



CPD 90



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Contributions of cover art and interior art are especially welcome.
Please contact the editorial address

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* DEADLINE for all contributions to PI85 is:
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* Saturday, July 7th.
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* HELP WANTED
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PAPERBACK INFERNO is in need of a new production
assistant as Phil Nichols has started a new job in a
different part of the country. I'm looking for someone
with word-processing facilities who will take on the job
of typing up reviews ready for paste-up. Anyone willing
to help, please contact me at the editorial address. You
don't have to have a particular machine, just one which
will give a clear and readable typeface after reproduction.

Paperback Purgatory

AND SO IT TURNS OUT that my librarian's date-stamp is endorsed once again
for my failure to produce an index with the last issue of PI. This was not
unconnected with the complications over deadlines for PI 83 and the arrival
of the advert for Pan's new line. Once again, an index to that issue is
available to anyone who sends a s.a.e.. Apologies.

And apologies to Jessica Yates, whose review of David Eddings' DEMON
LORD OF KARANDA I inflicted with gremlins (PI 82, p.12). Jessica wrote
of the Mallonee Empire, "its capital, Mal Zeth, is an enormous city
which reminds me of [Russia without the totalitarian ideology, and there
are rumours of] Gandahar, modelled on our India." My dropping the words
inside the bracket for reasons only known to people trying to type up
copy last thing at night, created a wonderfully meaningless sentence. I
have been taken out and shot.

Ah, but the great attraction of editing any sort of magazine is the
opportunity it gives to make a right royal prat of yourself. In the same
issue of PI in which the index originally was squeezed out (#79), I
frothed at great length about the habit of rpg-fantasy writers to over-
use the word "maw", especially as meaning "jaws". "Do these people not
possess dictionaries or thesauri?" I raved. Try saying that to the
Elizabethan Moreton family of Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire, whose crest
from at least the 16th century featured a typically awful Elizabethan
pun in picturing the open jaws of a wolf and a small barrel. ("Maw" +
"Tun" = "Moreton", geddit?) Abashed, and still reeling, I checked the
O.E.D. and lo and behold, although the primary definition of the word is
"stomach", it does also mean "the throat, gullet; now chiefly the jaws
or mouth (of a voracious mammal or fish)".

I'd still love to read a fantasy novel in which the word doesn't
appear, though...

On to more positive things. I mentioned the New SF Alliance last issue,
and I see that they have a new catalogue out, and new issues of two
associated magazines, Dave W. Hughes'/Andy Stewart's WORKS and PI
reviewer Nik Morton's AUGURIES. Check recent issues of PI and/or Matrix for
editorial addresses, details of subscriptions, etc. More and more mag-
azines are being planned over the next year - the latest INTERZONE carries
ads for at least three. I can't resist a plug for one mag which shares a
name with my favourite 80s band - R.E.M., that is. The first issue of this
is due any time now: if I can run a review this issue I will. Meanwhile,
it's published by Arthur Straker, 19 Sandringham Road, Willesden, London
NW2 5EP, who I believe is looking for longer stories of SF and "hard-edged"
fantasy. Payment rates are comparable to INTERZONE and the first issue
 (£2.50 +30p p&p or £9.00 for 4 issues) will feature stories from Simon
Ings, Eric Brown and Keith Brooke, among others, and artwork from SMS and
wossname - thingy - you know; the guy whose cover is on this issue of PI.

In fact, the PI connection is becoming quite gratifying. Perhaps I
should rewrite an INTERZONE editorial stressing all the up-and-coming
names you see in these pages, because yet another of the forthcoming mag-
azines is connected with reviewer Ian Sales. THE LYRE, which Ian is
co-editing with Nicholas Mahoney, is to be launched at next year's
Eastercon. Submissions (SF preferred) received before Jan. 31st will be
eligible for the "Launch Competition" which offers £100 to the best story.
Payment will be from ½p - 1½p per word; preferred lengths are 1500 - 7500
words. Further details can probably be obtained from Ian at 56 Southwell
Road East, Mansfield, Notts NG21 0EW.

You'll see somewhere in this issue that I've had a response to my re-
quest for help on the production side, but if anyone else is willing to
help out please drop me a line - see the ad. above. I hope that over the
next couple of issues the production problems - and some of the typos,
which everyone who has commented on the magazine has been too kind to
mention! - will have been ironed out. But I think I've said that before...
Anyway, you have an index this time!



Larry Niven & Steven Barnes -- THE BARSCOOM PROJECT (Pan, 1990, 340pp, £7.99)

Melanie Rawn -- STARSCROLL (Pan, 1990, 589pp, £7.99)

Chris Claremont -- FIRST FLIGHT (Pan, 1990, 243pp, £3.99)

Melanie Rawn -- DRAGON PRINCE (Pan, 1990, 574pp, £4.50)

Dan McGirt -- JASON COSMO (Pan, 1990, 220pp, £3.99)

Stephen Jones & Clarence Paget (Eds.) -- DARK VOICES (Pan, 1990, 348pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

SPRING... when a young publisher's fancy turns to promotions.

Two that have passed this way recently have been Titan's "Best of British" graphic novel promotion (of which more later) and the launch of Pan's new tripartite venture into SF, Fantasy and Horror with dinky little spine symbols and blockbusting books. As has been said elsewhere, the launch titles have been chosen for their commerciality, which is a sound move in terms of making an impact, and when the Pan-galactic tour arrived at EasterCon on April 14th (loved the sweat-shirts!) the floor seemed packed.

I'm writing this after reading Maureen Porter's survey of the launch books in Critical Wave and it would make for more scintillating journalism if I were to disagree violently. Unfortunately for fans of blood 'n' guts reviewing I more or less agree with Maureen's analysis, and if I differ regarding particular books it's a question of degree rather than fundamentals. I certainly find Larry Niven & Steven Barnes' THE BARSCOOM PROJECT (trade paperback, £7.99) less of a page-turner, more of a flabby exercise in composite marketing techniques (designed to appeal to gamers, thriller fans, followers of the authors' own hard SF and E.R. Burroughs fans on the strength of the title though what that has to do with the rest of the plot I have no idea). Even more disposable is Melanie Rawn's STARSCROLL, the other 'lead' hardback again also available in yuppieback if you want to save a fiver. This is so much the stereotype dragon-based fantasy novel for the Anne McCaffrey market that I forgot author and title in conversation with three people within ten minutes. Two of whom were the senior fiction editor and publicity manager for Pan books. Oh dear. Rather confusingly, this is the sequel to DRAGON PRINCE, which was published last year in hardback by Sidgwick & Jackson and now appears in mass-market paperback from Pan. Still, if these shift - and there's a huge market for RPG-SF and dragon-fantasy - then that breeds success for the new lines and so long as there's some good material appearing in the future - and there is - I'm happy that Pan have chosen this way of spreading their name throughout the SF & F readership.

Lacking the clout of 'lead hardback' status but all the better for it is FIRST FLIGHT, the debut novel from comics writer Chris Claremont. This is standard space-opera formula with brilliant young space pilot with tendency to screw up on her first voyage. Rescuing a damaged ship only to fall into a pirate trap, she ends up with the rest of her crew drifting out of the solar system... but wait! what's this unknown ship heading towards them? In a sense, this makes me feel more charitable towards THE BARSCOOM PROJECT and STARSCROLL: maybe I just like this subgenre better than the others. Maybe, but FIRST FLIGHT also combines action and sensawunda with the maturing of the main character. Claremont's main use of his freedom from the imposed emotional immaturity of X-Men comics is to allow his characters to say "fuck" every so often but (while it may be pretentious of me to say so) SF needs this kind of readable unpretentious constant updating of its roots.

Dan McGirt's JASON COSMO has a Josh Kirby cover and is set on a disc-world. There are four reasonable jokes in the book, one of which reads like a Pratchett out-take. That's a quid per joke.

DARK VOICES is a selection from the past 30 years of THE PAN BOOK OF HORROR STORIES, with each story introduced by a "modern master" of the genre. Altogether there are 13 stories, including Robert Aickman's 'Ring-ing the Changes', Stephen King's 'The Mangler' and George Langelaan's 'The Fly' (on which the films were based: David Cronenberg, who made the re-make, here introduces it). Later issues of the Pan Book seemed to fall in to a rut, but this is a superb collection and augurs well for future editions. All types of horror, from the suspense to the supernatural, are included, and its appeal is widened by the inclusion of several stories which you wouldn't think necessarily belonged in a horror anthology - but they were, obviously, originally included, and they do, they do... think about John Lennon's 'No Flies on Frank', Harry Harrison's 'The Streets of Ashkelon', and Ian McEwan's 'Pornography'.

What's the verdict? A set of books with something for everyone; a good collection rather than a great one, flawed by the impression that fantasy is a genre for indiscriminating readers of whatever has the word "dragon" in the title or a Josh Kirby cover, but which has potential for growth.

Later books scheduled include as you'll have read, K.W. Jeter's THE NIGHT MAN, Pat Murphy's THE CITY, NOT LONG AFTER, and Brian Stableford's THE EMPIRE OF FEAR, a former Clarke award nomination. The horror/dark fantasy list looks intriguing, with works by Charles de Lint and British newcomer Graham Joyce, though I shall be looking forward to Eric Brown's SF collection THE TIME-LAPSED MAN with special interest, not just because he's an occasional contributor of reviews to this magazine but because he is one of the most interesting and effective of what for want of a better term you could call the "Interzone" group of new young British SF writers. In all, it seems that Pan have put together a strong list for the year, and with any justice they should do well on it.



And now we turn to the medium of the post-literate ("post", as Alan Moore says as interpreted by Paul Dawson, = "following, adding to literacy" rather than leaving it behind).

Today, comics are Art!

The graphic medium comes of age! As it did five, ten, fifteen years ago... but this time "graphic novels" are no longer a novelty, but are becoming a mass-market success.

Titan Books are largely instrumental in this change from the fannish hype of a few enthusiasts to a more general attempt to escape from "cult" status (though smaller - and mainstream - publishers are producing some exciting ventures) and have crested the wave this spring with their "Best of British" promotion.

This aimed to increase awareness of the wealth of specifically British material in the graphic novel field among the book buying public and the book trade itself. Two dozen titles were specifically chosen for promotion to highlight the work of writers/artists such as Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons, Grant Morrison, Steve Yeowell, Neal Gaiman, John Wagner and Alan Grant, Pat Mills, SMS... and many, many more. The two-month long promotion featured a competition in bookshops offering the lucky winner a trip to San Diego "to witness at first hand the British invasion of the American market".

