Janie wanted to show Gerry how Hip had decayed, rather than living up to his brightness and promise; when Gerry

went manic-depressive (the term is used by Janie and Hip), the same process of decay was taking place. Finally, Hip draws the parallel overtly:

> Listen to me, orphan boy, I am a hated boy too. You were persecuted; so was I ... Listen to me, Miss Kew's boy, you lost yourself for years until you went back and learned again. So did I. Listen to me, Gerry. You discovered that no matter how great your power, nobody wanted it. So did I. You want to be wanted. You want to be needed. So do I. [p. 228]

"Multiplicity is our first characteristic; unity our second" Gerry learns at the end. The unity is, of course, achieved through the process of what I have called alliances or mergers. In a sense, the process is "physicalized" through touching, or physical contact; e.g., if the idiot and the innocent "so much as touch" they will be changed. Instead of listing all the touch images, I shall merely mention one, and note that the rest can all be considered to be the mechanism for various of the mergers. The call Evelyn "sends" to Lone is worth mentioning. It becomes, to him, " *Touch me, touch me*." The importance of touching is played up through a song Evelyn sings (p. 11) about touches which horrifies Alicia, the fact that the Kews "don't touch one another," and the whipping Lone gets as a result of his having touched Evelyn. The emphasis and repetition of touching are a cue; they would not, it seems, be there unless there were some necessity in terms of the work as a whole--and necessity there is, as explained just above.

Another group of elements relating to the theme of development are those pertaining to communication. Lone develops the power of communication with the Prodds, enabling him to become "human." Janie can communicate with Baby, enabling the gestalt to form. The psychiatric process is accomplished through Gerry's communicating his problems to Stern, and in overcoming his occlusion he is able, in a sense, to regain communication with his memory. Stern, by the way, notes at some length the human failing of inability to communicate. Miss Kew wouldn't even talk to Gerry until he mentioned Lone. Hip thinks at Gerry, and communicates to him his conclusions about morality. And finally, on the incorporation with the *über-gestalt*, there is "happy and fearless communion." (p. 231)

The concept of morality is not sprung upon the reader at the end of the development of the communication. It, too, undergoes a form of development in the incidents relating to moral issues. For instance. when Gerry and Lone were stealing food and Gerry took a bright yellow ball point pen, Lone made him put it back, saying "We only take what we need." (p. 96) There is a rudimentary sense of morality here, but Gerry does not comprehend: "morality" must be a conscious thing, and in his case a learned one. Stern's explanation of Gerry's loneliness is in terms of Gerry's lack of

morality, and once again Gerry does not understand what is meant. With Hip the case is altogether different. His very name, which we finally learn is from Hippocrates, suggests the rather highly developed moral code of the Hippocratic oath. Also, he is called prissy on numerous occasions and quotes Scripture at least once. The merging of the amoral Gerry and the over-moral Hip is an instance of the dialectic process (which is the form of most of the communication: question, answer, new question ...): embarassment with unconcern into a proper outlook.

Janie brought Hip to Gerry so that Gerry might learn to be ashamed, so that he might see how Hip's original brightness and promise have been prostituted. The parallel between Gerry and Hip suggests, of course, that this is the same thing which has happened to the gestalt. Hip understands what Janie wants. He realizes that "Morals: they're nothing but a coded survival instinct!" (p. 220) But they apply to an individual in a society. What Gerry needs, having at this stage no society of which to be a member, is what Hip defines as an "ethos," a code for species survival. He over-comes Gerry physically, with the help of the twins. However, he realizes that the moral act of killing a "monster" is superseded by the ethical act of allowing the species to progress in the "superman." He then frees Gerry and places himself in his power. Gerry extracts his thoughts and *is* ashamed. This accomplished, the *über-gestalt* is able to contact Gerry and explain to him the final stage of the development--the humanistic ethic which regards the gestalts as a part of humanity, revering humanity as its parent, and a partner in the progress of the human race.

The final area of development suggested by incidents is that of "authority," or power. Kew loses his authority to Lone, who in turn loses his temporarily to the Prodds. The Prodds lose their authority to Lone, who also gains authority over the kids (who had usurped authority from their respective parents). Due to Lone's, and later Gerry's, weakness, Baby is actually the boss of the gestalt in its initial phases. Alicia's attempt to take over causes Gerry to kill her, but before he can assert himself he must temporarily cede the authority to Stern. Janie rebels against Gerry's misuse of his authority, and enables Hip to become dominant. Hip's tenure is brief, but useful; and when he relinquishes the power to Gerry, Gerry immediately acknowledges the authority of the *über-gestalt*. But the *über-gestalt* is guided by the ethos, so the final authority rests where it should, with the philosophical sanction of humanism.

In terms of images, the theme of development is implemented in three major areas. First is Nature and natural images, which are linked throughout with growth and shelter. The drives mentioned earlier are an example. Also, Prodd's being a farmer, a grower of things, relates to his developing Lone.

Lone waits in the woods for completion, and the original dwelling of the gestalt was a covered-over hut-cave in a mountain. Hip's investigation of "natural" phenomena (the strange behavior of proximity fuses over the area which turned out to have the anti-gravity device in it) leads him to Gerry. These and other instances of natural images culminate in the description of the *über-gestalt* as "a laughing thing with a human heart and a reverence for its human origins, smelling of sweat and new-turned earth rather than suffused with the pale odor of sanctity." (p. 233) The major theme of development or completion is a natural process, and in the context of the book, Nature is a good thing.

