

ALSo ...

**The Journal of the Alliance of
Literary Societies**

Volume 8, 2014

The Literary Fantastic



President: Jenny Uglow

Vice Presidents: Bill and Kathleen Adams

Chair: Linda J Curry

Hon. Treasurer & Membership Secretary: Julie Shorland

Hon. Secretary: Anita Fernandez-Young

Journal Editor: Linda J Curry

For more information on the Alliance of Literary Societies, contact Linda Curry (tel. 0121 475 1805, or email l.j.curry@bham.ac.uk) – or visit the ALS website at <http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk>.

Further copies of this journal may be purchased (£7 per copy) by contacting the ALS as above. A discount is available for members of societies subscribing to the Alliance.

If you wish to place an advertisement in future editions of this journal, please contact Linda Curry for rates.

© 2014 published by the Alliance of Literary Societies

ISSN 1753-9862

ALSo...

The Journal of the Alliance of Literary Societies

Volume 8, 2014

THE LITERARY FANTASTIC

Editor: Linda J Curry

If you wish to contribute an article to the 2015 edition of this journal, please contact Linda Curry by email to l.j.curry@bham.ac.uk or by post to 59 Bryony Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4BY, by 1 December 2014.

The theme for 2015 will be 'Literary Places'. Some examples of the sort of thing this might cover are:

- Some of the difficulties of purchasing, and maintaining literary properties.
- Battles to save literary properties – and tips for success.
- The influence of places (properties or areas) on writers.
- Place as 'muse'.
- The importance of place to some writers.
- Fictional places and perhaps the 'real' places on which they are based.
- The tourist trail.

As always, the theme is broad – open to many forms of interpretation and the above are just some ideas.

Would someone from your society be willing to contribute a piece for the journal – of around 1,000 to 1,500 words? If so, I would be delighted to hear from you. Remember – it's good advertising for your society!

Contents

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Editorial | |
| A Fantastic History Anita Fernandez-Young | 1 |
| In A Ghostly Company of Myth and Legend Nigel Wilson | 5 |
| Into the Unknown – the Fantastic and Science Fiction Patrick Parrinder | 10 |
| <i>An Eye for An Eye: Anthony Trollope's Gothic Novel?</i> Yvonne Siddle | 13 |
| I Don't Believe in Ghosts – a True Story Beryl Fleming | 21 |
| Revolt in Dystopia Tom Miller | 24 |
| Notes on Contributors | 29 |

Editorial

Welcome to ALSo... – the journal for the Alliance of Literary Societies. Each member society receives two free copies of the Journal and an electronic version is circulated to the email contact we have for your society. It is therefore essential that you keep us up to date on any changes to contact details.

As usual, this was a broad topic, and the articles reflect that. We begin with a lightening journey through two hundred years of fantasy, and move on to explore the connections between myth and fantasy, journeys into the unknown in science fiction, the 'gothic' in the writings of Anthony Trollope, a real ghost story, and the Dystopian novel. I do hope you enjoy reading this edition of ALSo... .

My thanks go to the contributors, and, as always, to the ALS for supporting the production of this journal.

Linda J Curry

A Fantastic History

Anita Fernandez-Young

When we contemplate the idea of the fantastic in literature two questions arise as to what we mean by 'literature' and what we mean by 'fantasy'. If I avoid the first question by assuming that all the writers whose societies belong to the Alliance of Literary Societies are therefore authors of literature, the second question only remains: what do we mean when we talk about 'fantasy'?

In her invitation to us to contribute to this present volume, Linda Curry suggests that we might consider the use of myth and legend in literature, the role of magic in literature, the gothic, the ghostly and the presence of witchcraft, and thereby suggests the wide range of elements which can appear in fantasy writing, whether it rises to the dignity of literature or remains at the level of popular genre writing. I do not propose to set out a list of factors which might lift a particular book out of the genre category, but in my reading of Victorian books in particular and novels in general I find fantasy elements appearing in a number of specific ways and for specific purposes.

The 18th century seems to be (as far as modern conceptions of fantasy go) the period in which the fantasy novel had its origins, and also the period in which a fascination with the fantastic seems to have become part of the mainstream of thinking and writing. The Arthurian and Carolingian myths and legends, the works of Chaucer, Spenser and Marlowe (the Faust legend has a very important place in fantasy writing) had for long provided inspiration for writers, but the development of the novel form sprang mainly from the determinedly realistic works of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding, from the journalism of the first and the didacticism of the second. However, two novels of the time which are now seen by the general public as 'children's books', while superficially similar (both purport to be written as accounts of real journeys undertaken by their authors) are dramatically different in their approach to arousing the interest of readers.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) demonstrates the resilience of the individual in extreme peril, fortified by his religion and knowledge of the real world. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) deliberately rejects the rational realism of Defoe, using the bizarre adventures of his protagonist to satirise the political and social realities of his day. The contrasts and rivalries of the 'realistic' and 'fantastic' strands of writing have never really disappeared: hence the notion of 'magical realism'.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, it is often the case that the author distances herself from the magical or fantastic elements of the writing by the use of tropes such as we find in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), which uses the convention of declaring the work to be a translation: thus, the fantastic aspects (it is usually regarded as the first 'gothic' novel) can be attributed to the original, unknown author. Sometimes, works of this kind are 'found' in an old bookshop or stationer's, and this type of framing device is still used today, for instance by Charles Palliser.

Walpole's novel and its many imitators - Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and Mrs Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) - are among the best known of the early gothics, along with Beckford's *Vathek*; and they and their influence on the young are satirised by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey*, first published in 1817, after her death.

The very next year saw the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* which, although written entirely in the gothic tradition, because of its use of the quasi-realist science of Dr Victor Frankenstein, is often cited as the first 'science fiction' novel.

The year after *Frankenstein* appeared, another work was published: this time by John Polidori, Byron's physician, generated at the same time as *Frankenstein*. This short novel was called *The Vampyre* and was, for a time, attributed to Byron himself. The enthusiasm of the Byron/Shelley coterie for gothic fiction gave rise in due course to a rich tradition of work infused with the vampire folklore of Eastern Europe, the rise of scientific experiment and forensic criminal investigation, and the power of the Faust myth and magic. This period at the turn of the 18th to 19th centuries has been influential in the founding and development of almost every genre of fiction in English and throughout Europe and America.

Its influence can be found throughout the major Victorian novelists (and some of the minor ones, too). Dickens was much influenced by his childhood reading of fairy tales and traveller's tales (such as *Gulliver's Travels*) but seems not to have been influenced by the gothic tales very much, preferring the tales of seamanship and travel. He loved the *Arabian Nights* tales, which had appeared in English for the first time in 1706, translated from the French version. The idea of a framing story giving an explanation for the story-telling itself, combined with the 'found' or 'translated' tale, was one that interested him as an editor and journalist, and it appears in his *Master Humphrey's Clock*, a publication which provided for a collection of stories, and again in the Mrs Lirriper stories where he invites a number of his writing friends to supply the stories of Mrs Lirriper's various lodgers.

