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VECTOR

The critical journal of the British Science Fiction Association

Vector ($vekt\phi J$). 1704. (-L. vector carrier, traveller, rider, f. vect-, pa. ppl. stem of vehere carry; see -OR 2.) +1. Astr. An imaginary straight line joining a planet moving round a centre, or the focus of an ellipse, to that centre or focus. Also V. radius = radius v. (RADIUS 3 d) -1796. 2. Math. A quantity having direction as well as magnitude, denoted by a line drawn from its original to its final position 1865. 3. A carrier of disease 1926. Hence **Vecto** rial a. of,

Albion Writ ~ Christopher Priest

Haldeman interviewed ~ 2

Sturgeon remembered

Book reviews and Letters

pertaining to, or connected with a v. or radius

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

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AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

EDITORIAL. David V. Barrett

DANGEROUS DIVISIONS

Readers' letters, on Mary Gentle in Narnia and other recent tonics.

STURGEON REMEMBERED

Following the death in May of Theodore Sturgeon, appreciations by Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison and John Clute of one of the great

names in science fiction.

THE HALDEMAN INTERVIEW Part two of an interview with Joe Haldeman conducted by Ken Lake with Geoff Rippington.

ATRION WRITE Leave The Porgotten To The Night

Christopher Priest, author of The Affirmation and The Glamour, writes on writing and science fiction and other perspectives in our continuing series.

Reviews edited by Paul Kincaid

Including Joseph Nicholas on Helliconia Winter by Brian Aldiss; Chris Bailey on The Man In The Tree by Damon Knight, and Keith Preeman on The Science Fiction of Mark Twain, amongst many others.

David V. Barrett

REVIEWS EDITOR PRODUCTION EDITOR Paul Kincaid Bossain R. Holymed PRODUCTION ASSISTANT Ann Morris

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With this issue we welcome Hussain R. Mohamed as Production number of letters; Chris Priest's contribution in this issue Biltor, and Ann Morris. Production Assistant. By working closely will, we hope, raise even more response. An earlier writer of together as an editorial team we hope to make Vector consistently psychological (as opposed to hard science) SP was Theodore better than ever before. Our thanks to Alam Durey for stepping in Sturgeon, who died in May. My own contribution to Vector's to produce the last two issues tribute is simply this: if you haven't read him, do so; he was Mary Gentle's first Albion Writ in Vector 126 has prompted a one of the greats.

Manchester.

FNITORI

NAVIN V RARRETT

Just a roll, just a roll, Just a roll on your drum.

Just a roll, just a roll, And the War has begun. - (1)



THIS IS THE 10TH ANNIVENSARY OF THE END OF the Vietnam War, the 40th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and the 40th anniversary also of Hiroshima, These quotations come from a number of sources, none of them science-fictional. Much of SF does not deal with war - but of those books that do, take the first ten that come to mind, and consider their attitudes. As the 'literature of ideas', can we really say that SF is showing sufficient responsibility?

I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of their way and let them have it. - Dright D. Eisenhover, 1959 (2)

In 1983 there were 40 separate conflicts: 8 countries had troops fighting on foreign soil; a total of 4 million troops were fighting in 75 countries. Armed conflicts have taken up to 21 million lives since the Second World War. In conflicts where it is possible to make a meaningful distribution between casualties in and out of uniform, 3 out of every 5 fatalities were civilians - U.N. Report (3)

The average age of a combat soldier in the Second World War was 26 In Vietnam it was 19 ...

None of them received a hero's welcome. - Paul Barricagtle

Now come on mothers throughout the land, Pack your boys off to Vietnam. Come on fathers don't hesitate. Send your boys off before it's too late. Be the first one on your block to have your - nong (4) boy come home in a box.

Suddenly a glaring whitish, pinkish light appeared in the sky accompanied by an unnatural tremor which was followed almost immediately by a wave of suffocating heat and a wind which swept away everything in its path. Within a few seconds the thousands of people in the streets in the thousands of people in the streets in the centre of the town were scorched by a wave of searing heat. Many were killed instantly, others lay writhing on the ground screaming in agony from the intolerable pain of their burns. Everything standing upright in the way of the blast -walls, houses, factories and other buildings, was annihilated...Hiroshima had ceased to exist.

- contemporary Japanese journalist (5)

The current argument for the ultimate determent: that has kept the peace. The threat to that peace would come if the balance was upset... The certainty that any nation which starts such a war will be committing suicide is the most powerful motive for preserving the peace.

- Daily Mirror 6/11/80

But the idea is not news We are quite sure that if any man could invent a means of destruction, by which two nations going to war with each other would see large armies destroyed, and immense treasure wasted on both sides, in a single campaign, they would both hesitate at Russians and Americans could turn the world to dost. entering upon another. In this sense the

greatest destroyer is the greatest philanthropist - A Ristory of Wonderful Inventions, 1862

If any question why we died, Tell them, because our fathers lied

- Rudyard Kipling If in some smothering dreams you too could

Behind the wagon that we flung him in. And watch the white eyes writhing in his

Face His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin: If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood Come gurgling from the froth-corrupted

lunge. Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cul Of vile, incurable sores on innocent

tonques -My friend, you would not tell with such high pest



To children ardent for some desperate glory, The old lie: Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori.

- Wilfred Owen

In 1943 I became Supreme Allied Commander in SE Asia, and saw death and destruction on an even greater scale. But that was all conventional warfare and, horrible as it of survival. In the event of a nuclear war there will be no chances, there will be no survivors... - Mountbetten (5)

for?

Both East and West have the ability to devastate each other whatever the arguments may be regarding the total number of warheads. Effective parity therefore exists already: once a human being is killed once, the ability to kill him twenty times over becomes irrelevant. -

Why quicken the pace? Why does it seem that you choose to lose reason before losing face? Russians and Americans driven by the past The Third World moves in the shadows you

cast

In 1967 it was estimated that 10 million people suffered from smallpox, of whom 2 million died. It took twelve years of international co-operation before the World Health Organisation could declare that in 1980 smallpox had been eradicated. This achievement cost 300 million dollars, the equivalent of the cost of 2.5 days of the nuclear arms race. -

Now come on Wall Street don't be slow, Why man this is war so go go go There's plenty good money to be made, Supplying the Army with the tools of the trade

Just hope and pray that if they drop the Bomb. They drop it on the Vietcong. - (4)

These highly accurate weapon systems seem to be ideal for fighting a nuclear war but useless for deterring one...in times of crisis there would inevitably be great pressures on both sides to fire their systems first - for to wait could result in one's own missiles being destroyed. This inevitably leads to the conclusion that the deployment of the Pershing and Cruise missiles will reduce European security by making nuclear war more, and not

I repeat in all sincerity as a military man that I can see no use for any nuclear weapons which would not end in escalation. with consequences that no-one can conceive.. How can we stand by and do nothing to prevent the destruction of our world?

- Mounthatten (5)

'Star Wars'

The prospects for developing an effective, total defense against Soviet ballistic missiles are very poor. All of the proposed space weapons systems now under investigation face enormous technical hurdles and are highly vulnerable to devastating Soviet counters asures. A move by the United States to implement ballistic missile defence would be highly provocative and could precipitate an unconstrained Soviet response.

- Union of Concerned Scientists (7)

And it's One Two Three, What're we fighting

Don't ask me I don't give a damn, Next stop is Vietnam And it's Pive Six Seven, Open up the Pearly Well there ain't no time to wonder why, Whoopee we're all gonna die. -(4)

In 1952 Charlie Chaplin was expelled from the USA after being investigated by the Commission on UnAmerican Activities. But Chaplin was not anti-American or pro-Russian: 'Jew, Gentile - black men, white...we are all the same.' Who, then, is the energy? "The energy chooses to dress in a different uniform, so you'll be able to recomise him and kill him.' Russia is now the enemy; in the last war she was our friend. 'It seems to me that where

Dangerous READERS LETTERS

wonder if she is right in her opinion that faith in science, wonder it she is right in her opinion that faith in science, itself, has vanished. I wonder if pessimistic and gloom-laden SF stories are a result of a loss of faith and increasing mistrust in the politics of science and the developments in technology which stem from this. Such a gloomy future vision does not necessarily reflect the writer's own outlook on the future, but may reflect the writer's concerns on the possibility how easily things can go sour. Science can still find cures for diseases. but it's the political pressure applied that leads to the production of weapons of any sort, whether the weapons are softweapons designed to brainwash us, or hard ones designed to destroy us. Influences in this and other areas, political and otherwise has led to a great many of the unsavoury aspects of our society, not scientific developments in themselves, and often, not even technological ones, in themselves. Unothical practices or uses of our sciences and technology are chiefly to blame, and the manipulation that goes with them. I don't believe there is a loss of faith in science, but there is certainly a quite justifiable loss of faith in the way it and technology is wrongly

A FEW COMMENTS ON ELIZABETH SOURRET'S ARTICLE IN VECTOR 126: I

evoloited. Science fiction's present pessimism is in sympathy with our present, gloomy and real predicament. There are also other worrying factors, with some writers of scenes of extreme violence sexual degradation as culprits, but the majority write responsibly, if not competently. In any case, the present situation may offer writers and readers alike a release from reality into a world, that by comparison, is a lot worse. Facing reality after that doesn't seem so bad. And at its best, SF is a cautionary as well as entertaining media. Such caution stems from knowing ourselves too well. We still commit atrocities, we still make irresponsible acts and decisions. None of us really wants a utopia - we are too fascinated with our darker sides. We watch and read about death with our tongues hanging out, our eyes betraying the way we lap it up. It's called adventure. This is symptomatic of our times. In a bureaucracy, with no outlets for a true and whole release of our emotions, no room large enough in which to become truly individual, feeling cramped, stymied and which to become truly individual, reeling cramped, stylled ass stifled, we hunger after anything that offers an artificial version. The frustration of not being able to smell a flower because it is plastic goes much deeper than we admit to ourselves, and this is the case with so many aspects of our 'modern' life. Our frustrated and suppressed feelings and desires are at the root of so many of our difficulties, and when times get better, when writers are more in touch with their hearts, then we can look forward to that heart-warming optimism we, paradoxically, seek.

Mary Gentle's article was very illuminating. When I found

out the Narnia books were religious in content, I was put off reading then - this was some four or five years ago. I still can't get mymes! to buy the books. It isn't any picture of stained-glass either, but a dislike of the Christian doctrine. Many Gentle's comments have convinced me the books aren't as religious at they have seemed - as far a Christiantie. The form, in the religion descinates me and Lourt shade it off. It's furny, in the religion descinates me he highous function,

You may like to apply my may of viseding things to Baldeman's comments on the Mercican spirit, in his last paragraph of part one of the interview, and so it should come as no surprise the way of the second spirit of the second spirit of the second was in support of their belief they were doing the right thing, or because it offered a distraction from the stigms of life. The Hall hiddens could see through the decadeprons cand Pamerican spirit is commendable, but it's a shame he still harboured a contradictory faith. Saying that, I shalter his preception and

TERRY BROOME 45 Hykeham Road Lincoln ING RAA

T THOUGHT VECTOR 126 WAS A GOOD ISSUE, WITH A NICE BALANCE OF material. It is a pity, though, that Mary Gentle couldn't extend her scholarship from the various works on Lewis to the Bible. "I may be wrong, but I think the resurrection got tacked onto the Jesus legend fairly late in the day... Yes, Mary is wrong, as a glance at Matthew Chapter 16 Verse 21 would show - "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again on the third day," Or Mark Chapter 8 Verse 31 - "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." Or Luke Chapter 9 Verses 22 and 23 - "And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing: Saying, The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day." The similarity of the wording - in stories which far more often than not describe the same events very differently, if at all, is remarkable and twoical of those occasions when the Gospel writers - at different times and spread throughout the Mediterranean were retelling the actual words of Christ, No, the resurrection

EDITORIAL/Continued

friendship means so little, governments should not be playing with bombs and rockets, as though they were children's toys. Because you and I, we stand in the middle. We are the commedians'.

- Joseph Ley (8)

Four out of every bundred Servicemen who am nuclear weapons control rooms in America unifer from alcolaim, done about the servicement of the servi

- Daily Telegraph, 20/1/1983

'....and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions. And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will

fly from them.

- Revelation 9: 2-6

The explosion of a single nuclear bomb of the size used at Niroshima over a major city in the UK is likely to produce so many cases of trauma and burns requiring hospital treatment that the remaining medical services in the UK would be completely overwhelmed.

- BMA Report (9)

- Mountbatten (5)

4.

Einstein was asked to prophesy what weapons could be used in the Third World War. I am told he replied to the following effect: On the assumption that a Third World War must escalate to nuclear destruction, I can tell you what the Pourth World War will be fought with - bows and arrows.

The stone age may return on the gleaming wings of science, and what might now shower immeasurable blessings upon mankind may even bring about its total destruction. Beware, I say; time may be short.

