AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1987

VECTOR

139

The critical journal of the British Science Fiction Association

95p

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VECTOR
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Thanks to Mary Gentle for her cover design from my selection of goddesses and heroines -- DVB

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

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THE BSFA: The British Science Fiction Association is an amateur organisation, formed in 1958, which aims to promote and encourage the reading, writing and publishing of science fiction in all its forms. We publish bimonthly: *Vector*, a critical journal, *Matrix*, a news magazine, and *Paperback Inferno*, a review magazine of the latest paperbacks; and triannually, *Focus*, a forum for writers. Other BSFA services include *Orbiter*, a postal SF writers' workshop; an *SF Information Service*; a postal *Magazine Chain*; and an *SF Lending Library*.

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ADVERTISING: All advertising copy must be submitted as black and white camera-ready artwork with all necessary halftones. All enquiries on rates, ad sizes and special requirements to the Publicity Manager: Dave Wood, 1 Friary Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon, Avon BS21 7QA.

— THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION LTD —

EDITORIAL

DAVID V BARRETT

FEMINISM & SF

I'VE BEEN PROMISING THIS ISSUE, DEVOTED TO FEMINISM and SF, for over a year; I think the quality of the contents justifies the wait. Astute readers may notice that two of the contributors are male; so am I. Does this disqualify us from writing on feminism? Joanna Russ perhaps thinks so:

> I had to be beaten out of my liberalism as far as black people are concerned -- I no longer believe that I am entitled to get angry if one of them accuses me of racism (she is undoubtedly correct)... I do my level best to keep my mouth shut and my ears open. When it comes to racism I am no authority...
>
> In the realm of sexism and talk about it, you and I are not remotely equals in knowledge or experience or analysis or reading (I am quite sure of that last) or anything else. Your only appropriate attitude in this business is to keep *your* mouth shut and your eyes open and your ears opener until you know where you are...
>
> [letter from Joanna Russ to Damien Broderick, quoted in *Australian SF Review*, May 1987]

But listen to Father Andrew Greeley, in his introduction to *The Mary Myth: on the Femininity of God* (Seabury Press, 1977):

> There are critics who will argue that only a woman should write about the femininity of God. Such an argument is ideological romanticism. Only the young should write about the young, only the non-white should write about the non-white, only Jews should write about Jews, only married people about marriage, etc., etc? Such an ideology is also anti-intellectual, reactionary and oppressive....

I have been told by a very strongly feminist friend that she thinks I understand and accept much of feminist thought -- but I do not claim that I can see issues from a female perspective. I am not a woman; I have not been brought up and socialised as a woman; the assumptions and expectations instilled in me since birth are not those instilled in women; I have not lived with the (often unconscious) expectations and behaviour of others towards me as a woman. And I *do* have 35 years of upbringing and socialisation as a man counting against me in my attempts to be feminist.

So although Joanna Russ's comments are symptomatic of what I see as the arrogance and intolerance of some extreme feminist thinking, which I believe to be both unhealthy and offensive (not to mention sexist to the extreme), I accept her point, but not her conclusion. I do not claim that I can see issues from a female perspective but, like Fr Greeley, I do claim the right, as a human being, to discuss a subject vibrantly relevant to *all* humans, female or male.

IN THIS ISSUE

Mary Gentle examines the dangerous rape-fantasies of John Norman's sexist *Gor* books, and finds their roots to be firmly in our society.

Gwyneth Jones wonders what has happened to the rôle of the macho hero in SF in these supposedly more liberated days.

Jean Weber gives an overview of feminist utopian fiction.

Mike Christie sees how our language governs the way we think and behave, and finds in Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* a possible way to bring about a feminist society.

Sue Thomason looks at Ursula LeGuin's *Earthsea* trilogy, and asks "How can a woman write something like this?"

Michael Moorcock, in a pre-publication extract from his new book *Wizardry and Wild Romance*, describes different approaches to women in heroic fantasy.

Much of SF is about future or alternative societies -- which is really the reason for this issue. Read on.

Feminism is many things; there is no *one* set of doctrines which can be held up as its creed. So some, both feminists and non-feminists, may well take issue with my interpretation:

Feminism is a movement towards a different society: a society in which there is no discrimination against women -- or against men; a society in which decisions are made at ground level, by individual people in concensus, rather than being imposed from above; a society in which the traditional patriarchal pyramidal hierarchical power structure is replaced by discussion and agreement which lead to action; a society in which no person can impose his or her will on any other. Some feminists believe that the nuclear family (father, mother, children) should be replaced by the extended family (including grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins) or clan, or by a society in which children are raised communally. Many, but not all, feminists are Marxist, seeing the capitalist socio-economic system as the root of social divisiveness. Some are anarchists, believing that any governmental structure is wrong.