His greatest use of the fantastic, of course, is in *A Christmas Carol*, where he uses the supernatural spirits of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Future to pursue the moral reform of the miser Scrooge. When the Spirit of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back to his solitary schooldays, they find Scrooge reading alone but with Ali Baba outside the window, accompanied by Valentine and Orson from one of the Carolingian romances, more characters from the Arabian Nights and Robinson Crusoe's Parrot. The characters have taken on a physical reality for the reader – rather as the Spirits do for Scrooge himself. The question is left open at the end of the story as to whether the spirits have any kind of reality or are just figments of Scrooge's imagination. *Pickwick Papers*, intended to be a satirical series of stories deriving humour from the pomposities and ignorance of young City men, also has its embedded stories, some of which have supernatural elements.

Among Dickens's friends and fellow authors, Wilkie Collins was perhaps the most influenced by the gothic. Following on from Edgar Allan Poe, the creator of the fictional detective, Collins, like Dickens, produced mysterious plots and ingenious explanations. Some of this they owed to the gothic novels of the 18th century, full of trap-doors, mysterious castles, gruesome villains, doubles, beautiful maiden victims, strange rituals and cliff-hangers. The idea of the detective, who uses scientific methods and reasoning to explain 'magical' occurrences, seems to be the forerunner of yet another modern genre fiction: Sherlock Holmes' solutions to mysteries are often regarded as little short of magic. Harrison Ainsworth, another of Dickens's friends, wrote *Auriol; or The Elixir of Life* (1844 - one year later than *Christmas Carol*), an extravagant fantasy set in the late 16th century as well as the 1830s, and drawing on the Faust legend for inspiration. Ainsworth's only fully fantasy novel, it has all the gothic elements of mystery, magic, evil, a lovely heroine or two, and a dastardly vampiric villain.

Perhaps the most enduring fantasy novel of the 19th century is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by 'Lewis Carroll' (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), followed by its sequel, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871). George MacDonald's several well-known fantasy novels, *The Princess and the Goblin*, *Phantastes*, *At the Back of the North Wind* and others meant that he was in a position to encourage the publication of

Alice's Adventures and advise Carroll; he too was a friend of Dickens and Collins and also of Thackeray, whose children's book *The Rose and the Ring* is rather a playful fantasy, gently poking fun at the genre. Such a wealth of fantasy writing of different kinds, drawing on medieval stories, folk tales, myths and legends, must not exclude one of its greatest exponents: Hans Christian Andersen, who first met Dickens in London in 1847. His 'fairy tales' were mostly his own invention, although he also incorporated stories he had heard in childhood.

Many writers of the late 19th and 20th centuries wrote both fantasy and non-fantasy fiction, as the new genres of the thriller, the detective story and science fiction began to evolve. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* as well as *Kidnapped*, and Oscar Wilde produced *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as well as *An Ideal Husband*.

It is possible to see strands of connection through the emergence of the fantastic in literature right from *Gulliver* to James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933), in which the Lamasery has been founded in the 18th century by a Frenchman named Perrault – the name of the author of many fairy tales including *Cinderella*. Considering the satirical nature of Swift's original book, and the multiple purposes to which fantasy writing has been directed, its continuing popularity, even as a narrow genre of which the greatest contemporary proponent is Terry Pratchett, suggests that it offers writers freedom and flexibility to explore the human condition and offer both adults and children both entertainment and food for thought.

-ooOoo-

In A Ghostly Company of Myth and Legend

Nigel Wilson

In the early months of the Second World War, just as Herr Hitler, the Tyrant Berserker of Berchtesgaden, was launching his Nazgul over the pitiless streets of the Great Wen, my late mother, then chief cartographer for the temporarily suspended Land Utilisation Survey, cowering betimes on the staircase over her family's shop in proletarian Fulham, drew a map illustrating the density of medieval ridge and furrow field marks in Buckinghamshire.

More than half a century later, I found myself tracking those self-same field markings north-eastwards along the valley of the Great Ouse, as I traced evidence for Roman and Saxon road networks across what had already transformed in my own mind into an ancient landscape. Field names, medieval charters and last Wills & Testaments had populated this bygone land for me so that I found myself conducting deep conversations with those ancients who had once worked and lived on that very soil.

In those intervening years I had been born, read all of C. S. Lewis's oeuvres including *The Space Trilogy* and the *Screwtape Letters*; avidly consumed the entire output of ghost stories written by the antiquarian M. R. James; battled my way to Mordor with Professor Tolkien; ensured that Great Cthulhu was still sleeping at R'lyeh, despite the various attempts of Mr Lovecraft to wake him up; read my way through Anglo-Saxon poetry; and started writing my own ghost stories - and even got some published.

Throughout all this, many things about human nature came to amuse me, not least that the archaeological society which I supported had been presided over in his later years by M. R. James himself because he was a former Provost of Eton and sometime Provost of Kings College Cambridge, not because he was the greatest ghost story writer in the English language and the translator into English of the Apocryphal New Testament. To me, this man is close to the deity whereas, to those of intellectual rigour, he was but a worthy ornament of an academic quality.

The personality type that possesses a curiosity in the ancient, the historical and the religious, which moves happily from textual evidence, often in arcane languages, to those peculiar, relaxed visions of the supernatural that are induced by ideas of a long-lost knowledge, necromantic fantasies and visions of the departed is a well-attested phenomenon which demands both cultural as well as literary recognition.

This latter is arguably a task among many to which A Ghostly Company has set itself, to recognise the great contribution of the ghost story to easing the apparent discomfort of the puritanical English mind-set, liberating the narrow ascetic souls of the British to an embrace of the more generous, expansive Catholic traditions of the European mainland without endangering their own peculiar sense of place or troubling them overmuch with the spiritual uncertainties that a brutal Reformation unleashed.

Given Mr Jung's collective unconscious, there has to be a limited supply of myth and legend, which we are able to multiply by just seven, as such is the number of basic story-telling plots available, thereby illustrating that, as far as the modern fantasy story-teller is concerned, it is not so much about what is said but about how it is said. This is where the contemporary ghost story in particular serves itself very well, and why A Ghostly Company publishes its magazine of ghostly fiction, *The Silent Companion*.

Thus it was from a track of an incipient Roman road, lost in time and place, that I looked across the broad, shallow valley of the Great Ouse to see the tower of Passenham Church peering through the trees.