A second area of imagery which suggests development is that of animal images. Lone's progression from description as animal to description as human being has already been noted. Throughout, the animal nature of people is treated as a bad thing. Alicia makes sounds like a goose's honking. Gerry lived like a sewer rat. Janie describes the gestalt's lot as being like living on a desert island with a herd of goats. She felt human when she thought of Hip as a big glossy stallion or a bantam rooster when she first saw him, suggesting that the divorcement is between humanity and low animality but that proud and noble animals have something in common with what humans should be. There are many other uses of animal imagery; as a matter of fact, probably more than any other type. However, the only other instance I should like to cite is the death of Prodd's horse: Let us note that its death impels Lone to build the anti-gravity generator which in turn brings Hip into the picture. That is, it serves as a very important causal link in the overall process of development.

The anti-gravity device and its importance suggest the final area of imagery I shall note here: technological images. Hip's attempts to progress through making various electronic gadgets are failures. Lone's helping Prodd push the truck out of the mud causes Prodd to call him a hydraulic jack. Baby is like an adding machine. The initial description Lone offers Alicia of the gestalt is in terms of radio transmitters and receivers. For the most part I believe that a negative value (because the descriptions are among the group of faulty assumptions) is being attached to dehumanized technology. Lone needs an ax with which to build a shelter, and this is all right; but when Hip plays games with an elevator's control panel, he gets in trouble.

At first blush, it may appear surprising to find technology cast in a bad light in a science fiction story. Having read Chapter I, the reader will not, I hope, be shocked. The point is that a view of "hardware" technology as possibly inimical to humanity is both philosophically plausible, and biologically necessary in the scheme of hypotheses which underlies *More Than Human*, which is not at all guilty of the charges of Scientism or plumping for

technological progress at all costs. It is, rather, a concrete instance of the humanism of which I believe modern science fiction is "guilty." The "technological impact upon Society" definition of science fiction cuts both ways, and the possibility that technology may be biologically bad (for the mind should be used rather than the gadget) is just as valid a basis for a work as are the sociological ills which technology abets in *Brave New World*, *1984*, or *The Big Ball of Wax*. And to the reader who actively agrees with humanism, *More Than Human* is more satisfying than the satires just mentioned which endorse a humanistic approach only passively, through condemning the opposite approach of one form or another of tyranny.

To return from the digression, I believe that any further enumeration of objective factors from the novel would be of little purpose. The aspect of Complexity could be further traced out, to be sure, but the major inter-relations have been indicated, and further attempts on my part to point out complexities would take us into the area of personal opinion and "free association," thus irritating rather than enlightening the reader. To sum up before turning to a discussion of Beardsleyan Affective Reasons for liking *More Than Human*, we have seen that it is quite tightly unified, and highly complex. The unity of the book lies in its major theme of Development to Completion (which is unification itself, as a matter of fact)--which arises from the interplay of the opposed themes of Incompleteness and Progress. Further, the unity is supported by the formal aspects of the book, for instance the *method* of incomplete revelation as supporting and adding to the *theme* of Incompleteness.

2. "Affective Reasons"

It would be easy to say simply that I found the plot of *More Than Human* "intriguing," the final affirmation "uplifting," and the prose "scintillating"-- to borrow some phrases. It would also defeat the purpose of this paper, which is an attempt to establish that science fiction, at least occasionally, has literary merit. While the "objective reasons" cited above may not be convincing alone, an attempt to specify several of the grounds on which the book may be expected to appeal psychologically to most readers should be adequate to tip the balance. An induction based on introspection, which is what I propose to perform, is admittedly lacking in philosophical rigor; but it is also what most critics seem to do when they make a value judgement. The best I can do, then, is merely to list and comment on some of the features of the novel which strike me as appealing.

To begin, I must make two confessions; one of them has no effect on the value judgement, the other does but need not be endorsed by the reader.

That is, 1) I find myself in sympathy with the humanistic philosophy with which the book ends and which is a necessary result of the context which is established; and 2) I am to a large extent in sympathy with those literary critics who apply psychoanalytic considerations in their criticism.

Now the philosophy expressed or implied by a work of art should not detract from its artistic merit, but may even *add* to it if the presentation is skillful. As an example, let us note that Mr. Nabakov is not Humbert Humbert; whether or not nymphetophilia repels us does not detract from the skill with which the author maintains his persona and rationalizes its views to itself, and I am ashamed to even mention the possiblity of a reader's reacting to *Lolita* by piously proclaiming that we really shouldn't all go out and seduce twelve year olds and that Mr. Nabakov is simply disgusting for even suggesting it. By the same token, Sturgeon is to be commended for his development of the proposition that humanity must be considered to be the parent of its evolutionary successor not because we as readers prefer humanism to the God of the Old or New Testaments or to the Proletariat or to the Almighty Dollar, but because he has underpinned the need for a parent in the broken family relationships which were causal links in the formation of the gestalt emotionally, and in the importance of species survival philosophically. My personal endorsement of the philosophy has, as I said, no bearing on the value judgment I shall finally make; but the artist's presentation of it is a distinct plus value for the novel.

