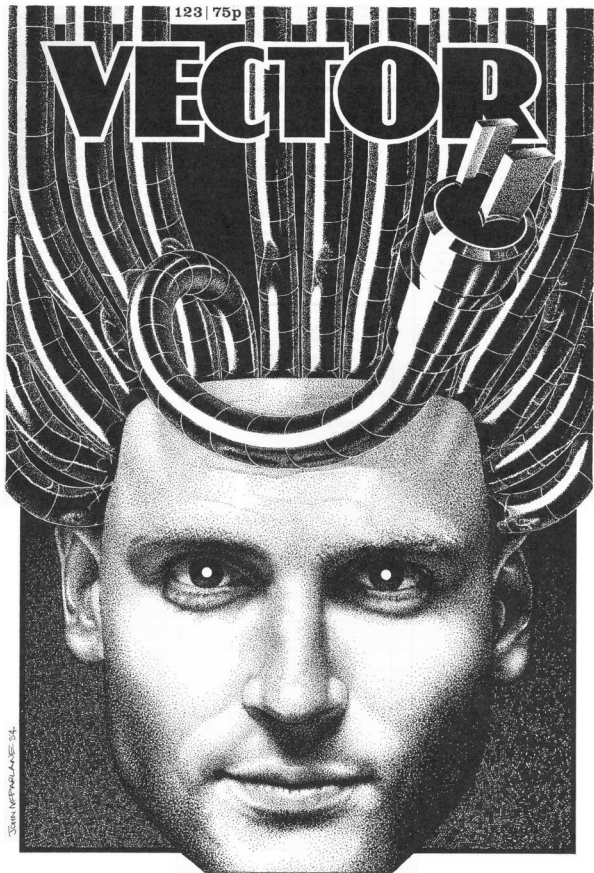


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# VECTOR



JOHN NEWMAN '84

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## CONTRIBUTORS

Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped envelope if they are to be returned. Submissions are preferred in typescript, with double spacing throughout. Footnotes should be numbered consecutively and grouped on pages separate from the text. Contributions should be in the range of 2000-6000 words, though shorter or longer submissions will be acceptable. Vector publishes essays, art, interviews, reviews. Please note there is no payment for publication. Members who wish to review books for Vector should write to the editor.

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The British Science Fiction Association is an amateur organization, formed in 1958, which aims to promote and encourage the reading, writing, and publishing of science fiction in all its forms. We publish - Vector, a bi-monthly critical journal; Matrix, a bimonthly newsletter/magazine; Focus, a biannual forum for writers and Paperback Inferno, a review magazine of the latest paperbacks. Other services include Orbiter, a postal SF writers' workshop, an SF Information Service, a postal Magazine Chain and an SF Lending Library. Membership costs £7.00 per year. For details write to: Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, Lanarkshire. G72 9NA or if you live in the USA:- Cy Chauvin, 14248 Wilfred, Detroit, Michigan, 48213, USA. The chairman of the BSFA is: Alan Dorey, 22 Summerfield Dr, Middleton, GRT Manchester.

# EDITORIAL

## Geoff Rippington

My dear, do you know,  
How a long time ago,  
Two poor little children,  
Whose names I don't know,  
Were stolen away  
On a fine summer's day,  
And left in a wood,  
As I've heard people say.

'No one knows for sure whether L. Ron Hubbard, the 74-year-old founder, is even alive...He may be in seclusion, as Church leaders claim, or he may be, as recent defectors believe, either dead or in failing health and under the control of half a dozen young followers who are manipulating his fortune.'

'Collectively, you guys are in some weird lower condition. You have allowed the missions to go squirrel and I mean squirrel... because you guys are sitting on the public, you're ripping off the orgs. You've just had it. You see these guys standing around here. They're International Finance Police and their job it to go out and find this stuff.'

To understand this org-talk, it's necessary to realise that Scientology is a money-making machine. Members pay the Church for services such as counselling and auditing to clear their 'engrams' so that they're better able to solve their own problems and the worlds. There are no religious services or clergymen. The job of Scientology missions is to get new recruits, sell them basic courses, then pass them on to Church-run centres for more expensive counselling and auditing. In America the basic course only costs \$50 but is looked upon as a 'loss leader'. The more advanced courses can cost \$300 an hour.'

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ARTWORK: FRONT COVER BY JOHN MCFARLANE  
INTERIOR ARTWORK BY ALAN HUNTER. PHOTO  
CREDITS FROM LOCUS MAGAZINE.

With a last issue there is always an urge, nearly impossible to resist, to ruminate over the previous issues you have edited, discussing not so much the successes of the magazine but where one thinks one might have failed. Not that editors are masochists (although it helps if you are) but rather it is a rearguard action against any adverse comments that might come once one is out of the editors seat! (All editors have a mixture of arrogance and self-doubt: "I'm always right, I think?") However, having once given into the Urge when I ended Arena SF I've since built up a tolerance and can resist the temptation. However, there have been moments in the running of Vector which have made it extra special. For instance, the dedication of one contributor who phoned the corrections of his article from the labour suite ("Hold it one moment dear, I've just got to phone a few corrections to Vector"; I hope his wife will forgive me.) The thrill of actually getting a reply to a begging letter; even if it is in the negative! The contributors that I at first only knew by their name and the friend they have become since. It has been an exciting but exhausting 2.5 years and I do not regret one moment of it. I would like to thank all of you that have helped in the creation of Vector and I hope that you will give the same encouragement and assistance to the new editor....he/she is going to need it!

With Best Wishes,



Geoff.

NB: Due to a change in the editor  
please read notice concerning new  
editor in Matrix Magazine.

Waiting in the entrance corridor of London's Sloane Club - now gone slightly to seed but with its tangible atmosphere of an Empire still remembered - brought back childhood memories of curates and colonels, brigadiers and bishops, afternoon tea in assorted drawing rooms and the croquet lawn in the Rectory grounds. And there was always a sweet, middle-aged, silver-haired retired headmistress, who talked fondly of letters still received from her 'gels,' now married to Viscounts or missionaries, or, in one case, to George Harrison.

It took me a while to disentangle the memories from the reality; only Anne McCaffrey's accent saved me from becoming lost in that earlier world of hunting prints and (I swear it) antimacassars.

Anne McCaffrey is a far more experienced interviewee than I am an interviewer; her lively response, her enthusiasm for books recently read and projects currently in progress, her bubbling laughter, made the interview into a relaxed conversation.

Obviously much of our time was dominated by dragons. She clearly adores them; and whatever feelings one has for the creatures after seven books, with the hint of more to come, it is impossible not to like their creatrix who wore a beautifully carved bone white dragon as if it were the locket of her lover on her breast, preparing to soar, and surely not only in her own imagination.

For all their sometimes twee sentimentality, her dragons are bred to be tough fighters; for all her friendliness and fun, and her lovely easygoing nature, Anne McCaffrey is also a hard-headed businesswoman, breeding horses at her stable in Eire.

But in Dragonhold, her home, I think she has indeed become a refined country gentlelady of independent means.

# Fire~Lizards Is Cats; Dragons Ain't Horses

## Anne McCaffrey



## David V Barrett

**BARRETT:** What gives you the most pleasure, in reading?

**McCAFFREY:** A well-paced plot. Dick Francis is the master of the well-paced plot; also Wilbur Smith - the sort of writer who picks you up and takes you on, and there's no effort in it, in the reading.

**BARRETT:** And in Science Fiction?

**McCAFFREY:** I like a different situation, that also has plot, pace and characterisation, and something to titillate your own imagination. Recently... Mary Gentle has written a fabulous new book, *Golden Witchbreed*, it's absolutely super. On the other side, not quite as erudite, perhaps, but certainly just as enjoyable, Elizabeth Scarborough's *The Unicorn Creed*... This is where it's titillating, because she has a witch, Maggie Brown, whose skills only deal with household chores, but in order to defeat an enemy she imagines you're beating up thirty six hundred dozen eggs - and whips him. Or Roberta MacAvoy's *Isa with the Black Dragon*; she has combined the magic of dragons with the modern sorcery of computers, and it's a superb blend. Now she has another book called *Daniago*, which is set in the Thirteenth Century in Italy; it deals with the angel Raphael, who's teaching our hero Damiano how to play the harp, among other things. You know, something like that,

that's just a bit out of the ordinary, so that you're fascinated, and amused.

**BARRETT:** Thinking of the functions of the novel, which I see as the same as those in the BBC's *Charter* - to entertain, to educate and to stimulate - how do you see the balance?

**McCAFFREY:** Well, it depends on what the motive of the book is... if you're a storyteller you can manage to do all three without the victim noticing it!

**BARRETT:** You've said that you see your work as science fiction, not as fantasy -

**McCAFFREY:** Soft-core science fiction, in other words, the science does not dominate the story. It's the interplay and interactions of the characters with the science of their planet, not necessarily the science itself.

**BARRETT:** Where would you draw the borderline between soft-core science fiction and fantasy?

**McCAFFREY:** Fantasy lays its own rules; it sets out the parameters at the beginning of the story. I'm not dealing with fantasy parameters, I'm dealing with



real parameters. Pern could actually exist; it's not completely in my imagination. It's solidly real enough -

**BARRETT:** You've not had to invent the Laws of Magic.

**McCAFFREY:** No, I haven't. There's no magic in any of the Dragon books, in fact, I don't deal with magic at all.

**BARRETT:** Does it annoy you, then, that the Dragon books are often thought of as being fantasy?

**McCAFFREY:** No, I always correct people! Everybody thinks, 'Dragons, okay, Fantasy,' but they're not, they're science fiction.

**BARRETT:** When you're writing stories, does the whole story come to you, as a whole, or very piecemeal?

**McCAFFREY:** No, it starts from a situation, and if that is logical, and the psychological conflicts within the characters are logical, the plot follows from that.

**BARRETT:** Are you ever surprised at what characters do?

**McCAFFREY:** Oh yes, constantly! I put Master Robinton in as sort of a spear-carrier in *Dragonflight*, and he's dominated six books - I mean, that's really taking over!

**BARRETT:** Do you have a strict writing schedule, or are you one of these amazing people who can -

**McCAFFREY:** No, I'm not one of these amazing people - I work at it. I get to my typewriter at 9.30 or 10 o'clock every day, and I'll stick to it till at least lunchtime, and if the creative end of it is not working right I'll go and do non-creative writing of which there is a great deal at this point in time. And then I'll start the next day, hoping that things will go better. But if something is taking off, I'll stick with it ten, twelve, fourteen hours.

**BARRETT:** *Dragonflight* came from two novellas, *Weyr Search* and *Dragonrider*, and parts of *The Crystal Singer* appeared first in the *Continuum* series. Do you find that you usually write a short story, then develop it into a novel?

**McCAFFREY:** Not any more (laughter). No, I was writing short stories because I didn't have enough free time to concentrate on a novel. Then my daughter, my youngest child, went to school full time, and I had the time to devote to a novel - I had eight hours, in which I had no interruption. So then I could start novels.

**BARRETT:** What problems did it create when you start off with a short story that was published, and later it became a novel?

**McCAFFREY:** Oh, I had no problems there because they were fairly contiguous. *The Ship who Sang* - each story ends where the next one starts. These short stories were complete in themselves, but Helva was an ongoing character, so I didn't have a problem there, and her problem was an ongoing one, so I had that as a continuing factor.

**BARRETT:** You're not planning to write any sequels to *The Ship who Sang*?

**McCAFFREY:** No. *Ship* was, shall we say, my voice during the time of my marital breakup, and since I'm happily divorced, and I do not intend to remarry, I'm afraid Helva is going to have to stay where she is. It's my favourite. I wish it had gotten on the bestseller lists; I think it's the best thing I've ever done.

**BARRETT:** I understood you were writing a sequel to *The Crystal Singer*.

**McCAFFREY:** Yes, I still am. I haven't started it yet, but I've signed the contract and it will be delivered on January 1985, publication probably in the following summer.

**BARRETT:** The Dragon books: *Moreta: Dragonlady of Pern* - that's the seventh book, I think; will there be any more?

**McCAFFREY:** Quite likely.... there's quite a lot of material.

**BARRETT:** You never think: 'Dragons: I can't face another dragon!'

**McCAFFREY:** I did at one point, but now I'm getting back to it again.

**BARRETT:** When you first wrote *Weyr Search*, did you have any ideas...

**McCAFFREY:** Good Heavens, no! I wouldn't have killed Fax off so summarily; I'd have left him on as a good villain. No, I intended only the short story. It was John Campbell of Analog who said, 'Look, you've got a rich vein here, you'd better go on with it.' And you listened to John. I took his advice, and obviously I'm not sorry, 700,000 words later!

**BARRETT:** Was he as much of a tyrant as people make out?

**McCAFFREY:** No, he wasn't a tyrant, but he could think. What he loved to do was to get a group of authors together for lunch, and many's the time I went into town with himself, and Gordon Dickson, Keith Laumer, Ben Bova, Hal Clement, even Isaac once - and he'd throw out ideas, and just see what he could generate. Very often he didn't believe in some of the Editorials, for instance, that he wrote, but he'd manage to flip up quite a storm. What he did was to make people think.



I benefited greatly by John's influence.

**BARRETT:** And there's nobody who fits into his role now?

**McCAFFEY:** Not in his precise role. I think, for instance, Judy-Lynn Del Rey has her own way of extracting stories from her writers, ably assisted by Lealer Del Rey. Betty Ballantine was my particular aegis for a long while; between herself and Virginia Kidd, my agent, I developed tremendously as a writer. Without them, I would not be the writer I am today.

**BARRETT:** Do you think most writers need that sort of help?

**McCAFFEY:** I'd say yes.

**BARRETT:** Because writing's a terribly solitary occupation.

**McCAFFEY:** Yes, it is - I'm glad you understand that! A lot of people think I'm mining and dining with my confreres in Ireland, but I know one: Bob Shekley, and he's just recently moved there.

