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The Creation of Cordwainer Smith

Some ultra-radical psychologist with a taste for final things may well have already defined all literature as a mere escape-mechanism. An Englishman of my acquaintance once seriously assured me that he considered sexual repression the motivating factor of all genius. With such extreme statements preceding me, I suppose that it will be safe for me to suggest that all literature is in a way Utopian.

—Paul M.A. Linebarger, “A Diversity of Worlds” (1932)¹

Psychobiographers have tended to focus on two broad questions about creative artists: How does knowledge of an artist’s life help us to understand his or her work? How does knowledge of an artist’s work help us to understand his or her life? A more interesting question may be: How do a creative artist’s life and work *interact* to promote psychological coping and growth? Here we do not seek simply to find clues about one realm of data by looking at another; rather, we seek to learn how life feeds into art and art into life to create an organic relationship between the artist and the work. In this view, art is not merely an expression of the artist’s psychological functioning, but an integral and probably central aspect of that functioning. The artistic work may at times serve a solely defensive function for the artist; this is the kind of psychological function that has most often been attributed to art. But a work may also serve a restitutive function, helping the artist to overcome and move beyond psychological conflict.² Robert E. Howard, in his “Conan” stories and other works, appears to have created a world of mindless violence in order to gain control, for a time, over his own intense anxieties about separation and death.³ But there is little evidence that Howard’s creative acts helped him to gain self-insight or to resolve his severe inner conflicts; at age 30 he committed suicide. B.F. Skinner, in contrast, emerged from writing his utopian novel *Walden Two* with a reconstituted identity, one that resolved longstanding and current intrapsychic conflicts and enabled him to become behaviorism’s foremost spokesman. Skinner’s personality certainly found expression in *Walden Two*, but the act of writing the novel helped to reshape his personality in turn.⁴

In the life and work of Paul M.A. Linebarger, we may observe another example of art’s restitutive function. Under the pseudonym of Cordwainer Smith, Linebarger became one of the great originals of SF, influencing other writers as diverse as Ursula Le Guin, Harlan Ellison, Algis Budrys, Robert Silverberg, and Frederik Pohl. Linebarger’s originality appears to have developed not only from his unique early background, but from his progressive confrontations of intensely felt psychological conflicts within imaginative fictional settings. By looking at his remarkable life history and at the development of certain themes in his published fiction, we may appreciate more fully just how the extraordinary person named Paul Linebarger not only gave birth to but drew sustenance from the extraordinary writer named Cordwainer Smith.⁵

1. The Life of Paul Linebarger. Public events and personal events interpenetrated each other throughout Paul M. A. Linebarger's life history, beginning even before he was born. His father, Paul M. W. Linebarger, was rewarded by President McKinley for faithful political service in Chicago with an appointment at age 30 to be one of the first US Federal District Judges in the Philippines. Linebarger Senior abandoned this post (but not the title of "Judge") after six years to join the revolutionary movement of Sun Yat-sen, who was working to overthrow the 4,000-year-old imperial reign in China. Judge Linebarger described his conversion to Sun Yat-sen's cause as equivalent to a religious conversion; 70 years later a scholar of Far Eastern politics compared it to "a modern-day conservative American judge in the Panama Canal Zone retiring and going down to join the Sandinistas."⁶ The Judge became a faithful disciple, devoting his life and his considerable fortune to serving as a fundraiser, propagandist, intelligence operative, and authorized biographer for Sun.

Judge Linebarger met Lillian Bearden, a self-made success in the women's clothing business, while he was in Paris on a mission for Sun. They married in February 1912, just after Sun succeeded in bringing down the Manchu regime. But because Chinese civil war continued almost without cease to the end of Sun's life and beyond, the Judge was unable to rest in his efforts to rally Sun's followers abroad. Both the Judge and Lillian were in their 40s when they married, and both had remained childless in previous marriages. When Lillian found that she was pregnant, she was reluctant to tell the Judge because she did not want to be sent home from their world travels; this led her later to blame herself for her firstborn son's life-long fragility and frequent illnesses.⁷ When the Judge learned of her pregnancy, he insisted that they return to America for the birth in July 1913, so that his son would be eligible for the US Presidency. Paul Junior joked about that in later years, but the Judge (who had run for Congress in 1910 to promote Sun's revolution) was no doubt serious.

During Paul's first four years, the family lived in Milwaukee and Chicago, where the Judge owned a large amount of inherited property. The Judge continued to travel widely on missions for Sun—in Europe, Asia, and across the US—but his wife and son did not accompany him. At this time Sun and his followers were in exile. When the US entered the First World War, the Judge sharply reduced his overt activities for Sun, since he felt the Wilson administration's "over-zealous [anti-]espionage agents" might seek his imprisonment.⁸ Instead he and his family retreated to what he described as "self-imposed exile" at an estate he had purchased in Mississippi.⁹ The Judge's friends christened the estate "Point Paul Myron," for the Judge's (and his son's) first two names. The family remained there until after the war ended. Another son was born during this period, and the Judge wrote a novel and a book of poetry as well as starting a monthly propaganda magazine, the *Chinese Nationalist*.

In June 1919 the family set sail for Shanghai. Sun was at that time living in the French Concession area of Shanghai, having temporarily suspended his own "more militant" activities. The Judge worked with him there on an authorized biography over the next year. But repeated illnesses led Lillian and the boys to return to America. En route they stopped for two months in Honolulu, where Paul lost an eye when a playmate threw a piece of wire at him. An infection in the blinded eye spread to the other eye, and his sight was saved only when he was rushed to San Francisco for an operation.

From late 1920 to early 1922, the entire Linebarger family again lived in Shanghai. Paul went to a British school there; he became a favorite of Sun,¹⁰ and

he was taught French by Madame Sun. Sun ruled a portion of China during the latter part of that time, but when the political situation worsened, the Judge decided to place Lillian and the boys in "pleasant surroundings" in Europe. While the Judge returned to China and to the collapse of Sun's government, the rest of the family spent several weeks in Monte Carlo, then moved to Baden-Baden in Germany. Paul thus attended a French school briefly, and then for two years a German school. Sun again returned to power in Canton in 1923; the Judge spent the latter months of that year and part of 1924 in Shanghai and elsewhere in the Far East. As civil turmoil in Shanghai and other parts of China increased, he picked up his family in Germany and sailed for America. They settled in Washington, D.C., where they remained for over two years (the 12th to 14th years of Paul's life). During this period Sun Yat-sen died in China.

In the latter part of 1926, the whole Linebarger family returned to Shanghai for a few months, but hostility to foreigners was strong there at the time. Early in 1927 the family came to Long Beach, California, where they lived for six months while the Judge carried on his activities for the Kuomintang (Sun's political heirs) up and down the West Coast. In July, Lillian and the boys returned to Washington, D.C., while the Judge began a tour of Central America and Europe, once again rallying the overseas Chinese to the cause. He joined the family in Washington towards the end of the year, and they lived there for two more years.