All of these ideas, and many other aspects of feminism, have been explored in SF; indeed, SF can be seen as the natural vehicle for feminist writing, despite the fact that the genre has historically been responsible for male-dominated sexism of the worst order.

TOMORROW BELONGS TO...

I write this three days after the General Election. This weekend I have worn a black armband, to mourn the death of democracy and freedom of speech. (This is an Editorial; I also claim the right to speak personally!) Once again we have a female Prime Minister who behaves more like a Victorian *pater familias* than do most men today, who rules by edict rather than allowing, let alone encouraging, free and informed discussion.

I believe that we will see over the next five years:

- an increasing centralisation of power (the antithesis of feminist political ideology)
- stricter regulations against freedom of information (Tisdell and Ponting-like trials will become more frequent, and will be politically controlled)

- stronger curbs on freedom of association (the action against GCHQ and teachers union members is but a foretaste of what is to come)
- social and religious intolerance (remember the dawn raid on the Peace Camp at Stony Cross? I was there eight hours earlier; it was one of the cleanest and most peaceful campsites I have ever seen)
- sexual intolerance (AIDS is a (I hesitate to say) heaven-sent excuse for queer-bashing; and a lesbian friend reports being harassed by the police on leaving a gay club)
- increasing interference in the freedom of choice of others in the fields of entertainment, education and other action by the Moral Majority (it's happening already in the States)
- political control of broadcasting (the Tebbit has already had a trial run against the BBC)
- illegal police raids on Special Branch/MI5/Downing Street orders (such as the seizure of Duncan Campbell's *Secret Society* programmes from the BBC Scottish offices)
- censorship of newspapers, magazines and books (see my Editorial in *V135*)
- the disparity between the "South" and the "North" (in reality between the South-East and everywhere else), between the rich and the poor, between the haves and the have-nots, growing ever wider, causing an increase in frustration, disaffection, depression, suicide, illness, illiteracy, petty crime, muggings, rapes, civil disturbances, riots, poverty of life and mind and heart....

My most frightening moment on the night of June 11th 1987 was at the end of *Spitting Image*: the clean-cut Thatcher Youth with arm outstretched singing "Tomorrow belongs to me", based on the song in *Cabaret*.

We have seen tomorrow, you and I, BSFA members: we have read it in SF over and over again. It doesn't matter now how you voted in June; I'm an Alliance supporter, Joseph Nicholas and Andy Sawyer (amongst many other BSFA members) campaigned for Labour in the election, and I'm sure we have some Conservative supporters.

That's irrelevant now; what matters is that we're all people, female and male, and most of us live in Thatcher's Britain.

We have seen tomorrow, many possible tomorrows, in SF. Only by espousing the principles known as "feminist" can we avoid the tomorrow I've outlined above. This is why this particular issue of *Vector* on feminism and SF is, quite fortuitously, so timely.

Next time you hear a woman, or a man, talking about feminism, discard your mental clichés of dungaree-clad, bra-burning, butch harpies, and listen to what they say. Then put it into practice.

And tomorrow may yet belong to us, people, female and male, together in a just society. A feminist society which we, SF readers and writers, should now be working towards.

L E T T E R S

«PLENTY OF LETTERS; NOT ENOUGH SPACE. I'LL TRIM SOME, AND hold the rest over till next time. Thanks for writing. And thanks also to those who have sent artwork for Vector: I've not yet written to you individually, but your artwork will grace these pages shortly. More is always welcome. (And I don't mind if you're professional artists -- so long as you don't mind not getting paid!)

First a letter from ER James (not Ed James) to tidy up the loose ends:»

NO APOLOGY: I MUST THANK YOU FOR GIVING EDWARD JAMES THE opportunity to flatter me by saying he had once hoped to be mistaken for me.

I did have stories in many of the Carnell magazines and in the issues of *Nebula* from editor Peter Hamilton and in some other lesser publications, but I never felt my work of great appeal.

With the contraction of the market I failed to interest other editors and was perhaps too much engaged in earning a living to attain any useful success with the small writing output with which I supplemented reading *Analog* and BSFA publications.