**BARRETT:** When did you move there?

**McCAFFEY:** Fourteen years ago, in 1970.

**BARRETT:** Because of your family situation?

**McCAFFEY:** Yes, I had a divorce, and I wanted a good school system for my two younger children, and also a place where my mother could spend her declining years without worrying about purse-snatching and all kinds of nastinesses that were happening in the States at the time. And it was a very good move; I think we've all benefited by it.

**BARRETT:** And you're planning to stay there?

**McCAFFEY:** I would hate to have to move. I breed horses, and I have a stable. I have racers, but that's not very lucrative, not very economical. What I have now are three-day event horses, which is also not economical, but what I'm trying to do is to build a training stable where the reputation will bring young horses for us to break and school. I have excellent rider in my Derval Diamond - that's her real name! - and it's beginning to pay off now. We take in a certain amount of liversies, and I have, at the moment, five horses that I own. It's one of Ireland's biggest industries, and I might as well get in on it.

**BARRETT:** You're obviously a lover of animals: horses, cats...

**McCAFFEY:** Dogs. Horses and cats mainly. I have two Dobermans at the moment; one because we live in parious times, and two, because my saddles were all

ripped off from my back porch one year. So I decided that I would have a dog that was obviously difficult, and I also invested in a shotgun; I think I got the fastest shotgun licence in Wicklow County. And it's bruited about the neighbourhood that I not only cannot see well at night, but I'm very nervous. Anything moving in my stableyard is likely to find themselves full of No. 3.

**BARRETT:** And, of course, being American, everyone assumes that you were brought up with a gun.

**McCAFFEY:** Well I was! My father was a colonel in the Army, and I learned how to clean smallarms before I could learn how to walk.

**BARRETT:** It's been suggested that sometimes your animal characters seem to display more 'human' warmth than some of your human characters.

**McCAFFEY:** I think that can be said about anybody's good dog. My dragons, for instance, are equals to their human partners, definitely; they're characters in their own rights, but they are equal. It's not a 'Down, fido, Giddyup, horsy, get away, cat' nonsense; they are on an equal basis. And that was what I wanted to bring across, that eventually when we do meet aliens, they needn't always be the bug-eyed monsters of the early '40s. Maybe they'll be more like ET; I was very glad to see that xenophobias taking a back seat. Over the last twenty years there's been this change. I mean, SPACE 1999 was so xenophobic it made me retch; bad enough that the science wasn't even accurate, but the xenophobias' what put me off. This has changed now, from STAR TREK to STAR WARS, and again now to ET.

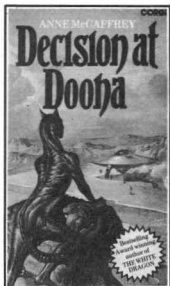
**BARRETT:** Have any of your books been filmed?

**McCAFFEY:** Not yet, but I'd take the option money and run! At the moment *Dragonflight* is under option, and I've written the script, and I hope it actually gets out of the can. It will be an animated feature-length adult film. I've also signed a contract with Lou Schiemi of Filimation for a Saturday morning TV series aimed at the younger market, and that would take off from *The Smallest Dragon Boy*, and use the youngsters in *Hold, Weyr and Craft* rather than the adults. The adult characters would come in now and then, but it would be centred on the youngsters, for the younger viewer.

**BARRETT:** I sometimes get the feeling that your dragons are base on cats.

**McCAFFEY:** No, no, no. Fire-lizards is cats; dragons ain't horses. The dragons developed on their own, and a lot of the things that came out were spontaneous; they certainly weren't consciously based on any Earth-type characters.

**BARRETT:** Did the fire-lizards come much later in your thoughts?



**McCAFFREY:** Yes, much later. I made casual references to them in the first two books, not realising that they would be of such importance. But as John Campbell pointed out, you couldn't just increase the size of fire-lizards to dragon size - they'd fall through the crust of the planet. So what you did, obviously, was to take the DNA/RNA structure and fiddle with it, and as my original settlers are supposed to be biogeneticists, this was quite easy for them to do. So that's where dragons were evolved, as a conscious effort to protect the planet, with a large enough creature that could be ridden, and controlled during threadfall and afterwards.

**BARRETT:** Which is why it definitely is science fiction, not fantasy.

**McCAFFREY:** Yes.

**BARRETT:** You started off as an opera singer.

**McCAFFREY:** Not really. I did direct and take part in amateur productions, and I trained as an opera singer.

**BARRETT:** How does the music that's in you come out in your writing, both in what you write and in the way you put it down on paper?

**McCAFFREY:** I use the mechanics of singing quite a bit, and also the problems, and the discipline; yes, music crops up all over the place.

**BARRETT:** I was thinking about *Crystal Singer*.

**McCAFFREY:** Well, I had a flaw in my voice, and that's why I ended up in production. At the time it was a very bitter experience, because I fancied myself as, not Birgit Nilsson, but at least a decent soprano, and it wasn't there. I came to terms with it, and thoroughly enjoyed being a stage director of opera; that I found very challenging.

**BARRETT:** Which did you prefer - the singing or the producing?

**McCAFFREY:** Probably the producing, because I'd always been a character actress, and appreciated the problems of an actor, and I appreciated the musical problems, but movement and flow on the stage was a challenge.

**BARRETT:** *Ship Who Sang* is also a musical book.

**McCAFFREY:** She liked to sing, as a leisure activity, and the fact that she could produce any type of voice with the equipment she had -

**BARRETT:** It's a strange hybrid of woman and machine.

**McCAFFREY:** She's a cybernetically augmented human.

**BARRETT:** Do you worry at all about the fact that technological development is bringing us to the stage where -

**McCAFFREY:** Well, we already are. Anybody with a pacemaker in their hearts right now is a cybernetically assisted human.

**BARRETT:** How far should it go?

**McCAFFREY:** As far as it can humanely. Can you imagine being trapped in your own skull by paralysis, unable to communicate? If the techniques that I mentioned could happen, and indeed, we're coming closer and closer to them, what a tremendous release it would be for people who are otherwise imprisoned in their own bodies. And we've discovered that so many talented people have been incarcerated as retarded or mentally unstable because they were screaming to get out.

**BARRETT:** So you're more of a technophile than a technophobe.

**McCAFFREY:** Yes. Everything in moderation, especially moderation. You can carry anything to ridiculous extremes, but sensible people seem to prevail, except in the nuclear arms bit, and we can only hope that we avoid the one and improve the other.

**BARRETT:** Is there anything that makes you so angry, or so worried, that you want to write a book about that, as a warning?

**McCAFFREY:** No, that's all been done, and far better than I could do. Better that I should give people hope by writing about a future, to encourage them that there will be one. I'm an optimist anyway.

**BARRETT:** We're now into 1984.

**McCAFFREY:** George Orwell, (laughter). Mind you, certain aspects of some of the things that he talked about have come about, not to the extent that he did, but certainly... word-processors, to do all this massive rewriting the talks about, with Mindspeak, Newspeak, and all the rest of it. But he wasn't writing science fiction, he was writing a dystopia. And, in fact, the protagonist is not even sure that this is 1984; he thinks that it might be that year, and George Orwell has left himself open.

**BARRETT:** Do you see any great differences between American writing and British writing in SF?

**McCAFFREY:** For a long while it seemed that the British writer could not get off the planet, and they were determined to fry, freeze, defoliate the earth we have -

**BARRETT:** - The Wyndham Syndrome -

**McCAFFREY:** - Yes, without ever getting to outer space. Mind you, again I say that I don't like what they did in *SPACE 1999*, but at least they got off the planet. There have been some really fine novels out of the English writers - *Helliconia Spring* and *Summer*, to mention one set; Mary Gentle has certainly gotten off the planet, with a vengeance. Janith Lee; the universes she creates are fabulous, and some of the best BLAKES 7 scripts were hers.

**BARRETT:** Have you written anything at all for TV?

**McCAFFREY:** No. I really wasn't known enough, and never really got into the STAR TREK area. I've been approached several times to do scripts, but the programmes have dissipated. Somebody now is trying to do something with 20th Century Fox, hour length adult science fiction, and I said, 'Great, go ahead, I'd be glad to be in it, but you've left out of your category certain vital people like Marlan Ellison, DC Fontana, Norman Spinrad, Bob Shekley,' I mean, really...

**BARRETT:** Last night we heard Ioby Roxburgh and Brian Aldiss talking about the state that SF is in.

**McCAFFREY:** Yes, I think some of their comments are quite valid. There have not been any tremendous introductions, I think because science and technology have caught up with us, or we have caught up with them. We're possibly at that bridging spot now where we are assimilating the science of the last twenty years, but we haven't caught enough breath to jump from that point, to extrapolate from it into the future. It was much easier, but the growth of technology has been so explosive that the mind literally cannot keep up with it.

**BARRETT:** So where do you see science fiction going in the rest of this decade?

**McCAFFREY:** I don't know; that's not my place to say - I'm not a critically acute person. Someone like Brian, or Toby, whose opinions I respect, I'll go along with them. But science fiction has for many years been cyclical. Damon Knight says it has a twelve year cycle; the Chinese zodiac has a twelve year cycle. I don't know whether it's the Year of the Rat for science fiction or not.

**BARRETT:** Is that low?

**McCAFFREY:** I think so.

**BARRETT:** And what do you see yourself doing in the rest of this decade?

**McCAFFREY:** I'd like to get more into script-writing. There've been some nibbles on Crystal Singer as a science fiction movie, live action; I'd certainly like to try my hand at the necessary surgery for that script. What was written in 1968 would not necessarily make a good movie for 1984/5, which is why I've been very careful to give an outline of what I would like done with Dragonflight. I think Crystal Singer is a little more contemporary, and would not need as many changes, but still it would have to be tailored for the media.

**BARRETT:** And writing?

**McCAFFREY:** Oh, I'll continue to write! I've got another Crystal Singer novel to do. I'm dabbling with a few short Dragon stories. And I would like to do a contemporary novel about the horse scene in Ireland, and the young people who dedicate so much of their time and energies; and really they're exploited very often by the stable owners in order to have a cheap supply of labour. It's grueling hard work! I've mucked out stables at 7 o'clock in the morning, and fed the horses and all that sort of stuff, with the rain dripping down the back of my neck, freezing my fingers off.

**BARRETT:** The SF world can be so cosy that for a writer to produce something totally unexpected, a totally different type of work, would probably cause a great deal of offence.

**McCAFFREY:** Oh, it would cause ructions, there's no question of it. Because people expect you to continue in the same vein, they're comfortable with that, and when you go and reverse your fields their polarity is also affected. That's why there have been so many... you get Roman numerals after JAWS II, PORKY V, ROCKY XIX - people are comfortable with the same framework, and indeed, unfortunately, the publishers, the film-makers, have decided to give them what they want, or what they think they want. I don't always approve of that. You can run something into the ground, with the AIRPORTs and whatnot; you don't take a good thing and work it to death. I would like to see more good science fiction produced as mini-series; they did The Lathe of Heaven, by Ursula K LeGuin, and evidently - though I haven't seen it yet - it was an outstanding success. SAPPHIRE AND STEEL was magnificent; you had to sit and watch everything. They were superb while they lasted. I don't know what's wrong with producers: 'Ah, we feel that people need this kind of trivia, and they need that kind of drivel...'

**BARRETT:** Finally, how do your own family react to your books? - The people closest to you can be your sternest critics.

**McCAFFREY:** My son Todd has been of great help; he's my devil's advocate. He reads the script and says, 'Mother, I don't think you're right here, you've gone change this, you can't have this.' He is into science fiction. Now, when Mayfair licensed the boardgames he worked with them in developing not only some of the actual moves but in developing the advanced game, and he has exhibited it several times in the States. This is The Dragonriders of Pern. We tried to get EPYX people to allow him some say in the development of the computer game because he's had an Atari for some time, and he's gotten inside and changed the Assembly language so he can make it do what he wants it to. So he's knowledgeable; I would trust his judgment.

My daughter also is very good, more in copy-writing, copy-editing, picking up on typos; she often makes some very astute comments which help me develop something else.

My older son is a non-fiction reader. He used to run a bookshop in Cambridge, Massachusetts, THE HUNDRED FLOWERS, and so many people came in to buy my books that he finally decided that he'd better read one so he could answer questions knowledgeably; I think he's read two. But, you know, it's not his bag; he's into Economics, and Marxism, and anti-nuclear demonstrations - fine: whatever rocks your jollies.

My older brother is delighted. He also writes science fiction; he hasn't had anything published, and I can't figure out why; I think he's eminently publishable. He's also been writing some suspense and spy stories based on his experiences in South East Asia as a CIA agent.

Generally the family has been most supportive; the kids, and my brothers.

**BARRETT:** And your kids: are they now more Irish than American?

**McCAFFREY:** Alec is firmly American. Todd prefers Ireland. Gigi sort of goes back and forth between both countries, rather easily, a foot in each; I think she's basically more Irish-oriented.

It was the tax-exemption as a writer; also the good schooling; and the fact that I wanted to put a considerable distance between myself and my ex-husband. And Ireland seemed to answer a lot of my problems. And I haven't been sorry; it's been a very good experience.

**BARRETT:** Thank you very much for talking to me this afternoon, Anne McCaffrey.

**McCAFFREY:** Thank you.



# SMACK THAT PULPIT!

## BRUCE GILLESPIE



Elton T. Elliott wrote two articles for *Science Fiction Review* (No. 44 and 45) in his column 'Raising Hackles'. The articles appeared under the general title of 'Fantasy as Cancer'. I did not notice them when they first appeared, but turned back to find them only when I saw how strenuously *SFR* readers agreed or disagreed with Elliott.

That title caught my eye: 'Fantasy as Cancer'. Ah hah, I said to myself (I say Ah hah! to myself quite often when nobody's listening). Ah hah! Somebody else is sick of what's happened to science fiction. It's not just me. I didn't stop reading science fiction - well, nearly stopped - just because of a midlife crisis, or getting married, or terminal alcoholic poisoning. It's the fault of science fiction as well. Maybe the rot's not just between my ears; maybe it's between the book covers as well.