Titan were also co-sponsors of "Strip Search", an exhibition of comic art old and new presented in February and March of this year by the London Borough of Camden at Swiss Cottage Library, who were launching their new collection of graphic novels. This turned out to be a massive success: "probably the best exhibition ever" according to the Borough's Visual Arts Officer, Paul Collett. The exhibition featured original art and printed matter from Rupert and Dan Dare to '60s "underground" comics, 2000AD, comics in Japan, the "new breed", etc. Over 600 copies of the catalogue were sold. Judging from this catalogue - which is a superb work in itself; less a catalogue for an exhibition and more an "essential readers' guide to comics with bibliography, list of (London) stockists, and A-Z of publishers", and essays by exhibition organiser Paul Gravett of Escape magazine and Paul Dawson, who teaches a course on "the Graphic Novel" at Manchester University - the success was deserved. John Wilkins of Camden Libraries commented on the huge number of young people who attended the exhibition. Apparently, it is hoped that "Strip Search" will appear in other parts of the country: meanwhile, if you can track down a copy of the catalogue (no price is given on mine: probably best to contact Camden Leisure Department or Swiss Cottage Library regarding availability) you'll have a superb and useful publication.

The enthusiasm which greeted "Strip Search" apparently extended to the "best of British" promotion. According to Paul Barnett of Titan, the

promotion has resulted in more take-up from libraries and major book chains such as W.H. Smith's, bringing graphic novels to the attention of more than the specialist book-store market. The competition has also had a good response - not surprisingly when the prize also goes to the book-seller's at which the winner picked up the entry form.

What with this year's Comic Art Convention having taken place in the official City of Culture (Glasgow, that is) and at least one other touring exhibition - seen by Your Editor at Preston Library and featuring the works of Leo Baxendale and Grant Morrison, among others - going the rounds 1990 seems to be the Year of the Graphic Novel.

Below, **John Newsinger**, regular PI reviewer who has also written on comics for Libertarian Education, examines four of the books featured in Titan's "Best of British" promotion, and wonders if there really has been a "comics revolution".



Simon Geller, Steve Moranus and Steve Dillon - - **ROGUE TROOPER BOOK 6** (Titan, 1987, £4.95)

Pete Milligan, Brett Ewins and Jim McCarthy - - **BAD COMPANY BOOK 4** (Titan, 1988, £4.50)

Grant Morrison and Steve Yeowell - - **ZENITH BOOK 1** (Titan, 1988, £4.95)

Jamie Delano and John Ridgeway - - **HELLBLAZER BOOK 1** (Titan, 1989, £6.50)

Has there been a British comics revolution? Probably not, but there have certainly been important developments that deserve attention. The range of titles has expanded, the subjects covered have become more adventurous, the age of people still reading comics has crept up, the number of specialist comics shops has increased, the day of the graphic novel has arrived, and there are a number of British writers and artists who have become "names", whose work attracts readers both here and in America because of their reputations and past achievements. What we have here, however, can perhaps best be characterised as a boom rather than a revolution, although there have been "revolutionary" initiatives within the context of this boom.

These initiatives range over explorations in comic format of the personal, the absurd and the political, explorations that if sustained might well eventually amount to a revolution. At the cutting edge, without any doubt, is *Fleebway's Crisis* comic and in particular the 'Third World War' strip, written by Pat Mills and Alan Mitchell and set in a near future crisis-torn Britain. Here we have a ferociously anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-establishment storyline that has broken completely new ground as far as British mainstream comics are concerned. It not only portrays injustice and abuse but more importantly celebrates resistance, a vital task in these times! Clearly there are interesting developments taking place. Where then do these four graphic novels, all the work of British writers and artists, fit in?

Three of the four are reprints from the boys' science fiction comic *2000AD* which is perhaps a fair indication of its importance as far as British comics are concerned. Created by Pat Mills in March 1977, *2000AD* in many ways prepared the ground for more recent developments. Throughout the late 1970s and the 1980s its regular *Judge Dredd* strip provided an essential commentary on and critique of law and order authoritarianism, and it served as the vehicle for outstanding comic book work such as Alan Moore's *Halo Jones* and *DR and Quinch* stories, Pat Mills' own *Slaine* and *Nemesis* stories and a number of others. Here we have three of the others: *ROGUE TROOPER*, *BAD COMPANY* and *ZENITH*, reprinted in the prestige Titan format as graphic novels. It has to be borne in mind that these strips were written and drawn primarily for a male teenage audience although the fact that they have been reprinted by Titan obviously shows that they are also of interest to an older and more well-heeled clientele as well.

First *ROGUE TROOPER BOOK 6*. Essentially what we have here is an all-action future war story that is decorated with more than the usual amount of anti-war rhetoric. *Rogue* is, of course, the last of the genetic infantrymen, an artificial man created to be the perfect fighting machine in a war without end. In this volume he is enlisted in a plot to assassinate a number of targets whose elimination will, or so he is told, bring the war to an end. Not very inspiring stuff and for my money Steve Dillon is one of the weakest artists to work on the strip. *Rogue* has never been one of my favourites but he has certainly been done better than this. *BAD COMPANY*

BOOK 4 is another war strip, purporting to explore "both the battlefields of war and the battlefields of the soul". Not really successful although Ewins and McCarthy's manic artwork is always weirdly fascinating.

Which brings us to *ZENITH BOOK 1*, written by Grant Morrison and drawn by Steve Yeowell. This is the real thing. Morrison's diffident young superhero, who would rather have a record in the charts than save the world has a human quirkiness and cheek that marks him out. Marvellous stuff. Who but Morrison would have an ex-hippy superhero transform into a Tory MP who is using his telepathic powers to get dissident backbenchers to support the Poll Tax? Incidentally, Morrison also writes one of the best American mainstream comics, DC's *The Doom Patrol*, which is well worth having a look at, and is also writing the new *Dan Dare* strip for *Fleetway!*

This brings us to another of the best American comics, DC's *Hellblazer* written and drawn by Brits James Delano and John Ridgeway. Titan have so far reprinted three volumes of this outstanding horror comic. In this first volume the hero, John Constantine, confronts the famine demon Mneroth, demon yuppies, and a member of the Damnation Army. Once again this is marvellous stuff. Constantine is an authentic character and the horrors he tackles are all the more potent because they are shown at work in a world that is recognisably our own. Ridgeway's artwork is excellent and if anything looks better in the black and white Titan edition than it did in colour in the original comic. This is also well worth a look at.

What we have then might not add up to a revolution, cultural or otherwise, although one lives in hope. There are, however, an increasing number of comics and graphic novels around that repay reading. Don't miss out on them.

(John Newsinger)



S U N N Y S I D E U P

Ken Lake looks at **ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S** autobiography, **ASTOUNDING DAYS**

(Gollancz, 1990, 224pp, £4.99)

This most opinionated, bumptious, self-indulgent, rambling book is also an absolutely essential buy for every SF fan.

Roughly hung on a partial and idiosyncratic survey of the plots and flaws of a wide range of stories published in *Astounding* from 1930 to 1971, it also discusses the authors themselves, the editors, the progress of science and technology - and of creative imagination, mankind's greatest gift - in 38 brief chapters, each taking up different issues of the magazine.

But that's just the beginning. Clarke's memories bring us snippets from his own life and works, he reprints his own spoof article 'The Steam-Powered Word Processor' and his own letters to the editor, and he roams back and forth with infuriating lack of any systematic approach through two millennia of science and nonscience. And that's where the real interest lies.

Obviously much of the "prophecy" found in SF comes from intelligent anticipation, or by the extrapolation of information perhaps known only to the author at time of writing. Even these startling foresights provide scope for our minds to boggle - but Clarke also proposes cases of genuine precognition, things which appeared in print when there was no conceivable way the author could have had any inkling of the facts.

Perhaps the most striking is his revelation that Frank R. Paul's cover for the November 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories* depicts a close-up view of Jupiter - complete with the pattern of loops and whorls in the cloud bands around the Red Spot, something we were not able to see until the *Voyager* space-probe sent back its epoch-making pictures almost half a century later!

In 1930 Ray Cummings featured what was on the face of it was a nonsense - using gravity assist to speed a spacecraft on its way - as well as gamma-ray detectors for locating sources of lunar radioactivity from orbit, which was first done by *Apollo 15* in 1975. Also in 1930 the magazine mentions the use of radar for blind landings of aircraft, and *FIDO* to clear fog - both first used in 1941 when Clarke was in the RAF. And in 1934 John W. Campbell forecast using the Doppler effect on radio waves to measure the velocity of a rocket - this was first done in 1944 - while Raymond Z. Gallun described large mercury mirrors for telescopes, a technique only now being tested.

nationalism. This is narrated through a sequence of engagements of Bond-like implausibility and ingenuity, loosely linked by the record of a first-person archivist. Predictably, the good have names like Jonathan Wilson Hazard and Harold Red Eagle: the bad names such a Jabal Shamar and Qumar-al-Rayyid. An (ambivalent) Russian hero has 'a ballet dancer's lean ascetic face'; a (wounded) English hero speaks with 'a languid, almost bored Oxford accent'; while the Comanche super-hero's voice resembles 'the suppressed growl of a restless volcano'.

The pluses of the novel lie in its somewhat naively idealistic geopolitical slant, fast action, and spectacular globe-faring. As undercover agents assume tourist guises, we find ourselves in such pleasant or curious spots as Sao Vicente, Lake Como, Dakar, the Moon; and we learn how Madeira came to be deforested and how the Saharan aquifer was formed. Extrapolated technology abounds - though the luxuriously fitted out flying-boat in which the anti-terrorist boss ferries his elite corps from continent to continent seems to owe as much to Jules Verne as to the future.

Adrian Cole - - - - -THIEF OF DREAMS
(Unwin, 1989, 366pp, £6.99)

(Reviewed by Terry Broome)

Second volume in the ineptly titled Star Requiem saga, in which the various antagonists - the alien Csendook, the psychotic Zellorian and incarnate evil - battle each other and the righteous in a test of brawn stage-managed by 'the Mother', a goddess of Innasmorn, a parallel world where magic rules and elementals exist.

The Csendook are 'huge', 'armoured in black scales' and have eradicated the equally ruthless human race from Zellorian's universe, somehow making the former inherently Evil and humanity inherently Good, otherwise they are interchangeable. The lack of difference between humans and Innasmornians is only explained at the end when it is also revealed 'the Mother' arranged the extermination of hundreds of humans and Csendook so the latter can enter Innasmorn and become a nasty force to combat in the next volume.

The groups are all ineffectual, despite (arbitrarily fluctuating) super-powers, especially the 'highly evolved' elementals who act like brainless children. Rabbits are pulled from hats to overcome obstacles and the scant description is occasionally inappropriate - places called 'mazes' for no obvious reason and gold chains that improbably 'tinkle like bells'.

A very muddled, obnoxious, cliched fantasy with little to distinguish one individual, group or race from another.

Christopher Evans &
Robert Holdstock (eds.) - - - -OTHER EDENS III
(Unwin, 1989, 237pp, £4.50)

(Reviewed by Jon Wallace)

This is the third volume of stories of imaginative fiction by authors writing in the UK that Holdstock and Evans have collected. If there was any doubt that there is a 'British SF', distinct from its transatlantic cousin, then these stories would dispel that doubt. They range from fantasy, as in Keith Roberts' 'The Grey Wethers', to hard-edged SF, as in Chris Morgan's 'Losing Control', touching most bases in between.

SF is growing up. Once it was a safe, cosy literature where Mankind, having survived all the nasty things that we are doing to ourselves now, go Out There in great silver ships to take our rightful place as Masters of

Creation. Now it is much more realistic. These stories acknowledge the fundamental hostility of the Universe. Nothing here is safe, nothing here is commonplace.

