Down, Out and Invisible in London and Seattle

Stefan Ekman

"If you close your eyes, they will all disappear."

Sometimes it seems remarkably simple to perform amazing feats of magic. Out of sight is out of mind. Ignore it and it will go away. Below this message, which could be read on an ad in a tram, an explanation was given in smaller print: "There are homeless people in Göteborg." It was a message easily overlooked and easily ignored, trying to draw attention to something invisible in our midst.

Fantasy has often been described as escapism, and while Tolkien's point, that the escape in fantasy is the Escape of the Prisoner rather than the Flight of the Deserter,[1] defends the act of escaping as such, it still accepts escape as central to the genre. There is, however, much fantasy that strives for neither escape nor flight, stories that keep us where we are in an attempt to show us things we have not yet seen.

While some stories might offer a journey to a secondary world, for recreation, escape or deeper understanding, others remain in "realistic-seeming settings" much like our own world. In *Strategies of Fantasy*, Brian Attebery discusses the difficulty in writing this latter kind of fantasy, which he terms "indigenous fantasy": "Indigenous fantasy is [...] an inherently problematic form," Attebery observes, and "[i]t is also [...] inherently interesting, for one wonders what strategies the author will adopt to conceal or bridge the built-in conceptual gap"[2] between the realistic and fantastic modes of fiction.

One way of bridging this gap is by setting the story somewhere or sometime else, as in "once upon a time", "east of the sun, west of the moon" or perhaps "a long, long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away," but in much indigenous fantasy time and place are more or less determined, and other ways of bridging the gap must be found.

In the novels *Neverwhere* (Neil Gaiman, 1998) and *Wizard of the Pigeons* (Megan Lindholm, 1986), the conceptual gap between the fantastic and realistic modes is bridged by setting the stories in a strange and invisible world which is, to most readers, as foreign as Middle Earth but bleaker and much less appealing. It is the world where the homeless live invisibly among us, the world to which we banish them when we close our mental eyes and make them disappear from our minds. In this article, I will use a model based on possible world theories to discuss how the dichotomy is set up, more or less explicitly, between the fantastic realm of the homeless and the "realistic-seeming" realm of the domiciled, and how the treatment of the homeless in society in general is portrayed and, ultimately, critiqued.

The nature of reality, especially the nature of reality as described in works of fantastic fiction, is a sticky matter at best. When we say "the real world" we usually mean the world that we live in. But what about books that take place in "the real world?" In what way are the worlds of Count Myshkin or James Bond more real than the worlds of Count Dracula or Harry Potter? Neither Dostoyevski's Myshkin nor Stoker's Dracula ever walked this earth, and while Myshkin's world, unlike Dracula's, certainly seems to obey the same rules as our own, it is just as certainly a different world.

Using the concept of *possible worlds* makes it possible to skirt this issue. Simply put, there is an unlimited set of possible worlds, including the *actual world* (the world in which we live and which we call our own).[3] The only criterion a world must fulfil in order to be *possible* is that it is *logically possible*.[4] The set of possible worlds, in other words, is to be understood to include worlds that are *physically possible*, that is, worlds that do not violate any physical laws of the actual world, as well as *physically impossible*, but not worlds that are self-contradictory. While originally developed in philosophy, this concept has been employed as a tool for theorising in a wide field of disciplines, including literary theory.[5] Possible worlds are human constructs and the possible worlds of fiction are "*artifacts* produced by aesthetic activities."[6] The notion of fictional possible worlds is in accordance with Tolkien's idea of the author as sub-creator of "a Secondary World which your mind can enter" and Tolkien also adds that what such a sub-creator relates is "true": "it accords with the laws of that world."[7] The possible worlds of fiction must be as logically possible as any other possible worlds. However, these fictional worlds can follow more than one set of rules.[8] For instance, they can be hybrids between *natural* and *supernatural* worlds.[9] Lobomír Doležel calls such hybrids "dyadic worlds", fictional worlds which are "split into two domains governed by contrary global constraints."[10] In one domain, magic might work and even be an everyday occurrence while in the other domain, it is nothing but superstition and tricks.