Now, however, approaching 30 years later, I have coming up in No 13 of editor Trevor Jones's *Dream Magazine*, a short story "Second Century KOMA", the production of which owes more than a little to a spur given me by a *V136* article about short stories being the writer's "children".

Thanks to that writer, to Edward James for his good humoured comment, and to the BSFA in general.

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«Garry Kilworth and I both wrote about writing in V136; what is tragic is that with all the blood and sweat that go into the pregnancy and birth of a short story child, so often that child is unwanted and unrecognised by anyone other than its parent. The short story market has contracted almost to the point of invisibility; getting a story accepted and published has become a major achievement in itself, over and above the writing of it.

On a lighter note, now that we've cleared up who you and Ed James are, are either of you related to that great short story writer, MR James? Or to the brothers Henry and William James? Is Sarah Lefanu (of the Women's Press) related to the 19th century Irish writer Sheridan Le Fanu? And how about John Crowley and Aleister Crowley, especially considering the modern Crowley's interest in things magical and esoteric? While we're at it, can anyone else in the SF world claim illustrious forebears who were writers?»

IT'S GENERALLY AMUSING TO SEE SOMEONE TRYING TO WRIGGLE out of what they said by launching a scattergun attack, and Ken Lake's reply to me is no exception. I agree that Charley Gordon (not Algernon, as he states -- Algernon was the name of the mouse) is a finely drawn character etc.; this doesn't alter the fact that Lake previously stated that SF readers could not be expected to empathise with a non-bright character. Charley is a non-bright character. Therefore Lake was wrong. (Interesting to note that he doesn't feel the same way regarding the character in "Mother to the World".) As for my use of the word "thick", as far as I am aware it is an accepted term for the non-bright, though I would never use it seriously. Perhaps this is an example of the north-south divide?

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I TAKE KEN LAKE'S POINT ABOUT THE TRILOGY; IT *IS* A VALID literary device for structuring large-scale narratives. However, there is a perceptible difference between the creative use of the trilogy format and the formulaic approach. On the creative side we could start by pointing out the difference between three-books-as-separate-entities and a fat book divided into three super-chapters. Here, the trilogy offers the writer opportunities unavailable within a single volume; for example, Gordon Dickson's *Dorsai* trilogy, or David Brin's *Uplift* books (exemplifying changes in elapsed time, or perspective where major characters in one book are minor ones in another -- and *vice versa* -- or are off-stage altogether).

The trilogy becomes objectionable when stylised imagery and the formula plot skeleton take over. It doesn't matter if the writers of such are naïve fans of heroic fantasy (or space opera, for that matter), or cynical hacks. The marketing strategy is identical since the three-book fix satisfies two criteria: it tickles the reader's pleasure nerve with the minimum of conceptual upset, and it keeps the pennies coming. Of course I realise that publishing is a business, and that low quality product shifts more units than high quality works. This

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would be a bearable situation if a significant proportion of published work was of a high quality, but this is plainly not the case. In this respect the ultra-commercial abuse of the trilogy *is* a specifically 80s phenomenon; bottom-line accounting is the new conformity to which the trilogy/sequence/series lends itself with ease.

"Schism", as I used it, did not mean "divisions in general" as Terry Broome suggested in his letter; *mea culpa* for not being sufficiently clear. I take the word to mean "a split or division" -- in this sense nothing is schismatic unless it was once part of the whole. Thus a national culture, for example, is a virtual landscape of schisms. To quote TS Eliot, "A national culture, if it is to flourish, should be a constellation of cultures, the constituents of which, benefiting each other, benefit the whole."

So it is with science fiction, itself a schism from literature and containing many strands within its indeterminable boundaries. Authentic schisms that develop creatively, making new discoveries within the language, depend on their capacity for receiving and assimilating outside influences, as well as the ability to return to and learn from their roots. Such creative aspects are all but absent in false schisms, those that survive under pressures of commerce or psychological alienation rather than motivation towards solving genuine problems of art.

As for the political leverage of SF fans and readers -- it depends on the individuals and how alienated they are from their immediate social environment. Even then you can't be certain that some influential person *isn't* a secret SF fan: what might Mrs Thatcher *really* find in the regular red dispatch box? - a sound Fournelle, perhaps, or an old Heinlein? Does Neil Kinnock sneak the odd chapter of Ian Watson before hitting the rostrum? And do the Alliance Davids openly peruse David Brin's latest, or Spinrad's *A World Between*? *«The mind boggles! Any other suggestions, anyone?»*

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I DO AGREE WITH KEN LAKE'S SUMMING UP OF WHAT A TRILOGY is -- or rather what it should be (*V137*). A trilogy is simply a novel which is too large to fit comfortably in one volume. Two and three part novels were perfectly common in the past. In *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austin pokes fun at the more sensational types of these epics. A true trilogy should have all parts published simultaneously, as the three books are part of a whole. If the three books can stand independently, they are more correctly regarded as a series.