The Chemical Wars. Generations after, the words could bring a tremor of fear to a child who could neither imagine what they had meant, nor the world which had preceded them.

- J.D. Gresham, 'The New Mapper'

These stories are the dark side of SF. J.D. Gresham's 'The New Mapper' is set after The Chemical Wars; Ian McDonald's 'Rainmaker Cometh' looks at mistrust, myth and bigotry; the characters in Keith N. Brooke's 'Passion Play' are non-human primitives with a culture built upon the ruins of our own. No punches are pulled, nothing is withheld to pretty things up, to make this 'acceptable'.

He came eagerly forward to meet the Hunter's knife and while he died we each took our sip from the cup. The ground receded, we rose, we flew, and watched the boy's blood soak into the earth below.

- Gill Alderman, 'Country Matters'

The stories in this collection are well written, but the depressing tone may not be to everyone's taste.

Isaac Asimov - - - - -PRELUDE TO FOUNDATION
(Grafton, 1989, 460pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

The early life of Hari Seldon, the man whose theories changed a universe, when Karl Marx only managed to change a world, ought to have been one of great interest. The portrayal of it ought to have been a great challenge. The explanation of that mind's workings require a great understanding.

Unfortunately this book provides none of them: it is weak in both invention and explanation. Hari Seldon is an idiot - alleged to be a great mathematician, he never talks of mathematics; alleged to have developed a theory of future history, he is ignorant of history. The facts we are given fail to support any belief in what he does.

The book begins just after Seldon has delivered a lecture outlining the mathematical principles that allow the future to be known. This leads to his being hounded through the rest of the novel until he finally finds protection. He takes sanctuary in three different societies in his underground life, and eventually abandons his attempt to know what has happened on planets throughout the past. Trantor, he decides, can supply all the data he needs to develop his theory.

What events show us is that Seldon produced his work out of nothing: it was not produced by an analysis of the past, about which he knows nothing. Indeed, he never even seems to know the maths either.

Presumably, Seldon should be Dr Asimov's equal if not greater, yet what Asimov gives us is a something much less. This is a book that does not explain the foundation of the Foundation.

Jack McDevitt - - - - -A TALENT FOR WAR
(Sphere, 1989, 310pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by K.V. Bailey)

A military mystery; a space epic; a kind of treasure-hunt: the mystery (archaeo-technological) is nebula enshrouded; the epic occasions the mystery; the hunt achieves its solution. There is a human mystery, also.

clued by a headstone on a far wintry planet. Much of the novel, particularly the holo simulated re-fighting of a long-ago waged war and the 'contemporary' climactic skirmish, is lively 'star wars' stuff, where all aliens are 'sons of bitches' and their battle cruisers 'goddam monsters'. But the novel has a larger dimension. By specific allusion and overt analogy we are made aware that we are experiencing a replay of classical themes of uneasy alliances and stubborn resistances echoed from the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars; and that such military and moral factors as were involved at Thermopylae are here centrally and motivationally significant. Yet this is no naive hi-jacking of ancient wars to provide a ready-made framework; rather it incorporates a quite sophisticated exercise in comparative histories - one actual, one science-fictional. The analogic thread lifts the narrative out of the category of conventional space opera: that, and a talent for imaginative description, making the suns, planets and cities encountered physically credible and often aesthetically enjoyable.

Robert Silverberg - - - - - THE CONGLOMEROID
COCKTAIL PARTY
(VGSF, 1989, 284pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Sue Thomason)

Paperback reprint of a collection (first published in 1985) of 16 short stories, written 1981-84. Each story is a concise exploration/extrapolation of a single idea or situation ranging from the definitely-SF to the scarcely-speculative, and each story is sleek and smooth under Silverberg's mastery of the tricks and technicalities of his craft. Mexico is a recurring background, and recurring themes are time travel/dislocation, drugs and/or distorted perceptions, and the lingering possessiveness of alienated/estranged relationships which evoke horror or disquiet rather than empathy for a succession of male protagonists who are unable to see women as anything other than tokens of a conventional and devalued sexuality or romanticism. Most memorable story for me is 'The Pope Of The Chimps', which treats the recognition of death as an enlightening experience opening the symbolic/ritual dimension of life to language-using primates.



Barrington J. Bayley - - THE FALL OF CHRONOPOLIS and COLLISION WITH CHRONOS (Pan, 1989, 397pp, £3.99)

THE PILLARS OF ETERNITY and THE GARMENTS OF CAEAN (Pan, 1989, 414pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Neale Vickery)

Barrington Bayley is one of those writers whose name always seems to be preceded by the word "underrated". Although his fellow writers consistently praise his work, he has not achieved the commercial success his critical acclaim would suggest he deserves.

These four novels, collected in two volumes (good value at £3.99 each) are a good introduction to his work. None

of them is new: three were first published in the mid seventies and the most recent in 1982. They do reveal, though, his continuing preoccupation with key themes - three out of four novels deal with time paradoxes - and none show any sign of dating.

All are space opera in the grand sense, and contain the standard genre features - imperial dynastic politics, religious schisms, FTL travel. All of them take a fundamental premise and build a universe, and a story, by extrapolating from that base. His constructed universes are rigorously consistent and it is this internal consistency that adds depth to Bayley's writing. He always follows the logic of the idea to its ultimate, and frequently depressing, conclusion.

In THE FALL OF CHRONOPOLIS the discovery of time travel has led to an empire that rules through time as well as space; the mutability of time means that it has to protect its temporal borders against attack from the future to protect it from being wiped out of existence by an alteration to history.

In COLLISION WITH CHRONOS Bayley presents time as a purely local phenomenon in the universe, moving like a wave in all directions. Two converging time waves sweeping together on Earth threaten the human race with extinction.

THE PILLARS OF ETERNITY is a more personal story. Time is presented as cyclical and unchanging. The hero is therefore doomed to repeat the awful torture he has suffered into eternity unless he can break time's cycle.

THE GARMENTS OF CAEN is the odd one out here since the paradox of time plays no part in this story. These fabled clothes have strange powers over their wearers, and seem to have a mysterious purpose of their own. You will have to take my word that the plot is not quite as bad as it sounds!

Even where Bayley contrives a last-minute reprieve for his characters there is a final twist in the tale (sic) to offset the otherwise happy ending. For instance, in FALL OF CHRONOPOLIS, the insight that although Chronopolis has been saved the same struggle will carry on eternally with no escape from time's circle, ensures a downbeat ending.

It is this ultimate pessimism which sets Bayley's work apart. Reading all four novels in quick succession, I was struck by the similarity with Phillip Mann's writing. Bayley is not quite the stylist that Mann is, but that sense of darkness in a strange universe, of man struggling against a wider backdrop than the merely human, is common to both.

Bayley adds a further dimension. A constant theme through all four novels is the limits of human intellect: small minds groping with large issues and retreating into religious dogma, as in the Chronotic Church in FALL OF CHRONOPOLIS or the neo-Nazi genetic theocracy of True man in COLLISION WITH CHRONOS. Bayley is excellent at describing the genesis of dogma and the fundamental perceptions underpinning and flowing from such dogma. It is this concern with the intellectual/perceptual consequences of his ideas, rather than the merely technological, which makes Bayley most interesting to me.

If you have to choose just one of these volumes, the COLLISION WITH CHRONOS/FALL OF CHRONOPOLIS combination is the best bet, but all four novels are well worth reading. It is about time they reached a wider audience.

Mike McQuay - - MEMORIES (Headline, 1990, 400pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Steven Tew)

Psychiatrist David Wolf has reached a crisis point in his life, professionally and personally, when he is visited by Silv, a psychiatrist from the future. She takes him into the past to find one of her patients who has escaped into Napoleonic times.

Wolf attempts to cure Hersh, the renegade patient, and persuade him to return to his own time. Wolf himself finds out more about the psychiatrist/patient relationship, which is tinged with exploitation. He is also forced to face up to his own unhappy childhood.

Hersh takes over the body of Napoleon (well, that is how you travel in time, isn't it?), and McQuay throws in a fair amount of historical detail, but this doesn't get in the way of the story. In fact, his interest in Napoleon does much to bring the character to life.

MEMORIES is an ambitious book, interweaving the traditional time-travel-paradox story with a vivid characterisation of the protagonist, Wolf. As Wolf inhabits the bodies of male and female, young and old, he becomes less self centred and more aware of the 'other'. A good read.

Clifford D. Simak - - THE AUTUMN LAND AND OTHER STORIES
(Mandarin, 1990, 172pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

Isaac Asimov once wrote (in one of his countless autobiographical sketches) that he has deliberately attempted to emulate Simak's "cool and unadorned style". However... while Asimov's anorexic style often makes Erle Stanley Gardner read like William Faulkner, Simak managed to enliven his admittedly laconic style with poetic insights, empathy, and characters who might have been tough but seldom mean. Simak didn't always fire on all cylinders at the same time, especially in some tacky latter-day novels (OUT OF THEIR MINDS, OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN, HIGHWAY TO ETERNITY), but his batting average as a short story writer remained consistently high. THE AUTUMN LAND... has been collected and edited by Francis Lyall - - who else? The title story (from 1971) is a mellow mood piece, leavened with cool, unadorned thinky bits. A down-but-not-yet-out engineer named Nelson Rand finds himself in ?, where time stands still (or does not exist?). "He walked the magic miles and left the world behind in bitterness..." (p.151). ? might - or might not - meet psyched-out modern man's need for a place "where nothing ever happened, where the moon was always full and the year was stuck on autumn" (p.172).

Of the remaining five stories, 'Rule 18' (Astounding, July 1938) is the justly famous but not-much-seen time travel-American football yarn about Men, Martians, and Mean machines, while 'Courtesy' (Galaxy, August 1951) is a trenchant little morality - no, politeness - tale. 'Jackpot' (1956), 'Contraption' (1953) and 'The Gleaners' (1960) fill out a compact but value-for-money collection. Thinky bit...I, for one, feel sure that Simak's liberal humanism will long outlast the kind of Heinleinian selfishness that so often passes for 'realism' these days.

Vernor Vinge - - THE WITLING (Pan, 1990, 220pp, £3.99)

TATJA GRIMM'S WORLD (Pan, 1990, 277pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Ken Lake)

Born in 1944, Vinge sold his first story to NEW WORLDS in 1965; the original 'Grimm's Story' appeared in ORBIT 4 in 1968 and in an expanded novel version in 1969, and new matter has been added to give us TATJA GRIMM'S WORLD, first published in the US by Baen Book in 1987.

THE WITLING (1976) was Vinge's second novel and has seen several previous appearances in British paperback form. The two titles now join the previously published THE PEACE WAR and MAROONED IN REAL TIME in a uniform Pan series, and will doubtless be welcomed by many fans and newcomers to SF.

Basically, this is 'space opera', but the difference in style and writing ability shown in the various parts of these two books provides an ideal lesson in pulp SF. I confess to having been vastly underwhelmed by Vinge when I first read his books; now I find them amusing for their reminders of a long-past tradition.

