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VECTOR

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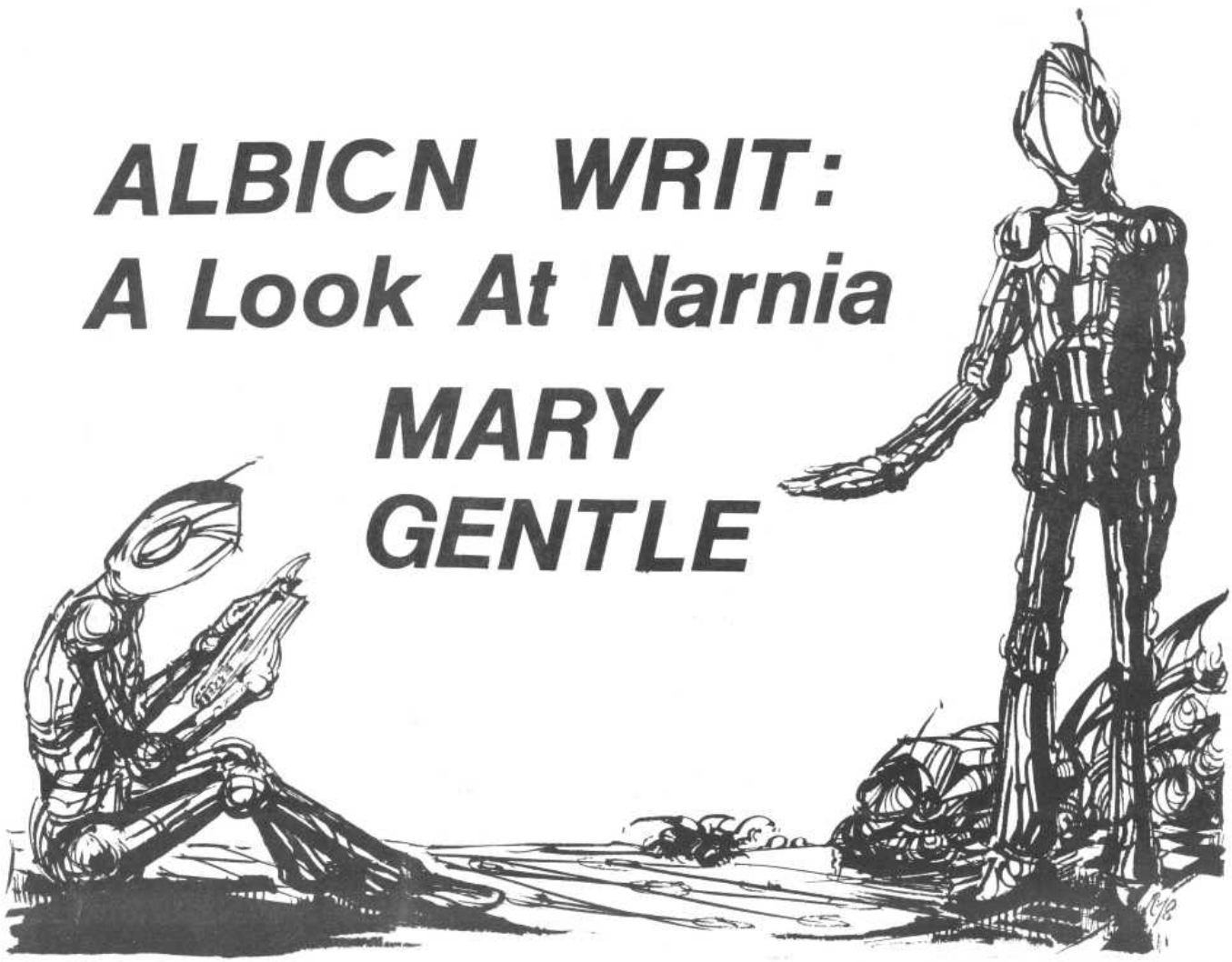
INTERVIEW WITH JOE HALDEMAN

ALBICN WRIT: A Look At Narnia

MARY GENTLE



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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.

VECTOR EDITOR

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Artwork: FRONT COVER VECTOR LOGO - John McFarlane.

PRINTED by PDC Copyprint 11 Jeffries Passage, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4AP

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ALL CORRESPONDENCE on this issue should be addressed to Paul Kincaid at the VECTOR REVIEWS editorial address.

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EDITORIAL

It seems to be a condition of editing VECTOR - or a part of it - that one moves house in the lest straightforward manner imaginable. Since the middle of March my 'home' has been a 9' by 10' hotel room, my typewriter wallowing on the bed, silenced for the sake of the other guests at 11 each night, thus playing havoc with my writing schedule, and all but a hnadful of my books, reference material and everything else inaccessibly stored 200 miles away.

Until further notice, then, all letters, articles etc., for me should be sent to me c/o Paul Kincaid's address; he will redirect my mail unopened, thus saving postage and guaranteeing that it reaches me wherever I am. Anbody I've given my hotel address to should continue to use it; I'll send them my COA when I move.

New Blood; New Brooms.

One of the functions of Editors is to shape the content and style of a magazine. Paul and I both have our own ideas for the future of our respective areas of responsibility, within the general policies and ideals of the BSFA. The changes probably won't be dramatic, but they will be there, and I'm quite sure that members will voice their approval or disapproval as strongly as ever.

I'm intending for the main feature in each issue to be an article by a British sf writer, on a subject in or closely realted to the sf field in which (s)he has a special interest or knowledge. This is the **British** Science Fiction Association, many authors are members, and it is only right that we should give them more than a passing nod.

In this issue the first article of **Albion Writ** is a piece by Mary Gentle which has forced me to look at C.S.Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia from a totally different perspective. I want to encourage new names in **Vector:** Elizabeth Sourbut argues in **What do we do now the Future is Here?** that SF still has a future if we put people first: Joe Haldeman answers some (at times) awkward questions from Ken Lake and Geoff Rippington, and gives some insights on the American Way of Life in the first part of **Vietnam Veteran - Universal Soldior.**

Finally, I too would like to pay tribute to Geoff; he did an excellent job, and I hope that the new editorial team can maintain the standards he set.

David V. Barrett

A Note From the Production Editor:

Volunteer required urgently to assist with the typing of final copy for **VECTOR.** This is an important job, needs someone ideally with a word processor or electronic typewriter, a person who can deliver the impossible in next to no time at all , and finally a person who can liase closely with the exisiting editors. Interested parties, please contact ALAN DOREY as soon as possible - Tel: 061-653-6293. Please think about this very carefully: **If VECTOR is to continue, it MUST have a good typist!**

VIETNAM VETERAN UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

"HE'S 5 FOOT 2 AND HE'S 6 FOOT 4
HE FIGHTS WITH MISSILES AND WITH SPEARS
HE'S ALL OF 31 AND HE'S ONLY 17
BEEN A SOLDIER FOR A THOUSAND YEARS"

- Buffy Ste-Marie

JOE HALDEMAN interviewed at the 1984 Eurocon/ Eastercon "SEACON '84", Brighton, by Ken Lake with Geoff Rippington.

PART 1 (Part 2 will appear in VECTOR 127, AUGUST 1985)

LAKE: Your earliest books, which you wrote after - as is stressed in most of your books - fighting in the Vietnam war, were books about the war, and war features very heavily in kost of your other books. Would you sya that the specific plots, or the general ideas, of all or any of your books, came to you during the war?

HALDEMAN: The first one, of course, which is not science fiction, is about Vietnam, called **War Year,** and that's almost autobiographical, in a slant sense; that it, the main character is not me. I'm a minor character who gets killed half way through the book. It's the sort of thing that happened to our group in Vietnam. That was an odd experience, because I had myself as a minor character; when I sent it in, I had lived all the way through the book. The editor objected to another minor character getting killed, and s d I should get rid of this professor fellow ((laughs)) - that was me! So I had to sit down and kill myself at the typewriter, which was an odd sensation.

LAKE: I read some of **The Forever War** in a magazine. Did you write this book originally as a series of episodes?

HALDEMAN: I wrote it as a novel, but it's an episodic novel, so I was able to sell at least 80% of it as magazine stories. It formed itself that way, because of the way that time is handled in the book, it does fall into four sections. but most of my work does tend to be episodic, and I've been critic ed for that. I think it's a reflection of reality, that is, that we consider our own lives as a string of episodes rather than a contiuum of everyday occurrences, we remember the high spots, the arresting things. That's perhaps no defence, because life is not fiction; but I think people who condemn writers or their individual works for being episodic, I'm not sure of what they're actually saying, they're just getting an easy critical handle.

LAKE: I would suggest, though, that life isn't episodic in a devloping sense, that the episodes are split up by purely fortuitous changes in your lifestyle, whereas it's no good writing a novel like that; you've got to have a flow behind it anyhow.

HALDEMAN: There have to be patterns in your episodes, certainly. I don't start out a novel to be an episodic novel. My later ones are much more continuous than the earlier ones.

LAKE: Looking again at **The Forever War,** my own feeling was that your female characters have too masculine attitudes. Is that because that's how you find women, or

how you'd like to find women, or how you fear they're developing, or how you hope they're developing?

HALDEMAN: You know, that's an odd, and peculiarly British criticism. The last two books I wrote have female protagonists, and they've been praised by female writers in the United States, and by feminists,,who are always out for some sort of poltical problem with the way that you portray a female character. I agree that in **The Forever War**, all the female cxharacters are in what we perceive as a masculine role. In order to function in a recognisably competent way they do act in ways that we would recognise as being masculine. But I don't think that this is a perception that I would apply to the women around me. I think that if you were in a Kibbutz, if you were in a combat organisation in Israel or Vietnam where you did have women fighting alongside you, you'd find that probably they didn't act as feminine as the women that you had known earlier in your life - although you can't be cross cultural about what are feminine characteristics.

LAKE: When you say that this is a predominantly English criticism, perhaps our women are still more feminine, and certainly less aggressively feminist.

HALDEMAN: I've noticed that!

LAKE: So you feel, perhaps, that you're reflecting something which would come more naturally to your American women readers than to men or women readers in Britain?

HALDEMAN: Possibly. An American publisher and critic said to me today that he hadn't found any contemporary British writers who are writing female characters who are believable.

LAKE: Maybe they're believable to the British. A last question on **The Forever War:** how did its success affect you?

HALDEMAN: Well, I understand it's bad for a writer to have too early success. Fortunately it was quite mixed in the United States; a lot of people didn't like the book, and were pretty voluble about no liking it, and a lot of people didn't like the fact that I'd won all these awards.

In fact, I suspect I won the Nebula Award for political reasons: not war politics, but liteary politics. I was up against **Dhalgren** and **The female Man,** and a lot of the people who would have voted for **Dhalgren** felt they had to vote for **The Female Man** for political reasons, which took votes away from Chip Delany: certainly a larger book, a more important book in a literary sense. So I nosed him out, also because a lot of people were reacting against what they saw as too literary a book. I just came along at the right time for that one.

LAKE: Going on to **Mindbridge**, which several people have said to both of us is by far your best book: it's a very complex format; there are reports, and quotations, documentation - and it works. Did you use that format because it fitted the story, or in order to shape the story that way?

HALDEMAN: I had in mind, when I started **Mindbridge**, writing a piece of meta-science fiction, Science Fiction about Science Fiction. This throwing in of discrete and accurate-looking graphs and reports and so forth was part of the joke, because the book is an extended joke. It's a hard Science Fiction novel about concepts that are totally non-scientific - telepathy and matter transmission - and that was the joke that I wanted to play. A lot of poeple didn't take it as a joke, and thought it was quite serious. I got an award for 'Spirituality in Science Fiction' because of the elements of metempsychosis that are in the book, and that was purely a rip - I was just having fun with it! I thought **Mindbridge** was my best book until **Worlds,** and that puzzles me, because it's not a 'felt' book, it's a totally intellectual exercise; I cranked it out, having a lot of fun with it. I wanted to write a sex scene where two people were in telepathic concert, and show that it didn't work, that they couldn't be totally honest and communicating with each other. I also wanted to have an alien that was physically quite beautiful and at the same time an incarnation of the Devil. So I had those two things that I wanted, and made up a story that would use them. I had so much fun with that book.

LAKE: You've trown a new light on it for me - I'm going to go back and read that one again! **All My Sins Remembered:** 1977, the same year that **Mindbridge** was published. Which came first?

HALDEMAN: **All My Sins remembered** I wrote off and on over a seven year period. That really is a collection of novellas about this guy, with alittle bit of connecting material; not exactly a fix-up, but not the novel that I had planned to write about the man. Originally I had thought that I would write a novel about this youth, what went on before he was essentially drafted into this Terran Bureau of Investigation and Interference. By the time I'd written half on his work in there, I realised I didn't actually want to do that, I wanted to show the end of his career and the debasement of his life by the bureaucracy. And so the last half of the book is written with the novel in mind. The first part **To Fit The Crime**, was written for an anthology of crime in the 21st century, crimes that couldn't be committed right now; so exploitation of aliens is something that couldn't be done right now, we don7t have them. And so I had this little story about the creatures working in mines on this planet and being exploited. I wound up selling it to **Galaxy.** Then I really liked the charcater and the notion that he had no real personality himself and kept getting these longings to be a professional, and so I wrote another one, and it sat around for a long time. In fact, I got the title at the same time I got the concept for the whole story. I remember the night very well. I was sitting at a friend's house; we were listening to some really bad rock music that he loved - the Stoney Poneys - and smoking dope, and I was sort of trying to engage my mind and amus myself. I was going throug Hamlet's soliloquy, and I tried to keep on going, and I got to 'all my sins remembered', and I suddenly I just slammed into the book, and then I went home and finished it with that in mind, which is an odd way for a book to be writtne I guess. They're all odd! I wanted the main character to be me, in the most broad, modern sense of the word, a tragic character; he's not in control of his detsiny, he's not old enough to know what's happening, when the thing starts, and then he's just troubled through a life of useless violence and finally killed by the outfit that made him a weapon. And I wanted to make him a sort of American Taoist, and make up this religion that's very pacifistic and so forth.

RIPPINGTON: When you were writing the **Star Trek** novels, did you get any idea of why that whole thing is so popular?