So I leapt to the bookshelf, to the pile of partly read fanzines. The pile collapsed on me. I picked myself up, dusted myself off, and found Elton Elliott's articles in *SFR*. I read them. I decided that yes, he is partly right, but I don't agree with him.

It is always difficult to summarise somebody else's argument. A few quotes from 'Fantasy as Cancer', both parts, gives the drift of Elliott's argument better than any summary of mine:

- \* 'Fantasy is a cancer attacking the SF field, drinking away its precious bodily fluids. 'Do you ever notice when you go to buy SF, how much of what is marketed as science fiction is really fantasy? I have. When I started reading SF there was a good chance that when you picked up a book labelled SF it was science fiction. It had something to do with knowledge, the empirical method and oftentimes \*shock\* even science.'
- \* 'Today the SF field is quite different. The bookstore shelves abound with fantasy and sword-n-sorcery.... - the science fiction book is a rarity.'
- \* 'Norman Spinrad has commented that the takeover of the entertainment media by corporate conglomerates has had a lowest-common-denominator effect on movies/TV and SF... Fantasy is certainly the lowest common denominator of SF.'
- \* 'The current popularity of fantasy ... is a reaction against technology. Most of the editors new to SF, and a lot that aren't, are sub-consciously frightened by technology (as are most readers and others). Most have a Liberal Arts background...'
- \* 'Countless times I've been in stores or at clubs when SF was brought up, and many people said that they used to read SF but the current stuff just wasn't as good. When pressed, most admitted that it was the fantasy which they detested and there is so much of it today that they can't be sure of buying science fiction when they see SF or science fiction on the spine of a book, so rather than hassle, most just stop reading SF; others only read a few authors they can trust.'
- \* 'One of the crucial factors underlying all of literature is how the characters deal with reality... In fantasy when the character gets into trouble he mutters some vital incantation and viola ((sic)) a magic genie

appears and solves all his problems, or he mutters the correct magical spell and his troubles vanish. In Science Fiction the character enters a new situation and has to extricate himself by dint of reason - the accumulated knowledge stored up though a lifetime of learning and experience... This division goes far deeper than mere dragons versus alien trappings; it is at base a completely opposite way of viewing reality itself.'

- \* 'Science fiction at its best looks forward to the future, based on present knowledge and extrapolation, always keeping in mind the lessons, examples and experience garnered from the past. Science Fiction tainted by fantasy seems to ignore the future, avoid the present, and view the past through nostalgic rose-coloured glasses. In essence, Science Fiction bastardized by fantasy is extremely limited in scope and suffers what I call Nostalgia for Yesterday's Tomorrow at best. Nostalgia for Yesterday's Yesterday at worst... (Bastard SF is also a lot easier to write than straight Science Fiction).'
- \* 'In summation, Science Fiction poisoned by Fantasy values is left weakened and emasculated, unable to deal with the harsh realities of our technological age, not to mention the problems posed by a rapidly shrinking base of literate consumers.'

Smack that pulpit, Elton T. Elliott, bang fist against fist, raise the hand to heaven, and hope to God that God's on your side; call the faithful away from sin, and back to the True Way.

There are sections of Elliott's article where I feel I'm being treated to the fine old sermons which Pastor Peter Retchford bellowed at us in a gospel tent in the mid-1950s. Good sermons are stirring, and there are times when you catch yourself going rah, rah, along with the preacher.

Yes, the trouble with Elliott's argument is that, in a perverse secret corner of my heart (the corner in which I sometimes still sit reading science fiction) I find myself wanting to agree with him. Wouldn't it be nice if...? But I'm getting ahead of myself.

The basis of Elliott's argument is that many fantasy books are mislabelled as Science Fiction. It doesn't take much checking of the shelves of any bookshop to confirm that this fact is correct. Dragons, castles, wizards, knights-in-armour - all these elements from the most hackneyed fantasy literature have littered the covers of 'Science Fiction' books during the last decade.

Elton Elliott does not consider that publishers put them there because pictures of wizards and whatnots sold more books than spaceships and aliens; that indeed, many readers had long since got sick of boring old Science Fiction, and wanted something with a bit more life in it.

Elton Elliott's argument is lopsided. The sins he ascribes to fantasy-masquerading-as-SF can be verified by picking up any one of these strange hybrid books and reading it. But where was all that great SF which was replaced by fantasy?

'The current popularity of fantasy,' says Elliott, 'is a reaction against technology.' But Science Fiction has been in revolt against technology, or science, for a long time. Either SF writers were, quite properly, warning against trends in their own society, or SF writers were quite willing to produce technological gimmicks which produced results as fake as the magical spells of fantasy.



Science Fiction has 'a completely opposite way of viewing reality itself', opposite from that of fantasy. But has it? I find it hard to produce counter-examples to destroy Elliott's argument, because he does not provide his own examples. Most SF books, especially most of the famous ones from the Golden Age of the 1940s and 1950s, rely on some fantasy premise to tidy up the plot. Most of SF's gimmicks - time travel, telepathy, telekinesis, anti-gravity - are fantasy gimmicks. They are not dressed-up-fairy-princess magic, but they are magic all the same. I find it very difficult to think of a famous SF book where 'the (main) character enters a new situation and has to extricate himself by dint of reason'. Usually he - usually a he in Science Fiction - gets out of a situation by firing a gun or socking someone on the jaw. (Elliott does not deal with the incidence of crude violence in both SF and fantasy.) Or someone rescues him. It's all magic: different wand, that's all.

Elliott's strongest argument is his delineation of the way in which fantasy looks backward, often to a past which has been ludicrously idealized. Indeed, it is this aspect of fantasy which has most seriously undermined Science Fiction. Even those SF books which still claim to be SF often point 'forward' to a simplified, primitive future. Aldiss does this with his fabulously best-selling *Helliconia*; Gene Wolfe does it with his even more fabulously best-selling work of the New Sun.

But does Science Fiction talk about the future? Did it ever talk about the future? An argument on this point could fill out an encyclopedia as long as Peter Nicholls' and Arthur C. Clarke's put together. I think there was a time during the Golden Age when SF writers imagined themselves to be imagining the future, and that science and technology decided the shape of that future. I don't think SF writers have imagined themselves to be doing any such thing for quite some time. Elton Elliott does not ask himself why people have been turning backwards. Is it because they, and their writers, don't believe there is a future ahead of us? This would be a reasonable assumption, after all. If you don't really believe in a future, then you want an idealized past to wash away the dangerous elements of today. People who are choosing fantasy over SF are not fools, but they may be jaded. Cynicism, on the other hand, is a quality which one might attribute to some writers, who pretend to be writing about some technologically based future which of course will never come true.

If you find all this very generalised, I'm sorry. Elton Elliott does not provide many examples to prove his case, and I don't have much space, either. I do want to suggest that Elliott has smelled out a serious problem, but that his sense of smell has not led him to the cause of the pong. The pong, needless to say, is not fantasy. I remember how fantasy crept into the well-guarded halls of Science Fiction. Elton Elliott does not. Fantasy came in because there was previous little in Science Fiction worth reading. The one preceded the other. There were two movements during the late 1960s: New Wave and Adult Fantasy. New Wave was literate Science Fiction, by and large, and the readers liked it for only a few years. Most of its practitioners have been forced onto the dole or into the executive offices of insurance companies. Ballantine's Adult Fantasy books, on the other hand, were very popular. Ballantine revived a host of books which had been out of print for many years. Many of them were literate, in an ornate, succulent way quite foreign to the literacy of the New

Wave books. New writers appeared, often from children's literature, who could write better than the 'classic' writers. Alan Garner, Ursula Le Guin, Susan Cooper, and William Kayne are names that spring to mind. It was an exciting time, and I liked many of these books better than any of the SF books of the time.

However, as Elton Elliott should have said, fantasy itself changed very rapidly during the 1970s. The good writers were still appearing occasionally, but they were almost forced out by a vast array of hacks who wrote one formula fantasy story after another. And many of their books were labelled as Science Fiction, as Elliott says.

But what Elliott cannot establish is that Science Fiction, as a genre, is lurking there in the wings, waiting a chance to return in all its holiness and gloriousness. It's dead, Mr. Elliott, because it died before the revival of fantasy in the late 1960s. Even if you are quite correct, and SF has some connections with sweet reason, and the difficult problems of our age, and resourceful heroes (and even some heroic heroes), you cannot prove that anybody can still write it. Not people who call themselves SF writers, that is.

Which is where I came back to where I meant to start. This article is, of course, a footnote to a piece I wrote last year, 'Why I No Longer Read Science Fiction (Or Hardly Ever)'. That was a psychological piece which told how I kicked an addiction without meaning to. I left other people to work out whether SF itself should not be read. That's not a judgement I can make for any person other than myself. But I can assert that Science Fiction, of the sort Elton J. Elliott and I might like to read,

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hardly exists under that label. Neither does fantasy, although the fantasy genre began so promisingly in the late 1960s. Both have melted together into the slag heap of escapist cliché. They have both become merely genres, merely throwaway items which cost a lot and give little pleasure.

But you can still read good Science Fiction. And good fantasy. Just don't look for them under the labels 'Science Fiction' and 'Fantasy'. Elton Elliott wants us to believe they are like two dogs at each other's throats, fighting it out. Not so. They are both toothless, moribund. No contest.

## ACT 1, SCENE 1.

Chris Bailey

[A THEATRE OF TIMESMITHS by GARRY KILWORTH Gollancz 1984]  
[185pp., £7.95 ISBN 0-575-03411-4]

First City, the setting for Garry Kilworth's latest novel, is not so much a township as a concentration camp, a collection of identical grey blockhouses beneath a dome which is embedded within a cone of kilometres-thick ice, its vital services maintained by a querulous computer, the frustrations of the inmates kept in check by a police force under the command of a sadistic megalomaniac. Nobody has ever escaped; over the years, thousands have died in the attempt. Life is a day-to-day triumph over cold, hunger and brutality.

The twentieth century's spiritual black spots inform this vision but, as other critics have noted, it is also a closed world in the classic mould of science fiction, the escape from this closed world being achieved through the winning of knowledge, or what we term a conceptual breakthrough.

The need to establish the framework for this gives the first few chapters of *A Theatre of Timesmiths* a stilted quality, Kilworth formally introducing the characters by means of their functions within the device. Morag Mackenzie, the central character, appears on the first page:

'She hated (First City) because she had a restless, curious spirit and the life style the city imposed upon that spirit was claustrophobic, crushing and promised a bleak future.'

Ben Blakely, her companion-to-be, is introduced in terms of a similar monomania, and the police chief, Rawenberg, through his harshness and cruelty. One thinks (not too fancifully, considering the novel's title) of Act 1, Scene 1, of a Jacobean tragedy, the cuckold striding on and swearing revenge on someone as yet unknown to the audience.

There is a conflict here between the ritual demands of the drama played out on this limited stage and the reader's expectations of the way characters should be presented in novels. Given the artificiality of the opening scenes, what emerges, happily, is a very rewarding novel. Garry Kilworth intelligently transforming First City from an SF device into an isolation ward for the examination of human behaviour.

One of the themes of the book, for example, is illusion-and-reality. On the face of it, this has to do with the 'timesmiths' of the title, people who can 'manipulate minds to produce illusions and dreams that are as much reality as they are fantasy to the recipients'. Yet, although their mysteries help shape the conclusion, the timesmiths as such scarcely feature in the body of the novel. Rather, their activities are mirrored in the attitudes of the characters. People assume postures, manipulate their own minds in order to create an identity. Feverle, one of the mysterious Five who hold the population in thrall, is revealed to be as desperate as anyone else to find a way out. The central computer takes on a random variety of personae. The entire citizenry bases futile hopes on the coming of a 'Messiah'. It becomes significant that Morag and Ben have been presented so baldly, for they have revealed their truest, deepest selves from the outset, while once Rawenberg's identity is stripped, he is seen to be

nothing.

Most importantly, this is a book about prisons. First City is a physical prison, obviously; it is also the prison of determinism. Things have always been the same and they always will be. The preordination is only broken with the freeing of the mind from the prison of its own creation. The heroine is told, "Those places folded themselves around your thoughts, Morag. You were the Maker". There is as clear an expression of the notion of the God in Man as you could wish; a god which can impose deterministic futurity or, instead, take on the responsibility of free-will. The conclusion to the book emphasises that the release into genuine free-will is not achieved through any manner of re-generation self-liberation but is a collective, social phenomenon. If Morag is a messiah then she is so only as a figurehead. We can all be timesmiths, Kilworth is saying, together creating the stage on which we play.

The above stresses only one interpretation of a complex novel which may yield other riches to other readers; also, it sounds unduly dry and solemn, which is unfair to a book that mixes incident aplenty in with the intelligence. The characters are firmly and likeably drawn, coming to overflow the confines of their functions and to earn the reader's concern - Morag's doubts, Ben's loyalty, Feverle's care, are real and vital. This is, additionally, Kilworth's best-paced novel so far. Nothing is more tiresome than the relentless pulling of rabbits out of hats, but here the author measures out his revelations with great facility, and although First City is scarcely a promising stage for high drama, enough raw excitement - a riot, a scene in a torture cell, an ascent by balloon - is introduced to keep the narrative moving. And the novel is neatly written. Kilworth, I feel, is not destined to be a great prose stylist, but his descriptions of the city often attain a mournful lyricism, and the creations of Morag's mind in the second half of the novel, a weird intensity.

On the inside flap the publishers aver that this is 'undoubtedly Garry Kilworth's best novel to date'. One would not expect them to say otherwise, but I am not disposed to disagree, other than to amend to 'best, because most complete'. An important stage in Morag's progress is passed when she comes to make up her first story, rather than merely recounting the ancient stories that are the norm in First City. The story is inept, provoking the reader's wry amusement, but Morag's imagination has been liberated; as too has Garry Kilworth's in the novel at large, to considerable effect.