This is not to say they are not gripping: whatever the literary standards of pulp fiction, readership appeal is a must, though Vinge's occasional digressions into fannish life must perplex many new readers - a significant aspect of TATJA GRIMM'S WORLD is the vast library of old SF and fantasy magazines carried around that world by the publicity ship Fantasie, a library in which some typically confusing plot activities take place.

THE WITLING tells of a prince who is regarded by his people as a half-wit because he cannot teleport - or even "seng" as the book puts it. Discovering that Earth has a whole planetfull of witlings, Prince Pelio decides to make use of two planet-wrecked Earthmen, like him witlings but technologically advanced, to bring changes to his world. I confess to amusement that the female he fancies bears the name Yonine Leg-Wot, but then, Vinge has a penchant for strange names with often buried double-entendres.

In TATJA GRIMM'S WORLD we meet a heroine who is "the most intelligent being in the world" but as that world is a stone-age one, that does not seem too promising. Again we are given a novel of transformation - so desperate is Tatja to reach the fabled people of the stars that she sets out to so change her environment that communication with aliens becomes possible for her at last.

Vernor Vinge is an associate professor of mathematical

sciences at San Diego State, currently specialising in computer science. He is married to Joan Vinge, who beat him to a Hugo with her 1977 story 'Eyes of Amber'. Vinge has been nominated for Nebula and Hugo awards on several occasions but so far has not succeeded in beating the opposition. Neither of these books is likely to bring such recognition, but he's a writer who bears watching.

Ramsey Campbell - - ANCIENT IMAGES (Legend, 1990, 299pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

"Ancient Images" are the frames of TOWER OF FEAR, a lost 1930s horror film starring Karloff and Lugosi. Those who worked on it are either dead or refuse to talk about their experiences. "Ancient Images" are also the repeated acts of a ritual which feeds the land of Redfield and ensures the wealth of the Redfield family. Sandy Allen, a film editor whose friend and mentor Graham has been killed shortly after tracking down a copy of TOWER OF FEAR, uncovers the latter while hunting for the former.

As usual, Campbell's ability to screw suspense out of the most commonplace observations is masterly. There's an ironic beauty to the way the interior paranoias of his characters interact with the outside world. What - they insist - surely must be a trick of the eye is, we know, something unguessably awful. But just occasionally... well, just occasionally it is just a trick of the eye or it may be just a trick of the eye, and this makes the horror creepier, more pervasive than any slambang confrontation.

In fact, in a way there is no slambang confrontation. The awfullness behind the Redfield family is both more thoroughly lurk in shadows and drive minor actors mad. The cliché aristocrat and contented peasantry is an initial feature of many horror scenarios, but what Campbell uncovers behind the facade is something beyond the evident cliché. As he has said (Vector 151) "in a sense [ANCIENT IMAGES] is a book without a villain". Although blood is spilled in the last two chapters the final confrontation carries as much irony as violence - but those who measure effectiveness in horror by the number of mutilations have been neatly disposed of some two hundred pages earlier.

C.J. Cherryh - - BROTHERS OF EARTH (Mandarin, 1989, 282pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Lynne Bispham)

First published over ten years ago, this tale of divided loyalty is one of C.J. Cherryh's most compelling novels.

Kurt Morgan, only survivor of a battle in space, is stranded on an uncharted planet, and to his horror discovers that the indigenous humanoids, the nemet, are ruled by another human, Djan; a woman whose people have been at war with his for centuries. Kurt and Djan are enemies, and yet they are also drawn to one another as fellow humans amidst an alien race. Kurt begins to make a place for himself among the nemet, but although he marries into a nemet family, he believes that he will never understand them in the way he can understand Djan's human mind. The nemet themselves are divided into political and religious factions, and Kurt's presence is the catalyst which causes them to question where their own loyalties lie.

The story is played out against a skilful depiction of a complex and entirely credible alien society, and the reader shares Kurt's dismay when this society appears to be heading towards the warfare that he has known all his life. Read this book - and if you read it back in the 70s, read it again.

Katherine Kurtz - - THE LEGACY OF LEHR (Beaver, 1989, 205pp, £2.99)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

THE LEGACY OF LEHR is one of those rarities - a Millennium Books/Byron Preiss Visual Publications Inc. novel that is actually worth reading. Not to mention the most unlikely, and (in my opinion) the most enjoyable vampire novel since FEVRE DREAM.

The starliner Valkyrie is forced to make an unscheduled stop at beta-Geminorum III/B - Gem/Pollux III/II Nuadi (take your pick - everybody else does). Purpose: to pick up Doctor Wallis Hamilton & Co., who are en route to the Imperial menagerie with four newly-captured Lehr cats *. They take off... I won't go into a detailed plot summary, because:

(a) there isn't enough space, and; (b) I don't want to spoil your fun.

*"... there is a superficial resemblance to Earthier lions ... In fact, they were first classified as *Felis leo caeruleus* - blue lion cats. That was the doing of Doctor Samuel Lehr ... great, golden-eyed felines with dense blue fur, neck ruffs on the males, and tufted ears and tails... chiefly nocturnal... they can be as vicious as a Furudite rock-splitter when cornered." (p.42)

Alex Stewart (Ed.) - - ARROWS OF EROS (N.E.L., 1989, 262pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Steven Tew)

As Stewart himself points out in his introduction, this collection may well not have been published a few years back, not because of its content (all the stories have something to do with sex) but because anthologies were considered unmarketable. Which is a shame, because anthologies like this stand head and shoulders above most of the bland blockbusters that sell like hot cakes. This is thanks to the quality and variety of the stories included: SF, fantasy, horror; serious and light-hearted.

Several of the writers look at the darker side of sex. In 'Wildland', Brian Stableford's central characters are lured to their demise by an alien organism which takes advantage of their sexual urges. Tanith Lee's 'The Beautiful Biting Machine' is a wonderfully gruesome send-up of sado-masochism, and definitely not for those with a weak stomach. Stephen Gallagher's 'The Horn' is a horror tale about the results of an adulterous elopement. David Langford creates an appropriately seedy atmosphere in his story about a sex shop employee's obsession with a decade old killing.

Several stories discuss the peculiar reproductive processes of alien cultures: 'The Palamino Boy' (Freda Warrington), 'The Growing Place' (Simon Ounsley), and the hilarious 'Mela Worms' (Diana Wynne Jones).

Sexual politics are the theme in 'Howie Dreams' by Anne Gray and 'Iron Shoes', Geraldine Harris's brilliant retelling of the Snow White tale from the Wicked Queen's point of view. There are several humorous tales, too, like Garry Kilworth's story, and the rather lame 'Odd Attachment' by Ian M. Banks.

Other contributors are Chris Morgan, Alex Stewart, Paul Kincaid and Christina Lake. Do your bit for British SF: BUY IT!!

Judy Klass - - THE CRY OF THE ONLIES (Titan, 1989, 255pp, £2.95)

Diane Carey - - DREADNOUGHT! (Titan, 1989, 251pp, £2.95)

Allan Asherman - - THE STAR TREK COMPENDIUM (Titan, 1989, 182pp. £8.95)

(Reviewed by Christopher C. Bailey)

Reviewing these three Star Trek titles has opened my eyes to the fact that there are a lot of good writers out there. In THE CRY OF THE ONLIES (ST 28) we are taken on a journey that very skillfully carries on from where we left off from the original TV Star Trek episode entitled 'Miri', which dealt with the Enterprises's crew discovering an amazingly earth-like planet whose only native inhabitants were children who turn out to be hundreds of years old. The Onlies, as the children call themselves, capture a starship, and cause serious mayhem (as children do!) between the Klingons and the Federation, which almost results in an interstellar war. In DREADNOUGHT! (ST 29), the Enterprise crew are involved not only in trying to recapture an experimental super-spaceship, but also contending with a potential revolution from within the Federation's own ranks. The experimental spaceship is the "Star Empire", which has some very unfunny weapons in its armoury, such as as super-fast, almost "intelligently chameleon-like" (Klingon) invisibility cloaking device designed by Kirk's arch-enemy Flint, who cropped up in the TV series 'Requiem For Methuselah' and who is also many, many hundreds of years old. DREADNOUGHT!, like CRY OF THE ONLIES, is fast paced, well written and seems to fit in with the Star Trek scenario.

THE STAR TREK COMPENDIUM contains everything the dedicated 'Trekkie' need to know about the original TV series, and revised and updated information on all five ST movies, including photos from the TV series and films.

Bruce Sterling - - ISLANDS IN THE NET (Legend, 1989, 448pp £4.50)

(Reviewed by Jon Wallace)

It is 2023. The threat of nuclear war has gone, along with national politics. The net, a global total communication network, permeates most of the civilised world. Outside the Net are communities which steal and sell information and proscribed technology. In the net lives Laura Webster. Laura and her husband and baby daughter run a Lodge (a haven and conference centre and small hotel rolled into one) for Rizome Industries (a Multinational - or perhaps Extranational - corporation). Laura's Lodge is chosen as the location of a meeting between Rizome and three disparate and mutually hostile groups of data pirates.

From this beginning Sterling builds a complex, world-spanning net of his own which stretches from the countries on the Net to the Data Havens and beyond, gradually expanding our view of his world until all the strengths and flaws of 21st-century culture lie before us. He does this with such conviction that we share fully Laura Webster's horror as the world that she once thought was such a safe place explodes into violence and chaos.

Bruce Sterling has created a very convincing view of the 21st century, my only quibble being that there doesn't seem to be enough time between now and then to achieve the starting conditions in the novel. But then he does his thing so smoothly that this misgiving soon vanishes, and we are immersed in his reality. What else do you want from a novel?

Brian Aldiss - - FORGOTTEN LIFE (Mandarin, 1989, 398pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Maureen Porter)

This is a very mean-spirited novel, both in subject-matter and in execution, mainstream rather than genre fiction, and a pale copy of those delightfully acerbic novels of observation produced by the likes of Iris Murdoch and Penelope Lively. Instead, Aldiss has opted for an unpleasantly allusive and joky style which beats the reader over the head until s/he gets the point. Clement Winter is a psychologist undergoing a mid-life crisis, a disappointed academic married to a staggeringly successful writer of romantic fantasy, known as "Green Mouth" (the parody will be lost on those who haven't attended the right conventions, but I assure you that it is vicious, not amusing). Over this hovers the spectre of his dead elder brother, a man he scarcely knew but who now haunts him through the mounds of papers Clem is obliged to sort. This is a novel about creative castration. Both Joseph and Clem have been disappointed men, each envying the other, each wanting something the other has, and each has allowed the past disappointments to irrevocably colour their lives. One might suppose the Forgotten Life refers to that which they didn't have, but instead I would suggest that the forgotten life is that of Sheila, "Green Mouth", who by sheer effort of will, has overcome her own disappointment and misery in losing her only child, become a successful writer, and for her pains been virtually ignored by both men. It is her bid to grasp that forgotten life which precipitates the final crisis of the novel.

I don't rate this novel as quite the success some of the jacket quotes imply. I find it ill-conceived, poorly constructed - the shifts between Clem and Joseph's viewpoints are so clumsy, the novel virtually falls apart in your hand - and entirely unsatisfactory in its resolution. A must, I suppose, for Aldiss completists, and amusing if you like humour applied with a bludgeon, but if you like the novel of observation, for heaven's sake read something with more wit and style.