As to the appeal of the plot, my second confession does have a bearing. In psychoanalytic terms, the "humanizing' of Lone in Part One represents a discovery of the familiar, which Freud (in "Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious") posits as being pleasurable in itself. The supernormal powers of Lone and especially of Gerry in Part Two appeals to the childhood fantasy of the omnipotence of thoughts, and the pleasure of vicariously experiencing Gerry's omnipotence (which is effected through thought) is sufficient to compensate for the distaste one feels for his nastiness. (I omit sadistic appeal on the grounds of slight relevance to plot, and also because most readers probably would not admit to feeling it.) Finally, Gerry becomes "humanized" and becomes part of an omnipotent thinker, thus appealing to both of the principles which underlie the appeals of the first two parts. The idiocy of Lone and the nastiness of Gerry give rise to a superficial weakness of the book in that the reader is less likely to identify with them. However, not only can he enjoy feeling superior to Lone (for a while) and being powerful with Gerry, but also when the rather conventionally "human" character of Hip bcomes the major character in Part Three and the unhuman gestalt becomes humanized at the end, the reader is both relieved and satisfied by the affirmation. In rule-of-thumb psychological terms, the alien quality of Lone and Gerry operates as a goad,

pushing the reader into sympathy with Hip, and into sympathy--though not necessarily belief--with the conclusion.

I should like to consider three other major areas which seem to furnish grounds for general psychological appeal before simply tossing into the pot some random factors which I enjoyed and which I think may well be shared by most readers. The first of these is "magic." Quite possibly an off-shoot of the omnipotence of thought fantasy, magical phenomena are enjoyable to contemplate, and their vicarious performance is appealing psychologically. Things magical proliferate in *MoreThan Human*: the mind-reading eyes "with their irises just about to spin" of Lone and Gerry; the call Lone feels which leads him to Evelyn; the "miracles" of Lone's "growing up," as the Prodds call them; Janie's telekinetic powers; the twins' teleportation. Not only are there the concrete instances just mentioned, but also there are the magical associations enjoyed by the concept of immortality, and by the giving of names to things (magically gaining power over them) which goes on throughout. To be brief, there is magic in the book and magic is fun.

Second, there is the area of mystery. The many examples cited as incomplete revelations earlier need not be rehashed. Let us note, however, that they all lend an air of mystery to the enterprise. Who is Thompson? Why is Janie interested in Hip? The natural desire of the reader to learn the answers gives a sense of speed, of pace, to the book. One rushes from revelation to revelation, carried along with the tide of the action. The presence of mystery or "suspense" in a piece of literature is also grounds for psychological appeal.

Third, and perhaps less clearly appealling, is the area of syntax or diction-- the problem of *how* the author "says" what he says. There are two aspects here: First is the "mood," or tone, of the narration, which should relate to the action to qualify as good style--form complementing content if you will. Even a cursory examination shows that this is indeed the case: the opening pages are slow and hazy, the descriptions indirect, suggesting the lost and aimless existence of the Idiot; Mr. Key is dealt with in a straight exposition, befitting his crudeness; Evelyn appears in "poetic" passages, as she is an innocent and hence the object of at least one sort of poetry; Gerry snaps at Stern when called Sonny, "Look, if a midget walks in here, what do you say--sit over there, Shorty?" (p. 79) thus establishing a proper hostility toward the therapist; the sheriff's abominable grammar show him up as a no-good, and gives a comic tone because of the contrast with his attempted gravity; and as a last example, Hip's grammar starts off as bad as the sheriff's (though he regains his powers of clear speech soon), suggesting his beaten condition.

In the second aspect of the syntax lies the problem: that is, the so-called

"poetic prose" which occurs here and there throughout the book. Not only is it difficult to define what is meant by "poetic" prose except by pointing at it, but some readers may feel that its use is an affectation, rather than a contribution to the whole of the work. In an instance such as the first paragraph of the book which was applauded by Demon Knight, the justification is clear in terms of mood:

> The idiot lived in a black and gray world, punctuated by the white lightning of hunger and the flickering of fear. His clothes were old and many-windowed. Here peeped a shinbone, sharp as a cold chisel, and there in the torn coat were ribs like the fingers of a fist. He was tall and flat. His eyes were calm and his face was dead. [p. 3]

> The disembodied impression induced by the indirect description and the imagery of the "black and gray world" and the "white lightning" place the Idiot in an other-worldly, unhuman context. The paradox of finding at a pinnacle the rugged foot of a mountain is also an effective image, suggesting the further "climb" which the gestalt is to undergo in the final parts of the book before it succeeds in knowing itself. A possibly bad example is Gerry's saying, when recounting to Stern his meeting with Lone and the kids, "The air had a haze of smoke and such a wonderful heart-breaking, candy-and-crackling smell of food that a little hose squirted inside my mouth." (p. 88) Such a description is apparently not in keeping with Gerry's "nasty" character. However, this weakness is also a possible strength, for "poetry" has been associated with "goodness" through Evelyn, and the suggestion would seem to be that even Gerry has a latent, balancing modicum of goodness in him. This is reasonable, for if Gerry had been depicted as entirely bad, the final conversion to and acceptance of the ethos would be implausible.