## Who Dares To Fail?

Paul Kincaid

[1982, JANINE by ALASDAIR GRAY Jonathan Cape, 1984 £8.95]

It is rare these days that one has the opportunity of praising a publisher, all too often they do no more than the minimum required to produce a book. Cape, however, have lavished care and, I would guess, not a little money on making *1982, Janine* a book that is pleasant to own. Part of this care has been dictated by the novel, of course. Chapter 11 is a pyrotechnic display in which Jack the hero, at the height of his fantasising, engages in a dialogue with God. This is represented by a dizzying array of type sizes and faces criss-crossing each other on the page. It is not often that art director and designer, typesetters and proofreader receive an acknowledgement from the author, but in this case they do, and they deserve it.

But Chapter 11 is not the only example of publishing care and attention. I cannot remember the last time I removed the dust jacket of a book to find the hard cover decorated in gold block with the author's cover design, a couple of lines of verse, and the YA pattern that is one of the features of the book. *1982, Janine* is a return to the great days of book production, and I can only hope that other publishers will follow suit.

As for the novel itself, it is something I entered with considerable trepidation. *Janine* was brilliant, but I couldn't see how Gray could follow it, except with a pale imitation of that first novel. I needn't have worried. *1982, Janine* is conclusive proof that Alasdair

Gray is a novelist of considerable imaginative power and originality. He has been compared, most frequently, to James Joyce, a comparison that I consider invidious; but he certainly displays Joyce's bold and innovative approach to the novel, and leaves far too many of his contemporaries looking staid and rather sick.

The novel takes place during one night in a dingy hotel bedroom where the hero, Jack - alcoholic, middle-aged, lonely and almost suicidal - fantasises and masturbates. The fantasies, recounted in some detail during the early chapters, are as near pornographic as you are likely to find outside plain covers. Clearly there is an intention to shock here. Gray apparently wrote to right-wing critic Roger Scruton asking him to condemn the book in order to increase its notoriety.

Anyone, however, who sees only the sexual fantasies on the surface is missing the real strength and purpose of the book. Because these slowly reveal themselves to be the doorway into the soul of the man. Jack has to hold on desperately to his dreams of domination because memories of his real and unhappy life continually break through. Eventually he proves unequal to the struggle.

Haltingly during the course of the novel, then at length when God intrudes into the fantasies, we learn of Jack's childhood with undemonstrative parents so that he is unable to reveal, or even admit, the love he has for his father. Then there is his relationship with Denny, a girl he eventually dismisses through misplaced pride, but who provides the only time in his life when he is truly happy. Finally comes his marriage to Helen, a sterile, awkward affair. Only on this night of nights, through the medium of his fantasies, does he realise she loved him after all.

It is clear from the start that this is the story of a weak and rather unprepossessing character. But as the story progresses we not only learn how his weaknesses have blighted his life, we also discover that he is not so unpleasant after all. Jack is everyman, and his story simply illustrates the social, political and psychological mess we all make of our lives.

In bald outline like this it may seem that the story is rather dreary and depressing. In fact the opposite is the case. Gray's prose style is never less than crisp and readable, and at its best, which is achieved with astounding regularity throughout this novel, it is a flood that sweeps the reader away with it, so rich and vivid and overwhelming. What is more, the story, buoyed up by arousal and salaciousness throughout its early chapters, proves in the long run to be a tale of hope and good humour. I found myself caught within the personality of Jack almost from the word go, and yet the novel, having led me unrelentingly through the trough of despair, left me feeling better than many a more obviously optimistic work.

I find myself struggling to do justice to an extraordinary novel. I have tried to give an impression of the main thrust of the novel, but the more I describe, the more I find I have left unsaid. It is, for a start, a very funny book. Not as outrageously so as *Lanark* perhaps, but you should certainly find yourself smiling throughout much of its length. It is also a committed book. *Lanark* painted a picture of Glasgow that was more vivid than any other fictional portrait I have encountered. 1982, *Janine* tells you of the political frustrations involved in being a Scot. The main action of the novel covers the last three decades, and underscoring the personal decline of the hero, Gray vividly points up the political and economic decline of his country. So much so that by the end of the book I was more convinced than I have ever been before of the justice of the Scottish Nationalist cause.

Erotic, humorous, political, one of the saddest and yet most inspiring portraits of a human being I have encountered; all of this still fails to present a complete portrait of the book. One of the most engaging things about *Lanark* was the way it ignored every literary norm in order to present something totally fresh and invigorating. That sense of linguistic iconoclasm, of setting out to use language in a way that works for the story regardless of literary convention, is present in this novel so that it becomes an exciting adventure to read it. The sort of typographical experimentation that marks Chapter 11, for instance, has been seen before in the 1960's stories of Harlan Ellison and Michael Butterworth among others but rarely has it been employed with such panache or such success.

It would be wrong to classify this story as science fiction, yet it is impossible to separate it completely from the genre. Particularly during Chapter 12, which occupies a good third of the novel, there are flights of

fancy and visionary episodes that can only be described as SF. Indeed, Chris Boyce is one of the people who is mentioned in the acknowledgements at the end of the book.

But then, it would be wrong to classify this book in any genre, and equally wrong to exclude it from any genre. It is one of those rare novels that partakes of the whole of literature, that is open to everyone to read into it what they will, and enjoy in it what they will. To say it defies description is almost a cliché, yet it is more true of this book than of any novel I have read since *Lanark*. I cannot see how anyone would fail to find something entertaining and worth reading within its pages.



## A Certain Kind

### Mary Gentle

[*WORLD'S END* by JOAN D VINCE: Volume 2 in the Snow Queen] (Cyclo. Bluejay Books 1984. 230pp., \$13.95.)

BZ Gundhalinu is a familiar character. After some thought, I pinpoint that familiarity: it comes from the novels of H.R.F. Keating. *World's End* is quite simply *Inspector Dhote In Space*. Well, fine, I always liked Keating's harassed and eminently human Indian police officer. But Vince's?

There is a character problem and a structural problem.

The character problem can be summed up in one line: why are you telling me all this? BZ is a failed suicide, which is supposedly the greatest disgrace one of his race and caste can endure. Because of it, he has taken the name Gedda, that labels his condition; because of it he is undertaking a journey into the back of beyond --- *World's End*, 'the Ashhole of the Hegemony'. And yet, a few pages into the first-person narrative, here he is telling us all about it. To which my immediate reaction is: No, he wouldn't, no way. If you have such an incident in your past... well, a large part of shame is secrecy. I suspect we would be a good two-thirds of the way on this journey into the heart of darkness before Gundhalinu disclosed that motive. We would hear much of his ostensible reason, the rescue of his two elder brothers who went prospecting to *World's End* before him. But this

instant soul-baring is an identifying mark of certain kinds of American SF.

The structural problem, then, is also simple. The most important motivating act, BZ's suicide attempt, happens off-stage. Happens, in fact, in *The Snow Queen*. It therefore appears as a kind of expository flashback, which lacks emotional impact; and because we don't have here the whole circumstances of BZ's attempted suicide, or his love for the computer-linked sibyl Moon, none of it is entirely convincing. It seems to me that, not only does *World's End* have to be read after *The Snow Queen*, it has to be read a fairly short time after.

And *World's End* is, like *The Snow Queen*, a fairy-story; the template in this case being the three sons, and the youngest son who... oh, you've heard it? Then the ending won't come as a total surprise. Even though it's really only in fairy stories that you can get away with such a morally squeaky-clean hero.

BZ duly sets off after the two Ugly Brothers (how the hell did Cinderella get in there?), travelling through the hostile landscapes of a backwater planet towards the mythical and 'sense-distorting' Fire Lake. He travels with a pair of prospectors, one venal, one sadistic; and, not wishing to blow his police cover, allows them to bully him unmercifully. I wish I thought this masochism was just a part of BZ's guilt, but oh how I doubt that...

Things really move in the latter part of the novel; there are some nice changes rung on the father/youngest son relationship; there is a fitting and entirely logical discovery about the nature of Fire Lake. It's all a bit late in the day. Really, there was no need to provide a guilt-motive for BZ's journey to *World's End*, his family seem to have afforded him relentless ill-treatment. Maybe they too had him labelled as Wringing Wet. Just a poor hard-done-by youngest son... I could have born with his emotional thrashings if they didn't sound like just so much fakery. Could a third-person narrative have allowed some balanced judgement in, something more than adolescent posturing?

Enough, enough. What we have here in *World's End* tread a neat line between fairy-tale and science, and is sentimental enough to suit the liberal conscience. What more could you ask for? (Answers on a postcard.)

## Peek-a-boo?

Ken Lake

[THE CRUCIBLE OF TIME by JOHN BRUNNER, Arrow Books 1984.]  
[474pp., £2.25 ISBN 0-09-936850-0]

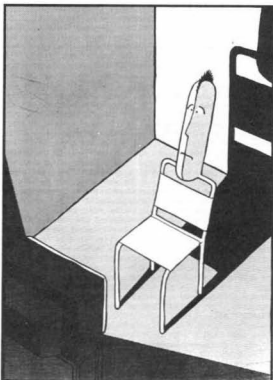
This is one of those "bury yourself in an alien environment and get your kicks from the author's grasp, and exploitation of, extraterrestrial geographical probabilities" books. In a sense, it marches with Hal Clement and Robert L. Forward, save that first it has no human protagonists whatsoever, and secondly it does manage, by and large, to interest us in the aliens who live in its pages.

The setting is convincingly consistent, adequately different from Earth, "built up logically" so far as that can be quantified, and does grasp our attention. The characters do manage to live, react and occasionally enote in ways with which we can empathise.

But is this a failing? Should aliens share our emotional framework to such an extent? Surely we are entitled to expect something a little more exotic from natives so amazingly different from us in form?

Well, it does make for less tedious explanation - and heaven knows there is enough of that anyway, though mostly well tailored into those peculiarly science-fictional conversational asides in which characters set themselves carefully into their geographical, climatic, historic, technological, sociological and goddam sexual frameworks for us.

Brunner has been around since 1934; his first science fiction novel was published in 1952 but, as it was pseudonymous, the author has successfully (and no doubt wisely) refused to confess to its provenance. His first U.S. sale came in 1953 with the still readable "Thou Good and Faithful" in *ASF*, and since then he has - I am pleased to say - deluged us with SF books and has



also written thrillers, "contemporary novels" and, would you believe, two volumes of poetry.

Doubtless some of this vast output will be found on the shelves of every SF reader and, on balance, the present work is a worthy addition. As with most of his work, the novel is hardcore SF and has a relatively simple theme: how an alien race, astonishingly hampered both by its physical shortcomings and by its planet's climate, rose from primitivism to space travel.

Possibly the weakest part of the book is its brief italicised Prologue, where we are invited to study the tales that follow with admiration rather than pity. I abhor this appeal to the reader couched in almost mystical terms, and found the recollection of its words while I was reading the book to be a constant annoyance. Needless to say, the matching Epilogue I found equally cloying and annoying: authors would be well advised to tell their stories straight rather than to attempt to set them within "meaningful" frames like this.

The story itself is, as the front cover informs us, an "epic spanning millennia." Unfortunately, all too frequently the treatment is not epic but picaresque - we move from primitive tree settlement to primitive sentient boat, from mountain to seashore, from one small group of characters to another, peeping at the planet every few thousand years or more, peeping at its peculiarities, sampling its people's stupidities, sympathising with their disasters and, hopefully, glorying in their successes. But the hoped-for vast flow seems to be missing: it's all broken up into snippets, snappy, jump, lacking the continuity that would have changed it from an intriguing game into a work of literature in its own right.

Naturally, we have to swallow the usual SF conventions: aliens frame their sentences in colloquial English and their thoughts in western philosophy; they go through terrestrial crises of personality and are driven by earthly aims and concepts. But not to use these conventions would bring two regrettable results: we'd find the characters needlessly tiresome and their motivations obscure, and we wouldn't finish the book. We might not even recommend it.

And since this book is obviously aimed at a much vaster and less sophisticated readership than the run of the mill SF novel, the aim is to produce and market something that will be a commercial success.

I do not think this book will disappoint its publishers. I hope the royalties will please Brunner - they'd certainly overwhelm me with joy. It's a well

tailored work, completely crafted and - despite its occasional longwindedness and its irritating anthropomorphism - I did manage to finish it without feeling I'd been misled or cheated. (Explanation: I actually bought the paperback months before I was sent a review copy, so I have the dual advantages of hindsight and an evaluation geared to my own pocket - an attitude normally lacking in a book reviewer.)

The careful reader will note that Brunner has devoted thought even to such minutiae as the characters' names: each era has its standard system of nomenclature, and by and large the names fit the schemes. I winced at such quiddities as taking the English word barque, spelling it barq, and applying it to a sentient creature used as a boat - there are several examples of this linguistic playing at ducks and drakes, and they jar. But setting aside these niggling annoyances, one must admit that this is a considerable *tour de force*.

Whether the effort expended on it was worthwhile is a decision I must leave to the individual reader, for while on the whole I found it successful, its manifest shortcomings force me, if not to damn it with faint praise, at best to praise it with occasional resounding damns.

## Dib, Dib, Dum, Dum

David V Barrett

[SINGLE COMBAT by DEAN ING. Tor Books 1984., 375pp., \$2.95. ISBN 812-54-100-6]

Single Combat begins in 2002 AD, four years after the end of Systemic Shock, though there is no indication on the cover that it is a direct sequel. Ted Quantrill, the boy scout who became a legal assassin, is not yet 21; his 'stunning' girlfriend, Maribye Sanger, is 24. Their job, under the cover of a Youth Search and Rescue organisation, is to search and kill.

What is left of the nuclear-war-ravaged USA (a surprising amount, considering the bombardment it received in Systemic Shock) is now known as Streamlined America, and is firmly under the control of a Mormon President - with all that implies. Dissidents and possible potential dissidents are rooted out and disposed of with all the detached efficiency of a housewife squirting pest powder at the silver fish on her pantry floor.

