APOCALYPSE AND APOTHEOSIS IN THE FICTION OF ARTHUR C. CLARKE

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Introduction: A Defense of the Material at Hand

Science Fiction. As a child I read The Space Ship Under the Apple Tree and Lloyd Alexander's Space Cat. In my early teens I devoured virtually everything that Norton, Burroughs, and Heinlein wrote. Since junior high school I have read one, two, or even three science fiction novels per week, although in recent years, of course, the number has had to decrease. Asimov and Bradbury have been replaced by Woolf and Pynchon, by assigned readings in Renaissance drama or the eighteenth-century novel, by the literature whose study I have hoped to make my life's work. But I have never for a moment lost the pleasure I take in science fiction. I still read it when I can (sometimes to the detriment of my studies), I write it with marginal success, and I occasionally attend fan conventions and read fan magazines. In my early college years though, I found my passion for science fiction something of an embarrassment. After all, I thought, it just is not literature.

Even today many people equate science fiction with Flash Gordon, and Japanese monster movies. And I, fooled by the pronouncements of critics whose knowledge of the field was limited to Flash Gordon, by the Weight of Established Critical Opinion, by my own preconceptions (though I should have known better), was guilty of this
too. Arthur C. Clarke, labeled as a science fiction writer, was innately inferior to John Steinbeck. The fact that their themes were often the same, that Clarke was occasionally the other's equal stylistically, and that Steinbeck actually had written some science fiction was irrelevant. Steinbeck wrote in the mainstream of the western novel; Clarke was a mere sub-genre writer.

This, of course, I now know to be ridiculous. If Steinbeck is Clarke's superior he must prove it on merit alone. Science fiction is at last gaining a portion of the critical study it has long deserved. Combining this knowledge of increased scholarly attention with my own improving critical sense I can view the field more clearly, stand above it, as it were, and make differentiations. I now recognize many of my earlier favorites, writers like Robert Heinlein and A.E. van Vogt, for the grand, glorious hacks that they are. Conversely, I can for the first time fully appreciate the talents of people like Walter Miller, Ursula Le Guin, and Samuel Delany, authors who are among the best of our recent fiction writers. Arthur C. Clarke, whose work is the subject of this study, stands among the foremost of these men and women.

Critics attempting to deprecate the genre have labeled it escapist, and it is to some extent; but then so is all fiction—to some extent. The point to be made is that the field is so broad one cannot justly generalize. Does the critic, after all, assess Shakespeare on the quality of his Pericles or his Titus Andronicus? Of course not.
If one is to judge the success of any genre of literature one must look at that genre's masterpieces. Science fiction's value as literature must be judged not only by the quality of *Radio Men of Mars* or *Galactic Patrol* but by such works as *A Canticle for Liebowitz*, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, or *Clarke's Childhood's End*. Such novels as these are far from escapist. They work with the most pressing problems of our age, the loss of religious faith, nuclear war, racial and sexual prejudice, and the future of man. In their own way they present matters every bit as serious as anything visualized by the most important authors of the contemporary mainstream.

Arthur C. Clarke has chosen for his basic concern the greatest of all possible themes in literature or in life. He has attempted, as I will show, to define man's place in our changing universe. Our world suffers from a plague of progress. While it is good for us within limits, it can also, like the deadly radiation treatments used on a cancer patient, destroy us if it comes too fast or if we are unprepared. What will be the effect on mankind of contact with extraterrestrial intelligence? With artificial intelligence? Can our moral and religious superstructure survive such an event? Is science the road to utopia or the path to extermination? How has our past prepared us for our future? Clarke asks these questions and many others. The purpose of this study will be to show how he answers them and how his answers change and mature.
I. Science Fiction and Myth

1. Myth

Birth is a cry of joy and a scream of pain: the environment that sustained us for a time is now crushing down and pushing us out. But death too is a scream of pain and a cry of joy, and so we cannot be certain that we are headed for one and not the other. Birth and death are ultimately confusing; to make sense of them we will have to make our peace with myth.

William Irwin Thompson, *At the Edge of History*

In a recent science fiction novel, *The Haunted Earth*, Dean R. Koontz postulates a world where all man's myths actually appeared, complete with all the rituals and rites associated with them. Vampires and werewolves prowl the streets, their violence carefully limited and sanctioned by the United Nations charter. God is the unhappy guest on a late night talk show where he takes a caustic verbal beating from a Buckley-like robot host. The restaurants are crowded with huge, black men and rumpled, greasy little Italians, eating their watermelon or spaghetti, shouting "scrumptious good" and "at sa good spagheti!" It's
all humorous nonsense, of course, a lightweight science fiction adventure story, but it does make this one point: man lives in a world of myths. Our lives are made up them, unavoidably structured around them. Myth is not merely the strange, antique belief of long dead Greeks and Romans, nor merely the stuff of fairy tales and horror stories. As Joseph Campbell says in his *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, myth has been the living inspiration of whatever else may have appeared out of the activities of the human body and mind. . . . Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth.  

We do not control our myths; they control us. Koontz's burlesque of the black watermelon-gulping moron (or that myth's more refined but just as distorted current counterpart) does not actually exist. He exercises a profound influence, however, both on the modern black American, who is forced to take a position unnatural to him to counterbalance the myth, and on the white American, who is also molded, not by his environment so much as by his own distorted view of that environment. Our myths change us. It is they that remake us in their own image.

But what are our myths today? There are, of course, tens, even hundreds of thousands of them around us, believed in to various degrees, and naturally they are not all of equal importance. In this study I will be primarily concerned with the greatest of mythic concepts, those
that are eschatological. That is, man's mythic concern with the end of the world and with immortality, apocalypse and apotheosis.

Those last two words need definition. As David Ketterer notes in his book, *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination*, Science Fiction and American Literature, the word apocalypse has taken on expanded connotations due to its recent popularity in the critical works of Frye, Kermode and others. It "often functions as a somewhat Delphic critical counter." Ketterer tries to limit the term. Working from its original root, the Greek "apokalupsis," and from its biblical usage, he states first that the word has both negative and positive connotations: "there is a necessary correlation between the destruction of the world and the establishment of the New Jerusalem." Second, considering the historical context of John's "Apocalypse" he finds the work's "visionary aspect, radically undercut by an indirect satiric bitterness and possibly a sense of paranoia." He concludes, then, that "the term apocalyptic allows for a dialectic, conflict, or tension of oppositions--and a dialectic, conflict, or tension of opposites is the stuff of literature." Ketterer goes on to survey briefly the uses of the term by various critics. He mentions, in particular, Alvin Kernan who, in *The Plot of Satire*, defines satire as an apocalyptic mode. Many recent critics, Kernan, R.W.B. Lewis, and Ihab Hassan among them, have seen the word in highly or entirely negative terms. As Ketterer says, "Hassan seems to make an
equation between apocalyptic literature and what he calls the literature of silence—of which Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett are exemplars."  

I will generally use the term in its darker sense. The fiction of Arthur C. Clarke contains apocalypses of both the negative and the positive sort. Clarke, however, does not, cannot bestride the legions of the damned and the saved and regard them as impartially as St. John or the various other exponents of religious apocalypse. He cannot view them as "the vintage of the earth," to be "cast...into the great wine press of the wrath of God." He is too much a humanist. Those who evolve beyond humanity, those who achieve demigodhood or apotheosis in his work, are regarded with all of the awe which such inheritors of the future deserve. But there is always an undercurrent of sadness, even bitterness for the misfits who never make it, whether they be individuals or the whole human race. Thus, I will generally apply the word "apocalypse" to catastrophic events: technological and natural disaster stories, atomic war stories and the like. I will use the word apotheosis to refer to fictions which present mankind's evolution or attainment of godhood, though they usually contain apocalyptic elements as well.

But how exactly did science fiction, until recently one of the most disreputable of literary genres, involve itself with eschatology, the most important of man's mythic concerns? At first glance they must seem an oddly matched pair. Consider, however, the primary concerns of eschatological thought. There is some interest in the past, whether it
it be the biblical creation myths of Genesis, the crucifixion and resurrection myth of the Christian New Testament, or any of the dozens of other extant creation stories, but eschatological thought has always been oriented primarily to the future. What will happen to the individual after death? What is the destiny of the human race? Is there destiny or justice in this universe? Will we ever have absolute proof of God's existence? These are the questions which students of eschatology concern themselves with, and in this day of collapsing religious belief, scientists—and hence science fiction writers—are equally concerned with them.

H.G. Wells was one of the first writers to demonstrate quite conclusively that science fiction could be serious literature dealing with important themes. Indeed, his work can be seen as merely the crown and culmination of a long line of utopian fiction (science fiction's first cousin) stretching back to Plato. He stood out in the first third of the twentieth century, though, as one man far above his fellow writers in talent, seriousness, and intelligence. After Wells there was little of value published in the field of fantastic literature before 1930.

2. Science Fiction: 1930 and After

Relegated for the most part to the pulp magazines, science fiction sank into a black morass of bug-eyed monsters, death rays,
adventure formulae, and a simplistic faith in scientific progress. It degenerated into a genre which no intelligent reader or critic would take seriously. Imagine a field which claimed Edgar Rice Burroughs, Edmund Hamilton, E.E. Smith, and other barely literate hacks as its giants! Standards were so low that even Wells' greatness was dimmed because of his connection with science fiction; and the budding talents of the few young capable writers in the field, men like Stanley Weinbaum and Clifford Simak, were masked from serious critics more successfully than if they'd written in Hittite.

Beginning in the late 1930's thought, something happened. Due in part to the war—a war so terrible that it shook even the most strongly held political beliefs, due in part to the advent of the atomic bomb—a weapon so horrid that it shattered forever all faith in the innate goodness of scientific progress, and due largely to the influence of John W. Campbell—after Verne and Wells the most important man science fiction has ever known—the 1940's saw a major change in the field. Almost against its will, science fiction began to grow up.

The ten year period from 1937 to 1947 witnessed the initial publication and rapidly growing success of many major writers. Asimov and Heinlein first broke into print regularly in Campbell's Astounding, as did van Vogt, Hubbard, del Rey, Sturgeon—the list seems endless. Not only were the writers new, fresh faces rehacking old formulae. No longer was the hero exclusively a wealthy scientist/inventor who built
his super spaceship and went off to conquer the evil minions of the
galaxy for truth, justice and the American way, regardless of the odds
or the bad grammar. No longer was the hero naive and honest to the
point where it made your teeth hurt. No longer were plots pure wish-
fulfillment fantasies promising only greater spaceships and more evil
aliens in the next issue. These crudities still existed (as they do
today), but they were toned down. Prior to Campbell the science fiction
reader usually had a choice between two types of story, the cosmic day-
dreams of Smith and Burroughs (and the early Campbell for that matter),
or the lifeless, scientifically accurate barbarism of the somewhat
earlier Hugo Gernsback gee whiz radio and electricity school. The
reader usually, of course, settled for a combination of the two.

With Campbell's Astounding, however, the reader received much
more. First, as is commonly known, the editor insisted on real plots
where things didn't automatically turn out fine, and where, if the
protagonist succeeded, he worked damned hard to do it, and at least
raised a sweat; more specifically, plots were based not on wishfulfill-
ment but on logic. Second, the reader found characterization of an
almost human complexity. Not even Campbell was able to draw really good
and varied characterization from his authors, assuming that he even
wanted to; the pages of Astounding were still crammed with male scientists,
Americans (or aliens who might as well have been Americans) and Caucasians,
but they were at least more or less human. They had interests other
than their spaceships. They worried about more than just the latest unsolved equation. It seemed likely that they might even sleep or eliminate wastes. Campbell didn't bring science fiction characterization all the way from the fairy tale to The Ambassadors, but he at least encouraged authors to show us a group of people as varied as we would find in a typical advanced calculus course at M.I.T.

The third thing which Campbell insisted on in his magazine was a minimum of stylistic quality. Writing could no longer be merely a vehicle for the conveyance of fact; it had to do more. It had to be at least grammatical and hopefully enjoyable for its own sake. Campbell himself, having converted from the old super-science days, provided science fiction with some of its smoothest and most lyrical mood pieces.

There is still a fourth area in which science fiction is indebted to John Campbell: subject matter. Wells had proven the adaptability of the medium to social commentary. Campbell, aware of this, brought the field from its various havens on Barsoom and in Andromeda, and, if you will accept a very apt cliche, dragged it down to Earth. Each story had to be concerned with a genuine human problem. These problems might be personal: what do you do if you're stranded on Mars with help a week away, but have oxygen left for the three of you for only five days? Or they might be social: what would the effect be on society if a new social science were developed that could predict
with total accuracy the movements and actions of large numbers of people
years in advance? These are questions of importance, questions which
are morally hard to answer, questions which make the reader think.
They are philosophical questions and to some extent eschatological ones.