Lisa Goldstein - - A MASK FOR THE GENERAL (Legend, 1989, 224pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by B.S. Cullum)

Alone among developed nations it appears that 21st century America has suffered a collapse. Isolated after the establishment of a dictatorship, Goldstein's society bears more than a passing resemblance to one's impression of any Eastern Bloc state.

That picture - with rationing, queues, curfews, is enlivened by the presence of the maskmakers. An embryonic underground movement exists alongside a near pagan cult,

the outward symbol of which is the animal mask. Its adherents reject the State, incurring the General's ire: the maskmakers themselves cite the influence of animal spirits and are somewhat reminiscent of Native American shamans.

The Collapse is best taken as read. Goldstein's explanations are not credible, comprising largely of a computer-induced banking failure. And would the membership of that hugely powerful lobby, the National Rifleman's Association, acquiesce to disarmament as described?

Minor quibbles these - Goldstein is more concerned with depicting the development of Mary, her teenage protagonist. Like previously chronicled mystics/witches, Mary suffers from a medical condition possibly accounting for her "trances". Eschewing the path of her maskmaking mentor, Layla, it appears that Mary will end up leading a growing resistance movement.

Robinson's WILD SHORE was better realised, but MASK can still be recommended. I'd add that it may have been written with the younger (female?) reader in mind, but I'd hope this would not be a disincentive to readers of any age (or sex!)

H.R. Giger - - GIGER'S ALIEN (Titan, 1989, 73pp, £14.95)

(reviewed by Jon Wallace)

Everyone knows what ALIEN is, you remember... the film about the thing that stalks a dark spaceship. Probably the best synthesis of the horror and Sf movie genres ever made. Yes? But did you know that the Alien himself (itself?) and the non-human spaceships in the film were designed and partly executed by the Swiss artist H.R. Giger?

This book is Giger's own account of the part that he played in the production of this film. He details the events that led to his being approached to do the artwork, and he tells us how he felt at each stage of the production. It's lavishly illustrated with stills from the film and with Giger's own sketches and paintings.

One of the fascinations of autobiographical material like this is the insight that you get into the way the author sees his part in the events surrounding him. Dan O'Bannon approached Giger to create the Alien for his film. As Giger's account of the production unfolds we become aware that he sees the film primarily as a vehicle for his creations and he becomes very angry at such accommodations as were required for filming. I suspect that O'Bannon might have another view of the movie...

Garry Kilworth - - IN THE HOLLOW OF THE DEEP-SEA WAVE (Unwin, 1989, 232pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Paul Kincaid)

The first thing to be said about this collection is that it contains perhaps the finest story Kilworth has so far published. 'Blood Orange' is a deceptively simple morality tale set in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. The narrator and Daniel are close friends, the sort who would do anything for the other. But faced with a matter of survival, here represented by the theft of a blood orange, the narrator betrays his friend by confessing his own guilt. It is a very neatly plotted story, but its strength lies in how deeply it excavates the human soul and the delicacy of touch in this exploration.

The second thing to be said is that although the other stories in this collection echo 'Blood Orange' in their concern with matters like guilt and responsibility, and in their exotic settings, none of them can quite match that high point. The story that comes closest is the title piece, actually a short novel which occupies more than half the book. It is set on a tiny coral island in the Indian Ocean where a new European teacher, John Trencher, arrives to find himself, because of his position, saddled with guilt for a crime committed by his predecessor. At the same time the native, Nathan, who befriends him is trying to manipulate Trencher into fathering a child upon Nathan's wife, because Nathan himself has been rendered sterile by exposure to radiation.

The scene is set, therefore, for a complex culture clash. For various reasons neither Trencher nor Nathan ever really understand the other, because they are never able to be a part of the culture from which the other springs. The sense of place and the characters are superbly drawn, but Kilworth is, if anything, too subtle in his effects and the culture clash which should be reflected in the clash of character never quite reaches the flash point

it seems to be building up to be.

Elsewhere in this collection, stories like 'The Thunder of the Captains' have all the qualities which have earned Kilworth his reputation as a superb short story writer, though others, like 'Filming the Making of the Film of the Making of Fitzcarraldo' are just too clever for their own good. They read more like somebody's great idea for a story than a story that really works in its own right.

J.M. Dillard - - STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER (Grafton, 1989, 311pp, £3.50)

Lisabeth Shatner - - CAPTAIN'S LOG: WILLIAM SHATNER'S PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE MAKING OF STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER (Titan, 1989, 224pp, £5.99)

(reviewed by Chris C. Bailey)

Having had the pleasure of reading both these books, I couldn't help but notice how well they dovetailed together. In J.M. Dillard's film tie-in version of STAR TREK V, we find Captain Kirk and crew being sent out on a mission to the 'Planet of Galactic Peace' (Nimbus III) to try to obtain the release of some important hostages who are being held captive by a maverick Vulcan, Sybok, who has been banished to the planet for being a heretic. After reaching the planet in Kirk's newly-acquired spaceship the Enterprise - see STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME - he is confronted by Sybok, who has, by using the 'Mind-meld' technique, captured the local town, Paradise City. Sybok succeeds in capturing the Enterprise and takes off on a conquest that takes him and everyone aboard to the centre of the Universe in search of ... GOD! (a sensitive subject, that!)

In CAPTAIN'S LOG, the reader is given a step-by-step guide to the making of the film, from the very first location shots, where Kirk (William Shatner) undergoes some dangerous mountain climbing scenes with Spock (Leonard Nimoy), through to the various studio sets, which include the famous 'Bridge' scenes. As Director of STAR TREK V, Shatner tells us what it took to produce this high budget film (\$30,000,000+) and how it gradually came together to fulfil his vision of how it should be.

Patrick Tilley - - DEATH BRINGER (Sphere, 1989, 373pp, £3.99)

(reviewed by John Newsinger)

A bloody struggle is underway for control of post-holocaust America, a triangular struggle between the Mute tribes, the Federation and the Japanese Ironmasters. The Mutes are the descendants of the above-ground survivors of the nuclear war, primitive stone age people with access to powerful natural magic; the Ironmasters are a cruel feudal elite descended from Japanese settlers and ruling over an enslaved population; the federation is descended from the survivors of the US military-political establishment that was hidden deep underground when nuclear war engulfed the country. Now the Federation is out to reclaim the blue-sky world, making use of its advanced technology to exterminate the Mutes. All that stands in the way is the Talisman prophecy.

This is the fifth volume of Patrick Tilley's Amtrak Wars epic. Here we see the Clan Mc'all inflict a crushing defeat on the Ironmasters and their allies and the sacrifice itself in battle with the federation so that the prophecy can unfold.

Tilley is an accomplished storyteller and has had this reader firmly enlisted on the side of the Mutes for some time. The Ironmasters have got theirs and hopefully the Federation will come unstuck in the next volume. I can't wait.

One problem: I can't help feeling a bit guilty about liking this sort of stuff. The problem is that storytelling is not regarded highly enough. My contention is that Tilley is an important writer of popular science fiction and deserves more critical attention than he has so far received.

Katherine Kurtz - - DERYNI RISING (Legend, 1989, 276pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Alan Fraser)

This is the first book that I have read by Katherine Kurtz, so perhaps it is not the best place to start in her series

about the Deryni. DERYNI RISING is the first of the Deryni Chronicles, Kurtz's middle trilogy of Deryni books, all ten of which are set in the medieval kingdom of Gwynedd in an alternative time-line to our own. The Deryni Chronicles is set after the Legends of Camber of Culdri but before the Histories of King Kelson. It contains the present volume followed by DERYNI CHECKMATE and HIGH DERYNI. The book immediately previous to DERYNI RISING chronologically is the short story volume THE DERYNI ARCHIVES, reviewed by Lynne Bispham in PI 73.

I have no information as to the original publication dates of all the deryni books, and whether Kurtz is still continuing the series, but the Deryni Chronicles dates from the early Seventies, though not published in the UK in hardback till 1985.

In this book, set in the year 1120, Kelson is just a boy, and the main character here, as in the rest of the Chronicles, is the half-Deryni Alaric Morgan, Duke of Colwyn, and General of the armies of the Kingdom of Gwynedd. The story starts with the murder of Kelson's father, King Brion Haldane by the renegade Deryni sorceress Charissa. The rest concerns subsequent struggle by Kelson and Alaric to establish Kelson's rule in the face of threats from several directions, including Charissa herself.

I opened the book with misgivings, feeling that this would be just another one of those "first of a fantasy trilogy" hackworks. However, I was eventually pleasantly surprised. Unlike most of her competitors, Ms Kurtz has put some effort into creating a world where the role of magic is well-defined and consistent. (Since reading the book I have discovered that other Deryni books contain appendices giving family trees, a chronology, and even a biology essay on the genetic basis for Deryni inheritance).

Together with some good characterisation and imaginative plotting, this places the book above the stereotyped fantasy that seems to be churned out on a production line these days. I am therefore able to recommend DERYNI RISING, although you may enjoy it more if you've read work of hers that was published earlier than this.

Katherine Kurtz - - DERYNI CHECKMATE (Legend, 1989, 308pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Alan Fraser)

DERYNI CHECKMATE is the middle book of the second of Kurtz' Deryni fantasy trilogies, and was originally written in 1970, though not published here until 1985. The events of CHECKMATE take place after those of DERYNI RISING. Unlike that book, however, CHECKMATE is not self-contained, as the storyline continues straight on into Book 3, HIGH DERYNI.

I can't see why these books took so long to get into print in the UK, as they are really quite good, certainly on a par with Norton's Witch World series, and miles ahead of a lot of dross that has been published in the fantasy field. No dragons or goblins here, just an alternative world with some elements of our history and geography, where magic is real, but works in well-defined ways only. The Deryni are not a non-human race like elves, but rather possessors of a unique gene that gives them their special magical powers. They have interbred freely with non-Derynis and the Deryni magical skills pop up in the most unusual people, especially in this story.

In DERYNI RISING the fourteen year old Prince Kelson survived the assassination of his father and became King of Gwynedd with the help of Duke Alaric Morgan, both using their Deryni powers to defeat their enemies, both Deryni and not. In CHECKMATE the Church decides to destroy the hold of the Deryni over the country by excommunicating them and placing Alaric's Duchy of Corwyn under Interdict. At the same time, Kelson's fragile rule is threatened by Warin, leader of an anti-Deryni uprising, and the fear of war with the neighbouring kingdom of Torenth. Kurtz makes up for a slow eighty or so pages at the beginning with some exciting action from then on, finishing with all the protagonists in trouble, and most of the major issues still unresolved.

For this reason, CHECKMATE can only be recommended to those who are already acquainted with the Deryni world, and in principle committed to reading on beyond this book. Something that might disappoint some readers is that, although the writer is a woman, CHECKMATE uses women very little in the story. Kurtz, whose characterisation is one thing that sets her work apart from run-of-the-mill fantasy (others being her attention to detail and consistency of invention), had some strong female characters in the first book of this trilogy. Here, however, she works with an all male set of principle characters, with women playing only small parts. If you don't mind that, once you make it past the slow

start, the story will grab your attention and leave you wanting to get hold of HIGH DERYNI.

