

New Weird Discussions: The Creation of a Term

IN APRIL 2003, M. John Harrison asked a question on his Third Alternative Message Board that eventually led to the creation, promulgation, mutation and distortion of the term "New Weird." This was an offshoot, as far as we can tell, of a conversation that originated with Steph Swainston's message board, but only reached critical mass with Harrison's question.

We've reproduced the first part of that public discussion below, filling in full names where we know them. We have preserved many idiosyncrasies of punctuation and phrasing that are in keeping with online communication.

The entire discussion took place over several months and many thousands of words. Several other individuals, including Jeffrey Ford, Michael Cisco, Kathryn Cramer, one of the editors of this very anthology (Jeff VanderMeer), and, perhaps most notably, China Miéville, eventually entered into the fray. An archive of the entirety of this very public investigation of New Weird exists on Kathryn Cramer's website at: www.kathryncramer.com/kathryn_cramer/2007/07/the-new-weird-a.html. — THE EDITORS

M. John Harrison (Tuesday, April 29, 2003 — 10:39 am): The New Weird. Who does it? What is it? Is it even anything? Is it even New? Is it, as some think, not only a better slogan than The Next Wave, but also incalculably more fun to do? Should we just call it Pick'n'Mix instead? As ever, *your* views are the views we want to hear —

Zali Krishna: Is it a bit like science fantasy but with more than a passing nod towards horror? Presumably the “Weird” refers back to *Weird Tales* – a pre-generic pulp era where sf, fantasy and horror were less well defined. I’m guessing here, based upon the Miéville attribution. Personally I think “Weird Shit” would be a better label – I’d like to see bookshops with a Weird Shit section...

Jonathan Oliver: Who coined the phrase *The New Weird*? I haven’t seen it in use before?

Al Robertson: Would definitely rush to *Weird Shit* shelves, think they should be balanced with *Heavy Shit* also. Dictionary *Weird* – “Strange or bizarre...supernatural, uncanny” *Uncanny’s* nice – makes me think of *unheimlich*, which I suppose is a v. good definition of it – uncomfortable fiction...

Krishna: I’m not sure I’d go near uncanny shelves. I’ve seen what sort of injuries falling books can cause. “Excuse me miss, can I see the *Heavy Shit* librarian?”

Harrison: *Nuevo Weird*? [Zali], the *Heavy Shit* librarian, sums things up as ever. It makes that exact allusion to *Weird Tales* and especially the fact that, back then, in that marvellous & uncorrupted time of the world everything could still be all mixed up together – horror, sf, fantasy – and no one told you off or said your career was over with their firm if you kept doing that. I heard it in conversation with China Miéville his self, and cheekily reapplied it in a preface to “*The Tain*” (mainly so I could use the title “*China Miéville & the New Weird*”, which I thought was second in impact only to “*Uncle Zip and the New Nuevo Tango*”). He writes it. But who else? And what are its exact parameters? Indeed do we *want* it to have exact parameters? Do we even want it? Is it, as Stephanie says, instantly rendered *Old* by being spoken of as *New*?

Stephanie Swainston: *The New Weird* is a wonderful development in literary fantasy fiction. I would have called it *Bright Fantasy*, because

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is vivid and because it is clever. The New Weird is a kickback against dated heroic fantasy which has been the only staple for far too long. Instead of stemming from Tolkien, it is influenced by *Gormenghast* and *Ironium*. It is incredibly eclectic, and takes ideas from any source. It borrows from American Indian and Far Eastern mythology rather than European or Norse traditions, but the main influence is modern culture — direct culture — mixing with ancient mythologies. The text isn't experimental, but the creatures are. It is amazingly empathic. What is it like to be a clone? Or to walk on your hundred quirky legs? The New Weird attempts to explain. It acknowledges other literary traditions, for example Angela Carter's mainstream fiction, or classics like Melville. Films are a source of inspiration because action is vital. The elves were first up against the wall when the revolution came, and instead we want the vastness of the science fiction film universe on the page.