During this time, Paul finished high school and entered George Washington University in June 1928, a few weeks short of his 15th birthday. His education at GWU was interrupted by the family's return to China (in 1930). For several months Paul attended a missionary school, the University of Nanking ("burying his head to study Chinese," according to his tutor). He entered the North China Language School in Peking that autumn. Now 17, Paul was living apart from his family for the first time. His mother and brother had returned to Washington, while his father was travelling frequently between China and America, lobbying on behalf of the Chinese for a large loan of silver and wheat from the US government. (The Kuomintang had by this time consolidated its power in China, and Chiang Kai-shek had emerged as Sun's successor.) The following year, Paul recalled his "lost golden days in Peking" as the happiest period of his life. During that time, he experienced an intense love affair, and also became directly involved in the Chinese political intrigues that were his father's life work. He began to be described in official documents as his father's private secretary, and played a small role in the wheat loan that the Judge finally helped to arrange for the Chinese government.

In September 1931, Japan invaded Northern China and captured three provinces. By this time, however, Paul had returned to Washington to resume his American education at George Washington University. That fall, he described himself as "more self-consciously lonely than ever before in my life." But he persevered, graduating from GWU in February 1933. He spent the spring term as a special student at Oxford University, studying medieval English literature. In the fall, at age 20, he began graduate studies in political science at Johns Hopkins. He received his Ph.D. there in 1936, shortly before his 23rd birthday.

Paul's doctoral dissertation was in a sense a realization of one of his father's dreams. The Judge, having earlier written what his son referred to as a "campaign biography" of Sun, devoted much of his time after Sun's death to writing a more detailed biography and a separate commentary on Sun's great ideological work, the *San Min Chu I (Three Principles of the People)*. When the Japanese bombed Shanghai in January 1932, they destroyed the publishing house that was ready to

publish both of the Judge's books. The destruction included the sole copies of the book manuscripts, proofs, and photographic plates, as well as virtually all of the documentary material upon which the Judge had based his work. Paul helped the Judge to recover from this disaster as best as he could, first editing a volume of speeches about Sun which his father reconstructed from notes and memory, then editing an allegorical verse play the Judge had written about Sun some years earlier. Finally Paul wrote his own dissertation as a commentary on the *San Min Chu I*. He was careful to note, however, that the dissertation had "no relation to the connections of Judge Linebarger with the Chinese Government or with the Nationalist Party."¹¹

Paul met an artistically inclined young woman named Margaret Snow shortly before he graduated from Johns Hopkins, and married her soon after. His next several years were largely concerned with developing his academic career. He taught part-time at Harvard for a year, then moved to Duke University. He wrote two more scholarly books on the government of China.¹² The Judge, who in his last years lived mainly in Paris, died in 1939. (Lillian outlived Paul as well as the Judge; she was over 100 when she died.) Paul's first daughter was born in 1942.

When the Second World War began, Paul's expertise not only in Far Eastern culture and politics but in propaganda—gained from his years of working with his father, perhaps the most experienced propagandist on Far Eastern issues that the Western world had ever seen—was put to early use. He worked as a civilian consultant to military intelligence, concerned with psychological warfare in the Far East, and participated in the formation of the Office of War Information. According to family legend, he then wrote the specifications for an essential military intelligence mission to China in such a way that, in spite of his glass eye, only he could fill the position.

The facts are somewhat different. Linebarger was given a commission in Army Intelligence late in 1942, but he was first sent to command a regular infantry unit in India. He eventually obtained a transfer to Chungking, the wartime capital of China, where he already knew many of the Kuomintang officials and soon became the US Army's liaison with the Chinese secret service. He also visited Chinese Communist headquarters in Yen-an (behind Japanese lines), became friendly with Chou En-lai and other Communist leaders, and acted as a liaison with their intelligence people as well. In addition, he developed anti-Japanese propaganda. But much of his work was standard military drudgery—preparing a 1292-page gazetteer of Chinese place names, writing administrative reports that did not permit expression of his own judgments—and he chafed at the limitations of his assignment.

Towards the end of the war, following a serious bout of illness in China, Linebarger was assigned to be Chief of the Far Eastern Section, Propaganda Branch, Intelligence Division, War Department General Staff, at the Pentagon. After the war, he continued as an Army Reserve officer and military intelligence "consultant," occasionally going on active duty for short periods of time, particularly during the Korean War and civil conflicts in Malaya and Indonesia. He resumed his academic career, moving from Duke to Johns Hopkins, where he became Professor of Asiatic Politics at the newly formed School of Advanced International Studies in Washington. He wrote the standard military textbook on psychological warfare,¹³ and continued to produce scholarly works on the Far East. He fathered a second daughter in 1947; was divorced in 1949; remarried in 1950; and died in 1966, at the age of 53.

2. Linebarger as a Writer. That might seem a sufficiently full life for any man—certainly for one who died fairly young. But in addition to his career paths as a China scholar and expert on psychological warfare, Paul Linebarger had begun at an early age to pursue a literary career. He pursued it almost invisibly, always under pseudonyms that he guarded jealously, and he did not find success easy to achieve. But he persisted from early adolescence until his death. He began by reading omnivorously, in several languages. At age 12, he was reading Jules Verne; at 13, H.G. Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mary Shelley, and early issues of *Amazing* and *Weird Tales* as well as Mark Twain, Daniel Defoe, and odds and ends of Chinese and German literature. At 15, just out of high school, he listed among books he had recently read several more works by Burroughs, including *Tarzan Bei Den Affen* (a German translation of *Tarzan of the Apes*); other popular novels by Scott, Dickens, and Dumas; plus George Sand's *Consuelo*, Pushkin's *Captain's Daughter*, and "*Schloss Dunkara*—a French eighteenth-century Gothic romance translated into German." On a list of "Books I Want" at this time, he included Rabelais' *Gargantua*, the Chinese classics, *Al Koran*, and "[a]ny book on Mars." Throughout his life he continued to read large amounts of SF in several languages, as well as a remarkable array of literary classics, contemporary mainstream novels, and many kinds of poetry.

Linebarger began to write his own fanciful stories at age 14. At 15 he wrote a partial draft of *The Mad God of Mars*, "a novel in imitation of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Martian series." The same year, he wrote "War No. 81-Q," an SF story that one of his teachers "threw a fit over" (whether positively or negatively, he did not say). It was published in the yearbook of the Washington, D.C., Cadet Corps, under the pseudonym Karloman Jungahr.¹⁴ At 16 he wrote a 15,000-word "Short History of the Colonization of the Planet formerly called Venus," and at 17 a sequel of equal length, subtitled "The Arabian Nights of the Future: a cycle of Tales and events from the History that is to be made, with varied discourse on many matters of importance and use in our present time." Neither these works nor "War No. 81-Q" directly anticipates the later SF of Cordwainer Smith, but they do show that Linebarger was beginning to think about a mythic future history almost 20 years before he began to write the cycle of stories for which he is now best known. Also at 17, he wrote "The Fife of Bodiharma" (*sic*), a three-page sketch of a story that he compared with Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and the tales of Arthur Machen. "There is something haunting" about the story, according to the 17-year-old Linebarger; and indeed there must have been, since he returned to it intermittently and arrived at a final version only after 28 years.¹⁵

As a college student Linebarger published "serious" fiction and poetry in the student newspaper's literary supplement, usually under pseudonyms, as well as occasional articles under his own name. He edited the literary supplement during the latter part of his senior year. As a graduate student he began a literary magazine of his own, with several friends, that ran for three issues in 1934. But though he continued to write short stories and poems, he published no creative work outside these protected confines all through the 1930s. He began a novel about a psychopathic killer in 1939, then abandoned it until late in the 1940s. He also began a murder mystery in 1939, as co-author with his wife, but she finished it. They submitted it to several publishers; no one was interested. In 1942, he sent two fantasy stories to *Unknown*, John W. Campbell Jr's fantasy magazine; both stories were rejected. Thus by his 30th year, Linebarger had been writing fiction regularly and in considerable volume for over half his life and had sold nothing.