Whether or not the majority of readers will agree with my general personal preference for "poetic prose" actually has very little bearing on the overall effect of the book on them. The "poetic prose" is a *possible* plus-value, but is not grounds for condemnation as its use, whether appreciated by the individual reader or not, can be justified in terms of the unities of the book.

To conclude the discussion of Affective Reasons, I should like to note four "gimmicks" which Sturgeon employs in various places which strike me as being effective touches--as evoking approbation, if you will. Most obvious of these is his use of meaningful names. "Kew" can be taken as punning on "cue," in the sense that the Kews furnish Lone's cue for getting into the real world and eventually becoming human. There might also be a covert

reference to Kew, the place, which is noted for its botanical gardens, for the trees around the estate and its foliage in general are important to the complex of Nature images. Prodd, of course, has only to lose the final "d" to describe literally what the Prodds do to Lone--they prod him out of his withdrawn state, out of his idiocy and into a reasonable facsimile of a comunicating human being. Stern is a beautiful name for an authority figure such as a psychiatrist. "Hip" connotes precisely the "wiseguy" nature of the young Hip Barrows to one familiar wtth the jazz idiom. Also, there is the possible pun from Janie to genie.

The multifarious barriers noted previously suggest to a fairly great extent a sexual symbolism. The penetration of barriers, especially in the case of Alicia, lends a covert air of sexual triumph to the enterprise. This consideration also would hold in terms of the telepathic process of which Lone and Gerry are capable, which is called "That--'opening up' thing" by Alicia at one point; "super" mental powers are common sexual fantasies. An overtone, granted, but one which probably elicits an unconscious response from the reader.

When Hip establishes dominance over Gerry, the symbol of authority is an eleven inch long knife procured for him by one of the twins. Much as I am loath to introduce cocktail party Freudianism into this discussion, it must be noted that there could be no more apt symbol of the acquisition of mastery than an eleven inch long, terribly phallic, knife. It's a very neat touch.

Finally, I should like to consider an overtone suggested by the repeated use of the same numbers throughout. Aside from a few "mystic" threes and sevens, the number which is thoroughly dominant is four. It takes the twins four days to develop their powers. Janie has to tell everything to Lone four times. The truck breaks down four times. Hip hadn't eaten for four days, and so on. The most important use of four-ness is not mentioned overtly, however. It is the composition of the gestalt itself, which has a head (Lone or Gerry), a memory (Baby), environment manipulators (Janie and the twins), and a conscience (Hip). Lumping Janie and the twins together may seem forced, but the title of the second part of the book (before Hip is integrated) *is* "Baby is Three" and the suggestion is fairly clear. The importance of the tetrapartite nature of the gestalt organism and its being emphasized by all the other fours' cropping up is probably best accounted for in Jungian terms. The similarity of the *über-gestalt* to the Jungian collective unconscious is not too farfetched, and with Jung on the scene due note must be taken of his notion of the mandala--"The 'magic circle' which in all cultures, even the most primitive, seems to represent a wholeness to which parts contribute in an essentially fourfold manner"[3] according to a commentator. Children's drawings of people are supposed to be strongly

influenced by the mandala: "In their drawings of people the circular head comes first, later elaborated by legs, then by trunk and arms. The four limbs are very prominent, at first with little attention to body proportions."[4] So the reason for the "rightness" of all the fours we find would seem to be that the number has connotations of wholeness and unity by virtue of its association with the mandala. The explanation may be over-ingenious, but the overpowering numerousness of fours in the book required note, and my explanation makes sense in the context of the book as process of unification. The fact that such connotations do apply to fours indicates that, whether or not he was conscious of it, Sturgeon's frequent use of them is both significant and, perhaps, effective. Once again, however, the general reader-effect is hard to estimate.

Simply because the discussion *could* be so long, the above treatment of "affective reasons" has been deliberately kept quite short. There are probably as many grounds for psychological appeal as there are readers of any piece of literature, however, so the argument is not completable anyway. My suggestions do not intentionally omit any positive points; nor do they intentionally omit any possible grounds for adverse reactions which I think may occur.

Due to the complexity of the question of style on any level, I have merely mentioned some of the points which struck me as good and have sidestepped the larger problem of "style" in general. Also, I have minimized the knotty problem of "poetic prose," as both the very definition of it and also its realm of application are quite subjective. Unless there are reasons dictated by the work's context for not using it, I enjoy poetic prose for itself ..... and at least some of Sturgeon's uses *are* complementary to the content.

A further reason for not going into more of the ramifications of the Affective Reasons is that it is unnecessary to do so in the frame of reference of this paper. We are merely attempting to determine the presence or absence of literary merit in science fiction. We are not looking for greatness, merely goodness. Suffice it to say that there are no serious objections to *More Than Human* and that by normal critical standards it is a good book--it *has* literary merit.

B. ... And Other Fish

In the following four brief analyses, I shall not endeavor to trace out the indicators of literary merit to the extent which I did above. Rather, I shall attempt to indicate briefly both the cognitive aspects of the stories and their

technical aspects, in order to present them in the light of "good" works of literature, following all four of the accepted criteria of Chapter II. The examples, by the way, are not picked because of any special claims to greatness they may have, but merely to show that good stories are to be found readily in science fiction if you look for them with an open mind--and also as counterexamples to some of the allegations cited in Chapter I.