HALDEMAN: It's not a simple phenomenon, but it does have simple elements to it, and one of them is the same thing that makes any situation comedy, or even drama, popular. That is, the audience is sitting there, and you really are in a different state of consciousness when you're staring at the tube; one thing that you like is to see familiar characters do recognisable things. This was the first time that this had been done in this particular way; I mean, there had been Science Fiction series before, but never with engaging characters like the engineer and the doctor and so forth.

RIPPINGTON: I saw one of the repeats recently, and at the end of it they showed the American flag being raised on a distant planet; it was very, very parochial.

LAKE: Let's face it, a function of American Science Fiction is the American way of life.

HALDEMAN: **It's just amusing when** it's on the surface, but it's not amusing when it's buried underneath. There's no questioning of the value of materialism, generally. But quite good science fiction can be written with philosophical underpinnings that are abhorrent; when you think of the Strugatskies, they write beautiful stuff, even when it's consistent with late Marxism-Leninism.

LAKE: Let's come on to **Worlds.** I saw this in essence as a Cook's Tour of Earth from the viewpoint of a young, kooky and rather immature outsider; an enjoyable tour-de-force, but I wondered what it proved, as the action comes thick and fast at the end, and is rather nasty.That's a very English attack on it, or simplification; where have I gone wrong?

HALDEMAN: That's a reasonable simplification. The thing is, the book is a set-up for the next one, **Worlds Apart**, which is a far better book, and certainly a lot more complex. In the three books the main character, Marianne O'Hara,, lives her entire life. Yes, in the first one she's a callow, rather self-congratulatory yet talented young woman, but not as talented as she thinks she is. I was sort of making a female version of myself inthat I was trying to recall how I felt when I was her age, and in that I think it's successful. I liked the book a lot more after I had written it than I do now - it must be seven years after I started it - it is too much of a set-up for the rest of the series; I don't see it as a complete book anymore, whereas I did when I finished it. I'm now working on the last one, **Worlds Enough and Time.**

RIPPINGTON: **Worlds** is a very depressing book in some ways, in the way that you depict the future, especially the Aemrican way of life; it seems to be New York magnified about seven hundred times; it's not somewhere that I would really want to live.

HALDEMAN: The hardback editors, when they got it, they loved it. They said 'That's just what New York is going to be like!' New York is my second home; I've never lived there, but of course, being in publishing, I leap in and out of New York all the time. And I love it! It's so filthy and degrading; it's a wonderful Baghdad of a city! I spend the Fall semester in Cambridge, Massachusetts, so I'm a New Englander then; the rest of the year I spend in my home base in Florida, because there's no state income tax there - and it's warm! But we travel so much that we are rather rootless; in any given year I doubt that we spend fewer than a hundred days travlling. My family is from Oklahoma. That influences some of my speech patterns and I think probably some of the rhetorical patterns in my writing are mid-western; but I don't know that it's good for a writer to be too analytical about the level of his writing - it either works or it doesn't.

LAKE: When I came into science fiction, most writers and editors still had the mental picture of a spaceship as being created in someone's backyard, the race into space - and I've been a little disappointed at how long it's taken the space shuttle, once we knew it was there and built, actually to be used for anything.

HALDEMAN: I find it very frustrating. I understand the problems; they are largely bureaucratic problems, with various power structures in the United States all jockeying for a piece of it...The Shuttle was modified extensively by the Air Force - they said, 'Not for use a s a weapon, of course, but we do need a wider bay, and a little more power' - and they could not have gotten the allocations of resources to build it unless they did bend the Defence Department. I don't see it as a direct weapon of war, but even a communications satellite can be a weapon.

LAKE: It's a point, that we only came into the Space Age because we had World War II.

RIPPINGTON: It's unfair to ask you, in a way, but you've been through Vietnam, which we can't really visualise...it seems as if we're going full circle again - especially from our side: we've just had the Falklands thing -

LAKE: That was just chivalric adventure!

RIPPINGTON: If we could have had horses, we would have done! But you had the same thing recently in Grenada. Do you think it is going full circle?

HALDEMAN: Well, that's the nature of history, isn't it? We should have learnt; but every generation says 'Why didn't we learn?' Grenada was especially interesting to me, because I didn t know it had happened. I go to my office at 3 or 4 in the morning, at MIT, and the **Boston Globe**, my newspaper, comes out about midnight. It happened to come out just before the invasion. So I read the newspaper; I sat in my office all day and wrote, I taught my classes; and at ten o'clock that night my students came up to me and said, 'What do you think about Grenada?' And I said, 'Do you mean Granada?' and they said 'No, Grenada.' 'What about Grenada?' and they said, 'We invaded Grenada!' Oh God! And then for a week - the city of Cambridge is a college town, it's a very liberal intellectual place - everybody was rending their garments and tearing their hair about this fucking island that we'd just stomped on. And then the Harris and such polls came out, and we found out that most of America was in favour of this barbaric thing that we had done. I don t know. I knew that that was in the American spirit, but it's depressing to see it confirmed.

THE POWER OF THE PAGAN

Mary Gentle

Mary Gentle is a regular contributor to Vector, and is also Reviews Editor for INTERZONE. She is perhaps best known for her SF epic GOLDEN WITCHBREED, but has also written a teenage fantasy A HAWK IN SILVER (published in her teens), which can be compared with Alan Garner's work, and which is notable for the power of its social realism.

In a recent issue of **The Women's Periodical** I came across this remark:

> "It would be easy to love Jesus as he should be loved, if he were Aslan."

I've been a lover of Narnia for longer than I care to remember, but with a break. Somwhere about the age of six or seven, in the local travelling library, I discovered the Narnia books. And loved them. And then, when I was nine, someone told me 'these are Christian allegories'. YUKK! was my reaction. (How did I come to be a nine year old atheist? Search me, I can recall hearing the hymn that begins 'Immortal, invisible, God only wise/In light inaccessible hid from our eyes', thinking that that was exactly how mice would regard a cat...). Not until I was seventeen did I come back to the Narnian Chronicles. And then it was with misgivings. Could one really read an author, deliberately blinding oneself to his major theme? Well, it was that or not read them at all. And there the matter rested. Until I read the remark paraphrased above. Whereupon light dawned:

The Narnian Chronicles are powerful fantasies. What is it that makes them powerful? More to the point: is ther anything **specifically Christian** about that power?

And the answer to that is: No.

There's a school of critical thought that says the last person you should ask about a book is the author, and to some degree I'lll go along with that. A book is text: is what's on the page. But if somone can read the Narnian Chronicles without the fainest idea that they're Christian - as many children seem to do - then there's a gap between author's intention and textual representation. Gap, did I say? A great yawning abyss. But here's C.S.Lewis himself on what he intended to do:

> "I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices, as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained glass and Sunday School associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I though one could."

On the face of it, that's fair enough. Here is this Christian author, with a Christian message, sitting down to encode it into the Narnian world. But wait a minute - - that isn't the way it happened. Where did Narnia begin? Lewis again:

> "All my seven Narnian books...begin with seeing pictures in my head. At first they were not a story, just pictures. The **Lion** all began with a picture of a faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood. This picture had been in my mind since I was about sixteen. Then, one day, when I was forty, I said to myself: 'Let's try to make a story about it'".

A faun in a wood...Mr.Tumnus, of course; whose library included such titles as 'Nymphs and Their Ways' and 'Is Man a Myth?'. Nothing Christian about Mr.Tumnus, nor about so many of the inhabitants of Narnia - fauns and dryads, from that cool and ancient classical world of the Greek Myths - Aslan's victory in **Prince Caspian** comes about with the aid of Bacchus, Silenus, and the 'wild girl' Maenads; toned down, to be sure, for the kiddies, but with a Dionysian pagan energy bursting through. That can stand as paradigm for all sevev Chronicles. **Prince Caspian** has also a pagan astrology, and some highly Machiavellian Elizabethan courtiers; as well as dwarves and talking animals from the MittleEuropean **marchen**. The White Witch - at least in her first incarnation in **The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe** - has come from that barely Christianised background: straight out of Anderson's 'Snow Queen'; and the 'traitor' Edmund is far more like Kay than he is like Judas. While we're on the subject, though, what **about** Lewis's borrowings?

> "Only Lewis could take all myth and ransack it for his **dramatis personae**, taking what he needed wherever he found it throughout literature, but making it so much his own that whatever 'original' reserachers may find, there is no thought of anything like plagiarism.

(C.S.Lewis: A Biography, R.L.Green and W.Hooper)

A quote from the somewhat over-friendly book. Opinions can differ: having read most of C.S.Lewis's fiction, I should like to say that he took from myth and literature with the indiscriminate taste of a jackdaw, and signally failed to ackowledge idiom, and wholesale borrowing. Undoubtedly it **worked**, in the Narnia books, and more power to his elbow, say I; I would cheerfully have watched Lewis 'ransack' the entiree canon of literature,,poetry, myth, religion and saga, if it had helped him come up with another seven Narnian Chronicles; but let's not be under any illusion. As for downright plagiarism - well, Lewis read Green's **The Wood The Time Forgot** in manuscript. I have a Ballantine edition of Green's book, and it remarkably forshadows the transition to another world, the temptation by sweet cordial/Turkish delight...as Green admits: "he (Lewis) had also been stimulated, perhaps subconsciously, by reading the manuscript of a friend's book of a similar kind, to continue with his own tale - and in doing so, seems to have drawn some ideas from what he read."

To return, however, to the beginnings of Narnia. The faun: the mental picture of a sixteen year old boy...Nothing Christian here. And when one considers Lewis himself at sixteen, perhaps that isn't surprising. If I can summarise the biographical writings of Hooper and Green, Lewis's Northern Ireland childhood seems at first to have inspired him with a distaste for religion. He wrote juvenilia about Boxen, a land of animals dressed as humans, involved not in anything magical but in political Machiavellianism. At the same time he had certain experiences - 'joy' - that were at first associated with landscape, and later with myths, in particular the northern sagas of Baldur and Odin and the other Norse Gods. Later he came to associate them with a Christian experience, but Lewis, when the seeds of the Narnian Chronicles were sown, was not a Christian.

> "...great men were regarded as gods after their death... thus after the death of a Hebrew philosopher Yeshua (whose name we have corrupted into Jesus) he became regarded as a god, a cult sprang up, which was afterwards connected with the ancient Hebrew Jaweh-worship, and so Christianity came into being - one mytholoy among many..." (Lewis: Letter to Arthur Greeves)

Now I'm not saying that peoplem aren't entitled to change their minds, nor that a conversion in later life isn't perfectly valid. The point I labour is that Narnia has certain pagan roots. But,, moving on, what's the next stage?

> "And somewhere, after he had suddenly begun writing again and was deep into Narnia, 'suddenly Aslan came

> bounding into it. I think,' Lewis records, 'I had been having a good many dreams of lions about that time. Apart from that, I don't know where the Lion came from or why He came. But once He was there He pulled the whole story togetherm and soon He pulled the other six Narnian stories in after Him.'"

Fair enough. It isn't uncommon for an author to be along way into a book before he or she finds out what it's **really** about. How valid, though, is Narnian Christianity? It is often said that the Narnian books explain much about Christianity, especially the Crucifixion. So let's look at the parallels.

Well, then, Aslan isn't the Son of God in the way that Jesus was; he isn't the Incarnation - by which I mean he wasn't born ands suckled of a mortal lioness. Aslan is always Aslan, except when he's shape-changing to be a lamd, in **Dawn Treader**, or various animals in **Horse and his Boy**. so we can say that Aslan doesn't live a mortal life and then become translated at his resurrection. From what I can make out, his body is the same supranatural lion-body both before and after his sacrifice on the stone table.

Now, before you tell me I've missed the point, yes, the stone table sequence is very affecting. That, and the last page of **The Last battle**, are two passages I can't read without being reduced to tears. But let's step back a little and analyse. Aslan dies, is sacrificed, and is then reborn. This isn't specifically Christian, this is the Dying God myth that all agricultural-based civilisations come up with. One person, the incarnated god, must die so that the community will live; a shape buried deep in the subconscious of us all, and the Christian story touches that neolithic nerve. Sacrifice for the greater good: this is a perilously **attractive** concept, isn't it? Every time a war comes round, they ring that little bell. I recommend the poets of the First World War, Rupert Brooke in particular, for its full flower.

However I don't want to do what Lewis himself does so much of in **That Hideous Strength**, that is, to set up easy straw men to knock down. It is perfectly true that Lewis said he never intended a one-to-one correspondence between the Narnian and our version of Christianity. If Christ were incarnated in a world like ours, but **not** ours, what might happen? So, from Walter Hooper's **Past Watchful Dragons**, I reproduce the following letter that Lewis wrote to someone who taxed him on just that point:

> "1) The creation of Narnia is the Son of God creating **a** world (not specially **our** world).
>
> 2) Jadis plucking the apple is, like Adam's sin, an act of disobedience, but it doesn't fill the same place as his plucking did his. She was **already** fallen before she ate it.
>
> 3) The stone table is meant to remind one of Moses' table.
>
> 4) The Passion and Resurrection of Aslan are the Passion and Resurrection Christ might be supposed to have had in **that** world - like those in our world but not exactly alike.
>
> 5) Edmund is like Judas a...traitor. But unlike Judas he repents and is forgiven (as no doubt Judas would have been if he'd repented).
>
> 6) At the v.edge of the Narnian world Aslan begins to appear more like Christ as he is know in that world.
>
> 7) And of course the Ape and Puzzle, just before the Last Judgement, are like the coming of Antichrist before the end of our world."

Narnia, then, is a stage less real than our world (and I do not speak in literary terms), being created by the Son of God rather than God himself. But when it comes to Jadis, and Digory's Uncle Andrew, in **The Magician's Nephew**...this is where Lewis starts to avoid the hard Christain questions. "Already fallen," remember? All the evil in Narnia comes form Outside. The White Witch/Jadis comes from Charn (oh how I love Charn!) and Andrew from Earth; and later on the telmarines are said to be pirates from Earth who managed to invade the Narnian world. So: who created evil? And who let it into Narnia? Aslan, of course, because he was the only one with the power to keep it out, had he chosen to do so. The problem of pain and the problem of evil are not easilly to be answered; there's a whole discussion about Free Will there as well, not to mention the one abouth whether Judas' betrayal was necessary, and so inevitable. But Lewis just plain side-steps the whole issue...