In the midst of the Second World War, in Chungking, he began to write a mainstream novel. It was told from the perspective of a woman (though in the third person), and he tried to imagine himself as a woman writer ("Lucy Estes") while he wrote it. He finished the first draft quickly—"90,000 words in one 30-day month," he noted proudly. He sent each section back to his wife in the States as soon as it was written. Two weeks after completing that novel (initially titled *Remember November*, later *Carola*), he began to make notes for another (at first called *The Resounding Bronze* and then *Ria*). Its central character was also a woman, and it was again written as though by Lucy Estes. After several false starts, Linebarger began to write steadily, and even counting a week in the hospital during which he could not write, he finished the complete draft in another 30-day month. Within a few weeks, he was making notes for a third novel, which would bring together characters from the first two to complete a trilogy.

Lest one conclude that Linebarger was merely playing games, it should be noted that the first two novels, after some revision when he returned to the States, were published by a respectable publishing house (Duell, Sloan and Pearce). They were treated seriously (though not always enthusiastically) by reviewers, and they hold up well 40 years later. (Linebarger initially planned to publish the novels under a female pseudonym or his wife's name. His publishers convinced him otherwise, so the books came out under the pseudonym of Felix C. Forrest—a conglomeration of puns on the Chinese transliteration of his first and last names. His third novel was purchased by the same publishers; but after the first two failed to sell well, it was returned to Linebarger and remained unpublished.)

While he was revising these mainstream novels in 1945, Linebarger returned to writing SF. He produced a 15,000-word story titled "Scanners Live in Vain." In July he submitted it (probably under the pseudonym of Anthony Barden) to *Astounding*, the leading SF magazine at the time. John W. Campbell, Jr rejected it with what Linebarger described as a "friendly note," saying it was "too extreme." Linebarger sent it to *Amazing* and then to *Startling*; both promptly returned it. He put it in the drawer for over a year, meanwhile writing another story ("Himself in Anachron"), which both *Astounding* and *Amazing* rejected. He then sent "Scanners" to a less well-known magazine, *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, which also rejected it. Between publication of his mainstream novels *Ria* and *Carola*, he sent "Scanners" to the rock-bottom market in the field, a semi-professional magazine called *Fantasy Book*, in March 1948. *Fantasy Book's* editor accepted the story within a month, but did not publish it until 1950. By this time Paul Linebarger's pseudonym for his SF had become Cordwainer Smith.

That weak response to "Scanners" seems to have nearly ended Linebarger's SF career. There is no record of his having tried to write any other SF stories between 1946 and 1954, though he completed four novels in other genres early in that period. (Only one of them was published—*Atomsk* [1949], an excellent thriller about an American spy loose inside a Soviet atomic bomb factory.) He might never have attempted SF again if Frederik Pohl had not been the (pseudonymous) co-author of a minor story in the same issue of *Fantasy Book*. Pohl noticed the Cordwainer Smith story and included it in his first anthology of SF, which appeared in 1952.¹⁶ Linebarger's response to that affirmation of his story's quality was not immediate; but in 1954 he wrote a short story called "The Game of Rat and Dragon," submitted it to *Galaxy* in March 1955, and received a prompt acceptance. He wrote six more SF stories later that year, submitting four of them to *Galaxy*. None was accepted, though the editor, H.L. Gold, strongly encouraged him to revise one drastically and resubmit it. Linebarger did not complete another

SF story for over two years. But then he began to sell his work regularly (including several of the 1955-vintage stories), and wrote SF fairly steadily during the next eight years. Indeed, he never gave up completely; he was still dictating story notes into a tape recorder during his final hospitalization.

3. Conflicts, Creativity, and *Carola*. Paul Linebarger ranged over many themes in his career as a fiction writer. Some were political, as one might expect from his professional history. Others were religious, especially after his own quickening of religious faith in the mid-1950s. Still others involved his keen observations of basic human behavior. But several recurrent themes throughout his fiction were highly personal in significance. He was often able to cast them in terms that strongly affected his readers, and indeed the personal issues that troubled him most were in a sense matters of basic human existence. But his knowledge of them derived from his own experience, and their sometimes peculiar expression in his fiction can be better understood through knowledge of his personal history and of his psychological state at the time each work of fiction was written. Further, a consideration of his fiction in those contexts suggests that he repeatedly used the fiction to help him work through his private psychological conflicts.

Those conflicts, Linebarger felt, derived in large part from the unusual circumstances of his childhood. The conflicts were usually not incapacitating (indeed, he generated an astonishing amount of high-quality work in his multiple careers all through his adult life). But they were painful enough to make him wish fiercely for their resolution. He was reluctant at first to approach a psychotherapist for help. But once in therapy, he found that process itself intriguing, at least as it applied to his own inner exploration. Several of his major works of fiction deal in large part both with the psychological problems that confronted him, and with the question of how much another person (professional or not) might be able to help him resolve those problems. Four works will be given particular attention here: *Carola*, the first novel that he completed in draft; "Scanners Live in Vain" and "The Game of Rat and Dragon," his first major SF stories; and *Norstrilia*, his only SF novel.

Linebarger's childhood, which may appear from the outside to have been glamorous and exciting, was perceived by him as often difficult and stressful. He was a brilliant child but an isolated one, living more in the world of adults than of other children. One of his earliest memories was of Point Paul Myron, the Mississippi estate where his father took the family into "self-imposed exile" during the First World War. The Judge later remembered the estate as an "enchanted land."¹⁷ Paul delighted in exploring the place, but also recalled, "For the next two years, I was the only child in a great, scattered old Southern house, bayou-encircled, looking out on the Bay of Biloxi." As the family began travelling beyond the US, Paul proved to be a quick learner of languages, but from his perspective not quick enough:

Whenever I went from one country to another, little colloquialisms and local slang eluded my understanding... I learned early that the surface meaning of words was not their real meaning. The thing to look for was the stance behind it: the moral gesture, the emotional posture. Sometimes the interpersonal meaning was conventional, sometimes individual. When I missed it, I missed comradeship or blessed obscurity or praise or whatever else I sought at the time. Often I got mockery, kicks, tweaks, threats, jokes, exclusion, dupery.

The loss of his eye when he was six only made such matters worse. His

mother's first response to the destruction of his eye was to bemoan the fact that she must now bear the burden of a one-eyed son. Paul himself, after surviving the terror of an emergency trip to the mainland and an operation to save the other eye, was left with a fear of blindness and an anxiety about being ugly—a six-year-old with a glass eye and heavy spectacles. As an adult he sometimes used the glass eye to play jokes on people, and he became particularly fond of a one-eyed cat which he called "Little Paul." But his partial blinding continued to trouble him, and left a distinct mark on his fiction.

His parents left their own marks. The Judge was proud of Paul, but his pride led him to make demands that must have been hard for a child to fulfill. The Judge dedicated his memoirs "Affectionately to my son, Dr. Paul M. A. LINEBARGER, who, since his childhood, I have engaged in the path of the cause of China's rapprochement with America and other countries of the world, and who has always remained faithful to this cause."¹⁸ Paul did remain faithful to the cause, but his restrained dedication of his second scholarly book, published in the same year ("With filial affection"), as well as his strongly ambivalent references in other works to his father's role in the Sun Yat-sen revolution, suggest that his faith was not easily maintained. Also, the Judge was simply not around during much of Paul's childhood.¹⁹ When he was living at home, many secrets surrounded his activities.