It is John Campbell's *Astounding* that published Arthur Clarke's
first stories.
II. Earliest Fiction: Mankind Overcomes Disaster

1. Man Triumphant and Rudyard Kipling

By 1946 Arthur Clarke was already a moderately successful science writer with articles to his credit in several technical publications. He had also published fiction and essays in a variety of amateur and fan magazines and, under the auspices of his friend Walter Gillings, the editor, had sold several stories to the fledgling British science fiction magazine Fantasy. When that publication's first issue experienced a series of delays Gillings suggested that Clarke try elsewhere. John Campbell accepted his story "Loophole" and published it in the April, 1946 issue of Astounding.8

The story consists of a series of memoranda circulated among various officials of the Martian government. It has been discovered that certain nations on Earth have experimented with atomic power and rocketry in their recent war. Fearing for their own safety, the Martians plan a show of force and send nineteen battleships to Earth with an ultimatum; rocketry experiments must cease or all life on the planet will be destroyed. Earth goes under without protest, or so it seems. Ten years later, the Martians, still unsure of their neighbors,
decide to exterminate Earth. Before they can put their plan into effect, however, a surprise occurs. Earth scientists, forbidden to work on rocket propulsion, have diverted their resources to the invention of matter transmission. A score of atomic bombs materialize on Mars and wipe out the Martian civilization.

Damon Knight has called the years from 1946 to 1950 "a period when Clarke apparently aspired, with some reason, to become the combined Kipling and Maugham of the spaceways." One might label these years Clarke's manifest destiny period. Mankind is seen as an expanding political, military, and economic force, conquering the solar system and the galaxy—a chosen people. The logic of these stories is the logic of Darwin and the survival of the fittest. As one critic says: "Man exists...and he must continue to exist, for the process that evolved him selected survival characteristics of dominance, intelligence, adaptability and endurance."

When James Gunn wrote this he was thinking of a specific Clarke story, "Rescue Party," which appeared in the May, 1946 issue of Astounding. This unusual piece, one of Clarke's most popular, has the distinction of being perhaps the most upbeat end-of-the-world story ever written. In it, an extremely advanced galactic survey ship, carrying a multi-species crew, speeds to Earth in a frantic attempt to save some of the planet's population from an impending nova. The aliens explore the Earth, but find it strangely deserted. They sadly
theorize that the planet's inhabitants have all either committed suicide or buried themselves deep, deep below the surface in a futile attempt to survive the explosion. The survey ship leaves Earth and heads back towards its base just moments before the searing heat reaches it. Passing the orbit of Pluto they discover a tremendous fleet of gigantic, but primitive, spaceships heading for the stars. Mankind has not hidden itself away in a hole to die, but has made a grand, desperate attempt to conquer interstellar space. The journey that the primitive ships are making would have taken hundreds of years without the aid they will receive from the aliens. Clarke strongly implies that in twenty years humanity will have come to either dominate or become at least a major partner in the galactic federation.

The theme of "Rescue Party" is very similar to that of "Loophole." Mankind, through its superior intelligence and pluck, is bound to master even the most overwhelming situation, whether it be threat of annihilation in war or natural catastrophe. In some non-providential, evolutionary manner, man is fated to succeed.

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Even here, in his first two published stories, most of the concerns that will become important to Clarke later are fully displayed. The first of these is the effect of catastrophic, almost apocalyptic events on mankind. Clarke is at his most optimistic in these stories. While "Loophole" mentions four acts or threats of violence, World War
II, the threatened and planned attacks on Earth, and the eventual
destruction of Mars, no moral comment is made on the World War, the two
potential Martian attacks are both seen as evil--the Martians, after
all, made no attempt at peaceful contact--and the final Earth offensive,
while not actually remarked upon by the author, can only be seen as
justified. This is one of the very few stories by Clarke--perhaps the
only one--which condones the idea of righteous warfare. Mankind
is similarly free from blame for the catastrophic events in
"Rescue Party." In most later stories the destruction of the planet
is man's fault, or if it is natural, acts as a bitter comment on man and
his sense of self-importance. In "Rescue Party," however, man shows
his importance by triumphing over nature. Clarke, in fact, does his
best to make man noble. As he describes it Earth's prenova civiliza-
tion is a veritable utopia.

The second of Clarke's major concerns in these stories is
man's first contact with extraterrestrial intelligence. "Loophole" is
once again atypical, for malevolent aliens are very rare in Clarke's
work. The crew of the galactic survey ship in "Rescue Party" is much
more typical. Indeed, the commander of the ship, Alveron, although
hardly all-powerful, can be seen as a prototype for Karel in
Childhood's End, the aliens of the early drafts of 2001: A Space
Odyssey--which Clarke recently published in The Lost Worlds of 2001--
and many others. The crew provides an excellent and varied sampling
of Clarke's ability to characterize nonhumans. Some, like the Pal-
adorian hive-mind beings, are genuinely strange. Others might as well
have been raised in London for all the differences in personality we
can find. Clarke, however, does not endow his aliens with human
personalities out of a lack of imagination of ability. While he is
often just not interested in his character, but rather the events they
are involved in, and thus leaves their personalities rather thin, he can
crisize in depth when he so desires. The priest in "The Star"
and HAL in 2001: A Space Odyssey are such examples. In characteriz-
ing his aliens, I feel, Clarke is consciously following the lead of
Olaf Stapledon, the prewar philosopher and novelist who influenced so
many other science fiction writers. First contact, in any case, is
linked almost invariably with an apocalyptic event. These two stories
show the trend well. Once man has met extraterrestrial, Clarke is
telling us, things will never be the same again.

A third concern which will come to dominate Clarke's fiction
is also present in these stories, his interest in human evolution. In
"Rescue Party" evolution gives us still another reason to see man as
the special child of creation, the chosen one. In the following
passage Captain Alveron of the galactic survey ship is apprising his
crew of their mission on Earth.

"Less than four hundred thousand years
ago, the survey ship S5060 examined the planets
of the system we are approaching. It found
intelligence on none of them, though the third planet was teeming with animal life and two other worlds had once been inhabited. The usual report was submitted and the system is due for its next examination in six hundred thousand years.

"It now appears that in the incredibly short period since the last survey, intelligent life has appeared in the system."\(^{11}\)

Mankind has appeared with an overwhelming suddenness. He comes roaring onto the Galactic scene with an exploding nova at his back and an overwhelming ability to adapt, endure and dominate.

* * *

Apocalypse and apotheosis. So far in discussing the two stories I have tried to avoid the use of both of these terms. For the first I have substituted such phrases as "natural catastrophe," "annihilation," and "almost apocalyptic." For the second, "evolution" and "dominance." Clarke, I feel, fresh from jubilant military victory in World War II, is still writing under the partial influence of the earlier Smith and Burroughs tradition. These stories are more serious than theirs, of course, although "Loophole" in particular contains a good bit of wishfulfillment; but Clarke has not yet attained the deep, strong moral stance that he will soon discover. Somehow the stories are too glib. There is none of the bitter, almost existential anguish found in Clarke's later work. In "Loophole" he describes without a
trace of sorrow not only World War II but the complete destruction of Martian civilization. In "Rescue Party" both Clarke and the reader are taken up entirely with heroics, those of the alien rescuers and mankind, with the excitement of the moment. Little time is spent mourning for Earth and the lost heritage which her destruction represents. This emotional vacuum might well be compared to the situations in Clarke's later works, "The Star" and "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth..." While the earlier stories are good, enjoyable optimistic adventures, these last two are small tragic masterpieces.

Clarke's continuing interests go back to the beginning then. In his earliest published work there are already hints of what his major themes will be. But there is a difference between having one's tools and learning to use them, and a difference between knowing how to use them and using them well.

2. The Static Utopias

"Rescue Party" briefly develops yet a fourth of Clarke's major themes, what he has called "the conflict between a pastoral and an urban way of life." He makes Earth's prenova civilization as utopian as possible:

The new civilization had machines and resources of which earlier ages had never dreamed, but it
was essentially rural and no longer bound to the steel and concrete warrens that had dominated the centuries before. The importance which Clarke attaches to this dichotomy may well derive from his personal experience. Clarke grew up in rural Somerset and disliked living in London during and after the war. Since the mid-fifties he has lived in a sort of sarong-wrapped rural utopia in Ceylon, commuting to New York, London and elsewhere only on business.

As early as 1937 Clarke was working on a book concerned with this subject, Against the Fall of Night. Moskowitz informs us that it was twice submitted to John Campbell and twice rejected; and he theorizes that Campbell's own short stories, "Twilight" and "Night", along with the works of Clarke Ashton Smith, Warner Van Lorne and the ever present Olaf Stapledon, inspired it. It was finally published in the November, 1948 issue of Startling Stories.

Against the Fall of Night tells the story of Alvin, one of the few remaining children in the great, slowly dying city of Diaspar. It is set so far in the future that the moon is only a forgotten memory of something that fell from the sky long ago, and the city can measure its own history in terms of hundreds of millions of years. Diaspar is a closed, technological utopia of towering skyscrapers, wide streets and parks, surrounded by desert. In the millions of years gone by mankind has visited the stars and fought a great war with
beings known only as the Invaders. Man lost and retreated to Earth, a broken race. Now only Diaspar is left, or so the city's history books say. Its people are nearly immortal and quite content. Alvin is the only exception; he wants something more.

Exploring restlessly, he pieces together several clues and at last manages to leave the city on a forgotten transport system which takes him to Lys, Diaspar's long lost rural counterpart and a technological utopia in its own right. At this point the story becomes quite complex; but briefly, Alvin continues his explorations and discovers evidence of an unknown and 'dying extraterrestrial technology. He gains control of an extremely advanced robot and spreads such consternation in both Lys and Diaspar that the two civilizations are forced to confront one another in order to figure out what to do with him. Using the robot, Alvin unearths an ancient spacecraft of advanced design and travels in it through intergalactic space to the Seven Suns, a gigantic ring of artificial stars placed near the center of the galaxy and meant to serve as a beacon for the ancient capital of the now defunct galactic empire. Alvin makes many discoveries and his history books are proven false. There never were any Invaders and Earth, it seems, was just one minor member of the Empire. This galactic society discovered 'a very great and very strange civilization far around the curve of the Cosmos...''which had evolved on the purely physical plane further than had been believed possible.'
The members of the galactic empire, millions of years ago, simply picked up and left our galaxy to study under these advanced beings. Diaspar and Lys, it seems, are all that is left of a civilization that couldn't keep up, that collapsed with an overwhelming, universe-spanning case of what Alvin Toffler calls Future Shock. Clarke ties things together neatly at the end. Humanity, now that it has rediscovered the truth, will retake the stars and hopefully find its long lost heritage.

* * *

City versus country, urban versus pastoral. The conflict is an ancient one in our literature. Blake and Wordsworth protested bitterly against the brutality and lewdness of the cities and longed for the passing simplicity of country life. The hot-blooded city rakes of Ben Jonson's plays and, later, of the Restoration stage, made fools of country squires recently come to town and stole their often willing wives. Sidney, Spenser, and a host of lesser poets, frustrated by the bustle of London and Westminster, wove seductive fantasies of a country life that never existed. The arguments go back as far as cities do, to Plautus and Virgil, to Horace and Aristophanes. City versus country. How do they relate? Is one of them superior and will it eventually dominate? Or, perhaps, will the better life be lost?

For Arthur Clarke the two are necessary companions; they
cannot exist apart successfully. Consider Against the Fall of Night. Diaspar is a technological utopia, computers provide man's every need, the city has lasted for millions of years, and yet it is a failure. The city dies. Its dying may outlast many centuries, even millenia, but its population and power shrink, and for a writer of such galactic expectations as Clarke this is failure, a mere prolongation of the end. The people of Diaspar too are dead, or nearly so. Their minds function slowly and mechanically. They can no longer grasp the majesty of the miraculous machines that serve their needs. In his later reworking of the novel, which he entitled The City and the Stars, Clarke adds an apt touch. In that version Diaspar's citizens are not even born of woman, but rather engendered quite literally from a machine. They have lost their humanity.

And the people of Lys are not much better off. Their minds are quicker, they look physically healthier, they understand their technology better, but they also are riddled with foolishness. Like Diaspar they wish to remain hidden and inconspicuous beneath the fearful shadow of an Invader that never existed. Their land too is dying slowly and surely. The city has whole neighborhoods which are darkened and empty. Much of Lys' cultivated land has fallen into disuse. Both civilizations die. It is only when Alvin brings them together, against their wills, that they regain vigor and flexibility.
William Irwin Thompson, in his superb work *At the Edge of History*, deals in some detail with Arthur Clarke's concept of pastoral and urban life. He finds Clarke's work "uncanny in its prophecy, for his billion-year future seems to be an imaginative description of our present 1970."\(^6\) Thompson narrows in on the apocalyptic nature of this dichotomy by comparing Diaspar to the standard culture of the United States, and Lys to the culture of the Hopi Indians.