There is a lot of genre-mixing going on, thank god. (Jon Courtnay Grimwood mixes futuristic sf and crime novels). The New Weird grabs everything, and so genre-mixing is part of it, but not the leading role. The New Weird is secular, and very politically informed. Questions of morality are posed. Even the politics, though, is secondary to this sub-genre's most important theme: detail.

The details are jewel-bright, hallucinatory, carefully described. Today's Tolkienesque fantasy is lazy and broad-brush. Today's Michael Marshall thrillers rely lazily on brand names. The New Weird attempts to place the reader in a world they do not expect, a world that surprises them — the reader stares around and sees a vivid world through the detail. These details — clothing, behaviour, scales and teeth — are what makes New Weird worlds so much like ours, as recognisable and as well-described. It is visual, and every scene is packed with baroque detail. Nouveau-goths use neon and tinsel as well as black clothes. The New Weird is more multi-spectral than gothic.

But one garuda does not make a revolution... There are not many New Weird writers because it is so difficult to do. Where is the rest? Jeff Noon? Samuel R. Delany? Do we have to wait for parodies of Bas-Lag? [M. John Harrison,] how many revolutions have you been part of?? The New Weird is energetic. Vivacity, vitality, detail; that's what it's

about. Trappings of Space Opera or Fantasy may be irrelevant when the Light is turned on.

Des Lewis: Vivid and clever, yes, and uncluttered. The text itself need not be untextured, though. Densely textured (or neo-Proustian) *and* limpid would apply to the New Weird at different times... but always uncluttered by anything else or anything unconnected with the text.

Swainston: Des: I agree. So the text is not “baroque”; style must be elegant even though it can be dense. On a practical level, the speed of reading is very important for action scenes! The surreal aspect is my favourite (I like colourful) but even in this the New Weird is not New – Moorcock’s “End of Time” books. The sub-genre is a combination of all these traits. But let’s not make it too proscriptive...

John Powell: “in that marvellous & uncorrupted time of the world, everything could still be all mixed up together – horror, sf, fantasy – and no one told you off or said your career was over with their firm if you kept doing that.” You could also include “realistic” fiction, thriller and symbolist fiction in that definition. The book I am reading, half way through it, *Rain*, by Karen Duve, uses a lot of those categories. It’s very sly about it, and very, very funny. It seems realist, straight sober, well-mannered fiction but it subverts the entire ball game. So far anyway. She is very talented.

Jonathan Strahan: Or is it the sound of one hand re-inventing itself? I can’t believe anyone is proposing another possible movement title! I mean aren’t you a New Wave Fabulist or something? Seriously, I think it’s a load of old cobbles. Much like the new space opera (a term invented by a bunch of critics to cover the fact that they got distracted by cyberpunk and didn’t notice that no one had stopped writing the other stuff), the new weird/new wave fabulist/slipstream whatever seems to be a pretty happy and healthy outgrowth of some things that came before which would probably be much better off if left unlabelled and left to grow in the dark where they belong. I certainly can’t believe

that you (MJH), China, VanderMeer, or anyone else would be better off if you were packaged up with some handy-dandy label.

Powell: I understand this idea differently. So called mainstream Anglo-American fiction tends to be very literal minded. A chair is a chair, a bus is a bus kind of thing. You can't have the vertical stripes of a John Lewis logo morphing into a vision of distant hills. It just wouldn't do. Thus you have mainstream on the one hand and science fiction on the other. Only in science fiction does the logo morph, etc. This bifurcation is less pronounced in European literature. The metaphysical *is* in the mainstream.

Robertson: Have been pondering all this myself recently – and ranting to people about it as non-realist fiction, ie fiction that's aware that it's not real (it's just ink on paper, at the end of the day) and does interesting things with this, at whatever level.