1. "Disappearing Act"

Alfred Bester writes for radio and television, *Holiday* (columnist), and has done some highly praised science fiction, including the Hugo-winning novel, *The Demolished Man*. "Disappearing Act" is one of eleven of his short stories appearing in *Starburst*.(Signet Books, New York, 1958) In it, a war is being fought: "This one wasn't the last war or a war to end war. They called it the War for the American Dream." The war, given the date 2112 later, is being run by a General Carpenter:

> There are fighting generals (vital to an army), political genera1s (vital to an admnistration), and public relations generals (vital to a war). General Carpenter was a master of public relations. Forthright and Four-Square, he had ideals as high and as understandable as the mottoes on money. In the mind of America he *was* the army, the administration, the nation's shield and sword and stout right arm.. His ideal was the American Dream.

The note of the American Dream is sounded throughout; to give just one example, "We are struggling for the Ideal of civilization; for Culture, for Poetry, for the Only Things Worth Preserving." He is continually calling for experts: "Every man and woman must be a specific tool for a specific job." The climax of the war, the narration informs us, takes place in a ward of an Army Hospital. To do an injustice to the story, and skipping the detail and order of presentation, what happens is, briefly, this: the patients have been disappearing from the ward. Thinking he is onto teleportation, Carpenter assigns experts to the ward to find out what's happening; one of them overhears a reference to Diamond Jim Brady (the reader has already been presented with three scenes following three of the patients in the "past"). After going through a Lapidary, a Semanticist, a Genealogist, and an Archaeologist, he finally is referred to an Historian, Bradley Scrim, who had been at twenty years hard labor, who identifies the man. The historian then is sent to the ward and comes back the next night to dispel Carpenter's notion that they have time travel as a weapon for the war by explaining that the "pasts" are thoroughly anachronistic--Brady coexisting with the Eisenhower election, Disraeli in a Rolls Royce with another of the patients--

and says, 'My God, Carpenter, *this* is your American dream. It's miracle-working, immortality, Godlike creation ..." But, Scrim continues, he can't figure out how to do it himself; a poet is needed, "an artist who understands the creation of dreams" (no scientism here!):

> Carpenter snapped up his intercom. "Send me a poet, " he said ... He waited, and waited ... and waited ... while America sorted feverishly through its two hundred and ninety millions of hardened and sharpened experts, its specialized tools to defend the American Dream of Beauty and Poetry and the Better Things of Life. He waited for them to find a poet, not understanding the endless delay, the fruitless search; not understanding why Bradley Scrim laughed and laughed and laughed at this final, fatal disappearance.

End of story.

Now, there are two types of satire operating here: The first is a general sort, good more for laughs than for thoughts; the second is social satire of a rather high order. To give a few examples of the first sort: "Our Dream," says Carpenter, "is at one with the gentle Greeks of Athens, with the noble Romans of ... er ... Rome." The army has sorted out all the possible kinds of injury, and segregates them into wards A through S; naturally, the dreamers are in Ward T. When Carpenter first sees three patients disappear, he calls for a combat-shock expert and an alienist; the first says, "War jitters," and the second, "Mass illusion," in perfectly stereotyped manner which scarcely requires an "expert" to parrot. But the broadest satire of all is Carpenter himself: he is so stultified by his reliance on experts that he starts to call for an Entomologist when Scrim says, "I'm the last singing grasshopper in the ant heap"; he goes through a full five experts to identify Brady; he is a parrot, a nothing who is shocked when Scrim talks about a poet's being needed, who doesn't understand when Scrim answers his "We're fighting for Poetry and Culture and Education and the Finer Things in Life" line with "Which means you're fighting to preserve me ...That's what I've devoted my life to. And what do you do with me? Put me in jail."

The whole "tool chest" refrain wherein every man and woman is a "tool" trained for a job is one of the tools of Bester's social satire. When "the experts worked over Dimmock [the director of the hospital] with pre-conscious softeners, id releases and superego blocks" followed by "every form of physical and mental pressure," but boggle at applying "pressure to the sick men and the woman," Carpenter rages "For God's sake, don't be squeamish. We're fighting a war for civilization. We've got to protect our ideals no matter what the price. Get to it!" The American Dream becomes an object of scorn in being talked about as "theory" but ignored in practice;

however, the criticism is not merely domestic--it applies to the whole political farce of false, resounding labels.

Technically, Bester performs beautifully. Perhaps the most obvious point is the pun in the title, applying it both to the patients and ultimately to the American Dream--both of which disappear from the "real" world. He also does a good deal with pace: Carpenter's staccato sentences suggest both command and emptiness, simpleness; when Scrim is explaining that the patients are visiting anachronistic "pasts"--and the process is a painful one because Carpenter isn't too bright--the passage is punctuated with one-sentence paragraphs as follow: "Carpenter nodded ... Carpenter looked expectant ... Carpenter looked puzzled ... Carpenter goggled." Also, for his satire he is relying on the technique of "extrapolation," but they are quite different from Sturgeon's evolutionary exptrapolations; over-specialization, taking *a* general to represent *the* Army, and the substitution of slogans for ideals are all present today although they have not expanded to the point which Bester portrays in the story ...or have they?

Another "technical " point lies in Carpenter's name, in which a double allusion seems to operate: to John Crowe Ransom's poem "Captain Carpenter," and through its quixotic Christ figure back to the original (but in this case the Saviour doesn't save).