We are the people closed in a culture of machines in which artificial intelligence, artificial organs, and extraterrestrial birth are promising to give "man" the future he has always dreamed of. The Hopis are the small spiritually and psychically advanced people watching us move toward apocalypse and remembering the prophecies.\(^7\)

Diaspar has the power to accomplish almost anything, but not the will, self-control, or spirituality. Lys has those mental powers which Diaspar lacks. They can look down on the dull citizens of the city with disdain, but divorced from them they are as powerless to act as the Hopi in twentieth century America. "Clarke is a prophet, but his prophecy is not so much prediction as the imaginative description of the implications of the present."\(^8\) This then, Thompson would say—and I would agree—is the nature of apocalypse in *Against the Fall of Night* and *The City and the Stars*. Invoking that most apocalyptic of
poets, Yeats, who makes for several interesting comparisons with Clarke.\textsuperscript{19} Thompson says "in 1970 there is no doubt that the gyre of Diaspar is at its widest expansion, and that the gyre of Lys is merely as small as the eye of a needle."\textsuperscript{20} If man is to continue evolving socially he must make peace with both his technology and his basic nature. He must not abandon one or the other but learn, rather, to compromise. He must learn, as Clarke himself has, to commute, at least mentally, between a rural Ceylon and an urban New York.

* * *

The static utopia was one of Clarke's greatest interests back in the 1940's. He returned to it again in the short novel \underline{The Lion of Comarre} which appeared in August, 1949. The plot is reminiscent of \underline{Against the Fall of Night}. A young man, Richard Peyton III, is unhappy with his highly advanced but static twenty-sixth century utopia. He wants to become an engineer in a world where technology is taken for granted and all the best minds are artists, philosophers and statesmen. Richard learns about a distant ancestor, Rolf Thordarsen, to whom he is apparently a genetic double, and who was history's greatest engineer. Thordarsen's most important discoveries were rejected by society and he left civilization in disgust, retiring to Comarre, a small but technologically advanced community made up of people known only as the Decedents. Richard is contacted by a secret group of scientists who want to break the stasis that society has imposed on their research and they convince him to enter Comarre and
search for his ancestor's secrets.

In Comarre Richard discovers a whole spectrum of new inventions, most importantly matter transmission and robotic intelligence. The few remaining Decedents lie dreaming under machine-made illusions which almost capture Richard. But he proves his superiority and convinces the intelligent machine which rules Comarre to let him have the various advanced scientific secrets including Rolf Thordarsen's own manuscripts. Richard tries to free the dreamers, but he finds them all hopelessly insane, addicted to their illusions, and unable to cope with reality. Leaving Comarre, he brings to mankind what Clarke calls "the Third Renaissance."²¹

To Clarke no society can be successful unless it expands or progresses. He has no use for Spengler's theory of history, preferring that of Arnold Toynbee, whose name and thought appears more than once in his work.²² Civilizations, Clarke would say, do not have to fall, but by responding intelligently to the crises that arise they can continue to progress, improving spiritually all the while. The future is open-ended. Societies which attempt to achieve a perfect status quo are interrupting the whole flow of history. Clark has said that

Civilization cannot exist without new frontiers; it needs them both physically and spiritually. The physical need is obvious—new lands, new resources, new materials. The spiritual need is less apparent, but in the
long run it is more important. We do not live by bread alone; we need adventure, variety, novelty, romance. As the psychologists have shown by their sensory deprivation experiments, a man goes swiftly mad if he is isolated in a silent, darkened room, cut off completely from the external world. What is true of individuals is also true of societies; they too can become insane without sufficient stimulus.

In *The Lion of Comarre* Clarke shows us two societies, one the dominant civilization of the twenty-sixth century, and the other that of the Decedents. The Decedents have admitted their inability to deal with the real world and have retreated into the closed system of their own imaginations. There are no new stimuli; everything is pre-programed. Thus the Decedents find only madness. But the people of Richard Peyton's world are no better off. Indeed, Clarke equates the two civilizations. They too have outlawed the original, the new. Even their greatest artistic achievements are mere reworkings and embellishments of ancient themes. They also, in their own ever so stable way, are mad, and this is something they share with the people of Lys and Diaspar in *Against the Fall of Night*. Change must come. Clarke tells us, and Man can either move towards it, rising upward to a destined apotheosis--however variously depicted--or he can cower in the ruin of his own shortcomings, his own inferiority, flinching before the Invaders, the fictions of his own stimulus-starved imagin-
ation. But if Man chooses the latter course, something which Clarke is not yet ready to face in his earliest work, he will have only himself to blame, and no one, no superior race, no god, will mourn this one insignificant failure.
III. Pessimistic Fiction: The Cold War Sets In

1. Limited Optimism

Crisis is a way of thinking about one's moment, and not inherent in the moment itself.

Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending

The work which I have dealt with so far has been both optimistically and eschatologically oriented. But there is another side to Clarke's postwar fiction, a darker side--his reaction, I suspect, to the tensions and failures of the escalating cold war. Clarke's very bleak "Technical Error," which concerns an accident at an experimental powerhouse and the entire installation's eventual destruction, appeared in print as early as the December, 1946 issue of Fantasy. Generally, however, the optimistic fiction seems to predate the more pessimistic; each year more and more of his published work was of the latter sort. By the early 1950's the few optimistic pieces that saw print were usually confined to the near future, to the limited horizons of hard science, and to a less all-encompassing kind of optimism. Typical of this sort is "Hide and Seek," published in September, 1949, an exciting adventure story in which a man in a spacesuit holds off an
armed space cruiser by the ingenious method of landing on the tiny Martian moon Phobos, a world so small that he can keep it constantly between him and the spaceship (which is plagued by a large turning radius). It all comes down to an interesting problem in physics. His novels Prelude to Space, which appeared in Galaxy in 1951, and The Sands of Mars, published in London in the same year, also date from this period. They are really fictional documentaries of man's first exploration of space. While they are cheerful, it is cheerfulness of a limited sort. Clarke can still write expansionistic, Kiplingesque fiction, but he is no longer willing to take on the universe. Man conquers in these pieces, but only the inanimate, lower life forms, and other men. These stories simply lack the deeper philosophic optimism found in "Rescue Party" and Against the Fall of Night.

2. Accidental or Natural Disaster

Clarke's bleaker mood was manifested in several kinds of stories, one of which I have designated that of accidental or natural disaster. Two of the best of these are "The Fires Within," published in August, 1947, and "History Lesson," dating from May, 1949.

"The Fires Within," which Sam Moskowitz considers "one of
Clarke's most successful stories,"\textsuperscript{24} deals with the discovery of high density creatures fifteen miles below the surface of the Earth. These beings, to whom the super-heated rock of the Earth's core is like air, have a great underground city whose center is near Cambridge, but which stretches well past London. The story of their discovery is contained in a report found by the beings several hundred years after they have emerged into what they call the Shadow World (that is the surface) and have accidentally destroyed man and all other surface life. They are mildly sorry about it and readily admit that humanity was "the more intelligent race. After all they discovered us first."\textsuperscript{25} They are not, however, very guilt-stricken.

This story, like many of the others written by Clarke at the time, works in an ironic manner. Northrop Frye, describing the typical writer of ironic fiction, states that "Complete objectivity and suppression of all explicit moral judgements are essential to his method,"\textsuperscript{26} and this certainly applies to Clarke, who merely portrays the "facts" as they are. He shows no sorrow over the death of man. He draws no obvious moral. He does not even enter the story as narrator; it is all told in a limited first person by the characters involved. Deep underneath, though, there are powerful emotional currents of the sort which can be found in almost any piece of good ironic fiction. As Frye says, "sophisticated irony merely states, and lets the reader add the ironic tone himself."\textsuperscript{27} Only the word "lets," it seems to me,
is inaccurate here; a capable ironist manipulates his audience and leaves them little choice but to feel what the author desires.

Clarke, then, is controlling his reader's response to "The Fires Within." Notice that man dies without particular dignity. Our only insight into his end comes in a humorous reference made by the underground beings to the scientist who discovered them. "'It must have given him a shock when he saw us coming up to the surface, right underneath him.'" Further, it is hinted that man's destruction is partially his own fault since the invention which was used to discover the high density civilization gave off the energy which first attracted its attention to the surface.

Man, Clarke implies, is at fault in part. The story, as Kingsley Amis has said of another Clarke piece, "presumably... allegorise/[a certain irrational feelings about where knowledge may land you if you aren't careful." Technological innovation—with, one assumes, a mushroom cloud as an unmentioned emblem in the back of Clarke's mind—is not synonymous with success. Humanity was the smarter race, and the new masters of the Earth in "The Fires Within" admitted it readily—but where did it get man? Perhaps we know too much.

* * *

"History Lesson" likewise tells the story of mankind's final end. A tribe of nomads flees over the mountains before the northern glaciers of a new ice age only to discover other glaciers approaching
from the south. Realizing that they have reached the end, they build a cairn and place within it the last mementoes of our civilization's lost achievements, a recording of Sibelius, a functioning radium powered radio beacon, a sealed canister of motion picture film and other items. Centuries later the first interplanetary flight from the rapidly growing Venusian civilization reaches the now uninhabited Earth and discovers the relics. Scientists on the second planet restore the film after many years and show it, eager to catch their first glimpse of what man looked like. As the story ends they sit in awed silence watching what they will never know is merely a Donald Duck cartoon.

No summary can accurately convey the effect of "History Lesson" on the reader. It is an ironic story told seemingly without any attempt at ironic detachment. We are invited to sympathize with the humans who suffer terribly. When their leader Shann--

lifted his eyes to the south, and saw the doom of all his hopes. For there at the edge of the world glimmered that deadly light he had seen so often to the north--the glint of ice below the horizon^{30}

--we share the terror of that doom. When the Venusians breathlessly examine their Earthly artifacts we feel the thrill of discovery and something more, a sense of pride. Man has gone, but through these artifacts he has achieved some sort of qualified immortality. The closing is a trick ending, of course, and such things are generally
looked down upon (they remind one of O. Henry and the more formulaic sort of detective fiction). But when they succeed, as "History Lesson"'s ending does, the ironic effect is devastating.

The piece is full of small bits of information which seem slightly out of phase with what the reader at first takes to be the memorial nature of the story. A Venusian scientist states that "almost certainly, man had sufficient knowledge to survive an Ice Age."31 He postulates that "disease or racial degeneration may have been responsible,"32 but we do not take his guesses seriously. He theorizes in scholarly and unintentionally humorous language "that the tribal conflicts endemic to our own species in prehistoric times may have continued on the Third Planet after the coming of technology."33 We translate this as "advanced warfare," and only then do we begin to wonder, only then does Clarke's bitterness begin to show through. Irony can be at its darkest when it is hysterically funny— one thinks of Swift and Beckett—and this is the effect of the ending of Clarke's "History Lesson."

**

The three major concerns of Clarke touched on in chapter two are once again apparent in these stories. In "The Fires Within" first contact and apocalypse are simultaneous. Not only is our civilization destroyed by the meeting of human with nonhuman, but all life as well. Clarke has explored the possibility of vast changes occurring in our
culture when we meet aliens in *Against the Fall of Night* and "Loophole." Here, more pessimistic, he considers the possibility that we will not even survive that meeting. The aliens of "History Lesson," on the other hand, never even meet man, but the implications are equally bleak. The Venusians misunderstand our artifacts. They never even translate our language successfully. Clarke is here suggesting that no mutual understanding can ever be reached.

Finally, "History Lesson" provides an interesting contrast with the earlier "Rescue Party" on the subject of evolution. In chapter two I pointed out the surprise expressed by Alveron and his crew at the unbelievable speed with which man has evolved. He is by far the newest intelligent race in the galaxy and has developed in a mere fraction of the time required by other races. Despite his relatively low status at the time of the story this sets him apart as somehow superior. In the later piece, though, man has not only lost his evolutionary edge, he is clearly inferior.

In the time that man had taken to progress from the Pyramids to the rocket-propelled spaceship, the Venusians had passed from the discovery of agriculture to anti-gravity itself—the ultimate secret that man had never learned. 34

Arthur Clarke can no longer see us as ultimate beings. We have the potential for greatness—Clarke never quite loses that belief—
but he is reaching the point at which he almost sees mere continued existence as a goal rapidly moving beyond our reach.

3. Man-made Apocalypse

The doors are twisted on broken hinges,
Sheets of rain swish through on the wind
where the golden girls ran and the panels read:
We are the greatest city,
and the greatest nation,
nothing like us ever was.

Carl Sandburg, "Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind"

The leap from the self-assured optimism of "Rescue Party" to the ironic pessimism of "History Lesson" is a great one, but Clarke must go further. Eventually in such stories as "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth...") Clarke considered directly man's own culpability for his situation. Turning from the various far off catastrophes he had envisioned, the novae, the ice ages, the alien invasions, he faced squarely the one really impending doom of the 1950's: nuclear war and its aftermath.

"If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth..." published in 1951, takes place in and near a large colony on the moon. A man takes his son up through the residential and administrative areas of the colony, all depicted
with the impeccable attention to detail one comes to expect from Clarke, and out onto the moon's surface for the first time. They drive for hours and reach a point from which the boy can see Earth which he views with awe until he notices that the portion of the disk that should have been in darkness was gleaming faintly with an evil phosphorescence... He was looking upon the funeral pyre of a world—upon the radioactive aftermath of Armageddon.  

All life on Earth has been destroyed; the moon colony is all that remains. The child understands that his trip has been a pilgrimage of sorts, and he learns that it will be generations before his descendants can regain their heritage.

He did not look back as they began the homeward journey. He could not bear to see the cold glory of the crescent Earth fade from the rocks around him, as he went to rejoin his people in their long exile.