A minor digression to Edmund, before we come to the end of the world. As Hooper says in **Past Watchful Dragons**, Christ atoned for the sins of the whole world when he died on the cross. When Aslan dies - "try as we might, I simply do not see how we could work out a doctrine of the Atonement from Aslan's vicarious sacrifice for one boy - a boy, not from Narnia, but from this world." Quite. Hooper suggests that we just regard it as an illustration of Aslan's love: he loves Edmund so much that he is willing to die for him. And yet, stripped of the Atonement, this is **not** a Christian myth. Oridnary men and women have died for each other, and for their children. What's powerful here is heroism, not religion.

Taking up point 6 from above, I would like to state, for the record, that it's when Aslan begins to appear more like Christ that he and my childhood self began to part company. I can take the statement at the end of **The Last Battle** that "He no longer looked to them like a lion", because Lewis doesn't tell us what he **does** look like. Christ, one naturally assumes, but the Pale Galilean is a pretty poor exchange for the power and glory of the Lion. And in **Dawn Treader**, when there appears the Lamb with its "sweet milky voice"...well, I don't care for lambs. Not when there's the roar and the glittering mane of a lion there. I didn't then, in my pre-Christian reading, believe that a lion could have any good reason for changing from that 'living cataract of power and beauty'. Twenty years on, it still doesn't ring true...

But onwards to **The Last Battle**. Attitudes change: I now find the end of this book very mocing (more of that later). As a child, it was -apart from the end - my least favourite of all the Narnian books. It wasn't a 'proper' Narnian book. Why? That's something I found very difficult to pinpoint. Surprisingly, it was the hero-worshipping Hooper who put his finger right on it:

> "If **The Last Battle** is re-red less often than the other fairy tales - and I don't know that it is - this is probably because the firts eleven chapters, which take place in the old, familiar Narnia, are so extremely painful to read. Almost everything we have come to love is, bit by bit, taken from us. Our sense of loss is made more excrutiating because we are allowed - even encouraged - to believe that things will eventually get back to 'normal'."

Hooper feels that we are compensated for this by the fact of life with Aslan, afterwards, I tend to disagree. I think **The Last Battle** is where Lewis's didactic Christianity got the upper hand over his pagan, Arthurian, and Northern sources. He was determined to have a Last Judgement on Narnia. So determined that characters who in other books have won through - Eustace, Jill, Narnian Kings and Nobles - are here subordinate to plot: there is no reason given, in story-terms, for their failure. Except that Lewis decreed Narnia should end. Ultimately, the Narnian's 'god' was very like Jehovah/Jaweh - authoritarian.

Lewis takes care to lambast those who don't share his views, from the comparatively good-natured portrayal of the 'atheist' dwarf in **Prince Caspian** (who doesn't believe in Aslan), to the Grub Street attacks on progressive education and A.S.Neill's school Summerhill in **The Silver Chair**, here called 'Experimental House':

> It was 'Co-educational', a school for both boys and girls, what used to be called a 'mixed' school; some said it was not nearly so mixed as the minds of the people who ran it. These people had the idea that boys and girls should be allowed to do what they liked...All

> sorts of things went on which at an ordinary school would have been found out and stopped in half a term, but at this school they weren't. Or even if they were, the people who did them were not expelled or pun ished. The Head said they were interesting psychological cases...

Even at six, one is aware that allowances have to be made for a bee in the bonnet - or even the occasional bat in the belfry. The sequence at the end of **The Last Battle**, with the dwarves who reject Aslan's reality, is too long to quote, but I recommend it for the same reasons.

Earlier I said **The Last Battle** wasn't a 'proper' Narnian book. yet, surely, if Christian, it should be the most 'proper' Narnian book of all? To contradict that, I have to give you some idea of what constitutes Narnia for me, why it isn't Christian except in the broadest ethical sense - there will always be that overlap between Christian and humanist values on the one hand, and humanist and pagan values on the other.

I've already spoken of the Classical and Germanic elements in the Narnian mythos. Let's look at something a little closer to home. Let's look, to be precise, at King Peter and King Edmund, Queen Susan and Queen Lucy, and the Court at Cair Paravel.

> "Narnia is a monarchical society, one in which there is loyal and joyful obedience to those above one in the hierarchical scale..." (Hooper)

Ouch. Yes, true; and not a a comfortable fact for a socialist like me. But Narnia is a literary monarchy - that is to say, it's King Arthur's Court, and all the noble Knights of Chivalry; it's Charlemagne, Roland and Oliver; it's King Huon of the Elves, it's...well, what it really is is that ancient dream of those ruling by Right, by being divinely appointed to the post, but mostly ruling because they are just and honourable, noble and merciful, etc. etc. You remember justice and honour and all of those qualities so noticeably missing from every court in history?

And of course, the 'Court' isn't a specifically Christian institution. There's Mallory, and the French tales of Lancelot, granted. There are also the Celtic tales of Finn and the Red Branch knights, of Math and Mathonwy, and the court of the Island of the Mighty. There are so many resonances here, not uncommon to modern fantasy - here is the boy Peter, in a high place, looking down on a castle like

> "...a great star resting on the seashore.
> 'That, O Man,' said Aslan, 'is Cair Paravel of the four thrones, in one of which you must sit as king. I show it to you because you are the first-born, and will be High King over all the rest.'"

And because I love Narnia I will say nothing at all on the subject of adolescent power-fantasies. Most of the exploits of Peter, in **Lion** and subsequent books, are 'kinght's ventures'. I wonder if the Christianity of Mallory has any relevance today? Was it wise of Lewis, in **Prince Caspian**, to link Peter with the crusaders? Historically speaking, they seem to have been a nasty bunch. But again, Lewis's are literary Crusaders. One sees the archetype, not the reality. And one would be extremely ill-advised to apply that archetype to real-life experience...Which brings me back to Christianity.

There is so much borrowed, in Narnia. The heroes-who-sleep-to-wake-again - granted they are not normally two boys and two girls from the twentieth century, but the legend, ah, the legend of sleeping hero! I may be wrong, but I think the resurrection got tacked onto the Jesus legend fairly late in the day, along with the virgin birth, and other accumulated myths. Myths is a word I use in no pejorative sense. There are certain powerful archetypes in the human psyche; it would be strange if Christianity had not attracted a few...but they are not Christian of themselves.

Borrowing, borrowing.,...the **Dawn Treader**'s voyage, bravely going where no man had gone before - with the possible exception of St.Brendan, and a handful of Celtic adventurers before him. (Hooper asks: "Could any **person** have made us understand bravery so well as the gay and martial mouse Reepicheep?" Frankly, yes: I recommend you to on D'Artagnon.) The 'brightness and sweet odour' of Aslan, which had been attached to the Holy Grail, which has its own Celtic ancestor the life-giving Cauldron of Ceridwen. Borrowings...the Monopods in **Dawn Treader** are from Sir John Mandeville; and in **The Horse and His Boy**, the Tisroc (may he live for ever) is from the Arabian Nights - possibly by way of **The Mikado. The Silver Chair**'s knights and ladies are from Spenser, and Prince Rilian bears a startling resemblance to Prince Hamlet. The end of **The Last Battle**:

> "...that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan's real world"

is, as Lewis is the first to admit, straight out of Plato. But then, to be fair, that's hardly Lewis's fault: ninety percent of Christianity is Platonism or neo-Platonism. The more erudite you are (which I am not) the more correspondence you will find. To be plain: I don't accuse Lewis of plagiarism. I do say that he has drawn from multiple sources, and that very few are Christian in their origin.

A few last words. Mainly because I can see one argument looming on the horizon, and I'd like to take note of it, if not dispose of it. That is: the people who will say, Yes, all those Pagan parallels are true - but don't you see, they all pre-figure Christianity. Or as Lewis said:

> "The Jew was only half a man, and the Pagan was only half a man, so neither was well without the other, nor could either be healed until Christ came into the world."

Something in that bothers me. Partly it's the idea of millions of people born with no chance of being saved, because they were born before Christ - but doubtless it's wrong to regard time as linear, and there's always Emeth in **The Last Battle**, who worshipped the Right, even if he did do it under the wrong name. And partly it's that monomaniac insistence on Christianity being the Only True Way. I distrust anyone who admits of no doubt whatsoever - the world's too complex for simple certainties.

I seem to have strayed away from Narnian matters, which was not my intention. To restate then: where the Narnian Chronicles are Christian, they largely avoid the problems of Christianity, and are less powerful as stories; where they are most powerful, they are not Christian at all. I can read them as Pagan, but if I regret one thing, it's that I can't quite get back the pagan Aslan that I had before someone told that child about Christian allegory; but childhood is always past recovery, I suppose. Can one criticise or analyse the landscape of childhood? (Can one ever read as one did, then?) Hooper and Green have some definitions of adult critics:

> "The adverse adult criticism is usually caused by other than purely literary reasons, such critics may be divided roughly into the sceptics and the sentimentalists. The first attack the stories for their Christianity, the second for their presentation of some of the children as unpleasant characters - Edmund for his early treachery, Eustace before his experience as a dragon, and so on. Both are also inclined to object to Lewis's 'cruelty': Aslan's sacrifice, Eustace's sufferings when the dragon's hide is torn from him, Peter's killing of the wolf and so on. And those who dislike, for either reason, do so very thoroughly and can see few virtues in the series - even condemning them as dull and badly-written, condescending, cliche-ridden, devoid of any characterisation

Thus Hooper and Green define the critics. Some of us, I hope, fail to fit in either category; if I have to be called as ceptic, it's a sceptic with reservations. And it's true to say that the Chronicles are condescending: Lewis can be a right Heavy Uncle at times. Regarding the unpleasantness: Hooper and Green seem to deny that this exists; however, it does, and it's a positive virtue for a child-reader. Children know that children can be treacherous, and selfish, and whining pains in the neck; having that there makes the 'bravery' that much more believable. And a world of suffering? Well, yes: Narnia is 'a fairy-tale that's **real**', that is, it's grounded in solid physical detail.

"Those who dislike...do so very thoroughly." It may sound that way, reading this; but if it does, you're under a misapprehension. I could go on at great length, listing what I love about Narnia - Lucy dancing with the tree-dryads, Aslan and the Stone Table; Doctor Cornelius; and the deserted Cair Paravel; Ramandu and the Star's Daughter; the Deep Lands, and Prince Rilian in the Silver Chair; Reepicheep, and the Silver Lake; the Desert Tombs at night; Digory and Polly in the Wood Between The Worlds; Jadis and the Destruction of Charn; Lantern Waste and the White Stag; Aslan singing Narnia into being; "the dream is over: this is the morning - " Which list I give you without having to refer to the books; if I did so, it would be longer.
One can speculate about why it is that so many people can, if not warned, read the Narnian Chronicles without noticing the Christianity. Were he alive, Lewis would probably put it down to the godless latter half of the twentieth century- the post-Christian Age, as it's known - but that's too simplistic, even if it could be established. The alternative view is that when stripping things of 'stained glass and Sunday School associations', one should be very careful. What lies beneath may not be what you expect; may not even be a palimpsest. Lewis thought the pagan world prefigured Christianity. Turn the argument round, say that Christianity might be an accumulation of pagan festivals, Greek philosophy, human ethics, and psychological archetypes; and then it's no palimpsest, but closer to what one might call the Onion Principle - in that, when you remove the last layer of onion, the whole thing's vanished.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW THAT

THE FUTURE IS HERE?

Elizabeth Sourbut has just completed a degree in Physics at Durham University, and hopes to enter a career in librarianship. From September she will be working at the British Museum. This is her first contribution to VECTOR; further work will appear in the future.

(This was the title of the essay competition at YORCON III. Elizabeth Sourbut sat on the follow-up panel, and here expands on what she said then.)

The reasoning behind this choice of title seems to be something like the following: Science Fiction is about the future. Science Fiction is full of spaceships and robots and computers and giant metropolises. Those things are now with us in the real world. Ergo, the future is here. I would take issue with all those statements, starting with the last.

The future is here.

What a frightening proposition. It seems to reflect the mood of a world which looks ever backwards, which celebrates another anniversary every week, and talks of a mythical Golden Age in our fathers' time. If the future is here today, what of tomorrow? This statement seems to imply that it's all over, we've caught up with the future, we've had our ration. Old grandfather's clock stops here.

But the reasoning which brought us this proposition is false. Most of what was 'predicted' in early science fiction has not come to pass. We'll never see Heinlein's millionaire hiring one mechanic to do up a derelict spaceship to take him to the Moon (1). Nobody's building humanoid robots, except for the movies. Many of the standard science fiction ideasd have been either written to death or overtaken by events, but in no real sense is the future **here**. We still don't know what will happen tomorrow; we still do know, with a reasonable degree of certainty, that tomorrow will come. Science fiction, the literature of change, the literature so often set in an imagined future, seems to be going through a phase of deifying its own past. We speak of a Golden Aghe, the greats from those years still dominate the popularity polls, and sequels to books written twenty or forty years ago are immensely popular. Certainly there was some excellent fiction written in those days. I was weaned on reprints of the stuff, and I loved it. I still love it. But it would be a mistake to glorify it. It was of its time and we should no longer try either to emulate it or to turn our backs on it altogether. Science fiction isn't really about the future. Ursula K. Le Guin (2), amongst others, has argued convincingly that science fiction is descriptive of the present, as seen by the author in question. The power of science fiction is that by setting a story in the future, or on a distant world, or a parallel world, we can look at the present from a different angle.

But, people think we mean it. They think science fiction is about the future. And science fiction **has** changed the world. If it hadn't been for all those pulp magazines of the 30s and 40s and 50s would Americans ever have walked on the Moon? It was a quixotic adventure, not driven by hard-headed economics, but by a dream. A dream created by hundreds of stories about the glories of conquering space. That's the key. An individual novel, however brilliant, can do very little, but in its sheer quantity, all pushing the same message, fiction can sway popular opinion and desires.