TALES OF THE WITCH WORLD 2 (Pan, 1989, 376pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Sue Thomason)

First, note the absence of any named editor. This shows, not only on the cover and credits, but also in the stories themselves, many of which would benefit from sensitive editing, not to mention proofreading.

The 17 stories in this volume range from good to bad. The better stories are those which don't attempt to copy Norton's style, and which lovingly explore ONE aspect of the Witch World's rich store of motifs. I enjoyed reading about Clare Bell's werecat, Patricia Shaw Mathew's competent chatelaine, Sandra Miesel's stone garden, Susan Schwartz' failed shaman, and Lisa Swallow's Sulcar legend. These stories have true value AS STORIES in their own right, not merely as evocation of a much loved subcreation, which many of us treasure because it was The One We Met When We Were Thirteen, that opened the Gates of the Imagination.

Most of the other stories failed to satisfy me for one or both of two reasons. Either they're written in clumsily handled dialects of Forsoothly ("Know you that the future be much pathed. You might change the scry - if you choose a steeper trail.") Or they try to cram ALL the motifs used by Norton in a double-handful of full-length novels into a single short story, which becomes so crammed with Gates, witches, magic, technology, aliens, shape-changing and ancient civilisations that there isn't much room for things like a coherent plot and credible characters.

Harry Harrison - - BILL THE GALACTIC HERO: THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT SLAVES (Avon, 1989, 236pp, \$3.95)

(Reviewed by ken Lake)

Harrison's seventh published novel, BILL THE GALACTIC HERO, appeared in 1965 to a universal welcome from the less stuffy members of fandom. In those days of hardcore SF and space opera, Harry's debunking job performed an invaluable service, reminding us not to take ourselves too seriously. It was also very funny.

This, the first of a string of sequels, comes at a time when "there's a lot of it about". Stapstick, satire corn and kitsch pervade the medium, and this example isn't even up there with the front runners.

We are in "the grand old lady of the [space] garbage fleet, the Imelda Marcos," with Bill, Admiral-Doctor Mel Praktis, Megahertz Mate 2nd Class Cy Bepunk, Engine Room 1st mate Meta Tarsil, and (unless I misjudge my readers) already a fair case of nausea. When we encounter Merlin, Mars the God of War and the (careful with this one) Barth-roomians, we are well into the final stretch but it's been a long, long day.

Unless your tolerance level for second-grade puns is running a fever, give this one a miss: it makes Douglas Adams read like Shakespeare.

Robert Reed - - THE HORMONE JUNGLE (Orbit, 1989, 300pp, £6.99) [also available in mass pb. at £3.50]

(Reviewed by Tom A. Jones)

This is a love story. Boy meets girl and falls in love, girl is in trouble and is just using the boy to save herself. Eventually girl starts to love boy but boy discovers secret and it all ends... well, I'll let you read that.

So what makes this SF? Well, the girl is a Flower, an android designed to give pleasure, although before that she was a Ghost, a set of human memories encapsulated in a computer chip, and before that a person. The boy is a Freestater, a warrior, a descendant of the Amerindian traditions.

There is a second plot-line, a feud between a Gardener and a Morninger whose climax triggers the climax of the main plot.

In this future the planets, moons and asteroids have been terraformed to reflect the dreams of their colonists. The colonists themselves are also reformed. The Gardener, Toby, is androgynous and comes from a moon of Jupiter which is a naturalistic paradise, whilst the Morninger, Gabbro, is a cyborg tailored to survive the rigors of Venus. This requires electronic and biological wonders: information net-

works, AI computers, gene manipulation, hyperfibre and more. (If this sounds like cyberpunk it isn't).

The story is told from various viewpoints; there are flashbacks, characters talk about their lives and there are descriptive chapters. Some readers may dislike this mix of stylistic 'tricks' but personally I've always enjoyed mixes of form and style providing it's well done.

So, a simple story blessed with good characters who do come across as individuals, an interesting stylistic form and worlds of high technology wonders. It's a good book but not a great book. I think there is too much in it: Robert Reed certainly has talent and imagination but he needs to be able to control them.

Finally I must mention Marina Elphick's cover which is not only a good painting but also captures the essence of the story.

Douglas E. Winter - - PRIME EVIL (Corgi, 1989, 380pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Colin Bird)

A stellar cast of Horror luminaries has been assembled here, each contributing a short story or novelette. A fine collection, by any standard. It's hard to imagine any genre fan being disappointed by a collection which includes giants such as King, Barker, Campbell, Straub, etc.

Top of my list is Ramsey Campbell who provides the shortest and most inventive vignette - a witty piece about an unbalanced and unsuccessful writer who seeks vengeance upon those who steal his ideas. Mordant humour is also provided by Dennis Etchison's mixture of reality and screenplay in 'The Blood Kiss'. For those who prefer more traditional forms there's Charles Grant's excellent 'Spinning Tales with the Dead', a deliciously ambiguous ghost story.

Horror's "great white hope", Clive Barker, provides an uncharacteristic story, the only surprise is how innocuous it is. The inevitable St***** K**g escapes accusations of fatuity by rescuing his untidy story, 'The Night Flyer' with the most gripping scene in the book - an encounter with a vampire in an airplane toilet. Other big names on autopilot include Peter Straub. Fans of his recent masterpiece KOKO will be disappointed by his effort concerning a child/man who mixes movies with reality.

A nice mix of authors and several 'hits' make up for the stories which are less than absorbing.

J.G. Ballard - - RUNNING WILD (Arena, 1989, 80pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

RUNNING WILD (first published by Hutchinson in 1988) is taken from '... the Forensic Diaries of Dr Richard Greville, Deputy Psychiatric Adviser, Metropolitan Police' (p.5).

Greville - the name sounds right, somehow - has been retained by the Home Office to investigate the Press-called 'Pangbourne Massacre'. Thirty-two residents of Pangbourne Village, an exclusive housing estate somewhere in Berkshire (built by Camelot Holdings Ltd!), have been variously done to death (shot, electrocuted, etc.) and their thirteen children 'abducted'. The most obvious solution (to the veriest cretin) is relegated to section (e) of his Bizarre Theories list: "The parents were murdered by their own children" (p.23).

RUNNING WILD strikes me as a mainstream rewrite of THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS. Someone (L.David Allen?) once called Wyndham's paranoid half-loaf a "generation gap novel", with the alien Children representing the juvenile delinquent 'war babies' of that time (c. 1957), who threatened 'civilisation' as nicely-brought-up, middle-class (Home Counties-type) adults then saw it. Ballard's novella could be re-titled VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED (from the 1960 film version of TMC), or - extrapolating ever-so-slightly - GLOBAL VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED.

But RUNNING WILD suffers from the same structural handicap as TMC. Like Wyndham's even more faceless narrator, Greville is - at best - a semi-detached observer, mulling over dry data and generally getting in the way. The real story lies with the (justifiably?) homicidal children, and because Ballard keeps them firmly in the background, until a too-little, too-late scene near the end the essential why? behind this amorality tale is never adequately explored, let alone brought out.

Samantha Lee - - CHILDE ROLANDE (Futura, 1989, 288pp, £4.50)

(Reviewed by John Newsinger)

A brutal warlike matriarchal society where most men are castrated at birth and raised as slaves and drudges, leaving only a handful intact to serve as breed beasts. A handful of wild men survive in the hills, waiting for a redeemer to come and free their sex from subjugation and overthrow the rule of women. This is the unlikely subject of Samantha Lee's novel.

The story takes place in the Scottish Highlands and is set in a clan society such as might have existed there in the middle ages. Now though it is women who are the warrior class and men who are the domestic beasts of burden. The women practice a religion that is a variety of witchcraft and lesbianism is very much the sexual norm. According to clan mythology, the old world was devastated by AIDS and after it had collapsed men were castrated to stop the spread of the disease. Now any different ordering of society is barely conceivable.

And then a saviour arises, the hermaphrodite Childe Rolande. He/she comes to lead the wild men in rebellion against the matriarchy, replacing it with a new order of gender equality, ruled over by his/herself together with his/her husband and wife (who is also his/her sister).

This is a powerful, compelling novel, exciting, gritty and sensual, graphically portraying a brutal clan society and the lives of its inhabitants. One difficulty arises. Are the dangers posed by a possible matriarchy so great today as to merit the treatment they receive in this novel? And should men's fear of castration be given quite so much exercise? Patriarchy and rape are still the more pressing issues, I would have thought. Despite this, Lee has written a marvellous novel that is well worth having a look at.

Marion Zimmer Bradley - - SWORD AND SORCERESS 4 (Headline, 1989, 285pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Lynne Bispham)

The fourth volume of SWORD AND SORCERESS confirms these collections of short stories as reliable sources of superior Sword and Sorcery fantasy which, as Marion Zimmer Bradley says, "present women as central to their own adventures". Fortunately the authors of these adventures manage to avoid the usual S&S clichés, and whilst their heroines are often swordswomen or magic users, they can also be the eponymous heroine of Dave Smeds's 'Gullrider' or a dryad as in Syn Ferguson's 'The Tree-Wife of Arketh'. I was slightly disappointed not to find more stories with the unusual settings that worked so well in Vol. 3, but Dorothy Haydt's 'The Noonday Witch' (featuring Heydt's heroine Cynthia who has appeared in previous volumes) set in Classical antiquity does show how effective an unusual background in S&S can be. Diana L. Paxon's heroine Shanna, a swordswoman, also makes a welcome reappearance in 'Blood Dancer'. The most impressive tale, however, is 'Rite of Passage' by Jennifer Robinson, a well-crafted, assured piece of writing in which the swordswoman Del and her male partner Sandtiger are hired to rescue a lord's kidnapped son. There are a few weaker stories whose main fault is that they fail to realise the potential of their ideas and peter out rather than having the strong ending so necessary in short fiction, but generally the stories are of a high standard and the book is well worth the attention of the S&S fan.

Fay Sampson - - WHITE NUN'S TELLING (Headline, 1989, 245pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Nik Morton)

The second in the Daughter of Tintagel sequence, following on from WISE WOMAN'S TELLING. Just when you thought every angle had been tackled concerning Arthur and the Matter of Britain, an author comes up with yet another fresh approach. Although I have not read the first in the sequence. I shall be reading the third, for Fay Sampson has brought her characters alive, with feeling and fine skill. This book concerns the childhood of Morgan Le Fay. But it is told from the viewpoint of a young nun, Luned, in the Tintagel Abbey, who was instructed to look after the abandoned princess Morgan.

Morgan was banished by Uther after having tried to murder her baby half-brother Arthur just before he was spirited away by the magician Merlin. Subtly, Morgan's personality dominates that of Luned. The Abbess, Bryvyth, totally unaware of the havoc that Morgan will wreak, blithely allows the young nun to spend most of her time with Morgan. Here, Luned learns about the dark mysteries of the Old Religion, and how to lie, and how to find pleasure...