Trilogies and series are very often regarded with hatred and loathing by the more high-brow SF critics. I have never quite understood the logic behind this vilification. Bad books should indeed be criticised, but sometimes trilogies are vilified purely *because* they are trilogies, or a new book in a series is condemned just because it is set in the same world as the earlier works. Surely if an author has created an internally consistent world, peopled with interesting characters, they might be allowed more than one book to work out all the possible themes and plot lines? I have seen it suggested that you should be able to say all you have to say about a world and its characters in one book, but if you take this argument to its logical conclusion, mainstream authors should only be allowed one stab at a novel. Yet how many highly acclaimed mainstream writers return again and again to a similar setting for their novels?

I realise that there are some truly awful fantasy trilogies around, but I just wish that each book could be taken on its merits and not rejected as rubbish out of hand, simply because it is a trilogy.

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«I think it's because so many SF and fantasy trilogies and series are so bad -- simply commercial regurgitation of already over-chewed formula writing -- that we tend to condemn without thinking. But there are many excellent trilogies and series. I'd be happy to publish articles on, for example, Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast *trilogy, CS Lewis's Ransom books, James Blish's* Cities in Flight *tetralogy, Gene Wolfe's* Book of the New Sun, *Evangeline Walton's* Mabinogion *retellings, any of Michael Moorcock's series, particularly* Jerry Cornelius *or* The Dancers at the End of Time, *Richard Cowper's* Corlay *books, Michael Coney's* The Song of the Earth, *very definitely Samuel R Delany's* Neveryon *books, HP Lovecraft (et al)'s* Cthulthu *books, the entire Cordwainer Smith oevre, Zenna Henderson's* People *stories, H Beam Piper (and other writers)'s* Fuzzy *books, and even (why not revisit them, if only to see how dire they are!) Isaac Asimov's* Foundation *trilogy or EE Doc Smith's* Lensman *series. That should keep us going for a year or two... Seriously, if anyone's interested in doing an article on any of these, or on any other series of three or more books, please let me know.»*

DAVID KNOTT DECLARES, IF NOT AN INTEREST, THEN A BIAS (IN the direction of engineering) in his discussion of the science in SF ("Forgotten Fruit", *V138*). Allowing that, as he says, he has more involvement in "the way an author uses his scientific postulations than in the actual ideas", his observations are certainly fruitful; but I am moved to spring to the defence of HG Wells who is, I think, hard done to by him.

First, then, to take up the barometer illustration. David Knott is of course right to say that the graph represents phenomena occuring in both space and time; but he fails to stress that, in the passage quoted from *The Time Machine*, the Time Travelller says: "Surely the mercury did not trace this line in any of the dimensions of space *generally recognised*" (my emphasis). Wells in 1897 was writing pre-Einstein and still within the Newtonian intellectual framework of absolute space and absolute time; but he was peering through what he later described as the contemporary "enigmatical fog" of physics towards Minkowski's formulation ten years later of the new absolute of spacetime.

Immediately before the passage quoted the Time Traveller has produced portraits of an individual made at the ages of 8, 15, 17, and 23, pointing out that they "are evidently sections, as it were, Three-Dimensional representations of his Four-Dimensioned being, which is a fixed and unalterable thing" (cf. Wells's early unpublished essay

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"reconstructed" in *Experiment in Autobiography* -- "The Universe Rigid"). Far from "rushing through" theory in order to start the adventure, he is laying the ground of a concept entirely essential to his narrative. That the quantum universe now implies different concepts of time-matter-energy relationships doesn't make these imaginative speculations within the scientific framework of his day any the less impressive.

Knott goes on to state that the Time Traveller confesses (the word suggests guilt!) on behalf of Wells that his use of scientific ideas was to a literary end. (What, one may ask, is all science fiction but such a form of literature?) But there is no "confession" here. True, the Traveller, as quoted, says: "Consider I have been speculating upon the destinies of our race until I have hatched this fiction"; but, read in the occasion's context, he is only saying to the sceptical company that he can't expect them to believe him. Take it as a lie, a prophecy, a dream, he says, or if you like even as a fiction. It is almost a dream to him, and he can only believe in it with the veridical evidence of Weena's gift of flowers to help him. Wells seems to be implying that what has ranged over a vast four-dimensional construct is the Traveller's own consciousness; that this was the nature of the time experience; and here again he is foraging forward from the borderlands of contemporary thought.