All that I knew about Passenham at that moment was from a brief, yet important, passage in the Anglo Saxon Chronicles (translated by G. N. Garmonsway, published 1953):

“ ... the same autumn [920 AD] king Edward [the Elder] went with the levies of Wessex to Passenham, and encamped there whilst the fortress of Towcester was being reinforced by a stone wall. Jarl Thurfelth and the [Scandinavian] barons submitted to him, together with the entire [Scandinavian] host which owed allegiance to Northampton, as far north as the Welland, and made their submission to him as their lord and protector.”

It is no surprise that Edward the Elder founded a memorial at Passenham in the name of St. Guthlac (a Mercian warrior-prince who became a hermit at Crowland) to commemorate those of his people who had suffered and died to achieve so important a victory over alien warlords. To accommodate his glorious dead, Edward created an extended churchyard; thus, unwittingly, starting a tradition that eventually created a deeper, darker history for Passenham.

Whilst a tutor at nearby Stowe School in the 1930s, T. H. White, author of *The Once and Future King*, worked up legends associated with Passenham into the ghost story ‘Soft Voices at Passenham’.

It seems that in addition to Edward’s exceptionally large churchyard, which was partly dug up, to contemporary horror, so that a new manor house could be built close to the church, there is a true tale of forced enclosures, rural depopulation, an exploitative landlord with strong connections with an unpopular court, civil strife, religious dissent and intolerance. All these terrors boiled over into a colourful tradition, outlined by White, of headless horsemen, spectral coaches, a wild hunt, a mill race haunted by a suicide, the not very dear departed reluctant for burial, and unquiet graves demanding the attention of massed clergy. Yet, for some strange reason, neither Passenham nor such events are deemed sufficiently exceptional to be worthy of note. It seems that British culture can only face up to those unacceptable parts of its history, which have been discarded from the established narrative, through the ghost story.

The idea of a lost past, spoken about in hushed and fearful tones, began very early in the English tradition, as demonstrated by the Anglo Saxon poem, ‘The Ruin’ (*A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse*, ed. Richard Hamer, Faber 1970), a reflection upon Roman buildings, perhaps the former town of Aquae Sulis.

*Beohrt waeran burgraeced, burnselamonige,
heah honrgestreon, hersweg micel,
meodoheall monig, mondreama full,
oththaet thaet on wende, wyrd seo swathe.*

The public halls were bright, with lofty gables
Bath-houses many; great the cheerful noise,
And many mead-halls filled with human pleasures.
Till mighty fate brought change upon it all.

It is this mighty fate which is the essence of fantasy: a sudden change in conditions which alters that which was previously seen as inevitable - a sort of dance with death. The fall of the Roman Empire, the ruin of its cities and the ending of its far-reaching power has to be a fascination to any of us who have come after.

These days, we have the rigours of science and history to explain phenomena, even though we do not know everything, but just imagine you stood in the shoes of that early English bard contemplating the Roman ruins. Your thoughts would run riot to see such greatness vanquished and vanished. There would be tales you could refer to, but, in the absence of a written tradition, there was every opportunity for embellishment, forgetfulness and conflation.

As time passed, after a thousand years or so, a literate standard became established, providing the teller of tales with a great heap of legend to draw from, plus a vast ignorance to probe, as the stone ruins of an elder civilisation can seem articulate, whereas the leather, pottery, wood, wattle and daub of a stronger more vibrant culture that replaced it can rot unnoticed in the fields. This is how events and times become squeezed together to form the strange tales we choose to call myth and legend.

Story-tellers happily fall upon such things to explain what can, in part, be seen and known, and place them in a magical framework. A good example is Rudyard Kipling's 'Puck of Pook's Hill' (first published in 1908), where a good faerie introduces two children – obviously Kipling's own – to tales from English history, part-fantastical, part-truthful, in an attempt to explain what they see around them and why it is that way.

Trackway and Camp and City lost,
Salt Marsh where now is corn;
Old Wars, old Peace, old Arts that cease
And so was England born!

She is not any common Earth,
Water or Wood or Air,
But Merlin's Isle of Gramarye,
Where you and I will fare.

The concept of a good faerie that makes all things well is very welcome, so long as it is not believed in. Sadly, Kipling became rather associated with empire in later life, which perhaps decried the gentle patriotic expression of 'Merlin's Isle of Gramarye' but, now that empire is no more, allowing Kipling's later poem 'Recessional' to be seen as a piece of future history viewed from the past, we can put aside our passions and embrace the deep-seated spiritual yearning for understanding and explanation which underpins all myth and legend.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, the historian Macaulay posited the idea of a New Zealander at some point in a distant future viewing the ruins of an Imperial London that had followed Rome to its destruction. In many ways, this was a Victorian at the highest point of his own culture postulating an unhappy future, not yet known.

A fantasy indeed, but is not the contemplation of a possible future, however dystopian, the role of that parallel department of literature, called science fiction? Perhaps 'fantasy' is best seen as a contemplation of a mythical past coupled to a magical, supernatural present, all to be found in and around Merlin's Isle of Gramarye. At worst, it can distract us from the historical past of the four horsemen; war, famine, pestilence and death. At best, it takes the glory of myth and legend to armour our psyche in the contemplation of a discordant present.

-ooOoo-

Into the Unknown – the Fantastic and Science Fiction

Patrick Parrinder

Literary theorists tell us that the fantastic and the marvellous are two quite different categories. In tales of the marvellous, we are immersed within a fantasy world, but the fantastic is a moment of change between states - a moment, above all, of uncertainty. Here we are poised between the solid and the immaterial, between presence and absence, between the familiar and the profoundly disconcerting. It is the moment of taking the plunge, of a leap in the dark, or, perhaps, of the hero and heroine clinging on above the edge of the abyss by their fingertips. So popular was this scene that it became one of the great clichés of early cinema, where the climax of each week's episode was known as the 'cliffhanger'.

In science fiction, the initial moment of the fantastic typically coincides with a journey into space or a journey in time. The one word connected with the US space programme that everyone knows is the word 'lift-off': "We have lift-off" – the moment of leaving the launch-pad, the gravity-defying transition from Earth to space. Time travel remains possible only in theory, so the moment of departure should cause still greater uncertainty. As he climbs into the saddle and prepares to launch his time machine, H.G. Wells' Time Traveller speaks of his fear of setting off a huge explosion which would "blow myself and my apparatus out of all possible dimensions – into the Unknown". This is the territory of the fantastic, but the Unknown, in this story, is on the brink of becoming known.

As the Time Traveller sees the future rushing past him and eventually decides to stop his machine, we move from the fantastic into a sinister but strangely logical world: that of the Eloi and Morlocks who are humanity's distant descendants. We are now in the realm of the marvellous or uncanny – as in Kafka, Borges, Calvino, and many other writers – and, in Wells' case, we are in the world of science fiction. The fantastic got us here, but what happens to the fantastic once we are in that world?