I don't see the point in trying to make a literal representation of a reality (itself a doomed enterprise) to talk about that reality, when you can have a dragon stick its head through the window, or the ghost of a spaceman wander past. For me, abandoning strict definitions of the real (tho' I think you still need emotional / thematic / internal coherence etc) leads to more interesting narratives, richer imagery, and a wider field of view in general.

I do hesitate slightly to put a name on things – tho' it's good to have an inclusive banner to march under, it's also problematic if that becomes an exclusive banner to judge with. My attitude – if it works, use it, if it doesn't, find out why, and use that knowledge. Having said that, there's definitely something developing out there...

Swainston: Jonathan: yes, agree that these authors would be better off without labels at all. Each is so individual anyway: China is writing his own style, etc. But they're too smart to feel limited by the fact some reviewer has bounded them together.

That the authors have ten labels thrust upon the authors by readers/reviewers/publishers probably makes them want to rationalise it into

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one label! It isn't the authors doing the labelling, or wishing to join anything. Perhaps the rest of us are just trying to make sense of it.

This is not the crest of a high and beautiful wave – it's a sub-genre with a lot of developing to do. Good writers are going to do what they do regardless of others' labelling and they'll outlive any fad (if this really exists, and if it is a fad).

Rick (last name unknown): I have to confess that this thread represents the extent of my exposure to the New Weird. So far my initial reaction is similar to Jonathan S's. Apart from the new label (Oh good, another new label...), what is new? Judging by Steph's explanation above, Clive Barker and Christopher Fowler have been newly weird for years, and possibly Banks as well sometimes. You might even be able to get away with hiding some of Moorcock's anthierotic stuff in there too – although perhaps not stylistically. A list of influences and sources from which borrowing is identifiable does not bode well for an exciting new movement.

The healthiest stuff has always mixed and matched or mismatched without regard for labels. With determined disregard for labels. A new movement... Apart from stuff like cyberpunk and space opera, which have the definition built into the label thus making it really easy for everyone, many of the movements that have gone before seemed to represent more of a shape-shifting, natural mutation: magic realism, Brit new wave, slipstream. All reactionary, but with blurred or easily disposable manifestos.

New labels and sub-genres encourage people to try to write what fits fashion. Cyberpunk should have made that clear (shudders). Don't like labels. Don't like canons. Like beer.

Harrison: Hi Jonathan. The old dog learns to amuse itself wherever it can, sometimes by learning new tricks, sometimes by the copious use of irony, sometimes both. I believe I'm an honorary New Wave Fabulist yes, along with about twenty other puzzled people. Generous of Brad Morrow to bestow that laurel on me after I so repeatedly savaged his New Gothic in the *TLS* [*Times Literary Supplement*] in the 90s. As Steph

remarked, "MJF or three, I suppose That history gives and naming, the One thing is, Reynolds (neither as a mere regrown many US Next Wave five there, Jonathan can be so close to Another thing ing the actual intimate not just underestimate th in the ring, write the *Guardian* the Hartwell to describe god forbid, I wake There's a war on: gle to name is the think that your brothers' view is anyt I think very pertinent in the dark where motive be for want

Rick: Steph: "they" has bounded them new writers who I voice.

Mike: your last paragraph cries out for ca. For the record, I t willingness to stand Justina is brilliant

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marked, "MUR, how many revolutions have you been part of?" Two
or three, I suppose, and sometimes I was there and sometimes I wasn't.
That history gives me satisfactions, along with a point of view on names
and naming, that you can't have.

One thing is, I think it reductive to describe China or Justina or Al
Reynolds (neither do I think you will be able to describe Steph herself),
as a mere regrowth from some buried root. You may be able to describe
many US Next Wavers as that, I'm sure. Were you intending to be reduc-
tive there, Jonathan, or was that just an accident of prose? Reducivism
can be so close to belittling, can't it? Don't you find?