Man tends to see the world as a series of either/or situations, a set of opposites. We speak of the politically far left and the politically far right, forgetting that fascism and communism when put into practice have given us that strange pair of almost identical twins, the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. We talk of morality and immorality, fixing them as indelible opposites in our minds, and then stand
helplessly indecisive before the complexities of real moral choice. Another such false bipolarity is the one drawn between optimism and pessimism. We tend to see the world views of Kipling and Conrad as extremes and such might also be said of stories like "Loophole" and "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth..." But in man there is something which sets a limit to his despair. Whether this trait is an innate characteristic of intelligence or something given by a god, I do not know, but it is something which we should prize. The secret police of the world have always known it. They are familiar with prisoners who achieve a state of mind in which no torture can reach them. This is equally true of the purely mental anguish associated with the twentieth century, with alienation and existentialism. The worlds and works of Beckett, Sartre and Genet are dark and filled with pain; their lives seem purposeless, without reason for continuation. But none of them has committed suicide. Out of that very darkness they can construct a reason to live.

Throughout this study I have invoked the names of imposing thinkers and authors. Perhaps it is unfair to compare Clarke to Beckett and other major writers, but I do not think so. Clarke cannot compete with them stylistically, but is he not after all facing the same problems as they are in his own way? Man, he says, can destroy himself, prove his insignificance, obliterate all knowledge of himself
from a meaningless universe, and yet... and Clarke must pause. It is the same pause which keeps a man like Samuel Beckett alive after he has written "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more." It is the pause of hope. Clarke is not the philosopher Beckett is and he cannot devote his life to a detailed description of Hell, as that author has done. But he can for a while reach the same depths, the same great wells of darkness.

Hell, for Clarke is an abortive apocalypse: atomic warfare, "the funeral pyre of a world." He describes it. He shows man destroying himself without mitigating circumstance, without help from nature. He faces what is for him the ultimate horror and finds hope. The world in "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth..." is dead, a mass of radioactive slag, but man lives on. He is isolated and in long exile, but he lives. Out of Clarke's most despairing pessimism, from the fear of atomic fire, rises a phoenix. Man will endure.
IV. Extraterrestrials: A Question of Religion

1. Something Original about God

I should...like to see you awarded a prize for theology, as you are one of the very few living persons who has written anything original about God. You have in fact written several mutually incompatible things...if you had stuck to one theological hypothesis you might be a serious public danger.

J.B.S. Haldane, A Letter to Arthur Clarke

Historically the concept of apocalypse has been closely tied to religion. The various catastrophic events, invasions, great plagues, wars that lasted for decades have almost invariably been equated with God's anger. They have been seen as the scourge by which he seeks to redeem man. Only within the last hundred years has man's power and scientific knowledge grown to such an extent that he has been able to envision himself as the direct cause of needless and purposeless catastrophe, the sole bearer of responsibility for events, and most science fiction has taken this scientific viewpoint.
Clarke's early fiction had little to do with religion. Catastrophic events were either due to man or to the unforeseen and meaningless vagaries of nature. Among the stories we have discussed only Against the Fall of Night has any religious element. The old man from whom Alvin gets his robot is the last disciple of the religion of the Master, a faith whose basic tenet is that one day the galactic civilization will return to aid Earth. Clarke, however, makes it clear that the religion is merely a degenerate remainder of what was formerly a political philosophy. Only later, when Alvin discovers that this civilization has gone off to another galaxy to study under a far superior race, is there some hint of semi-religious awe. But such stories as "Rescue Party," "History Lesson," and "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth..." are devoid of any supernatural background. They take place in a mechanistic universe with nothing behind it except, perhaps, a sense of ironic justice.

As I have tried to show in chapter three, with stories like "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth..." Clarke has regained his faith in man and has turned to themes that have thoroughgoing religious overtones. He does not actually write about God, but his stories take on a more mature, and a more mythic semblance. These themes will culminate in a major work, Childen's End, but they are apparent in a series of other shorter pieces.
2. The Dangers of Alien Manipulation

Clarke has always been fascinated by the possibility of aliens, benevolent or otherwise, manipulating mankind. This is the major theme in *Childhood's End* and he returns to it in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Clarke first used it in "Guardian Angel," an optimistic piece which appeared in April, 1950. In a slightly different form this story became the first section of the novel *Childhood's End*. It will be discussed in conjunction with that work.

Clarke published "The Possessed" in 1952. It tells of the Swarm, a race of nonbiological, energy based intelligences who, parasitic in nature, come to the Earth looking for a new host species. They find nothing advanced enough to suit their needs and the majority of the Swarm sets off for another solar system, promising to return in several hundred million years. Those that remain begin to genetically manipulate the small lizards that they find, speeding up their evolution considerably. Mammals develop and the Swarm selects one of the several new species as the host with the greatest potential for intelligence and physical ability. They enter the small mammals and wait restlessly for the approaching time when they will again be able to build a high civilization. Something goes wrong, though; the host reaches an evolutionary
dead end and the group mind of the Swarm degenerates. Sure of success, they grow complacent and fail. Intelligence is lost. Man, whose ancestors were probably considered as hosts and rejected, evolves and never learns of the Swarm's existence. All that is left is a blind, mindless urge to return to the spot where the Swarm is supposed to meet its other part in several million years. The hosts which they selected, we learn, are lemmings.

"The Possessed" has a fairly complex effect on the reader. No attempt is made to give the Swarm a truly human personality, but we are urged to sympathize. The alien entity, like man in "Rescue Party," flees from a home world which has been destroyed in some unmentioned catastrophe, and "even now the memory of its lost birthplace was still sharp and clear, an ache that would never die."39 The Swarm suffers; it receives a "merciless buffeting of radiation"40 in space; it is "faced with a tormenting dilemma."41 The reader cannot help but feel concern. But this concern must be mixed with distrust, for the alien who is a mental parasite is a stock science fiction villain (Just one year previously, in 1951, Robert Heinlein had published The Puppet Masters, a novel on this very theme, which Clarke might have read). We are also distrustful because throughout most of the story we are under the mistaken impression that the mammal chosen as host by the Swarm will evolve into man. The tragic and complete failure of the beings, precursing and
reminding one as it must of the Overlords' tragic limitation in Childhood's End, and the ironic closing further confuse the situation.

"The Possessed" is a flawed piece of fiction and I think it is flawed because of its ambiguity. It leaves the reader confused, unsure of whether he has seen a tragedy or whether all is for the best, because the Swarm's success would have been man's ruin. It is also, however, an important story; for in it we find many of Clarke's major plot elements. I have pointed out the story's similarities to both "Rescue Party" and Childhood's End. Other parts of it are reminiscent of the earlier "History Lesson" (an ironic look at a race that failed) and the much later 2001: A Space Odyssey (a consideration of the possibility for gently manipulating a primitive species in the hope of guiding its evolution). Finally, "The Possessed" is important because it signals Clarke's return to the themes of Olaf Stapledon, with that writer's interest in cosmic time schemes and strangely evolved intelligences as a major source of influence, something largely missing since Against the Fall of Night.

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If the moral implications of "The Possessed" are ambiguous, those of "The Parasite," published in 1953, definitely are not. In this story the manipulation of another's mind is seen as totally evil. Jack Pearson follows his friend Roy Connolly to a Mediterranean island which
he has fled to, seemingly without reason, deserting his wife, business, and friends. Connolly tells Pearson a wild story, claiming that his mind is being read and manipulated by an evil being from the far future whom he calls Omega.

"He's in a kind of hollow, egg shaped space—surrounded by blue mist that always seems to be twisting and turning, but never changes its position. There's no entrance or exit—and no gravity, unless he's learned to defy it. Because he floats in the center...

Have you ever seen a lemur or a spectral tarsier? He's rather like that—a nightmare travesty of mankind with huge malevolent eyes. And this is strange—it's not the way one had imagined evolution going—he's covered with a fine layer of fur, as blue as the room in which he lives...I think his legs have completely atrophied; perhaps his arms as well."

Connolly claims that this being has been with him for many years, constantly pushing him into sexual and emotional indiscretions, but says that he has discovered Omega's existence only recently. Pearson assumes that the being is imaginary and symbolic of his friend's sublimated guilt feelings, but agrees to help him. A woman appears on the scene, Connolly's latest lover, and goaded in part by her taunts and in part perhaps by Omega he commits suicide to end his anguish. As the story
ends Pearson discovers to his horror proof of Omega's reality.

The world he knew had faded from his sight, and around him now were the fixed yet crawling mists of the blue room. Staring from its center—as they had stared down the ages at how many others?—were two vast and lidless eyes. Pearson has become the parasite's next victim.

There is no moral doubt in this story, for Omega is thoroughly evil. Clarke pictures for us the parasite and his fellows ransacking the tragedies of the past, flocking ghoulishly to fight for the minds of Nero, Caligula, and other villains. These men of the future have "reached the heights and fallen from them into the depths the beasts can never know." It can only be hoped that the parasite represents merely one branch of man in the far future, one diseased branch, and not the complete culmination of our evolution.

Clarke has several times made the comment that any science considerably more advanced than our own would be indistinguishable from magic. A logical implication of this would seem to be that the wielder of such science would be indistinguishable from a god. Both the Swarm and Omega are god-like in many ways—virtually immortal, telepathic, able to control others—although the former fails totally and and the latter becomes more devilish than anything else. Clarke does not portray very optimistically the chances for physical, mental, and spiritual advancement. If only man could find a benevolent guide, he
might be saying, a superior being or beings to set him on the right path from racial childhood to maturity, everything would be better.

3. "The Sentinel" and Childhood's End

It seems to be a condition attached to the exercise of thinking about the future that one should assume one's own time to stand in an extraordinary relationship to it. The time is not free, it is the slave of a mythic end.

Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*

There is something breathless about apocalypse, a sense of nervous waiting. One might imagine the Christians of the first and second centuries going through their daily toils perfunctorily—constantly glancing up towards heaven with ears at attention—each hoping to be the first to catch sight of Christ in the clouds or hear the great trumpet. This sense of expectancy is clearly evident in two of Clarke's best known pieces, "The Sentinel," published in 1951, and the novel *Childhood's End*, which appeared in 1953. Although specifically denying any concrete religious meaning for them, indeed, denying the meaning of all organized religion, Clarke has created a devotional atmosphere in these works, a kind of worshipful attitude which would seem more typical of George Herbert, Edward Taylor, or even William Barrett.
than a modern, science oriented, professed agnostic like Clarke.

Thomas D. Clareson, possibly the best known of the literary scholars to turn to science fiction in recent years, has said of "The Sentinel" that "...both in narrative technique and in theme it shows, I think, Clarke at his finest: what I call the essential Clarke." Clareson further states that this story, along with "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth..." best enunciates what he feels are Clarke's two basic themes, man's loneliness in the universe, and his fear of what an end to that loneliness will mean.

"The Sentinel" tells the story of the first expedition into the Moon's Mare Crisium, the Sea of Crises, in 1996, by a well organized group of scientists with the narrator, a geologist named Wilson, as leader. They have been exploring for some time when Wilson notices "a metallic glitter high on the ridge of a great promontory." He determines to discover the cause of that light and sets off with a small party in a difficult climb to a plateau where they discover "a glittering, roughly pyramidal structure, twice as high as a man, that was set in the rock like a gigantic many-faceted jewel." The structure is obviously artificial and not native to the Moon. The narrator theorizes that it was left by ancient star wanderers who

...must have looked on Earth, circling safely in the narrow zone between fire and ice and must have guessed that it was the favorite of the Sun's
children. Here, in the distant future, would be intelligence; but there were countless stars before them still, and they might never come this way again. These wanderers have left a sentinel to signal them when it is discovered, and by placing it on the moon they have guaranteed that it will be found only by an advanced race. Wilson wonders about them. Will they wish to help us, or will they be insanely jealous? He does "not think we will have to wait for long" to find out.

"The Sentinel" shows the extent to which Clarke has matured. There are no "slam-bang" heroics, no painful, bitter ironies. There is merely the waiting, breathless, expectant, and open minded. In "Rescue Party" Clarke envisioned a sort of interstellar coast guard rescue service, made up primarily of British-like aliens, checking up regularly on all the myriad planets, but now he has more fully realized the enormity of the universe and the impossibility of such a task. That we should merely have been visited once is a near miracle and Clarke does not try to portray what those visitors might be like, or to do more than speculate on their reasons. To know that they are coming back is enough.

* * *

The novelette "Guardian Angel," which later became the first part of _Childhood's End_, takes up roughly where "The Sentinel" stops.
A race of seemingly omnipotent creatures known as the Overlords comes to Earth and puts an end to all war-like activity. They force the nations of the planet to unite into a world state under their rule and that of a revitalized United Nations, and, despite opposition, a utopia comes into being. For reasons unknown, however, the Overlords will never let themselves be seen, and the story closes with a typical Clarke surprise ending as Stormgren, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, discovers that they are exact physical replicas of the devil, complete with bat's wings, hooves, and tail. Here Clarke is examining the positive aspects of alien intervention on Earth, but he is not thinking about it in any deep philosophical way. One almost wonders if the piece was not written for the ending; if, in fact, the idea of the ending did not come first. It seems clear that Clarke did not realize at the time that "Guardian Angel" would grow into his most ambitious novel.