The answer is that classical science fiction aims to reduce the transitional, disordered state of the fantastic to something that can be explained and understood. But the explanation, however clear it is in the author's mind, will be held back from the reader, and from the protagonist, for as long as possible. In Wells' *Time Machine* information is released a little at a time, with each new discovery triggering a further moment of surprise and fear. The Time Traveller thinks at first that he has landed in a future Arcadia, but soon realises that he has not; he senses that he must be in the power of some intelligent force that remains hidden; he catches sight of wraith-like creatures that come out in the dark, but has no idea what they are; and so on. Finally, when the secrets of the Eloi and Morlocks are revealed, he makes a hair's-breadth escape and travels forward to the dying Earth of the very far future. He is seeing the beginnings of the "heat-death of the universe" foreseen by nineteenth century physicists, a revelation that does not belong to the fantastic but to the scientific sublime – to what, in science fiction, is invariably called "the sense of wonder".

The sublime here includes not just an awesome natural spectacle, but the human mind that observes and comprehends it – the mind of the adventurer braving everything to achieve and bring back an understanding into the unknown. This is what William Wordsworth felt when, as a student in Cambridge, he passed the statue of Isaac Newton: "The marble index of a mind for ever/ Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone". Newton here is the predecessor of Wells' Time Traveller, not to mention other heroes of early science fiction such as Jules Verne's Captain Nemo.

Verne's novels were published under the general title of "The Extraordinary Voyages", and, for the most part, they belong to the genre of the marvellous voyage rather than to the fantastic. There is not much that stays weird in Verne's somewhat schoolmasterly view of the world.

One reason why there is more of the fantastic in Wells is that there are no aliens in Verne's novels, and hence none of those moments of "first contact" that have played such a key part in science fiction. Once again, the shock of first contact with an alien intelligence, like the moment of entering the future, is only transitory. In many "first contact" stories, the initial emotions of fear, confusion and distress give place to what is essentially the logical and technological problem of finding common ground and establishing communication. It may, indeed, be argued that to the extent that we can communicate with them the aliens become 'human', and that we are not equipped to understand and describe the non-human except by a kind of pathetic fallacy, or analogy with the human. Without this translation process, could we even recognise "alien intelligence" as belonging to the category of intelligence?

In the case of Wells' 'aliens', the Morlocks, as already seen, are revealed to be our future descendants and even the terrifying Martians of *The War of the Worlds* come to be explained in terms of ever more penetrating human analogies. And yet, in order to stay within the mode of the fantastic, the aliens need to retain their disconcerting strangeness. This is exemplified by that modern master of Science Fiction: the Polish writer Stanislaw Lem, and especially by Lem's *Solaris*.

The more that we learn about the intelligent ocean of the planet Solaris – the more that the scientists observing it (and trapped by it) try to apply human analogies – the more elusive and incomprehensible it seems.

In most science fiction, however, the writers' process of thought is like that of the NASA physicists who put together a collection of human cultural artefacts to accompany the early long-distance space probes. The artefacts supposedly represent a universal language, including examples of mathematical equations and scientific experiments, calculated to persuade any alien species intercepting the craft that we are intelligent too.

Some hope! In science fiction, it is not the establishment of communication, but the journey into the unknown where the unknown *remains* unknown that is the final province of the fantastic.

-ooOoo-

***An Eye for An Eye: Anthony Trollope's Gothic Novel?*¹**

Yvonne Siddle

The name of Anthony Trollope is not usually to be found in a list of nineteenth century Gothic writers such as Mary Shelley, Sheridan Le Fanu, Robert Louis Stevenson, or Bram Stoker. This article, however, will argue not only that there is a justification to reach beyond the more obvious categorisation of Trollope as a realist novelist, but also that, by viewing his novel *An Eye for an Eye* through a Gothic lens a particularly telling pattern emerges which reveals a great deal about Trollope's relationship with Ireland.

Granted, it is with obvious glee that in *An Autobiography* he quotes Nathaniel Hawthorne's assessment of his work as:

"... solid and substantial, ... and just as real as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth and put it under a glass case, with all its inhabitants going about their daily business, and not suspecting that they were made a show of."

But, he also rails against restrictive definitions and categorisations: "I am realistic", he writes, seeming to mean that this is how he is generally (and perhaps too easily) categorised whilst, by contrast, his "friend Wilkie Collins is generally supposed to be sensational". He continues:

"The readers who prefer one are supposed to take delight in the elucidation of character. Those who hold by the other are charmed by the construction of plot. All this I think is a mistake, - which mistake arises from the inability of the imperfect artist to be at the same time realistic and sensational. A good novel should be both, - and both in the highest degree."

It is partly in this resistance to categorisation, this insistence on the good novel as a combination of elements, that I locate my justification for a Gothic reading of *An Eye for an Eye*. Cases could be made for the novel as sensational, tragic, even comic at points, but, laying a Gothic template over the text allows some particularly interesting patterns to emerge.

To explain how this can be argued, it is useful to pause here to establish the stock features of the Gothic in literature.

Historically, Goths were a Germanic tribe who settled in much of Europe from the third to the fifth centuries AD, but Gothic fiction, far from being an authentic recreation of their world, draws on associations of the Goths with barbarism (linked partly to their role in the fall of the Roman Empire) and, more broadly, to notions of wildness, 'otherness', and a fantasised version of a less civilised past. In fiction, the setting translates into stock locations such as castles, monasteries, convents, medieval ruins, and ancestral homes (often faded and decaying).

Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839) shows how the Gothic explores once-grand families brought low by in-breeding, self-absorption and withdrawal from the world. The twins Roderick and Madeline are the last of the line holed up in the house bearing

¹ This article is adapted from a talk given at the Anthony Trollope International Summer School in Drumsna, Ireland, 2013, and re printed in *Trollopiana*, journal of The Trollope Society, in issue no. 99, Summer 2014.

their name, which crumbles when they die, thus bringing an end to the *house* of Usher in both meanings of the term.

Frequently, these buildings are in foreign, potentially hostile, remote locations, where central characters are both physically and socially isolated, and the locals operate by a different set of values and speak a different language.