And Quantrill and Sanger search and kill, search and kill, doing an absolutely marvellous job, their training as S & R Rovers making the SAS look like a gang of five year olds, their reflexes of body and brain putting Superman in the same league as Ronald Reagan. They are perfect killing machines, never allowing a moment's doubt, never a qualm of conscience or a twinge of emotion, which also means that they cannot admit their love to each other, neither of them knowing the other feels the same way until half way through the book.

By that time, they have rebelled against the system, and against Control who issues instructions through a tiny two-way radio embedded in the mastoid bone: Control can also hear every word that a Rover says, and can deal with disobedience, rebellion or conscience by detonating a small amount of explosive attached to the radio. It might be messy, but that Rover will never rebel again. No prizes for guessing what happens with Quantrill and/or Sanger: there are few surprises in this book. Most of the climaxes and clever plot twists are telegraphed chapters in advance: in fact, the neat and tidy happy ending was foreordained from half way through the earlier book.

Single Combat is the Republican-brought-up, red-blooded, all-American teenage boy's wet dream of power and permissible violence, with just enough sex to liven it up without making it in any way disreputably liberal. Its ideas of totalitarian control and individual rebellion have been done to death, and its setting in 'Streamlined America' is utterly unconvincing. The Nuclear Winter hadn't been nightmare of when this was written, but we knew enough about the effects of nuclear war to let even the most naive reader realise the entire scenario is make-believe. But Dean Ing, of course, is the man who tells us in High Tension how to construct nuclear

fallout air filters out of baked bean cans and string; he makes Protect and Survive become a responsibly written, valuable document. It is exactly his thinking which will bring about nuclear war: of course we can survive it, he tells already conservative Ivy Leaguers; just stand firm, and use your initiative and your boy scout training: you owe it to your country.

Single Combat, with its prequel - they can't be considered separately - is a good macho adventure story, and is exciting reading in places. It is all the more dangerous for that.

## A Little Wooden Artefact

K V Bailey

[THE ZEN GUN by BARRINGTON J. BAYLEY Daw Books Inc. 1983] [159pp., \$2.30]

The zen gun is the ultimate weapon, potentially an almost instantaneous disintegrator of stars, a little wooden artefact, but only fully usable by one who is mentally trained. In The Zen Gun it is a kind of grail surrogate, having perhaps a little of aura of the 'talisman' in Simak's Way Station: "A man to use it must find the gun himself."

The novel's chief protagonists comprise a thrown-together archetypal band, who are not so much seeking the gun (it passes from one to another of them, in and out of their possession) as acting so as to arrive at an existential moment and at that voluntarily dedicated person whose use of it in the galaxy's crisis will be crucial. The chimera Pout (a genetically composite, frustrated and sadistic primate) is the gun's first finder and possessor; the spiritually advanced kocho warrior, Ikematsu, who "will not use the gun in war" finally possesses it and, in order to redeem the Empire, the galaxy, the entire Hubble-bubble, delegates its use to Admiral Achler. The Admiral has joined the group after being relieved of his command in the universal take-over by rebellious intelligent pigs.

If this sounds like the wilder shores of space opera, so be it - the shores get wilder as the story progresses. Yet it is just because some of its properties and scenery belong to the theatre of the absurd, while other legitimately exercise the aesthetic imagination, stimulate speculation, and provoke, if not a sense of wonder, then a sense of being at home in a lively arena of science fiction, that the novel is able to maintain tension on the level of action and, on the level of ideas, to achieve direction.

Of course much of the performance is sheer battle-fleet extravaganzas, never far from parody: the warships themselves, complete with 'beaming' facilities, are vast enough to put 'Enterprise' in the dirty class. Under-manned because of a low human birthrate, under-equipped because of prolonged strikes of factory robots, they are crewed and officered mostly by drug-happy children and intelligent animals, pigs, weasels, elephants and so on. 'Feetol drive' moves them through light minutes in seconds (yet they use radar), and from breach-loading cannon they fire heavy shells that travel at a million times the speed of light. "Staring at the massive gun, Magroom had to remind himself that this was not fantasy. This was real - and in deadly earnest."

You could have fooled me, the 'hard SF' readers will reply; and such readers may wonder what kind of suspension of disbelief they are being called upon to make. Whether they class this as SF or fantasy will depend on how they register Barrington Bayley's para-scientific conventions. Such a novel, they might say, which on the testimony of the author's 'Afterword' uses an unscientific and unquantified invented physics, loosely based on the conjectures of one who, in his own words, is not competent mathematically, has to be fantasy. But, though Bayley is suitably diffident about it, there is serious intent in this 'regressive hypothesis' with its corollary that "there is no 'place' except where a body is." It leads to the koan of his concluding line: "Nothing moves: where-would it go?" Thus he solves at a blow both Xeno's paradox and that of his

speeding 186 billion miles a second projectiles; but only, as he half-admits, as part of the "strategy" of novel writing.

Bayley's zen gun games with space, allowing for maverick spins and twists, seem to be evolved from a conflation of Mach's Principle and General Relativity Theory, just as in *Collision with Chronos* they are partly derived from J.W. Dunne's modification of Minkowskian models. Those who enjoy such excursions, as I confess I do, must have sympathy with the problem of an author who, believing his framework integral to the novel, faces the difficulty of introducing theory in an acceptable style and at operationally effective points. The *Zen Gun* is not entirely successful in this. Where incident and exposition are logically and situationally inter-related, as in Ikenatsu's explanation of the zen gun's functioning to pig-Gruwert, the method works. Where it is inserted as a lecture or as pages from a future text-book, it breaks continuity and can be tedious. In an "Afterword" context there's no difficulty, but there, of course, it's isolated from the action.

The *Zen Gun* is a singularly rich book. Even for those who jib at its cavalier gravitational high-jinks there are themes, pastiches, gem-like vignettes, and a variety of semi-parodic resonances which can appeal to an equal variety of science-fictional preferences, nostalgias and bizarre tastes. Its on-board parties (thousands of civilians voyage with the battle fleets) seem like endless Comics. It excoriates *Star Wars* by out-Heroding them; it out-foundations Foundation. Diadem, star cluster and planet community, the hedonistic enfeebled centre of Empire, is a kind of galactic Rome; the semi-autonomous flotillas are its detached and potentially seditious armies; its intelligence-implemented pig usurpers are representative of what Toynbee called an "internal proletariat"; the unsubmitive Escorians and roving pirates call to mind his "external proletariat"; the eventually monastery-based zen gun disciples the withdrawn cells of the 'dark ages'. There is in Gibbon a splendid passage which almost miniaturises the broad canvas of *The Zen Gun*: "Prosperity ripened the principle of decay; the causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest; and as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial supports, the stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight... The victorious legions, who in distant wars acquired the vices of strangers and mercenaries, first oppressed the freedom of the republic and afterwards violated the majesty of the purple."

The animals, who eventually take command of the fleets and of the Council of Diadem, have an additional symbolism. As Bayley expounds it through Ikenatsu: "When you gave artificial intelligence to animals, you were giving base emotions an unnatural power of action." Unfair to animals, you may think; but as symbolic entities the genetically engineered Pout, the vicious weasels, the horrific Gruwert evoke psychologically the beasts of Dr. Moreau, socio-politically shadow Orwell's farm animals, and in their more limited and pathetic aspects echo the Underpeople of Cordwainer Smith.

Then there are the moving cities which roam the plains of Earth. Bayley likens them to the city-states of Greece, China and Italy. The administering machine-minds, with which the inhabitants live in symbiotic though conditioned - if not coerced - relationship, seem to have more in common with Plato's philosopher-kings than with Blish's City Fathers. The cities share some of the feature of Bayley's own "City 5" and they rumble about the one-time sea bed rather like his own colossal "Dominus". The cities of the plain are good inventions and are a significant stage in the zen gun people's 'pilgrimage'; but unhappily they are deleted more completely than ever was Carthage by the brutal and devious Fire Command Officer, pig-Gruwert.

Bayley's ingenuity is prodigious. If it occasionally goes well over the top, it also creates, almost incidentally, glimpses one after another of special 'worlds' which linger in the imagination and make one feel that a longer visit would be pleasant. His overall serio-comic design precludes accusation of escapism; his skill in mingling parodic pastiche with his unique inventiveness banishes any thought of plagiarism. Where, except perhaps on Majipoor, will you find such an ur-city of fantasy as that encountered by Hesper?

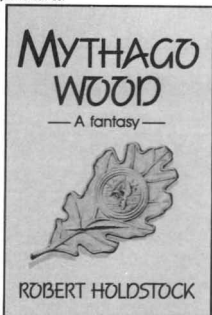
"Up, up and up rose the moulded towers, connected by bridges, interspersed with terraces, ksuspended lazars and esplanades, all shining in the evening sun. They stood on the ground floor of the city, so to

speak, but it had many floors at dizzying levels. It was, she had to admit, the most entrancing urban construct she had ever seen. And to think that all this moved."

It is, about all, that final well-placed commonplace that gives this a sort of tongue-in-the-cheek zest. And where outside *Star Maker* (save maybe in Vancian Alastor) is there such a vista as Diadem presents?

"...there were cities which, like the starry population of Diadem itself, exhibited depth upon depth of architectural glory, though many were inhabited by animals now, and there were worlds galore with sculpted climates and reconstituted biospheres that rendered them planetary paradises, each according to the private tastes of its owner..."

Again, the travelogue cliché "planetary paradises" puts a check on too florid a romanticism, but makes a journey into it no less agreeable. This enjoyable eclectic virtuosity is only one facet of a book which is likely to exasperate some, exhilarate some and will certainly not leave any indifferent. If you start it the whatever-next-compulsion, if no other motive, will ensure that you finish it.



## The Tail Of History

Martyn Taylor

[MYTHAGO WOOD by ROBERT HOLDSTOCK. Gollancz 1984. pp.252] [£8.95. ISBN 0-575-03496-3]

The British tale of History is a triumphal process, the song of battles won (and defeats transmuted into quasi-victories, or else the result of treachery by other, lesser breeds. What price Perfidious Albion?), the hymning of dynasties confirmed (sing up, chaps, to drown out the echoes of the hymns which greeted the now extinguished line of God anointed princes). Except as breeding machines for Tommy Atkins we ordinary folk are excluded from this tale, required only to stand by and gawp as we are privileged to have these little-less-than-godlings, whom we could not understand did they deign to speak to us, steal our crops, rape our womenfolk, and murder our men. The British tale of History is one of

conquest (odd for islands supposedly never conquered since 1066, after which we invited in our foreign princes) written of conquerors, by conquerors, for themselves. Conquerors never tell the truth, especially concerning the conquered. One megalomaniac proto-Italian came to these shores, had a quick look, and proclaimed that he had conquered, dismissing as barbaric a culture which had already superseded one which had left such insignificant memorials upon the landscape as Stonehenge. When lead water pipes and tight bunned boys brought down the empire proclaimed by the megalomaniac's nephew our islands entered into a 'Dark Age' until another conqueror arrived equipped with scribes to permanently record his triumph. Never mind that during that 'Dark Age' these islands were a significant element in a trading system which encompassed almost the entire civilised world, with the exception of South America, and had a socio-legal system the like of which was not seen again for several hundred years after the demise of the institutionalised paranoia of William the Bastard's 'Perfect Feudalism'. And so the tale continues down the ages, with the triumphalist puppet masters casting around all over Europe in their desperation to find a figurehead who doesn't mad, bad or suffering from tertiary imbecility. The one consistent feature of the cultural eaves warping over our shores has been the need of insecure newcomers to obliterate what was before their arrival. Within living memory it has been physically dangerous to speak the Gaelic, Welsh even. The largely unwritten history of the pre-Celts, the Celts themselves, the Saxons, the Vikings, has all been bundled into that pigeonhole labelled 'Unrecorded History. Unreliable', the stuff of legend - the fictionalised telling of what was - and myth - '...a story... of an earlier age taken by preliterate society to be a true account'. Yet when 'authoritative' reports of contemporary events can be shown to be at best partial, at worst impure fiction, is it any wonder that we respond to the visceral urge to gather at Stonehenge and ask ourselves whether that version isn't really the true one. Even when legend and myth is admitted into polite conversation conquest is all. These small islands have a body of legend and myth unparalleled, acre for acre, by anywhere else in the world. Yet how much of that body is known to us, we who can reel off from memory the names of Greek gods, dryads and centaurs? Even the Norse sagas bulk larger in our collective consciousness than the tales indigenous to our islands, and that despite a characterisation of the Norsemen as murderous, rapacious brigands (a calumny, that... well, almost...) I repeat, history books are written by the conquerors.

If legend and myth have been excluded from 'serious' history, they have fared no better in the literary sphere of late. Alumni of minor public schools have abused themselves before the brazen statue of the great god Graves and adorned their perversions in language only marginally less obscure than their metaphors. Hordes of exceedingly sub-Tolkien Red Letter romancers and elvetasters attempt to convince that it is written in the runes that all will come right with the world if only we reinstate Divine Right. Limp porn merchants churn out metric tonnes of bulging thews and doe eyed houis in s'n's 'epics' as stupid as they are tedious (s'n's = sex'n'sadism, aka sword and sorcery). So great has been the agglomeration of third rate whimsy it is now virtually impossible for serious British authors to address themselves to the subject of myth (our South American cousins seem order these matters rather better...)

'Virtually impossible', but not absolutely so, for 'Mythago Wood' is such a book. That it exists at all is a pleasant surprise; that it should come from Robert Holdstock is rather more pleasant and even more a pleasure. His previous novels - except *Necromancer* - struck me as being fired in the 'worthy but dull' tradition of most 'post modern-wave' British SF. *Necromancer* was a horse of a different colour as good an example of 'guts on the bedpost' contemporary horror as you might want to read and still sleep at nights. The acclaimed short story from which this novel has grown did not prepare me for the splendour of *Mythago Wood*. It is, to coin a phrase, different class.