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Dr C. Phillips & Dr. I. Ross - The Maclear Casebook - Polygon 1983 The Guardian 16/2/85 Country Joe MacDonald - 'I Feel I'm

Fixing To Die Rag'
Earl Mountbatten of Burma - 'On
Nuclear Arms and War' (Speech at
Strasbourg 11/5/1979)

Nuclear Arms and War' (Speech at Strasbourg 11/5/1979) 6. Chris Morgan - The Shape of Putures Past - Webb & Bower 1980

Mast - Webb a Bower 1980 Union of Concerned Scientists, Cambridge, Mass. - Breaking Point, Vol. 2, No. 3, Spring 1984 Joseph Ley, Director Marrogate Theatre

in Education - Charlie Chaplin: The Great Dictator British Medical Association - The

Medical Effects of Nuclear War Norman Myers, ed. - The Gaia Atlas of Planet Management - Pan 1985 is not a late addition to the myth, but one of the earliest and most definite at ements of Christianisty (without it there is no Christianity, as Mary so rightly remarks in her dismissal of Aalma as the fisher Origins). Built, it is a very poserful piece of suck and reflects many of the disquisting moments I had when, as a strongly covenized Christian, I adapted The Lion, the Nitch and the Swatchest of the Swat

MARTYN TAYLOR Flat 2 17 Hutchinson Square Douglas

MARY GENTLE'S AUTHORITATIVE BAMBLE AROUND MARRIA (VECTOR 126) embodies a stimulating assessment of C.S. Lewis's purposes and achievements in those books - stimulating because she is constantly prompting her readers to question further, and in doing so to refer back to the texts. In doing just this I found one or too points on which, while being in agreement with the or. offer further parents will be either to voice reservations.

First, the question of Aslan's maryrots to save Bhusch. It is estr, as she following balter lineport suppers, simply a case of secrifice for a single top - although even that, on the 'look of secrifice for a single top - although even that, on the 'look has been as the same of the control o

This brings me to my second reservation, which arises out of Mary Gentle's contention that Lewis "just plain side-steps" the issue of the entry of evil into Narnia. The key text here is the Magician's Nephew, much of which is taken up with the creation of Narnia by Aslan, Aslan, like Maleldil in the SF novels, is fictionally surrogate for both God and Son of God, and Mary Gentle needn't really have worried about the apparent dichotomy, or about the orthodoxy of such dual identity. Narnia, as Aslan or about the transform of a six the planet Venus in Perelandra; evil comes into it as a result of Digory's violence and wilfulness in ringing the golden bell in Charn, thus awaking and bringing to Narnia the evil Queen/Witch. This event, and the earth-life from which Diogra comes, are outside Narnian created earth-life from which Digory comes, time, reflecting Lewis's belief that the original "Fall" was something taking place on a supernatural plane and involving the revolt of a will-endowed created entity against its creator, that men, also created with free wills, joined in the revolt. He seems to think their revolt a contingent circumstance, for in Perelandra Adam and Eve remain in their paradise avoiding a Personality) Lewis wrote: "I don't know how things would have worked out if the human race had not rebelled against God and joined the enemy." One may be disinclined to accept Lewis's supernatural premise but, if you all him that, he is neither

illogical ror side-segging.

One further reservation; I can't quite agree that The Last
Doe further reservation; I can't quite agree that perhaps
some of the earlier books, but the platonic and escalatogical
veins that seems so strongly in The Last Battle are also more
veins that seems so strongly in The Last Battle are also more
transformations of 116 and landscape at the end of The Silver
Chair; in the mode of creation of Barria through the small or
Alarias some in the Bagician's believes; in the transportations by
becomes (in The Lino) the Marintoe of paraspe between Earth and
Rarnias and more parently in Bairs valediction in them Tenders
reason why you were brought to Barria that by Novolong se
here for a little, you may know se better there's. Although Lexis
denied any initial planning of his stories as Christian
denied any linitial planning of his stories as Christian
started with pictures in the main, he also maid (in of Other
Northal) that he chose the opene that he called Tairy Tair's
'that's "tat's in continuous thought the Chronicles
and cortainly the 'taut's in continuous thought the Chronicles

of which The Last Battle is the natural culmination.

Finally, not a reservation, but an observation. In the autobiographical Surprised by Joy, Lewis wrote that with his mother's death (he was nine at the time) "all settled haroiness. all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life...it was sea and islands now: the great continent had sunk like Atlantis." It is remarkable how regularly, both in the Narnia books and his SF/fantasy novels this image occurs: in the floating paradisal islands of Perelandra; in the perilously makra haunted seas and in the islanded "heaver" of Medidiorn in Out of the Silent Planet; in the saving return of Atlantean magia in the person of Merlin in That Hideous Strength. parallels and resonances occur throughout the Narnian Chronicles: "the great flat plain which was cut into countless little islands by countless channels of water" of The Silver Chair; in Dawn by countless channels of water" of The Silver Chair; in Dawn Treader where: "In the soa, the deeper you go, the darker and colder it gets, and it is down there, in the dark and cold, that dangerous things live...It is on the heights (or as we would say 'in the shallows') that there is warmth and peace..."; in Prince Caspian, where the archetypal island of entry is a launching pad for the redeeming of Narnia; and above all in The Last Battle when the sea comes in until "all was level water from where they when the sea comes in until all was level water iron water dray stood to where the water met the sky, and where, as they made their way ever "farther up" to the "real Namia", Tirisn west for the passing of the Narnia he had know, saying: "I have seen my mother's death." In leaving an apocalyptic landscape, reminiscent both of Revelation and of the furthest reaches of The Time Machine, they have passed through the ice-encrusted Doorway to "find themselves in warm daylight, the blue sky above them, flowers at their feet, and laughter in Aslan's eyes." (This is not unlike Wells's Traveller's experience when, escaping the dying earth and sun in his machine, he immediately found that 'the sun got golden again, the sky blue".)

In a recent TLS review (21.6) of Humphrey Carpenter's Secret Gardens, a book which surveys the work not only of nineteenth century children's writers and fantasists, but also that of Tolkien and Lewis, Isabel Quiqly asks: "..was the whole flight into the walled garden of perfect fantasy (or fantastic this judgement should be applied to Lewis in any sweepingly dismissive sense - his formidable intellect was constantly on guard. Nevertheless, it can fairly be said that, in common with many other writers of works containing elements of such fantasy who also experienced some marked childhood deprivation (the The Child's Dream of a Star' and The Old Curiosity Shop; the Kipling of 'The Wish House' and Puck of Pook's Hill: the Wells of the eloi "paradise" and The Happy Turning), Lewis suffered trauma with lasting effect. His mother's death, soon followed by a "Belsen" life at Wynyard School, helped to create a condition of alienation in which he says: "I feared for my soul." He also says (in Surprised by Joy) that critics who want a historical explanation of what they consider a too great preponderance of Hell in his books should seek it in the Anglo-Catholicism of the church at "Belsen". Out of such tensions grelater intimations of more ultimate roots of disharmony . historical, metaphysical, commic; but also images of unity and restoration, together with knowledge of possible and positive paths towards the achievement of what they symbolised.

lasts (belief the services, was hisself well mere of correspondences and sets, of course, was hisself well mere of correspondences and the services of correspondences and being. In a layer's sermen delivered in ordered (at Hamfelled College) he said: "In varying deprese the lower reality can actually be drawn into the higher and become part of it." That expresses the essentials of Sermis Be certainly regarded pagan' elements and their origins in this light; and Hary Gentle's article is of great value in opening up thought.

K.V. BAILEY 1 Val de Mar Alderney C.I.



about the validity of such a concept.

STURGFI

-remembered

Recrinted from the newsletter of the Rizmingham SF Group, with the author's permission.

STURGEON? THE NAME WAS MAGNETIC. THERE IT WAS, PERPETUALLY cropping up attached to the stories I most admired. Sturgeon:
quite an ordinary Anglo-American word among exotics like A.E. Van Vogt, Isaac Asimov, Heinlein, Simak, and Nuttner, Yet - spikev, finny, odd. And it was not his original name. Theodore Hamilton Sturgeon was born Edward Hamilton Waldo. To the usual boring, undeserving parents. That was on Staten Island, the year the First World War ended.

So there were two of him, as there are of many a good writer. A bright side, a dark side - much like our old SF image of Mercury, remember, so much more interesting than banal reality. He had a mercurial temperament. The bright side was the side everybody loved. There was

The bright side was the side everybody loved. There was something so damed nice, chamming, open, empathic, and elusive about fed that women flocked to him. Men too. Maybe he was at the mercy of his own fey sexuality. If so, he was quizzical about it, as about everything. One of him more cutesy titles put it admirably. If All Hem were Enrothers, Meadly two Let Come Marry Your

Sister? Not if it was Sturgeon, said a too-witty friend. He played his guitar. He sang. He shone. He spoke of his philosophy of love

Ted honestly brought people happiness. If he was funny, it was a genuine humour which agrang from seeing the world aslant. A true SF talent. Everyone recognised his strange quality -"faunlike", some nut dubbed it; faunlike he certainly looked. Inexplicable, really.

Unsympathetic stepfather, unsatisfactory adolescence. Furny obs, and Ether Breather out in Astounding in 1939. So to an even funnier job, science fiction writer. It's flirting with disaster. I could not believe those early stories: curious subject

matter, bizarre resolutions, glowing style. And about sexuality. You could hardly believe your luck when one of Ted's stories went singing through your head. It, with Cartier illustrations, in Unknown. Terrifying. Derm Madness. The magnificent Microcognic God, read and re-read. Killdozer, appearing after a long silence. There were to be other

silences. Baby is Three: again in the sense of utter incredibility with complete conviction, zinging across a reader's synapses. By a miracle, the blown-up version, More Than Human, was no disappointment either. This was Sturgeon's caviar dish-Better even than Venus Plus X with its outre sexuality in a hermaphrodite utopia. As for those silences. Something sank Sturgeon. His amazing

early success, his popularity with fans and stardom at conventions - they told against the writer. Success is a vempire. In the midst of life we are in definite trouble. They say Sturgeon was the first author in the field ever to sign a sixbook contract. A six-book contract was a rare mark of distinction, like being crucified. A mark of extinction. Ted was no stakhanovite and the deal did for him; he was reduced to writing a novelization of a schlock TV series. Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, to fulfil his norms.

At one time, he was reduced further to writing TV pilot scripts for Hollywood. He lived in motels or trailers, between marriages, between lives. Those who read The Dreaming Jewels or Venus Plus X or the story collections forget that writing is secretly a heavy load, an endless battle against the disappointments which come from within as well as without - and reputation a heavier load. Ted was fighting his way back to the

light when night came on-About Ted's dark side. Well, he wrote that memorable novel, Same of Your Blood, about this crazy psychotic who goes for drinking menstrual discharge. Actually, it does not taste as bad as Ted made out.

That was his bid to escape the inescapable adulation One small human thing he did. He and I, with James Gunn, were conducting the writers' workshop at the Conference of the Fantastic at Boca Raton, Plorida. This was perhaps three years

ago. Our would-be writers circulated their effusions around the table for everyone's comment. One would-be was a plump, pallid, unhappy lady. Her story was a fantasy about a guy who tried three times to commit suicide, only to be blocked each time by a green

monster from Hell who wanted him to keep on suffering. Sounds promising, but the treatment was hopeless. Dumb comments around the table. I grew impatient with their unreality. When the story reached me, I asked the lady right out,



THEODORE STURGEON ------ 1918 - 1985

"Have you ever tried to commit suicide?" Thespected response. She stared at me in shock. Then she burst into a hailstorm of tears, collapsing onto the table..."Three times", she cried. Everyone looked fit to faint.
"It's nothing to be ashamed of", I said. "I've tried it

"So have I", said Sturgeon calmly.

He needn't have come in like that. He just did it bravely, unostentatiously, to support me, to support her, to support everyone. And I would guess there was a lot of misery and disappointment in Ted's life, for all the affection be generated. Wet he remained kind, loving, giving, (The lady is improving by the way. We're still in touch. That's another story.) If that does not strike you as a positive story, I'm sorry.

I'm not knocking suicide, either. Everyone should try it at least

Ted was a real guy, not an idol, an effigy, as some try to paint him. He was brilliant, so he suffered. I know beyond doubt that he would be pleased to see me set down some of the bad times he had. He was not one to edit things out. Otherwise he would

have been a less powerful writer.

There are troves of lovely Sturgeon tales (as in the collection labelled E Pluribus Unicorn), like Bianca's Hands, which a new generation would delight in. He wrote well, if scmetimes over-lushly. In many ways, Ted was the direct opposite of the big technophile names of his generation, like Doc Smith, Poul Anderson, Robert Heinlein, et al. His gaze was more closely fixed on people. For that we honoured him, and still honour him.