Science fiction is a product of its time. It could never have grown without the changes in ideaology begun by the Industrial Revolution. The technological triumphs and erosion of religious beliefs stemming from that time led to an ideology justifying scientific research as intrinsic to the nature and purpose of human existence. Scientific optimism was perhaps at its height during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when it seemed as if science could solve all the world's problems, By 1939 Bernal (3) was already commenting on a general loss of enmthusiasm for scientific progress. Gernsback, Campbell, and their stable of writers resisted this, and tried to convert American youth to the scientific world-view via science fiction. In the 1960s the swing towards individualism and Eastern thought was mirrored in stories of the transmutation of consciousness, sexual frankness, and a sujectivity apparently alien to the scientific world view. Since then, science and technology have been increasingly mistrusted by the majority of science fiction writers. The faith in science **per se** has vanished, and is yet to be replaced by a new faith. "It is now a commonplace," says Patrick Parrinder (4), "that science fiction in England and America is largely pessimistic." John Griffiths (5) tells us that many writers, chief amongst them the immensely influential J.G.Ballard, have despaired. His depressing conclusion is that tomorrow has been cancelled.

But why should science fiction writers have despaired at all? Most of them are middle-class citizens of affluent societies, surely still on the receiving end of most of the benefits of technology. Klein (6) gives what I find a very suggestive explanation. After the expansionist optimism of the pre-1940s, and the "confident scepticism" of 1940 to 1960, the technologically orientated middle class found itself as a proletriat. It is essential to industry, but further than ever achieving control of the world as the "scientific elite" dreamed of by H.G.Wells and others. Science is no longer a revolutionary force, but a servant of big business. At the same time, science fiction has ventured out of its ghetto,

and has itself been taken up by big business. Its questioning, subversive drive is being diluted by a publishing industry which is interested only in making a quick few megabucks. Is it not possible, then, that this despair stems, not so much from the fate of the world, as from the fate of the science fiction author?

If so, it's about time that we snapped out of it. The world is not interested in our self-indulgent breast-beating. Control over the use of science may have been taken over by business-men and politicians with little or no scientific knowledge, but science itself is not to blame. For science fiction authors to attack, or turne their backs on, science is to mistake the root of the problem. Science and technology simply constitute a body of knowledge which is available to us, and which may be used in many ways. To react against technology is absurd; remove it all today, and most of us die tomorrow. But it is undoubtedly true that technology has been misused, and is being misused in terrifying ways. One of the major challenges facing modern science fiction is to show how it can also be used constructively, and how it is being used constructively.

It is currently fashionable to prophesy doom, and large numbers of science fiction writers have jumped on the band-wagon. Doom, in any of its myriad guises, is always a possibility to be guarded against, but to court disaster, to glory in it, is the action of a lunatic. It is also to deny much that is hopeful and constructive in our world today. There are researchers who forsee a very hopeful future indeed, and to balance all the cries of despair we should look at what, amongst others, Kahn, Simon (7), and, independently, Stine (8), have to say. Surely it makes sense at least to postulate an attractive future, and to strive towards it.

If the popular fiction is all post-holcaust novels and escapist fantasy series, if when people turn to more "serious" works by respected authors all they get is gloom and despair, then it will strengthen their depression about the future. The idea of human and machine working together to shape a future suitable for the human rather than the machine seems to have been abandoned, both in the pages of science fiction and in reality. Mankind should have the upper hand; machines, computers included, are important tools which can make our tasks easier. The increasing subjugation of human to machine must be overcome. Often life mirrors art; science fiction can open up new possibilities, readying them to be explored in reality. Why don't we concentrate some of our attention here?

Science fiction, like any branch of literature, is only of importance when it is dealing directly and relevantly, in whatever guise, with the current concerns of its readers. Escapism has its place, but it is ultimately unsatisfying and unhelpful. Western civilisation, and in its wake the world, is passing through a time of change, and the literature will inevitably reflect that change. If we wish to see science fiction vital and thriving, we should root it in the concerns of the present, and not the images of the past.

Isaas Asimov has split the history of science fiction into four periods, according to the dominant features. (9) He suggested: adventure-dominant (1926-1938), science-dominant (1938-1950), sociology-dominant (1950-1965) and style-dominant since then. We all seem to be too self-conscious these days, too eagerly pursuing the chimera of literary respectability. Style is important, but only insofar as it helps to strengthen mood or reveal character. Once it becomes an end in itself we run the risk of sinking into decadent self-indulgence. What was once a powerful medium full of ideas and fine story-telling become merely acollection of clever plays on words and dazzling emptiness. Let us keep our style, but the content must come first.

If I could propose a fifth period, to begin in 1985, and pick out its dominant feature, I would suggest that we concentrate on people, and in all of our stories ask ourselves, what would this change mean to the family down the street? Let's think more about small-scale technology, here and abroad. Let's think about a world suited rather to people, than to big business corporations. So the fifth period: people-dominant, or if you prefer, grass-roots-dominant, 1985 onwards.

It's time we stopped looking exclusively backwards, and began to face the immediate future. We take with us the lessons that we have learnt from the last sixty years of science fiction and the dream that those stories have awakened in us. I believe that we **can** ghet there from here, and science fiction writers can help to show the way.

Notes

1) Robert A Heinlein "Requiem" (short story, 1939, Street & Smith publications.

2) In her introduction to the 1983 Ace edition of **The Left Hand of Darkness**

3) Bernal, J.D. **The World, The Flesh, and the Devil,** reprinted Jonathan Cape, 1970.

4) Parrinder, P. **Science Fiction and the scientific world-view** (essay)

5) Griffiths, J. **three Tomorrows: American British and Soviet Scienec Fiction**: Macmillan, 1980.

6) Klein, G. **Discontent in American Science Fiction**: SF Studies 4, part 1 (March 1977) pp. 3-13.

7) See Stine, G. Harry, **Global 2000: 'dead Wrong'** (article) Analog, January 1984.

8) Stine, G. Harry, **The Hopeful Future**: Macmillan 1983.

9) Quoted in **The Road to Science Fiction 2: From Wells to Heinlein**, James Gunn, ed., New American Library, 1979, p.5.

Liz Sourbut

SECOND GLANCE
Paul Kincaid

There's no letter column in this issue of Vector, but one item in the last issue certainly aroused interest. The reassessment
of Keith Roberts' Pavane by L.J.Hurst prompted both Steven Tew and Judith Hanna to write in with contrary opinions. To my mind Pavane is one of the most complex and most rewarding of all SF novels, and one that is certainly open to many interpretations.

My own view on the book can be found in the BSFA's bibliography of Keith Roberts which is now available. But it is certainly worth considering other readings of this multi-layered novel. First a letter from Steven Tew, then a review by Judith Hanna originally published in Science Policy Journal.

STEVEN TEW

Having recently read Keith Roberts' **Pavane** for the first time, I read with interest L.J.Hurst's examination of it. I am puzzled by certain elements of his interpretation which seem to have given him unecessary difficulty. There are two points I wish to make, one minor, the other essential to an interpretation of the work. The minor point is the symbolism of the White Boat, for symbolism it certainly is. The very colour white represents the enlightenment of freedom and progress in contrast

to the black and supressed world of Becky's home. Where the White Boat comes from is not really important in the context of this story, it is simply another pointer to the forces of science bubbling under the surface of this reality. The sequence does not fit well into the structure of **Pavane**, which probably explains its exclusion from previous British editions. It serves only as a sidelight on the story, a literary exercise clinging awkwardly to the side of the wider design.

The other point is to do with the view that **Pavane** is a future history rather than an alternative history. I do not believe that this is so. I have no idea what the author would say he intended, but, having looked back at the text, I am sure that we are meant to see it as an alternative history. When writing of 'our' civilisation being destroyed by a nuclear Armageddon, John Falconer refers to it as "beyond our time", not "before our time". His use of the past tense does not seem, to me, to mean that he is talking of his own world's history. He is referring to an alternative world, corresponding to ours, a world which is indeed "beyond his time". I must refer back to the words in the story, **Corfe Gate**: "The castle... seemed to ride not a hill but a flaw in the timestream, a node of quiet from which possibilities might spread out limitless. These lines clearly present the theme of alternative realities. there are other indications throughout the work, such as a reference to "this England" (as opposed to ours), all serving as reminders that our world exists parallel to this one - or at least did, until being destroyed. (In my edition the "Brother John" episode is set in the summer of 1985, putting later events a fair way into the future.)

As in Gregory Benford's **Timescape**, the follies of one reality informs and saves another. For this to happen is warped, a warping which is sensed by Margaret Strange the younger. In **Pavane**, time is split into (at least) two realities, and there are places at which time warps so that these realities somehow come into contact. This is a common happening in alternative history fiction, most writers seeming to see it as necessary that some link be made with our world for their story to have any relevance.

JUDITH HANNA

Brother John of the Adhelmian Order finds himself summoned to Dubris to record with pen, ink and colour wash the operations by which the Inquisition strives to extirpate heresies. On his return to the abbey, "With white mouth and staring eyes", he speaks only once, to say: "I enjoyed it, Brother. God and the Saints preserve me, I enjoyed my work." Then he runs away, possessed by visions, to become a focus for English rebellion against the rule of the Church of Rome.

In **Pavane** Keith Roberts creates an alternative mid-twentieth century England where no technological revolution ocurred to rush us towards Auschwitz and Belsen. The assassination of Elizabeth the Faerie Queen in July 1588 threw England into a turmoil from which Medina-Sidonia's Glorious Armada saved her, and the rest of Europe, for Holy Mother Church. Steam locomotives, the Inquisition and fairies are not the stuff of which orthodox science fiction is spun. It's a measure of the variety the field encompasses that **Pavane** (first published in 1968) is recognised as one of the classics of British SF. **Pavane** first appeared as a series of linked short stories, and this new Gollancz edition is the first time the whole set of stories has been included in the one volume.

To suggest that Brother John, the artist fascinated despite his horror by the nightmare tortures he witnesses, stands as a metaphor for Roberts, the novelist turning history inside out, is surely ridiculously far-fetched. The two bear the same stretched and heightened to the point of surrealistic caricature relationship that**Pavane**'s richly imagined world bears to the equally unfathomable world we live and read in. The metaphor is carried by a casuistcal logic which has little to do with the robust common sense we normally accept as reason. brother John draws the evil he sees; Roberts draws an imagined alternative to this world, which by its differences describes the corner technological progress has driven us into. Unable to escape from his new knowledge of the reality of his own world, Brother John goes mad; is it the ability to form his doubts and questions into a science-fictional alternative world that helps Roberts, or any other writer, or reader of their works, to remain sane?

Orthodox SF may be said to mimic science: an imaginary world is constructed as an experimental model within which the narrative can pursue a logical proof to some hypothesis. **Pavane**, for instance, has been considered an exploration of the effects of the absence of the Reformation, showing the results of continued Church domination which forbids the pursuit of the Protestant Ethic which led to secularism, scepticism and the Industrial Revolution. This sociological setup certainly underlies the narrative, but as a mechanism never examined or explored, not as a purpose.

It's the fairies most readers can't swallow. Roberts' insistence on their existence undermines any attempt to explain the world of **Pavane** in rational and scientific terms - even those of soft-baked social science. I'd suggest, however, that the fairies are not a whimsical flaw in a serious sociological work, but are intended to point a warning against falling for the obvious sociological interpretation: the fairies add another dimension to that reading.

In this day and age taking fairies seriously is difficult. That is one difference between **Pavane** and our world. Pavane's people believe in God, for they can see His power in the rule of the Church. Roberts does not commit himself to the existence of God; he does to the reality and power of the Fairies.

So what part have they in Roberts' story? Kipling's **Puck of Pook's Hill** gives the tradition of the Dymchurch Flit, when in Puritan times all the Fairies left England. As the 17th century broadside ballad "Farewell Rewards and Fairies" says, "By which we note that fairies/Were of the old profession:/Their songs were Ave Maries,/Their dances were procession." Protestantism drove them from the land; Catholocism denied them souls but did foster a climate of belief in supernatural powers, both good and evil. Secularism was encouraged by Protestantism's emphasis on examination of individual conscience. Once the individual was given, instead of ritual to act out, the task of weighing every belief and experience for truth or falsity, good or evil, so the Church's teachings were weighed and increasingly rejected. And as individual judgement has replaced faith in Higher Powers, so fate has become a careless outcome: not even a non-existent God playing dice with the universe.

In the world of **Pavane**, ruled by Religion and watched over by Fairies, Fate is not random but purposeful; no sparrow falls but is part of divine plan. The important difference between this reality and that, is that here grand tragedy and true herosim has become impossible, undermined by the cynicism and scepticism our rational and scientific world view entails: human life has become trivialised. It is this, as much as the technological revolution, that **Pavane** shows as the fundamental effect of Protestantism on human life. In the world of **Pavane**, where Fate is seen as guided by higher powers, human suffering is given meaning and so rises to tragedy: the minor evil of the tortures inflicted by the Inquisition prevents the greater evil of meaninglessness, anomie and modern alienation. Suffering inflicted deliberately, as part of a grand plan, is nobler than merely accidental suffering: that is the arguable assumption underlying any nostalgia for this state of affairs.

Roberts, as author, plays God inflicting suffering at will so that his puppets may carry out his grand plan. The reader has the fairy power of moving at will between worlds, independent of the inexorable passage of time in each, and so is able to compare, contrast and judge between, that world and this.

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited By Paul Kincaid

THE LAUGHTER OF CARTHAGE - Michael Moorcock

Secker & Warburg, 1984, 601pp, £9.95

Reviewed by Martyn Taylor

To lie: 'to speak untruthfully with intent to mislead or deceive: to convey a false impression or practise deception.' To a greater or lesser extent, and with greater or lesser effect, we lie every day. There is the 'little white lie' - "I'll get back to you about that." and the bare faced lie - "The cheque is in the post." There is the lie diplomatic (personal) - "My dear, you look wonderful tonight." - and diplomatic (impersonal) "Sovereignty is negotiable." There is the commercial lie - "Delivery within 28 days" and the lie political "The National Health Service is safe in our hands." The wheels of human intercourse are greased with lies. Most of us know we aren't any good at lying, so we don't do very much of it. Some of us are excellent at it, and become politicians, actors, writers and advertising executives. The difference is that most of us have a terror of forgetting when we are lying while the others always know the precise extent, texture and content of their lies. A very small numuber of people cannot distinguigh between truth and lie on any personal level and thereby never succeed in fooling anyone. With one exception. They always, but always, fool themselves.