2. "Poor Little Warrior"

Another good anthology is Brian Aldiss's *No Time Like Tomorrow* (also Signet, same price, 1959). Aldiss won a special plaque at the last World Science Fiction Convention as "the year's most promising writer," and is also Literary Editor of the *Oxford Mail*. The plot of "Poor Little Warrior" can be recounted quite succinctly: Claude Ford is hunting a brontosaurus, having travelled back in a twenty-second century travel agency's time machine. He is a failure in life, unhappily married and unable to stand "the whole awful, hopeless business of trying to adjust to an overcomplex environment, of trying to turn yourself into a cog." Though he finds the bronto awesome, he kills it anyway, hoping to achieve some sort of catharsis--which he does not do: "Poor little warrior, science will never invent anything to assist the titanic death you want in the contra-terrene caverns of your fee-fi-fo-fumblingly fearful id!" Before returning to his time-mobile, he turns back to the dead creature, regretting the necessity of returning to his wife Maude, and the whole mess of 2181 AD:

> So you pause, and as you pause, something lands socko on your back, pitching you face forward into tasty mud. You struggle and scream as lobster claws tear at your neck and throat. You try to

pick up the rifle but cannot, so in agony you roll over, and next second the crab-thing is greedying it on your chest. You wrench at its shell, but it giggles and pecks your fingers off. You forgot when you killed the bronto that its parasites would leave it, and that to a little shrimp like you they would be a deal more dangerous than their host. You do your best, kicking for at least three minutes. By the end of that time there is a whole pack of the creatures on you. Already they are picking your carcass loving clean. You're going to like it up there on top of the Rockies; you won't feel a thing.

The most striking feature of the story is its diction, especially its overwhelming number of almost Joycean puns. They have two characteristics: at the beginning of the story the puns run to the almost preciously clever; by the end, they are malignantly sardonic. In the beginning, there is a play on Claude's hearing the bronto's heart beat "as the ventricle keeps miraculous time with the auricle. [Paragraph] Time for listening to the oracle is past ..." In reference to the dung-eating parasite birds, the close of a mock-travelogue which was describing their process: "and now as the sun stinks in the Jurassic West, we say 'Fare well on that diet . . .'" By the end (the story is only five pages long), the birds leave the dead bronto: "They know when a good thing turns bad, and do not wait for the vultures to drive them off; all hope abandon, ye who entrail here." And the final play is on the grotesque image of the *crab*-things eating "a little shrimp like you."

There is more to the story than meets the paranomasiac's eye, though. There is double-edged satire operating, both on the weak individual who tries to "escape" the real world and on the society which not only drives him out but also provides a commercial means for doing it. The "moral ", if you will, seems to be "Thus be it with all escapists"; so the story can be read both as a personal tragedy, on the "everyday" level demanded by Arthur Koestler, and as one which is universal in application. Whatever the source of his psychological needs, his own weakness or Society's over-complexity, Claude's tragedy is amplified by the fact that he is legitimately trying to prove himself a man, to assert himself, to combat Nature . . . and he fails so miserably. The final mock-solace of "you won't feel a thing" heightens the effect, for in a sense his death solves all his problems, though perhaps not in exactly the way he had intended.

Aldiss employs a technical device in inducing both the sense of tragedy and the satire which bears mention. He accomplishes a complete shift in tone from the matter-of-fact "Man--though perhaps contemptible--dominating Nature" tone of the opening to the tragic "Man powerless and thoroughly

dominated by Nature" tone of the close. This is managed syntactically, by employing a nominal second-person narration throughout but playing on the properties of "you" as a pseudo first-person and pseudo third-person. That is, he starts "Claude Ford knew exactly how it was to hunt a bronto-saurus. You crawled heedlessly through the mud among the willows . . ." The "you" represents the generalized third-person "one", or, in other words, represents the first-person to the speaker; in the middle of the story, the "you" becomes accusing (though not accusative). "This time the bogey-man is real, Claude, just as you wanted it to be, and this time you really have to face up to it before it turns and faces you again." Though the shift may not be unambiguous earlier in the story (the above occurs almost exactly halfway through), here is marked the beginning of the vicious criticism which builds to the wonderfully mocking "Poor little warrior" line.

A final point about the applicability of the story is hinted at by the description of the bronto's eyes after Claude has shot it: "With no indecision, those century-old lights, dim and sacred, go out. Those cloisters are closed till Judgment Day." If you're fond of allegory, or partial to Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, the bronto can represent God, herein ritually (and actually) slain; but without God, man is the prey of the universe, hence the parasites are freed to kill Claude. Aside from the religious terms just quoted, there is a bit of internal evidence in the line "God, if adolescence did not exist it would be unnecessary to invent it!" and the atheistic sentiment from which it is derived. Although it's cheating, I can't resist pointing out that there is a good deal of Nietzschean influence in at least three of his other stories--which are concerned more or less with dying at the right time ("Beyond Good and Evil")--, and the "God is dead" line comes from the same place.