The story concerns the enigmatic tract of still primeval woodland in Herefordshire. This wood has fascinated the father of Steven, the hero, fascinated him to death and beyond. It fascinated Steven's elder brother, and it comes to fascinate Steven with its ability to project into reality the characters of myth and to obviate 'natural laws' such as the passage of time. Within the realm of the wood myths are as real as

Steven himself, more so, because the wood is their domain and within its boundaries he must live by their rules, or die by them. The wood is a living repository of the collective fantasies of generations, able to bring into life an Arthur or a Robin Hood whenever the need or demand arises. Steven is sucked into this wood to become absorbed into a myth, a myth created around the mythfigure of his own brother, a myth which develops as he goes along rather than having been handed down, immutable, through the ages. Myth is alive, it is dynamic and, as the story tells us, it can kill and be killed.

It would be pointless here to retell the storyline of *Mythago Wood*. Holdstock has already done it, and if you are looking for an adventure story with all the appropriate twists, turns and (logical) surprises then you will find it in this book. Within that storyline characters move and behave as we are led to believe they do in 'real' novels. They convince as rounded human beings, enlisting our sympathy and understanding. No cardboard has been used in their construction. What is more, they convince as being creatures of their time, an effect enhanced by the replication of the narrative style which might reasonably be expected of a person with Steven's background - educated, disaffected, numbed by World War II. This is a personal narrative owing nothing to the breathless journalism of the post Hemingway era (in my opinion a most signal virtue). This is a book about 'England' written in English rather than American or some mid-Atlantic bastard tongue, in which there is a rare harmony of subject matter, character and treatment. Quite simply, it is a book for grown ups who are prepared to read and who are unashamed to admit to a little education. While the story can be taken straight it is also brimming over with resonances. Not a name appears which does not have some significance over and above the labelling of a character, a place. The family name of the hero is Huxley, with all the intellectual baggage that brings in train, while the elder son devoted to the destruction of the mythreals is 'Christian' (the Arthurian references are particularly strong). The mythago for whom all these men fall is called Guinevere (Guinevere, in case you missed it). Any relationship between the name of the great hero in the story,



Megiddo, and that ominous place name, Megiddo, cannot be accidental (can it?). The density of reference within this book is startling, suggestions within meanings within significances, which makes it not the easiest of reads but, read properly, it satisfies those places in the intellect most books ignore.

If there is one significant flaw it is that the relationship between Steven and Guinevere does not ring true in the way that the rather similar relationship between Desland and Karin rings in Richard Adams' *The Girl in a Swing*. For instance, Steven's love too quickly becomes a token, a token even, not to cast a doubt over what has gone before. It may, of course, be another example of the mystifying process at work.

*Mythago Wood* is a serious book addressing itself to a serious topic in a dignified way without ever being sombre; the story line is too taut and compelling for that. In many ways it is a classical work in its outline, approach and language. Perhaps Holdstock is not yet capable of producing work of the beauty of, say, Marquez,

but *Mythago Wood* must mark a significant and large step for him. Conspiracy theorists might like to wonder why mainstream critics have largely ignored this book (as they ignored John Crowley's *Little Big*) while they heaped praise upon an ultimately sterile five finger exercise like *Mantissa*. The rest of us may content ourselves with simply reading this book. Even if you only read one serious book a year then this year make it *Mythago Wood*. It may not be perfect but it is, literally, magical.

## What If?

Edward James

[WEST OF EDEN: by HARRY HARRISON. Granada 1984. 578pp.,] [£8.95. ISBN 0-246-12002-9]

Somehow I associate Harry Harrison with novels of alternative history. It is not that he has written many: indeed, I can now only think of *A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!* It is presumably because he has thought out many of the problems of this sub-genre: look at his piece in Nicholls, ed., *Explorations of the Marvellous* (1978), a watered-down version of a talk that he has no doubt given in many different versions. I heard one myself, when I chaired a lecture he gave to the History Society at University College Dublin in 1978 or so: the wittiest performance in that Society's history in all probability. Alternative history is one of the purest forms of the classic 'what if?' approach to SF, one of the most interesting, and difficult, variants of the Great Game. (Or is it only because I am a professional historian that I believe that?)

Alternative history, of course, needs a Jonbar point, an event which did not happen in our world and which set history off in a different direction. In *A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!* it was the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, won by the Muslims of Spain rather than the Christians. In *West of Eden*, the meteor which in our world (for the purposes of the story) wiped out the dinosaurs, missed. It is a Jonbar point shared, perhaps, by Aldiss' *The Malacia Tapestry* - and Harrison shares rather more than that with Aldiss: he has borrowed two of the experts who worked on Aldiss' *Helliconia* to help him with *West of Eden*. Jack Cohen devised the biology, and Tom Shippey the languages. And these are two of the delights of the book. The intelligent saurians who dominate the world were called the *urgo* (plural of *marag*) by the humans, or the *Yilane* by themselves. Harrison and Cohen give them a complex biology, and make them masters of genetic engineering. Their clothes, boats, guns, microscopes, cameras, are all living things genetically altered in ingenious ways (and nicely illustrated by Bill Sanderson, after the fashion of Victorian engravings, in the headers to each chapter and in the appendix). The convincing complexity of the human and *Yilane* languages show the benefits of employing team philologists as assistants (though 'team' is not perhaps the adjective which best describes Professor Shippey, as those who've seen him at conventions or elsewhere might testify). Is this going to become a fashion?

Enjoyment of *West of Eden* is going to come largely from appreciation of the ingenuity and plausibility of development from the initial 'what if?'. And there is no doubt about the ingenuity. Thanks partly to Cohen and Shippey, *Yilane* society, science and language are intriguing, and the description of palaeolithic humans, and their meeting with neolithic humans (agriculturalists, weavers and potters), is convincingly done. What I am not so certain about is the likelihood of both saurian and mammal intelligence coming into existence in the same world. The development of large mammals, so I understand it, could only have taken place in a world in which there were no other large predators. Could mastodons and deer, let alone humans, have evolved in a North American overrun with dinosaurs, even allowing for the fact that dinosaurs could not live in the cold north of the continent? In *West of Eden* (hence the title) humans evolve in North America from North American apes: the other continents, including South America, are totally dominated by saurians. And yet two human races apparently very similar to those we know (one

characterised by blond hair and blue eyes and the others darker of hair and hue) manage to evolve in this environment so different from that in which homo sapiens actually evolved (according to most current notions). The scenario depends on a number of assumptions: that no saurian species ever emerged which could cope with colder climates, that the intelligent saurians who could have devised ways of living in the cold did not, for various cultural reasons; that all higher forms of mammals could have evolved in colder climes, and in areas largely undisturbed by saurians. These problems are glossed over in the appendices which set out some of the historical background.

The action takes place, probably, a few million years before or after our own time, if the hint that the stars in Orion's belt are not in a straight line is any clue. The *Yilane*, worried by the encroaching cold which has destroyed some of their cities which grew from seed in the Old world, are settling up a city in what we would call Florida. For the first time they meet with humans. The intense dislike between the two races (resisted only by a few heretical *Yilane*) leads to both attempting to wipe out the other. The humans succeed ultimately in destroying the new city and driving the *Yilane* from North America. Inevitably one wonders a little at the implied parallels: it is all too suspicious that only North America harbours people with whom we can identify. Do the *Yilane* symbolise un-American forces in general, or just communists? Is it calculated to evoke a deep emotional response in the American readership? Or is it just a good story?



Good story it certainly is. Told in a direct and uncomplicated way, without much sophistication, but with every trick in the trade to keep up the interest and excitement. And the characterisation of the two races, and in particular of the *Yilane*, is not quite so simplistic as I suggest in the last paragraph. If some aspects of their life are repellent, that can be explained by their biology; if they are at times brutal and unfeeling, well, so are a number of the humans as well. The main protagonist who, according to the Prologue, has read and approved the entire book as a 'true history of the world', is Kerrick. Captured by the *urgo* as a young boy, he learns their language and comes to think of himself as one of them. He rises to a position of prominence in *Yilane* society because the city leader sees him as a means by which she can achieve her political ambitions. (She also has a bit on the side: one would think this book ideal for teenagers were it not for the brief moments of somewhat kinky sex - or was that to get the teenagers interested?). Kerrick finally escapes from the *Yilane*, almost against his will: the conflict in Kerrick's mind between his loyalties to the *Yilane* and to humanity is well-handled by Harrison. Kerrick becomes the natural leader of the human tribes he meets, leading them first away from the *Yilane* and then to the attack, because he is the only one with any idea of *Yilane* weaknesses. The book ends with the hint of possible friendship between the two races, but also with a memory of the prologue's bleak vision of a world full of *urgo*. Hint of a possible sequel? The temptation will be there, and I hope that it is one that Harrison resists. He has introduced us to an intriguing world, but it is the novelty of that world which intrigues, and no variations on the theme are going to have the same impact.

The book itself is well produced, although in enormous print (well-adapted for reduction into the paperback edition, I suppose) and with rather too many typographical errors (of the 'heard' for 'herd' type). The illustrations add a lot to the text, even if one might quibble with some of the details. How many Stone Age men were able to obtain enough protein to look like Schwarzenegger? Why does the artist ignore the fact that the *Yilane* had protruding jaws, according to the text, and make them into saurian chinless wonders? (Were I to meet one as illustrated I would roll about in laughter rather than respond with the correct human reaction of



fear and loathing.) But surely books like this are intended to create argument. It's all part of the game.

## 'Exiled Royalty Return!'

Helen McNabb

[A PRINCESS OF THE CHAMELIN by CHERRY WILDER. Athenum] (N.Y.) 1984. 275pp., ISBN 0-689-31025-0]

There seem to be a lot of heroic fantasy books about these days. They do vary as to their location, the intricacies of the plots and such like, but there is a sameness about the genre which I've never been able to define properly to myself, perhaps it is just because they are a little genre to themselves that they acquire similar characteristics, enabling one to readily post them into their proper pigeonhole. A Princess of the Chamein is a heroic fantasy, albeit having a heroine instead of a hero, and the plot is not particularly original. The heroine, Princess Aidris Am Finn, is ousted from her kingdom of Chamein by a usurper and takes refuge in a neighbouring kingdom until the time comes for her to reclaim the throne, which she does successfully at the end of the book. The interest in the book must therefore lie in the skills Cherry Wilder has in creating a fantasy world and characters with whom one can sympathise sufficiently to maintain an interest through the length of the book.



CHERRY WILDER

I haven't read any other of her novels so I cannot judge how typical this one is, but I would now read the others if they came my way. Without being in any way startlingly new I enjoyed the book as a story and once past the opening few chapters found it very readable. It was sent by the Children's Publicity Department of the publishers and would probably be very much enjoyed by teenage girls who could identify with Aidris but it doesn't read like a juvenile, the writing is not simplistic. The opening is enough to put off all but the dedicated reader and if I hadn't been obliged to read it I would have given up half way through Chapter 1 which is unfortunate. It is a welter of peculiar assexual names, quantities of information about the Chamein, their beliefs, habits and customs, Aidris is pitchforked in, her parents die; the style is stiff and lacks any attempt to convey emotion or personality, merely sketching in the background information necessary. It is a clumsy and off putting start and is about as interesting as reading the phone book. Once Aidris escapes the style picks up. Seeing events through her eyes instead of the author's impersonal viewpoint breathes a lot more life into the narrative, and her subsequent history disguised as a soldier, a *kedran*, evokes interest and some empathy. Aidris herself becomes enough of a person to carry the book but I never fully identified with her. I felt that the author kept me at a slight distance so that I felt no

urge to cry when Aidris cried or rejoice when she rejoiced. I was still a spectator never fully a partaker in the events of her exile and return, which made the whole book more superficial than it need have been.

This is the first part of a trilogy called The Rulers of Hylor and it may be that over the course of the other two books some of the holes in A Princess of the Chamein would be filled. In this book by itself I felt that the political structure of Hylor was left vague, as was its geography. I wanted some sort of map to show the relationships of the various kingdoms and to follow Aidris' journey. I didn't want the only thing I got given which was the crests of the rulers of Hylor and a sort of family tree. It was short of any evocative description, I had no real clue about what the countryside looked or felt like, except an impression that Athron is like Sussex. Nor was the magic properly explained; it existed and Aidris had some skill with it, but I was left uncertain about its place in the life of Hylor. Some other things are filled in in more detail, the peoples are not all of the same racial type or speak the same language, the differences between them adding depth and texture to the story, as do the changes in clothing styles, variations in types of ruling and so on, they do give the book its own flavour but fail to raise it above the rest of its field sufficiently for me to get excited about it. I enjoyed it for what it was, I've read many books a great deal worse than this one, but I've also read many a great deal better. It's competently written after the first few chapters, with no passages of purple prose, but no poetry either; there isn't enough of a third dimension to the characters to cast much of a shadow even on a cloudless day but they are more than thin cardboard and can lay some claim to lives of their own. It is more than adequate even if it is less than stunning and could be worth reading if it comes your way but I wouldn't queue up in the rain to buy myself a copy.

THOUGH HE WAS NO ARTHUR...by Judith Hanna  
Continued from Page 21.

scholars. Yet they are, or so I find them, strong stuff. The bare bones of the legend are only weakened by attempting to dress them up in psychologizing; overstated, the eternal verities are reduced to banalities. The Celtic style, captured by Chant, alternates exuberant extravagances with the stark simplicity of:

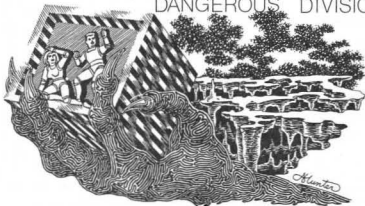
"Terrible was the slaughter; ravens waded in blood there. Cusenhin died that day, and Carengun son of Gai, and many other gold-torqued lords of battle; a hundred thousand men of the island fell there. Those who died before that day were fortunate; the last days of the world will show nothing more fearful than that battle, when the glory and the safety of Britain were cast away for the sake of a faithless woman, and by the wiles of a contentious man. Such was Camlann, where Arthur and Modrat fell."

No need to tell us what to think, how to react, the events speak for themselves.