Nancy H. Traill discusses the natural/supernatural hybrid further.[11] She regards worlds of fantastic fiction as being dyadic worlds consisting of two domains, governed by separate sets of rules: the natural domain and the supernatural domain. The natural domain is a "*physically possible* world having 'the same natural laws as does the actual world'"[12] and the supernatural domain would be a "physically *impossible* world"[13] in which for instance magic would work.

Neverwhere and *Wizard of the Pigeons* both portray dyadic worlds. Their natural domains have the same natural laws as the actual world, and they also mirror the opinions and norms of domiciled people in the actual world. Their inhabitants represent, to some extent, ourselves. The supernatural domain is hidden, an invisible enclave in the natural domain. The relationship between

the domains is not static, however. In both novels, there is a struggle between the two domains. The split between the two domains runs along the dividing line that separates the homeless from the settled majority of people. Fantasy Land is reached not by travelling physically, but by leaving the safety of everyday life: in *Neverwhere*, the rat-speaker girl, Anaesthesia, ran away from physical and sexual abuse. After having been homeless for some time, eating refuse and sleeping under a bypass in Notting Hill, she took ill and when she came to, she found herself in the supernatural domain of London Below (pp.87-88).

It should be noted that "homelessness" is a rather imprecise term which can be defined as "not having customary and regular access to a conventional dwelling,"[14] but there is still a certain amount of ambiguity connected to that definition.[15] In this article, "homeless" is taken to be more or less synonymous with "rough sleepers" or "street homeless", including squatters and people who live in dwellings which are un-conventional according to domiciled people in the natural domain (and in the actual world). So while Wizard, as well as the denizens of London Below, the supernatural domain in *Neverwhere*, may well consider themselves to have homes, they are regarded as homeless. In fact, one of the first things that happens to Richard Mayhew in *Neverwhere* when he becomes part of London Below is that he loses his home in the natural domain.

Richard Mayhew finds himself part of London Below after he helps a wounded girl called Door, whom he chances upon in the street. In order to return to his old life in the natural domain, Richard accompanies Door and her companion, the Marquis De Carabas, through the labyrinthine tunnels and sewers beneath the metropolis on a quest to find out who killed Door's family. By coming to terms with the different set of rules of London Below, and acknowledging that this domain is as real as the life he has left behind in the natural domain, Richard can finally return to London Above, only to find that he no longer enjoys being part of it and he eventually returns to London Below.

Originally written as a television series for BBC, Gaiman worked the story into a novel. In this article there will be references to both the novel and the TV-series, as they offer slightly different versions of the *Neverwhere* story.

Wizard, in *Wizard of the Pigeons*, is one of the wizards of Seattle. Together with the other wizards and their leader, Cassie, he protects the city and its inhabitants from unspecified perils. One day, Wizard is attacked by a threatening grey entity, which, Cassie warns him, will try to defeat him and bring ruin to the city. The grey entity is called MIR,[16] which are the initials of Wizard's past identity as Vietnam veteran Mitchell Ignatius Reilly[17] – it is Wizard's buried past coming to get him.

MIR's ghastly presence and the overwhelming amorous advances of the waitress Lynda cause Wizard to lose faith in his magic, and it leaves him. Lynda persuades him to move in with her, and Wizard is ready to return to the natural domain and become Mitch Reilly again. Cassie puts a stop to this and helps him in the final confrontation with MIR.

