

## PREFACE

# Dusk In The Robot Museums: The Rebirth of Imagination

RAY BRADBURY

For some ten years now, I have been writing a long narrative poem about a small boy in the near future who runs into an audio-animatronic museum, veers away from the right portico marked *Rome*, passes a door marked *Alexandria*, and enters across a sill where a sign lettered *Greece* points in across a meadow.

The boy runs over the artificial grass and comes upon Plato, Socrates and perhaps Euripides seated at high noon under an olive tree sipping wine and eating bread and honey and speaking truths.

The boy hesitates and then addresses Plato:

"How goes it with the Republic?"

"Sit down, boy," says Plato, "and I'll tell you."

The boy sits. Plato tells. Socrates steps in from time to time. Euripides does a scene from one of his plays.

Along the way, the boy might well ask a question which hovered in all of our minds the past few decades:

"How come the United States, *the* country of Ideas on the March, for so long neglected fantasy and science fiction? Why is it that only during the past thirty years attention is being paid?"

Another question from the boy might well be:

"Who is responsible for the change?"

"Who has taught the teachers and the librarians to pull up their socks, sit straight, and take notice?"

"Simultaneously, which group in our country has backed off from abstraction and moved art back in the direction of pure illustration?"

Since I am neither dead nor a robot, and Plato-as-audio-animatronic lecturer might not be programmed to respond, let me answer as best I can.

The answer is: the students. The young people. The children.

They have led the revolution in reading and painting.

For the first time in the history of art and teaching, the children have become the teachers. Before our time, knowledge came down from the top of the pyramid to the broad base where the students survived as best they could. The gods spoke and the children listened.

But, lo! gravity reverses itself. The massive pyramid turns like a melting iceberg, until the boys and girls are on top. The base of the pyramid now teaches.

How did it happen? After all, back in the twenties and thirties, there were no science-fiction books in the curricula of schools anywhere. There were few in the libraries. Only once or twice a year did a responsible publisher dare to publish one or two books which could be designated as speculative fiction.

If you went into the average library as you motored across America in 1932, 1945, or 1953 you would have found:

No Edgar Rice Burroughs.

No L. Frank Baum and no *Oz*.

In 1958 or 1962 you would have found no Asimov, no Heinlein, no Van Vogt, and, er, no Bradbury.

Here and there, perhaps one book or two by the above. For the rest: a desert.

What were the reasons for this?

Among librarians and teachers there was then, and there still somewhat dimly persists, an idea, a notion, a concept that only Fact should be eaten with your Wheaties. Fantasy? That's for the Fire Birds. Fantasy, even when it takes science-fictional forms, which it often does, is dangerous. It is escapist. It is day-dreaming. It has nothing to do with the world and the world's problems.

So said the snobs who did not know themselves as snobs.

So the shelves lay empty, the books untouched in publishers' bins, the subject untaught.

Comes the Evolution. The survival of that species called Child. The children, dying of starvation, hungry for ideas which lay all about in this fabulous land, locked into machines and architecture, struck out on their own. What did they do?

They walked into classrooms in Waukesha and Peoria and Neepawa and Cheyenne and Moose Jaw and Redwood City and placed a gentle bomb on teacher's desk. Instead of an apple it was Asimov.

"What's that?" the teacher asked, suspiciously.

"Try it. It's good for you," said the students.

"No thanks."

"Try it," said the students. "Read the first page. If you don't like it, stop."

And the clever students turned and went away.

The teachers (and the librarians, later) put off reading, kept the book around the house for a few weeks and then, late one night, tried the first paragraph.

And the bomb exploded.

They not only read the first but the second paragraph, the second and third pages, the fourth and fifth chapters.

"My God!" they cried, almost in unison, "these damned books are about something!"

"Good Lord!" they cried, reading a second book, "there are Ideas here!"

"Holy Smoke!" they babbled, on their way through Clarke, heading into Heinlein, emerging from Sturgeon, "these books are—ugly word—relevant!"

"Yes!" shouted the chorus of kids starving in the yard. "Oh, my, yes!"

And the teachers began to teach, and discovered an amazing thing:

Students who had never wanted to read before suddenly were galvanized, pulled up *their* socks, and began to read and quote Ursula Le Guin. Kids who had never read so much as one pirate's obituary in their lives, were suddenly turning pages with their tongues, ravening for more.

Librarians were stunned to find that science-fiction books were not only being borrowed in the tens of thousands, but stolen and never returned!

"Where have we been?" the librarians and the teachers asked each other, as the Prince kissed them awake. "What's *in* these books that makes them as irresistible as Cracker Jack?"

The History of Ideas.