Wells did, indeed, take "a greater imaginative leap than Verne", even though, as Wells admitted, Verne's anticipation of actual inventions and discoveries was "remarkable". Yet the depth of Wells's scientific insights were not only greater, but were based on a discipline and understanding of principles greater than Verne's; and this is particularly true of *The Time Machine* in its geo-evolutionary aspects. Darwin had died only two years before Wells's entry as one of TH Huxley's students at the (now) Imperial College of Science and Technology. Survival depends upon adaptation to environment and the long-term environment is one of entropic degradation. Huxley's "cosmic pessimism" appears in extended metaphor in *The Time Machine*; so does his humanistic philosophy of swimming against this deterministic tide in Wells's "Epilogue" exhortation to "live as though it were not so". The enduring influence of Wells on both the "hard" and more fantastically speculative sub-genres of SF ultimately rests on his active response to scientific thought -- which must be recognised and appreciated as necessarily that of his time. Whatever "fruits" may be in danger of being forgotten or overlooked, don't let us in making critical assessments forget their seeding.

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RIGHT, WHO'S GONNA TELL ME WHAT THIS CYBERPUNK THINGUMAjig is? I can't remember reading anything significant about it in previous BSFA publications. Certainly, Bruce Sterling was not very forthcoming when interviewed by Paul Kincaid (*V138*) The term was raised twice during the interview, but to my understanding no acceptable definition arose.

Early in the interview Sterling says "It's the idea of integration between technology and popular culture" (50ís?); then "modern science fiction" (1987 BSFA Award winner *The Ragged Astronauts*?) and "commercial science fiction" (Asimov?). I am sure you can think of your own incredulous responses. Clearly, all three statements are inadequate. Perhaps I am being unfair as interviews are generally not conducive in producing workable definitions, but it would be nice to know what they're talking about.

Later Kincaid suggests cyberpunk is "a sort of Chandleresque narrative onto traditional science fictional forms" which Sterling brushes aside as he has never written like Chandler. However, he does involve JG Ballard as "he integrates science into the social structure in a way that's very similar to cyberpunk". Well, Ballard does to some extent integrate technologies with contemporary western societies, in, for example, *High Rise* and *Crash*.

To summarise then, the inadequate definition I piece together is: a popular form of SF at least involving the fusion of modern technologies with contemporary western-type societies. Not having read novels by Gibson, Bear, Cadigan and Sterling I wonder how close this "definition" is. If cyberpunk remains amorphous why should I believe it is real? Maybe it is just another hype!

PS On the strength of all the magazines put out by the BSFA this year, I regard the new subscription rate of £10 as being fully justified. Well done everyone involved, you all get my vote of thanks.

ROB FREETH
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«I mention cyberpunk in my Editorial in V138, with my feelings about it. You might also be interested in the following extract from my article on computers in SF in Computer Weekly *(3rd April 1986):*

> The mid-1980s have seen a new movement, known as "cyberpunk", or "the Neuromancers", after William Gibson's triple-award-winning novel. Cyberpunk combines vivid extrapolation from today's state-of-the-art in computing with sleazy glamour and gutter credibility.

A review of Gibson's Count Zero *appeared in the same issue.*

WHILE READING THROUGH THE LIST OF MEMBERS IN THE JUNE mailing I noticed that some members of the BSFA are from South Africa... The question is important: should you allow membership for people living in the RSA? Personally I don't think so. The ANC, recognised worldwide as the legitimate voice of the majority of South Africans, has asked for a total cultural boycott of that country.

Does the BSFA consider itself above such a request? Unlike many publications, it has almost complete control over where its magazines can be read. You can simply return membership fees and stop mailings. Are you going to do so? Don't come up with the argument that through your writings you hope to persuade white South Africans to oppose apartheid. The very act of allowing South Africans to purchase your magazines gives them the feeling that basically they are living in a normal state.

One way to stop SF descending into (remaining?) a "trainspotter's" hobby is to involve itself in today's issues. The best science fiction *is* "the best" because it involves itself with the real world. Here's your chance to do [illegible] I would really like to hear what other members' thoughts are on the subject.