In her discussion on "the conscious moral basis of much serious fantasy,"[18] Ann Swinfen explains that since "[p]hilosophical and religious idealism tends to be concerned with worlds beyond this world,"[19] such idealism seems natural to express in secondary world fantasy. Indigenous fantasy, however, allows greater scope for social criticism. "Social and political idealisms […] are idealisms of this world," Swinfen continues, and "[i]n order to remain relevant to the contemporary reader within the framework of his daily life, works in this genre may not stray too far from primary reality."[20] Whereas neither *Neverwhere* nor *Wizard of the Pigeons* are political manifestos, they clearly address some of society's shortcomings and display an awareness of the problem of homelessness. Rather than being stories of high adventure in appealing fantasy worlds, the novels retain the squalor and depression of homelessness in the actual world. "I could've made it really cool to be homeless," Gaiman says, "but I didn't want some kid in Birmingham or Liverpool running away to London to live on the streets because they'd seen this TV show and they knew how cool it was."[21]

Through Wizard's battle against MIR and Richard's quest for his old life, the readers experience more than a fantasy world, they are also provided with a closer look at homelessness. Moreover, these stories go further than the basic message that "homelessness is deplorable." The readers are encouraged to see beyond the stereotype that "exaggerates the drug addiction, mental illness, and alleged criminality of the homeless population."[22] By subverting that stereotype, and by giving supernatural rather than social causes for the behaviour of domiciled people vis-à-vis the homeless, these authors hold up, as it were, a "mag(n)ifying glass" – through the magic of the fantasy worlds, we are shown marvels but also a rather unpalatable reality.

Thus, while the general image of the homeless in Lindholm's natural domain as well as in the actual world is one of people with "poor personal hygiene and shabby appearance,"[23] Wizard, just like many of his actual world counterparts,[24] presents an image of neatness and cleanliness and could pass for "anything from a car salesman to a food service supervisor. Almost" (p.38). Cassie explains to him that "[a] little bit of class implies authority and intimidates" and that "dressy clothes are discarded before they are worn out" (p.79) and by following her advice, Wizard finds that he can do things homeless people are usually not considered able to do: sit in cafeterias and restaurants, use train station wash rooms without anyone minding, and spend entire days browsing the shelves of a bookstore without anyone asking him to leave.

In London Below, dress and appearance are as varied as in London Above. The greasy, frayed suits of the immortal assassins Croup and Vandemar, De Carabas's combination of a "huge, dandyish black coat" (p.45) and raggedy clothes, the fur-lined dressing gown and carpet slippers of the Earl of Earl's

Court or the elegant, black velvet dresses and silver jewellery of the vampiric Velvets, are not part of a system that someone from the normal domain would recognise, however. Not only do we find our stereotypes challenged, as in *Wizard of the Pigeons*, we also find that they are, in fact, often misleading in attempting to understand the society in *Neverwhere*'s supernatural domain.

As the opening quote suggests, the homeless in the actual world are often ignored, treated as if they were in some way invisible.[25] This metaphorical invisibility is made a literal part of the fantastic narrative in the possible worlds of *Neverwhere* and *Wizard of the Pigeons*, and becomes conspicuous social criticism.[26]

Julia Wardhaug observes that "[a] street homeless person may be harassed, robbed or beaten, apparently in full public view, yet no-one will 'see' what happens."[27] In Richard's first encounter with Door, she is also endowed with this same "visible-yet-not-visible" quality:

> They had reached the person on the sidewalk. Jessica stepped over the crumpled form. Richard hesitated. "Jessica?"
>
> "You're right. He might think I'm bored," she mused. "I know," she said brightly, "if he makes a joke, I'll rub my earlobe."
>
> "Jessica?" He could not believe that she was simply ignoring the figure at their feet.
>
> "What?" She was not pleased to be jerked out of her reverie.
>
> "Look."
>
> He pointed to the sidewalk. [...] Jessica took his arm and tugged him toward her. "Oh. I see. If you pay them any attention, Richard, they'll walk all over you. They all have homes, really. [...] Richard, what are you doing?"
>
> "She isn't drunk," said Richard. "She's hurt." He looked at his fingertips. "She's bleeding."
>
> Jessica looked down at him, nervous and puzzled. "We're going to be late," she pointed out (pp.23-24).

