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THE LAST ELECTION by Pete Davies
Vintage Contemporaries, 1986, ISBN 0-394-74702-X, \$6.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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This is a non-cyberpunk novel or, rather, a non-cyber punk novel. The England of the future (1990s would be my guess) is definitely punk, but the technological revolution that Gibson et al portray has bypassed England, and pretty much everyone else. Instead, London is a decaying city, with crumbling buildings, pot-holed streets, thousands of homeless living in garbage heaps, and 24-hour-a-day televised snooker matches to keep the populace happy. All this is overseen by "Nanny," who from the description is a aging, possibly senile, version of Margaret Thatcher and the leader of the "Money Party." On top of everything else, the "Last Election" is coming up.

Cyberpunk novels postulate a society of great technology, where many, perhaps even most, live in comfort. Though the characters portrayed in them are the lower strata, we do get a glimpse of the better life that most people lead. In T_h_e_L_a_s_t_E_l_e_c_t_i_o_n, few people are at that level. The mass of people are unemployed, kept on the dole and pacified with television. People who do manage to drag themselves away from snooker go to state-run discos where they can get loud music, drinks, and drugs. Naturally, there is more to the plot than this. There are the antics of Wally Wasted, top snooker commentator, and Thor Thunders, the candidate of the People Party. There is the whole question of what the Money Party's plans really are, where the new drugs that are circulating at the discos are coming from, and whether there is any hope for the future.

T_h_e_L_a_s_t_E_l_e_c_t_i_o_n is an engrossing book. It is, however,

extremely

depressing. The blurb compares it to 1984, AC1ockwork
Orange, Brazil,
and BladeRunner. Of the four, it is most like the vision of the recent
film of 1984, that of a Britain slowly falling apart while everyone
tries to pretend that everything is fine. The solutions held out by
Nanny are dishonest in much the same way as Big Brother's are--they are
solutions, true, but they are not what they appear to be. As long as
you're not the type who gets suicidally depressed by the shape the world
is likely to be in ten years, I would recommend this book.