Good for him that he never ended up in that prick's junkyard where they pay you a million dollars advance for some crud that no same man wants to read-

Ted died early in May in Oregon, of pneumonia and other complications Now he consorts with Sophocles, Dick, and the author of the Kama Sutra. He had returned from a holiday in Hawaii, taken in the hopes he might recover his health there. That holiday, incidentally, was paid for by another SF writer one who often gets publicity for the wrong things. Thank God. there are still some good guys left. We are also duly grateful

for the one just departed.

RRIAN AI DISS

Condensed with permission from the entry by John Clute in The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, ed. Peter Nicholls, Granada 1979.

THEODORE STURGEON WAS BORN EDWARD HAMILTON WALDO IN NEW YORK City: Sturgeon was his stepfather's name. His career as an SF writer began in 1939, with the publication of Ether Breather in Astounding. In about three years of active writing he produced more than 25 stories, all in Astounding and Unknown, including It (1940) and Microcosmic God (1941).

Along with Van Vogt, Heinlein and Asimov, Sturgeon was a central contributor to and shaper of John W. Campbell's so-called Golden Age of SF, though perhaps less comfortably than his colleagues, as even in these early years he was less interested in technological or hard SF than in attempting to use SF frameworks to illuminate psychological tales, often romantic.

The decade following the Second World War saw Sturgeon at his most prolific and assured. He was increasingly free to write stories expressive of his interest in various manifestations of love, and though his explorations of sexual diversity seem unexceptionable nowadays, stories like The Norld Well Lost (1933), about aliens exiled from their own culture because the

are homosexuals, created considerable stir on publication. Sturgeon's most famous single volume is More Than Human (fix-up 1953), winner of the 1954 International Fantasy Award, which consists of three connected stories, two new sections built around Baby is Three (Galaxy, 1953) which is perhaps his most famous single story; it depicts with considerable intensity the coming together of six 'freaks' into a psi-powered Gestalt, and

of its eventual achieving of true maturity.
A later tale, Claustrophile (1956) illustrates Sturgeon's adroitness with themes of frustrated adolescence. The young protagonist, cramped by his repressive family, is a sensitive oddhall (like many young SF readers), and discovers himself to be not an Earthling at all but a lost member of a spacefaring race;



else entirely: he is instinctively afraid that the earth is falling on him-

Theodore Sturgeon's warmness of texture often fitted ill into the traditional SF moulds he was so frequently forced to utilize. Though the lack of opportunity to write adult stories of love from the beginning of his career engendered some very unfortunate sentimentality in his work, he was a powerful and generally liberating influence in post-wor American SP. He was particularly influential upon such younger writers of the 1960s as Samuel R. Delany. His voice as a writer was sometimes self-indulgent, and his technical experiments less substantial than they seemed to claim by the exuberance of their presentation, but his very faults demonstrate how great a struggle it has been in American SF to treat openly (and relaxedly) the profound themes to which he always addressed himself.

JOHN CLUTE



I THINK THAT EVERYTHING HAS BEEN SAID BY NOW. IF YOU READ LOCUS, or are a member of the SFWA, you will have read all about Ted.
There is little that I can add - other than my feeling of personal loss. Ted was a good and close friend for over forty years. We had a lot of fun together, got very drunk from time to time, and I shall miss him. He was a man of peace and the last time he stayed with us his calmness prevented my wife from throwing another guest off our balcony. Even though she was perfectly justified. But our friendship was ours and that is that. I just wish I could have seen more of him these last years. That is my personal loss. His loss is much greater so that chapter is closed.

The loss that we must all feel in SF is the death of a giant in our field. For Ted was one of the tiny band of first generation magazine writers who shaped science fiction as we know it today. Led by Campbell, he - and Van Vogt, Heinlein, Doc Smith, you know all the names as well as I do - took those garish, crappy pulp magazines and created a new form of literature. That can never be taken away from them. Ted had a can never be taken away from them. Ted had a writing block as big as Mount Everest, Van's current writing seems to bear no relation to the old, Heinlein self-indulgently ignores his readers. It doesn't matter. What they did can never be diminished. I read them as they were being published - and it was a glorious time to be an SF fan.

This is the reason we readers miss him. He was one of the first - and one of the best. There will never be another like him because the universe is only created once. So - goodbye Ted. It was a pleasure to know you.

And it was an unforgettable, mind-blowing, career-shaping, highly emotional experience to read what you wrote.
Thank you very, very much.

HARRY HARRISON

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VIFTNAM VETERAN — LINIVERSAL SOLDIER

He's 5 foot 2 and he's 6 foot 4 He fights with missiles and with spears Be's all of 31 and he's only 17 Been a soldier for a thousand years - Buffy Saint Marie

Joe Haldeman interviewed at the 1984 Eurocon/Eastercon, Brighton, by Ken Lake with Geoff Rippington. (Part one appeared in ector 126, June/July 1985)

LANE: Just before we started our interview, you spotted the cover on Infinite Dreams, and you had one or two things to say about it. Would you like to say something about the concept of cover design?

HALDEMAN: That's a sore point with me right now, I just saw my latest cover for Worlds Apart in America, and it's awful. It's a woman with huge breasts, really exaggerated would be tipping over all the time! - and she's standing, looking intrepid, she has a face like Brooke Shields, she has a raygun in her hand, obviously in a space ship of some sort or a space station, with this huge space structure in the background, which isn't bad, it is actually in the book

- but oh, such a pulpish cover'l Now I could understand if this was a book that they had bought for peanuts, but it's probably one of the most expensive books they've bought this year, and they give it a cheap junk cover like that.

LANE: Is it possibly because they figure that is how to treat an expensive book, to sell more? It doesn't matter what people buy it for - if it's got books it will sell?

HALDEMAN: Well, that's what my editor said when I called her. She's a woman for Christ sakes! 'How can you perpetrate something like this?' and she said, 'Well, I didn't like it either, but believe me, it'll sell books. I guess I'll believe it when the royalties come in. The book is, to me mind, a dignified book, and that's a very undignified cover.

LAKE: So you have absolutely no control over this at all, no way ou can stop it?

HALDEMAN: No. In fact, by the time I saw the cover it had been printed on a poster, and it had gone all over the place. No, some authors get control over covers, but the thing is, you have to trade off. If I absolutely required control of the covers I'd pay for it in terms of the advance money, because they're doing me a favour. And in fact they have a whole room full of people whose job it is to came up with good cover art, and they're experts, supposedly, so normally I let them.

selection; have all the stories appeared previously? HALDEMAN: Yes, in some form they have. Of course, one reason why
you want to get megazine stories out in book form is so that you can correct all the terrible things that magazine editors did to your stories, like changing titles. There are no connecting links between the stories; the introductions

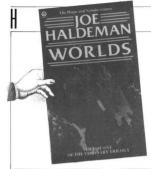
talk about the circumstances under which each story was written and where the idea might have come from; other than that, they are just the first couple of dozen magazine stories I had out that I liked. I did not include any stories that I no longer cared for. It's still one of my favourite books; I like the variety. It's the book that I hand people who aren't science fiction readers because there is a lot of different stuff in it, and none of it's so long that it would put you to sleep. I left one story out: that is in my next collection, which will be called Strange Seasons. I think I may have just overlooked it, but it's 25 or 26 thousand words long, a very huge story. It was part of The Porever War, and maybe I didn't include it because it was too soon after The Porever War had come out. It was the middle section of the novel - "You can never go back" - it was going to be the middle section, but I sent it to Ben was guing to be the middle section, but I sent it to Ben Goldberg at Amalog, and he sent it back saying, 'It's too depressing, in the first place, and in the second place. out in space, you're just slowing things down.' I sgreed with him, and reluctantly wrote another novelette, and that other novelette wound up in the book. Now I'm rather sorry it did: I think that the original should have stayed, so this is a way of getting straight.

LANGE: Would you consider rewriting part of The Porever War to make it the novel that you wish it were, or having a new edition published which was a variorum edition offering both the middles?

HALDEMAN: Now wouldn't that be interesting. If I could find a small press that would be interested in doing that I'd certainly like to do it. I don't know whether the book is too specifically 1970s, too much about Vietnam, to have sufficient interest in a variorum edition. But it is a Hugo winner, so possibly...

IAKE: What about the content of Infinite Dreams? You made the RIPPINGTON: You say the book is about Vietnam, for American





readers, but to us, without you actually saying it, we wouldn't have thought about it in those terms.

HALDEMAN: Well, yes, but wars are wars, and I take the structure of Vietnem as the structure of a typical war, though of course it isn't

LAKE: But we don't see these parallels, that you and maybe many Hard we don't see these parallels, that you and maybe many American readers see automatically in reading your books; they don't exist for us. That brings us, still on the subject of war, to your anthology Study War No More,

which you have writings by nime other writers plus yourself. EMAN: Let me tell you how I put that together, I never advertised for stories. I took writers whose work I admired, DAT DEMAN and who it seemed to me were pretty much on my side of the fence, that is, fairly Left, most of them; I wrote to them individually and asked. Have you ever written, or would you like to write an anti-war story?' And it turned out that all of them had one in the closet somewhere and they sent them along. It's an uneven collection, I suppose: I liked all the stories - there were some I liked more than others.

IAKR: It's uneven for one reason, in that Damon Knight's piece dates from 1954 and Poul Anderson's from 1959 - surely this has to enter into it, that they're written from a different viewpoint, so obviously they don't present a united picture of war, or a united picture of science fiction, for that matter. What therefore do you feel is the function of the book, and do those stories adequately, in retrospect, do what you wanted them to do?

HALDEMAN: Even from the immediate retrospect of writing the Introduction to it I had to admit that it did not fulfil what I had hoped it would. I wanted science fiction alternatives to war, and most of the stories instead treated war metaphorically, or the solutions were not practical solutions, they were things that pointed out one aspect or another of warlike behaviour, and also in retrospect, shouldn't have been surprised at that, because if anybody ever has come up with a simple solution to war, one that can be put in a short story, nobody's ever heard of iti

RIPPINGTON: Do you enjoy editing as much as writing?

HALDEMAN: No, not as much. There's an awful lot of red tape involved, and you have condemned yourself to a lifetime of book-keeping as soon as you've done one of these things: every time a little royalty cheque comes in you have to split it ten ways. That's not part of an agent's job. normally, partly because the money's not that great. I have two anthologies: the other one is called Commic Laughter -that was my second book. That still brings in a little money every now and then, which I send out in little five dollar packets to various people. I think there was never a British delition of that per se; however, a box of them got over here for remainders, and I see it more often in Britain than I do in America, at signing sessions and that sort of thing. in when the a standing seasons and that sort of things, its a competent little collection of fun science fiction stories. The contract was offered to me as an apology by my publisher for screwing up so badly on my first novel. He said, 'Here, you can have \$5000; put this together.' You

see, my first novel, War Year, was critically quite well received: I had the largest and most positive review I've ever had in the New York Times, which is of course the touchstone of commercial criticism in America, with that book. But they didn't print enough copies, and they didn't send then to the book stores. It was a book that was fated not to be sold. Probably one of the most appalling things that can ever harpen to a first author; two weeks after the book came out I went to the American Booksellers Association meeting in Washington DC. I didn't have enough money for a ticket, but an editor loaned me his name tag, and I went in, and I went straight to my publisher's display, and they must and I went straight to my publisher's display, and they must have had 150 titles there, and they didn't have mine. So I asked the salesman, 'Do you know of a book called War Year by Joe Haldeman?' and he says. 'By George, you know, I read that one myself, and it's a really good book but it's about Vietnem, and nobody's going to buy it, so I didn't bother to bring it along. It devastated me, and it cost him his job too, when I got the word back.

IAKE: Now, we've talked about the genesis of Study War No More, and the selection. What was the reaction of the contributors themselves to their contiguity to each other, once they came

to read the completed book? HALDEMAN: I got very little reaction from them, which is normally the case with anthologies. When I've been in anthologies I rapidly read through my story to make sure they didn't set the type upside down, and them I set it aside, and it may be wears before I read the other stories in it.

LAKE: Oh, you don't see it as a connected concept at all, saying 'It's a pity you didn't put me in front of so-and-so and after so-and-so'?

HALDEMAN: No, there are commercial considerations; you like to be either the first or the last story, and it's nice to be in a book with recognisebly good writers. I would complain if I were in a book full of unknown and schlock writers.

TAKE: On the grounds that you were there to sell them. HALDEMAN: Yeah. It's happened once. Well no, not only me: Ray

Lafferty was in it. It was one of those strange Roger Elwood collections; oh, awful! I tried to read the book and couldn't. My story in it was absolutely incomprehensible. He had to buy it because he'd been advertising the various science fiction writers he's bought stories from, always including my name, and I got really annoyed about this, and I said, 'Roger, you're going to have to buy a story from me now that you've done that.' I got really annoyed because he'd commissioned a story and had then refused it on the grounds that it had too-adult language in it - "Why didn't you ask for childish writers?" So I had this story that had been rewritten for three different editors, and I didn't even understand it, so I sent it to him and dared him not to print it. And he did! It's called John's Other Life; it's got a few paragraphs that are pretty good, but I defy anybody to tell me what it's about!