Another thing is, in misreading my opening post here (and ignor-
ing the actual information contained in my second one) you underes-
timate not just the cheerful ironic glee of new-movement-naming: you
underestimate the amount of agenda involved. If I don't throw my hat
in the ring, write a preface, do a guest editorial here, write a review in
the *Guardian* there, then I'm leaving it to Michael Moorcock or David
Hartwell to describe what I (and the British authors I admire) write. Or,
god forbid, I wake up one morning and find *you* describing me.

There's a war on here, Jonathan. It's the struggle to name. The strug-
gle to name is the struggle to own. Surely you're not naive enough to
think that your bracingly commonsensical, "I think it's a lot of old cob-
blers' view is anything more than a shot in it? One more question, and
I think very pertinent to that last one – Why do you want us to remain
in the dark where we belong, Jonathan? What might your unconscious
motive be for wanting that, do you think?

Rick: Steph: "they're too smart to feel limited by the fact some reviewer
has bounded them together"... definitely. The danger is probably for
new writers who have yet to build confidence, literary identity and
voice.

Mike: your last post is scary. You describe a literary/political struggle
that cries out for canons. Another weapon of ownership surely.
For the record, I think China M is brilliant both as a writer, and in his
willingness to stand up and be counted where his politics are concerned.
Justina is brilliant too. Neither can be described as "mere regrowth

from some buried root". You've said yourself that there is nothing but influence. The trouble with labels and movements is that they imply parameters. They encourage people to disassemble what is a fully synthesised whole in a quest for its building blocks, its influences. To deembed (?). There is plenty that's new or fresh... or that *feels* new and fresh. What are we after? To define it so we can break it down into identifiable components? What then? Understand the bits in a stab at literary determinism. Study enough bits and all possible texts will emerge? Ownership...

Powell: Structure is what I think we are after. (What I am, anyway.) Handke: "Work is almost all structure..." You get the structure, you can do the essay. The story. Or whatever. It falls into place. You can complete. No structure, no completion. (e.g. hard to write an essay on what science fiction is without limiting terms to structure it. On the other hand, what does limit it? Nothing? On these grounds – no essay.)

Justina Robson: It's like Venn diagrams, isn't it? Everyone involved in artistic creation has a whole lot of things going on at once. Some are big footprints over predecessors and some come in from the quirky sidelines of whoever's life it is and taken all together you have a full picture of what someone's doing at a particular moment.

Trouble is, all of those Venn circles are politically charged and economically charged, like it or not. The assignment of value (quality) is something you have to do because you're human and everything has to be categorised somewhere on the scale of Important To Me/Nor Important To Me. We all know, mostly to our cost, exactly what the Science Fiction/Fantastic stamp is worth in the contemporary economy of literature. It's so powerful a stamp that Margaret Atwood's publisher has gone to enormous lengths (and has been aided) to make sure it doesn't appear in any review of *Oryx and Crake* in mainstream press. (I say this because as far as I've been able to track it through a discussion on FEM-SF, [Margaret Atwood] herself has never derided SF.)

Saying these divisions are cobblers expresses justified exasperation but it's disingenuous. This is a war, the winners get all the loot and to

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er. (What I am, anyway) get the structure, you can into place. You can come to write an essay on what it's re it. On the other grounds – no essay.)

Henry: It seems to me that to describe the New Weird as a movement or a school is to fall into a trap; one immediately starts trying to categorize, to reduce, to say that writers of the New Weird are x, y and z, and that x, y and z are what is important about them. It's only one short step from there to self-published manifestoes, official goals, and Five Year Programmes. I reckon that it's more useful to think of the New Weird as an argument. An argument between a bunch of writers who read each other, who sometimes influence each other, sometimes struggle against that influence. Who don't ever agree on what the New Weird is, on where it starts and stops, but are prepared to harangue each other about it. Describing the New Weird in these terms involves its own kind of codswallop, but at least it's a less constricting kind of codswallop. But I'm an academic rather than a writer; I *look* and *read* but I don't *do* so I'm writing this from the outside.