Maxim Arturovich Pyatinski is one such. Moorcock introduced him in **Byzantium Endures,** the first volume of his memoirs. We meet him again on the steamer 'Rio Cruz' fleeing the Bolsheviks on his way to Constantinople. He is a lecher, a pimp, a paedophile and a cocaine adict. His ego is of mind boggling proportions, believing himself to be a temporal Messiah:

> "The formulae for Utopia in my document-case were available to everyone. Is it my fault the world refused its redemption?"

and

> "This is why I am convinced Lenin was personally responsible for my frustration and misery, because Kolya fell when Kerenski was overthrown."

Perhaps it is unsurprising that such a character should believe that it is sufficient for him to say anything, no matter how absurd, for it to be accepted. In America he holds himself as part English and part French, and to prove his Englishness he says of a non-rigid dirigible:

> "The British had named them...after the legendary Colonel Blimp, one of their great patriots."

this to some Ku Klux Klan bigwigs. Perhaps his total, innocent conviction makes his tales convincing, I shouldn't like to say. But his fragile hold in everyday reality is really no more than a facet of his consuming obsession, Carthage - the notion that forces of 'Carthage' are conspiring to bring down White Anglo Saxon Protestant Christianity. His antisemitism would bring a blush to the face of Adolf Eichmann, and his contempt of any non-white Anglo Saxon Protestant race would place the average Klan member among the lists of the enlightened. His life is the personification of this insane conviction.

After fifteen pages I wished to treat this volume as I did the first, ie: discard it. This time, however, I persevered and was transfixed by Moorcock's glittering eye. I still do not like Pyatinski - he's a whining, aggravating, obsessive, monomaniac - but he also embodies many of this century's shaping fascinations and I believe we will all find echoes of the darker, hidden aspects to our nature within his withering brand of anarcho-fascist paranoia. Everywhere he sees the agents of the Jewish-Oriental-Bolshevik (and probably Martian) conspiracy which is Carthage, and they are out to get him at all times. Why him? Well, as I've said, he believes himself the genius who could provide the technological fix for Christianity. Except it isn't any sort of Christianity you might recognise. It is based - loosely, v-e-r-y loosely - on Orthodoxy with Byzantium at its centre and the Tsar of all the Russias as its paternal, democratic head. I doubt whether any Metropolitan would recognise Pyatinski's brand of Orthodoxy any more than he would see how Orthodoxy can be identified with Protestantism, which is another feat Pyatinski manages (along with identifying Aryanism with Pan-Slavism). Mind you, we find him hopped up to the eyeballs kneeling behind a child prostitute considerably more often than we find him on his knees in prayer. His explanation for that is simple:

> "The truth is that the real conspiracy has been hatching for centuries, so perverting the Christian world it is now barely recognized!"

And, of course, the Tsars were renounced for their democracy!

If there is one talent always evident in Moorcock's work it is brisk storytelling, and in this long work we see Pyatinski being conned by Kemal Ataturk's rebels, French noblemen, a pair of carpet-bagging paper lawyers in Memphis (Tenn.) and the ultimate lie machine, Hollywood. Whenever he is in trouble he finds help in the strangest places - with anarcho-syndicalists in Rome, the Klan, then the Mafia and finally a thinly disguised Howard Hughes. The machinations of the tricksters are always obvious to us, but to the ever innocent (and for all his loatesome "qualities" Pyatinski retains that innocence of those truly without self knowledge) hero each betrayal comes as a complete surprise, a profound shock and betrayal, further proof of Carthage's success. Moorcock never allows Pyatinski to condemn himself in his own mouth but allows us to draw our own conclusions. Whenever he seems likely to see sense he is allowed another homily against Judaism or whatever. Not that his ideas are altogether absurd. He holds that

> "I now believe most people suffer from serious chemical imbalances. We should be searching for the correct mixture of substances which directly feed the brain... Tiny pieces of metal, which never affect us physically, could be entering the cortex, reacting, say with magnetism in the streets, with random electric impulses ...One day we feel like making friends with the world and the next we want to blow it up."

which sounds familiar to anyone concerned about lead in petrol, and

> "He was dragged down in the end, however, by the Great Depression. People seem to think of this as some kind of natural force, like a drought or an earthquake. Ask any Ukranian if Stalin was an earthquake."

which is heresy in these days we are all expected to bow down before the perfect 'market'. But of course, those are my mania bumps being massaged. For every example of 'sense' there are dozens of lunacy.

This is a remarkable book both in scope, approach and writing, and there are important aspects I cannot even touch in a review of this length - Esme, for instance - but I suggest it is a good 100 pages too long. Too often the narrative is grounded or diverted by Pyatinski's racialist flights of abuse, and the very frequency of their expression diminshes their appalling impact, although it must be owned they are entirely in character. The middle of the book - Rome and Paris, where the surrounding characters are not as blue in tooth and claw as those who populate the rest of the book - seems flat, as though Moorcock's descriptive edge has been dulled by contact with characters with whom he is probably much more in sympathy. Some of the essential vigour fades and is only reawakened by sight of Liberty's torch and all that implies - unlimited supplies of cocaine, financiers eager to support his dreams and whores unlimited for Pyatinski.

HJad Pyatinski a fraction of the tyalen he claims for himself he would be an heroic, tragic figure, but where is the evidence of his genius? A few wild dreams, a repair job on a ship's boiler, a powered hang glider which doesn't work and a steam car of no great innovation. Far from being a noble inventor he is a mechanic - and this is intended as no insult to mechanics, without whom...Should the Carthaginian conspiracy exist there is no reason why it should waste time and effort on Pyatinski. Unless, of course, he is heimself Jewish and barred thereby from his vision of mortal Elysium. He accuses his father of liberal excess in having him circumcised yet what gentile father in the Ukraine - home of the Cossacks who killed Jews as happily for Hitler as for the Tsar - would indulge in such a gesture? Only one as crazy as his son. Not that it matters, in the end. Any objective reality is important to Pyatinski only to the extent it becomes grist to the mill of his obsession, and it is testimony to Moorcock's skill he makes that dreadful mania endlessly fascinating. The logic of Pyatinski is perfectly circuitous. Any rebuttal of his views only confirms them. His life only confirms them. His failure is proof positive of the conspiracy, and the circle is unbroken throughout this book from the dedication to the final fade into the next volume, all of it a commentary upon us and all Moorcock's previous work.

To "enjoy" this book requires a perversity all too recognizable in Pyatinski, but then which of us is not perverse? Read 'em and weep.

IAMGINARY MAGNITUDE - Stanislaw Lem

Secker & Warburg, 1985, 248pp, £8.95

Reviewed by L.J.Hurst

This latest book by Stanislaw Lem consists of the Prefaces to five works by five different authors published in the twenty-first century. In **A Perfect Vacuum** Lem wrote straight-faced reviews on non-existant books - novels with titles like "Gruppenfuhrer Louis XIV" and "Gigamesh" (sic) and philosophy books such as "The Impossibility of Life" and "Civilisation as Mistake" - but this new volume consists of a much narrower range of subjects: art, computers, the growth of bacteria, all described in terms of Information Theory (it is that obscure at points but usually explains itself). Ths cover describes the book as "witty"; if that means inenious, yes, the book is ingenious but it does not mean that **Imaginary Magnitude** is comic, although it is funney in places, it is nothing like **The Cyberiad**. It is interesting, thought-provoking, well-produced (each extract gets a different typeface, for instance) but only borderline sf. And I would recommend it for its educational values as much as for its power of fictional creation.

Each chapter, or Preface, is a parody of one style of work (but not a parody of a particular author's style of writing), and the three shortest sections are really only jeux d'esprit. The first, "Necrophobes", is an art critic's introduction to a book of high-class pornographic X-ray plates - a send-up of all those seventies posters of skeltal hands reaching for female backsides. The second, "Eruntics" by Reginald Gulliver, is about bacteria taught to communicate in morse code - I suppose this is the Voyage to Laputa brought up to date, and a knock at the chimp and gorilla tariners in American colleges. The fourth, "Verstrand's Extelopedia in 44 Magnetomes" describes an electronic encyclopedia, which not only describes the future rather than the past, but also changes the text in your hand according to the probability of the future events predicted - a knock at Hermann Kahn and Prestel at the same time.

In those three sections, and in another, "Bitic Literature", Lem keeps up the punning and neologisms that must keep his translators working overtime, and the gross exagerations (like the 44 magentomes) are there as well but never for more than a few sentences or paragraphs, not even in the Gulliver chapter. In "Bitic Literature", which describes the problems and devlopment of computer generated literature (such as their garbled grammar and unconscious puns), and the final and longest section (over half the book), "Golem XIV", about a sentient computer at M.I.T, it is difficult to find any humour, or the subject of a parody. Lem stops at one point to list computer howlers (thoroughfare = large meal, knee guard = dwarf sentry, carnivore = Mardi Gras prostitute) but these have nothing to do with the subjects which are really quite serious. The "Bitic" chapter is probably an attack on Marshall ("Medium is the Message") McLuhan and "Golem XIV" ate least refers to work by Norbert Wiener (who developed cybernetics but whose last book was **God and Golem Inc**). But those subjects are not obvious. The "Golem" section also includes two lectures by the eponymous computer. one on evolution, and the other on the computer's need for religious belief. They might not be Lem's opinions but they are presented as a straight talk with no comic overtones. The "Bitic" chapter also ends with a portion on computer theology, which leads me to believe it is a parody of McLuhan. McLuhan wrote about the old and new media of print and television, Lem deals with people and computers as producers of literature, and implying that they are as good or bad as each other while McLuhan was pro-television, anti-book because of his Roman Catholcism, Protestantism being the religion of the Guttenberg Galaxy. I do not know what Weiner thought of religion. But Lem deals with computers and religion and personality far better than say, Isaac Asimov in **Reason** or **The Bicentennial Man**.

Although these are Prefaces to non-existent books it is difficult to treat them as fiction. For long passages lem writes comprehesive and comprehensible accounts of Information Theory, computing, the theories of Alan Turing and John von Neumann, and even the structure of lanaguage. I was reminded at times of C.H.Waddington's **Tools for Thought** but Lem appeared first: the Polish edition of this book appeared in 1973. As people like McLuhan have stopped being fashionable some of Lem's targets may not be recognised. Even so he has grasped the problems of technological devlopment and if **Imaginary Magnitude** is sf, it is hard sf: it deals with the way professionals encounter science and technology in their work, and how they report it. **Imaginary Magnitude** is a thought-provoking book, though it might not attract a large readership.

A word I would use to describe it is Responsible: it panders neither to pseudo-intellectuals nor to petty nationalism. It can be related to his other books in some of its approaches - **Solaris** includes a chapter of dialectical analysis of how a planetary life evolves, even though Lem has never seemed to be a Marxist writer, just as the philosophy of the computers may not be his philosophy - but it also shows an ability to use materials and settings (and most of the book is supposed to be American in origin) that seems to be copied but it reveals a large area that has been avoided by other authors which deserves to be filled. You only have to compare this with **Colussus: The Forbin Project** or **Wargames** to see that. Writers and readers can learn a lot from it.

GHASTLY BEYOND BELIEF: THE SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY BOOK OF QUOTATIONS - Neil Gaiman and Kim Newman

Arrow, 1985, 344pp, £2.50

Reviewed by Terry Broome

It is a great temptation to play along with the book and proclaim that this is a singularly excellent work. Excellent because it is invaluable to the serious sf writer, filling

the gap all sf writers have found on their bookshelves between the Oxford Guide to English Literature and the Collins Book of Quotations. But also because it doesn't suffer from being the first volume of a series and can therefore stand on its own four feet, or tentacles, or claws, or - or whatever the case may be. It is self-complete. We hope. We hope, but of course we know better. This book highlights just some of the very typical faults dominant in the written and the visual sf fields.

If you're a serious writer, but can see the joke in your situation, this book is for you. Funnily enough, what I said about it being useful is, unfortunately, very true. When yet again, you've had your latest blockbuster returned with the customary rejection slip, take out your copy of **The Science Fiction and Fantasy Book of Quotations** and look for the similarities between passages in your work and those quoted therein. "Wellspring of original thought?!" you'd exclaim, amazed, perhaps even bug-eyed.

From the lurid front cover, complete with bug-eyed monster, scantily clad female in impractical space-suit, rocket-ships, alien worlds and ghastly red stars where award information is usually displayed; to the back cover, complete with over-blown or totally untrue blurbs ("Buy this book or your head will explode!"), this is a delight. Gaiman and Newman, critics extraordinaire, and members of the British Fantasy Society, have done possibly the first, true, coffee-table reference book.

An introduction by Harry Harrison is followed by sections on books and films. These are split into chapters on blurb-writing, stereotypes in sf, language (on Insults: "Clam it, you squint-eyed slime lizard!" - Smith's **Second Stage Lensman**,) preoccupations in sf works (sex, food, religion, weapons et al), and so on, taking in authors' laws, science, monsters, styles and one-linerts. There's even a mini-chapter on catch-phrases, which has been arranged in the form of a quiz.

The chapter on film-hyping is especially rib-tickling. For example, the publicity poster that went with the 1972 film, **Progs**, states: "Today the pond, tomorrow the world!"

A few illustrations wouldn't have gone amiss, but then that would have put the price of the book beyond anything most fans could accept or afford, but the editors intersperse the quotes with some amusing observations and anecdotes, which is one of the book's strengths. Still, I would have liked to have seen a still of the closing shots from, to name one film, **Amityville 3**, with that giant plastic fly bobbing around on its string. But you can't have everything.

Something else that could have been explored is music. The amount of stuff recorded that contains sf themes, is, forgive the pun, astronomical, and albums/singles like **Battlefield Earth** and Hot Gossip's **I Lost My Heart to a Starship Trooper** would have been quite at home quoted in this book.

There are small quibbles.

A chapter on writers, of course, couldn't have been overlooked, and there are several pages of quotes close to being libellous. One of the less offensive ones is taken from Philip Jose Farmer's **Riders of the Purple Sage**, "If Jules Verne could really have looked in the future of say, AD 1966, he would have crapped his pants."

If you are familiar with some of the quotes, there are many more you probably won't recognise. And even if you have read the books in question, taken out of context, the passages can still seem exceptionally funney and embarrassingly awkward, if not awful.

Indisputably indispensable.