IANG: Talking about writing for a child audience, it seems to me that - at least for a teen audience - that is what you've done with There Is No Darkness, which you've written with your brother. I gather that one of you would write one chapter, the other would then rewrite as he felt like it and write the next, then the first would come back and rewrite the second chapter and write the third...

HALDEMAN: There was a sort of sending back and forth of ideas, and in fact we rewrote little of each other's prose. My brother's a very good pastiche artist, and so he came about ninety per cent toward my style and I came about ten per cent toward his natural style. You see the book originally was the first science fiction I'd ever written. After War Year came out I started writing There Is No Darkness under the title Star School. I wrote about forty pages of it and sent it to my editor who had done my mainstream novel, and she said. No young adult audience will like this; it's too violent...' So I just put it in a drawer for another twelve years. My brother finally reminded me that it was sitting there smouldering, or mouldering, in my files, and he asked whether he might take a look at it and we could do a collaboration, because he'd done a lot of collaboration, and I said sure, why not. And so we got into it and did write the book over a space of about eighteen months while we were both involved in other projects. We both have word processors, that have compatible data storage. Now he wants to do another one, but I don't want to do another collaboration. They want us to do a sequel for it; it's a tremendously successful book, There Is No Darkness

RIPPINGTON: Do you find it difficult collaborating? I know when I write anything, I hate any body altering a word of it.

That's the thing. My brother is just as sensitive in that area as I am, so we didn't just go through and red pencil and change each other's sentences. What we normally did was add interlineations and paragraphs and so forth: wouldn't change a line of his, or he of mine, without sending it back. I'd sit by the typewriter while I read it. and make little corrections and additions, and then I'd send them to him, and he would put in the ones that he agreed with I talked to Boris Strugatski about a year ago, and asked him how be collaborated with his brother, since we had both done this. And he said they had tried everything, you know, alternating chapters, you write the book and I'll rewrite it, every possibility, and now what they do is, either Boris goes over to Arkady's house, or Arkady goes over to Boris's house, and one of them sits at a typewriter, and they argue line by line until they get the right thing out, Very Russian, in a way!

And maybe it shows in some of the stories. I must say that There Is No Darkness reads very, very smoothly. doesn't read in any sense as disjointedly as one expects occasionally to find in a collaboration.

NMAN: Well, that's great. We both spent a lot of work on it. We didn't want it to be a thriller, and we did pursue it

HALDEMANas a young adult book.

Did you hear Chris Priest's GoH speech? It seemed to me that he was arguing that science fiction has been improperly and unfairly delimited and restricted in its definition by and unnarry delimited and restricted in its definition by editors and publishers, and his own, much more relaxed definition of science fiction, or speculative fiction, should be the one that applies. Now your writing is very much more, in fact entirely, I would say, in the tradition of mainstream hard SF. Do you find that that is a restriction, or do your thoughts automatically run within traditional parameters?

Without completely disagreeing with Chris, or with you, I do choose as the symbolic means to tell my stories a lot of the trappings of hard SF. I am trained as a scientist, and a lot of the way that I look at the universe is coloured by having a technical training in physics and astronomy. And so even if I were writing a straight mainstream movel, that kind of sensibility would colour it.

You tend to have things happening to people rather than people influencing things. BMN: Well, that's my perception of fate. BALDEMAN:

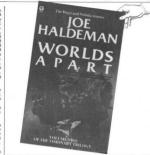
It's my belief that the people who set the tone of what one can regard as acceptable science fiction are not the editors, and not the publishers, but are the general public. which takes an awfully long time to change its own perceptions of what is acceptable SF...Now you have hit that basic mainstream, have caught the attention of the average

science fiction reader. HALDEMAN: EMAN: Well, one reason is that the key writers of my generation are hard science writers. My readers - a lot of them are twenty or thirty years older than I am, and a lot of them are teenagers, so there's the people who grew up on hard science, and the people who like the gadgetry and so forth. This seems to be a natural way for me to write. I don't disagree with Chris in his historical interpretation, that is, I see the ghettoisation, or even the balkanisation of science fiction as being something that was the direct result of the personalities of men like Gernsback and Campbell, and the marketing strategies that grew out of the rather narrow perceptions that they had of what made a good story. I can't disagree with that, and I can't disagree that I am influenced by it, because that's what I read when I was a kid, and that's what I grew up wanting to write.

But you don't write with the shortcomings of the SF of the Golden Age. TAKE-HALDEMAN: Well no, but I've also got a Master's degree in Exalish.

My point is that Gernsback didn't publish crud, he published what he could get to fulfil a specific market, but when he published HG Wells he was publishing stuff that was superbly crafted.

Oh certainly...but did he publish Stapledon? It's HALLEMAN: odd, because obviously he could tell the difference between a good story and asshole crap. But I suppose I would prefer, now as a writer of fifteen years standing, that that had never happened, that we had kept the notion, like HG Wells, of being able to write science fiction within the mainstream of literature: but this is what we have.



Everybody keeps trotting Stapledon out as an example, but Olaf Stapledon never read SP, he didn't know there was the genre in the world; he didn't submit his stuff to Gernsback; how can you criticise Gernsback for not publishing it? HALDEMAN:

concerned. But I can see why the particular virtues that Stapledon has wouldn't be virtues that. ah -

His visionary writings were a little too airy-fairy for that sort of market RIPPINGTON I wouldn't write him off, though, because although

the style is pretty awful, at least it had a vision, which is more than British SF even today has; it's very inlooking. But I've yet to see a British novel set in, say as Worlds is, in that sort of environment.

Oh, I don't know, I mean, how about Arthur Clarke? TAKE.

He's not British....! (laughter) LAKE: No, but he was the major product of the R.I.S. in the pre-war and immediately post-war years when I entered SF. If Arthur can do it, surely other British people should be able to. But I think we become too cliquy, we all like to feel that we're avant-garde writers, and that there is some

special kudos in being innovative, instead of producing a bloody good readable book. BMAN: Well...there's scmething to that, I'm sure.

RIPPINGTON: Do you actually live your books, while you're writing them?

HALDEMAN: Oh you do, you really fall into them. When I was writing Mindbridge, the women all have shaved heads when they go on expeditions, and I was writing and imagining and so forth, and I went down to the grocery store, still thinking furiously about this book, and I walked into the store, and here are all these women with long hair - it was a culture shock, because all the women I'd seen for the past eight hours didn't have any hair! My cat almost killed me when I was writing one of my spy novels. I was just typing along, this battle between a white shark and a killer whale, and I have them snapping jaws and fighting, and ooh, isn't this awful gory - and my chair had a little hole in the back, and the cat, who had never done this before, snuck up behind me and put both her paws on my ass, claws out, and my whole nervous sytem was geared up about sharks and teeth and everything - I almost dove over the typewriter and through the window! But yeah, even the cheap ones, even the simple novels, you have to get geared up on the action, or even the most intellectualised ones; it has to be real.

It's got to be real, otherwise it doesn't sound real. I must say that you've convinced me in each of the milieux about which you've written.



LEAVE THE FORGOTTEN TO THE NIGHT

Christopher Priest

"If I was shown a class of children and asked, 'Can you pick out the future novelists', I would look for the ones who are actually little that the chambers all I for the ones who sho not show up very little that the chambers all I for the ones who sho not show up very away inventing a new scenario for the argument that just happend." (Wohn Budden, He Lively Arts, October 1977)

L. THROUGH FM LIME I FREL AS IF I HAVE REEM BACKING TORS and was living away to rescribe the argument. Has is not a more than the second of th

Now the trait manifests itself, at least in my own case, is in a form of individualism, but not the rugged variety that went out and built the empire. Mine is of an altogether more inward type: stubborn, egotistical, grumpy.

symmetric special color in the control of the control of the color of

swetting case info existence that I later databal the Tagin Symptome. Young witters of one promise but only opdicate tailout happily gave up their individual ism to be able to true someone sales quitze for a decade or as. A type of witting as emerging, not relinquish ascething I was not. For a time I had been cought up in it all, but one day I comeshor realized what was at table. I backed many institutiately, reptrasing the appears. In doing now to inticine when the contraction of the constant of the contraction of the con-the contraction of the con-traction of the con-tracti

It reminded me of being at school, when I had decided neither aport nor swotting wes in my line of business, and went my one way, getting intersected in girls, smoking behind the gan, etc., and having the shit kicked out of me for doing so. Bullies are basically forces of authoritarianism and conformism, in literature as in school, and their basers—on are bein militia.

Note recently I have been experiencing a similar feeling about the valoe of the exience fitten field what once seemed to me an attractively advertured pales to be a witer now appear science fitting and the science fitting and the science fitting as the science fitting was not as sterrible as it appears in forther words, as causally become the reverserbet science fitting and has no point miless it is, so eterrible as it appears in other words, might stretch the definition of the genre a little, and pos viall have produced smoothing that is no longer "real" science fitting, and have produced smoothing that is no longer "real" science fitting. Our in the U.S.A, it viil be something that yet and point in just a bad just a bad just as that layer them come fitting. And has just as bad just as that layers them come from a many common fitting.

My instinct again is to go it alone. Yet to do so is to create an irony for myself. Putting it as plainly as possible, the sort of books I want to write obviously have something in common with science fiction, even if no longer



"real", and what I write is most intelligently perceived by science fiction readers.

science fiction readers.

Like many writers (but not all) I don't especially like writing about my own work...nor, for that matter, talking about it. Instead, I prefer the safety of generalizations, and tend to

it insteam; a preser the manage of gamma and an extra around me.
This is actually a way of putting my own work at a remove, because in generalizing about "the field" or about "iterature" or about "science fiction" a writer can talk in metaphor about his own surfa.

For instance, over the last few years I have sometimes specified or written about the need for autobiographical content in science fiction...but this is only since my own books have been more overtly autobiographical in tone and subject, and thus it has become a subject of interest to me.

has become a subject of interest to me.
Now I have conveniently raised the subject, let me talk more
directly about it.

Towards the end of the 1960s I started attenting a class in writing that, such principally, by the rowell at Success Diffy, like writing that, such principally and the comprehensive, the comprehensive, the confidence of some as power will find, which is shoot as freely an electron of some as power will find, which is shoot as freely and the comprehensive, the such that the weep weak there would be readings from some of these best in the every weak there would be readings from some of these best in the every weak there would be readings from some of these best in freeling that the same and the same of these works in progress land londown in the insensities are present as the same and the londown in the insensities are success, working in the total poles, having their first sensel appreciate, we retain the total poles, the property of the same and the same of the same of the same indicates the same of the same of the same of the same indicates the same of the same of the same of the same indicates the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the same that the same of the same of the same of the same of the sam

I often felt uncomfortable listening to these passages. This sartly because some of them were actually personal, but also because of a more principled feeling I had that fiction should be fiction, that it should spring from the imagination and not be a thinly fictionalized version of reality.

A L B I O N

My surly individualism moved to the fore. I had been planning to well eit soon anyway, but spured on by my feelings about the class I started work on Indoctrimaire, a novel that is sholly imaginary, conceived and executed in the abstract. One week I took a section of it along to the class, where it was the content of the class where it was the content of the class where it was the content of t

Pugue For A Darkening Island, which followed a year or so later, was another abstract novel.

My interest in exploring personal images only really began

(and then in an extremely tentative way) when I was writing Inverted World, which although in several respects is the closest thing I have ever written to "real" science fiction is actually nowered by a small, hidden engine of autobiography.

I now see Inverted Nerold as a turning point in my approach to writing. I cold have gone on etting between tooks for ever, but they would have become increasingly arid and arbitrarys as the terms of the second of

In hid come by an individualistic route to a version of the Nauren Lifty Approach. He I can not shelly before. I still the proposed of the proposed of the proposed of the proposed disputed personal experiences. I continue to believe the power of the inspiration is greater than the force of accurate journalism. After all, although life is reasonably long the variety of experience is restricted for most people, ay own no variety of experience is restricted for most people, ay own no from the number of the proposed of the proposed of the form the number of the proposed of the proposed of the restriction.

Men I was about elevem years old I was pushed off my bicycle by another bay - the forces of conformi colomin in, etc. I fell heavily, hit my head and suffered concussion. Although the scert physical injury I suffered was a belly grazed eye the incident left a much deeper scar. When I woke up in bed an hour or so later, not only head I no memory of the actual incident, but I was also suffering from what I now know is called rectograde amessia. I could remober orbiding at all of the four

or five days leading up to the incident.