The children wouldn't have said it in so many words. They only sensed it and read it and loved it. The kids sensed, if they could not speak it, that the first science-fiction writers were cavemen who were trying to figure out the first sciences—which were what? How to capture fire. What to do about that lout of a mammoth hanging around outside the cave. How to play dentist to the sabre-tooth tiger and turn him into a house-cat.

Pondering those problems and possible sciences, the first cavemen and women drew science-fiction dreams on the cave walls. Scribbles in soot blueprinting possible strategies. Illustrations of mammoths, tigers, fires: how to solve?? How to turn science-fiction (problem solving) into science-fact (problem solved).

Some few brave ones ran out of the cave to be stomped by the mammoth, toothed by the tiger, scorched by the bestial fire that lived on trees and devoured wood. Some few finally returned to draw on the walls the triumph of the mammoth knocked like a hairy cathedral to earth, the tiger toothless, and the fire tamed and brought within the cave to light their nightmares and warm their souls.

The children sensed, if they could not speak, that the entire history of mankind is problem solving, or science fiction swallowing ideas, digesting them, and excreting formulas for survival. You can't have one without the other. No fantasy, no reality. No studies concerning loss, no gain. No imagination, no will. No impossible dreams: No possible solutions.

The children sensed, if they could not say, that fantasy, and its robot child science fiction, is not escape at all. But a circling round of reality to enchant it and make it behave. What is an airplane, after all, but a circling of reality, an approach to gravity which says: look, with my magic machine, I defy you. Gravity be gone. Distance, stand aside. Time, stand still, or reverse, as I finally outrace the sun around the world in, by God! look! plane/jet/rocket—80 minutes!

The children guessed, if they did not whisper it, that all science fiction is an attempt to solve problems by pretending to look the other way.

In another place I have described this literary process as Perseus confronted by Medusa. Gazing at Medusa's image in his bronze shield, pretending to look one way, Perseus reaches back over his shoulder and severs Medusa's head. So science fiction pretends at futures in order to cure sick dogs lying in today's road. Indirection is everything. Metaphor is the medicine.

Children love cataphracts, though do not name them thusly. A cataphract is only a special Persian on a specially bred horse, the combination of which threw back the Roman legions some long while ago. Problem solving. Problem: massive Roman armies on foot. Science fiction dreams: cataphract/man-on-horseback. Romans dispersed. Problem solved. Science fiction becomes scientific fact.

Problem: botulism. Science fiction dreams: to someday produce a container which would preserve food, prevent death. Science-fictional dreamers: Napoleon and his technicians. Dream become fact: the invention of the Tin Can. Outcome: millions alive today who would have otherwise writhed and died.

So, it seems, we are all science-fictional children dreaming ourselves into new ways of survival. We are the reliquaries of all time. Instead of putting saints' bones by in crystal and gold jars, to be touched by the faithful in the following centuries, we put by voices and faces, dreams and impossible dreams on tape, on records, in books, on tv, in films. Man the problem solver is that only because he is the Idea Keeper. Only by finding technological ways to save time, keep time, learn from time, and grow into solutions, have we survived into and through this age toward even better ones. Are we polluted? We can unpollute ourselves. Are we crowded? We can de-mob ourselves. Are we alone? Are we sick? The hospitals of the world are better places since tv came to visit, hold hands, take away half the curse of illness and isolation.

Do we want the stars? We can have them. Can we borrow cups of fire from the sun? We can and must and light the world.

Everywhere we look: problems. Everywhere we further deeply look: solutions. The children of men, the children of time, how can they *not* be fascinated with these challenges? Thus: science fiction and its recent history.

On top of which, as mentioned earlier on, the young people have tossed bombs into your nearest corner art gallery, your downtown art museum.

They have walked through the halls and dozed off at the modern scene as represented by 60-odd years of abstraction super-abstracting itself until it vanished up its own backside. Empty canvases. Empty minds. No concepts. Sometimes no color. No ideas that would interest a performing flea at a dog circus.

"Enough!" cried the children. "Let there be fantasy. Let there be science-fiction light."

Let illustration be reborn.

Let the Pre-Raphaelites re-clone themselves and proliferate!

And it was so.

And because the children of the Space Age, and the sons and daughters of Tolkien wanted their fictional dreams sketched and painted in illustrative terms, the ancient art of story-telling, as acted out by your caveman or your Fra Angelico or your Dante Gabriel Rossetti was re-invented as yet the second giant pyramid turned end for end, and education ran from the base into the apex, and the old order was reversed.

Hence your double Revolution in reading, in teaching Literature and pictorial Art.

Hence, by osmosis, the Industrial Revolution and the Electronic and Space Ages have finally seeped into the blood, bone, marrow, heart, flesh and mind of the young who as teachers teach us what we should have known all along.