Cheryl Morgan: Labels are marketing gimmicks. I've been asked to be on a panel about the New Weird (although it isn't called that) at Wiscon.

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The main reason the panel exists is that China is one of the [Guests of Honor] and lots of eager Americans want to know where they can find “more like this”. So, yes, Jonathan, it may be a load of old cobblers from a literary theory point of view, but it is also an opportunity to sell more books, and perhaps even secure a US publishing contract or two. So who wants me to claim them for the New Weird?

Rick: I could live with that as an alternative interpretation, but then it becomes an in-crowd in-joke. MJP: I think there’s scope for debate about carts and horses here. Structure is often something that is only seen in retrospect. Depending on the method favoured by the writer, it is not unusual for structure to be the last thing on an author’s mind. In these cases it emerges from the struggle and the resolution. Completion occurs and then, later, the structure is perceived...

Robertson: Hmm – labels certainly marketing gimmicks, and with my marketing hat on New Weird vs. useful label, clearly defined area of fiction appealing to clearly defined target marketplace etc.

But I don’t like talking about fiction like this, hold onto notion that you write what you need to write and that the great struggle as a writer is not to write like a part of a school but to write like yourself. Other considerations certainly present, but secondary.

If people can be recognisably grouped, it’s I hope because they share concerns / strategies / effects / etc, because they share these they create fiction that has a common mindset – that overlaps with each other – not because they’ve taken a market driven or insecurity driven decision to do so. I hope that you are a certain type of person, with certain interests, certain concerns, therefore become a certain type of writer as a natural expression of where you are. Perhaps naive – certainly economically so. Therefore label useful as a means of identifying that sharedness, but something that comes after the writing, not before it or driving it. Rick – totally agree – structure (at least, critical structure) often retrospective – a post rationalisation of something that was intuitive when carried out.

But naming is power defines the thing name certain things / people shortlived. There has relationship. If the name is whatever, it will drop a quality that endures.

Strahan: Hi Mike – “T” sometimes by learning irony, sometimes both. I wondered if there was more of an impulse by throwing impulse by throwing confuse the labelers... [Fabulist] who was pleased I don’t even think [the e it’s a little unfortunate

No, I wasn’t attempt the achievement of any was suggesting through of commentators to label reductive itself and b) wholly or in part influence I strongly feel that any art, and so is often less label and b) use labels.

Well, I would say the “glee”, I took a particular in describing you is as your fiction. It may echo something to the need to seize sympathy. I guess it’s the labelers and prevent “There’s a war on h

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But naming is power (as [M. John Harrison] points out) because it defines the thing named, includes certain things / people / etc, excludes certain things / people / etc. But if the name doesn't work it will be shortlived. There has to be an interaction, a sense of appropriate relationship. If the name is wrong, created for short term political reasons, whatever, it will drop away. Hype great but temporary, it never lasts, it's quality that endures.

Strahan: Hi Mike – “The old dog learns to amuse itself wherever it can, sometimes by learning new tricks, sometimes by the copious use of irony, sometimes both.” I certainly saw the irony [in] it, and even wondered if there was more than a little desire to struggle against the labelling impulse by throwing more labels out there just to mischievously confuse the labelers... I don't think I've heard of a single [New Wave Fabulist] who was pleased with or felt some connection to the label. I don't even think [the editor Peter] Straub had anything to do with it, so it's a little unfortunate it is gaining any currency.

No, I wasn't attempting to be reductive or to in any sense belittle the achievement of any of the writers mentioned in this forum. What I was suggesting though, is that the endless search by a small-ish group of commentators to label and sort what is happening in the genre is a) reductive itself and b) ignores the fact that many of those writers are wholly or in part influenced by existing traditions. I would also add that I strongly feel that any label reduces and limits perception of a work of art, and so is often less than helpful. I also note my own tendency to a) label and b) use labels. It's something I try to fight.