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*Childhood's End* is an amazing book, although full of flaws: a plot that seems loose and disjointed; no clearly developed protagonist, but rather a series of interchangeable, cardboard figures; several unforeshadowed and unnecessary twists in plot. It is nonetheless one of the most highly praised works of science fiction in history. Damon Knight has called it "a genuinely distinguished novel."\(^{50}\) Leslie Fiedler, speaking of the myth of childhood innocence in modern literature, mentions
In connection with *Huckleberry Finn*, *Catcher in the Rye*, and other works, and calls it one of "the most successful of such fictions."\(^5\) In a *New York Times Review* William Du Bois describes the work as "a first-rate tour de force that is well worth the attention of every thoughtful citizen in this age of anxiety,"\(^52\) and as Sam Moskowitz has said, "if a science-fiction novel had ever received a more favorable review in a publication of major influence it is well hidden."\(^53\) Praise has been virtually universal and today the book is even read in college courses. But why this success?

In his *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode has said,

> Men, like poets, rush 'into the middest,' in medias res, when they are born; they also die in medias rebus, and to make sense of their span they need fictive concords with origins and ends, such as give meanings to lives and to poems. The End they imagine will reflect their own irreducibly intermediary preoccupations. They fear it, and as far as we can see have always done so; the end is a figure for their own deaths.\(^54\)

Kermode, I feel, has provided an almost complete answer to my question. Man, today, has lost the old myths. He fools himself into thinking that belief continues, but it does not. The scientist has replaced the priest as the figure of power. Man will always have an irrational side, an unmentioned, perhaps unrealized belief in magic and the unknown, but
he can no longer believe in God or gods, literal devils or angels. The rocket—doubling as a symbol for fantastic and impossible adventure, and as a bringer of destruction and death, and the alien—the ultimate outsider, a perfect manifestation of our own alienation: these are the new archetypes, the new symbols. Any science sufficiently advanced beyond one's own might as well be magic; but do we understand the rocket ship or even the light bulb any better than we would understand anti-gravity or interstellar flight, any better than our ancestors understood magic? We know that electricity is the flow of electrons through a conductive medium, but we really do not know why they flow. Science is as much a creature of the unknown as magic, for it does not answer our questions, but merely allows us to formulate them more accurately.

Thus, today, man's myths are those of science fiction. We can no longer believe in a supernaturally endowed scourge like Marlowe's Tamburlaine, in the saving grace of God, or in a heaven just above the highest clouds; but we are forced to believe in the far deadlier scourges, over-population, pollution, and atomic warfare, and, as an alternative to despair, we might welcome the powerful alien, the god-substitute, who comes to oversee man. And Clarke even provides a substitute for heaven.

This then is the reason behind the success of *Childhood's End*. Man needs a new set of "fictive concords" to give meaning to his life. Absolute belief is not necessary, although an almost religious belief
in the existence of life elsewhere in the universe is now widespread. All that is required is the desire to suspend disbelief, the "sense of wonder" which science fiction people speak of. And this, despite its many flaws, is what Arthur Clarke's *Childhood's End* offers more of than any other work.

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"Guardian Angel," with only a few changes, forms the first section of the novel. The second part begins fifty years later when Karellen, the ruling Overlord, brings his ship down to an Earth which has reached near utopian perfection and shows himself to the people. Clarke examines his "perfect" society in detail. We see peace and prosperity, general happiness and success. Only one flaw exists; science and the arts have stagnated. Clarke introduces us to a variety of new characters: Rupert Boyce, whose elaborate party is the backdrop for this section of the story, and whose library of psychic phenomena is of interest to the Overlords; George Gregson and his fiancée Jean Morrel, whose future children will be of immense importance in the third part of the novel; and Jan Rodricks, who will be the only Earthman to reach the stars. We learn that the Overlords are waiting for something important and that it is tied to their interest in psychic research. They are expectant for they know "with what inexorable swiftness the Golden Age is rushing to its close."
The last section of the book takes place on the island of New Athens, a small, scientifically advanced, but pastorally oriented artists' colony where Greggson, his wife, and children live. Clarke spends some time exploring the city versus country motif which he had considered in Against the Fall of Night and which he was to rework in The City and the Stars, the expansion of that early novel which he published three years after Childhood's End. The Overlords examine the colony and we learn exactly what their interest in psychic phenomena has to do with the two Greggson children. The children are the first to achieve total telepathic breakthrough. They are the first to contact the Overmind, the galaxy-spanning mass mind which the Overlords serve. Various plot lines rapidly become clear. The human race has reached the end of its physical evolution, and its children—who are no longer human—will achieve the next step, unification with the Overmind. Kareden ships all of the young people to a separate continent to isolate them from the remaining population where, growing, maturing, and changing they reach the point at which they can abandon their bodies and, indeed, all matter. They rise into the sky as a pillar of light, and speed to join the Overmind, destroying the Earth and all its life in the process. Childhood is at an end.

This novel fits the apocalyptic mode more perfectly than any of Clarke's other works. There is a Second Coming of sorts, a Judgement,
and an Apotheosis. On the darker side there is also a Damnation—the fate of all mankind over ten years of age—although many of the critics who have discussed *Childhood's End* seem to ignore the more negative aspects of the novel, preferring to see it as a simplistic paean to mankind and evolution similar in theme to the earliest of Clarke's works. One of the critics who has most drastically misread the story is Mark R. Hillegas who, in an article entitled "Science Fiction as a Cultural Phenomenon: A Re-evaluation," equates Clarke's novel with "the Baconian faith that by the systematic investigation of nature man can master the secrets of this mysterious universe and in so doing improve the human condition." Hillegas explicates the novel in this way:

> the Overlords, a manifest symbol of science, invade our earth just in time to prevent men from turning their world into a radioactive wasteland and by introducing reason and scientific method into human activities transform earth into a technological utopia where each individual can develop his potentialities to the fullest.

Hillegas has not only made several factual errors. He has done much worse, for he has inverted the story's very meaning. He is partly accurate in calling the Overlords "a manifest symbol of science," but what then is their actual purpose? First of all there is little to suggest that they really "prevent men from turning their world into a
radioactive wasteland." There is a cold war going on when the aliens appear, but it is not dwelt upon, and Karelven himself implies that nuclear war was never mankind's greatest danger. Indeed, the first thing the Overlords actually do is to terminate the manned space program. Surely it is a strange symbol of scientific progress which manifests itself by stopping that which has always been for Clarke a prime goal of progress, the conquest of space. Further, while it is clear that the Overlords are sorry for mankind and indeed want to improve man's situation, it is equally clear that this situation is of only secondary importance to them. Hillegas treats the intervention on Earth as if utopia were the aliens' end, when obviously it is merely the means to a very different finale.

Clarke's novel can be seen as almost fully devoid of Hillegas' "Baconian faith" in the "systematic investigation of nature," for, as Karelven makes clear, man's chief danger comes from something beyond technology. "There are powers of the mind, and powers beyond the mind, which your science could never have brought within its framework without shattering it entirely."

There are things which are simply too dangerous for science to explore. The Overlords themselves are not only a symbol for science, but a symbol for the limits of science. Like Dante's Virgil they are nearly omniscient, omnipotent, representing the perfection of logic and science; but like Virgil they have their own limit
beyond which they cannot pass. They can see the promised land but cannot enter it.

For all their achievements, thought Karellen, for all their mastery of the physical universe, his people were no better than a tribe that had passed its whole existence upon some flat and dusty plain. Far off were the mountains, where power and beauty dwelt, where the thunder sported above the glaciers, and the air was clear and keen. There the sun still walked, transfiguring the peaks with glory, when all the land below was wrapped in darkness. And they could only watch and wonder; they could never scale those heights.\(^9\)

They can never join the Overmind, and that is their tragedy.

We can now see something of the full complexity of Childhood's End. Optimism is present, of course, it has to be, for mankind has attained apotheosis, but there is much more. As David Ketterer has said, any complete portrayal of apocalypse must be partially negative and partially positive, for "there is a necessary correlation between the destruction of the world and the establishment of the New Jerusalem."\(^0\)

\(4. \) Clarke and Organized Religion

William Irwin Thompson has characterized Clarke's philosophy as "atheistic mysticism,"\(^1\) and the description seems particularly apt
when applied to Childhood's End, Clarke feels little but disdain for all organized religion. Whenever he has described a superior culture in his fiction, whether it be the Overlords, the intelligent beings of "Rescue Party," or the galactic civilization of Against the Fall of Night, he has ignored or denied outright the possibilities of religion. In the novelette "Jupiter Five," for example, published during 1953, he has his narrator state that "we have never found any trace of what might be called a religion among the Jovians," a highly advanced but now extinct culture. This story, although marred by a crude ending and relatively mediocre writing, makes for interesting reading. In it we find several ideas which Clarke later reused in superior pieces, including the memorial to a dead race found in "The Star," the gigantic, ark-like spaceship of Rendezvous with Rama, and an explanation for the strange irregularity in the albedo of Jupiter Five, the moon on which he had Kubrick situate the star gate in 2001: A Space Odyssey. Religion, for Clarke, is a sign of either degeneration or ignorance and is typified by one of the few organized religions which the author has ever shown, the superstitious worship of the Master in Against the Fall of Night. Clarke has written:

The proof, which is now only a matter of time, that this young species of ours is low in the scale of cosmic intelligence will be a shattering blow to our pride. Few of our current religions
can be expected to survive it, contrary to the optimistic forecasts from certain quarters. The assertion that "God created man in his own image" is ticking like a time bomb in the foundations of Christianity. As the hierarchy of the universe is slowly disclosed to us, we will have to face this chilling fact: If there are any gods whose chief concern is man, they cannot be very important gods. 63

In 1955 Arthur Clarke wrote a story which he seemed to mean as an ultimate denial of both Christianity and religion in general. It was called "The Star," and the fourteenth World Science Fiction Convention picked it as the finest short story of the year. Like Childhood’s End it is a flawed piece of work—it telegraphs its punchline—but like that novel it has such strength, such perfection in other areas that this flaw is overlooked. It is my own favorite among Clarke’s fictions.

A survey ship explores the remains of a supernova many light years from Earth. The narrator, a member of the ship’s crew, is not only a competent astrophysicist but a Jesuit, and he has discovered something which has made him lose his faith. On a planet far enough from the star to have survived its explosion they have found a time vault of sorts, a museum containing the remains of a civilization destroyed by the supernova. Although it never developed interstellar flight, this civilization seems to have been far superior to our own—scientifically, artistically, and morally. The great tragedy of their
end is given an ironic twist when the narrator discovers what has caused him to lose his faith in God: the supernova that destroyed this superior race was the star which shone in the heavens on the night Christ was born.

The power of this story is not hard to explain. In summary it may seem like just another rhetorical trick but it is not, for any reader of average perception will guess the secret of "The Star" before he is halfway through it, and the piece can be read many times with equal enjoyment.

There can be no reasonable doubt: the ancient mystery is solved at last. Yet, oh God, there were so many stars that you could have used. What the need to give these people to the fire, that the symbol of their passing might shine above Bethlehem?\(^{64}\)

So the story ends. And I have read this piece perhaps ten times in my life and yet my reaction to it is still intensely personal; why is this? I am not a Christian and, while I can react to the Christ story as I would to any truly great piece of literature, I cannot have that deeper reaction which faith would provide. What makes this work of fiction so effective? Clarke has been said by several critics to lack skill in characterization and the development of mood, but "The Star" gives the lie to that assertion, and it is here that we find the answer to the story's success. Clarke's prose is of a high order; it perfectly builds
the mood. The intensity of the piece never decreases; it drives the reader before it and forces him into the narrator's mind, where he is trapped by that carefully etched personality. In this one small story Arthur Clarke has attained a level of writing which can justly be compared to all but the greatest masterpieces of psychological fiction. In "The Star" Arthur Clarke asks the question "how can a good God allow so much suffering in the universe?" It is a fairly standard question and many others have asked it before, but few have put it so well.
V. Realistic Fiction: Winning the Solar System and a Return to Deeper Concerns.

1. How the Solar System was Won

After all, it does seem a little odd that a flat and lifeless plain, broken by a single small mountain should be labeled on all the charts of the moon as Sherwood Forest.