ENCHANTERS' END GAME - David Eddings

Corgi, 1985, 372pp, £1.95

Reviewed by Sue Thomason

9:30 p.m on a sleety Friday night. Wearily, I drain the dregs of my lukewarm coffee, stared at the latest review copy sitting limply on top of the pile in the IN tray, and noted my preconceptions. They were as follows:-

1) **Enchanters' End Game** is popular, so it must be terrible.

2) It'll be one of these dreadful, illiterate, humourless, overstuffed fantasy pieces, full of unpronouncable names and twee maps.

3) It's Book Five of a series, **The Belgariad**, and I haven't read the other four. So either I won't understand what's going on for at least two-thirds of the book, or there'll be one of those tedious introductions summarising and plugging the previous four books. In either case, **Enchanters' End Game** won't stand alone as a a novel.

I picked up the book and started reading. At ten to one I put it down again. Preconception 1: wrong. Preconception 2: wrong. Preconception 3: wrong.

Now don't misunderstand me. **Enchanters' End Game** is popular, in that it doesn't go in for high-flown lanaguage, nor does it try to overwhelm the reader with its intellectual or stylistic superiority. The story's premise is not exactly original. Young Garion, guided by his grandfather the sorcerer Belgarath, is off on a quest to kill the Bad Guy)in this case a Bad God) with his enchanted sword (well, actually it's the jewell on the pommel of his sword-hilt that's the magic bit). He wanders round the landscape, meeting people from many nations, all with strongly-defined national characteristics (quite a good reason for this common fantasy motif is given in the book). Meanwhile his future bride the Princess Ce'Nedra is raising an army to confront the Forces of Evil and provide a showy diversion so that Garion gets overlooked by the Bad God until the last minute.

This is all good, standard stuff. But there is a real backbone of morality under the fancy clothes and magic weapons. And there's also something increasingly rare in epic fantasy, a delightful wry humour running through the book. These characters don't take themselves too seriously (a common fault of heroes: like feminists, they are often accused of having no sense of humour). The main characters do have a natural dignity, but they don't insist on standing on it.

And okay, it has got maps, and it has got funny names, but the descriptions in the book are clear enough to make the maps an extra flourish rather than a dire necessity. And the names are believeable.

And yes, it is Book Five of the series, and I've obviously missed references to things that happened in earlier books, but the book does stand as a story in its own right, and I want to go and read the other four now, and find out what I've missed...

Full marks to David Eddings for an entertaining, unpretentious read!

THE SEVENTH GATE - Geraldine Harris

Unwin, 1983, 243pp, £2.95

Reviewed by Helen McNab

The Seventh Gate is the fourth and final volume in the Seven Citadels quartet, a fact which put me off before I started as I haven't read the previous three volumes. Nevertheless I looked at the map, the family tree and the plot synopsis before unenthusiastically starting to read, to discover it was much better than the cover, the paper and the blurb implied.

It is a quest story. A young prince, kerish-lo-Taan, is sent, with his half brother Forollkin, to obtain the seven keys to the gates of the Imprisoned Saviour which are in the keeping of seven sorcerers. At the opening of this book Kerish has six of the keys and two more travelling companions when they are taken captive by Brigands. The story details their escape and subsequent adventures on the road to the seventh key which in themselves are not unusual for a fantasy quest although well enough told to maintain interest and avoiding most of the more hackneyed cliches. What makes it more interesting is the character of Kerish. He is 'godborn', a direct descendant of Zeldin, the god who founded the Imperial dynasty, it shows

in his face with its large, inhuman purple and golden eyes, he is a prince from a dynasty which is visibly different from the people they rule, nevertheless he doubts the value of his quest, the value of the Emperor and the godborn to the people they rule. It's impossible to get a full picture of Kerish because this book shows only a quarter of him, his character in this book is a result of the events shown in theor other three, but hints indicate that his personality has undergone great changes since he left the palace at the beginning of his quest. It is unusual to find any contemplation on the nature, virtues or disadvantages of kingship, usually a crown is seen as both necessary and good, even if certain kings aren't very Good Things; but Kerish does consider these things as he learns more about his people during his travels, so that the conclusion of his quest is fitting even if something of a surprise. I found the thought behind that interesting, even though not developed at length, it added an unexpected dimension to the story.

The background to the fantasy world is thorough and full of detail without seeming too contrived although much of it is still fairly predictable. The writing is adequate and if it doesn't create excitement neither does it jar. It is well crafted enough for me to wish that I had read the other three volumes first, which is a lot more than I though I'd say at the beginning; none of the other characters are as rounded or developed as Kerish but his character had an originality which I liked; it's not a particularly thought-provoking book, but then few fantasies are, however I would recommend it to fantasy devotees as a good read which is a bit above the usual.

DIVINE ENDURANCE Gwyneth Jones

Unwin, 1984, 233pp, £2.95

Reviewed by Paul Kincaid

It took me a long time to get into this book. It took me even longer to finish it. I found I could only read a page at a time before I had to pause and think about it for a while. This is s densely written book; there's a lot that's said but even more left unsaid, and it takes time to absorb it.

Divine Endurance is a sparse, teasing, elliptical novel. It suggests, yet rarely fills in the details, so that the reader has to work hard at the book. This is carried through with an unusual rigopur, so that even in the first few pages there is an assumption that everyone knows the situation and understands the complex societies portrayed. That was why I hjad difficulty getting into the novel. These are strange societies indeed, as far removed from the science fictional norm as they are from anything we are familiar with in the West. Perhaps that provides the vital clue - most sf creations, no matter how far removed in space and time, are based upon a familiar Western model. But this is a novel of the East, shot through with the attitudes and impressions of the orient. Which makes it slip through one's expectations and settle into a place all its own. A true original.

Oh it is hard work, for a long time you struggle in a maelstrom of impressions that don't seem to gel into a complete and accessible picture. Then suddenly, the pieces seem to fall into place. And all the hard work is worth it. This is a novel in which you become absorbed, a thouroughly enjoyable experience.

The story involves a girl Cho and her cat Divine Endurance, though through the course of the novel it gradually unfolds that neither is what they seem. As the book opens they inhabit a grand palace in the desolation that was once China. They leave the palace to journey to the remnants of human civilisation clustered at the southern tip of the Malaysian peninsula. It is a time of decay and disruption as society rund down and rebellion is planned. Social decay is not an easy thing to portray, there is nothing sweeping or dramatic, just a subtle sense of things coming to an end. And this is perhaps the most impressive part of Gwyneth Jones' achievement. As Cho and Divine Endurance become involved with the rebels, and subtly affect the course of evenmts in ways they neither plan nor understand, somehow the centre stage is always occupied by the society and the sense of foreboding, the sense of things running down, that permeates the whole novel.

Gwneth Jones has written for children before now, but **Divine Endurance** is her first novel for adults. It is a debut that takes my breath away.

Not that it is perfect. The allusive and ellusive quality is all well and good, but it can be carried to excess. There are times when a simple, straightforward statement would have been most welcome. And I feel the pieces should have fallen into position before I was 50 pages into the book. For much of that I was suatained only by the enthusiasm of those who had read the book before me, and by the feeling that writing of this quality must bear fruit eventually. Also there is a large cast of characters, and the identity of some of the secondary characters tends to blur somewhat at the edges. Nor am I totally happy with a novel that changes its point of view as this does.

But these are quibbles. I was totally caught up in the book, it achieves incredible effects, and who can quarrel with success like that?

STUDIES IN SPECULATIVE FICTION - Approaches to the fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin - James W. Bittner (xvii + 161pp)

THE POLITICS OF FANTASY: C.S.Lewis and J.R.R.Tolkein - Lee D.Rossi (x + 143pp)

THE UNIFIED RI G: NARRATIVE ART AND THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL - Frank Sadler (xvi +117pp)

UMI Research Press, 1985, £28.50 each

Reviewed by Colin Greenland

These are nos. 4, 10 and 11 of a new line, Studies in Speculative Fiction: a dozen critical works published by UMI Research Press in America and distributed here by Bowker Publishing Company. Other subjects in the series include Ray Bradbury, Mary Shelley, feminist and soviet sf, and Kim Stanley Robinson's study of Phlip K. Dick. The high price indicates (and ensures) that these are specialist volumes for academics and academic libraries: they are slender hardbacks, cleanly produced but remarkably drably designed in grey. As anyone who knows this area of publishing will immediately guess, each of my three was originally a post-graduate thesis, submitted in 1979, 1972 and 1974 respectively. And there's the rub.

James W. Bittner's thesis is that the key to the work of Ursula Le Guin is complementarity, the reconcilliation of opposites, informed by her understanding of Taoism. He discusses the "marriages" she celebrates, between mundane and fantastic fiction, historical fact and romantic vision, myth and science, the past and the future.

Lee D. Rossi's thesis is that, for both C.S.Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkein, fantasy offered an escape from their "dismay at political reality" and a way of delineating an ideal world, didactic or consolatory, where spirtual salvation could be physically achieved by efforts of virtue.

Pran Sadler's thesis is that recent science fiction formally demonstrates how modern science has altered our perceptions of ourselves and the universe: it "presents a picture of our **relation** to nature rather than presents a picture **of** nature". This he illustrates by isolating the functions of relativity in **The Einstein Intersection**, probability in **Report on Probability A**, and time in **Slaughterhouse-Five**. Bittner's work on Le Guin is the best of the bunch. He examines her achievement in terms derived from her own philosophy, and by skilful biographical dissection establishes the true course of her work to 1976, which has been obscured because early writings were not widely published until later, and also because critics have tended to separate her fantasy from sf, as if it were a minor sideline rather than an integral part of the whole. For Le Guin, **everything** is an integral part of the whole. Nothing has virtue or makes sense alone. Light is the left hand of darkness, and darkness the right hand of light. This is what Bittner calls the principle of complementarity. He also shows that the pattern of the journey, the tradition of the quest, structures most of her work in circles: voyage, discovery, return. The same movement of going forward to go back, which in an essay on the Earthsea trilogy Tom Shippey called "osillation", has characterized her career overall. Her last real novel was called **The Beginning Place** (**Threshold** in the UK). Bittner clearly demonstrates

the Hainish cycle to be Le Guin's synthesis of forward-looking, Asimovian sf with her father's macro-historical research into racial origins. He observes that "in 1966, when she drew on her father's anthroplogy to invent the Ekumen,...instead of extending the chronology of her Hainish future history forward, she wrote novesl set prgressively farther in the past". The book that should clinch Bittner's argument is, of course, **Malafrena**, in which Le Guin returned to Orsinia, the country of the stories she wrote before ever turning her hand to science fiction - but **Malafrena** was published in the year that Bittner submitted this thesis, and though he has revised the text for publication, he has not brought it up to date.

The looming absence of **Malafrena** does not spoil the book: it's a good book anyway. But it does remind us, every few pages, that Bittner's study is incomplete, and therefore unfortunately outdated.

Lee. D. Rossi's thesis on Lewis and Tolkein was submitted in 1972. What **he** missed was **The Silmarillion**, published five years later. He has inserted two brief references to it, misspelling it each time, but omitsit from his bibliography and clearly has not read it. His account of the early devlopment of Tolein's world is not of much substance without the material that has been unearthed for **The Silmarillion** and the volume **Unfinished** and **Lost Tales.** there are other oddities too: Rossie confuses Bilbo with Frodo, credits Tolkein with a non-existent degree of "M.S", and persists in abbreviating **The Lord of The Rings** as **The Ring**, as if it were all Wagner, instead of only some of it. The most important error, though, is in Rossi's own title. This is not a study of the "Politics of Fantasy" at all, nor even of the politics of Lewis and Tolkein's fantasies, which are, to say the least, reactionary. Tolkein's **Leaf by Niggle**, Rossi has to admit, expresses "an ideology whose political face is complete aquiescece in the status quo" (sic). Recognising shrewdly that in **The Hobbit** Smaug's hoard signifies, indeed constitutes, political power, he says of its dispersal: "Political power is left to the heroes who are great enough and good enough to weild it" Tolkein's "real interest is in characters like Bilbo, who are unable to cope with political society".

"As an oberver of politics, " Rossi says, "Lewis, like Langland , 'has nothing to propose except that the estates do their duty'." Of the "divine truth" affirmed in **Perelandra**, that men should be extravert and aggressive, women introvert and passive, Rossi concedes: "It would not be overharsh to label this position sexist." Discussing the characterisation of Narnians and Calormenes in **The Horse and His Boy**, he ventures: "We should probably, at this point, notice the British prejudice, which Lewis shares, against 'wogs'."

Probably. Rossi steers well clear of any political analysis of Lewis or Tolkein, but reluctantly sustains these embarrassing charges against them. Unusually, this seems to be not because he particularly loves either of them, but because they themselves believed politics to be a thing, that you could have or not, as you chose. Astonishingly Rossi acts as if he accepts this. Lewis and Tolkein's professed apoliticality actually meant, as so often, that they were both profoundly conservative and not open to discussion. As far as he can under his inconvenient title, Rossi respects and perpetuates their silence. What he does instead is realte their sad biographies, their retreat from the world into Christianity, and the fantasies they concocted to persuade themselves and others this was a good thing. In other words, Rossi's thesis is simply a rehearsal of the Case for Lewis and Tolkein's respectabili ty, addressed to academic examiners who believe it already.

Also mistitled, as far as I can see, is Frank Sadler's **The Unified Ring: Narrative Art and the Science Fiction Novel.** It's only secondarily about narrative art, primarily about the philosophy of science; nor is the image of the "unified ring" explained, though it is presumably meant to stand in some kind of opposition to Lois and Stephen Rose's 1970 book **The Shattered Ring**. This, Sadler says, "anaylzes the impact of modern science on man's quest for meaning through a study of contemporary science fiction". The thing is, so does his own book, rather laboriously and repetitively, and reaches a conclusion which seems more shattered than unified: that certain modern works of fiction, and especially science fiction, "are not closed or complete in Aristotle's sense, but exhibit a certain openness or indeterminancy of form". This is because "the philosophical implications of the theory of relativity, of quantum mechanics, and the recent developments in mathematics have transformed the way in which man sees his universe". The texts through which he traces these philosophical influences are **The Einstein Intersection, Report on Probability A** and **Slaughterhouse-Five.** On the strength of them, he asserts that "the science fiction novel has begun to emerge as a truly experimental form" - indeed, that "a new literature is in the process of emerging". Well, in 1974 I thought so too; and I also wrote a thesis trying to persuade my doctorate examiners that it was so; and I also (if Chris Priest will forgive my mentioning it) had my thesis published as a book, **The Entropy Exhibition**, in 1983 - though not before I'd taken the opportunity to insert one or two crucial historical qualifications. What renders Sadler all but obsolete is the fact that the promised new sf has very distinctly stopped emerging, due not to radical rethinking in science but to subsequent economic and socio-psychological shifts that he completely overlooks, even in hindsight.