Jessica comes over as callous, but her puzzled look is, in the possible world of *Neverwhere*, also due to the fact that she is unable to keep a denizen of London Below in her mind. Richard meets the same puzzled look when he attempts to talk to people at work, once he has become part of London Below (p.59), but very quickly his invisibility to the natural domain becomes more definite. His first clue that something has gone wrong is that he is simply ignored. He is unable to flag down taxis, can vault the barrier in the Tube without being noticed (p.57), and when he talks to people, they do not recall who he is and instantly forget about him (pp.59-61). Even the machines of the natural domain ignore him: he is unable to buy a Tube ticket (p.57) and the ATM refuses to acknowledge his account (p.66). As both the rat-speaker girl Anaesthesia (TV, pt 2) and Door (TV, pt 3; p.186) explain to him, once you are part of London Below, people in London Above simply do not notice you, and if they do, they forget about you. By making the metaphorical invisibility literal, Gaiman forces us to recognise the narrative as fantastic.

In *Wizard of the Pigeons*, the link with our own world is broken in the first paragraph: "On the far western shore of a northern continent there was once a harbour city called Seattle. [...] In that city, there dwelt a wizard" (p.1). Seattle is described as something unknown, but the existence of a wizard is taken as given. The reader is encouraged to interpret Wizard's actions as magical and only when Wizard starts doubting his magic does the reader start re-interpreting the narrative as non-fantastic, and the magic becomes only narrative technique. According to Attebery, "[d]etails that could be arranged into a sociological study of the homeless here contribute to the fantasy because they are interpreted as magical"[28] and the visible-yet-not-visible status of Wizard could be a result of the "blindness" of the citizens in the natural domain, or a result of Wizard's magical powers – or both.

So while the people in London Below are magically invisible to their natural domain counterparts, homelessness in *Wizard of the Pigeons* works and is mediated through camouflage, just as Wizard used camouflage to survive in the Vietnam War in his former life. He dresses respectably in order not to be noticed, but this strategy only works as long as his magic stays with him. Once Wizard believes himself to have lost his magic, his camouflage slips and he is no longer taken for a respectable member of society, but for a street alcoholic or drug addict (pp.96, 103, 112). Regaining control of his magic restores his camouflage. No one gives him nor the dancing wizard Rasputin a second glance. They are like the chameleon girl, who "[w]hen she moved [...] was visible. But as soon she was still again, she began to blend back into her surroundings. Subtle ripplings of color crossed her. In a moment, she was invisible again" (p.214).

Traill outlines a typology of five modes of the fantastic: the Disjunctive mode, the Supernatural Naturalised, the Ambiguous mode, the Paranormal mode and the Fantasy mode.[29] Her typology offers some interesting insights into the dynamic relationship between the natural and supernatural domains. Although Traill suggests that the five modes can be used in diachronic as well as synchronic discussions,[30] it is the latter perspective that will be of interest here. The modes, which Traill is careful to emphasise are purely theoretical models rather than pigeonholes,[31] are useful in discussing the tension between the natural and supernatural domains – and between the domiciled and homeless societies – in *Neverwhere* and *Wizard of the Pigeons*. In *the disjunctive mode*, "the domains have the status of uncontested, unambiguous fictional 'facts.'"[32] In the mode Traill calls *the supernatural naturalised*, and which she admits corresponds more or less to Todorov's *the supernatural explained* (or *fantastic-uncanny*[33]), "the supernatural domain is constructed [...] as it is in the disjunctive mode, but is, in the end, disauthenticated when the narrator imparts a natural explanation for the strange events."[34] There are, according to Todorov, six types of

explanations: dreams, drugs, madness, accidents or coincidences, tricks, and illusions.[35] In *the ambiguous mode*, the supernatural domain is neither fully authenticated nor disauthenticated. The *paranormal mode* describes a world in which the two domains are not mutually exclusive. That which could be termed "supernatural" is simply strange phenomena belonging to the natural domain.[36] As in the final mode, *fantasy*, it is not necessarily dyadic. Whereas the paranormal mode could be said to have only a natural domain, fantasy might consist solely of the supernatural domain, which is allowed to crowd out the natural domain completely, or leave it only in the form of a frame story,[37] as in the case of, for instance, the Narnia books.