Well, I would say that rather than misreading [your “cheerful ironic glee”], I took a particular approach... Mike, the only way I'm interested in describing you is as you. Fiction by Mike Harrison is Mike Harrison fiction. It may echo something here or there, but it's still mostly Mike. As to the need to seize the labelling day, as it were – I understand and sympathise. I guess it's just my instinctive reaction to try to beat back the labellers and prevent the very war you mention.

“There's a war on here, Jonathan. It's the struggle to name. The

struggle to name is the struggle to own. Surely you're not naive enough to think that your bracingly commonsensical, "I think it's a lot of old cobblers" view is anything more than a shot in it?" Not at all. I understand, but it rankles. I don't think the war is a productive or intrinsically worthwhile thing because it leads to a reductive view of art rather than an attempt to understand what is actually being achieved by the artists in question.

"Why do you want us to remain in the dark where we belong, Jonathan? What might your unconscious motive be for wanting that, do you think?" I think this is your sense of mischief coming to the fore. I don't think you seriously believe that by ridiculing an attempt to drum up a label for work that may have some vague commonalities that I'm in any way trying to keep anything in the dark. If I have an unconscious motive, it's to not have to go through the whole stupid cyberpunk thing again and live through a decade of people with very little talent dressing their latest trilogy up in new weird drag. Besides, what's the matter with the dark...

Harrison: I agree with everyone here on the basic point. It would be difficult not to, having said so many times that fiction should be written by individuals.

But two things: there is a struggle to name, whether we like it or not, and that struggle is also a struggle to define and own. I think labels are crap, but I'm not willing to give up my own definition of what's going on without a fight. Especially, paradoxically, since one of the best things going on with this form of fiction is its genuinely unlabelable (is that a word?) quality, the sense I have of real, lively writers doing exactly what they want to do. So please excuse me, all of you, if I go over the top a bit about this sometimes.

I think I agree most with Justina and Cheryl's pragmatism here: any thing that does a job for the fiction, I'm in favour of.

Steph, I take your point about ownership: I just don't ever intend to wake up being owned by someone else – otherwise, why be a writer in the first place? The New Wave named itself (or stuck itself to the best label it could find from those on offer), not just for publicity purposes,

not just as a flag, for your ideas. The bagging, especially live by that kind of Henry: I so wish think of the New of writers who sometimes struggle what the New Weird harangue each other involves its own kind of codswallop. Jonathan: you're making in both my at one another; and This whole process of something that in (and thus nurture its Justina: Speaking you're absolutely right need to take the advantage not as convinced as I (Meville.) It's up to us unlabelled umbrella, there will be a melting will take the form of a for that and see it as a favour. The prospect is to swim or drown...

Strahan: Hey Mike. You let's do a definitive and Harrison: OK Jonathan.

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not just as a flag, but because to name yourself is to take responsibility
for your ideas. That's a way to prevent commercialisation and carpet-
bagging, especially now, when we're surrounded by middlemen who
live by that kind of parasitism.

Henry: I so wholly agree with this: "I reckon that it's more useful to
think of the New Weird as an argument. An argument between a bunch
of writers who read each other, who sometimes influence each other,
sometimes struggle against that influence. Who don't ever agree on
what the New Weird is, on where it starts and stops, but are prepared to
harangue each other about it. Describing the New Weird in these terms
involves its own kind of codswallop, but at least it's a less constricting
kind of codswallop."

Jonathan: you're right, of course, there was deliberate mischief-
making in both my posts; and, yes, it was designed to get us all baying
at one another; and yes, I wish to God we could have our cake and eat it.
This whole process is as undignified as hell, especially right at the start
of something that might get no further but which has to describe itself
(and thus nurture itself) somehow.