Consider Jonathan Harker travelling to the distant Carpathians, and Count Dracula's remote and craggy castle. The Harker of Stoker's novel is very much the modern, educated English gent who understands his world in terms of the rational, the factual, and the documented, and is thus spectacularly ill-equipped to read and understand the place and people around him. As every well-equipped traveller should, he tries to research the area but significantly discovers it is uncharted territory. He is not able "to light on any map or work giving the exact locality of the castle Dracula, there are no maps of this country yet to compare with our own Ordnance Survey maps", and so he is left without the customary means of navigation. He largely dismissed local beliefs (including Roman Catholicism) as superstition, and so endangers himself by ignoring pleas not to go to the Castle. A local woman tries to stop him as he is about to leave:

"Finally she went down on her knees and implored me not to go; at least to wait a day or two before starting. It was all very ridiculous, but I did not feel comfortable. However, there was business to be done, and I could allow nothing to interfere with it. I therefore tried to raise her up, and said, as gravely as I could, that I thanked her, but my duty was imperative, and that I must go. She then rose and dried her eyes, and taking a crucifix from her neck offered it to me. I did not know what to do, for, as an English Churchman, I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous, and yet it seemed so ungracious to refuse an old lady."

Competing impulses are at work here. In the end, Jonathan does reluctantly accept the crucifix, but is also driven by thoughts of ridiculous superstition and that there is business to be done, duties to fulfil, and he insists on continuing to the Castle.

At the latter end of the eighteenth century, when enhanced value was being placed on emotion and imagination and how these inform the intellect, the Gothic also began to exploit a contemporary preoccupation with the Sublime and, in particular, what constitutes the sublime in landscape. Here, the ideas presented by the Irish politician and philosopher Edmund Burke in his 1757 work *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (a text which Trollope read and annotated) became very influential.

In this work, Burke drew an important distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, seeing "beauty" in the benign nature of rolling hills or a sparkling stream, but "sublime" in highly dramatic encounters with nature such as tempestuous seas, towering mountains, sheer precipices. Such encounters exude awe and terror, intimations of mortality, and a sense of human insignificance. Mary Shelley puts the "sublime" to good use in the dramatic alpine landscapes of *Frankenstein*. It is also in the remote mountainous area of Count Dracula's castle.

With monasteries and convents come monks, nuns and priests. It is worth noting that there is a concentration, especially in early Gothic tales, of a capacity in such monks, nuns, and priests to perform the most outrageous acts, which both exploit and fuel anti-Catholic bigotry. Aristocrats, and élite equivalents of various kinds, populate the castles and ancestral homes, possessing power, but also the capacity to abuse it.

Other stock characters include the predatory (perhaps aristocratic) darkly attractive male and the vulnerable female. In the conventional Gothic tale. Parents are also absent, dead, cruel, or neglectful, and beautiful young daughters are made vulnerable as a result.

Thematically, deranged states of mind, the supernatural, and transgressive sexual behaviour make frequent appearances. Think, for example, of Poe's obsessive and homicidal narrator in *The Tell-Tale Heart* who kills the old man because of his evil eye. Consider vampires of all sorts who perform bodily penetrations which mimic and disrupt ideas of sexual "norms".

A number of critical approaches are routinely used which illuminate further characteristic features of the Gothic. Building on Freud's definition of the uncanny, Gothic is seen to deal in a very particular way with ideas of identity, both personal and national.

The uncanny here is understood as a disconcerting sense of the familiar becoming worryingly unfamiliar, and as a disturbing breach of apparently solid boundaries. It is evidenced, for example, in the undead state of the vampire which renders ideas of life and death frighteningly uncertain, and in the deployment of the double in Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* which undermines trust in the stability of the unified single identity of the apparently respectable Dr Jekyll.

Gothic texts are also approached as being covertly expressive of the anxieties of the time of their creation, and as reflecting and interrogating prevailing values and attitudes. It is thus, for example, that *Jekyll and Hyde* has been read as reflecting late nineteenth century concerns about degeneration, the city and homosexuality.

So, how does all of this relate to Trollope and *An Eye for an Eye*? Admittedly, we might struggle to find elements of the supernatural but, if pushed, could insist that Kate's deranged mother functions as a haunting presence in the text. Other Gothic elements, however, are certainly evident:

- Scroope Manor as the gloomy ancestral home with a threatened blood line
- The Irish location ready-laden with suggestions of the untamed, the atavistic, the violent and the alien
- A dangerously influential Roman Catholic priest
- An initially absent, and later hostile, self-serving father
- An abandoned and, therefore, disempowered mother
- A vulnerable and beautiful young woman
- Fred, an irresistibly attractive but dangerous hero, seducer of the innocent Kate
- The remote cottage of the marginalised mother and daughter, so close to those sublime Cliffs of Moher
- Transgressive sexual behaviour
- A deranged asylum inmate

The genre can be used to invoke, and then lay, ghosts; to breathe life into, and then slay, monsters; to transform virtuous maidens into sexually aggressive vampires, and then safely stake and decapitate them so that they can do no more harm. Alternatively, at the end of some Gothic tales the coffin lid is not securely nailed down, with the result that the anxieties which have been aroused are left to haunt and terrify the reader.

Thus, Trollope might employ the Gothic to animate an alarmingly wild and dangerous Ireland, only to reassuringly disarm, defeat or expel it, or use it even more straightforwardly to reinforce ideas of Ireland as threateningly uncivilised, by merely exploiting unsettling stereotypes. But, he does something rather more complex and intriguing.

For instance, Scroope Manor, the gloomy ancestral home in this text, is English, not Irish, and is showing signs of becoming obsolete and irrelevant with its library full of “old books which no one ever touched”. The Earl, once handsome, popular, and respected, has withdrawn behind the walls of his domain to a house whose windows face away from the village, defeated by the grief and disappointment caused by the loss of his first wife and daughter, and a son who married “a wretched painted prostitute from France”, was banished and died childless. His nephew Fred becomes the heir because the continuance of the line is under threat, not from an aggressive Irish Catholic source but, arguably, from its own failure to grow and adapt, a failure to recognise the true nature and value of the “other”. Scroope unthinkingly rejects Kate as a wife for the heir on the grounds of her nationality and religion. Lady Scroope is instantly appalled at the prospect of this “wild Irish girl”:

“A Roman Catholic, one whom no one knew but the priest, a girl who perhaps never had a father! All this was terrible to Lady Scroope.”

But, this is employed to expose Lady Scroope’s bigotry, when Kate is revealed as unfailingly virtuous, loyal, and better educated than Fred.

The whole basis of racial/national purity is arguably signalled as fallacious in that Mrs O’Hara, Kate’s mother, automatically treated as Irish because of her name, is actually English. Moreover, if she can be charged with endangering her daughter’s virtue by allowing her to spend time with Fred, this is also offered as her doing the best she can as a lone parent in the most trying of circumstances, forced to the edge physically, socially, mentally, and not as a display of predictable Irish maternal fecklessness and loose sexual morality.