Arthur C. Clarke, "Venture to the Moon"

After publishing Childhood's End in 1953 Clarke wrote little eschatologically oriented fiction for some eight years; "The Star" was the one major exception. The most important work to appear was his The City and the Stars in 1956, which, as I have already mentioned, was a mere expansion of his earlier novel Against the Fall of Night. The book is important because it is considered by some to be Clarke's best novel, superior even to Childhood's End. The author, I feel, definitely improved the work stylistically and strengthened the plot, but offered nothing new thematically. Thus what was said in chapter two about Against the Fall of Night still applies; the novel covers little new ground. Some critics have been much harsher though. Moskowitz feels
that "Clarke essentially changed nothing when he expanded the novel." Damon Knight states that "some of the changes are certainly improvements. ...Others are at least doubtful...others...are pure padding; and still others, it seems to me, merely illuminate the original faults of the story in greater detail." Clarke's non-fiction work The Exploration of Space appeared in 1952 and was selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club. The tremendous financial success of this work, coupled with a newly discovered hobby, skindiving, led to the production of a large quantity of non-fiction. During these years Clarke wrote such marine and nautical works as The Coast of Coral (1955), The Reefs of Taprobane (1957), and (with Mike Wilson) The First Five Fathoms (1960). What fiction he published was as thematically limited as his work had been in the period from 1949 to 1951. It bore a strong similarity in form and content to such novels as Prelude to Space and The Sands of Mars. It is probably true that this kind of story never really disappeared from Clarke's repertoire, but for several years it had ceased to represent his most important work. When Clarke was giving us "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth..." and Childhood's End he was also writing these limited, near-future stories, but they minor. In the period from 1954 through 1960, though, such pieces were just about all he wrote. Besides "The Star" and The City and the Stars his best works in these years included Earthlight, an expansion of an
early novelette which he published as a novel in 1955, the story of a power struggle over the Moon and its mineral resources between various independent planets; *The Deep Range*, published in 1957, which Moskowitz called "one of the finest and most absorbing expositions on the future farming of the seas ever done,"67 and the two series of very short pieces "The Other Side of the Sky," and "Venture to the Moon," which examined in detail and with considerable humor man's first space station and the early exploration of the moon. While they are enjoyable fictions and are used to examine social problems to some extent—political dealings in *Earthlight* and world-wide food shortages in *The Deep Range*—these stories do not consider deeper eschatological problems.

2. Apocalypse and Social Criticism

Social criticism was to become increasingly important to Clarke, however, and in a series of short stories starting in 1960 he began to examine many of the world's more important issues. Although often immensely realistic, these pieces differ from works like *Earthlight* in philosophic outlook. *Earthlight* gives us a potentially apocalyptic situation, war between planets, but is primarily concerned with a realistic description of life on the Moon, political intrigue, and future warfare. Clarke now returned to the kind of mood in which, one assumes,
he wrote "The Star." In such works as "I Remember Babylon" (1960), "Before Eden" (1961), "The Last Command" (1962), and "Reunion" (1963), Clarke looks respectively at the power of the mass media, the dangers of the space program, culpability in atomic warfare, and race relations, and he is taking a much more critical look at them than he ever has before. He sees these four aspects of our world as of much more than just local concern. They are not ephemeral interests to be used as the basis for an adventure plot. They are matters of the greatest importance, of racial life and death, and as such, eschatological matters.

"I Remember Babylon" owes much of its power to intense realism; indeed, throughout the piece it almost seems as if one is reading an essay. Clarke himself is the protagonist, and he establishes the work's apocalyptic tone immediately.

"My name is Arthur C. Clarke, and I wish I had no connection with this whole sordid business. But as the moral—repeat, moral—integrity of the United States is involved, I must first establish my credentials. Only thus will you understand how, with the aid of the late Dr. Alfred Kinsey, I have unwittingly triggered an avalanche that may sweep away much of Western civilization."

Clarke discusses his own background as a scientist; he was the first man to conceive of communications satellites, publishing a paper on them in 1945, and he helped publicize the idea in his non-fiction works. He now
lives in Colombo, Ceylon, where he writes books on skin diving and an occasional piece of fiction. All this, of course, is true. Attending an embassy reception, Clarke meets Gene Hartford, a former television executive, who tries to interest him in what he says is a new communications system. The Chinese, with Russian help, are going to put a series of TV transmitters in orbit around the Earth to compete with American television. They plan to transmit an unlimited stream of propaganda and much more. Enormous amounts of money will be spent to produce extremely high quality programs which are intensely sexual or violent in nature. American political scandals will be aired and interpreted in such a way as to undermine public faith in government, as will be old Nuremburg war trial films.

And there are dozens of other angles,...The Avenue thinks it knows all about Hidden Persuasion—believe me, it doesn't. The world's best practical psychologists are in the East these days. Remember Korea, and brain washing? We've learned a lot since then. There's no need for violence any more; people enjoy being brain washed if you set about it the right way.69

The communists plan to use America's own decadence as a weapon against her and Clarke fears they will succeed. "Land of Lincoln and Franklin and Melville, I love you and I wish you well. But into my heart blows a cold wind from the past; for I remember Babylon."70
Babylon was a city destroyed by too much civilization; its people became decadent. Man naturally seeks to maintain his level of achievement and to increase it, but Clarke is suggesting that there are, or should be, limits. Technology out of control, he says, can breed disaster in thousands of ways, many of which we do not even recognize as potentially dangerous. One of the most powerful of these technological advances is our rapidly growing mass media. Today the frames of reference, the symbols of most children and many adults come not from religion or art or nature or even from science, but from television's and newspapers' interpretations of these matters. I have had students, freshmen of presumably at least average intelligence, who, when propping for something to compare their own real experiences to, could think of nothing more accurate than the cliches of television drama. We all know the political power of the media; as often as not major newspaper and network endorsement is tantamount to election. And although the seemingly obvious guilt of the current crop of national politicians involved in the various scandals lumped under the title "Watergate" precludes any great criticism of the media's handling of the affair, the powerful effect of that media on the situation, their ability to slant an event with carefully chosen photograph or quotation, is obvious. The President of the United States, whether guilty or innocent, would not be in his current precarious position if he had worked less dili-
gently at alienating the media.

* * *

"Before Eden" makes a similar point. It tells of the first expedition to Venus, a world of awful heat, darkness, twisted rock formations, and dense fog. Scientists on a ground expedition to the planet's south pole are surprised to discover that the temperature has dropped well below the boiling point of water. Later they make an even bigger discovery--life, "a crawling carpet, sweeping slowly but inexorably toward them over the top of the ridge." The thing is actually a huge, mobile form of plant, harmless, and fantastically beautiful. When the scientists shine a light on it they see "a blazing pattern of glorious, vivid reds, laced with streaks of gold. No Persian prince could ever have commanded so opulent a tapestry from his weavers." Clarke builds the mood well and the reader shares the emotions of the scientists involved, a strong mixture of awe and excitement. They study the life form for hours until hunger and fatigue force them to halt and make camp. Later they leave, determining to return with a full team of scientists, but their wish is not to be, for they have accidentally destroyed what they only wished to study. One of the plants ingests the refuse the scientists have left sealed in a plastic disposal bag, and with it the bacteria and viruses which, upon an older planet, had evolved into a thousand deadly strains.
...As the carpet crawled back to the lake, it carried contagion to all its world...

Beneath the clouds of Venus, the story of Creation was ended.73

Clarke is again bringing to our attention a problem whose importance we have not yet fully realized: contamination between worlds. This problem is not only science fiction but fact. We have never been to Venus, but reaching that planet is only a matter of time. We have already visited the Moon, and Mars is at most twenty years away. Environmentalists know the drastic effect that the introduction of one new species can have on a closed ecosystem. Our own Department of Agriculture has on occasion introduced new animal forms to help control other undesirable creatures, only to end up having to introduce a third species to destroy the explosively spreading second species. No ecosystem on Earth can be more than relatively closed off from its neighbors, but the distances between planets and the hard vacuum of space make for a much more effective isolation. Clarke knows that the breaking of that isolation could have catastrophic results and N.A.S.A. officials would be the first to admit that our precautions have been minimal. What will the effect of such contamination be? Clarke gives one extreme possibility and a recent novel, *The Andromeda Strain*, suggests another. But are such possibilities necessarily any less likely than more mild ones? Perhaps the effects of contamination will be
minimal or nonexistent; perhaps species from totally different biospheres will ignore each other completely. But the point is that we simply cannot know for sure. It is possible that because of us some as yet undiscovered life form is slowly dying on the moon. When man plays with the life of planets as the stake, no odds are good enough.

"I Remember Babylon" and "Before Eden" are merely the best of a large number of stories from these years all of which have the same basic theme, that man's smallest faults, whether manifestations of some form of political, racial, or moral blindness, or just carelessness, coupled with his expanding technology, can now destroy him in ways he is not even aware of. Among the other stories in this group are "The Last Command," which considers the possibility that the West might actually start an atomic war and put the Soviet Union in the position of acting heroically and refusing to retaliate; "Reunion," which shows a rescue mission returning to Earth after a million years to save humanity from the horrid plague which has reduced the former galactic civilization to a level of barbarism which it is is only just climbing out of again, a plague whose chief symptoms are insanity and a whitening of the skin from the healthy brown-black of normal humanity; and "The Food of the Gods" (1961), which considers some of the possibilities for cannibalism in a technologically advanced society. These stories are not pretty, they are not enjoyable; they hurt, and they hurt in unexpected places.
3. Strange Intelligence

In recent years Clarke has shown a particular interest in the possibility of computer intelligence: *HAL in 2001: A Space Odyssey* is the best known example of it to appear in his work. Clarke feels that such intelligences will be constructed in the near future. We are, in fact, almost there.

Machines have been built which do not sit passively waiting for instructions, but which explore the world around them in a manner which can only be called inquisitive. Others look for proofs of theorems in mathematics or logic, and sometimes come up with surprising solutions that had never occured to their makers.74

And herein, Clarke would say, lies yet another danger for mankind. He considers the possibility that in the far future such machines might greatly surpass and actually replace man. But this does not bother him, for it is merely one possible avenue that evolution might take. His deeper concern is for the near future when "even machines less intelligent than men might escape from our control by sheer speed of operation."75

The computer is seen as a potential monster, and we are once again
aware of the strong anti-Baconian, anti-science streak in Clarke's
philosophic makeup. HAL, the computer turned murderer, is once again
the prime example, but there are others.

In 1963 Clarke published "Dial F for Frankenstein." The piece
begins: "At 0150 GMT on December 1, 1975, every telephone in the world
started to ring." At midnight on that night all of the telephone and
information gathering systems of the world had been joined together
by satellite. One of the scientists studying the problem theorizes
that the system has reached a critical point; it now contains enough
separate switches, linkages, and computer memory storage facilities
to spontaneously generate intelligence. Things begin to happen:
electrical systems of all sorts malfunction, airplanes crash, and radio
stations go off the air. The world-spanning electronic creature, self-
aware, but with no more intelligence than a new born baby, acts at
random, and unintentionally brings man's world crashing down upon him.
The narrator feels despair for "he knew already that it was far, far
too late. For Homo sapiens, the telephone bell had tolled." The story is actually told in a humorous, almost farcical man-
er, but its meaning is as serious as it is obvious. Man is playing
with much more than fire. He is playing with powerful tools which are
not fully understood, tools which can destroy him.
VI. Recent Fiction: 2001: A Space Odyssey and After

1. The Motion Picture and the Novel

Stanley Kubrick tried to assure M.G.M.... with Lloyd's of London, asking them to draw up a policy which would compensate him if extraterrestrial life was discovered and our plot demolished. How the underwriters managed to compute the premium I can't imagine, but the figure they quoted was appropriately astronomical, and the project was dropped. Stanley decided to take his chances with the Universe.

Arthur C. Clarke, Report on Planet Three

Between 1964 and 1968 Clarke published very little fiction. Probably the best story that appeared was "Crusade" (1966), an apocalyptic piece in which an intelligent, naturally evolved computer on a super-cold world sends out probes to discover other life forms and is outraged to find that biological intelligences predominate in the universe and in fact claim to have created all of what few computer intelligences there are. The natural computer will not believe this and sets out to avenge and liberate its fellows. Clarke tells us that
"the crusade will reach the vicinity of Earth about the year 2050." Yet another excellent story is "The Cruel Sky" (1966), a straight action piece concerned with Himalayan adventure and the discovery of anti-gravity.

But still, Clarke's output was minimal in those four years. There were two reasons for this dearth of fiction. Clarke explains the first of them in the preface to his most recent short story collection.

This is my sixth volume of short stories, and I was tempted to give it the subtitle "The Last of Clarke"—not through any intimations of mortality, but because I seem to be doing less and less writing, and more and more talking, traveling, filming, and skin-diving.

The second reason for Clarke's unproductivity in these years was his work on the motion picture **2001: A Space Odyssey**. Stanley Kubrick first brought up the idea for the story in a letter to Clarke which reached him in Ceylon in March, 1964. Kubrick wrote that he wished to make a really good science fiction film dealing with "the reasons for believing in the existence of intelligent extraterrestrial life." Clarke, who had a high opinion of Kubrick's work, was very interested, and going through his published stories he immediately decided that "The Sentinel" formed an excellent point of departure for such a film. Due in New York to complete work on his latest book **Man and Space** for
for Time-Life, he set up a series of meetings with the director, the first of which occurred on April 22, 1964. The results of that meeting and what ensued are recorded in detail in Clarke's essay "Son of Dr. Strangelove, Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Stanley Kubrick" published in his collection of short nonfiction pieces, Report on Planet Three and Other Speculations.