Both Gaiman's and Lindholm's novels demonstrate that this model, despite its claims on dynamism, is too static. They initially give the impression of being constructed according to Traill's disjunctive mode, but rather than compliantly letting itself be explained away, disauthenticated, assimilated by the natural domain, the supernatural domain struggles to remain separate, physically impossible, unexplained. Conversely, the natural domain cannot accept the existence of the supernatural, because it would then itself cease to be. In other words, the novels glide between the modes, starting in the disjunctive, moving towards the supernatural naturalised and the ambiguous, ending up finally in the disjunctive once more. The narrative portrays a struggle between the domains; were either of them to win, the mode would change from the initial equilibrium of the disjunctive mode.

This struggle manifests itself in the fear of the protagonists in their initial encounter with the supernatural domain. Cassie's first attempt to explain to Wizard that he is in fact a wizard whom Seattle will take care of if he takes care of the city in return is met with confusion, anger, and the accusation that she is crazy (p.61). To Richard, his first encounters with London Below seem to be a joke, trick or prank (p.61), a nightmare (pp.57, 126) or madness (pp.42, 46, 61, 126).

When Wizard is crumbling before the joint assaults of Lynda and MIR, he begins to see the supernatural domain differently. It is an unreal place to which Lynda brings reality (p.133). Richard Mayhew finds that ending up in London Below is like walking into "an unreal mirror" of the natural domain which to him was "a world of safety and sanity" (p.123). In this looking-glass world, he finds that sanity and madness has traded places (p.115; TV pt 1) and value systems have been inverted:

"Rubbish!" screamed a fat, elderly woman, in Richard's ear, as he passed her malodorous stall. "Junk!" she continued. "Garbage! Trash! Offal! Debris! Come and get it! Nothing whole or undamaged! Crap, tripe, and useless piles of shit. You know you want it."

A man in armor beat a small drum and chanted, "Lost Property. Roll up, roll up, and see for yourself. Lost property. None of your found things here. Everything guaranteed properly lost" (p. 110).

A most conspicuous form of attack on the supernatural domain is when attempts are made to persuade characters that this domain is just a delusion. These kinds of attacks provide pivotal moments in both *Neverwhere* and *Wizard of the Pigeons*. During the Ordeal of the Key, an attempt is made to persuade Richard Mayhew that he has had a nervous breakdown, that he "wandered alone and crazy through the streets of London, sleeping under bridges, eating food from garbage cans[,] talking to people who weren't there" (p.246). The aim is to undermine Richard's belief in the supernatural domain, to accept that he is insane and that he would do himself and the world a favour by committing suicide. Only at the last moment, Richard becomes aware of a memento from the rat-speaker girl Anaesthesia in his pocket, realises that London Below is just as real as London Above, and this realisation saves him and takes him through the ordeal.

Wizard suffers a similar attack by MIR. This presence from the past manages to undermine Wizard's belief in magic and pushes him out of the supernatural domain. His doubts cause him to lose his magic and he comes to consider the magical existence "fragments of a disordered mind" (p.185). He gives in to the combined onslaught of MIR and Lynda's attempts to bring him into the natural domain: "No more playing games with my mind, he warned himself sternly. No magic, no Truth, no Knowing. [...] [H]e was an adult now, and back in the real world. He wasn't going to play that kind of hide-and-seek anymore" (p.174). Only help from the other wizards, and Cassie in particular, saves him and allows to defeat MIR. Like Richard Mayhew, Wizard reaches the understanding that there is magic in the world, that there is a supernatural domain and that he belongs in it.