Furthermore, Trollope, in his Irish Catholic priest, employs but then defies Gothic stereotypes, when he exposes Fred’s erroneous preconceptions:

“He [Fred] had not yet escaped from the idea that because Father Marty was a Roman Catholic priest, living in a village in the extreme west of Ireland, listening night and day to the roll of the Atlantic and drinking whisky punch, therefore he would be found to be romantic, semi-barbarous, and perhaps more than semi-lawless in his views of life.”

Father Marty befriends Fred, places trust in him but refuses to accommodate his irregular request. Further, he confronts him with the consequences of his moral dissembling, causing Fred to face the wall “speechless and sobbing”. So, if Ireland proves fatal for Fred it is not because of an inherently dangerous “otherness”, but rather Fred’s misreading of it as a place where the usual rules need not apply: his failure to appreciate its true worth. Significantly, Mrs O’Hara becomes insanely murderous because of Fred’s refusal to fully respect and marry her daughter.

What is being recommended here, therefore, is a re-evaluation and incorporation of the “other”, the formation of a particularly thorough and openly validated union which benefits both parties: rejuvenating the house of Scroope, legitimising Kate and her child. Transfer this to the national political stage and the threat is not Irish nationalism but the failure on England’s part to value and fully incorporate Ireland.

The choice of the Gothic mode by some of its more prominent Irish exponents among the group which used to be called Anglo-Irish writers, such as Sheridan Le Fanu, Bram Stoker and Elizabeth Bowen, has been read as growing out of a sense of displacement, marginalisation, out of an anxiety about, or sensitivity to, issues of identity. *An Eye for an Eye* would seem in a sense to place Trollope in this company, as using the Gothic to explore and express but, at least in his case, ultimately ease anxieties about his English-Irish identity.

If we examine some of Trollope's other works we find more examples of the deployment of a marital metaphor to represent the Union of Britain and Ireland. Notably, in *Phineas Finn*, it is explicitly invoked by the narrator, apparently reflecting the views of Phineas' friend Mr Monk to insist on the continuance of the Union.

"[I]f it was incumbent on England to force upon Ireland the maintenance of the Union for her own sake, and for England's sake, because England could not afford independence so close to her own ribs it was at any rate necessary to England's character that the bride thus bound in a compulsory wedlock should be endowed with all the best privileges that a wife can enjoy. Let her at least not be a kept mistress. Let it be bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, if we are to live together in the married state."

This reinforces the symbolic significance of the relationship between Fred and Kate portrayed in *An Eye for an Eye*. While *An Eye for an Eye* is not an obviously political work, it has a place in Trollope's unionist literary project. An examination of the novel simply at the level of plot might seem, of course, not to bear this out. Fred Neville, Trollope's English nobleman, far from achieving a happy union with the Irish Catholic Kate O'Hara, is pushed to his death by her maddened mother. On closer investigation, however, a reading is possible which points not to the impossibility of successful union but rather the desire for a more thorough and respectful integration, an insistence on Ireland as the wife and not the mistress.

In Trollope's reworking of the Gothic, Fred is no moustache-twirling villain. He struggles to reconcile competing familial and personal, social and moral imperatives but he dies because he offers the Irish woman he has seduced only an irregular, unsanctioned, incomplete union which, in her mother's eyes, would leave Kate a "harlot". In this reading, the novel is not a cry of despair but a call for a clear-sighted, responsible treatment of Ireland.

It contests wrong-headed, romantic notions of Ireland as the location for reckless adventures which incur no consequences. The novel recommends instead that the English establishment, in the shape of the moribund House of Scroope, could have benefited from the intellect, vitality and charm of an Irish Catholic Countess.

Importantly, in doing so, it secures the Irish component in Trollope's identity. For it was during the eighteen years that he was resident in Ireland (1841-1859) that he became a husband, a father, and a valued Post Office official. In Ireland, he was transformed from "hobbledehoy" to one of the nineteenth century's foremost writers.

He knew that young men who learned to read and respect the country could go to Ireland without ending up smashed to smithereens at the bottom of a cliff. If, as he explains in his autobiography, he had in his youth learned to think that Ireland was "a land flowing with fun and whiskey, in which irregularity was the rule, and where broken heads were looked upon as honourable badges", he learned to read Ireland more accurately, noting that "the Irish people did not murder me, nor did they even break my head".

His early experience of Ireland is, in one way, a complete contrast to that of Fred: if Ireland tests and breaks Fred, it makes Trollope. And he incorporates an Irish element into his sense of self: "When I meet an Irishman abroad", he declares in *North America*, "I always recognize in him more of a kinsman than I do an Englishman." To contemplate the end of the Union was, for him, to be confronted by the truly uncanny disturbance created when his Irish and English identities threatened to tear him asunder.

This union, however, in both senses would prove unsustainable. In 1882, in the last months of his life, Trollope, like Fred Neville, was travelling between England and Ireland. He was gathering material for that last unfinished novel, *The Landleaguers*, and balancing conflicting loyalties and impulses.

Under Charles Stewart Parnell, calls for Irish Home Rule were growing, and William Gladstone, in Trollope's eyes, was exacerbating the situation through appeasement. *The Landleaguers* is a bitter and resentful work. Feeling rejected by Ireland, it repudiates the treasured land of his youthful transformation as an "accursed, unhallowed, godless country".

In *An Eye for an Eye*, however, that state of disenchanting rage is yet to come and Trollope brilliantly deploys the dark potential of the Gothic genre to covertly recommend the sunnier prospect of a union which need not end in vengeful mutterings of "an eye for an eye".

-ooOoo-

I Don't Believe in Ghosts – a True Story

Beryl Fleming

In 1994, we went to visit our daughter and son-in-law in Coimbra, Portugal, where they lived and worked. Our first grandchild, Graham, had been born a few weeks earlier.

The suburban house was rented. Small and squat, its gate on the roadside, it was over a hundred years old, its faded stucco walls grimy with streaks of rain and dirt from passing traffic. A large tree in the front garden overshadowed both the lounge windows and the bedroom in which we slept, making them dark and gloomy. Down some moss-covered outside steps was a dank, dark basement.

On arrival, excited attention focused on our new grandson: I took little notice of the house. With the heater on, it was warm and cosy, and we had arrived in torrential rain (with a grim forecast). At night, shutters were closed against the elements, and all was quiet except for an occasional howling wind. Quiet, yes, but in our bedroom all was not well.

Houses do not usually affect me, but this one made me shudder. I could not explain why. It was depressing, almost overpowering in its gloominess, not helped by miserable weather. Of our first night, after an exhausting journey, I remember little, but, on the second, third and fourth nights, as I closed the bedroom door, I was aware of 'something' in the room which I could neither explain nor describe; just a heavy, depressing presence. I felt constricted, claustrophobic, and went uneasily to bed.