Paul's mother was loving and attentive. But she was also demanding, intrusive, and controlling. The latter qualities may have been exaggerated in her interactions with Paul because she was already in her mid-forties when he was a toddler. She apparently relied heavily on shame to control Paul's behavior. According to his adult characterization of her, "Bats, nutty, 'you know,' etc. have been her catch terms. She prides herself on an obsessive common sense which was actually a historical and social composite of what she heard in her family and what she learned in the little-discussed years of her independent life." Paul felt that both parents "lived life through unwieldy and impractical interpersonal constructs," his father as "patriot, rebel, gentleman, 'judge,'" his mother simultaneously wanting to be regarded as a Bohemian and as a respectable woman but doing little outside the family to gain either reputation. As an adult Paul strove to gain some perspective on them, because "their systems . . . persist in me. They confuse my choices, tastes, preferences." As a child, such perspectives had been denied him:

[W]hen young, I never could understand what my parents were really doing (because Father wanted to hide what he was doing, and Mother never knew or wanted to know what she was doing). He was looking for a drink, a woman, a bargain or companionship. She was looking for a way to get ahead of him, for companionship, or for someone to whom to suffer or to earn attention.

The young Paul developed his defenses. He later wrote that from ages 7-13, he attempted "to find security against adolescents by using adults as a shield." As he grew older, he developed a shell of "foreignness, arrogance, opinionatedness, talkativeness." He also found ways to focus his attention outward for periods of time, away from the pain of his inner life. In part, this involved reading; like a number of other psychologically isolated boys of his era, he found *Amazing Stories* to be a godsend. (In his diary at age 13, he noted each issue that he read, carefully imitating the into-the-distance logo whenever he printed the magazine's name.) In part it involved writing his own fictions, regardless of whether they would ever be published.

In a remarkable letter written for his year-old daughter in October 1943, with a return address of "Somewhere in India," Linebarger said he had spent his life "wandering through whole throngs of myself." He described the "three Pauls who are always there": the Watching Paul, "frightened and forever alone," who is "mostly curiosity, pity, love, and fear; he never wants anything for himself, but often wants things for others"; the Watched Paul, who is "busy, clever, acquisitive, rebellious, untrustworthy, anxious and proud... the engineer of my brain"; and the Living-and-Doing Paul, "who moves in secret from the other two, since he loses himself in work and accomplishment... [H]e depends upon my being aware of the world outside, not the world within." Then Linebarger presented his strategy for dealing with his inner selves:

I can remember that even when I was a small boy in Baden, self-scrutiny became intolerable and I would have to say to myself, "I want to want something. I've got to be crazy about something—old coins, a fountain pen, coins, stamps, excursions, a gun, or something!" And sooner or later Living-and-Doing Paul would blot out Watched and Watching Paul, and the paired antagonists would disappear behind a screen on which the real regular world happened. But I would attain or forget the object of my desire, and return to the non-timed desolation of my inward world. Much of my life has consisted in such wild leaps away from my inward and inescapable self. Somehow, writing comes closest to shadowing out the interior, because Living-and-Doing Paul can pretend that he is Watched-and-Watching Pauls; and he can fool himself for long periods of time.

This letter, mixing such self-characterizations with introspective ethical advice for his daughter's future consideration, sounds like the sort of message a very intelligent soldier might send home from the front because he fears he might not return. And indeed, Linebarger later wrote to an admired novelist in explaining the origins of his own first novel:

In the winter of 1943-44, I was a very disgusted and lonely infantry first lieutenant in the China-Burma-India theater. I was not afraid of being killed by the Japanese, but I did have a persistent premonition of death by disease. I looked back on my own life and found that I had left a record in my own profession, and had done something in the Army, but that I had created nothing *beautiful*.

A need to master his inner conflicts and an urge to create something beautiful—those were, in Linebarger's own view, the motives for writing the novel that came pouring out of him during the month of April 1944.

The need seems to have been met only temporarily at best, and the beauty of the novel *Carola*²⁰ is not immediately visible. But it is, from a perspective of four decades, a brilliant achievement. *Carola* is a 39-year-old executive secretary, glad to be back in the States in 1943 after many years abroad, glad to be working in a sterile Manhattan office, and glad to be living in an antiseptic New York apartment. The book is in large part a contrast between her delight in ordinary comfortable America and her appalling memories of life in the war-ravaged Far East. The opening paragraphs sketch the degradations from which she has had to lift herself in order to reach America, and for which she must find a rationale in her own past history:

Never again gunfire, filth, blood, sun-streaked water-gleaming acres. Never again Chiburinominato half-weeping with pleasure when cruel. Never again her

husband Ding, taking her arm with the repulsive trustfulness of a demented child, and asking that she undo his life for him. Never again cities burning, and people burning in them, nor Grecian furies weaving doom while dangling Phi Beta Kappa keys against tweed vests. Never again the perfume of Mr Zickel Jone, nor the unpleasant clean smell of Hifumi-san.

Never again Asia, thought Carola. No more bright color superimposed upon disease and war. Let me forget Asia's placid strength and shrill keen humor.

At first Carola tells herself that her current life has nothing to do with the "other Carolas in the past," that only "the steadfastness at the innermost center—the Carola-who-was-really-there" truly matters (1:18). Then she begins to feel "a coldly interested inquisitiveness about the tally of her years. . . . All she wanted to do was to see the rooms, not the corridors. . . . I'm going to look at each of those rooms. I'm going to see me" (1:19). That "coldly interested inquisitiveness" carries her through 300 pages of intense recollection of childhood fears, adolescent sexual identity crisis, personal betrayal, public treason, blackmail, and murder. Through much of the book Carola is deeply depressed and passively accepts her degradation. Through the rest of it she is either engaging in what she perceives to be reprehensible acts or trying compulsively to justify them to herself. Yet back in Manhattan she never considers seeking a psychotherapist's help in dealing with the bad memories or the unresolved conflicts. She feels she can manage very well by herself, and besides, the only psychologist she ever knew so misinterpreted her feelings as an adolescent that she blames him for "greasing the skids under twenty years of my life" (3:87). Instead she finds a fiancé who "stood for nothing but a good time, and decent living, and simple, honest feeling" (10:304). She tells him, "I want to forget all the things I used to worry about. I want to leave government to the politicians. I want to leave war to the soldiers. I just want us to have a regular ordinary American life together" (10:306). And so the book ends.

That ending never satisfied Linebarger, according to his widow. Indeed, he planned to have Carola leave her decent honest fiancé in the final volume of the trilogy, after the man reacts with horror when Carola tells him something of her inner being. The middle volume of the trilogy and the first one published, *Ria*, ultimately offers little more satisfaction. *Ria*, a woman who suffers from a psychosomatically crippled hand, insists on conducting her own self-analysis rather than seeking out a psychoanalyst. In the end she must rely on pills from a physician to give her partial relief from pain. After reading *Ria*, Linebarger's anthropologist friend Geoffrey Gorer told him the book illustrated its author's simultaneous fascination and resistance regarding depth psychology. Linebarger was very pleased with Gorer's specific interpretations of the novel's content, and he did not object to that general characterization.