In its own small way it is similar in theme to THE NAME OF THE ROSE, without the whodunit! The claustrophobic atmosphere of the Abbey is conveyed well, as is the gradual succumbing of Luned to Morgan's will. And yet, for all that, a touch of sympathy shines through for the ill-treated Morgan...

The time, the place and the characters ring true. An excellent imaginative historical work. Recommended.

David Gerrold - - CHESS WITH A DRAGON (Beaver, 1989, 127pp, £2.99)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

Words fail me. Almost.

Every now and then, PI's esteemed editor sends me a book for review that is descriptably bad. Andy has gone one step further, this time: CHESS WITH A DRAGON is in - descriptably bad. But, on the off-chance that somebody might like it...

CWAD contains the germ of a good idea. - - "As I understand it, Mn Dhrooughlorh', Yake [Singh Browne - - Our Hero] began carefully, 'the InterChange is a gathering of many different species from many different worlds. Admission is granted to any species that can maintain a mission here. Is that correct so far?' - - 'Unfortunately so. You are aware also of the responsibilities and (fresh excrement) that such membership entails?' - - 'Information requested must be paid for with information of equal value - - or by services. My species understands the concept of value exchange quite well.' - - 'That is the concern and (antique chair collection) of my species...' (p.17).

But this "germ of a good idea" has been killed off by the literary (??) equivalent of Domestos, to be replaced with... not much, really. CWAD is minor David Gerrold (putting the last nail in the coffin). I did enjoy the free verse (!?) chapterlets entitled 'The Cold Earth' (pp. 38 - 41) and 'The Warm Lands' (pp. 118 - 9) - - in a reverse kind of way. And other headings like 'A Night to Dismember', 'A Glass of Bheer', 'A Game of Rh/attes and Dragons', and 'The Clack of the Killakken' are good for a laugh (collectively, not one apiece).

The last line of this Millennium/Byron Preiss production reads "Yake ran like hell" (p. 127). Prospective readers please copy.

Roger Macbride Allen - - FARMSIDE CANNON (Orbit, 1989, 406pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Terry Broome)

The edited, opening quote from pages 391-4 is embarrassingly cack-handed and the prelude ends on a melodramatic note with inappropriate associations with WAR OF THE WORLDS. Scenes are titled, a practice necessary in some films, but textual information makes them annoying and needless here. On page 201 unofficial west-to-east travel is confusingly printed as east-to-west. The story really commences on page 135 when the main action transfers from the Earth to the Moon, but the book is padded throughout, with minimal characterisation and description, though the exposition is well-handled.

Contrary to the back-cover blurb, the geologist hero, Garrison Morrow (improbably a good astronomer and astrophysicist too) is banished to the Moon after he is betrayed attempting to warn the public that a mining corporation's plans to bring an asteroid close to Earth may be disastrous. On the Moon he gains control of a laser communications station which provides the means to destroy the asteroid. Against this some funny, blundering political situations are played out and further humour is achieved by the way Garrison is perpetually duped, sometimes bringing the book dangerously close to farce.

A competent hard-Sf adventure which promises better things to come.

Nancy Kress - - AN ALIEN LIGHT (Legend, 1989, 480pp, £4.50)

(Reviewed by Colin Bird)

This is the story of a band of humans on the lost colony of Qom, who accept the challenge of the alien ged to enter the city of R'Frow and stay there for a year. During this year the advance ged teach some of their science and technology to the humans who have regressed into primitive warring states since colonisation. The Ged are at war with humanity elsewhere in the universe and wish to observe the backward colonists as an experiment to determine the true nature of mankind's violent impulses. The trainees of R'Frow eventually band together against their benefactors and discover the reality behind the experiment.

Kress has concocted a neat battleground of ideas in the city of R'Frow where the aliens play upon the humans' corrupt appetite for new weaponry. The story is mainly told through the eyes of three women; a warrior, a whore and an artist (glassblower) and to the author's credit these stereotypes only seem obvious in analysis of the book, not in reading it. The glassblower, Ayrres, does advance from neolithic to Sir Isaac Newton's level rather more quickly than seems feasible and, annoyingly, the whole subject of why the colonists have regressed into barbarism is left untouched. The writing is well honed and AN ALIEN LIGHT is good entertainment just faintly lacking the elegaic quality I would have expected from a book with such fundamentally pessimistic undercurrents.

M.J. Engh - - WHEEL OF THE WINDS (Grafton, 1989, 352pp, £3.99)

(reviewed by B.S. Cullum)

"Told with the style & intensity of Ursula Le Guin's classic THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS and with Engh's own subtlety and vision WOTW is an SF novel of the first rank" - This blurb prompted me to read LOHD and I can now say that Ms Engh is no Ursula Le Guin.

(Surface similarities exist: a Federation's lone Envoy/Exile; journeys through ice and snow; portable stove...!)

Although it's unfair to compare the two novels the publicist should be blamed for suggesting this mediocre work was in the same league as the Nebula and Hugo award winner. Having said that, in reading the book, I was able to while away several bus journeys to and from work...

A series of needless journeys are undertaken by The Exile, the warden & the Captain (+Dog) whose world varies from ours in presenting virtually the same aspect towards its sun at all times: thus there are regions of perpetual day, dusk and night.

The characteristically adventurous Captain indulges her own and the Exile's wish to explore hitherto uncharted regions. Intelligent life forms, adapted to prevailing dark and cold conditions are found after crossing the vast river Soll; a dominant feature in the lives of both Captain and Warden alike.

WOTW did not overly inspire this reader, comprising an unimportant series of events examined too insufficiently to grab the imagination. The most interesting feature was the Exile's portrayal, and the confirmation of his origins: this didn't redeem a dull piece of fiction.

Charles Grant (ed.) - - NIGHT TERRORS (Headline, 1989, 308pp, £4.99)

(Reviewed by Colin Bird)

Horror anthologies seem fairly common these days and I welcome the fact that several series concentrate on original stories, although the magazine markets are obviously thin on the ground. Here are a dozen stories from three writers from differing backgrounds.

David Morrell provides three tales blending J.D. Salinger style narrative with urban horror to some effect. Morrell is the man responsible for Rambo (he wrote the FIRST BLOOD book) and his horror has a slight fantasy element but is straightforward in effect. He is a good 'second division' writer with neatly packaged idea-based stories, lacking only the pervading vision to imbue darker elements into them.

Joseph Payne Brennan is a writer from the old school and his six shorter contributions are mainly traditional ghost stories in modern garb. Two of his stories feature Lucius leffing, a supernatural sleuth who solves hauntings

for a fee. The menace is hinted at with considerable restraint in these stories and despite considerable overlapping in content the author's elegant style makes them enjoyable.

Karl Edward Wagner provides three efforts which are largely hit or miss affairs. Thankfully his one hit is the best story in the collection. *OLD LOVES* is a delightfully wicked tale of the heroine from an *Avengers*-style TV programme who wreaks her vengeance on a hapless fan dressed up as the show's rival hero.

A worthwhile series of anthologies even if this volume is overpopulated with average stories.

Robert Silverberg -- *DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH* (Gollancz, 1990, 190pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Jon Wallace)

Holman's World. Now Belzagar, self-determined ex-colony of Earth. Gundersen has come back after eight years to this planet where he had been a colonial administrator until the natives (the elephant-like nildoror and the humanoid suldoror) had been declared intelligent. Belzagar is a truly strange and alien planet, its life-forms strange and sometimes hostile, but Gundersen has his own reasons for coming back.

His motivations are vague at first, but as the novel progresses, they are gradually revealed - both to the reader and to Gundersen himself. But as he treks across Belzagar in search of the answer to the puzzle of the rebirth ceremony, his interactions with the new ruling classes, who had once served him, and his encounters with the last remaining Earth people all serve to emphasise the changes in Gundersen's feelings towards the planet and peoples that he once helped rule.

Silverberg handles the mix of enigmatic alien and repentant colonialist as well as we expect him to, and the questions raised as the plot moves along are skilfully answered as the novel's climax approaches.



Terry Brooks -- *WIZARD AT LARGE* (Orbit, 1989, 291pp, £3.50)

Humorous fantasy, third in a series, featuring Ben Holiday, sometime Chicago lawyer, now High Lord of the Magic Kingdom of Landover. Readable - if you can accept such characters as a man turned into a talking dog and child-like gnomes - but lacks the zest of, say, a *Discworld* novel. (Lynne Bispham)

James Buxton -- *SUBTERRANEAN* (Futura, 1989, 288pp, £3.50)

This is a suburban horror story distinguished only by the polished quality of the writing. There is nothing original in the horror itself - a familiar litany of damned souls from the past vent their hatred on the present - but the care Buxton takes over creating his main characters and his ability to make us care about their fate, makes *SUBTERRANEAN* worth reading. (Neale Vickery)

Martin Caiden -- *BEAMRIDERS* (Pan, 1990, 411pp, £3.99)

From the author who created *The Six Million Dollar Man* (as he carefully reminds us), *BEAMRIDERS* reads like a TV Movie plot. In essence, it's a rather tired story about the pioneers of teleportation. Notable mostly for its sexist and anti-Russian bigotry. (Steven Tew)

Brian Daley -- *JINX ON A TERRAN INHERITANCE* (Grafton, 1990, 412pp, £3.99)

Second in comic space-adventure series. Whilst Hobard Floy and Alacrity Fitzhugh are searching for Floy's inheritance (a spaceship), they evade a number of murderous larger-than-life villains, encounter some gorgeous women and uncover an interstellar conspiracy. The book does contain occasional flashes of humour and invention, but mostly it just trots along towards the next book in the series. (Lynne Bispham)

Simon Hawke -- *THE DRACULA CAPER* (Headline, 1990, 212pp, £2.99)

In the first few pages of this latest installment of *The Time Wars*, we meet a werewolf, Conan Doyle, H.G. Wells and his servant/mistress/wife-to-be Amy Robbins, Bram Stoker, Henry Irving and a vampire in Victorian London; from there on in, things get complicated. Also totally unbelievable. But as Hawke has never allowed that to bother him before, you should not be surprised. It's all good fun, but certainly not to be taken seriously! (Ken Lake)

Christopher Hine -- *CRESTWOOD HEIGHTS* (Headline, 1989, 504pp, £4.50)

Fast paced easy read, the sort of thing people buy at airports and stare at with glazed expressions on the beach. If you like reams of impressive sounding medical/techno jargon (wow, look how much we know about subcutaneous monitoring) combined with what appears to be a complete and masterly command of stereotyping this one is for you. One has to wonder how many more of these "terrifying techno-thrillers" the market can endure. Surely someone, somewhere, has to edit this garbage. (Vernon Leigh)

Mercedes Lackey -- *ARROW'S FALL* (Legend, 1989, 319pp, £3.99)

Final part of fantasy trilogy in the McCaffrey mould - there be "horses" rather than dragons; probably harmless. (B.S. Cullum)

George R.R. Martin (ed.) -- *JOKERS WILD* (Titan, 1989, 374pp, £3.95)