On the second night, I awoke suddenly – it was 3 a.m., by the luminous alarm – and realised that my face was wet. Without a bedside light, I moved towards the light switch by the door, thinking in my half-awake state that the moisture was an inexplicable nosebleed. But, before I touched the switch I tasted salt and realised that I was, or had been, crying – and was overwhelmed by a terrible grief. I did not switch on the light but returned to bed and, eventually, slept. The same thing happened on the next three nights, at the same hour. I did not tell anyone, even my husband, but expressed my dislike of the house and how oppressive I found it.

For four nights, all was well. When we closed the door, the room felt free of any 'presence' and I decided that the continuing atrocious weather was to blame for the atmosphere. Then, for the next two nights, I awoke at 3 a.m., NOT to find myself crying but sensing a 'presence' in the room – not threatening but very near. I was not afraid of it, and eventually slept. Still I told no one.

Two days before we left, after a calm night and no 'presence', I emerged from the bathroom in the morning (I was the first one up), and went into the little kitchen to put the kettle on. As my hand groped for the switch, I saw her, standing by the sink, and I remember catching my breath. She was tall, perhaps 5' 10", rather severe-looking, and aged at a guess about seventy. Her hair, dressed in an old-fashioned style, was parted in the centre and dragged back, possibly into a bun. Her hair was dark, only lightly touched with grey, her face thin and gaunt – but not remotely 'ghostly'. She wore a high-necked, straight, black (or very dark) dress, with a kind of frill under her chin; long sleeves and her hands folded in front of her at waist height. She looked directly at me and, although I could only have seen her for a few seconds, she was instantly imprinted on my mind in detail. Yet I had not, at that point, switched on the light ...

When I did locate the switch the room was bathed in light; and she was gone. I waited a few moments, trying to unscramble my thoughts. I put the kettle on and returned to our bedroom. My husband said that I was as white as a sheet and looked stunned. Thinking I was faint, or giddy, he sat me down and asked what was wrong. I replied, slowly he said, as if doubting my own words, saying I had seen an 'apparition' in the kitchen. Why I said 'apparition' I have no idea. I calmed down and said nothing to the family.

Before we left, I told my daughter everything: she was intrigued. They had lived in the house for a year and never noticed anything unusual but had just learned that the landlord (no, not his wife) had died on the day we arrived. They had never met him, rent being paid through the bank. Such an old house would have had many occupants. She promised to make enquiries.

During the ensuing months, tentative enquiries lead nowhere. No one seemed to know much of previous occupants, though one elderly neighbour said that she had "heard things", refusing to elaborate.

I have no explanation for my experience – only that it was very real. I can picture that woman in the kitchen now, as clearly as the moment I saw her. There is no explanation – is there?

Why not? Because I do not believe in ghosts ... or do I?

-ooOoo-

Revolt in Dystopia²

Tom Miller

The composition of an article such as this has been made easier, because the writer can refer the reader to texts, and indeed to whole films, on the internet, such as the novel *We* and the film *Things to Come*.

I dislike the term DYSTOPIA because, according to the received view, Sir Thomas More's coinage means NO PLACE, not GOOD PLACE, and an imaginary place could be bad. However, the usage DYSTOPIA is respectable, and the word is more euphonious than ANTI-UTOPIA or BAD UTOPIA. (A Dystopia is easier to write than a positive Utopia, because we all know a nasty place when we see one; but opinions differ about what is desirable, and Utopia-writers, including More, are usually reluctant to explain how their creations came about.) Science fiction may or may not be used to transfer the reader...

I seek to interrelate the greatest Dystopia in the language, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with other efforts. (The importance of the book is signalled by the fact that its notice in the file copy of the *Times Literary Supplement* in the London Library has been excised!)

The only possible plot in a Dystopian novel is of a revolt. This is so because fiction *implies a conflict*, and a revolt (in which we can identify with the rebel) against an undesirable regime, is obviously more dramatic than a struggle for power inside an Inner Party. There is such a struggle in H. G. Wells' *When The Sleeper Wakes* (1910, but based on earlier material), but, had Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* given us a tussle within the Inner Party, about, say, whether Oceania's putative enemy was to be Eastasia or Eurasia, we would get a mere political novel, inferior to something by Trollope.

There is a convention in Dystopian fiction that a character comes on to defend the malign system: for example, O'Brien in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Mustapha Mond in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and Ostrog in *The Sleeper Wakes*.

Before the books of Wells, there appeared Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870, a bona fide work of science fiction, and filmed truthfully by Disney in 1954). This is a Dystopia *on a very small scale*: that of a single submarine, the Nautilus, whose commander, Captain Nemo (a sort of Big Brother) is strongly opposed to an evil empire, against which he uses force; but a revolt is mounted by his hostages, though they are divided, because Professor Aronnax is somewhat sympathetic to Nemo, but Ned Land and Conseil are not.

Wells in *The Sleeper* posited a society run by predatory big business that, for complicated reasons, vests the world's wealth in a man undergoing a cataleptic trance: when the Sleeper wakes, Ostrog uses the event to discharge the oligarchy, the White Council, but he turns out to be no less of an oppressor than the Council of the common people, who are helped in their rebellion by the alert Sleeper. By employing flying, a fascinating novelty in the 1900s, Wells gives his story immediacy.

² I had the advantage of a number of private conversations with the late Sir Kingsley Amis, and, though his memory must not necessarily be associated with my opinions, it will not surprise the reader to learn that he represented a large influence on my conclusions ... This is a revised version of an article that appeared in the Orwellian 'Newsletter' in October 2012, in which I interrelated *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with *Brave New World* and the work of Wells.

However, his *The World Set Free* (1914) is not a Dystopia, because at the end of the book everything is going wonderfully.

The Sleeper was an obvious influence on Jack London's *Iron Heel* (1908) and E. M. Forster's 'The Machine Stops' (1909). *The Sleeper* also influenced the Russian Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924) - a book presenting elaborate sexual freedom, but condemned by Kingsley Amis in conversation as "difficult to read". Zamyatin was also probably influenced by a sketch, 'The New Utopia', by Jerome K. Jerome (1900), that is available on the internet.

We was followed by *Brave New World*. Orwell (*Tribune*, January 4, 1946, and also available on the internet) thought that Huxley was influenced by *We*, but Huxley denied reading it, citing instead an attempt (the point is made by, for instance, Peter Firchow in his *Aldous Huxley* [1972] at page 120) to parody Wells' *Men Like Gods* (1923), in which Wells speculates about how much nicer people would be if they were not people, together with heavy fun about Churchill, who tries unsuccessfully to mount a rebellion, and other contemporaries. (The earthlings are transported to a Utopia in another Universe, because the men like gods make a mistake when experimenting with Einsteinian Physics. The story is more credible now than it was in the 1920s, because the proved existence of exoplanets makes celestial civilisations credible.)