Hence this collection of essays which you hold in your hand, regarding and analyzing the phenonemon of the Beautiful Naked Truth walking amongst us unseen. And that Truth again: the History of Ideas, which is all that science fiction ever has been. Ideas birthing themselves into fact, dying, only to reinvent new dreams and ideas to be reborn in yet more fascinating shapes and forms, some of them permanent, all of them promising Survival.

I hope we will not get too serious here, for seriousness is the Red Death if we let it move too freely amongst us. Its freedom is our prison and our defeat and death. A good idea should worry us like a dog. We should not, in turn, worry it into the grave, smother it with intellect, pontificate it into snoozing, kill it with the death of a thousand analytical slices.

This collection should be taken up by all of us who would like to remain childlike and not childish in our 20-20 vision, borrowing such telescopes, rockets, or magic carpets as may be needed to hurry us along to miracles of physics as well as dream.

The Double Revolution continues. And there are more, invisible, revolutions to come. There will always be problems. Thank God for that. And solutions. Thank God for that. And tomorrow mornings in which to seek

# Introduction

JOHN J. TEUNISSEN

It is some thirty-five years ago that I read my first science-fiction short story, which was also one of the first short stories that Ray Bradbury published. My first science-fiction novel was C. S. Lewis' *Out of the Silent Planet*. I was very young thirty-five years ago, and these two writers—one a young man from the American Mid-West, the other a middle-aged, extraordinarily erudite Cambridge don—shaped a taste in fantasy and science fiction that finds itself reflected, at least in part, in this collection of essays.

That this taste has caused me some embarrassment and secretiveness over the years as I went about the business of planting for myself a place and building for myself a bower in the Groves of Academe will pass without elaboration, but that I have in the past half-dozen years or so discovered that I am not a *lusus naturae*, that many of my seemingly so staid and conventionally-trained colleagues have had the same or similar experience, has been a second education. Consequently, while I have not discussed the matter with any of the authors of these essays, I suspect that most of them have had traditional educations in the received subjects but that nevertheless they did not come to fantasy and science fiction lately or expediently. I suspect that most of them have spent a good deal of time underground, as it were, and, as I did, and perhaps only half-consciously, that they chose to specialize in the acceptable but related periods, fields, genres and figures, waiting all the while to reveal themselves in the light of day at the appointed

time. Now that I think of it, that must be why I was drawn to John Milton and Herman Melville; for are they not great writers of fantasy and science fiction? That I have placed this brief introduction between Ray Bradbury and Donald Lawler has therefore some significance.

In "Some Remarks," which prefaces *Re: Colonised Planet 5 SHIKASTA*, Doris Lessing incisively states the situation:

The old "realistic" novel is being changed, too, because of influences from that genre loosely described as space fiction. Some people regret this. I was in the States, giving a talk, and the professor who was acting as chairwoman, and whose only fault was that perhaps she had fed too long on the pieties of academia, interrupted me with: "If I had you in my class you'd never get away with that!" (Of course it is not everyone who finds this funny.) I had been saying that space fiction, with science fiction, makes up the most original branch of literature now; it is inventive and witty; it has already enlivened all kinds of writing; and that literary academics and pundits are much to blame for patronising or ignoring it—while of course by their nature they can be expected to do no other. This view shows signs of becoming the stuff of orthodoxy. (pp. ix-x)

From pariahdom to orthodoxy in so few years.

My tastes are of course also my biases, but I am quite conscious of them and I have tried in selecting the following essays to be as objective as possible, so that while I may not be in particular sympathy with an approach or two I sympathize completely with what the authors are attempting. That said, my criteria, besides that announced in the collection's sub-title, were as follows: 1) excellence; 2) coverage of major themes and trends; 3) coverage of as many important authors as possible. The reader will have to judge how well we have succeeded with the first criterion. With regard to the third, the reader will note that the works of certain authors, particularly Ursula K. Le Guin, seem to receive undue space. To this I can reply only that a proportionately greater number of submissions were concerned with aspects of Le Guin's science fiction. If we did not already know it, we would now have to conclude that she is clearly the science-fiction writer whom academics find most congenial. They are, after all, still academics.

I want to devote the rest of this space to a discussion of my second criterion, but first a word needs to be said about the over-all scholarly orientation of the material in *Other Worlds*. The synchronicity of the academic community's growing interest in interdisciplinary studies and its discovery of fantasy and science fiction leads one to believe that the natural critical approach to science fiction is interdisciplinary; and, while there will continue to be arguments about science fiction as *genre*, there can be no disagreement about the compound noun, "science fiction," being interdisciplinary in its very compoundness. Thus every essay in this collection, with the possible exception of Robert Philmus' necessary genre study, is of an interdisciplinary nature: each illuminates the work or works with which it deals by utilizing the findings of a non-literary discipline or disciplines. It is my

feeling that today we have to be either deconstructionist or interdisciplinary. Again, these essays will reveal my bias.

