

him he was curled up like a baby on the special composition surface of the track." His death is like a journey into birth.

There is no sequential connection between the stories in *Night Flights*, yet Cohen is the kind of writer whose books tend to grow out of each other, and the curious reader will find interesting links between some of the stories—even the earlier ones—and his most recent novel, *The Colours of War*. The wife of the man who calls himself Columbus bears the same name—Felipa Perestrello—as the wife of the guerilla leader in *The Colours of War*, and this fact must be joined to the many internal hints in that novel which suggest that we should avoid regarding it as a naturalistic picture of a likely future.

As I have said elsewhere, *The Colours of War* is in fact a book in which everybody is seeking to get back to the past by way of the future, and fragments of that sought-for past appear in three stories of *Night Flight* which are among the most naturalistically rendered items in the volume. These are "Glass Eyes and Chickens," "Country Music," and "Brain Dust," all of which concern the Frank clan of drink-rotted agrarian degenerates who live in the Ontarian countryside near Salem, the hometown to which Theodore Beam escapes as civilization collapses in *The Colours of War*. The Franks are dead of their debauches long before the future in which Beam makes his journey with the guerilla Perestrello and his gang, but they are remembered and one character from the stories, Kitty Malone who was Pat Frank's mistress, survives to give Theodore a shelter from his pursuers. Yet in a significant detail the stories anticipate the novel, for Pat Frank, who is really their central character, is an auto mechanic who believes that drink is shrinking his brain and the empty spaces it leaves in his brain are filling up with dust. That, monstrously expanded to fit a civilization, is really what happens in *The Colours of War*, in which the collective mind of man seems to be turning into dust, as individuals seek escape by retreating into the past, into the aged childhood of the race, as in "Vogel" and other stories of *Night Flight*: the childhood where the death they evade lies waiting.

George Woodcock

JOHN STURROCK

Paper Tigers: The Ideal Fictions of Jorge Luis Borges
Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
Pp. 227. \$12.95.

Jorge Luis Borges writes his purely ideal fictions in a vacuum—isolated, immobile, distracted from the real world—while his Spanish-American contemporaries wallow in reality and scold him for his lack of attention to the world in which at least his body, lives. They can tie him to the real world only by interpreting his work as a reflection of an idealist or agnostic philosophy.

We are so contaminated with the notions of romanticism and realism, and with the idea that art of any kind reflects real life, that John Sturrock finds it necessary to hammer insistently on the point that Borges is a classicist to the core and must be understood as such. The harder he hammers, the more method he discovers for us in the seeming madness of Borges's mind-swamping stories.

An author is called a realist in the degree to which he keeps an eye on the real world while he makes up a fiction. Concentrated world-watching began with the romantics, who had tired of the classicists' abstractions and universals and wanted to write of the concrete and particular. The classicists cared far less about the particular and sought the archetypal forms of things. They lived in an intellectualized, orderly reality of human making, subsuming under abstract headings the great mass of details out there in nature. They saw clearly that nature is chaos and that art is order, and they never confused the two. So now we understand that art about nature is realism and that "art about art" is literature which may radically substitute the rules and requirements of art for natural law.

Borges replaces nature's laws with the rules of fictional narration, and his characters obey these rules, often "writing" the stories of which they are part. Sturrock, steeped in narrative theory, interprets Borges's plots, symbols, and artifices from this appropriately "unreal" viewpoint with persuasive force and in gratifying detail. He does much to establish the validity of minute symbolic-allegorical (that is, structural or systemic) interpretation of Borges's fictions.

The primary laws of fictional narrative are requirements imposed on the creator, whether he be Borges or one of his characters—for the characters, too, are creators. These laws are isolation, inspiration, and idealization; that is, distraction and concentration, the free play of memory and ideas, and controlled “dreaming.” Borges’s characters, who are not people but merely proper names, are isolated in prisons, hotels, hospitals, houses, sickbeds, towers. Inspiration (heady, abstract thought) comes to them as dizziness, fever, or delirium, often produced by alcohol. Idealization, or the turning of the “world” into words, comes as action. To take an example out of its context is to do it a disservice, but here is one: Emma Zunz (“Emma Zunz,” *El Aleph*, 1949) wants to kill Loewenthal, who framed her father. In order to kill him with “justice” she first gets herself sexually deflowered by a nameless sailor. A real-life reason is implied, but it is weak. Emma, as “author” of her own “story,” is obeying the laws of narrative, and the reader of a narrative has the right to suppose that what immediately precedes an event also justifies it. The sexual outrage justifies the murder, and it does not matter that the perpetrator of the outrage and the murder victim are not the same man. In fact, we might add, they are Platonically the same one; Emma has suffered outrage at the hands of both and can subsume them under one heading.

There is critical resistance to the meticulous interpretation of symbols and images, particularly if it shows Borges to be guilty of bilingual and etymological puns, tiny linguistic tricks, and other playful deceptions. But the evidence has grown to the point of being undeniable, and Sturrock adds greatly to the stock of examples. This one is typical: in “Nota sobre (hacia) Bernard Shaw” (*Otras inquisiciones*, 1952) he points to an idea “attributed to a hypothetical scholar by the name of Kurd Lasswitz (taking *lass* to suggest *lassitude*, or the French *las*, and *-witz* to suggest *wits*, we end up with . . . ‘Weary-wits’).” Sturrock’s magnifying glass is highly appropriate to an analysis of Borges’s work.

Sturrock is not an academic but a literary journalist, Deputy Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* of London. Perhaps for this reason he carries on almost no dialogue with other critics whose observations may either approach or coincide with

his own. (He makes points previously made by Ronald Christ [*The Narrow Act*, 1969] or by myself [*The Mythmaker*, 1969] without acknowledgment. No matter; I am grateful that the principles he lays down so convincingly vindicate many of my own interpretations, particularly my unapplauded assertion that “The Sect of the Phoenix” is a story about the making of fictions and not about the sex act as many would have us believe.)

Given Sturrock’s productive insight, it is disappointing that his study deals only with selected stories and essays; but these are taken from the whole range of Borges’s prose and show how consistently Borges has followed his “system” from the beginning to the present. Sturrock is required reading for Borges scholars, and students just entering into Borges criticism can profitably begin with this book.

Carter Wheelock

HEINZ KRUSCHEL

Gesucht wird die freundliche Welt
Halle (Saale): Mitteldeutscher
Verlag, 1976, Pp. 356.

This is a moralizing, socialist novel from East Germany, in which the rebellious eighteen year old heroine, Sabine Wulff, undergoes a year of rehabilitation converting her from surly, antisocial defiance to altruistic communism. We are shown in detail her painful, unconvincing progress from a reform institute for teenage delinquents through many tearful trials and temptations, that would have made Job himself recommit the sin of despair, to the shining goal of salvation. Salvation being here the fulfillment of her production quota in a depressing shoe factory.

The plot of the novel is reminiscent of Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, in which the antihero Franz Biberkopf has just been released from Berlin prison and is subject to various trials to see whether he can find a true sense of moral responsibility. Kruschel has Döblin’s sympathy for the delinquent main character, but all artistic similarity ends there. For Kruschel sadly lacks Döblin’s penetration and stylistic innovation.