Of the grounds for recommending the story, two have been mentioned briefly: personal tragedy, and the satirizing of an undesirable individual (which are not at all incompatible). Two others are: 1) the gadget (time machine), which is not dominant in the story; and 2) Aldiss's whole prose style, which is brilliant. In the latter regard, I should at least mention his "poetry": Not only does he employ a great number of images, but almost invariably his images operate through the poetic modes of simile or metaphor: "Its eyes gleamed with the liveliness of a week-dead corpse's big toe"; "Slowly, a squeeze of cold reptile blood toothpastes down one cheek"; "the midget maggot of life is dead in the creature's skull." The sardonicism is necessary; perhaps it is nowhere more forceful than the "tasty mud" Claude is pitched into--it's gallows humor here, and that is just one more factor contributing to the horror of the final paragraphs--read them again, they get even worse (which means better, in terms of the artistry).

3. "The Queen Bee"

The final two stories I shall discuss are included only for their content, as I want to clear up a few points which I couldn't include in Chapter I. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with the writing, but it is by no means so "dense" or "rich" as the previous ones mentioned--that is, the complexity is less great, to revert to Chapter II's terms--, and I am far more interested in what's going on in them.

Randall Garrett's "The Queen Bee" appeared in the December, 1958, *Astounding*. An intersteller liner explodes. There are only seven survivors (four men and three women) who manage to get a lifeboat to an inhabitable planet. The title of the story applies to Elissa Krand, a spoiled and egotistical rich man's daughter. Now, the law dictates that survirors are to try to populate any planet they become marooned on. When one of the other women becomes pregnant Elissa kills her and also the third woman. She then sets out to play the "queen bee," and demands service from the four men, threatening to abort any children they might force on her. The men are restrained from killing her by their desire to propagate the race, although they all hate her. Finally they decide to make of her a literal queen bee, and perform a lobotomy: "One year later, the first child born on the planet Generatrix was a lovely baby girl, named Tina."

The story is dealing with the solution of a problem of the future. Problem: to perpetuate the race when the only available female refuses to cooperate. Solution: a lobotomy, leaving her placid and mindless but not damaging her genetically. Implications: Society and the Race are of paramount importance; the solution is a hard one, but so is the universe (cf., "Poor Little Warrior"), and if Man is to survive he must fight the Universe on its own terms.

Further, sex is dealt with here, and the one female who is afraid of men, and hence manifests the "spinsterly distaste" *Time* reports Amis objecting to, is talked out of her stand. For the interested trend hound, I would suggest Sturgeon's "To Marry Medusa" *(Galaxy*, August 1958) for one example of a different view of sex; not only is there a fine example of a nasty seduction there, but the plot hinges upon still another seduction's being successful.

"The Queen Bee" makes sense in its own terms and is well-written, although not brilliantly so. Aggressions and castrations and Oedipus complexes aside, it's a pretty good story.

4. *The Puppet Masters*

Just as every discussion of literary theory seemingly must contain a reference to Aristotle (to say nothing of Freud, nowadays), every discussion of science fiction should probably contain a reference to Robert Heinlein. His forte is the delineation of a future society as background, as opposed to the out-and-out satires *of* the societies (as foregrounds) often encountered elsewhere. His scientific background may or may not have anything to do with it, but he is a great story teller. Though among science fiction fans you may hear Sturgeon or Clarke mentioned as "best" author instead of Heinlein, if you ask for the top few, invariably you will hear "And of course, Heinlein." Instead of discussing style after a plot summary, I should like merely to state in advance that he is quite direct and un-"complex."

The Puppet Masters is also out in Signet paperback, 1952. The narrator is an agent of the Section, a super-secret supra-FBI which is directly responsible to the President. He tells the history of an invasion of Earth by slug-like, football-sized parasitic creatures from Titan which attach themselves to hosts (they want humanity for their next host) and completely take over the hosts' minds, ultimately causing the host's death because the parasites are completely uninterested in the care and feeding of their hosts. The invasion is beaten back, leaving many dead humans and planetwide seminudism (so that any remaining parasites may be detected) in its wake. It's a good adventure story, quite exciting and gripping; however, the reason I mention it here is contained in the last two pages, when the narrator is concluding his history preparatory to leaving the planet with Operation Vengeance, a task force to wipe out the parasites on their home satellite, Titan. The philosophy expressed is quite prevalent as an underlying motif in science fiction, related, I believe, to the humanism so often noted. I shall quote selected passages, which delineate, in what one might call the rather homely prose of the first-person narrator, the point of view that Man must make his own place in the universe:

> This is for keeps and we intend to show those slugs that they made the mistake of tangling with the toughest, meanest, deadliest, most unrelenting--and ablest [!]--form of life in this section of space, a critter that can be killed but can't be tamed. . . Whether we make it or not, the human race has got to keep up its well-earned reputation for ferocity. The price of freedom is the willingness to do sudden battle, anywhere, any time, and with utter recklessness. If we did not learn that from the slugs, well--"Dinosaurs, move over! We are ready to become extinct:" . . . We are ready to tranship. I feel exhilarated. Puppet masters--the free men are coming to kill you! *Death and Destruction!*

Science fiction *is* used to express philosophies, and here we see one which

makes the happy synthesis of being both optimistic *and* realistic--there is hope, but success is not automatic to the pure of heart. The optimism is a refreshing change from the pessimistic sort of mainstream writing cited by Rosalie Moore in Chapter I; the realism is a refreshing change from the perennially "upbeat," "slick" fiction. In short, science fiction is a field worthy of consideration from both entertainment-seekers and "serious readers."