Gaiman keeps his reader firmly anchored in the actual world, but rather than making strange that which is familiar, he anchors the story to reality. The only strange thing about Anaesthesia's story of abuse and escape is that she is saved by the rat-speakers (pp.87-88). The den of Croup and Vandemar is situated in the sub-cellar of a Victorian hospital, which is explicitly described as closed down due to National Health Service budget cutbacks, not just closed down. By his detailed description of the hospital's fate and its political cause, Gaiman creates a strong tie with the actual world.

The disauthentication of the supernatural domain relies mainly on what Todorov calls the opposition real/imaginary, where there has been no supernatural occurrence because nothing has happened at all. Anything seemingly supernatural is just the product of a deranged imagination.[38] Dreams, drugs, and above all madness are used to explain away the existence of the homeless' supernatural domain.

It is disturbingly easy to find the roots for this strategy in the actual world. In Sweden, the relative number of homeless people with psychological disorders have increased during the 1990s,[39] in the US a large part of the homeless have

a history of hospitalisation due to mental illness[40] and in the UK, 30–50 per cent of the homeless are reported to suffer from mental health problems.[41] While homelessness itself is only one contributing factor to mental disorders,[42] deinstitutionalisation certainly has contributed to the image of the homeless person as mentally disturbed.[43]

Lindholm and Gaiman both recognise that this struggle between the domains takes place on two levels. Neither domain can fully acknowledge the other in a dyadic world without running the risk of being absorbed and thus cease to be, leaving the world either physically possible or impossible.

The main focus of both Lindholm's and Gaiman's criticism is our treatment of the homeless. Along with Wizard, the reader experiences the barriers raised in order to keep the homeless, poor and lonely out. In one restaurant, "lone patrons or persons ordering less than $1.50 each are not permitted to sit in booths between 11:00 and 2:00 pm" (p.8), and while his magic helps Wizard overcome that particular obstacle, others remain. No matter how convinced Wizard is that he knows what it takes to survive as a scavenger, and pities those who do not (pp.43, 49), he is, unknowingly, depending on his magic to get by. When he believes himself bereft of magic, it becomes obvious that more than a respectable appearance is necessary, even though Wizard finds this hard to understand. The apparently unreasonable behaviour, first of a bus driver (p.96) and then of a sequence of café employees who refuse to have his custom even when he carries more money than ever before (pp.101-02), surprises him – and the reader. The strangeness of their behaviour makes it noticeable and questionable, and similar *Verfremdung* can be found in other instances throughout the book. Staff in shops, diners, and public conveniences are portrayed as potential enemies, public buildings judged on their ability to keep you safe from the elements, and the railway station lavatory a place to use only in an emergency (p.37).[44] The animosity towards the homeless, sometimes open, sometimes implied, is almost (but not quite) as disturbing as that of the actual world,[45] but unlike in the actual world, it is not possible to turn away. Wizard's struggle reflects the struggle in our own actual world, where homeless people are shunted aside, because if we accept that they are there, we must also, ultimately, accept that they are our responsibility, and that the way they are currently treated is not worthy of the liberal, humane society we claim that we have.

In their novels, Lindholm and Gaiman create indigenous fantasies by using, for their supernatural domains, social spaces in our actual world with which the majority of readers are unfamiliar. By using, subverting, and inverting the preconceptions that we have of these social spaces, and by using the way in which homeless people are treated in the actual world, they have managed to create compelling fantasy narratives that draw attention to how unfortunate members of our society are treated.