The essays that follow are philosophical (Lawler, Pielke, Olsen, Elkins), feminist (Monk), theological (Otten, Reddy), iconographical (Redekop), psychological (Cederstrom), folkloristic (Whitaker), anthropo/sociological (Walker), oneiric (Touponce); some of them, on behalf of humanity, utilize physics (Tavormina), semiotics (Hardesty), engineering (Beauchamp), and ecology (Brigg). Last but not least (bibliographical materials seem always to come at the end), Marshall Tynn applies his experience as a fantasy and science-fiction bibliographer to assembling in a highly-readable but condensed form the critical and research materials necessary for anyone just discovering fantasy and science fiction as fields of academic study.

The essays that follow, however, do not range so far afield one from the other that there would not be a basis for disagreement among the group were we to hold a symposium. I can imagine three fruitful subjects for this "Other Worlds" symposium (there are many more): 1) genre; 2) myth; and 3) women.

On the subject of genre, if Tzvetan Todorov were to be invited to our meeting, no one, it seems, would agree with him. The interdisciplinarians and historians would, I think, reject his rigid structuralism as reductive; others would sense that Todorov wants to relegate science fiction to "mere" fantasy (after all, science fiction says real things about a real world; it only seems to deal with aliens on other worlds). After Todorov had left the room, some of these authors would claim that fantasy and science fiction are separate genres, others would argue that they are both subgenres or descendants of (say) medieval romance. I, vacating the chair for the moment, might argue that science fiction is a subgenre of fantasy in which science provides the former leavening power of *magia* or *goetia*. At this point the meeting would degenerate, perhaps, into various kinds of unacademic activities and I would have to resume the chair. Ray Bradbury would warn us not to become over-serious.

Donald Lawler's eleventh footnote is central to the problem of fantasy and science fiction and myth. Judging from the essays that appear in this collection, it seems almost impossible to discuss any aspect of the genre(s) without touching upon myth—ancient or modern, Jungian or political. Are fantasy and science-fiction stories and novels *about* myth? do they *use* myth? are they *mythic*? are they *myth*? *what* is myth? This questionnaire would yield fascinating but, I fear, inconclusive results. There is no danger, however, that a questionnaire of this kind will for this reason fall out of use.

If Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is not myth, is not mythic, its subtitle, pointing as it does to Aeschylus' version of the Promethean myth, and its epigraph, directing us to Milton's version of that myth in *Paradise Lost*, allow us at least to suggest that it *uses* myth (how, why and to what effect are now beside the point). Without choosing sides, then, let me point out that the two essays which allude to the myth are about robots and women. Asimov has apparently had as little success with his Three Laws of Robotics as Man has

had with his Three Laws (love, honor and obey) of Feminics. These creatures are definitely out of control (or have they already taken over the world?)

Women authors are well represented in this collection because they represented themselves well. Laws, as Terry Otten might observe, are made (if one is a romantic) to be broken. Women authors may be proportionally better represented here than in most non-feminist collections of essays because like the women writers of fantasy and science fiction whom they study, they have found a field peculiarly congenial to them (although I would not want to suggest that in both endeavors feminine intuition might be a real asset). But only one of the six essays by women in this collection is specifically a feminist essay, i.e. provides us with an analysis of the evils of a system until recently dominated by males, analyzes the attempts of women writers to adjust the balance, prescribes solutions. Another deals with potentially feminist material from a psychological point of view, arguing along the way that if psychology is a science then works of fiction which extrapolate from that science must be science fiction and pointing out that Doris Lessing seems to have been a science-fiction writer somewhat before the *Canopus in Argos: Archives* series. The remaining women essayists seem generally unconcerned by the feminist issue. One of them, apparently ignoring the fact that the protagonist of the work under discussion is needlessly masculine but drawing our attention, in the process, to the fact that he could not have made his amazing temporal discovery without the writings of one Odo, a woman, indeed chooses to discuss a Le Guin novel with which the feminist author finds particular fault. Consequently, however one chooses to account for these three positions, it is clear that if fantasy and science fiction are now, definitively, with us, so are the women.

But I should let you read this collection for yourselves, after one last word:

If in some ways the idea for this collection of essays owes its origins to Ray Bradbury and C. S. Lewis (neither of whom, I am sure, would have in those days contemplated such a possibility), it also owes itself in part to my good friend and teacher, Joseph Frank, who once in a graduate Milton seminar, drew it to our attention that Satan's space flight to earth in *Paradise Lost* is one of the first recorded in cosmic history. Whether that makes Milton's poem science fiction or fantasy could be argued, but there was one teacher at least who furthered the cause of Ray Bradbury's Republic.