The trouble with having your thesis published is that, rather like the mills of God, the presses of academia grind slowly, while the rest of the world, that's you and me, hurry on by.

FUTURE WAR NOVELS: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS IN ENGLISH PUBLISHED SINCE 1946 - John Newman and Michael Unsworth

Oryx Press, CLIO Distribution Sewrvices, 55 St.Thomas St., Oxford OX1 1JG: 1985, 93pp, £34.80

Reviewed by Keith Freeman

First reaction on receiving this type of book is to wonder what its purpose is and, if one can establish that purpose, has it succeeded in it? One purpose a cynic could immediately think of is that the whole exercise is to provide two academics with a published book for use in gaining tenure. We will ignore that possibility.

191 books are listed in chronological order of publication and a brief description of each given. I can only assume the book has three purposes: (a) to give a complete lists of novels (that meet the specification) published in **English**, (b) to give a brief description so that future researchers can form an opinion on what each book is about (actual war, aftermath of war etc) and (c) to gain the authors kudos if not money. Having defined the terms we can now approach the body of the book.

Obviously any book of this nature can only be correct up to the time of publication and the Introduction makes clear that it sets out to deal with novels in the period from when the first atom bomb was used until 1984. (Convenient as both the year of publication and the year George Orwell's title made famous!). So, does the book cover that period (1946 - 1983 inclusive) comprehensively? Reading the introduction reveals some more limits - the authors are only interested in war **on Earth**, or to use their words "excludes stories of space travel beyond the moon, time travel, imaginary beings, parallel universes, alternative history, and magic."

Purpose (a) is not carried out succesfully in that I can think of several novels not included (**The Moon is a Harsh Mistress** by Heinlein and **The Mouse that Roared** by Leonard Wibberley to name but two - a scan along my own bookshelves reveals another couple...). Such carping is inevitable but this kind of work must be as nearly complete as possible or its usefulness will be very quickly discredited.

Purpose (b) is one I'm happier to accept as having been accomplished. I've dipped into the book and looked up the necessarily brief annotations for novels that I've read - in almost every case I can agree, allowing for subjective (personal) differences, with the authors' description of the plot, setting, characterisation and military details. My disagreements, where they occur, are of a very minor nature and probably of no consequence.

So we come to the third reason for publishing the book - at the price and slimness of this book I can safely forecast it won't be a best-seller. In fact, as far as I can see, the only purchasers will be libraries if they're prodded. If **you** want to study this book then my advice is try and get your local library to purchase it...

THE ARMAGEDDON RAG George R.R.Martin

NEL, 1985, 333pp, £2.95

Reviewed by Tom A.Jones

This isn't a science fiction book. I think it's debatable whether it's a supernatural book as it could be argued that the strange happenings are psychological, some form of self delusion, but this doesn't really matter; a book's a book. What this book is about is the Sixties and the nostalgia for the Sixties, which does not seem limited to those who were part of that generation. George R.R.Martin obviously was part of that generation, and so was I; I've heard all the bands and musicians listed at the front of the book, and bought their LPs (when I couldn't tape them), I felt the outrage when the Chicago police rioted at the Democratic convention, and was against the Vietnam war, and sat in at university. In retrospect some of it was a game. I've changed, my ideas have changed, I've not been true to those early principals.

Why am I boring you with this? Because I want you to understand that I cannot judge this book objectively, I can identify too well with the characters.

Onto the plot. The Nazgul are the archetypal 60s band and the killing of their lead singer, Hobbins, at the West Mesa rock festival in 1971 is considered the end of the 60s. On a historical note most people would consider the Altmount festival with Hell's Angels killing someone whilst the Rolling Stones played "Sympathy for the Devil" to be the end of the 60s. The Nazgul area composite of many 60s bands, it's so easy to spot aspects of Paul McCartney and John Lennon mixed into the song writer/bass player and the lead singer. The content and style opf some of the songs is reminiscent of the Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil" and "Jumping Jack Flash". Spotting all the sources would require a better knowledge of the music and musiicians than I have.

The book follows the attempt of a mysterious, possibly revolutionary, group to resurrect the Nazgul, the evntual reunion of the band and how they follow the concert trail back to West Mesa.

The hero is Sandy Blair, ex-underground journalist and now a critically accepted but not unpopular novelist. He starts by investigating the murder of the Nazgul's old manager and eventually becomes involved in the reunion.

Th book is in two halves, the first leads up to the reunion and the second deals with events following it. The first half deals with Blair's re-evaluation of the 60s and his life since then. It consists of a set of discussions between Blair and members of the Nazgul or his 60s friends, these identify crucial events and experiences for both era and for Blair. Interspersed with the discussions are periods of self-contemplation by Blair and dream/ghost sequences which amplify the experiences and explore their relevance. The dramatic events you might have expected to read about go on in the background.

In the second half Blair finds Edam Morse, the man trying to reunite the Nazgul and eventually becomes publicist for the group. The dramatic events move to centre stage often involving Blair who becomes a pivotal figure. Whilst he continues to re-examine his life he is forced to make decisions which will dictate not only his future but also that of America, and perhaps the world. (Sounds corny, but it isn't when you read it)

I enjoyed the first half, I could relate to the experiences. I found the Chicago dream/ghost sequence very powerful, very effective. In the second half the supernatural aspects become more overt, there is a deliberate quickening of tempo, the events are compressed and for me it is less satisfactory, it seems akin to the Stephen King style (please note I do rate very highly some of Stephen King's books).

This is an interesting book. Those who were part of the 60s generation, even if only peripherally like myself, should find muchto consider, perhaps many of their own thoughts and feelings are re-examined. For those not part of that era I don't know how this book will seem. Perhaps it will be interesting, throwing some light on those times or perhaps it will be confusing, cryptic. For example in the final dream/ ghost sequence at the end of chapter 26 many of the ghosts talk in lines from 60s songs. I know the songs and context which tends to amplify the single lines (where it doesn't I probably haven't understood), but will someone brought up on disco, punk or ne wave understand?

I'm glad George R.R.Martin wrote this book, and I hope it helped to exorcise his ghosts.

THE CONTINENT OF LIES - James Morrow

Gollancz, 1985, 274pp, £9.95

Reviewed by Jim England

No doubt it will soon be commonplace for books to be written by machines, about machines and for machines. Much science fiction already gives this impression. It is a fact that some books are being written, or at least polished to a high gloss, by committees. The above seems like one of them, judging from the author's acknowledgement of help and advice from at least ten people who read the early drafts. It must be left to the reader to judge whether the result was worth the effort. Splashed across the front cover of the book is the assertion by Arthur C Clarke:

> "Technology will improve remorselessy until we can be 'wired-in' so completely that we can't tell what's real and what isn't....**The Continent of Lies** deals with this subject brilliantly."

One cannot help wondering whether Clarke has actually read the book, flicked through it or simply heard about it; because it deals "brilliantly" with nothing.
Quinjin, the narrator, is a reviewer of cephapples and dreambeans as they are popularly known by the inhabitants of some distant planet in the year AG 791. They, or the hallucinations they give rise to, are "the ultimate entertainment medium". The novel concerns Quinjin's quest to find and destroy the "evil creator" of a dreambean whose effects on his twelve or thirteen year-old daughter are less than pleasant: so unpleasant, in fact, that many other consumers are left incurably insane. And that is more or less all that needs to be said about the plot. The pseudo-scientific explanation of the dreambeans is given in **Brave New World**-style on page 32 and is worth quoting for its machine-like prose:

> "We exited into a preneseed nursery - a sprawling grotto abuzz with neuroactivity amplifiers, guanine vats, adenine flasks, cytosine vials, thymine tubs, reaction chambers, highly pattented computers, and milling technicians. It was to this place, I knew, that the derby had relayed my maiden attempt at dreamweaving. In processing such a broadcast, the machines regulated the introduction of several hundred artificially synthesized neurotransmitter genes into plasmids appropriated from an ordinary plant spore: inserted back into the spore, the plasmids replicated like mad, turning it into a phreneseed."

On the credit side, it has to be said that the book often conveys a very slick professionalism. (What else can you expect when only about one in two thousand submitted manuscripts are currently achieving publication?) The writer has cultivated a type of humourous one-liner, such as (p.52): "Jonnie looked like a baby learning that its mother lactates ice cream" and (p.61): "a young woman who looked as if she hadn't emptied her bladder for a week." He writes about certain gruesome horrors with a positively manic enthusiasm. On the debit side, it has to be said that this sort of stuff has no soul. It shows no progression from novels written on the same theme as long as forty years ago. There is the same transplantation of twentieth century manners, customs, and idioms into a remote future. There are the same references to "Terra" and standard science fiction cliches. The novel is enormously padded with banal and monotonous dialogue, often of incredible silliness. The writer shows an Asimovian tendancy to explain things, as if to a juvenile reader - perhaps a twelve or thirteen year old. He hides himself behind the surface polish so well that it is almost impossible to detect an underlying individual personality. The book sets out to be an ejoyable extravaganza about dreams and fails partly because the dreams described are so artificially conceived as to bear no relation to real dreams, or nightmares, in which emotion but no physical pain is ever felt.

Despite this reviewer's views, the book will probably sell well, thanks to publisher's hype and the praise of Arthur

C.Clarke. It sold well in the USA last year and, according to the dust cover blurb: "establishes Jame Morrow as an exciting new name in science fiction".

THE BOOK OF BEING - Ian Watson

Gollancz, 1985, 184pp, £8.95

Reviewed by K.V.Bailey

The Book of Being is the last of a trilogy which, so the publishers' blurb says, is finally brought "to a richly satisfying, unpredictable climax". It is difficult to review it without estimating how far the author succeeds in this. On the other hand, it is impossible to discuss in detail his denoument without revealing it; and these three books taken together have this in common with a mystery novel (the winding-up of which reviewers must withold): they contain many chains of action which could lead to alternative endings - to some extent they are 'alternative universe' books. In Ian Watson's imagined cosmology the compact units of 'Ka-Space' called 'electons' recreate but also sustain 'reality' from moment to moment "from amidst a flux of options'. This is the "breath of being", but as the plant-woman Hovarzu says:

> "...I believe that there are minor cycles within the breath of Being. By breathing in tune with these, the wizards of old Earth must have worked their temporary alterations of reality - if legend can be trusted."

The action, not only of the **River** books, but of so comparatively realistic a novel as **Chekhov's Journey**, is in accord with some such cosmological principle; and in this final volume of the trilogy Ian Watson seems to offer his readers a "flux of options", particularly in Part III ("All the Tapestries of Time"), in itself, and in essence, a microcosm of the trilogy. In it we reach the "Grand Climacteric" in which reality "melts" and "flows". For Yaleen there are: "So many streams and branches! So infinite a pool of possiibilities. So many actuals woven in my memories."

After a "Grand Climacteric" the author cannot easily in the concluding sections ("The Rose Balloon" and "Afterword") move to "unpredictable climax". Instead he moves, predictably, into anticlimax, writing in low-key and at times parodic vein, pitching the narrative towards fictional rationalising rather than towards fictional mythologising. It is one option; and it works in so far as its backward-looking 'correspondences' may lead the reader to a mental and emotional recapitulation and reappraisal of mythpoeic resonances, not simply in **The Book of Being**, but in the whole trilogy. A reader unwilling to accept the intention and discipline of this shock technique could experience a little of the irritation that often accompanies a mystery writer's playing the joker.

It is unwise to attempt this volume without some knowledge of **The Book of the River** and **The Book of the Stars**. Retrospectively directed hints and allusions in Part I will only mystify. Given, however, understanding of River lore and history, and of Yaleen's reincarnations, the reader can settlle back to enjoy Part I's often very funny account of the Lourdes-cum-Lhasa establishment improvised in a spice warehouse. It carries the story forward to the infant-priestess's embarking on a grand progress. In Part II she is whisked away to the "Palace of Enchantment", the domain of the Gargantuan philosophising chef, Mardoluc. Palace and forest setting are described in passages of bravura 'fantasy prose' ("a medley of coarsewoods with occasional ashen groves of ivory bone"). The alien gastronomy of Mardoluc's meal is at once gross and mouth-watering. Following the feast comes the drug-dream verbal duel between the Worm and its priestess-emissary, entertaining as are all their exchanges, but now tactically geared to the approaching God-mind crisis and leading directly to Yaleen's wanderings, in Part III, through "all the tapestries of time". After being 'hosted' under Helliconia-like suns, and then among Stapledonesque plant-people, there comes to her the apocalypse - or apotheosis - of the Timestop. For imaginative exuberance and metaphysical sophistication Part III is unrivalled in the trilogy - except perhaps by the opening of "Narya's Narrative" in **The Book of Stars**.

As intimated earlier, the final sections can't keep up with this: are not intended to. We are deliberately left with only "a ghost of a worm". In Part IV we are in a kind of Keith Roberts world. The descriptions of palaeotechnic artefacts (Archimedes screw, aqueducts, water-gas balloon) are especially good, but the events in which they feature seem pale as compared with the corresponding events in pre-Timestop narrative. The effect is one of paradox. We have the feeling of emerging from a world of myth and fantasy into a 'real' world, but also of awareness that 'reality' and 'potential' lie deep within the mythic world. Even this world of "The Rose Balloon" may exist only within "so infinite a pool of possibilities"; and, for all its definitive tone, the (here still unrevealed) "Afterword" strangely tends to reinforce rather than undermine such a view.