The "fact" behind the story of Arthur is not the history of Celtic resistance to Saxon incursions after the withdrawal of Rome; the real fact of Arthur is the legend itself which is the product of generations fascinated by the idea of the Hero who wins a Golden Age then passes into the West - which may be either the land of eternal youth and feasting or the land of death, we cannot know. Bradley's trivialization has little to do with the spirit of legend; but Chant, by focussing on the storytelling traditions that first formed the legend, has achieved a revitalization of this much over-worked Arthurian material.

[THE MISTS OF AVALON by MARION BRADLEY. Michael Joseph] [1984, 876pp, £9.95. THE HIGH KINGS by JOY CHANT Allen & Unwin 1984, 237pp, illus, £12.95]

# DANGEROUS DIVISIONS



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The new size Vector pleases me. Well, partly. I think it should be this size, but it buggers up my filing system, never very organised at the best of times.

Sorry to hear that you're standing down; I hope you'll get into something equally worthwhile in the future (such as reviving *Arena*?) once the job/house/family are organised to satisfaction. [[[ I'd be only too happy to revive *Arena* if someone was willing to give me the £400 per issue that would be required! ]]]

The review of *Battlefield Earth* was if anything, kind. I agree with Edward James: the book is by someone once well-known in the SF field, now head of an organisation which appears to have influenced a considerable number of people. To ignore it, and the phenomenon of its apparently large sales, is to close our eyes to the unpleasant fact that much of SF is exactly what the hostile critics from 'outside' say it is. To review it at length is to verge on the danger of giving it more importance than its pitiful lack of merit warrants. The classic dilemma. But on balance I'm glad to see a review of it in *Vector*. I'd be even gladder to see a response from someone responsible for inflicting this monstrosity on the world in the first place.

Put it this way. When I read *The Number of the Beast* I was convinced that I had read the worst SF book ever. Poor gullible fool that I was... Admittedly I couldn't actually bring myself to finish *Battlefield Earth* and I lay myself open to attack from anyone who cares to point out that the last 50 pages contain some of the greatest prose and most gripping storytelling in the English language, but I just cannot imagine anyone with a grain of human sympathy or respect for the creative imagination actually reading this book for pleasure. And as for the motives involved in writing and publishing it... if you were to print what I suspect in *Vector* you'd be laying us both open for libel actions. (And I'm not sure I buy the supposed attraction of the book for semi-literate people: I don't think slow readers buy 819-

page blockbuster novels unless, perhaps, there's a TV series involved.) [[[ I don't believe that was a totally serious suggestion. ]]]

No, I wonder if its supposed high American sales were due rather to the number of scientologists in the USA rather than the number of unconquered Golden Age SF fans. At least I hope so. If scientology does that to the imagination, then I don't want to know about it. If *Battlefield Earth* is the culmination of SF then can I have an Enid Blyton book for my next Christmas present?

So Ballard didn't get the Booker. I do not quite construe Robert Nye's remark in the same way you do; Nye's own work has strong elements of the fantastic and I would have thought he'd be quite sympathetic to Ballard's past work. I haven't read *Empire of the Sun* or any of the rest of the shortlist - but I thought the point Robert Nye was making was simply that *Empire* was Ballard's best book to date - or at least most likely to be appreciated by a larger audience. (Even within the SF field, there are plenty of people who find Ballard inaccessible or pretentious: the strangest thing about Nye's comment is that Ballard is actually NOT "essentially a science fiction writer.") This is backed up by Richard Cobb's somewhat peculiar remarks about the six books on the shortlist being easy reads, and therefore GOOD THINGS. (I paraphrase).

What I'm saying is that *Empire* might be Ballard's best book, or most accessible book, in which case the fact that it isn't SF is irrelevant. [[[ I hope I did not give any indication of underselling Ballard's book; *Empire of the Sun* is, indeed, 'A Good Read'. ]]]

I'm actually more worried by the disappearance of Moorcock's *The Laughter of Carthage* which I read at one point was a possibility for the Booker shortlist, but seems to have vanished from consideration. I can't obviously compare it directly with any which actually made it to the shortlist but I'll be surprised if I read many more novels of its calibre this year. Again, it's not SF but it's clearly much more ambitious than his SF/fantasy novels.

No, it's not just anti-SF prejudice that means that such novels don't get the praise that's due them, although I agree that

there's something of that. But can you think of an SF book this year that deserves a place on the Booker shortlist? Would Aldiss's *Heliconia Summer* be eligible? How many SF books ever have been best books of the year, by whatever criteria you use to judge this? I don't think we ought to be sorry that Ballard made the Booker shortlist with a non-SF novel (although personally I'm sorry that he didn't win the actual prize). I think what it does show is that there are people within the SF 'ghetto' who are capable of producing literature which stands comparison with the best. It may be a pity that *Empire* isn't SF (from what I've read of it, I think using SF imagery may actually serve to undercut the impact of the book anyway) but I'd rather have Ballard and Moorcock with what they are writing than I. Ron Hubbard.

DAVID R. SMITH,  
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A brief note to say that I thought the cover of *Vector* 122 was excellent; I think I might even frame it! Looking back I think it's the best cover since Thys Ebbenhoeist's cover for *V* 113.

I was also pleased to see the transcription of Josef Nesvadba's speech. You were right about the links between articles; when Josef said "It is the duty of every one of us to speak for himself and find his own (themes)", he seemed to sum up (part of) what M. John Harrison was saying.

JIM ENGLAND,  
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First, I must say how much I liked the brand-new and highly original arrangement of the list of Contents of *Vector* 122: not at all! Apart from that, I thought it an excellent issue.

I don't like committees, and when Dave Langford tells us that a sort of committee has been daft enough to write a book purporting to rate works of SF on a 5-star basis for Readability, Characterization, Idea Content and Literary Merit, I am not greatly surprised. I applaud the way in which Dave points out its ludicrousness. Interestingly, in the same issue, M. John Harrison (being interviewed) says in refutation of a former distinction he made between idea based and escapist types of SF: "I don't think writing is about ideas... People who write fiction or poetry, they don't have 'ideas'". Like most arguments about semantics (what is an 'idea'?) this is one that could go on and on, ad infinitum, with very little in the way of a positive result, but the fact that it is arguable might have suggested to the committee that they were attempting the impossible. How do you measure the "Idea Content" of a work of SF? Do you estimate the

sheer number of ideas involved, regardless of whether they are conventional, well-trodden SF ideas or not? Do you concern yourself with their novelty? (Some quite ridiculous ideas are novel.) Or do you try to estimate their importance? Suppose you opt for the latter. What do you mean by 'importance'? Consider the idea expressed in "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains". (Yes, I know this didn't appear in fiction.) This was important enough to start a revolution. Why? Not because it was literally true. (It wasn't.) Not because of its novelty. Because of the Literary Merit of its mode of expression! In other words, Important Ideas Content and Literary Merit are not separable. The same is true of Readability and Characterization. (Needless to say, SF does not have a monopoly on Ideas Content. There can be more and better ideas in mainstream fiction.)

This brings me to M. John Harrison's statement that the SF he has been writing for 15 years has been "too fastidiously well-written" to please the average SF reader, so he has now turned to Higher Things - I can't blame him. But if he and others (J.G. Ballard and Chris Priest, to name but two) are signalling to us the start of a mass exodus of good writers from the field of SF, I am greatly worried about its future. Are we content to leave the SF field to the tender mercies of literary hacks and producers of SF films doing nothing to enhance its currently lousy reputation? I hope not.

So what is to be done about the situation? A greatly improved kind of SF needs to be written, using a minimum of SF clichés, and it needs to be written well. The trouble is that there is virtually nowhere to get such stuff published. The BSFA gets £7000+ annual income. Can't it do something? It could help with the publication of short stories in a special magazine. The idea has been considered already - by a committee - and rejected out of conservatism. I would suggest to this committee that they think again. ("If you can keep your head while, all about you, others are losing theirs - perhaps you lack a true appreciation of the gravity of the situation!" to misquote.) It needn't cost a damn thing. I would be in favour of the BSFA offering a prize for good short stories. (It could be widely advertised and help the BSFA publicize itself.) Let competitors put their money where their mouths (or typewriters) are, and accompany their MSS with a £1 donation. Have a single editor of the magazine (paid, if necessary) who can say "the buck stops here" and risk his or her own reputation in selecting the best stories - not a bloody committee. The thing would soon pay for itself; the country is bursting at the seams with unemployed, unpublished and/or frustrated writers. I appeal to the BSFA to be bold and think hard about this, for SF's sake!

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My congratulations to everyone concerned with the production of *Vector 122* - it was a superb piece of work in every respect and I sincerely hope that the standard will be maintained. The quality was first class and the layout done with great care and skill. However, I must reserve special praise for John McFarlane for producing a cover which is, in my opinion, a classic piece of science fiction art and deserves every bit of praise that I am sure it will receive. Rather than it simply being a 'one-off', I feel that it would be a good idea if the BSFA could somehow incorporate it into the mainstream of its advertising - perhaps as a poster for general distribution? [I] My

thanks for your comments; I agree with you re John McFarlane's cover. It is indeed superb. [I]

Whilst I sympathise with Terry Broome with regard to seemingly obscure references, literary and otherwise, I can equally see the problem from the view of the author. Whatever one tries to do, they are in a 'heads you win...' situation. I was recently taken to task (only slightly) for referring to *Australopithecus Africanus* in a piece of fiction. It so happened that there were good reasons for it having to be that particular hominid. So, what to do? Assume that the reader would recognise him, or include a little end note? I put myself in the shoes of the reader, and decided that anything is better than seeming to patronize someone - if I knew what it was, what right had I to assume someone else didn't? To be sure, it's a dilemma. But I don't think that it can be

SPECIALISTS IN SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY & HORROR

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acceptable to cut and trim a piece of fiction or an article on the grounds that you consider yourself 'better read' than the reader. I feel most people would rather be baffled than insulted. One point though - this doesn't simply apply to scholastic literary references. In reviews, articles and letters on SF, there are constant references to works of science fiction which must baffle the reader. Nobody has read everything, and it's not possible to go into detail on every reference or quote, so it seems that the problem is one which has no answer.

With regard to the idea of incorporating all the BSFA publications, the thought of either one great 'super-editor' or even a 'committee' of editors and all the associated problems and risks is pretty horrific. However, it has always mystified me why a separate publication is needed as a critical review for paperbacks. Would it not streamline the whole thing to incorporate *Paperback Inferno* into *Vector*, which could be done quite easily with the new format, and have the one magazine devoted to article/critical reviews - be they paperback or paperback. A review is a review, so why the separation? It would, I'm sure, cut down the postage costs and possibly allow an expansion of focus either in size or frequency of publication. [If you remember the original intention of *Paperback Parlour* was to provide a magazine that gave a brief mention of all the paperbacks published. Since then the magazine has changed to being a spin-off of the *Vector* review section, concentrating on paperbacks. Now it would be quite easy to amalgamate *PI* into *Vector* - but if truth were to be told, all that would happen is that the material *PI* publishes would disappear as there is a limit to the number of reviews that you would want to publish in any one issue. The limit that I've tried to follow over the last 2.5 years is one-third of the magazine. You must remember that a large section of the BSFA do not like book reviews! Besides which even a dedicated book review reader can die of a 'surfeit of violets'. ]]

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You are disappointed that Ballard cannot get the credit he deserves. You are probably more disappointed that he did not get the prize.

There is no need for disappointment, unless of course you are JB. The 'battle' is won. The inexorable march of demography will leave SF winning the prizes, not merely writers who digress into the

mainstream for the odd novel.

Literary prize judges and other literary persons of influence, other than novelists, are of the generation that missed SF, never read it and regards it as forever beyond the pale.

In other professions where younger people reach positions of influence earlier SF is accepted and has in turn influenced behaviour, thought and standards.

A recent 'Nature' has three articles on 'Nemesis' - a speculated companion of the sun proposed as a cause for periodic comet bombardments and species extinctions. Why read SF? Cosmology seriously speculates on alternate universes and serial universes. Look at the plots of new films, look at advertisements. The imagery of SF is everywhere. SF has escaped into the wide world. No wonder there's no sense of wonder.

Nuclear and other nasties permitting SF will be among the prizes in the 1990's. Booker's and Nobel's will fall to SF with regularity. By then of course the BSFA will have stopped complaining about the characterisation in SF and will no doubt be agitating for a return to the old values with plenty of hard science.

Perhaps a computer game will be the Booker prize winner one day. An 'adventure' type with associated texts of course.

Time marches on and our day is coming. Cheer up! [I'm not sure whether to laugh or cry if that is what the future holds... My thanks to the many of you who wrote in expressing regret on my leaving - it was appreciated.]]

## Though He Was No Arthur.....

JUDITH HANNA

We can never know for sure exactly what the historical fact behind the Arthurian legend was, and I doubt that any of us would want to swap the legend in all its rich variety and inconsistencies for cold fact. Perhaps what's most notable about the numerous modern Arthurian fictions is the variety of interpretations they offer, blending different versions of the legend with different theories of the history.

### 1. Ritual to Romance...

In Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*, legend (which is to say, fantasy) dominates. The background research Bradley acknowledges is into neopaganism, a religion itself based on and buttressed by readings from myth and legend. Historical fact gets barely a look-in here, and where it does, it jars. Casual mentions of Caesar and the Romans a couple of generations ago, or of one sour-faced "Father Patricius" who may not, after all, be intended as the St. Patrick of the Irish, don't sit easily alongside quasi-medieval stone castles or such Frenchified forms as "Duke Gorlois", "leodegranz", "Viviane". The basic story is the familiar Malory that children's versions of "Knights of the Round Table" are based on (How do you like my knights?" asks Arthur on p298. "I have called them after the old Roman 'equites'"). It's a right old hodge-podge, but of course, that is the way the legend grew: Celtic marvels, memories of Rome, medieval fancies all stirred together and dished out dressed up in the spirit of the age. Our modern day offers more than one "spirit" for such reinterpretation; Bradley is clearly little interested in the "Arthur" in history" theme that fascinates (for instance) Rosemary Sutcliffe and Geoffrey Ashe. As the front cover blurb tells us, *Mists of Avalon* is the legend of King Arthur "told through the lives and visions of the women central to the story". (Vera Chapman has used the same approach).