Chapter IV: Of Tygers and Men, A Conclusion or Two

We have reached the point at which we have a good deal of evidence for agreeing with a statement of Dr. Treguboff's, which she put forth quite early in her thesis:

> Science fiction is a subject of many popular misconceptions. It is believed, for example, that it is a form of pulp fiction, with no literary merit, whose content is about gadgets, space adventures, and monsters, and whose readers and authors are people of small education and smaller literary discriminations. Little, if any, factual basis exists for these beliefs. (pp.24-5)

Of course, not all of her assertions are amenable to statistical treatment--this is one of the reasons why my thesis was necessary. However, I am not attempting to draw the cloak of statistical/scientific respectability about science fiction on the basis of the quotation; the point is that Dr. Treguboff read a good deal of science fiction, and did so under the enforced objectivity of her panel, and after so reading was convinced that the above remarks were justifiably to be made in her doctoral dissertation. I stress the source merely because one is far more likely to be certain of one's ground before taking stands in a thesis than in a periodical article. Science fiction, then, can convince others, on the basis of intuitive and/or statistical evidence, that it is more than pulp.

The logic behind the evidence I have discussed was as follows: after reading and sorting out numerous critical opinions, I saw that critics object to either the content of science fiction or to its form. The content, we saw, can be both morally and cognitively valuable--and has been so not merely in a few exceptional cases but in enough cases that it may be considered to be a regular occurence--and a few of these cases were illustrated in the text. The form, too, can satisfy conventional critical criteria; this was illustrated in a lengthy reading of a Sturgeon novel, and shorter readings of Bester and Aldiss short stories. Hence, science fiction *is* more than pulp, on the basis of evidence which is literary criticism and not mere unsupported intuition.

The first conclusion I should like to offer is this: it is obvious to even the most casual reader that not all the science fiction which is turned out even in the modern period is good literature; however, because there can be quite excellent stories in among the whole range of science fiction, it is clear that the critic and the general reader will be missing much if they ignore the field as a second-class citizen of literature--as "pulp", that is. Therefore, it is

incumbent upon "serious" critics and readers to deal seriously with science fiction, at the risk of otherwise missing valuable and enjoyable literary experiences, for it too can furnish all the characteristics which they praise in other fields of literature.

Actually, the above paragraph is the real conclusion of this thesis, at least on the grounds of the material I have already presented. However, I should like to offer an observation not based on the evidence above, but stemming from it, which might help to explain why the blind-spot in the "popular" view of science fiction has persisted. My second "conclusion" is that there exists a science fiction sensibility, a special temperament which is either induced or appealed to by science fiction. The sensibility is perhaps best characterized by an experience I had recently: I was sitting in on an Introduction to Literature class which was discussing Blake's "The Tyger," and found that while most of the people in the class were speaking of the Tyger as an evil entity about which the poet could not decide whether it had been created by God or by The Enemy, I was myself "for" the Tyger and in sympathy with it. That is, it seemed to me perfectly valid to look upon it as a self-generating entity, splendid in its vigor and strength, which in a sense had created itself, and which was capable of "taking on" the Universe. The instructor, with whom I was taking a special readings in poetry course, later confirmed the plausibility at least of my alternative view. Then I realized that my view of the Tyger was virtually identical to Heinlein's view of Man in *The Puppet Masters* (see Chapter III) and hence to a quite prevalent science fiction viewpoint. The science fiction sensibility, then, is one which actively entertains the notion that Man is not inherently depraved, but is at least *capable* of progress. "Down-beat" science fiction stories are usually warnings against the opposing view; a work like *On The Beach*, that is, is a warning type, but it would be more common (though less effective psychologically) to find in what we might call mainstream science fiction the hero going off with his lady love and submerging his submarine beneath the polar icecap until the radiation had died down--analogous to the action in Wylie's *When Worlds Collide*--instead of docilely surrendering to the hostile Universe. If I were the psychologist-statistician Dr. Treguboff is, I would have tested my notion by means of questioning fans and antis about their reactions to the Blake poem; however, I could not have constructed a valid test myself, and so I shall let the issue rest on the suggestion that there is a science fiction sensibility and that it can be operationally defined in terms of reaction to "The Tyger"--at least I shall let it rest until I write an *Astounding* article about it.

A final comment: John Campbell is changing the name of *Astounding* to *Analog Science Fact and Fiction* for the express purpose of not scaring off the pulp-conscious prospective buyer. Though the howls from the

sentimentalists are long and loud, I think it commendable that Campbell should be willing to meet the uninitiated more than half way, and hope that the pulp misappellation will soon be dispelled.

In conclusion, whether one is a Tyger-fancier or a critic who is looking for valuable literary experiences, science fiction is good stuff. I shall write at no greater length about it, because--and this is perhaps the *real* test of literary value--I'd rather go read it.

Footnotes

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Chapter III

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and belated **CORRIGENDUM**:

[*] Added in September, 2003 [!], when after summarizing the story for the amusement of the delightful sister (and, sadly, her boyfriend) of a current-day Elissa-type in character but even more aesthetically pleasing in looks femaleperson, after said delightful sister had assured me I was "far from alone" in my negative reaction to said femaleperson, I wanted to confirm the citation and discovered the bibliographic reference had been inadvertantly omitted all those years ago, so had dig back into Chapter 3 to (re)construct the citation.

"There's always one more typo."