At first I didn't realize this, but when I returned to school I case across immuneable minor mysteriess I had settlen learned in the learned in

day incidentally. I have mover economic those memorias) and for warms ago I am reading a mode about the control for warms ago I am reading a mode about the section of the warms and the section of the s

Because of my one minor encounter with the phenomenon I was hereinsted to read of this, and it set me to thinking again about the property of the property of the property of the property had going but could not a fravants remainer doing. The whole neutro of memory began to intrigue me, and the way in which it relates to how we porcely reality, 80 far, three novels — A form this tiny seed. With hindsight I row see that Prope (itself a world which memors a freezilke a letted state, associated with memorial) can also be pertry statified to the seed personal

This incident is by no means the total autobiographical content of the novels, because otherwise they would be as abstracted as the first two, nor, indeed is autobiography all that is in them. It is one source of many, although for me it is an increasingly important and interesting one.

In 1982 I was in Holland for a science fiction convention, and along with Jack Vance and a few other writers I was interviewed for Belgian television. (Terrible things like this happen to you when you're abroad.) One of the questions we were all asked was about our interest in the autobiographical content of fiction. My anasow was much the same as I have written here, although somewhat more brief. Vence, when his turn came, said: "An analysis of the same and the same and the same and the said of the same and the same and the same and the same and the same before the same and sake Vence is that I will adult it and be son't."

The longer I go on writing the more it seems to me that the work of a novelist is to try to make sense in public of private turmoil (the turmoil of everyday life and prosaic experience that is shared by us all), and is thus an essentially exotistical act. Some go too far, and some will not go far enough. Witness the dichotomy between, say, the phony strutting cockiness of someone like Barlan Ellison, and the equally false (but rather more attractive) humility of someone like Vance. I believe one of the most difficult tasks facing a writer is getting to grips with his subject matter, and so coming to terms with one's ego is a crucial step towards serious work. The more at ease a writer is with his ego, the better chance he has of dealing with it responsibly in his fiction. (This is possibly why the ludicrous nosturings of Ellison make him widely and erroneously perceived as a raw-nerve "artist" - which is how he likes to see himself and why Vance's self-effacement gives rise to the belief that he is an honest, diligent "craftsman" - ditto. Both perceptions are wide of the mark, although for differing but related reasons.

What all this has to do with science fiction will seem to

you (as increasingly it seems to ma) rather remote.

I carried this with a quotation from shim Powles, and took
often summoned as a witness in the science fiction world. At
Least, not in public 1 m only one of many vetters powless who
has learned a lot from both, and draws much inguiration. Both are
filed, built have another, more widely read in the science fiction
world. As I get older, I find vetters like this speak more
unterances of calcience fiction writers seem increasingly esitserving, misquided or shatract. Only a week or two ago I was
exercedly explained by characterization was not and should not
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but here and nonemer for wear a nemed?

And I find the same sense of irrelevance in what little science fiction I read these days. It seems to me that most contemporary science fiction is an end product; it has become a derived, secondary form, drawing on itself and the most banal influences, rendering itself into the literary equivalent of biodegradable plastic bottles.

The best fiction - at least the Teas' in the sense witner use it, of providing the most receive input - is that which decen to theme. Which cause nothing the contractive input - is that which decen to the contractive input - is that which decen to the contractive input - is the contractive

My last three novels, and some of my stories, have dealt with various from of delusion, and are shout people who blind with various from of delusion, and are shout people who blind limparry and a grivate life, and were intended to be read as works of immylarary fiction. It would be specious to declare that they were disquired messages shout a form of wetting that once greatly were disquired messages shout a form of wetting that once greatly method to be should be should be should be should be should be method to be should be should be should be should be farther from my sind while wetting them. Afterwards, tough, the parallels have not been lost on me, especially when those helpful loss, who are less tools for 'Meetic and Foundation have pointed the should be should should should should should should should should should shou

But in reality, however perceived, I still simply see myself in retreat, backing off, getting ready to rephrase the argument.

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THE GREAT YEAR DRAWS TO ITS CLOSE, BATALIN and Helliconia move away from Freyr towards apastron and a winter that will last five hundred of our years. A fractious humanity continues to squabble amongst itself despite the looming cold that threat civilisation's very existence. Sparked by seasonal changes, the plague known as the Fat Death is beginning to ravage humanity and the phagors are once again coming into their own. What great leader, what allembracing idea, can persuade the people to unite for their own sake against the winter

that is soon to swallow them? Such is what Helliconia Winter, the cluding volume in the 'Helliconia' trilogy, seems to promise, at least to judge from the overall thrust of the previous two volumes. Belliconia Spring shows us humanity emerging from a period of ice and ignorance and embarking on a climb back to the glories that winter had erased; Helliconia Summer showed us the moment of conceptual breakthrough as the people began to grasp the true history of their world and ponder how to control it; but Helliconia Winter doesn't quite ful fill the expected pattern of showing us how humanity at last comes to break the tyranny of the seasons. I'm uncertain why, but I halfsuspect that at some point during the writing of the trilogy some new idea, one that was perhaps not abroad in the culture at the time the original scenario was drafted, became incorporated into the overall scheme in such a fashion as to subtly alter the theme and direction of the final volume - and, comparing the list of acknowledgments at the end of Helliconia Winter with that at the end of Helliconia Spring, it seems clear that the idea in question might be James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis (first popularised in Gaia: A New Look at Life On Earth, Oxford

University Press, 1979).

Briefly, this hypothesis contends that the Earth itself is an organism of sorts. with the human species an integral part of the biosphere and as necessary functioning as all the other flora and fauna. Thus humanity can no more dominate the Earth than can the rhododendrons, for that would entail ceasing to function as part of the biosphere, separating ourselves from it altogether.

It should be obvious, therefore, that to apply the Gaia hypothesis to Helliconia is to greatly reduce the importance of the people's struggle against the winter, to render largely irrelevant the question of this is the basis of the plot, almost to undermine it.

A little harsh, perhaps, particularly as the focus this time is on one character rather than several, with the result that such larger questions are addressed indirectly when they're addressed at all. Luterin Shokerandit participates in the last pitched battle to be fought in this Great Year. Charged with carrying news of the victory and of the spreading Fat Death, he is waylaid by another Sibornalese officer, Harbin Pashnalgid, who informs him that the entire army is to be massacred to prevent it bringing the Pat Death into Sibornal with it. The bulk of the rest of the novel is taken up with Shokerandit's journey back to the family home near Kharnabhar, a travelogue of great colour and action: interspersed with updates of vents on Avernus, the Earth Observation Station that orbits Helliconia, and of Earth itself.

Quite a lot about Earth itself, fact, amounting to little short of a history of Earth since the commencement of interstellar flight but, in contrast to the richly imagined narrative that unfolds against the lavishly described background



Reviews edited by Paul Kincaid

HELLICONIA WOOSTER

of the thoroughly believable Helliconia, these interludes are mere sketches; short to the point, certainly, but thus rather dry and uninvolving. Racing through the centuries, it climaxes with philosophical discussion between three of our descendants in which the possessive, domineering ways of present-day mankind are compared with the possessive, domineering ways of the Helliconians. the implication being, presumably, that they are not a mature culture in the same way that we are

Brian Aldiss

not a mature culture. One can always be certain with Aldiss that he won't take the easy way out, that he'll came up with samething that requires his readers. And simply fulfilling the expectations that the first two volumes had created would have been altogether too easy. But I stand by my earlier claim that the Gaia hypothesis acts almost to render the Helliconians' struggle completely meaningless by suggesting that there is little point to individual human effort; and comes close to canceling out the wonderfully life-affirming message of Helliconia Spring that individuals do matter, regardless of what the universe may get up to

Is Helliconia Winter therefore a disappointing conclusion to the 'Helliconia' trilogy? Conscious that I'm imposing my own perceptions upon what Aldiss is doing, and that in any case it's illegitimate to criticise a novel for not being something it didn't set out to be, this is a question that I'd rather defer answering. I will say, though, that if 'Helliconia' had been invented by anyone else, the present novel would probably be entitled Helliconia Autumn, and in the 'real' Helliconia Winter we'd be told uneasy. It should be explained that Gene is

precisely how civilisation had managed to either survive or perish. By stopping at this point Aldiss ensures that Helliconia is not reduced to the status of a mere fictional backdrop for a series of colourful adventures, Rather, it remains larger than the novels written about it: every page of description we read another ten or twenty or more remain unwritten, perhaps unknown, which means

that if we want to know any more about it then we'll have to imagine it ourselves. And while imagining it ponder again on the message Helliconia's Great Year holds for our own civilisation.

THE MAN IN THE TREE - Demon Knight [Gollancz, 1985, 246pp, £8.95] Reviewed by Chris Bailey

SO, DAMON KNIGHT, A BIG NAME SURELY. although the credentials are rather This elusiveness is partly our fault for putting the weight of approbation behind the novel and in this class Whight has produced but infrequently and indifferently. I recall cautiously friendly reviews of the novel before the present one, The World and Thorinn (which I believe must be a fix-up of earlier short material) and I have more recent recollections of the novel after this one, just serialized in F & SF -titled CV, it is a rotten potboiler. Yet otherwise, Rhight's references are impeccable. He is an excellent short story writer, a renowned editor and anthologist and a significant critic. Milford and Clarion further endorse the writerly authority

And so I would like to be able to tell you that this time Knight has written the novel that will seal his reputation, but I cannot do that. Nevertheless, there is plenty to admire and enjoy in The Man in the Tree.

Gene Anderson, a nine-year-old boy living in a small Oregon town during the 1950s, quarrels with another boy, bullying Paul Cooley, and accidentally kills him. No guilt and no innocence attach to Gene, because he is in command of forces he is as yet incapable of understanding, and it is uncertain as to whether or not these contributed to Paul's death. All Gene knows is that he can reach into parallel worlds to extract objects that duplicate those around him - handy when he needs a dime - but this incident is the first indication that he may possess other himself in the hills and woods, building a tree-house to live in-

The freak in the woods...this is More Than Human territory, yet I intend no charge of derivativeness, because these opening episodes of The Man in the Tree are quite individual and quite masterly; warm, sensitive and written in a simple and expressive prose that is rich with images small town life and the colour of the surrounding countryside, in all a glowing evocation of childhood and "the world of small things". Rewarding characters emerge too, notably the dead boy's father, Tom Cooley, and with Cooley's scheme to avenge his son, Knight lays the foundations for an intriguing study. Cooley is vicious, cunning and unprincipled, and yet, when all is said and done, he is motivated by love.

Cooley's first assassination attempt forces Gene to flee to San Prancisco and then New York, where he meets and studies with a bohemian crowd of artist. It seems proper that he should study art in his transition from backward boy to adult, learning the guileful skills of representation necessary for the city. However, his progress is halted by the death of his teacher and lover, the sculptor Avila, and he is on the road again, this time joining a travelling carnival show.

At this point I started feeling

well-developed for his age -indeed, by the did not put the book aside for a while time he reaches adulthood, he is over eight before returning to it in a different frame feet tall. Why does Knight find this of mind. Gene is now episodically seen discussion with the Lizard Man about the the worst when a scene in which he admires place of the freak in human society, but an artist's Crucifixion, "hanging under the the conclusions drawn are tangential to the weight of its pain. direction one shortly finds the book to rictus and the sweat of death on its skin' take. Enight has a messianic end in mind is followed immediately by a discussion of for Gene (Michael Valentine Smith's the world's problems, education also included a spell "on the overpopulation. carnie") and I considered it interesting that he should have to make Gene literally he is installed in a customized Florida loom large in the imagination before he mansion - he has graduated beyond the could tackle the character. Perhaps he duplication of mere greenbacks - surrounded

fiendishly ingenious but futile murder his harem. Aware now of the full extent of attempt by Cooley, Gene leaves the his powers, Gene emberks on a world-saving carnival, and at this point the narrative programme, and almost the only scene of fragments to such an extent that I will interest in this latter half of the book need some convincing if told that Knight comes when he debates with himself his

a physically outstanding figure.

Gene has an interesting wandering the world, and one begins to fear mouth open

We next meet Gene at any length once feels that the masses will only respond to by doting camp followers and holding forth to all and sundry, and irresistibly evok ng As the consequence of another the spirit of bloody old Jubal Harshaw and

firmer for this role: Which was worse. save humanity for the wrong reasons - or to let it perish through comerdice?". Suffice to say that Knight rides over Gene's reluctance, Choley reappears but summarily. which is symptomatic of the nature of this part of the book, for his previous pursuit of Gene gave the story a narrative drive and tension it now lacks. The final pages ermuchat redeem (as it were) what has gone immediately before, but the last impression is that The Man in the Tree says little that is not said by Stranger in a Strange

THE CODE THRMSELMES - I sear Asimov [Gollancz, 1985, 288pp, £8.95] REACH FOR TOMORROW - Arthur C. Clarke [Gollancz, 1985, 166pp, £8.95] Reviewed by Mark Greener

ASIMOV AND CLARKE HAVE COME TO REPRESENT SE in the mind of the general public. Howe their reputation rests on work produced in the "Golden Age" when critical standards were lower and it is improbable that they would gain such a reputation today

These books are both reprints: the Clarke reprinting short stories originally published in the pulps of the forties and fifties, the Asimov a reissue of a novel first published in 1972. What becomes obvious from a comparison of the two books is how little hard SF evolved in the intervening 30 years. It is possible to exonerate Clarke on the grounds that he was writing at a time when SF was the result of different sociological forces than those in operation in the early seventies. Asimov as no such excuse. 'Gods' was written after the advent of the new wave and Asimov should have appreciated the different critical standards that availed as a result.