Clearly both *Carola* and *Ria* incorporated important aspects of Linebarger's personal history, though neither was autobiographical as a whole. (He told one of his editors, for instance, "RIA draws upon my living at the Hotel Frankfurter Hof in Baden-Baden, 1922-24. . . . The characters are composites. . . but the setting is carefully and faithfully reproduced."²¹) The novels suggest that he was flirting with the idea of getting psychotherapeutic treatment immediately after the war (an unpublished portion of the blurb he wrote for *Ria* said he was "pursuing a keen though non-professional interest in psychiatry"), but that he hoped he could instead analyze himself, perhaps through writing the novels. That attempt was at best only partially and temporarily successful.

4. Psychotherapy and Cordwainer Smith. After *Carola* and *Ria*, Linebarger wrote "Scanners Live in Vain."²² Though its style and tone differ sharply from the novels, "Scanners" confronts the same central issue: How can the protagonist best deal with severe psychological pain? In "Scanners," the pain comes from travel in space: "[T]he great pain... started quietly in the marrow, like an ache, and proceeded by the fatigue and nausea of each separate nerve cell, brain cell, touchpoint in the body, until life itself became a terrible aching hunger for silence and for death" (p. 20). This extreme version of psychological pain necessitates an extreme response: the creation of the scanners, men who are surgically cut off from all sensory input except through their eyes. The scanners scan in two ways: they watch over spaceship crews and ordinary human passengers who avoid the "pain of space" by suspended animation; and they necessarily watch over their own bodies, from which they are now so divorced that they must regulate their physiological responses through mechanical sensors and controls set into their chests. The scanners are thus unable to interact with other people normally. Without sensory feedback, their movements are crude, their voices are too loud, they miss all social cues except the most obvious visual ones. They can temporarily return to normal through a process called "cranching," but cranching is itself too dangerous to be used frequently.

Dramatic conflict enters the story when a scientist, Adam Stone, develops a way to protect people from the pain of space by means other than suspended animation or the physical severing of nerves. Most of the scanners, having built their self-esteem on the belief that nerveless scanners are essential to the maintenance of human civilization, vote to kill Adam Stone, because if he succeeds, "Scanners live in vain!" (p. 28). But one scanner, Martel, happens to be "crunched" when the vote is taken. (He has been "cranching" dangerously often because he is married and wants to enjoy his limited time with his wife as much as possible.) Martel is able to perceive that Adam Stone's technique for blocking the pain of space offers a promise of freedom, for others and for himself. No one will ever again have to undergo the drastic nerve-severing he has endured, and even if he loses the proud role of scanner, he may be able to enjoy the rest of a short life by "cranching" at home with his wife. So he endangers himself in an attempt to warn Adam Stone of the murder plot.

"Scanners Live in Vain" ends on a note of deeper optimism than either *Carola* or *Ria*. Martel succeeds in warning Adam Stone, who reciprocates not only by bestowing his new form of space-travel protection upon mankind, but by developing another process that restores full sensory functioning to Martel and the other scanners. They will still fly in space as a proud Confraternity, but now they will have new jobs as spaceship pilots.

The story differs from the novels not only in its happy ending but in its means to that end. Though Martel, through "cranching," has tried to deal with his sensory deprivation and social isolation largely on his own, he reaches a permanent solution both to his original problem of psychic pain and to his defensively severed nerves only with the help of another individual, Adam Stone. Stone's technique for restoring the senses of the scanners is vaguely described, and his technique for protecting people from the pain of space seems a little far-fetched—he simply fills the spaceship walls with live oysters. But in both cases, people are saved from psychological pain and defensive emotional constriction through the intervention of other living beings. It appears that Paul Linebarger was now willing to consider the possibility that he could be helped by a psychotherapist, or at least by another person who would listen sympathetically to his troubles.

In addition to these broad issues of neurotic defensiveness and tentative moves toward psychotherapy, "Scanners" also contains elements directly related to details of Paul Linebarger's early life, given renewed salience by recent events. He had returned to Washington before the end of the Second World War because an attack of jaundice became so serious that (in his widow's words) "his good eye started to go. . . . General Wedemeyer assigned him special courier status so he could bump anyone off the flight and get back to the States for treatment as quickly as possible." That experience was very similar to his return to the States for emergency surgery when he lost an eye as a child. Both experiences must have remained very much on Linebarger's mind during the period when he was writing "Scanners." On July 18, 1945—the day he mailed the "Scanners" manuscript to *Astounding*—he wrote to a friend: "I have gone from the 'being-read-to' state of eyesight back up to the 'read-a-little-at-a-time' phase, so that I am getting into [reading a new book] in a slow luxurious way quite unlike the top-speed scanning which I used to give books in my nastier and freer days."

The eye destroyed in childhood had been replaced by a non-organic prosthesis, a glass shell covering a metal ball. Linebarger wore that prosthesis in his eye-socket for the rest of his life, just as the scanners wore a kind of prosthesis embedded in their chests, their control boxes. Linebarger's glass eye was less troublesome than his remaining "good" eye (which continued to be an intermittent focus of disease and anxiety). But getting that glass eye necessitated a loss of sensory input, as with the pain-free but non-functioning sensory organs in "Scanners."

An interesting defensive reversal occurs in the story: instead of being blinded when their other sensory connections are severed, the scanners retain *only* the use of their eyes. For Linebarger, the loss of one eye had increased the importance of the other, and of vision generally. (According to his widow, "That was the one great fear of his life, to go blind. He would rather have been dead than blind.") A similar defensive reversal involves the fact that Linebarger's eye had been pierced by a wire thrown at him. In the story, the scanners' senses are temporarily *restored* during "cranching" by a wire with a small sphere at one end, which must be tossed into the air to be activated.

Linebarger's experience of losing his eye as a child does not appear to have been solely responsible for the central theme of "Scanners" (and certainly not for the similar themes of his mainstream novels). But it may well have offered him a powerful set of metaphors and defensive reverse-metaphors to represent another sort of disaster in his life, his "cutting off" or restriction of ordinary human pleasures and social interactions as a means of controlling anxiety and maintaining self-esteem.

Between "Scanners" and the writing of his next published SF story, nine years elapsed. During that time, Linebarger did seek psychotherapy; indeed he saw several therapists over the years. According to his widow, he probably saw the first one as a result of wartime experiences, and perhaps also because of difficulties associated with his first marriage. Linebarger himself referred to 1949, a year when he was seeing a psychotherapist regularly and when the first marriage was finally ended by divorce, as his "hell year." Shortly after he remarried in 1950, he wrote a book manuscript entitled *Ethical Dianetics*, intended to teach a mass audience how to engage in "mutual emotional aid" with a sympathetic friend or spouse. Linebarger hastened to note that he was not trying to replace "qualified psychologists or psychiatrists" for readers who really needed professional help, nor was he proposing what he referred to as a "closed cult" like the Dianetics of L. Ron Hubbard. (He described Hubbard as "probably the outstand-

ing science fiction writer of our time” but “not a person to whom you would turn for relaxation or for spiritual repose.”²³) Rather, Linebarger offered a systematic method by which any two people could help each other under certain circumstances:

Ethical dianetics presents you with the opportunity of reliving part of your life with the help of another person. *Don't try to do it alone...* Torment more hellish than anything the Gestapo ever invented can be developed by two people who are in a condition of intimacy and who try to discharge malign ch'i at the same time. I know. I experienced it. I never want to try it again. Two people, both of them tormented, can help one another tremendously *if they take turns*.²⁴

Linebarger wrote that he was “a great deal happier now than I was two years ago when I began testing some of these techniques.” He was unable to sell the book to a publisher, and it is not clear how long he depended on “mutual emotional aid” (presumably with his new wife) before going back into therapy. But his next story appears to have incorporated aspects of this experience.