Yet it would be quite wrong to give any impression that the archetypal iamginings, the 'impossible' worlds of these books lack earthy substance. Their impact owes much to the juxtaposing of esoteric events (the 'heart of the rose' experience; the "Ka-state" illuminations) with eating, drinking, fishing, sailing or trading. Shifts of narratory viewpoint, switches between subjective and objective modes, changes in dramatic focus, keep the action, however bizarre, vibrantly alive. There is a stylistic virtuosity that embraces slangy repartee, mystic raphsody, witty doggerel, 'romantic' prose, telepathic 'stream of consciousness', and a mock-academic pastiche, parodying both demythologising and structuralism. All is sustained by a flow of good, fast story-telling, a feature particularly true of **The Book of Being**, ingeniously shaped as a fitting coda to this intricately composed trilogy, which is also a riddle - and a poem - where, as Yaleen says in **The Book of the Stars**, "almost anything can be related to anything else": such as a raven to a writing desk, or 'inner' consciousness and memory to the seemingly insensate flood of occurrences in 'outer' space and time.

SPELLBINDER - Stephen Bowkett

Gollancz, 1985, 120pp, £5.95

Reviewed by Nik Morton

This first novel comes from the Gollancz Children and Young Adults stable and actually runs to about 111 pages when all the blanks are discounted. Stephen Bowkett's name may be familiar to readers of the Cassandra anthology, in which he has been featured more than once, usually writing SF poems. The one proper poem in **Spellbinder** is good and telling, abaout hate, a wish made into a weapon...The thirteen year old here, Tony Vannerly, is a nice enough lad with a penchant for concert-hall magic tricks - a gimmick to get himself noticed. He is described with sure touches, as though there is a part of the author in him; indeed, all the young characters are devloped and consistent: his elder sister, Sal; Linda, the girl he fancies but hasn't the courage to approach; Spud, the group's comic; and Micro, his closest friend who spends most of his time with his micro-computer at home. Perhaps the style is not as eloquent as Leon Garfield, whose tales for children are in fact far superior to some for adults, particularly in SF, but there is nevertheless a light and endearing quality about **Spellbinder**.

Some of the descriptions of the long hot summer are truly evocative, perhaps as we should expect from a teacher of English. "The sun has sucked the green out of the grass", created a vivid scene, as did "...the field breathed off its heat in a shimmer." There is atmosphere, both in and out of school; obviously, Bowkett has drawn on his own experiences as a teacher as well as a child, and in small ways it shows. The characters and story elements are modern, from the computer interest to the iniquitous presence of vandalism and violence Repartee between the friends seems natural, as does the wit. On the surface, this is good, even wholesome - characters using words like flippin' and flamin' - lightweight stuff. Yet it is a little more than that, too, for Tony's slow realisation that he possesses an uncanny ability introduces choice into his life, and fear. For the first time, he was really afraid of the secret power he is beginning to appreciate. The supernatural elements are treated in a sensible, half-humorous way, avoiding any over-writing; it is all handled with a sure hand, and clearly the characters have meaning for the author.

Would everybody make the correct choice? Bowkett seems to be asking. Or would the secret popwer alter you, increase your dark side? Would you be brave and bold enough to accept it, with its concommitant dangers, the loneliness, the unremitting secretiveness? As his mentor says, "The power that I have

and that you have is no more special or magic than intelligence or kindness. First lesson - realise what you possess." The gift to "use magic as balcksmiths forge metal or carpenters carve wood." What introspection there is has been honestly treated; the quandary presented to youn Tony was great, and difficult to handle, and the story conveys this well. There is little melodrama, even in the denoument when the villains get their comeuppance. The heroics are credible for not being excessive or flamboyant.

It would not surprise me if Tony and his magical friend did appear in another book, possibly to continue the boy's esoteric schooling, rather like the young Arthur and Merlin team in T.H.White's classic. **Spellbinder** was an undemanding, pleasant read and I would recommend it for any young teenagers.

NINE TOMORROWS - Isaac Asimov

Granada, 1985, 236pp, £8.95

Reviewed by Nigel Richardson

What can be said about the reissue of a twenty-six year old collection of stories, the best of which have since been anthologised and the rest of interest only to completists? Does the world **really** need yet another Asimov reprint? Bracing myself, I find myself answering "yes" to this. There are probably countless thousands of teenage boys who would not read anything if the public libraries did not regularly retsock with the works of Asimov and Clarke - I offer myself as an example, long since reformed. Without, say, **Earth is Room Enough**, **Foundation** and similar titles on the shelves, my library tickets would have gone unused like those of my schoolmates back in my early teens, and the world of **real** literature, if you'll pardon the inevitable pun, would have remained a closed book to me. Essentially, Asimov is a writer for boys, producing work that looks like grown-up fiction but that presents the universe in simplistic black and white terms that a twelve year old can not merely grasp but can connect with.

Take the longest story in the book, "Profession", for example. It tells of a young boy who is led to believe that he is of no use to anyone and a burden upon society; it turns out, of course, that he is really a genius and that the hard time the world has been giving him is purely to test him out. This is archetypal of both children's stories and Asimov's other work - what twelve year old boy has not fantasised this scenario?

"The Ugly Little Boy" is undoubtably the best story in the collection and possibly the best thing Asimov has ever written: it is also one of his most unrepresentative stories, being more convcerned with people than robots or galactic empires. It is the only Asimov story I've read in which the characters come **alive** and become more than mere mouthpieces for Asimov's interminable lectures. The story is straightforward, telling of the developing relationship between a nurse and a Neanderthal child scooped from the past, and although the ending is inevitable and somewhat sentimental, it works on levels that few other Asimov stories attain to.

Of the remaining seven stories, only "All the Troubles of the World" and "The Feeling of Power" are more than one notion squibs -one telling of a computer that begins to think like a human, the other about a **human** that does the same in the far future. The remaining five, together with the excrutiatingly unfunny doggerel that starts and ends the book, should have been left in the ephemeral pulps of the late fifties.

To conclude: if you have to have some Asimov then this collection, together with the slightly better **Earth is Room Enough** from the same period in his career, contains his most able work, where the onus is on ideas rather than page-count or self-congratulation. But with the exception of "The Ugly Little Boy" it is still, in the end, kids' stuff.

MILLENIUM - John Varley

Sphere, 1985, £1.99

Reviewed by Barbara Davies

They say you can't tell a book by its cover. On this book the cover is plain silver, like those mirrored sunglasses that make the wearer inscrutable, with a cut out inverted triangle in which is a blob-like being with a red nose. Rudolf it ain't. Why Sphere gave it this particular tasteless design is beyond me - but I did pay good money for it so it must have something in its favour.

As I began to read I had a sense of deja vu - it turns out that I had read extracts from it in "Computing" - but this is entirely appropriate because it is about time travel.

The hero "William 'Bill' Smith , forty-something years old, chief onsite investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board" and his team are investigating the debris from a mid-air collision between a DC 10 and a 747. There were no survivors. As the investigation progresses there are anomalies like the 'black-box' flight recorder that contains the voice of the observer screaming about dead, burnt and mangled passengers **before** the crash, like the mechanical watches found that are 45 minutes slow, like the digital watches found that are counting backwards.

In fact, people from the future, presided over by the Big Computer and the Programmers' Council, are appearing through a 'Time Gate' onto each plane before the crash, removing the 'real' people and substituting 'wimps' (I won't tell you why they want the 'real' people - you'll have to read the book.) The chief of Snatch Team Operations is the heroine Louise Baltimore, who we are told looks like a filmstar "from 2034".

So far so good, but the point of the story is that a stunner used by the 'snatch' team has been left on a plane and if Bill Smith finds it and puts two and two together it could result in a "twonky" or time distortion that will wipe out the future. Louise Baltimore must avert this. In addition, Louise keeps receiving time-capsules from her future contaning instructions - and they are written in her own handwriting.

The plot may be confusing but stick with it because with it this book contains some interesting concepts (as good sf time-travel should) and some fine writing here and there. The author has given each chapter a title based on a classic time-travel book by another author and acknowledges them all in a note at the start. This seems a harmless enough pastime but I wonder if he altered his plot to fit the titles rather than vice-versa.

The book consists of two narrative threads which are intermingled. This leads to some confusion at first but gradually the story becomes clearer and eventually the two threads merge. Each thread is told in a different style to suit the hero or heroine. Bill Smith is convincing, but the style chosen for Lousie Baltimore's narrative jarred rather on this English ear. It is 20th century brash American which seems out of keeping for a character from the future. Later in the plot this would be alright because the heroine takes a refresher course of 'Ameringlish', but it is used throughout. I did not find Louise totally convincing (though as a female created by a male author she is miles ahead of any Heinlein creation) but Bill Smith anchored the book successfully.

> "I was jerked awake by the silent alarm vibrating my skull. It won't shut off until you sit up, so I did. Mornings had been getting both better and worse than they used to be. Better because I didn't have that many of them left and valued each new one more. Worse because it was harder to get out of bed.
>
> It would have been easier if I'd allowed myself to sleep plugged in. But you start doing it and before you know it you're plugged into more things than you want, so I didn't. Instead I kept the revitalizer console
>
> on the other side of the room and forced myself to make that long walk every morning.
>
> Ten meters.
>
> This time I made the last two meters on my hands and knees. I sat on the floor and plugged the circulator tube into my navel."

This passage is from the introduction to Lousie Baltimore. If it made you sit up and take notice then this book's for you; inspite of the cover.

INTERZONE: THE FIRST ANTHOLOGY - Edited by John Clute, David Pringle and Colin Greenland

Everyman Paperback, 1985, 206pp, £3.95

Reviewed by Edward James

This is, the title proclaims, the **first** anthology from **Interzone** magazine, made up of 12 stories from issues 1 to 9 (the Autumn 1984 issue) and one brand-new story: Geoff Ryman's 'O Happy Day!' Let us hop that it is the first of many, and that it serves to bring the magazine to a wider public. The choice of stories is a good one; they are indeed among the best from the first 9 issues, and Geoff Ryman's sneaks in with no apologies needed. (To my mind it is much more successful than his 'The Unconquered Country' in **Interzone 7** which recently won the BSFA Award for the best short fiction of 1984.) If you've always wanted to find out what **Interzone** was like, or what it aspires to, but had been afraid to subscribe, you'll get a very good impression from this.

Whether you will then fill out the subscription form on the last page op the book depends on what sort of sf or fantasy you like. There is very definitely and **Interzone** 'ho use style'. Although the editors are no doubt sincere in their protestations that they are very much dependant on what people send them, their concept of 'radical sf'and the tone set by the early issues must to some extent determine what reaches them. Awould-be author who believed in writing for her/his market could , after a bit of research, assemble an archetypal **Interzone** story. It wouldn't be easy, because they clearly require a higher standard of literacy than, say, the equally imitable **Analog**. First of all (s)he would have to read a lot of Moorcock-vintage **New Worlds** and a lot of Ballard. (S)he would have to be ready to write about entropy and decayed city-scapes and contemporary (or once-contemporary) pop-icons like Marilyn Monroe or Jack Kennedy. (Kim Newman combines both here in the savage little 'Dreamers'; Neil Ferguson cameos Bobby Kennedy in his witty alternative history fantasy 'The Monroe Doctrine', about the meeting - and more - of President M.Monroe and President L.Brezhnev.) Ideally (s)he should also include a great deal of violence. In these stories humans are blown up by the million, gassed by the train-load, killed by their daughters, and lovingly ivisected by surgeons. And finally (s)he should carefully avoid much of the subject matter and tone of traditional sf. Space-ships are clearly out (except as contemporary pop-icons), and aliens should only appear ambiguously.(In the two stories in this collection which feature non-human beings, one does have the uncomfortable feeling that perhaps they were figments of the protagonist's unconscious.) It is 'inner space', not 'outer space' which is the subject matter of this sf: this old watch-word seems to have survived the 60s intact. And clearly has its devotees. An interesting letter in **Interzone** 8 called for stories about 'the relationship between living beings and their material culture...The beings in question should be terrestrial, and preferably human; the main setting should be Earth, and the society depicted should be a real present-day society directly and recognisably derived from one such'. This is what one reader wanted, but it seems to chime in too with what the editors want (or with what they get). There must be a readership for this sort of sf/fantasy, which has excellent literary and intellectual credentials, but it is perhaps a restricted readership (as the relatively low sales of **Interzone** suggest). And I do find it personally rather sad that the vast limitless universe of sf and fantasy should be excluded by these artificial restrictive and paraochial bounds.

Our hypothetical author should eschew outer space - and also anything resembling good cheer, faith in human nature or optimism. I suppose that the main reason I have not been a regular reader of **Interzone** is that it covers all too often fulfill the laudable aim of suggesting what is inside, their intimations of pain and suffering preparing one for the tone of the stories within. It is partly this unrelieved gloom and morbid fascination with suffering that has set British sf apart from American sf (see my 'Blood on the Racks', PI 52, and see Spinrad in **Asimov's** for March 1985). Has it taken over from flagellation as 'the British disease'? (Or has it sublimated flagellation...?)

A constant diet of such stories is wearing; but that doesn't mean that this particular distillation is not well worth reading. If you have missed the magazine, but this. You might feel, like me, that Michale Blumlein's 'Tissue Ablation and Variant Regeneration', a cut-bu-cut account of the vivisection of Mr.Reagan by, among others, Dr.Biko and Dr.Guevara, is sick and inhuman. You might wonder whether Angela Carter's musing on the childhood of Edgar Allen Poe or Cherry Wilder's tale of Third World politics are sf or fantasy at all. But some of the others are gems: in no particular order, Malcolm Edwards' 'After Images', Keith Roberts' 'Kitemaster', Rachel Pollack's 'Angel Baby', Scott Bradfield's 'The Flash! Kid', John Shirley's 'What Cindy Saw', and Ballard's 'The Object of the Attack': one of the most striking of his stories in recent years. And the gem of gems you won't find in the magazine, and while I hesitate to say that it is worth buying the book for this alone (£3.95 for **one story**?!) the Geoff Ryman story I menioned at the start is one that shouldn't be missed. It is set in a camp staffed by the Boys: gay men who are tolerated in a future state run by women because they undertake the unpleasant task of elminating the violent (or potentially violent?) who threaten the existence of this would-be pacifist utopia. Yes, it is a violent story, but not gratuitously so, nor is it a story that is without hope or humanity; the issues it faces (the problems of violence within a pacifist society, of conscience, of the establishment of utopia, of feminist aspirations etc, etc) are important ones; and the characters and setting wholly and horrifyingly credible. There are aspects of **Interzone** I deplore, but if it can produce a story like this in an anthology as good as this, long may it prosper! Now, where's that subscription form...?