The stories in Reach Day Tomorrow range from the readable (The Fires Within)to the abvamal (Jupiter Pive). What becomes quickly obvious is that Clarke is able to write better short stories than novels as he has a greater understanding of the limitations and conventions of short story writing: the perfect illustration of this being the transformation of The Sentinel into 2001, although few of the stories raise any questions about the human condition, they are on the whole readable and it is quite possible to while away a few enjoyable hours with this book. However, I feel the nine pound price tag is unjustified and the book would have been

better presented as a paperback.
On the other hand it would have been better if Asimov's The Gods Themselves had not been reissued at all. The story concerns the construction of an 'electron pump' which proves to be the panacea for Earth's energy crisis. The invention was prompted by messages sent by aliens from a parallel universe. Officially the pump is considered to produce a symbiosis between the two universes. However it is soon realised that the continued use of the pump will lead to the destruction of our solar

Asimov hints that social changes accompanied the implementation of the pump, but these are not examined in any depth. He mentions the cultural differences between the inhabitants of the Moon colony and those of Earth, However these differences are commetic and Asimov misses the potential allegory for our present society. The characterisation is weak, the characters being the archetypal stereotypes of hard SF and the aliens, around which the whole book revolves are neither convincing nor alien, their society being analogous to ours. Again the potential for allegory is

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missed. The prose is turgid and the plot has neither pacing nor significant development. The ending when it eventually arrives is a relief.

The most worrying aspect of the novel is the fact that the SF world vindicated the book's existence by awarding it the Hugo and Nebula, which implies to the outside world that this was the best SP novel of 1972. As such the continued existence of this book can only serve to harden the unjustified artistic prejulices which exist against SF and prevent it being taken seriously as an artform.

Neither the Asimov nor the Clarke are books which will further the cause of SF and when taken in a historical context show hard SF for what it is: the primitive scribblings of an art before it matured. Knight has been outlining those

conditions and qualities necessary in a saviour, should one walk the earth again. He goes some way towards achieving this especially in the earlier part of the book comparing Gene's attributes to those of an artist or a magician - yet it is also possible that the world itself is not amenable to such an exercise. Take the issue of overpopulation mentioned above Much recent analysis suggests that it is not so much this as the distribution of the earth's resources that is the difficulty, yet Knight is content to put the clock back twenty years and aver that overpopulation is prima facie the world's number one crisis. It seems that global problems must be simplified to an unacceptable extent to be accommodated within the simplistic solution of a messianic deliverance.

Read The Man in the Tree by all means, and enjoy the first 130 pages as much as 1 did. Be warned however that it is a measure of the expectations engendered by those pages that what follows may be considered a disappointment.

OCTAGON Fred Saberhagan [Penguin, 1985, 272pp, £2.50] STARMAN Alan Dean Poster (from a screenplay by Bruce A. Evans and Raynold Gideon) [Corgi, 1985, 1920p, £1.95]

SUNDIVER David Brin [Bantam, 1985, 340pp, £1.95] Reviewed by Tom. A. Jones

BACK IN THE 60S THE CRY WAS TO GET SF OUT of the ghetto. I don't think we quite desire. We wanted SF to become part of the 'mainstream' of literature, equating 'mainstream' with Sunday Times book reviews, Nobel prizes and university literature courses. Of course, there is no such thing; literature is a collection of genre - SF, fantasy, spy, thriller, detective, domestic, etc. These three books provide three different examples of SF which also fall within the scope of other

Fred Saberhagen is best known for his Berserker stories, and if you weren't aw of this one of the characters in Octagon tells you. Mr. Saberhagen also calls company pivotal to the plot Berserkers Inc. Whilst this isn't a Berserker story these are fairly heavy signals to the reader about the main theme of the plot.

This book is set in today's world. most of the hardware exists. Whilst I don't know of any sentient computers, the idea is no longer fantastic, it is a standard theme within high tech thrillers. The plot revolves around a postal adventure game, Starweb. Starweb is a real game, and this mixing of fact and fiction is another trait of the high tech thriller. The plot is very simple: Starweb players start to die and Alex Barlow is sucked in to try and find out why. Government computer networks, research establishments, 'robots', eccentric millionaires are all mixed in and are pretty typical ingredients of the high tech thriller.

The plot relies on a lot of coincidences; the biggest, revealed near the end of the book, is the cause of the whole situation, I won't reveal it, but a lot of you will guess. There are too many coincidences and some so outrageous that I could not believe in this book.

Characterisation is minimal. A pity, as Caroline the wheelchair-bound cripple could have been interesting; but the difficulties of the disabled are hardly touched on, her environment having been tailored to her needs. This is in line with both the high tech thriller and much of SF, unpleasant parts of reality which the hero can't easily deal with can provide background but mustn't intrude into the main thrust of the plot.
This book isn't SF anymore, it is a

high tech thriller but not a very good one. Whilst the plot hooks are there, it lacks the appropriate writing technique found in the best of this genre.

Let's move to Starman, the novel from one of this year's predicted blockbuster moves. Again a simple plot: Voyager II is picked up by highly advanced aliens who decode the record it contains including the invitation to "drop by". The aliens visit Earth and send down an explorer but his lander is detected and shot down by US jets. The alien survives and takes on the form of a human, the deceased husband of the heroine, Jenny Hayden. The alien forces Jenny to drive him across America to his pick-up point; they have adventures along the way and are pursued by the military. During the journey the relationship between the alien changes kidnapper/kidnappee to close friendship.

I was unhappy with the number of inconsistencies. Why do most of the aliens' super science powers require the use of a 'magic marble', good for one go only, but the ability to repair machines is achieved by the laying on of hands? Also, the alien appears to resurrect a deer without the use of a marble while mending Jenny's wounds requires not only a marble but considerable internal energy. The similarity between the alien's abilities and some of the New Testament miracles is a little heavy

The alien's horror at the fact that we kill and eat animals seems overdone for someone who is not only an experien explorer but has been studying Earth with remote probes. There are also references to our use of animals in experiments. Whatever your own views, I was left with the feeling that this 'message' was there for commercial reasons, perhaps I'm just too much of a cynic.

I'd also like to know what the alien had intended to do if he'd landed where he was supposed to land, and the nonexplanation for there being a limited number of special places where the ship could pick him up seems to cater to the semi-mystic community.

The style is straightforward, pacv. competent prose; reading some of the SF published, producing this is an accomplishment in itself. Presumably Mr. Poster's ability to write like this is one of the reasons he is chosen to do these film novelisations. If this sounds snide or critical it isn't meant to; the ability to write clean prose should be respected.

Anyone who has seen an SF film over the past few years or one of the TV offerings will be familiar with the trappings of this tale. The plot,

characters and effects are no longer special to the SF domain and the book/film aren't aimed at the SF reader. This SF for the non-SF fan is a relatively new genre and seems linked to the treatment of the various aspects which make up the story, as the basic 'alien amongst us' theme can still be treated as 'pure' SF.

Finally, Sundiver. First the plot. Mankind is in touch with a number of alien races. Each of these has been helped sentience by an already sentient race who in their turn were helped and so on back to the original race, the Progenitors. Thus there are Patron and Client races and this process is called Uplift. Mankind is the odd man out having no obvious Patron, and is thus thought strange and is only tolerated because he has uplifted chimpanzees and dolphins. The other races rely to a great extent on the Library, a repository of all galactic knowledge: strange mankind does research. You may recognise this process of uplift from Von Daniken's books, and within this novel those who believe man once had Patrons are

called Danikenites. With this background the hero Jacob enwa goes to help the Sundiver team on Mercury who have been investigating the sun and may have found 'creatures' Theen creatures may be sentient, perhaps they are mankind's original Patrons. Add to this a cast of aliens and humans, who may not be what they seem, put in some interesting background touches and we have a solid SF

book - yes? No.
This book is a murder mystery of what I'll call the country house type. The form is followed even to the point of all the suspects being gathered into one room for the denouement. In fact this happens twice. I'm not giving anything away as the first one happens about 100pages before the end and it's obvious that not all has been revealed.

As such it's not bad and in truth there are other books which fit into both genres but none spring to mind which stick so closely to the mystery format.

Unfortunately there are two stylistic traits which I hated. One was a tendency for a character to begin an explanation but not finish it. Sometimes the character just rambles on, often for several pages, and we're supposed to figure it out; okay providing you could still remember the point of the explanation. Sometimes someone or something interrupts and there's a switch to a new topic, no matter how important the original had been. Sometimes something dramatic happens, often signalled by the chapter ending abruptly. I found this increasingly annoying as the book went on

Even worse is the author's occasional descent to hideous prose: "One of the things he could remember best about his adolescence was the asolopsistic roar of starry nights". What? Anyone know what "asolopsistic" is, my Oxford doesn't and like to know what I missed in my

adolescence. Three examples of cross genre novels, none completely successful and none enhancing the SF genre, although Sundiver could have been interesting if it hadn't been marred by its stylistic faults.

THE SCIENCE FICTION OF MARK TWAIN edited by David Ketterer

[Clio Press, 55 St Thomas St, Oxford, 1985, 412pp, £30.16] Reviewed by Keith Freeman

AN IMPRESSIVELY SIZED BOOK, 9in BY 6in, with its 1 inch thickness made up of "Introduction & Notes" (33 pages), "Explanography sandwiching nearly 340 pages of stories, I've not weighed it (how many readers had begun to think I would?) but I certainly do not recommend that this book should be read in bed-

The editor's avowed intention is to show that Mark Twain should be considered of Wells as the major turning 'instead point in the tradition leading to modern SF' (page xiii). Thus I see this book as having two purposes - firstly to entertain the reader with the amility of the examples of Mark Twain's work and, secondly, to show, with these same examples, the proof of this statement.

Whilst reading this Introduction I became irritated by the fact that the 'footnotes' weren't footnotes but notes and appeared, all 50 of them, after the Introduction. To let the eye skip down from the middle of a paragraph to look at a footnote disturbs the concentration: having to turn several pages ruins it. Allowing for this the Introduction gave me food for thought: it even skates over the definition of SP and gives a very sketchy literary biography of Mark Tein- Mark Tein's plots are mentioned and compared with those of several well-known modern SF authors (Vonnegut, Dick, Heinlein and Aldiss amongst them).

So we come to the 'meat', and start with Petrified Man. The one possible reason for not putting footnotes becomes apparent -they are now in the 'Explanatory Notes' that appear after page 339, and this halfpage story generates a full page of them! I not intend to comment on each story, which varies from the first, half page one, to ones of 90 odd pages and includes part of A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. It is nerhans significant that several stories have only been published posthumously and moreover published in 'academic' (as opposed to 'popular') books. There are also what the editor calls "fragments from Mark Twain's notebooks" - ideas for stories and small portions of stories. Any professional writer, if not all writers, would tend to have ideas and parts of stories, plots or 'scenes' scribbled down - and I'd suspect the majority of these scraps would stay as just that. I don't think the reputation of Mark Twain has been enhanced in any way by the revelations not only in this book but also the others where these fragments have been disinterred.

Mark Twain is basically a humourist and is renowned as such although I'd was more people know of him today than actually read his books and stories. With any collection of stories by one author there is a danger that what, in one story, can be considered funny, or artful or whatever begins, by the second or third, to irritate and annoy. The first time you come across a mixed-up slice of history ("He was with Columbus in the Mayflower and assisted him in discovering America and Livingstone" page 177) it can amuse. When the same device is used in the next story it isn't so funny - though if the reading of the stories were separated by sufficient time I can well imagine greeting such a passage affectionately as one would an old friend. The same applies to an author's individual style of writing; and here, unmistakably, there is what can only be called, today, an old-fashioned very verbose style.