MARK McCONN
Derry
N Ireland

«I agree that SF should be involved with the real world -- hence this particular issue of Vector. *So far as I know the BSFA as a whole has never had a policy such as you suggest; my personal feeling is that we shouldn't. What is the BSFA? Nearly 1000 people who enjoy SF. That's the common thread amongst members, rather than a particular political stance. While I'm keen for us individually to take whatever stance we believe in, I don't think this is the function of the BSFA as a body. I'd particularly like to hear the views of those members who live in S Africa, and of non-white members, but if this becomes a major debate it would probably make sense to transfer it to the pages of* Matrix.»

WOMEN WIZARDS? YES — NOW!

SUE THOMASON

URSULA LEGUIN'S EARTHSEA BOOKS *(A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA, The Tombs of Atuan, The Farthest Shore)* are important to me. I often re-read them, with intense enjoyment. They are a touchstone for excellence in fantasy writing. But until recently, they filled me with a deep sense of unease. So I started putting together some notes on the trilogy, trying (according to the Way of Mageheod) to name my disquiet. The notes said:

- Why can't women do effective magic in Earthsea? "weak as woman's magic", "wicked as woman's magic". No women in training at the school on Roke.
- Why are mages apparently celibate? Sparrowhawk is, Ogion is; Vetch is the only one who has anything like a real family, and even then it's brother and sister, not wife and children.
- All three books are based on an essentially frustrated or unexpressed love between Sparrowhawk and Ogion/Tenar/Arren. Why? Does the principle of non-attachment ("I desire only my art") rule the mage so strongly? If so, Earthsea says you can either "do people" (get married), or "do art" (develop your creative gift or power) but not both. Coming from LeGuin this is surprising.
- How could a woman write a book that excludes women like this?

At first I thought I had fallen into the familiar fantasy-fiction trap of mistaking the actual for the ideal. Earthsea, after all, is not a perfect world. It has its drug addicts, its slavers. It has plenty of poverty, ignorance, oppression and prejudice; nobody, man or woman, has a particularly easy life. Neither is Sparrowhawk an "ideal" or "perfect" man. His childhood is brutal, he spends most of his life in poverty. He is indelibly marked by his insecurity (shown in the conflict between his simultaneous feelings of superiority and inferiority at the School on Roke), his progressive estrangement from women, and his compulsive desire to prove (i.e. both test and demonstrate) his own power by mastering/manipulating his reality. Sparrowhawk is twisted and trapped by his rôle as Mage, and thus it cannot be a desirable rôle.

But of course it *is* presented as a desirable rôle. The Mage is a benign authority figure, a man of knowledge and the holder of mythic and spiritual power. The Mage's position combines the offices of priest, poet and doctor; the School on Roke is a cross between monastery, university and Bardic academy. And it is an all-male establishment.

It might be assumed from the argument so far that LeGuin believes in separate but equal spheres of action/influence for men and women. So what do women do in Earthsea, to make up for having to forego the art and power of magic? They get to be innocent and nurturing and pack up food for Sparrowhawk and Vetch, as Yarrow. They get to spend a long time devoting themselves to ultimately sterile and useless religious ritual, and then get rescued by Sparrowhawk, as Tenar. They get to be ineffectually bad, and a sexual temptress, as Serret (they get killed for it, too), and they get to be rescued (again) as a craft-witch, the Dyer of Lorbanery. Terrific. This isn't any "separate but equal" deal, this is exclusion.

And it's no use arguing that LeGuin is following good Taoist principles in condemning the aggressive, manipulative "way of action" and opposing it to a more enlightened, "feminine", contemplative approach to life. For a start, wizardry encompasses both doing (Sparrowhawk) and being (Ogion), and they are both male. For a second start, Taoism stresses that the dualistic pairs are complementary, rather than opposing, alternatives. In Taoist thought, every condition contains the seeds of its opposite, and every person should cultivate "opposite" qualities to balance their innately one-sided nature. Thus in the Western European tradition, as men learn gentleness, women learn strength. But there are no balancing women in Earthsea; often, the women are simply not there...