Justina: Speaking of carpetbagging from the mainstream, I think
you're absolutely right, and that a big convulsion is in the offing. We
need to take the advantage and get our act together, certainly. But I'm
not as convinced as you that we'll lose. (After all, we have Bartleship
Mieville.) It's up to us, as individuals and as sharers of some labelled or
unlabelled umbrella, to make ourselves as strong and feisty as possible.
There *will* be a melting pot, at some level, although personally I think it
will take the form of a steadily-enlarging slipstream. Up to us to allow
for that and see it as an opportunity, not a defeat. To be honest, I'm in
favour. The prospect shakes me out of my old guy's lethargy. I'm ready
to swim or drown...

Strahan: Hey Mike. You win. Just used "new weird" in a book review.
Let's do a definitive anthology to celebrate!

Harrison: ok Jonathan. Now, what shall we call it...

Strahan: Why The New Weird, of course. Or maybe Odd Worlds: The Best of the New Weird... So the next obvious question is, who are the new weirdoes? We have China and Jeff and...

Morgan: Thank you Jonathan, that's exactly the question I need answered for my Wiscon panel. (And you have the two names I have.) Suggestions would be appreciated. By the way, I have suggested to Wiscon that "New Weird" be used in the panel title.

Harrison: Hi Jonathan. I think naming names would be making rather too much mischief, for me, at present. The Wiscon panel Cheryl mentioned will surely produce a list we can all argue over. Instead I've been mulling over Justina's point above, trying to match it to my own sense that something is happening here (but you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?) which I see as really quite new in the history of the ghetto's relationship with the mainstream. As Justina says: it's a science world now, & they're just waking up to that out there, also how to speak about it, or let it speak itself through you.

This is in a way a development from the highly fashionable science & the arts movement which has been going on in other disciplines since the mid 90s (and of which we, bless our little cotton socks, though we're clear inheritors of that label, have taken no advantage at all). Part of the clear inheritors of that label, have taken no advantage at all). Part of the problem there is that we have taken absolutely no part in the discussions, and never insisted on having a place in things. You can't expect people to come to you in this life, and if you don't make moves of your own, you can hardly complain if things seem to change very suddenly around you in a way you weren't prepared for. I was sitting in on informal meetings on the South Bank in 1997/8: everyone else there was a scientist or someone in the plastic arts... This point extends further. Life in the West now is a crossply of fantasies. Because we understand fantasy from the inside, we're the people to write about that, too. It seems to me that as a result we should open this front of the struggle-to-name the front that faces out from the ghetto, with a certain confidence.

I'm aware here that I'm not talking directly about the New Weird, & that I've bundled it with British SF. Deliberately, because I see them both as

responses – or n situation, which erary mainstream soon going to be we can bear their think we have to. exists, partly because whole new genre *Travel Arrangements* aware that both (concerns me more by China, Al Rey I suspect that may,

So I'm less into collection, than in when we face out to [China Miéville broadsheets review concerns me is towards with confidence

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responses – or not quite that, probably some better word – to the same situation, which is the increasing convergence of concerns between lit- erary mainstream fiction and f/sf. Thus back to Justina's point: they are soon going to be tackling exactly the same subjects as us. I don't think we can beat them, in the sense of taking them on directly; but I don't think we have to. I'm in favour of a melting pot – in fact I think it already exists, partly because “slipstream” has been quietly doing just that for a whole new generation of readers who are as happy with [my collection] *Travel Arrangements* as with a David Mitchell novel – although I'm very aware that both China and Justina have different views here. All of this concerns me more than how the new developments in f/sf represented by China, Al Reynolds, Justina, myself, et al, face *inwards* into the genre. I suspect that may become in some sense irrelevant.

So I'm less interested in filling the contents list of an inward-facing collection, than in wondering how we organise and present ourselves when we face outwards. How we capitalise on the out-there response to [China Miéville's] *The Scar* or [my own] *Light*, or the fact that the broadsheets review pages are so suddenly interested in us all. What concerns me is who, in the New Weird, etc., is capable of speaking out-wards with confidence, not inwards.