Does the book entertain? There are several good stories but, overall, I don't think so. Does the book succeed in putting Mark Twain amongst the pantheon of 'Early SF Influences'? - again I don't think so-Basically Mark Twain used SF transings but lacked the logical consistency and vision 197. (It is a scientific hypothesis which, stuff. Fits you for understanding the

of an SF author. His primary aim is either | despite Copernicus, is still widely to be humorous or to make sociological comment - and any logic is immediately sacrificed in order to pander to these two aims. This is, perhaps, surprising when it

is remembered that Samuel Clements was, besides being Mark Twain, an inventor and indeed, held several patents. Where David Ketterer outlines a plot the SF aspect is clear. but reading the story that particular aspect is usually hidden under a welter of ideas, subplots and detail that nullify the whole thing. 3,000 Years Amongst the Microbes (for example) is compared to Pantastic Voyage (film, then Asimov's adaptation). On reading the story the 'invasion of a human body by a human turned-into-a-microbe' does not try to convey the wonders of the human body but quickly introduces lots of different microbes (all appearing human) and their cats and dogs(1). The human body is, thereafter, used as a background 'funny map' with microbes coming from 'the Republic of Getrichquick' and areas identified as 'Shoulder Range', 'Great Lone Sea' and such like

COLSEC RESELLION - Dounlas Hill [Gollancz, 1985, 121pp, £5.50] Reviewed by Helen McNabb

THIS IS A JUVENILE BOOK, AIMED AT CHILDREN aged about 8 to 13 I should guess and as such I think it works fairly well. I tried to remember the kind of SF I was reading at that age and this compares reasonably with Andre Norton, James Blish and Heinlein's juveniles. It is volume 3 of a trilogy so the main characters are already familiar to many of the readers although it stands interentantly enough as a story. Its strong points are an active space opera plot with the five teenage protagonists playing a suitably important but not wildly improbable part in saving the world. The children are all from different gangs which have taken over parts of a hard-pressed Earth, so they represent a gang/youth culture which is anti-Establishment which is a bit different and very non-Enid Blyton, although as the Establishment is completely corrupt and self-seeking it shouldn't worry any anxious parents or teachers unduly. Its failures are the characters which are made from fairly thin cardboard and the writing is no more than adequate although it doesn't particularly. All in all it's a readable adventure, it avoids condescension and most platitudes although it doesn't have any extra sparkle either unfortunately.

COMET HALLEY - Fred Hoyle [Michael Joseph, 1985, 410pp, £9.95] Reviewed by Edward James

penggoone ove porh univide usic one a linear time been fascinated by the possibility of intelligent life in space: actually in space, that is, not on planets, Ris first novel The Black Cloud (1957) and his latest, published on his 70th birthday, are both about the problems and consequences of contacting such life-forms. Indeed, in some ways things have changed very little. A British scientific team establishes radio contact with an alien, inorganic. intelligence in space; that alien can political and environmental crisis on Earth: the novels end on a tone of (unspecified) optimism. The protagonist is still a scientist in Cambridge - a town which is, if anything, even more the centre of Hoyle's universe now than it was in believed by Cambridge academics.) There is in this novel more attention

to the politics than the science: plausibility is not something that Hoyle seems particularly worried about. He is driven by astronomical necessity to place Comet Balley in 1986, but held back by caution (or libel laws) from making this 1986 much like the one that will be there by the time this is a paperback. He peoples 1986 with men and women we don't know although we certainly recognise some of the stereotypes or (in the case of the Americans and Russians) caricatures. British politics are presented in a totally grey and neutral manner, summed up in th figure of the Prime Minister, whose ideology is unclear (perhaps it's an Alliance premier?), and whose sex (as far as I can see) is cunningly concealed by never referring to him/her/it by name or by

But this ambiguity is perhaps partly to do with the strangely non-visual view of the world which Hoyle has. A few of the characters are described, but only perfunctorily; some have verbal tics to distinguish them, but none have physical ones. Apart from a few glimpses of a lively Cambridge, the landscape is just as unreal There is very little sense of place at all: sadly for me, since Comet Halley shares the dubious and unimportant distinction with Penelope Lively's The House at Norham Gardens of having a protagonist who lives in a street in which I've lived myself -

Adams Road, Cambridge. For all that, it is in many ways a much more successful book than The Black Cloud. Hoyle's writing is much less wooden; his characters are less inclined to mathematical calculations in footnotes, as in 1957. The action moves along at a cracking pace, and there is plenty of it. And to complain about the lack of realism is probably to miss the point. Despite all the science, this is a fantasy, in the same sense that the James Bond books were fantasies. Or a better comparison might be with the Michael Innes detective fantasies. Not just because of the high-table wit or the Oxbridge background (and Hoyle's scene of a murdered academic found in a moonlit Trinity College Chapel, his finger still depressing an organ key, could come straight out of Innes), but because of the way in which Hoyle uses the novel as a vehicle for wry comment upon his own world.

In some ways he views it with more tired amusement than in 1957. His spies or politicians with a classical or literary education are tolerated, and the irony of it is relished. One undercover agent ountes an Horatian ode, translates it for the Da and comments 'That's real Foreign Office

weitf (p.133), the Yeassey maders in Heary Julian sake only one pertinent comment about the scientific sepects of the Comet Halley crists, and that is consent the control of the Comet Halley crists, and that where, p.355, he mispatces his Greek, but presentably that is fir Freef said, but for his farry, a Freef only a scientiat, poor his farry, a Freed only a certainty and the country, as in deepar shout the current state of science and society in this country, as compared to the country of the country of

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WAIL - Trevor Hoyle [John Calder, 1985, 188pp, £4.95] Reviewed by Martyn Taylor

'VAIL HAD BEEN IN LONDON LESS THAN A fortnight and had been accosted four times by the police. Each time be had given them a different name, address and occupation. Either they were incompetent or the national computer wasn't functioning properly, or his lock was just too good to good to

be true. Picture, if you will, a Britain not so very different to today. London and the gilded South East prosper under the benevolent gaze of a strong lady Prime Minister. Thurists unload their millions on an increasingly tatty but VAT-free Oxford Street. The media circus says that it's all for the hest in the best of all possible worlds, except when it isn't and then it is their fault. Sports stars and showbir personalities cruise the motorways in chauffeur-driven limousines. As for the rest of us, we live on the other side of the wire, North of Watford Cap, kept away from Merrie Olde Englande by check points and enthusiastic thugs in uniform. We have been infected deliberately with AIDS to solve the queer problem (wonder what they'll do with all those echoing, empty public schools?...) And it is (unannounced) policy to encourage social Darwinism by dumping toxic and nuclear waste secretly on

our back docreage.

Dev Iyled to on any in my frequising the property of the law of the control of the law of

whole book. Them we mee the Prime Minister well linto a typically blood-corelling speech when also says 'Unisters who watch and reved them also says 'Unisters who watch and reved the making'. Think about that Mrs. That there, before she went into government, was, along with eleven members of the first income test footging is not a crime, it is a principle of the North Republic to the control of the principle of

I do not doubt Mr. Hoyle thinks he has written a fine, furny, crusading book, and in places it does show the unregarded ugly side of contemporary Britain. Vail, his wife murdered by a terrorist he gave a lift to on the Ml, his only child dying in his arms as a result of all that toxic waste, is treated to a technicolour living Daily Mail sermon from the good customers of St Neots' Waitrose in a passage which is wickedly accurate, when all he wants to do is steal some food for his dying daughter. But this illuminated incident is all too rare in a tale which prefers to go for the easy target - mercenary media folk who fuck (up) anything that moves, and can't move venal politicians: without cocainer policemen who would be frightening if they weren't such bunglers: terrorists who are no different to the police. We know all this we've heard it all before and sung to a better tune. There is a soft centre at the heart of this hard-bitten tale which is in no way hidden by Hoyle's making Vail into an amoral Candide, quite happy to take the smooth with the rough.

The writing, too, is never, as the the weak them to be the them to

are very soft. It is something of a commentary that this book - no better written than the average SF book, and certainly far less well-constructed than the works of, say, Garry Kilworth or Rob Holdstock - receives Arts Council support whereas many works with a genuinely imaginative approach to the world struggle to be published. It seems as though, much as it was sufficient to get a job in early Hollywood to be Bungarian, it is sufficient to be published by the 'serious' imprints (who wouldn't touch SP with yours, ducky) to express the appropriate political sentiments with no expletives deleted. For myself I agree with Sam Goldwyn, it isn't enough to be Hungarian, one must also be talented. This unpleasant, uneven book falls a long way short of most of its readily attainable targets and I cannot recommend it.

BAUNTED TRAVELLERS - Edited by Denys Val Baker (190 pp) GROSTS FROM THE MIST OF TIME - Ronald Chetwynd-Hayes (20 pp) TIME IN FOR FEAR - Edited by Reter Haining (1920an)

(190ps) DUSK COMES CREEPING - Lanyon Jones (190ps)

THE 41 MORROR STORIES IN THESE FOUR COLLECTIONS above how well the form suits the subject. In 20 pages or so there is just room to present characters within a situation, create a shiver of unesse, and tests in the tail. There are the occasional attempts at fine writing - and even the odd sorching to the story, and may even detract you can be supported by the story, and may even detract fourmers probable work best are plain.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about these stories, however, is their settings. Remote, bleak locations: settings. Remote, bleak locations windswert Ourswell, the wilds of norther moorland. The crumbling country mansions or gaunt castles far from human ken are not simply traditional, creepy settings, but a conscious or subconscious removal of the story from modern life. All but a very few have a contemporary setting, yet barely any of them occupy a recognisable urban milieu, and those which do are the least successful. More than ghosts linger from ages past, even in the most modern of these tales, Lanyon Jones, for instance, one of the youngest of the writers, seems more at ease in a Trollopean world of cathedrals and county towns bypassed by the 20th century, or in the enclosed, backwardlooking atmosphere of a public school. His second collection of stories, When Dusk Comes Creeping, contains some effectively chilling tales; though his attempt to find a dark significance beneath nursery rhymes and popular songs hardly matches Angela Carter's supreme achievement in this same area with The Bloody Chamber (1979).

Jones's 'The Coastquard', however, is easily the most authentically creepy of the stories in the best of these collections. Haunted Travellers. It must be said. though, that among these accounts of journeys and ghosts there are several with predictable punchlines, or no punchline at all. And I do wonder how Edgar Allen Poe's Descent into the Maelstrom' and R. Chetword-Haves' unusual vampire tale, 'The Labyrinth', qualify for a collection of ghost stories. Chetwynd-Haves' own collection, Ghosts from the Mist of Time, does include some very good ghost stories, especially 'Time Check'. In others such as 'Cold Fingers' and 'The Echo', though, he indulges a preference for the baroque and the grotesque that doesn't always work.

In Tune in for Pear, Peter Baining has collected stories from the golden age of radio, when a scary tale was a regular part The most of the family's entertainment. recent dates from 1951. Several have been extensively anthologised before; the savagely edited version of The War of The Worlds does no favours to Wells, or to the famous Orson Welles broadcast it is meant to represent; and few make anything like the impact they are supposed to Popular tastes change, in being scared as in other things; but it must be said that these stories don't have the chill created by their more recent fellows in the other three collections.

THE SMALE MOON - Nancy Springer [Corgi, 1985, 263pp, £1.95] Reviewed by Barbara Davies

ILL COME CLEAN - THIS IS THE THIRD BOOK IN The Book of Isle trilogy - and I haven't read the first two (The Maite Bart and The Silver Sum). I'm also certain that someone with a sound howledge of mythology sould have read it on a deeper level than I was able to. However, if you want a layman's opinion, read on-This is a 'Quest' story - with a map,

glossaries and a family tree. I would not go as far as Marion Zimmer Bradley who says Thomas Covenant' or as far as Lynn Abbey who savs 'a shimmering tapestry of magic and song', but I will say that The Sable Moon is like the 'curate's egg' - good in parts. In short - it is an average fantasy. In essence, it is the story of Prince Trevyn of Isle - from the day he leaves home in a fit of adolescent pique to the day he becomes King of Isle. Trevyn's Treym's homeland is being attacked by hordes of wolves possessed by the followers of Whel chief priest of the cult of the wolf. Trevyn first encounters them while saving the enterestic maiden Men and her one Molly from a mire. He is unable to vanguish the wolves except temporarily and with Meg's help. After forming an attachment with Meg, Trevyn leaves and sails to the home of Wael, Tokar, Here he is shipwrecked and made a slave. While pretending to be mute, Trevyn is bought by the magician Emrist and they become allies in the fight against the wolf cult. A conflict with Wel results in temporary victory but Trevyn has to travel the magic island of Elwestrand in order to grow in wisdom and strength. Returning to Isle he finally defeats Wael and his followers. As for Meg - Reader, she marries

him. Throughout the book there are references to characters and adventures presumably met in the previous two books. The Sable Moon can be read on its own but is really an integral part of the trilogy.

The characters, quite often bearing mythological names, are fairly well-drawn especially that of Gwern (the dark side or 'Word' of Trevon) - with a few exceptions. Some are sketchy having been introduced in previous books. The references throughout to fabled animals, like unicorns, plants, like asphodels, are rather disconcerting. My impression is that the author has crammed in every possible piece of folklore known to her whether it belongs to Greek or Celtic tradition - strange bedfellows In fact The Sable Moon does what most average fantasy does - steals blind from existing traditions and environments thus obviating the need for creation of a new and strange world or civilization.

To sum up - in the current field of fantasy fiction if you want an undemanding read this book may interest you. But read the other two books first.