There are people, many of them, who say that all this doesn't matter, that I take it all far too seriously and out of context, that these are only childrens' books, after all. They say that studies of young readers show that both girls and boys have tended to prefer books with male protagonists. This is probably because the male is the norm, as demonstrated in a well-known psychological experiment in which panels of volunteers (of both sexes) were given a list of personality traits and asked to indicate which traits they would expect to be characteristic of "a well-adjusted man", "a well-adjusted woman", and "a well-adjusted adult". When the resulting personality profiles were compared, it was found that there was no significant difference between the "well-adjusted adult" and the "well-adjusted man", but that the "well-adjusted woman" was more emotional, more dependent, more child-like, more neurotic.

LEGUIN'S EARTHSEA TRILOGY

How can a woman write books like these?

This was my first indication that something really was unbalanced in Earthsea, and a careful comparison of Sparrowhawk's all-male school on Roke with Tenar's all-female "convent" on Atuan confirms it. Roke is at the centre, the heart of Earthsea, in the midst of a flourishing and prosperous town, in the midst of life. The precinct of the Tombs founded upon death, situated in a sterile desert; it is a decaying power, increasingly marginal to its people, who are themselves the marginal "barbarians" of Earthsea. One might hope that the rescue of Tenar from the Tombs would mark an integration of this surpressed and marginalised element into the living myths of Earthsea's Mages, and this is so. The barbarian whiteskins start coming to Roke for training; in the final book one of the Nine Masters is a whiteskin. But still no women take up power.

This is more worrying still when I see what LeGuin herself has to say about the basis of wizardry in Earthsea. She says:

> ...to know the true name is to know the thing, for me, and for the wizards. This implies a good deal about the "meaning" of the trilogy, and about me. The trilogy is, in one aspect, about the artist. The artist as magician... Wizardry is artistry. The trilogy is then, in this sense, about art, the creative experience, the creative process.

And indeed, Earthsea's magic is founded on the Art of the Word. The Mage is a subcreator in precisely the authorial sense; he *(sic)* transforms his reality by naming it in the True Speech, the ur-language of power. And there is a difference, an opposition between the speech of men and women. Roke is the home of the True Speech, in which a Mage may correctly name (and hence manipulate) the world. The Tombs of Atuan are the home of "the empty word", where Tenar learns "a word so old it had lost its meaning, like a signpost still standing when the road is gone... the songs whose words no man understood, which she had learned syllable by syllable". That is, LeGuin says wizard = artist, and in particular writer; Earthsea is a world without women wizards; Earthsea is a world described by a woman writer in which there are no women artists/writers.

To replace "magic" by "writing" in LeGuin's statements about women and Art makes the point even more sharply. "Weak as woman's writing", "wicked as woman's writing". There are, of course, plenty of people who have said (and say) this about women's creative work. But not only is the exclusion of women from the Magehood never questioned, it is assumed to be a Good Thing.

Let us here have a short digression on the nature of wizards, to find out just what it is that LeGuin says we can't be. Wizards can be divided into two main types, the Wise Old Man (e.g. Tarot Hermit, Gandalf, Merlin) and the Young Magician (e.g. Tarot Magician, particularly in packs styled after Waite, Sparrowhawk, Damiano Delestrego). These are both archetypes of considerable power, and perhaps one reason why there haven't been many representations of women taking up that power in contemporary fantasy is because women are only starting to imagine how they might do so. It takes a long time for such things to work themselves into the archetypes.

The wise old man is usually an advisor to the protagonist of the story (Merlin advises Arthur, Philemon advises Jung, Gandalf advises everyone in sight). Old Wise Men are not human (Gandalf is an angelic intelligence in human shape, Merlin is the son of a nun and the Devil and regarded as dubiously human). Young Magicians on the other hand are human, and as protagonists are probably representations of what Jung calls the Soul-Image. The wizard is thus an ideal self, and particularly appropriate for a writer as he *(sic)* can change and manipulate the subcreated world in a way only comparable to an authorial act.

With this in mind, it's interesting to see that female wizards in contemporary fiction are still struggling for their power. There's the wizard Nun in Patricia McKillip's Riddle-Master trilogy (an Old Wise Woman who is trapped and diminished in power for much of the story), and the wizard Yrth in Barbara Hambly's *Ladies of Mandrigyn* (a young magician who has a disfiguring birthmark and is unable to complete the rite of passage into full wizardship until the end of the story). There are also women-wizards who take the classic route of an exceptionally talented woman infiltrating a bastion of patriarchal power; they become "one of the boys". These include Reynard in John Ford's *The Dragon Waiting* and the wizard Lythande in various stories by Marion Zimmer Bradley. Such women become pseudo-male, achieve a position of privilege, and then represent the position that because one (exceptional) woman has done this thing, any woman could do it. The fact that the majority of women don't, can't, or won't follow in their footsteps is used to prove that women really *are* inferior, untalented, etc.