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2001: A Space Odyssey is a strange book and an even stranger film. To what extent are its two authors separately responsible for it? When dealing with two such imaginations as are possessed by the creator of The City and the Stars and Childhood's End on the one hand, and the creator of Dr. Strangelove and A Clockwork Orange on the other it seems safest to assume that either is capable of any of the film's wonders. There are, however, two objective ways in which we can make a differentiation. The first is simply to compare the book and the film. Kubrick's celebrated psychedelic finale is a more subdued and rational but still spectacular event on paper; the man-apes of the opening sequence are much more clearly characterized in the book, and one of them, Moonwatcher, even takes on a personality. There are many such small differences. But some of these are totally the result of media limitations. Clarke, for example, picks Saturn as the goal for his odyssey, a logical choice since Japetus, Saturn's fifth moon, has an odd six to one
brightness ratio, a potential signal if there ever was one. Kubrick, however, had to limit his flight to Jupiter and use Jupiter Five for his Star Gate, a moon which also has an unusual brightness ratio (although not quite so obvious a one), because the special effects department which produced such fine work in the film was unable to build a good enough mock-up for Saturn's rings.81

The second way we can differentiate between Clarke's ideas and Kubrick's was given to us by Clarke in 1972 in his book, The Lost Worlds of 2001. This remarkable volume is full of anecdotes, stories, and explanations. It also contains "The Sentinel" and several chapters from the earliest versions of the novel 2001, chapters which bear little similarity to the finished work but give tremendous insight into how that work was created. The book tells us that HAL the computer's prototype was mobile and variously named Socrates and Athena. We learn that in preparation for work Clarke read Joseph Campbell's The Hero With a Thousand Faces and Robert Ardrey's African Genesis. The Starchild ending, we discover, is Clarke's; the idea of killing all of the astronauts but Bowman is Kubrick's. The director is also responsible for the idea of teaching the man-apes to fight with weapons and for the 2001: A Space Odyssey title. Although in the original manuscript Clarke used visible and humanoid aliens somewhat similar to those of Childhood's End or "Encounter in the Dawn," the idea of making them immaterial and invisible
is at least partially his.

How then does one deal with a work produced by more than one author. Clarke himself has admitted to being unsure at what point his ideas left off and Kubrick's started. The novel was supposed to be written before the screenplay, but as Clarke says ...

...the result was far more complex; toward the end, both novel and screenplay were being written simultaneously, with feedback in both directions. Some parts of the novel had their final revisions after we had seen the rushes based on the screenplay based on earlier versions of the novel... and so on. 82

He ends by suggesting that the book's title page should read "by Arthur Clarke and Stanley Kubrick; based on the screenplay by Stanley Kubrick and Arthur Clarke," and that the motion picture credits should read the exact opposite.

After worrying about this matter for some time I have come to the following conclusions. That the style of the novel is Clarke's cannot be doubted; it is typically British and shows quite obviously his distinctive tendency to overuse punctuation. In addition, from certain comments made in The Lost Worlds of 2001 it seems clear that Clarke was doing most if not all of the actual writing and that Kubrick was merely supplying assorted ideas, criticism, and, perhaps, part of the plotline. One would think that Kubrick's hand should be most clearly evident in the
dialogue, since this is the only part of the novel which might be placed on the screen unchanged, but a careful look shows it to be more like Clarke's style. It is generally flat and unemotional, even banal. While critics have often praised it as an intentional attempt to characterize the machine-like men who speak it—and this is undoubtedly true in part—it still seems more in line with what we would expect from Clarke who is, after all, primarily a novelist of ideas, than with what we would expect from Stanley Kubrick, creator of a good part of the hyperbolic jargon of the film version of *A Clockwork Orange*, and the wildly humorous language of *Dr. Strangelove*. But above all, there is very little dialogue in either the book or the motion picture; probably less than five words are spoken in the film's first and last forty-five minutes.

The characters also seem less typical of Kubrick than of Clarke, whose fictions abound with unemotional astronauts, scientists, and bureaucrats. HAL the computer is generally considered to be by far the most interesting "person" in the work and this also is what we would expect from Clarke.

Lastly, there is really nothing in the plot that we have not seen in Clarke's fiction before. The ape-men of the opening and the beings who come to aid them are reminiscent of "The Swarm," *Childhood's End*, and "Encounter in the Dawn." The carefully detailed technology of the space station and the Discovery is little more than an update of
Earthlight or his excellent 1961 adventure novel A Fall of Moondust. The man versus computer theme is likewise his; one remembers "Dial F for Frankenstein" and "Crusade." The literal apotheosis which Bowman undergoes at the story's end differs from that of Childhood's End only in detail. The story's central symbol, the monolith, comes directly from "The Sentinel." And while it is possible that it was Kubrick who first suggested the change from humanoid aliens to immaterial and invisible ones, such a concept is certainly not foreign to Clarke. He dealt with it as early as 1946 in Against the Fall of Night. So it seems obvious that while Kubrick may have had total control of the visual elements of the film and considerable say in the details of plot, he was working basically from Clarke's store of ideas. What we have, I feel, is a novel essentially by Clarke, with amendments by Kubrick, but in the spirit and style of Clarke.

2. The Novel and the Motion Picture

2001: A Space Odyssey is in some ways a difficult book to write about or at least to write about intelligently. It has probably sold more copies than Childhood's End and The City and the Stars together and everyone, it seems, has read it or has at least seen the motion picture. Between them the book and the film have stirred up more
critical reaction than any other work in the history of modern science fiction. This fact would seem to suggest fertile ground for further scholarly work—more is being written about Hamlet today, after all, than ever before—but this does not hold true. The scholars who have been alternately lionizing and villifying the novel almost invariably treat it in a vacuum; they ignore Clarke's earlier work or are unaware of it. They often miss one major point which I have touched on briefly in the previous section of this chapter, which is that the book contains nothing new. The logic of the plot and the style might well be Clarke's best work; he spent four years on it, after all, considerably more time than he would normally have put into a novel. Given those four years he should have been able to work out any small, uneven spots or minor knots in the plot. But, as I have said, the book has nothing new in it. It is little more than a reshuffling of the standard ingredients. It has its points of interest and I will discuss them here, but its major themes are those of Childhood's End and, to a lesser extent, such stories as "The Sentinel" and "Dial F for Frankenstein."

* * *

As in Childhood's End, Clarke is concerned in 2001: A Space Odyssey with the limits of science. William Irwin Thompson has summarized the situation well.

Looking at...Clarke's story of the programming of human history, one almost has to accept the
theory of extraterrestrial intervention in human evolution. Watching the film's Australopithecinae at work, it is almost impossible to conceive of their developing a language without radical alteration. The hypothesis of intervention seems almost as unbelievable as the hypothesis of evolution to Homo Sapiens. It is ironic that the acting of the apes, which is intended to make evolution seem all the more believable, only succeeds in making it seem incredible; thus we are prepared to accept the even more incredible arrival of the star beings.

But that is not the only irony... The film itself is the perfect American irony: a gadget-filled special effects ode to technology that is at once a requiem to all technology. The very movie that dazzles us with all its tricks is the movie that shows how trivial all these toys are when set upon the cosmic scale. 83

What are the limits of science? Man has everything neatly categorized, neatly set, but he is little closer to the truth than were his superstitious medieval ancestors. Clarke is showing us, as he did in Childhood's End, that science is merely a rather limited tool, a tool which will some day be worn out and thrown away. He wants to impress this on his reader rather heavily. What after all is the most advanced and spectacular example of technology found in the book? Obviously it is the Star Gate of the chapter called "Grand Central," "a cosmic switch-
ing device," an artifact as large as a planet, or indeed, as an infinity of planets. And yet we soon learn that "this whole world was deserted; intelligence had come here, worked its will upon it, and gone its way again." This switching device is an example of the aliens' almost supernatural mastery of technology, but they have abandoned it. Indeed, they have transcended it. Bowman sees the crumbled wrecks of spaceships below him, ships millions of years old, and only one other operating craft, a ship that is perhaps as powerless as he is. From an overdependency on technology and science can come the worship of science, the exaltation of science as religion. The scientist becomes priest. Clarke, like most science fiction writers, has been guilty of such glorification of technology on occasion, but from the very beginning of his career, since Against the Fall of Night, he has generally been leery of it.

"God made man in his own image." We no longer trust the old Biblical phrase; we think it false and clichéd. We turn it around with a slight sneer and say "Man made God in his own image," not realizing that this is equally untrue. How much similarity is there between man and God, whether it be Jehovah, Christ, Buddha, or whoever? Obviously it would be more accurate to say that man made God in what he would like his own image to be; for after all, a civilization's view of God represents an ideal. A god's personality, his attributes are something to be imitated. The monk, the talmudic scholar, the yogi: each is attempting to attain a
state similar to that in which he envisions his god.

But what of the scientist, or, more specifically, the man who worships science? What does he strive for? Modern science is characterized by logic, factuality, and lack of emotions, the attributes we associate with the computer. And do not these represent the ideals of our civilization? Could a society that saw man in any other way have envisioned the assembly line? Uniformity and interchangeability are our watchwords. Even our dominant art forms are those which can be labeled "masscult" or "mass-media."

Referring to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Thompson says "Man has triumphed in conquering the moon, but in order to do so he has turned himself into a machine." Writing on the American space program in his book *Of a Fire on the Moon*, Norman Mailer once made a similar point. In developing too much dependence on science, on technology, on the computer, man has made himself over in the image of the computer; he has lost his humanity. It is no accident that HAL is the most "human" character in Clarke's novel. Thompson says

As Hal and the ship's captain come into mortal combat, there is an exchange of opposites in which the computer becomes human and the astronaut becomes a deadly machine with one purpose: to disconnect Hal. It is a fitting irony: at the very edge of our human history, man and machine fight out their natures, and
man only barely succeeds in conquering the machines that have made his space flight possible. But by the time he has won, "man" is beginning to approach his end. 86

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The apocalyptic moment, the very end of man as he is today: why do we fear it so? "Many readers," Clarke has said of 2001, "have interpreted the final paragraph to mean that he [the Star Child] destroyed Earth, perhaps in order to create a new Heaven." 87 Clarke did not intend this at the time. Only the nuclear weapons are destroyed. His returning Star Child, although not yet sure of what he will do, desires to help mankind. His role will presumably be similar to that of the Overlords of Childhood's End, although, perhaps, with a less ulterior motive. And yet we fear him. The nuclear weapons which he destroys, it seems clear, were about to be used on him. Clarke had intended the ending of 2001: A Space Odyssey to be optimistic,

but now... I am not so sure. When Odysseus returned to Ithaca, and identified himself in the banqueting hall by the stringing of the great bow that he alone could wield, he slew the parasitical suitors who for years had been wasting his estate.

We have wasted and defiled our own estate, the beautiful planet Earth. Why should we expect any mercy from a returning Star Child? 88
3. Clarke Since 1970

Since the publication of 2001: A Space Odyssey Clarke has written very little, but what has appeared has been, for the most part, excellent. Freed by the success of that novel and film from the constraints of having to earn a living, he has been able to polish each of his stories to near perfection. One of his best recent pieces is "Transit of Earth," which appeared in 1970.

An expedition is sent to Mars in 1984 to record and study one of the rarest of astronomical phenomena, a transit of Earth, which happens when the third planet moves exactly between the Sun and Mars. The event occurs only once every century. Disaster strikes and the ship is disabled. Much of the oxygen is lost and rescue is impossible so four of the expedition's members commit suicide in order that the fifth can remain alive long enough to record the transit. The story opens as the remaining astronaut prepares his recording equipment. We learn all of this through his memories and the tape recorded log which he keeps. As the narrator works he contemplates his approaching death, discounts poison or the opening of his suit to vacuum, and after completing his job decides to end his life as well as possible by using his last hours to explore certain unvisited areas of Mars where long range
probes have suggested the existence of advanced life forms. He plans to spend his very last moments listening to Bach's "Toccata and Fugue in D."

The story is very well written, a complex matrix of memories, taperecorded reports, and actual events which develops a mood comparable in Clarke's work only to that of "The Star." Both stories are intense first person narratives spoken by men undergoing the deepest emotional agonies. They differ, however, in outcome. The priest-narrator of the earlier work finds only despair, but the narrator of "Transit of Earth" gains some measure of happiness and nobility. But it is of even greater interest to compare the nameless narrator of this story to Bowman in 2001: A Space Odyssey. In that novel we are shown man evolved or regressed almost into a machine. Bowman the human being and HAL the computer, as Thompson has suggested, actually reverse their roles. The man loses his humanity to the machine which, wrong and sick though it may be, is both wrong and sick in a very human fashion. In "Transit of Earth" Clarke is once again examining an astronaut, a man who on the surface might seem little different from the characters of 2001: A Space Odyssey. We have been shown that Bowman's mechanical, machine-like action stems from his loss of humanity, a loss all mankind seems to share. Now, however, Clarke is taking the other side and showing us how such mechanical persistence in the face of disaster
can actually be one of humanity's noblest attributes. The actions of the narrator in "Transit of Earth" are very similar to Bowman's. Both men are far out in space on a mission; both meet disaster, the death of all their comrades, and their own imminent deaths calmly; both continue with their work; and both end their adventures in the exploration of new regions inhabited by unknown life forms. This similarity surely must be intentional. And yet we feel nothing but respect for the narrator of "Transit of Earth." He acts out of duty and honor, out of respect for his dead comrades. He acts out of his own human dignity. His choice of the Bach piece, with its ominous yet joyful complexities, for what is in effect his own funeral music seems to fit the noble character that he has shown.