“The Game of Rat and Dragon” was reportedly written “at a single sitting one afternoon in 1954.”²⁵ Though the first draft may indeed have been written that quickly, the careful structure and polish of the published version, plus the fact that the story was not submitted for publication until March 1955, suggest that Linebarger treated it with particular care.²⁶

Nine years had elapsed since Linebarger's writing of “Scanners.” Roughly 3,000 years had elapsed between the two stories in his future history, according to J.J. Pierce's estimates.²⁷ The early pages of “Game” establish that the discoveries of Adam Stone have not provided sufficient protection from the dangers of space. When people travel beyond the solar system, they must contend not only with the pain of space, but also with “something out there *underneath space itself* which was alive, capricious, and malevolent” (p. 70). The passive defense of putting live oysters in the outer walls of the “shell-ships” must be supplemented by an active defense against these space monsters (perceived mentally as dragons by telepaths who have survived brief contacts with them). Someone discovers that light will dissolve the dragons, so the ships are sheathed in light.

But “[a]s mankind learned about the dragons, so too, apparently, the dragons learned about mankind” (p. 72). The dragons develop maneuvers that enable them to attack the light-sheathed ships; humans respond with an intricate protective technology called “pin-lighting.” Human telepaths have their dragon-detecting powers amplified by “pin-sets,” machines that fit onto their heads; once a dragon is detected, “ultra-vidid miniature photonuclear bombs, which converted... into pure visible radiance” (p. 72) are hurled at it. But the dragons become too fast for the reflexes of the human telepaths, who must then be trained to work with telepathically linked “partners”—cats who see the dragons as giant rats. Launched toward the rats/dragons in tiny ships, the cats react much more quickly than their human partners can to the monsters' evasive maneuvers and destroy the creatures with light-bombs. After this technology is described, the story becomes a depiction of one mission against the monsters. Particular attention is given to the close emotional relationship between a human telepath, Underhill, and the cat partner who is assigned to him for the mission, Lady May.

There are obvious similarities between “Scanners” and “Game,” similarities which relate to Linebarger's personal history. Both stories deal with a male protagonist who is a member of a profession devoted to protecting humankind from dangers in foreign territory. In both cases, the work is itself dangerous and

the hero yearns for feminine companionship to make the stresses easier to bear. In these circumstances one can perceive elements of Linebarger's foreign Army Intelligence missions. Both the scanners and the supersensitive telepaths resemble skilled espionage agents in certain ways: though respected and admired by ordinary folk, they are regarded as not quite human and are not able to lead ordinary lives. Certainly these biographical components contributed significantly to the stories' development. But they do not help much in explaining the central conflict in either story—Martel's efforts to save Adam Stone and his discoveries from the wrath of the scanners, Underhill's telepathic involvement with his cat partner and the scorn he encounters from human women concerning that involvement. Nor do they explain the underlying differences between the stories.

A major difference lies in the psychological isolation experienced by Martel in dealing with his problems versus the psychological closeness of Underhill and his partner as they face the dragons. In "Scanners," Martel has a wife and returns to her in the end, but she gives him rather little help along the way. Adam Stone does help him, but in a vague and remote manner. In "Game," the cat Lady May not only exists in total psychological symbiosis with Underhill during their assignment, but is so perfect a mental partner that the story concludes, "Where would he ever find a woman who could compare with her?" Just as "Scanners" reflects Linebarger's difficulties in dealing with his psychological problems alone and his hesitant moves toward getting help from another person, so "Game" can be seen as reflecting his experiences with psychotherapy in the intervening years. He has encountered a succession of therapists who cast light on his repressed desires and conflicts, thus helping him temporarily to disperse his private dragons; the problems return, the unconscious tries new evasive tactics, necessitating different kinds of therapy; he gains satisfaction—at least for a time—with the "mutual emotional aid" described in his *Ethical Dianetics* manuscript.

Such a psychological underpinning for "Game" was certainly not far from Linebarger's conscious thinking as he wrote the story. The space monsters are described in strictly psychological terms—never seen directly, but appearing in the minds of human telepaths as dragons, demons, "hungry vortices of aliveness and hate" (p. 71). The damage they do, short of death, is also psychological: "Telepaths tried to reach into the minds of the psychotics who had been damaged by the dragons, but they found nothing there beyond vivid spouting columns of fiery terror bursting from the primordial id itself, the volcanic source of life" (p. 72). In *Ria*, Linebarger had already made explicit the destruction of monsters by light as a metaphor for psychological-coping processes:

Ria turned her eyes to the sea, and to the past. Somewhere in herself there was a force; she visualized it as an animal, indolent, brainless, cruel only in that it lived. This animal attacked her. It was up to her, and to her alone, to go back into the darkness to herself, to find the enemy, and to kill it with light. (1:6)

The difference is that in "Game," Underhill has an intimate ally to help him kill the creatures with light.

By the time Linebarger wrote "Game," he had been married to his second wife, Genevieve, for four years. In various ways they were well suited to each other. Among other things, she was also active in intelligence work, and they enjoyed travelling together. Their sharing of emotions during the development of the "mutual emotional aid" approach seems to have been a heady experience for him, and some of that is likely to have gone into "Game." Nonetheless, the protagonist in "Game" is unable to share his thoughts and feelings fully with *any*

human woman; he can do so only with a cat.

This is not the first time in Linebarger's fiction that a human character has an easier time communicating with cats than with other humans.²⁸ But the relationship is more intense and certainly more erotically tinged in "Game" than in earlier works. Linebarger did often hold conversations (one-sided, one assumes) with his own cats, of which he usually owned several. His resumption of psychotherapy in the 1950s suggests he may have found that even a reasonably happy second marriage could not in the short run meet all his psychological needs. One or another of his cats may then have played the role of transitional object in helping him cope with his disappointment. That is, the cat or cats may have become the focus for his imagining of an ideal woman until he could deal realistically with his excessively high expectations for his second marriage.

This interpretation may seem rather speculative, in the absence of more direct information concerning Linebarger's feelings at the time. But certain aspects of a subsequent work, the Cordwainer Smith novel *Norstrilia* (begun in 1958 and completed in 1963), appear to lend further support to such an interpretation of "Game."²⁹

In *Norstrilia* (which has many more themes, subplots, and characters than can be discussed here), a young man named Rod McBan finds himself very much out of place on his home planet of Norstrilia, because he cannot control his telepathic sending and receiving effectively enough to communicate directly with other people. McBan, with the aid of a computer inherited from his father, acquires a fortune so vast that he can afford to buy the planet Earth. He makes a difficult space voyage to Earth, apparently only for the purpose of acquiring rare postage stamps for his collection. Once on Earth, he encounters a fascinating cat-girl, C'mell, with whom he falls in love, and a cat-man, referred to as the Catmaster, who happens to be Earth's only remaining clinical psychologist. The Catmaster has the stamps in which Rod is interested, but tells him, "Those pieces of paper are not your heart's desire. Something else is" (p. 195).