GREENSIGHT - Angela Shackleton-Hill [George Allen & Unwin, 1984, 371pp, #8.95] Reviewed by David V. Barrett

From the eafaon-arol of Huyilf astayl, as translated by Heorad Tarithyr: first of elth in Omael and first reth..."Eaf Life, it is All. All that ever existed. that will exist and may exist, is eaf. And eaf is creativity, unto creation's effect. Thus, it is perhaps strange to speak of teinith-eaf of the First Life and yefith-eaf the Second, as though there are two eternals, but that is how my father named them in the Lifedoomsong and he was the astayl - the earthwise..." (p.xi)

SO I JOURNEYED FORTH, MY QUEST TO SEEK understanding, my heart burdened by unpronounceable names and unintelligible paragraphs, my companions Arich Astienyr, a poet and salvor, or healer-through-the-mind; a dying herd of waifs, strangely-powered antlered horses; a number of somewhat revolting, hairless, eyeless, wolf-like creatures; and several! comparatively unimportant people.

Twenty thousand years in our future, in a cold porthern land with no stare in the sky - the significance of which escaped me completely - Arich attempts to reinterpret the ancient mythologies, and becomes entangled with his own Bonding with the last waif, and his own struggles, ofttimes almost to the point of Death, with Evil. That, as I understood it, was the plot.

My nilarimage was long and hard: 1 could travel no more than thirty leagues sorry, pages - a day, trudging through unending mires of impenetrable prose, climbing mountains of agonising reflection, until I arrived at the last at my journey's end, and was in no way wiser than at its beginning.

The language is often poetic, and sometimes brave and inventive. I applaud he tramped on through the gridelin dusk (=grey-purple), but could make nothing of and stood before the syenite sky' (=rc like). But mostly it is heavy and slow, and repetitious: every other paragraph, and then every other sentence, could safely have been deleted. And of what use is the eleven-page glossary, where a typical entry reads 'esse: the eafher warded in Ivhain by thiaylim of Errith Earithyr's line'? tend to link books with music. While

reading one section, I was listening to a particularly demonic fifteen minute live version of Curved Air's 'Ultra-Vivaldi'. followed by the Blue Oyster Cult's 'Don't Pear the Reaper': a tortuous reach towards unecaleable peaks; a heavy, dark, doom-Laden deathwish. The match was exact. There is a beauty in this book, but it is the beauty of flowers lying on an open coffin-The constant drifting between present reality and tortured vision has the nightmare confusion of the Illuminatus books, miscegenated with the deep mystery of the Eddas, and written by an immature Dylan Thomas during a bad acid trip.

Arich nicked out the sheets on which he had written...It disturbed him most of all that they were fragments laid down in metre - lines composed at times when he had felt a poetry come on him: a strong but jumbled impression of bloodscent and hawks, of stars burning like eyes in their brains. (p.177).

This is an admirable description of the literary style throughout Greensight. But amongst all the words, I found no meaning, Having had to wade through it. I would genuinely like to know what it was all about: I doubt that anyone but the author - and perhaps not even she - could enlighten me.

THE SONG OF MIDDLE EARTH - David Harve [George Allen & Unwin, 1985, 143pp,£10.95] Reviewed by Chris & Pauline Morgan

THE WORKS OF THAT POPULAR CULT FIGURE J.R.R. Tolkien have been considered as an exercise in linquistics (by Tom Shippey in The Road to Middle-Earth) or in Jungian psychology (by T.R. O'Neill in The Individuated Hobbit). David Harvey can only explain them as a mythology. Tolkien, it seems, was worried that while Wales, Ireland and most other European countries had a series of creation myths, England had none. Therefore he set out to create one. Unfortunately, mythologies do not come ready-formed; they develop as tales are passed on by oral tradition. They do not so on oy oral tradition. They do not assertly start at the beginning during and weaknesses, beliefs, ideals, thoughts evolution. Neither did Tolkien.

[many of them]. By the end of the book I feel I know him, fascinatingly strange necessarily start at the beginning during their evolution. Neither did Tolkien.

without mythological intent, written for children. Even its sequel, The Lord of the Rings, did not develop in the way that he originally intended. Tolkien WAS A painstaking writer, and a perfectionist, as the scram of earlier versions published in Unfinished Tales and the Lost Tales show. It is doubtful if his original intention to develop a mythology but, as a professor of early English literature, he would no doubt have begun by drawing on material he was familiar with - Beowulf and the Bidas. Later he obviously did intend to create a mythos, and The Silmarillion was the result

David Harvey seems to regard the whole of Tolkien's writings as fitting the pattern laid out by the mythologies of other western cultures (it is noticeable that he draws no comparison with Asian or African mythos). Indeed, Harvey has a good case. There are the Tragic Heroes (as Harvey capitalises them) Turin Turambar and Frodo Raggins: compare them with Hamlet. Oedipus and Gawain. Tolkien also has his Quest Heroes, Beren, Aragorn and Earendil, to be considered alongside Galahad. And in the beginning there is the creation, the way things came to be, how the sun and the moon took their appointed places and how evil entered the world and paradise was forbidden to sinful man. These are common themes present in Tolkien and in virtually all cultures of the world.

Perhans this is where so many fantasy

writers before and since Tolkien have gone wrong. Perhaps to catch the imagination in way that Tolkien did it may be necessary to include these themes, whether consciously or unconsciously, in any epic

When considering these factors perhaps their importance should be questioned. Clearly, to David Harvey they are very important and, to be fair, he has made his piece of academia very readable. Undoubtedly there will be scholars of English literature who will find his ideas interesting or that kind of enthusiast who must see motives behind every word, and allegories on every page. But for those of us who just wish to read Tolkien for enjoyment this little volume is best left on the shelf.

GILGWESH THE KING - Robert Silverberg [Gollancz, 1985, 320pp, £9.95] Reviewed by Sue Thomason

ALTHOUGH WRITTEN BY A FAMOUS SF-AUTHOR, AND issued by a Famous SF-Publisher, this book is not SF, nor is it intended to be read as fantasy, but as historical reconstruction an account of the 'historical Gilgamesh which is factually correct as far as possible, and filled out with imagination where the records are missing. As Silverberg has a serious interest in history and archaeology, I am sure that he has taken pains to get his portrait of Sumerian life right, All the verifiable details of dress, architecture, burial customs: I am sure they can all be substantiated from archaeological excavation and contemporary records.

So why does the book leave me so cold? I can't help comparing a work of this nature with the first, and so far the best, example of its kind I've read: Mary Renault's The King Must Die about the 'historical' Theseus. And the thing I first notice is the difference in character between Theseus and Gilgamesh. Theseus is a representative of a complex and utterly alien cultural mind-not. He has strengths though he is, rather well. Gilgamesh, on the other hand, is definitely not the sort of person I want to get to know better. He's of heroic physique, and takes no time at all in letting us know this. He's the best fighter, he screws the most women, works the hardest, doesn't understand Women or Intrigue; he's a brainless bully who's



SHAREST ZENEBBERC

convinced of his own superiority, a standard-issue All-American Barbarian (they probably already have Arnie S. lined up for the film...). Though he tries quite hard to work up a Death Complex, he's your archetypal uncomplicated extrovert, ready to solve his country's problems before lunch, followed by a couple of hours of good clean chariot-fighting and a woman or five to relax with in the evenings.

Yech. Yech. Yech. Though I suppose there are still boys who like this kind of thing: a sanitised, denythologised, plastic -set of a culture, complete with Berk/Hero, one: Bitch-Goddess, one: Supporting Good Guy Who Snuffs It, one: Supporting Good Girl Who Snuffs It, one... It's enough to make one give up historical novels, almost. What can I say that's nice about this book?

The cover art is excellent.

THE WARRIOR WHO CARRIED LIFE - Geoff Ryman [George Allen and thein, 1985, 173pp, 48.95 (hardback) 42,95 (paperback)] Reviewed by Mike Dickinson

It's a curious fact that, whereas fantasy remains generally the field of mediocrity, it has featured some work superior in ambition and execution to almost anything produced in either genres or mainstream Even on shelves currently littered with asinine Anthonys, dreary Donaldsons and morbid Moorcocks it is possible to find writers who can entertain and excite both in what they say, and the way they say it.

Now, declaring himself a writer to be taken as seriously as the best, comes Geoff Ryman. Those already familiar with the Interzone story 'The Unconquered Country' will not be surprised. That story convinced in its depiction of the personal and cultural trauma caused by Western blundering. It used fantasy purposefully to empathise with a culture that is as alien to us as any of those Hal Clement things,

and to express its sickened outrage. It seemed to many then that here was a powerful and individual voice whose time had come to be bard.

This first novel confirms that The vast majority of the book concerns

a year in the life of a young woman, Cara. While still a child she has seen her mother destroyed: a seer who broke taboos and told men things they did not want to hear. Later her noble family was shattered and she herself mutilated for resisting the will of a powerful new ruling house. On attaining adulthood, Cara is inducted into Kasova magic, a decadent remnant of the potent earlier Wensenara group of sorcereases. Having learnt the spells for starting fires and sitting on air, she is taught the one which will allow her to change form for a year, to mature her magic. The usual choice is something savage like a wolf; she chooses a form even more dangerous, that of a mature armed warrior, and thus begins a year dedicated to revenge.

All of this has occupied only the

first sixteen pages of the book. Yet in that time we have already had her mother eaten by dogs; a horrifically detailed description of the storming by the inhuman, in all senses, Galu of her native village; and, perhaps more important, the with the remnants of her family and the remnant of herself. It is this fusion of terrific plotting, incident crowding remorselessly upon incident, with psychological values that demonstrates the hand of a master writer. No extraneous information is provided, so the reader is ashed on by action until the moment such information has maximum impact. And characterisation is done deftly in little jigsaw pieces: "Sister", she called Latch and tried to smile, the aperture of her mouth widening only slightly over skulllike teeth. Even Latch shuldered and looked away. Cara's face had become a weapon.'(p.13) Thus Cara deals with a former bondswoman of her family, now con-

tent to exploit their fall.
The background of the novel is anomalous: a ziggurat seal suggests the Rittite civilisation: whereas the presence of books in many languages, old enough to be considered passe, indicates millennia later. It does emerge though that there is a clear causal connection with the Epic of Gilgamesh, the first known heroic poem, surviving partially from the third millennium BC. There are several clear reasons for avoiding the label 'based on'. Principally, despite several exceptions such as the adult work of Henry Treece, Robert Bye's Merlin, The Bloody Chamber by Angela Carter, and Robert Holdstock's excellent Mythago Wood, most of those reworkings of ancient myth are parasitical, detracting from, rather than enhancing, the magic of the original story. Secondly, this link is rather more tenuous, being closer to 'inspired by' rather than any direct modelling. Oertainly there are some similar features: for example, both Cara and Gilgamesh traverse great mountains; both visit the Underworld: both have to contend with god-like figures, and most explicitly, h go in search of the key to ortality. However, in some measure The both go in search of the Warrior Who Carried Life is an antithesis to the Ppic of Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh is a despoiler of virgins and a lover of battle; in short, the sort of arrogant brutish male sometimes called Conan or Thongor, or a host of other such names in relatively contemporary work. His companion is Enkidu, another similar Husky. contrast, Ryman's hero/heroine accompanied by a slight girl, Stefile. She ironically saves Cara's life on at least occasion, as she/he turns out, at least at first, to be no invincible warrior. In fact, one of the subtexts is an exploration of male/female roles within imaginative fiction. One of the few humourous sections is Cara's surprise at the male body and fascination at managing its external genitalia.



However, imagination is the keynote of the book as Ryman hits the reader with continuing wonders, including the visit to the Land of the Dead, where Cara encounters the archetypal Adam and Eve (forget the sanitised Old Testament version, this feels much more like the real things); the mountain retreat of the original, stillpowerful Wensenara, and a journey with Asu Numetar, the hume 'Beast Who talks to God'. Then there are other marvels, such as the strange nature of the Galu and the wonderful specialisations of the warrior clans, especially the deadliest of them all, the 'Men who look like Angels', whom Cara joins. Finally, there is a climax of truly stunning proportions. To state it this is really creative mythologising.

The original inspiration of this novel is more evident in mood and style. Both works are dominated by death. The earlier work changes with the hero's intimidation by his own mortality, having seen Enkidu die; the latter, reflecting less selfcentred ends, deals with the potential slaughter of the whole population of Earth and the actual death of a fair proportion. Nevertheless, it is in style that Ryman is most spiritually in tune with the original incident dominated with a sustained narrative drive, featuring a dispassionate chronicling of horrific details (some of these are more truly horrible than any found in the horror genre) - a thoroughly macabre streak. For those who know only

Unconquered Country', this change of style must come as a great surprise, contrasting with the hypersensitive cerebral personal and dreamlike quality of that shorter work. At a time when too many writers of any type seem insensitive to mood and only capab of one stock style, the flexibility of Ryman shows a genuine blend of craftsman and artist - adventure on a magnificently heroic scale, accomplished with economy,

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