Third of the comic/novel *Wild Cards* fusion in which the evil Astronomer is finally defeated, not without some casualties among the Aces. Still fun, but the situation's baroque elements remain overshadowed by cheap action and even cheaper sex. Not that either shouldn't be there, just that the villain's motives are terribly confused and *JOKERS WILD* ends up the typical book written by a committee. The shadow of the Outline holds back individual talents. (Andy Sawyer)

George R.R. Martin -- *ACES ABROAD* (Titan, 1990, 467pp, £3.95)

Fourth volume of *Wild Cards*, the super-heroes 'mosaic novel' series. The framing idea - an international tour to investigate the treatment of Wild Card virus victims elsewhere in the world, allows some interesting comment on global politics, even though few of the stories overcome the 'adequate thriller' level. (Andy Sawyer)

Adrienne Martine-Barnes -- *THE RAINBOW SWORD* (Headline, 1990, 213pp, £2.99)

Fairly lighthearted heroic quest novel, third of three apparently aimed at young adults, and set in "an alternate Earth". The decent, bookish hero and other odd characters are well drawn but the gods are unconvincing and the mythology rather a mishmash. It starts well but gets tiresome before the end. (Geoff Cowie)

Joel Rosenberg -- *NOT FOR GLORY* (Grafton, 1990, 253pp, £3.50)

The apologists for mercenaries never seem to amaze me with their arguments and this tale of interplanetary military troubleshooters and assassins fair turned me over. I found it unreadable and offensive. Leave it well alone, I'd say. (Steven Tew)

Guy N. Smith -- *THE FESTERING* (Arrow, 1989, 191pp, £2.99)

Another horror book that's more disgusting than horrifying. Cozy thing escapes from the pit where it has lain for centuries to terrorize the countryside (except that Smith's countryside seems to be fairly sparsely populated). The few characters seem to arrive just in time to get - well, read it yourself if you really want to find out. (Jon Wallace)

Brad Strickland -- *NUL'S QUEST* (Headline, 1990, 274pp, £3.50)

occasionally amusing sword-&-sorcery, second in the Jeremy Moon series. Not too run-of-the-mill, but nothing all that special. If you're a fan of the genre, you'll probably enjoy this one as much as any other. (Ian Sales)

"Upon the rack in print"

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE
and ANALOG, FEBRUARY TO MAY 1990

reviewed by Edward James

Having missed the last issue of *Paperback Inferno*, I have eight issues of the magazine to mention: I can do

no more than bring out some of the highlights. Highlights for me, of course, are not likely to be highlights for everybody, and this time round this is even more likely to be true: both magazines seem seriously afflicted with seriesitis, and those who haven't read the prequels are not going to get so much out of the stories as those who have.

A case in point is Michael F. Flynn's "A Rose By Other Name" (*Analog*, May) - a direct follow-on from his two-part serial *In the Country of the Blind*, in *Analog* back in October and November 1987. That was an excellent story about the discovery of attempts to predict and control the course of human history, and "A Rose By Other Name" is an agreeable read for those who remember the serial, with an additional twist in the tail. It is intelligible, but hardly interesting, to those who are not *Analog* collectors. Pat Cadigan's "Fool to Believe" (*Asimov's*, Feb.) was an excellent story, but not making so much sense to those who have not read *Mindplayers*. (I enjoyed it more than *Mindplayers*, actually). Lois McMaster Bujold's "Weatherman" (*Analog*, Feb.) is another episode in the space operatic saga of the dwarfish Miles Vorkosigan, again of not so much interest on its own: "The Flowering Inferno" by Janet Kagan (*Asimov's*, March) is the continuation of the biological puzzle stories previously seen in March and October 1989; Joe Haldeman's "Passages" (*Analog*, March) is another story of the galactic big game hunter we met in an earlier issue - though it does stand up well on its own, unlike the others. Series items in magazines were, of course, common in the great days of the magazines, when the magazines provided the bulk of what was published as sf - but I really do wonder whether they are appropriate for today's readership.

We also have what is arguably a greater evil: the writing of sequels by those other than the original writers - a form of franchising or world-sharing. Recently, in *Asimov's* for March 1989, we had Silverberg's version of C.L. Moore's "Vintage Season" (now printed in paperback together with the original); now, in *Asimov's* for May we have Walter Jon Williams's "Elegy for Angels and Dogs", sharing not only the setting but also a number of characters with Zelazny's "The Graveyard Heart". It is a story of the media elite, The Set, who hibernate much of the time, to emerge only for much publicised parties: a good story, too, if you didn't know the first version. But Williams's version adds very little indeed to Zelazny's classic, except an implausible twist at the end. Williams (like Silverberg) can be a stunningly original writer. Why descend to this?

So, what did I enjoy? Ray Brown's "Tongues in Trees" (*Analog*, Feb.), about the problems of communicating with aliens via linguistic computer - because it reminded me of the late great Eric Frank Russell. Paula May's "The Solomon Solution" (*Analog*, March), a disturbing comparison between the Black Death and AIDS; and, in the same issue, W.R. Thompson's "Backlash", which uses alien-human relations to look at some of the problems of current racism. Robert R. Chase's "Transit of Betelgeuse" (*Analog*, May), with space exploration, "alien" contact and a superior cyborg all rolled into one. Damian Kilby's "Travelers" (*Asimov's*, Feb.), about a woman's chance meeting with a time traveller - or a woman's alienation and delusion. Bruce Sterling's "The Sword of Damocles" (same issue), a streetwise and witty guide to the Greek myth. The March *Asimov's* had a number of good things in it: a splendidly funny poem by Sandra Lindow about a heroic housewife and a dragon (Moral: "Hoses are dangerous: don't allow them to be used by children without supervision."); Steven Gould's "Simulation Six", extrapolating about future advances in the procedures for simulating a crime in order to discover the criminal; Lisa Goldstein's "Midnight News", with its neat twist on the old cliché of the human hostage taken by aliens in order to test the worthiness of mankind; and John Crowley's "Missolonghi 1824" - Lord Byron, in his last year, encounters a being from ancient Greece.

The two most interesting issues out of the eight were certainly the April and May issues of *Asimov's*. May had the Zelazny follow-up from Walter Jon Williams, mentioned above; Pat Murphy's "Bones", a fantasy about an Irish giant with a strange affinity for the natural world who comes to London in the early nineteenth century, the heyday of the anatomist body-snatchers. (The giant is called Charlie Bryne; he is presumably modelled on Patrick O'Brien, a real Irish giant of the

same period.) The story did not read altogether plausible as an historical recreation (Powers does it better), but it had some arresting images. In John Maddox Roberts's "Mighty Fortresses" we time-travel with a couple of German Landsknechts from the Sack of Rome in 1527 to Rome under Mussolini: spoilt for me by its adoption of the misleading stereotype of Niccolò Machiavelli as a prototype fascist. (Based on a misunderstanding of *Il Principe* and ignorance of Machiavelli's other works, in my view, but that's another story...) Bruce McAllister's "Angels" is a disturbing, and (to me) puzzling story about the "manufacture" of an angelic boy by a future millionaire: haunting, but I am not sure what it is getting at.

The lead story, and the leading story, in April was Joe Haldeman's "The Hemingway Hoax", a long, nearly 30 page, novella. It is the story of an academic and a con-man, who fall into the idea of forging some lost early stories by Hemingway. From a quiet, well-characterised and wholly believable beginning, it gradually turns into an alternate-world tour-de-force: a memorable story, and surely an award-contender. Esther M. Friesner's "Up the Wall" is great fun, too: a colloquial look at life for a Roman soldier on Hadrian's Wall, where we meet a lake-monster, a barbarian called Bee-Wolf, who talks in heroic verse, and a fraudulent old Celtic wizard, who may well be called Merlin... John Barnes's "My Advice to the Civilized" is an unusual and thoughtful visit to a post-holocaust America; and S.P. Somtow's "Lottery Night" another of Sucharitkul's entertaining tales of a fantasy Thailand. All in all, an issue well worth buying. If you can afford two, get the May one as well.

INTERZONE 35 (May 1990)

(Reviewed by Andy Mills)

Brian Stableford has won the equivalent of the league and cup double in this year's *IZ* poll, winning both with his non-fiction and his fiction ("The Magic Bullet"), so it's quite fitting that this, the first monthly issue of the magazine, should contain a new Stableford short. "The Fury That Hell Withheld" is a self-proclaimed mythic narrative of the near-future. This tale of murder and appropriate revenge is Good versus Evil incarnate and though I felt that Stableford was coasting somewhat with this one, it is still well worth reading. As is Thomas M. Disch's "Celebrity Love", which introduces the delightfully wry artist Vanessa O'Day, inhabitant of another near-future Earth. Many are the numerous references from Disch; I'm sure I only caught a fraction of them. Neil Ferguson's "One Way To Wap Wap" brings together linguistics, sex and foreign policy in rather a unique fashion, though ultimately there's more style than content.

Two articles: L Ron Hubbard is discussed via the 'Big Sellers' series - mainly looking at the *Mission Earth* books, there is really insufficient examination as to why they sell; quite a revealing interview with Barrington Bayley, however. Having just read his "The Four-Colour Problem" in *NEW WORLDS: AN ANTHOLOGY*, I was intrigued by his statement that the New Wave affected his writing "hardly at all"... Back to the fiction, Bayley it is who provides us with 'Culture Shock', a time travel story detailing the effects of a futuristic teaching-aid on a hominid. Straight-forward sf, crude but entertaining. A better story than that of Stephen (ex-SM) Baxter's offering in the same genre category, 'Vacuum Diagrams' (whose scientific rationale contained, to my untutored eye, a fundamental flaw).

For me, though, the best story this issue is neither sf nor fantasy. Nicholas Royle's 'Negatives' is an utterly realistic horror story, whose very simple central idea has been turned into a brilliant short story, a salutary warning for anyone who indulges in motorway driving. It has been suggested that perhaps there is not sufficient material available to enable *Interzone* to produce a high standard fiction magazine each month, but if David Pringle can maintain the quality of fiction as exemplified by the Royle, Disch and Stableford stories in this issue, then there should be no fears whatsoever.

Ian Watson - - MIRACLE VISITORS (Gollancz, 1990, 239pp,
£3.50)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

A lot of people will already know about this edition of a 1978 novel, as I see that it's already in the SF best-seller lists. In a sense, Ian Watson deserves it, as I did not remember from my original reading that, by chance or otherwise, aspects of CE3K, E.T. and BACK TO THE FUTURE were laid out here first (aliens looking like tortoises out of their shell, for instance, or space rides in classic cars) and one aspect of the novel is clearly set in that Spielberg/Stephen King "let's take the ordinary suburban world and freak out from it" sort of world.

The most important thing about this novel, though, and one that indicates Ian Watson's professionalism, is how he uses an attitude to the book. MIRACLE VISITORS is only partly a space/first contact novel. What it is really about is paranoia, and that keeps the reader hanging on, as everything seems to be due to some secret, malignant, conspiring force. The second half of the book is weaker than the first because it has to start to wrap up the questions and start to provide answers, and the solution is never really satisfactory, but for a long time MIRACLE VISITORS is a book that can only be put down to check that no-one has entered the room without opening the door.

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