The Catmaster then puts Rod through a therapy session that features hallucinations, recollections of childhood, and catharsis, much of it involving Rod's recognition and expression of his repressed hostilities toward his parents. Rod emerges from the therapy having "forgiven his last enemy" and having "forgiven himself" (p. 202). He has also acquired full telepathic skill, and the Catmaster gives him the stamps he has come to Earth ostensibly to obtain. But one last matter must be taken care of: Rod's irrational love for the cat-girl C'mell. When he asks her to marry him, she tells him that is impossible: "Poor silly me! Poor silly you! Don't you see it, Mister, I *am* a cat" (p. 232). But that final wish is granted too, in a sense. Rod is given a half-hour with C'mell "in a linked dream, her mind to yours, for a happy subjective time of about a thousand years. You will live through all the happy things that you might have done together if you had stayed here.... *Two living, accelerated minds, thinking into each other....*" (pp. 250-51). Having thus satisfied his dream of perfect love—"It was not marriage which they had had, but it was pure romance" (p. 262)—Rod returns to his home planet to marry a more ordinary human woman who will, at least, be kind to him.

Once again, then, Linebarger has had his protagonist wrestle with inner conflicts, this time directly aided by a very wise psychotherapist. (In keeping with other developments in his life, Linebarger depicted the protagonist as being helped by a religious figure as well.) This time, however, the resolution of the protagonist's problems seems more fulfilling and more emphatically permanent than in any of the previous stories. In "Game," the hero and his partner manage to destroy

the attacking dragons, but he can enjoy a close mental relationship with the partner only temporarily, and feels at the story's end that he may never have a rewarding relationship with a real woman. In *Norstrilia*, Rod McBan is allowed to have his cake and eat it too. He resolves all his psychological problems, lives a very long and full life with his cat-girl (even though it is only imagined), and then settles down to a comfortable and loving relationship with a real woman for the rest of his real life.

By this time, Genevieve Linebarger had been helping her husband with the Cordwainer Smith stories for several years—a bit of verse here, a page or two there. Rod McBan's happy marriage to a real woman at the end of the story was Paul's idea, but the details were written partly by Genevieve. Paul Linebarger liked it that way. He had found many satisfactions in imagination while creating the world of Cordwainer Smith. But he had also, with the help of those stories, reached a point in his psychological development where he could enjoy a sustained and mutually rewarding relationship with another genuine human being. He lived only three more years, much of it passed in illness and pain. Genevieve was herself often unwell, and their marriage was by no means a perfect one. But a man who could give his hero a thousand years with C'mell in half an hour of real time may have been able to find his own measure of happiness in those last difficult years as well.

5. Conclusion. For many readers, the primary appeal of Cordwainer Smith's work is the richly complex future universe that provides a backdrop for the action of each story. For others his appeal comes from the interplay between the interstellar governing body, the Instrumentality of Mankind, and the forces of political and religious revolution and evolution. Paul Linebarger lived all his life among such massive contending forces in their earthly guise, and his SF often expressed his sophisticated insights into their dynamic interaction. But as he wrote in an unfinished autobiographical draft in 1951,

No matter how urgent the politics get, the private lives go on. The things which are most important to me are *for the record* such things as the North Atlantic Pact, the development of the UN, the security of constitutional liberty, the avoidance of World War III, or victory in it if it comes, my duties as a Reserve officer, my responsibilities as a professor, my work in psychological warfare. But that's the record. That's what I tell other people and what I try to tell myself. It's not *me*.

No matter how much politics I talk I take myself along with it. My old problems lie deep within me. . . . [T]he accumulation of a lifetime gets thrown in jumbled together with the grand and public spectacles of world politics and strategy.

In each of Linebarger's best stories, however much the Instrumentality and other intergalactic forces may wrangle in the background, intense psychological conflicts experienced by real people come to the fore. The conflicts may at times involve feelings about political expediency, ethical responsibility, religious faith. They may eventuate in grand Utopian designs or in grander revisions of designs that have failed.³⁰ But most of all they are matters of pain and loss, hope and love within individual human beings. Those were the matters of ultimate importance for Paul Linebarger.

Linebarger's writing of SF was not primarily an escapist activity, in the sense of distracting him from pressing emotional problems, as his stamp and coin collecting and his pre-World War II writing had often been. Nor was his SF merely

disguised autobiography, using long-past events from his unusual background as the foundations for a future history—though a surprising amount of autobiography is written into the stories. Rather, the process of writing SF served Linebarger as a means to confront the vital issues of his ongoing personal life. He could address those issues more readily in the universe of the Instrumentality, millennia and light-years away, than he could in realistic novels or in real life. At times he may have used his SF stories consciously for that purpose; at other times he may well have let his characters take over the stories as they struggled with problems unconsciously resembling his own. In either case, the act of writing seems to have helped him work through his unresolved conflicts in ways that more direct approaches could not.

“Scanners,” “Game,” and *Norstrilia* might be viewed simply as a metaphorical record of the progress Linebarger had already achieved by other means at various points in his psychological development: breaking out of his emotional shell, establishing close emotional contact with another being, settling into a comfortable marriage. The stories do indeed reflect already established changes in his emotional life, but they appear to have been accomplishing more than that. Each of the stories discussed here is transitional, in the sense that it not only records psychological progress but examines issues which Linebarger had not fully resolved at the time. He had not actually approached a psychotherapist when he wrote “Scanners,” as far as can be determined. Among his surviving papers, “Scanners” appears to contain the first indications that he was seriously considering seeking emotional help from another person to deal with his psychological problems. When he wrote “Game,” he had been married to his second wife for several years and had experienced a degree of emotional closeness that pleased him greatly. But it was not yet the kind of psychological intimacy for which he had yearned when only his cats were willing to listen to him, and the end of the story leaves the protagonist still questioning whether such intimacy will ever be possible with a woman. *Norstrilia* imagines a greater degree of satisfaction for its hero, posited on a compromise between a subjectively intense psychological union with a cat-woman and an objectively comfortable marriage with a human woman. But even that compromise solution seems to have reached its full development only after several years of intermittent work on several drafts of the novel; it was not already clearly established in Linebarger’s mind (or notes) when he began work on the book.

Linebarger underwent additional psychotherapy during at least a portion of the time he was working on *Norstrilia*, and the psychotherapy presumably addressed at least some of the same personal issues as those represented in the novel. He credited psychotherapy with doing a good deal for him emotionally over the years. But going to a psychotherapist seems never to have been enough to resolve all the major emotional problems in his life; he needed active involvement in his fiction too. According to one close friend, Linebarger’s writing of SF was “a way to keep his sanity and an additional therapeutic treatment to his psychoanalysis.”³¹

Linebarger’s SF writing was never *only* a therapeutic process. He was too consciously a creative artist to have been writing for self-curative purposes alone. But neither was his fiction only an aesthetic achievement. In 1945 he wrote to a friend, “You can’t be superlatively efficient and superlatively *human* at one and the same time.”³² A year later he wrote to the man who would soon become the editor of his mainstream novels: “As you probably realized from our conversation, I have advanced into the field of fiction because of an inner necessity, and with very little reliance on my own judgment of what might or might not interest

the reading public.”³³ All his life Paul Linebarger felt driven, as much by others’ expectations as by his own high standards, to become “superlatively efficient.” But he also felt an “inner necessity” to become, if not superlatively human, then at least more fully human than his early emotional life had left him. His struggle in that direction is only occasionally hinted at in his writings on Asia and on psychological warfare. It is at the heart of his SF.