Notes

1. J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories", in *Tree and Leaf* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), pp.11-70, at p.54.
2. Brian Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992), p.128 and 129.
3. Raymond Bradley and Norman Swartz, *Possible Worlds: An Introduction to Logic and its Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1979), p.2.
4. Bradley & Swartz, *Possible Worlds*, p. 7; Lubomír Doležel, *Heterocosmica* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1998), pp. 19, 115-116.
5. For a fuller discussion of the concept of possible fictional worlds, see e.g. Doležel *Heterocosmica* pp.12-24; Lubomír Doležel, "Possible Worlds and Literary Fictions" in Sture Allén, ed, *Possible Worlds in Humanities, Arts and Sciences: Proceedings of Nobel Symposium 65* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), pp.221-242, at pp.230-239; Ruth Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), pp.5-9; Nancy H. Traill, *Possible Worlds of the Fantastic* (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1996), pp.8-9; Nicholas Woltersdorff, "Discussion of Lubomír Doležel's paper 'Possible Worlds and Literary Fictions'" in Sture Allén, ed, *Possible Worlds in Humanities, Arts and Sciences: Proceedings of Nobel Symposium 65* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), pp.243-249, at p.244.
6. Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, pp.14-15; his italics.
7. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories", p.36.
8. Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, p.23; Traill, *Possible Worlds*, p.9.
9. Doležel, "Possible Worlds", p.232; see also Traill, *Possible Worlds*, pp.8-9.
10. Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, p.23; this terminology is also employed by Traill.
11. Traill, *Possible Worlds*, pp.8-11.
12. Traill, *Possible Worlds*, p.8: citing Bradley & Swartz, *Possible Worlds*, p.6; her italics.
13. Traill, *Possible Worlds*, p.9; her italics.
14. Peter H. Rossi, *Down and Out in America* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1989), p.10.
15. See e.g. Jonathan Kozol, *Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1988), p.92; Rossi, op. cit., p.11.
16. It is also a Russian word having the double meaning of "world" and "peace" (as well as being the root of the word for "to go begging" in Russian). Lindholm explains that she had no knowledge of this at the time of writing, adding: "I wish I could claim to have been aware of all those subtle shadings of meaning for MIR. But the truth is, it is simply a short word that appealed to me" (Megan Lindholm, private e-mail to the author, 12 Mar 2003).
17. For a comment on Vietnam veterans turned homeless in the actual world, see Kenneth L. Kusmer, *Down and Out, On the Road: The Homeless in American History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), p. 243.
18. Ann Swinfen, *In Defence of Fantasy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p.147.
19. Swinfen, *In Defence of Fantasy*, p.190.
20. Swinfen, *In Defence of Fantasy*, p.190.
21. Neil Gaiman, interview on the commercial video tape of *Neverwhere*, TV series (London: BBC1, 1998).
22. Kusmer, *Down and Out on the Road*, p.246; see also Julia Wardhaugh, *Sub City: Young People, Homelessness and Crime* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p.93, for comments on actual world stereotypes.
23. Rossi, *Down and Out in America*, p.92.