It's a cosy, sprawling family saga of passion, deception, adultery, murder and trivia - for Bradley the spirit of the age is clearly soap opera. It's a wearisome and deeply silly book shot through with inconsistencies and characters who either flinch away from uncomfortable thoughts or else wallow in self-pity and similarly shallow emotions. Take Ygraine for instance (please!) who swings from indifference toward hubby Gorlois to mild liking for him to deep pity until (p71) she decides she "hates" him, and on page 85 "she no longer hates or resents him", but lo, flip to page 87 and it's "implacable hatred" time, because the formerly placid and long-suffering Gorlois has suddenly taken it into his head to beat her up because he's impotent. Do people behave like this? In this book, yes, all the time. And through it all, never a hint that poor old Gorlois is anything more than a prop for Ygraine to react against - if he has any ordinary irrelevant human habits neither Bradley nor her creature Ygraine pay them a blind bit of notice. Or perhaps inconsistency is meant to be the key to Ygraine's character - that could explain why she changes faith from priestess-reared pagan resentful of Christian morality to pious Christian to deathbed turnback towards the Goddess again. Just as vulgar sybaritism is the key to Morgause (sister of Ygraine, Viviane & Morgaine, marries Lot of Orkney), here pretty much a bawdy barnard type modulating into merry widow - shrewd, gossip, ruthless where her own interests are concerned, who could blame her for that. And pious Christian



guilt and anxiety completely deciphers poor gormless blonde Gwenhwyvar. Morgaine's situation is more complex: Morgaine (the narrator) loves Lancelot who loves Gwenhwyvar who loves him but is married to Arthur who loves Morgaine his sister. No wonder Mordred (son of Arthur and Morgaine, raised by Morgause) grew up a confused lad with a chip on his shoulder. I got a bit resentful myself. The women sit around and spin and sew and stew in tepid emotion while the men ride off and do like Malory says: on page 538, Lancelot even gets to kill a nasty slimy dragon before Morgaine traps him into marrying Elaine.

Only for pagan women, who can cross to the Otherworld island of Avalon by calling up a magic mist on the lake around Glastonbury Tor, there's an escape from banality into fantasy - there priestesses learn to understand magic and so gain a secret special power in their secret special women's world. That archaic women's power, according to Bradley, made Arthur into king; Arthur's betrayal of his promise to guard and protect that paganism equally with male-dominant Christianity leads, in this version, to his doom.

"La Morte d'Arthur", as Malory realised, the forces building towards Arthur's inescapable betrayal and death, are the climax and key on which the myths of Arthur depends. But in *Mists of Avalon* too much wordage wasted on trivialities entirely dissipates any potential climactic build-up - what Bradley has written is just soap opera in mythic clothing.

## ii. ...yet he glutted the Ravens

In striking contrast to Bradley's evident lack of thought and background knowledge is Joy Chant's *The High Kings: Arthur's Celtic Ancestors*, a coffee table book well illustrated by George Sharp. Chant's text alternates factual discussions of aspects of archaic Celtic culture with scenes from the court of Arthur, "Chief Dragon" (ie Pendragon) of Britain, giving an imaginative reconstruction of post-Roman British society, with such familiar characters as Arthur himself, Gueneva, Gal and Bedwyr calling for the bards of the courts they visit to tell a story to fit the occasion described.

This is not just a collection of stories but a work of speculative scholarship, much of it written in the form of fiction. This is most appropriate: the figure of Arthur, though it may well be based on the historical fact of a fifth century war-leader who inflicted a crushing defeat on the invading Saxons, is far more an artifact of the stories that have gathered around him, as stories will gather around any hero. By retelling the tales Arthur may have listened to Chant illustrates this process, for in these traditional tales we can recognise some of the same patterns and episodes that have gone into building up Arthur's own legend. Chant's retelling these tales captures well the vigorous and vivid spirit of those archaic Welsh and Irish tales that have survived and that provide our best guide to how the early Celts thought and felt.

The stories which Arthur may have listened to form a legendary history of Britain, beginning with the tale of how Brutus son of Aeneas came to the island called after him "Britain", how his general Corineus wrestled with the giant Gogmagog and threw him into the sea, and so Cornwall was called after Corineus. These stories, like that of how Vennolanda (Gwendolen) became High Queen of Britain; and the story of Bladud the magician's sojourn in the Otherworld and how he subsequently discovered the healing spring of Sulis at Bath; and that tale of Leir and his daughters which was used by one Wm Shakespeare; and the rivalry between the twin brothers Belinus and Brennos for the kingship of Britain; all are taken from the twelfth century Geoffrey of Monmouth's history of the Kings of Britain written in the Latin language and manner, for long regarded as pure fiction but now thought to be based, if not on the "ancient book in the British tongue" which Geoffrey himself claims to have taken his history from, then on the oral traditions which Geoffrey would have heard during his childhood in Wales.

The tale of Bran the Blessed and the Hospitality of the Marvellous Head forms the Second Branch of the Mabinogi: the "Four Branches of the Mabinogi" preserved in Middle Welsh versions are clearly remnants of pagan Celtic myth, and the figure of Bran seems to reappear as the wounded Fisher King of the medieval Arthurian romances. The tale of the rivalry of Julius Caesar

(Flamdwyn) and Cassivelaunus (Cadwallawn) for the love of Flower (Fflur), hinted at in the "triads" (story-tellers' mnemonics) of "Three Great Loves of the Island of Britain" and "Three Cordwainers of this island", is an amalgam of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the "Giant's Daughter" traditional tale-type as it is seen in, for instance, "Culhwch and Olwen" which is included in *The Mabinogion*. Also from the Mabinogion comes the tale of Maxen Wledig, the Spanish general Magnus Clemens Maximus acclaimed Caesar by the garrison of Britain in 383 AD, defeated and executed by Theodosius in 388 AD - but in the Welsh tale there's no trace of what history tells us about him. And bringing the legendary history up to Arthur's own time, there's the tale of the traitor Vortigern, his bewitchment by Rowenwen, daughter of Hengist, and how he let the Saxons into England - a story taken from Geoffrey, and recently used by Mary Stewart in *The Hollow Hills*.



JOY CHANT & MARTIN BRADLEY

Finally Chant gives us the tale of Arthur himself, as after his death the bards may have woven Arthur's deeds in with the traditional patterns of story-telling, which have been shown in the tales Arthur himself might have listened to: marvellous conception and birth; boyhood deeds; fostering in the court of Ambrosius the High King; unwitting incest with his sister Morgen, daughter of his Otherworld father; the gift of his father's marvellous sword Caledvold; how Arthur takes the beard of the giant Ritho; his wooing of Gueneva daughter of the Giant Gogmagog against Mordred's advice; Arthur's raid on the Otherworld to seize the Cauldron of Plenty (the Middle Welsh poem "Preiddeu Annwn", ie "Spoils of the Otherworld" tells of this) "seven times the fullness of Pridwen was the host that sailed with Arthur; seven men only returned"; the digging up of the head of Bran from Tower Hill in London - that was one of the "Three Unfortunate Disclosures", for while Bran's head was buried there no "gornes" (pest, plague or invasion) could come to this island, but Arthur declared that while he was alive Britain needed no protection but himself; how Amros, Arthur's son by Morgen, came to Camlodd (which Chant places at Camulodunum, ie Colchester) and was killed by Arthur - this may be compared with the Irish tale of "The Death of Cuchulain's One Son"; how Modrat, son of Cordaw Chief Officer of Britain was fostered with Arthur and Arthur loved him as a son, making him regent when Arthur went to hunt the marvellous boar Irit (as is told in "Culhwch and Olwen") and when Arthur went to free Rome from the barbarians; how Love sprang up between Gueneva and Modrat so that Gueneva (like the Irish Grainne and Deirdre) put her lover "under bonds" to take her with him wherever he might go; and so the great battle between Modrat and Arthur came about - the battle of Camlann which, according to the "triads" is one of the "Three Frivolous Battles", brought about by one of the "Three Unfortunate Blows", that which Modrat struck upon Gueneva; and at the end Arthur is taken over the sea to the Otherworld Island of Women.

The events of this story are all familiar, secondhand, the stuff of tradition, argued over by Continued on Page 17.

# SCIENTOLOGY

Continued from Page 2

'L. Ron Hubbard is moving back into the science fiction field with a vengeance. At the American Book-sellers Convention, Bridge Publications unveiled a five-year plan of publishing new L. Ron Hubbard work, republishing old work, and doing anthologies, movie tie-ins, tv programs, cassettes, records, etc.'

February, 1980. 'No Scientologists except for the Broekers have seen him [Hubbard] since.'

'Hubbard disappeared because he feared he would be caught up in a trial in which one of his former Messengers, Tanya Burden, claimed that she had been forced to be his serf from the age of 14.'

Among the trees high  
Beneath the blue sky

They plucked the bright  
flowers And watched the birds  
fly; Then on blackberries fed,  
And strawberries red,

And when they were weary  
'We'll go home,' they said.

'According to senior officers of the Church in 1982 Hubbard assigned certain key trademarks, including his signature, to the Religious Technology Center, set up by Miscavige and his associates. But the document which is supposed to have passed these valuable rights to the RTC as a gift has been challenged as a forgery.'

In the spring of 1982, at the same time as he formed the Church of Spiritual Technology, Miscavige incorporated Author Services International, a profit-making corporation which is used to funnel income to Hubbard from the sale of his books. According to Howard 'Homer' Schomer, who was treasurer-secretary of Author Services, during one period \$1 million a week was being moved from Bridge Publications, a Hubbard Company in the US, to New Era Publications, another Hubbard firm in Denmark, and then bank-wired to Hubbard accounts in

Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Within six months, Schomer testified, Hubbard's wealth grew from \$10 million to \$40 million. Finally, Schomer said, he could no longer go on skimming money from the Church and make it look legal...'

'Budrys speculated on why Hubbard was doing all this. Obviously he doesn't need money, and obviously he has achieved fame of a kind through Dianetics and Scientology. 'I think Hubbard realized that people had forgotten him as a science fiction writer, and he wants to be remembered for it.'

Judge Breckenridge 'The evidence portrays a man who has been virtually a pathological liar when it comes to his history, background and achievements.' He was a man gripped by 'egoism, greed, avarice, lust for power, and vindictiveness and aggressiveness against persons perceived by him to be disloyal or hostile'.

'In an effort to keep the money flowing, prices for Scientology courses have soared and continue to rise almost every month. It now costs £40 to buy a copy of Dianetics, the bible of the Church. And after the introductory £100 communications course, charges for training and counselling can run into thousands of pounds.'

'On July 8, 1980, Ensign Ken MacFarlane was "highly commended" for training Scientology Registrars (salesmen) on hard-sell techniques so successfully that his first graduates produced \$25,000 in their first week.'

'Sturgeon pointed out that he was not making money off this. "People seem to think I'm doing this for the money," he said, "but I am getting only \$25 to read each story, plus travel expenses when I appear for the organization. The other judges get the same. I think Hubbard was one of the greats of the Golden Age and has gotten a raw deal in the history books."

And when it was night  
So sad was their plight,

The sun it went down,  
And the moon gave no light.  
They sobbed and they sighed  
And they bitterly cried,  
And long before morning  
They lay down and died.

'It's a con - it was all a fraud from the very beginning' claimed Hubbard's former archivist Gerry Armstrong, who said his eyes had been opened after being authorised by Hubbard to write his biography. 'I went from being a devotee - I thought it was the hope of mankind - and I learned it was all based on lies and deceptions.'

'Algis Budrys added that he got "normal consulting fees" for some of the work but wasn't getting rich either. "I think the contest is important for new writers, and I'm very much involved with beginning authors."

'That's a Rehabilitation Project Force, they're RPFers, psychological prisoners - slave labour, in a way...' RPFers, the Church's labour force, tend to their every need - cleaning house, waiting at table, washing dishes, forbidden to talk, moving at a run.'

'Anyway, they love Ron. He is their God.'



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'It [Scientology] has also earned the enmity of numerous governments, including Britain's, and many hundreds of disillusioned individuals who claimed they had been hoodwinked by high-pressure Church salesmen into spending thousands of dollars on Scientology programmes.'

'From July until December 1982 the Scientology international states (membership figures) C-R-A-S-H-E-D with a capital C.'

'The plans for the book seem rather grandiose for a field where trade paperbacks normally sell under 20,000 copies. Bridge is planning a 100,000 first printing with a \$50,000 promotional budget and tours by the Judging panel.'

'In Britain, where the Church once boasted 200,000 supporters....that membership has fallen to around 1000.'

'At a press conference held at LA Con, Fred Harris of Author Services, the public relations firm devoted to L. Ron Hubbard's fiction, formally announced a new professional publication: L. Ron Hubbard's To the Stars Science Fiction Magazine. Terry Carr, one of the most respected anthology editors in the field, will be fiction editor. Craig Miller, co-chairman of LA Con and a partner in the movie public relations firm ConArtists, will be managing editor. William Rotsler, writer and artist, will be art director. Harris himself will serve as editor-in-chief.'

'"Outrageous and personal abuse permeates the organisation" Boston Lawyer Michael Flynn.

Judge Paul G. Breckenridge called the Church of Scientology "schizophrenic and paranoid", adding that "this bizarre combination seems to be a reflection of its founder."

And when they were dead,  
The robins so red  
Brought strawberry leaves  
And over them spread;  
And all the day long,  
The green branches among,  
They'd prettily whistle  
And this was their song-  
'Poor babes in the wood!  
Sweet babes in the wood!  
Oh the sad fate of  
The babes in the wood!'

#### Text Sources:

Sunday Times Magazine, October 28, 1984. "Sinking the Master Mariner" by John Barnes.  
Locus Magazine edited by Charles Brown.  
Science Fiction Chronicle edited by Andy Porter.  
The Babes in the Wood: Anonymous

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