NOTES

1. Quotations from previously unpublished works of Paul Linebarger are used by permission of Rosana (Linebarger) Hart and Marcia Linebarger. They and other relatives, colleagues, and friends of Paul Linebarger have shared memories, information, and documents with me, and this paper could not have been written without their help. They should not, of course, be held responsible for my interpretations or conclusions. Others who have been particularly helpful include Genevieve Linebarger, W. Wentworth Linebarger, Ardath and Jane Burks, Chu Djang, J.J. Pierce, A.J. Budrys, Frederik Pohl, Brian Aldiss, Larry McMurtry, Gary K. Wolfe, John K. Fairbank, Robert A. Madle, and the staffs of the University of Kansas’ Kenneth Spencer Research Library and the Hoover Institution Archives.

2. Defensive and restitutive psychological functions are perceptively contrasted in Robert Stolorow and George Atwood’s *Faces in a Cloud: Subjectivity in Personality Theory* (NY, 1979).

3. See L. Sprague de Camp, Catherine Crook de Camp, and Jane Whittington Griffin, *Dark Valley Destiny: The Life of Robert E. Howard* (NY, 1983).

4. Alan C. Elms, “Skinner’s Dark Year and Walden Two,” *American Psychologist*, 36 (1981): 470-79.

5. One extraordinary matter, the question of whether Linebarger was the patient in Robert Lindner’s famous case history, “The Jet-Propelled Couch” (in *The Fifty-Minute Hour*, NY, 1955), will be considered in a subsequent work. This question, first raised in Brian Aldiss’ *Billion Year Spree* (NY, 1974, p. 179), involves psychobiographical issues beyond the scope of the present paper.

6. Interview with Ardath Burks, Sept. 9, 1979.

7. Interview with Genevieve Linebarger, Sept. 26, 1979. This interview is the source for subsequent quotations from Genevieve Linebarger (the widow of Paul M.A. Linebarger), unless they are otherwise identified.

8. Paul M.W. Linebarger, *Mes Mémoires Abrégés sur les Révolutions de Sun Yat Sen* (Paris, 1938), p. 119. The English-language version quoted here was never published.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

10. Paul M.W. Linebarger, *Sun Yat Sen and the Chinese Republic* (NY, 1925), pp. 359-61.

11. The father’s works were *The Gospel of Chung Shan* (Paris, 1932) and *The Ocean Men* (Washington, D.C.: 1937); the son’s *The Political Doctrines of Sun Yat-Sen* (Baltimore, 1937).

12. P.M.A. Linebarger, *Government in Republican China* (NY, 1938); *The China of Chiang Kai-Shek* (Boston, 1941).

13. P.M.A. Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: 1948 and later editions).

14. The story is reprinted in Cordwainer Smith, *The Instrumentality of Mankind* (NY: Ballantine, 1979), pp. 21-25. The pseudonym appears to have come from the Chinese names of a major mountain pass between the Soviet Union and northern China, Jungahr Men, and a nearby town, Karamai or K’olamai. “Karloman” survived

in Linebarger's later pseudonyms, *Carmichael* and *Cordwainer*, and in one novel's central characters, *Carola* and *Carson*.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-09.

16. See Pohl's introduction to *The Instrumentality of Mankind*, pp. xi-xii.

17. P.M.W. Linebarger, *Mémoires*, p. 181.

18. *Ibid.*, dedication page.

19. One of Linebarger's fictional protagonists had a father "who came and went as startlingly as a comet." P.M.A. Linebarger [as Felix C. Forrest], *Ria* (NY: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1947), p. 23.

20. P.M.A. Linebarger [as Felix C. Forrest], *Carola* (NY: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1948).

21. Letter to Miss Nichols at Duell, Sloan & Pearce, May 3, 1947.

22. Reprinted in *The Best of Cordwainer Smith*, ed. J.J. Pierce (NY: Ballantine, 1975), pp. 1-39. Page citations refer to the paperback edition.

23. Linebarger had known Hubbard when both were undergraduates at George Washington University, and as editor of the student newspaper's literary supplement he had published one of Hubbard's early stories. He was treated by a "dianeticist" prior to writing *Ethical Dianetics*. His compliment regarding Hubbard's SF may have been meant to balance his criticisms of Hubbard's therapy; Linebarger's adult preferences in SF actually tended toward more literate writers, ranging over the years from Olaf Stapledon to Theodore Sturgeon and Anthony Burgess.

24. P.M.A. Linebarger, *Ethical Dianetics* (variant title: *Pathematics*), unpublished manuscript, pp. 32 and 82. Here and in other quotations from Linebarger's work used in this paper, the emphases are his.

25. Or so Genevieve Linebarger told J.J. Pierce. The story is reprinted in *The Best of Cordwainer Smith*, pp. 67-83.

26. H.L. Gold did some editorial work on the manuscript, but wrote to Linebarger that the editing process was enjoyable in this case because of the author's fine technique.

27. See Pierce's chronology in the front matter of *The Best of Cordwainer Smith*.

28. See, e.g., *Carola*, pp. 216-21.

29. P.M.A. Linebarger [as Cordwainer Smith], *Norstrilia* (NY: Ballantine, 1975).

30. Arnold Klein ("Destination: Void," *Harper's*, Dec. 1982) has used Linebarger's *Instrumentality* to illustrate his complaint that SF authors rely on "benevolent authoritarian regimes, or some similarly simpleminded arrangement," for future governance. Klein's implication that Linebarger approved of the *Instrumentality's* rule is as erroneous as his idea that it is a simpleminded arrangement.

31. Chu Djang, personal communication, Jan. 6, 1980.

32. Letter to Bill [Glei?], July 18, 1945. This is the letter cited earlier as having been written on the day Linebarger mailed "Scanners" to *Astounding*; the sentence quoted here, though it appeared in another context, is a neat summary of one of the story's major themes.

33. Letter written (but never sent) to C.A. Pearce, Sept. 19, 1946.

RÉSUMÉ

Alan C. Elms. La Création littéraire de Cordwainer Smith.—L'artiste peut, dans certaines occasions, utiliser sa fantaisie créatrice dans le but de contrôler des impulsions inacceptables et des conflits intrapsychiques non résolus. L'oeuvre de l'artiste peut également servir de compensation au fur et à mesure que celui-ci surmonte et

dépasse ses conflits. C'est, semble-t-il, la fonction de l'oeuvre fictionnelle de Paul M.A. Linebarger, alliée au travail d'une psychothérapie. L'on a cherché preuves d'un développement d'ordre psychologique chez Linebarger, à la lumière de sa biographie, de ses romans les plus représentatifs, et de plusieurs de ses textes majeurs de science-fiction, écrits sous le pseudonyme de Cordwainer Smith, à savoir: «*Scanners Live in Vain*», «*The Game of Rat and Dragon*», et *Norstrilia*. (ACE)

Abstract.—A work of creative fantasy may be used defensively by the artist to control unacceptable impulses and unresolved intrapsychic conflicts, or it may function restitutively as the artist overcomes and moves beyond such conflicts. Paul M.A. Linebarger's fiction appears to have served the latter kind of function for him, assisted by psychotherapeutic treatment. Evidence for Linebarger's psychological development is examined in his life history, in his mainstream novels, and in several of the most important SF works he wrote under the pseudonym of Cordwainer Smith: "*Scanners Live in Vain*," "*The Game of Rat and Dragon*," and *Norstrilia*. (ACM)