24. Rossi, *Down and Out in America*, pp.92-93.
25. See e.g. Wardhaugh, *Sub City*, p.87; Kozol, *Rachel and Her Children*, pp.75, 85, 135, 153, 157, 164, 176-178; for a different view, see Rossi, *Down and Out in America*, p.15; Elliot Liebow, *Tell The Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women* (New York: Penguin, 1993), p.2; "Homeward Bound" in Brian Wallis, ed, *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), pp.220-223, at p.223; Murray Hawtin and Jane Kettle, "Housing and Social Exclusion", in Janie Percy Smith, ed, *Policy Responses to Social Exclusion: towards Inclusion?* (Buckingham: Open UP, 2000), pp.107-129, at p.117.
26. Kusmer, *Down and Out on the Road*, p.247; Brian Wallis, open discussion, "Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures" in Brian Wallis, ed, *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), pp.183-207, at p.200; Kozol, *Rachel and Her Children*, p.91.
27. Wardhaugh, *Sub City*, p.92.
28. Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy*, p.135.
29. Traill, *Possible Worlds*, pp.11-20.
30. Traill, *Possible Worlds*, p.10.
31. Traill, *Possible Worlds*, pp.19-20.
32. Traill, *Possible Worlds*, p.11.
33. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975), pp.44-46.
34. Traill, *Possible Worlds*, p. 16.
35. Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p.45.
36. Traill, *Possible Worlds*, p. 17.
37. "Frame Story" in Clute and Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (London: Orbit, 1997), p. 365.
38. Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p.45.
39. Lena Yohanes, Anna Angelinn Anders Giertz & Hans Swärd, "*De kommer ut fräscha och fina*": *Om wång och hemlöshet* (Statens institutionsstyrelse: Forskningsrapport 2002:4), p.18.
40. Rossi, *Down and Out in America*, p.146.
41. T. Craig *et al*, *The Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative: An evaluation of four clinical teams* (London: Department of Health, 1995) cited in Social Exclusion Unit, *Rough Sleeping – Report by the Social Exclusion Unit* (Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister, July 1998. Accessed 17 July 2003, <http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/publications/reports/html/rough/sr1.htm>).
42. Hawtin & Kettle, "Housing", p. 117; Kozol, *Rachel and Her Children*, p. 171.
43. For comments on deinstitutionalisation, see Kozol, *Rachel and Her Children*, p. 20; Rossi, *Down and Out in America*, p.145; or for a different opinion Wallis, op. cit., p. 188.
44. In the actual world, Wizard's precaution would have been quite sensible. Kozol describes how the station management of Grand Central, New York, tries, with sometimes appalling methods and a varying degree of success, to drive the homeless from the station (Kozol, *Rachel and Her Children*, pp.176-77).
45. For some expressions of this animosity, including giving homeless people one-way tickets out of town, criminalising the foraging for food, and poisoning dumpster contents, see Kozol, *Rachel and Her Children*, pp.177-78.

The Patriotic Rhetoric of Harry Turtledove's Alternate America

Warren Rochelle

Historiographer Hayden White, in *Metahistory*, notes that "historians write history, not as disinterested outsiders, but as interested parties who structure their narratives to make a particular point."[1] And so, I am arguing here, do writers of alternate history. Juxtaposing an alternate world with reality is a rhetorical act: the forces of good have triumphed in history, or they have not. That the good won, and that good things have followed its victory, becomes something of which the reader must be convinced. It is such a rhetorical act that I am going to examine here: the juxtaposing of an alternate version of America, that found in Harry Turtledove's *Great War* and *American Empire* series, with reality. Initially Turtledove's argument seems clear: the America in his two series, an America after a Southern victory in the Civil War, is less desirable than reality. The post-Southern victory America "is a different world in which we weren't so lucky."[2] The Confederacy is far more racist and class-stratified than the real South. Slavery was only grudgingly ended in 1882, to ensure British and French support in the Second Mexican War.[3] African Americans – Negroes or blacks – are residents, not citizens, denied last names, and their place in Confederate society is very similar to that of their counterparts in apartheid South Africa. In Turtledove's history, the United States remains a plural noun, not the singular one with which we are familiar. The alternate United States – indicated by the usage "are," rather than our familiar "is" – are much more conservative and harsh. No Statue of Liberty graces the New York harbour. Instead, the statue of Remembrance, erected after the USA's defeat in the Second Mexican War, stands on Bedloe Island, "the sword of vengeance gleaming in her hand."[4] Emperors still rule in Brazil and Mexico – the American revolutionary spirit, as Gregory Benford asserts in his introduction to *What Might Have Been*, Volume 3: *Alternate Americas*, is absent.[5]

By implication, the history that followed the Union victory in 1865 created a far better, freer, kinder, and gentler world, ours. What I intend to argue here is that Turtledove is not comparing his harsher alternate America with reality, but with a mythic America. The real America is far more ambiguous and problematic than Turtledove's rhetorical juxtaposition suggests, and in the end, it seems that this rhetoric fails. Or does it? Yes, racism is endemic in the fictional United States; it is not absent in reality. The United States is still struggling to create a society in which people are judged by the content of their character and not the colour of their skin. Could it be that Turtledove is arguing for the myth as a desired reality, and that his alternate America, flawed