Wells was hurt by *Brave New World*, and he described Huxley in *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) as "one of the most brilliant of reactionary writers" (page 373 of the Corgi edition of 1967), though *Men Like Gods* and *Brave New World* have superficially little in common. The story line of *Brave New World* is taken from *The Tempest*, like the film *Forbidden Planet* (MGM, 1956).

In 1962, Huxley brought out a positive Utopia, *Island*, that somewhat resembles *Men Like Gods*, as I pointed out in the *Wellsian* for 1994 (at page nine). Huxley's Pala presents a practical system, which probably would work in a small agricultural society, but not in a large industrial one. Like Wells, Huxley never answers the question, "What do we do with dissenters?"

Another writer to take exception to *Brave New World* was Bertrand Russell, who noted resemblances to his own *The Scientific Outlook* (1931) - a muddled book that contains a history of scientific method; a deflation of the attempts by the scientists Eddington and Jeans to bring back religion by reinterpreting twentieth century science; and, in Part III, a non-fictional Dystopia.

Having set out the cruel World State that science dictates, with its stern class discrimination, control of thought - Shakespeare is forbidden to the ordinary reader, in the same way that Homer is forbidden to residents of Plato's *Republic*, the first and greatest Utopia - the employment of a hangover-free drug, scientific breeding, the stultification of the lower orders, and communal housing and feeding, Russell adds that he is not serious, but *I wonder*, because he stands behind the character Mr Scogan in Huxley's *Crome Yellow* (1921), a brilliant talker who defends in Chapter 22 the ideas found in *The Scientific Outlook*. Harold Laski in a letter to Mr Justice Holmes of the US Supreme Court (December 8, 1921 -- at page 387 of the *Holmes-Laski Letters*, Oxford, 1953) praised Russell's talents as a conversationalist, and Huxley, who had very poor sight, probably developed his powers of hearing and memory to the point at which he could accurately reproduce speech.

According to Wikipedia, Russell thought that Huxley had borrowed too much, but his publisher talked him out of taking action. However, in *Brave New World*, Mustapha Mond asks in Chapter 17 whether autocracy or anarchy is preferable, and Russell in his review (*New Leader*, March 11, 1932) suggests that autocracy is better than the prospects seen in

1932.

Wells' motion picture *Things to Come* (London Films, 1936) is a difficult case, because there are two Dystopias in Everytown, and both of them experience physical opposition:

In the late 1960s, after the war has ground to a halt, the boss, played by Ralph Richardson, runs an unpleasant community that has gone half way back to barbarism: the boss is overthrown by an invasion by altruistic airmen based at Basra, encouraged and helped by disillusioned locals. Wells thinks that his Everytown of 2036, that has developed out of the Basran polity, is a Utopia, but the bulk of the population does not, and a rebellion (led by a sculptor played by Cedric Hardwicke) against a space programme fails. (There is a hint of human sacrifice as the autocrat, played by Raymond Massey, sends his daughter into an uncertain future, following the Christian God, who sacrifices His son.)

The film illustrates the conflict between those who think that human nature is strong enough to withstand without psychic dislocation the assault on its traditions that the conversion of a society into a model community based on Reason implies, and those who disagree. The argument was well set out by Orwell in his essay, 'Wells, Hitler and the World State' (*Horizon*, August 1941, and available on the internet).

The distinction between Wells and many of his successors is that Wells DID believe that a Utopia is possible, and, although he describes attacks on Dystopias, his fundamental tone is optimistic (as we have seen, Wells does not approve of the revolt in Everytown in 2036, though we may do so), whereas Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell are dubious.

In my opinion, the job of reforming a society can be done, though it is very difficult, as the 'enlightened despots' of the eighteenth century found out. The most successful example is that of Japan, a country that was transformed by General Douglas MacArthur between 1945 and 1951, though he had the advantages that the subject of the experiment had been shattered by World War II, and that the Japanese saw that the old governing élite had been disastrously wrong. No one, however, claims that contemporary Japan is a *Utopia*.

Kingsley Amis' *The Alteration* (1976) presents an "alternate" 1976, in which efforts are made to prevent the castration of a superb treble singer in order to preserve his voice. Amis delivers a surprise ending. Though the book *appears* to be an attack on the Papacy, Amis was really condemning attempts by Collectivists to control people: Michael Foot and Corin Redgrave appear as cruel policemen, and the English Inquisition is headed by one Lord Stansgate.

The book is genuine science fiction, unlike the author's *Russian Hide-and-Seek* (1980), that is relevant 'future fiction': the Russians running England in 2035 are confronted by countrymen who want to restore to the English people their culture, but the plot fails, and anyway the English have lost their culture, that cannot be restored. (Amis is attacking the vulgarisation of standards that he noticed in the 1970s.)

The common point in *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is that, in both books, there are TWO simultaneous revolts:

- In *Brave New World*, by Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson, who are treated leniently, and by the Savage, who is a romantic, and is allowed to commit suicide in private -- an echo of Huxley's brother Trev's suicide in August 1914.
- In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, by the Brotherhood, that may not be a fake, and by Winston and Julia, who do nothing irregular, except to make love, and to think

bad thoughts.

David Bradshaw, on Melvyn Bragg's *In Our Time* on BBC Radio Four on April 9, 2009, said that *Brave New World* is better than *Nineteen Eighty-Four* because, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it is all too easy to see who the baddies are, and the reader is not left with unanswered questions; but the characterisation in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is superior.

-ooOoo-

Notes on Contributors

Anita Fernandez-Young is the Honorary Secretary of the ALS. Now partly retired, she is a jobbing academic and business consultant.

Beryl Fleming is a lifelong writer of poetry, short stories and articles, and has been a U3A Creative Writing tutor for 25 years. She has two poems in the archives of Westminster Abbey as being representative of twentieth century literature. She is a member of the Society of Women Writers & Journalists, The Downland Poets, and Secretary of the Chichester Literary Society.

Tom Miller is an Oxford Law graduate who qualified as a solicitor but drifted into journalism. In the course of this work he interviewed Kingsley Amis for the *Illustrated London News* and Amis was a vast influence on him. He has been a member of the H. G. Wells Society for over 20 years.

Patrick Parrinder is a Vice President of the H. G. Wells Society, and former editor of the *Wellsian*. He is the author of many books, including studies of H. G. Wells and science fiction, and a history of the English novel, *Nation and Novel* (2006). He is an Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Reading.

Yvonne Siddle specialises in nineteenth century literature and is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Chester.

Nigel Wilson is a graduate from York University and left a long career in international logistics to research history and write. He has written a number of ghost stories, some with strong historical themes. His outlook has been shaped by the dissenting origins of his family and the marginal landscapes in which they lived.