Yet, the reversal of Clarke's outlook towards science in this story is actually more apparent than real. 2001: A Space Odyssey seems to have a strongly anti-scientific orientation at first, but a close examination of that book and of Clarke's other works shows this to be untrue. Clarke has never denigrated science. Indeed, he is on record as having said "in the long run the only human activities really worthwhile are the search for knowledge, and the creation of beauty." What Arthur Clarke does oppose is man's veneration of science, his insane belief that it provides all of the answers. The narrator of "Transit of Earth" has dedicated his life to the search for knowledge, but he has
maintained a balance which the computer-like astronauts of 2001: A Space Odyssey failed to achieve. They had room for nothing but science. He has allowed time in his life for beauty.

* * *

"A Meeting with Medusa" appeared in 1971. One of Clarke's most successful stories (it won the Nebula award for that year), it is also one of his strangest. The author forsakes much of the intense realism which has been his trademark for many years, preferring an opening setting that could easily be mistaken for one of Jack Vance's weird and beautiful half-fantasy pieces like The Dragon Masters or The Last Castle. Later in the story there are scenes reminiscent of Lovecraft or perhaps William Hope Hodgson's dark marine fantasy, The Boats of the Glen Carrig. One such scene occurs in the fourth section of the novelette when the story's protagonist is awakened just before midnight.

At first, there was only a soft hiss of whatever strange winds stirred down in the darkness of that unimaginable world. And then, out of the background noise, there slowly emerged a booming vibration that grew louder and louder, like the beating of a gigantic drum. It was so low that it was felt as much as heard, and the beats steadily increased their tempo, though the pitch never changed. Now it was a swift, almost infrasonic throbbing. Then, suddenly, in mid-
vibration, it stopped—so abruptly that the mind could not accept the silence, but memory continued to manufacture a ghostly echo in the deepest caverns of the brain. 90

Although this kind of writing is not typical of Clarke, it is not without precedent. His early novel Against the Fall of Night verges on Vance's style, and he has previously shown the capacity to write horror fiction in "A Walk in the Dark" (1950) and stories in the vein of Lord Dunsany like the fine "Wall of Darkness" (1949).

The story divides into two rather uneven parts. In the first, Commander Howard Falcon is supervising the trial run of a new dirigible luxury liner which is more than fifteen hundred feet long. In this far future world of universal plenty, many of the Earth's two-hundred and fifty million inhabitants can afford this sort of slow and expensive means of travel. Falcon is exploring his ship and meeting the crew (which includes several almost human "superchimps") when an accident occurs, the dirigible crashes, and he is badly injured.

The central part of the story begins several years later. Falcon has recovered, although he is now equipped with a considerable number of prosthetic aids, and has become perhaps the foremost dirigible commander in the world. He is planning the first manned expedition to Jupiter, hoping to overcome the planet's immense gravity field by the use of a sophisticated balloon which would operate in a manner
similar to the fragile, dirigible-like bathyscaphs which we use to explore the sea depths. Falcon arrives on Jupiter and witnesses many strange phenomena: hurricane-like storms as large as the Earth itself, a three-thousand mile wide wheel of rotating light, and gigantic creatures which look like jellyfish, might be intelligent, and are more than three miles in diameter. Attacked by one of these medusae (perhaps it was only curious), Falcon leaves the planet. As the story ends we learn to our surprise the extent to which Falcon was injured in that earlier balloon accident. Nothing remains of him but his brain; the rest is all metal and plastic. As the "superchimps" of the first section of the story were halfway between animal and man, Falcon is halfway between man and something else. But his flight to Jupiter has given him an insight into the future.

Some day the real masters of space would be machines, not men--and he was neither. Already conscious of his destiny, he took a sombre pride in his unique loneliness—the first immortal midway between two orders of creation.91

The evolutionary and apotheotic nature of this work should be clear. Falcon has become something much more than a man and his transformation is not merely physical. He feels his ties of kinship to the human race becoming remote, tenuous. He can see humanity objectively as nothing more than "air-breathing, radiation-sensitive
bundles of unstable carbon compounds,"²² and see himself as an outsider with a special function to fulfill, an apocalyptic function. Like Moses, like Christ

He would after all, be an ambassador;
between the old and the new--between the creatures of carbon and the creatures of metal who must one day supersede them.²³

* * *

In an earlier chapter I showed how Clarke's "The Sentinel" opened up a much larger universe than had been present in earlier works like "Rescue Party." Such a broadening of scope occurs again in his most recent novel, Rendezvous with Rama, which appeared in 1973. Clarke has been living in Hindu Ceylon for a number of years and the effect of that religion's outlook is apparent in the novel. The temporal universe of Hinduism is immensely greater than that of Christianity. When Western man thinks of an age he labels it a millenium, a thousand year period, and his history is made up of a limited number of these. The Hindu speaks of an equal number of time periods, but he calls them kalpas and each one lasts more than three million years. Comparing a Christian time scheme to a Hindu one is like comparing a solar system to a galaxy, and all of Clarke's previous work--even such a far future piece as Against the Fall of Night--stands in a similar relationship to Rendezvous with Rama. And this despite the fact that the entire
story covers only a year's time and takes place only one-hundred and fifty years in the future.

Rama is a huge cylindrical spaceship more than forty kilometers long which enters our solar system at an enormous speed in the year 2157. The Endeavour, a small exploratory craft commanded by Captain Norton, is the only Earth ship which can reach the speeding vehicle as it heads toward the sun in a tight parabolic orbit. Entering Rama, Norton finds a strange and largely incomprehensible world of great staircases, automated "cities," mile high machines and incredibly specialized, only partially organic creatures. As in "A Meeting with Medusa" Clarke simply shows us his wonders without attempting to explain them.

Rama turns itself on gradually. It alters its orbit. More and more advanced "life forms" appear. The various human governments are in a quandry for they fear invasion, colonization, and destruction. Some plot to destroy Rama; Captain Norton is forced to disarm a nuclear weapon just moments before it will be sent against the alien ship. Finally humanity discovers that Rama is not even interested in our solar system except as a refueling depot and temporary repair station. Gathering energy from the sun, the spaceship heads outward again on a journey which has already taken millions of years and has millions more to run. Mankind has had a warning of sorts for two more
Raman ships can be expected.

While the creators of Rama are no more technologically advanced than the star beings of 2001: A Space Odyssey or the Overlords of Childhood's End, the gulf that separates them from mankind is immeasurably greater than that which separates the superior beings of these earlier works from us. Looking back over Clarke's work we can indeed see a distinct progression. The aliens of "Rescue Party," "History Lesson," and "Encounter in the Dawn" differ from man only in technological advancement. Man either can, does, or should equal or surpass them. The Overlords of Childhood's End have not only technological but also moral and intellectual superiority; nevertheless mankind still surpasses them and gains equality with and in the Overmind. While Bowman, the Star Child, does not actually match the superbeings of 2001: A Space Odyssey, he (and one assumes mankind) is obviously following along the path they have covered. But the gulf between Earth and Rama is much greater. We cannot really even understand the enormous time and distance that the giant spaceship's journey represents. We cannot guess at its goal. Clarke has previously considered almost all of the possibilities involved in mankind's first encounter with extraterrestrials. He has shown them as gods and as devils, as philanthropists and as entrepreneurs. But what, he is now asking, if they ignore us? What if they do not even notice our existence?
VII. A Mythos for the Space Age

There is a necessary relationship between the fictions by which we order our world and the increasing complexity of what we take to be the "real" history of that world.

Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending

We have now spanned Clarke's career from 1946 to 1974, from Diaspar to Rama, from yesterday to eternity's end. We have discussed his major works and a good number of the minor ones. No perfect fictions have been found but some, Childhood's End, "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth...", "The Star," "A Meeting with Medusa," have been seen to be of indisputable merit. They have clearly earned the title of "literature" and have, I hope, been treated as such in this study. It is now time to come to some conclusions.

At the end of chapter six I pointed out the progressive expansion that both Clarke's concept of the universe and his concept of the possible attainments of intelligence have undergone. The relationships between man and alien in "Rescue Party" and in Rendezvous with Rama are clearly different, as are the implications of those
relationships for man's survival and success. We have seen, I think, a clear improvement in Clarke's writing, an increased maturity, and a better understanding of the possibilities inherent in the word "intelligence."

As I have said in the Introduction to this study, Arthur C. Clarke has chosen for his basic concern the greatest of all themes in both literature and life: the definition of man's place in our changing universe. Many of the greatest writers, if not all, have dealt with the problem. The Book of Genesis, Paradise Lost, Hamlet, Tom Jones, Wuthering Heights, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Waiting for Godot: the whole body of our literature has been devoted to the question. Yet Clarke, I feel, has something new to add. If Genesis and Paradise Lost give us supreme examples of the ancient theistic mythic structure, and if Portrait and Godot provide fine examples of the modern godless mythic structure, then Clarke has gone a step further. Where Joyce and Beckett mirror the breakdown of our orderly and ancient concept of the structure of the universe and man's place within it, Clarke is attempting to build a new mythic structure, a framework free from the old concepts, the old gods, the old guilts—a mythos for the space age. This then is Clarke's purpose as I see it, and it is this purpose that I have discussed. Clarke has produced no flawless works of fiction, but he has given us much that is entertaining and much that is of value. His work has functioned, as
does the best literature, to open the minds of its readers to new ideas and possibilities, for the old ones must now of necessity be replaced. Mankind needs new beginnings. It needs new ends. It needs new myths. Clarke has tried to provide them.
Appendix: A Note on Chronological Categorization

In attempting to categorize Clarke's fiction I have found it impossible to make strict chronological groupings. Publication dates are dubious guidelines at best, and composition dates are often hard to come by. Clarke's novel Earthlight, for example, was not published until 1955, although it was based on an unpublished shorter work written in 1946. And what do you do about a work like Against the Fall of Night, which was written and reworked during the period between 1937 and its eventual publication in 1946, and was then extensively rewritten and expanded as The City and the Stars in 1956?

Some chronological organization, however, is possible. Clarke seems to have worked primarily with certain themes at specific times. There are definite trends in his writing. The early, manifest destiny stories like "Rescue Party" and "Loophole" pretty much disappeared before 1950. Although this theme re-emerged as Clarke's dominant interest in the late 1950's and early 1960's, the period in between was primarily devoted either to such pessimistic mood pieces as "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth..." and "The Star" or to more transcendent, far flung creations like Childhood's End.
In the body of this paper Clarke's work has been dealt with according to this rough, partly intuitive chronological order.
NOTES

I. Science Fiction and Myth


II. Earliest Fiction: Mankind Overcomes Disaster


13 Reach for Tomorrow, p. 10.

14 Moskowitz, p. 380.

15 The Lion of Comarre and Against the Fall of Night, p. 208.


17 Thompson, p. 156.

18 Thompson, p. 156.


20 Thompson, p. 157.

21 The Lion of Comarre and Against the Fall of Night, p. 60.

22 Reach for Tomorrow, p. 128.


III. Pessimistic Fiction: The Cold War Sets In

24 Moskowitz, p. 379.


27. Frye, p. 41.


31. *Expedition to Earth*, p. 78.

32. *Expedition to Earth*, p. 78.

33. *Expedition to Earth*, p. 78.

34. *Expedition to Earth*, p. 77.


IV. Extraterrestrials: A Question of Religion


1. Reach for Tomorrow, p. 162.
2. Reach for Tomorrow, p. 74.
3. Reach for Tomorrow, p. 79.
4. Reach for Tomorrow, p. 72.
6. Expedition to Earth, p. 158.
7. Expedition to Earth, p. 161.
8. Expedition to Earth, p. 164.
9. Expedition to Earth, p. 165.
V. Realistic Fiction: Winning the Solar System and a Return to Deeper Concerns

65 Moskowitz, p. 380.
66 Knight, p. 191.
67 Moskowitz, p. 385.


69 Tales of Ten Worlds, p. 19.
70 Tales of Ten Worlds, p. 20.
71 Tales of Ten Worlds, p. 131.
72 Tales of Ten Worlds, p. 136.
73 Tales of Ten Worlds, p. 139.
Profiles of the Future, p. 216.
The Wind from the Sun, p. 69.

VI. Recent Fiction: 2001: A Space Odyssey and After

The Wind from the Sun, p. 93.
The Wind from the Sun, p. 1.

It is interesting to note that several years later Douglas Trumbull, Kubrick's special effects man in 2001: A Space Odyssey, solved the "rings" problem in his own excellent science fiction film Silent Running.


Thompson, p. 160.


Thompson, p. 160.

Thompson, pp. 161-2. For some reason Thompson chooses to spell HAL's name "Hal," perhaps to further emphasize his "humanity."
87 The Lost Worlds of 2001, p. 239.
88 The Lost Worlds of 2001, p. 239.
89 Profiles of the Future, p. 87.
90 The Wind from the Sun, p. 145.
91 The Wind from the Sun, p. 168.
92 The Wind from the Sun, p. 168.
93 The Wind from the Sun, p. 168.
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