So Sparrowhawk is a type of Ideal Self. But what sort of ideal does he represent? He embodies the Logos and the Light. Desiring nothing beyond his art, he becomes so forged and tempered by this single purpose that he cannot hear the voice of the faceless dark Lord with the Flame, the Light-Bearer who enters other men's dreams to tempt them. He has no equals in his art, he seems to have very few friends. Certainly he's not in a position to be able to trust very many people. He seems happiest and most relaxed when he's on his own. Although he speaks about giving up his power, his responsibility, he finds it almost impossible to do so.

An interesting side-issue here is the attribute of the wizard's staff. Witches (like the Dyer of Lorbanery, who is about the nearest thing to a good female wizard in Earthsea) have cauldrons, and wizards (like Sparrowhawk) have staffs. Traditionally the cauldron is the vessel of transformation; the crucible, the source of all nourishment. Staffs seem to be used as channels (rather than sources) of power, and as defensive weapons, methods of keeping people at a distance. And staffs and sex don't mix. I know the Earthsea books were written for children, and hence one can't expect the wizards to be sleeping with each other (or even with women) on every other page, but it is quite orthodox and in order for the (male) rescuer and the (female) rescuee to get married and live happily ever after, or something of the sort, at the end of a fantasy. That LeGuin doesn't show this is to her credit, but she fails to show any alternative. Sparrowhawk and Tenar don't marry, despite their obvious love for each other and the fact that Tenar is one of the only seven people in the world who Sparrowhawk trusts with his true name. At the end of *The Tombs of Atuan* she gets packed off to Gont. The closest mythic parallel that springs to mind is the betrayal of Ariadne by Theseus, after she has assisted him to escape from the Labyrinth.

I can't really understand why Tenar doesn't go to Havnor to take up the Kingship -- she ought to be capable of this, in the story's terms, because she is the rightful holder of the Ring of Erreth-Akbe, which bears the lost rune of Kingship. Further, she has been trained for a position of power. I have a horrible feeling that she will end up being married off to Arren. As the Ring of Erreth-Akbe is described as "a woman's arm-ring", I wonder if the Earthsea kingship works along the old Hittite-Assyrio-Babylonian system of transferring kingship through the female line i.e. the ruling King holds his office by virtue of having married the woman in whom the power of the throne (which descends through the female line) resides.

While considering wizardry and gender, it may be useful to consider wizardry and sex, particularly as the innate "talent" of wizardry is definitely not sex-linked. In Earthsea, contemporary wizards seem to be celibate, (e.g. Vetch's "family" are his younger siblings) although several non-wizard characters are named as being descended from famous mages. Indeed, wizardry and sex seem to have an inverse correlation. Perhaps they are two opposed routes for channeling the same power, as Bradley suggests (at least for women) in her Darkover series? Sparrowhawk's loss of his familiar, his Animal Helper, is significant in this context.

As a child, Sparrowhawk rejects a weak, foolish, manipulative mother-substitute (his aunt) for a distant, kind, non-manipulative father substitute (Ogion), who warns him against Woman in the shape of Serret, the witch's daughter, the only woman of his own age in the vicinity, the only woman the young Sparrowhawk talks to. He is attracted by her when he meets her again in the Court of the Terrenon. She tempts him, he falters, loses his otak, is badly burned, and loses his staff. That's what Sparrowhawk knows of "normal" sexual feeling. The Earthsea trilogy is not simply nonsex (as one might expect of children's literature of the 60s) but anti-sex. Sex is linked with the old, dark power of the Earth, the Terrenon. It is evil. Sparrowhawk is tempted by its power, he is burned, he rejects the evil and survives. That's when he becomes "the hawk of pure solar rationality", the Logos figure. What is opposed to Logos is Eros. We next meet the Old Powers of Earth, who are by implication the female powers, at the Tombs of Atuan. They are the Nameless Ones, the ones who eat everything and give nothing. LeGuin describes the subject of this book as "in a word, sex".

Sparrowhawk's price for power is the loss of the Mother. This is important; LeGuin says somewhere that Tenar is ultimately redeemed from the darkness of the tombs because she bears the memory of her mother's love deep inside her. It is this that gives her the strength to fight the Dark Ones, this that is reawakened by Sparrow-

• Continued on p 9

HEADS I WIN, TAILS YOU LOSE

The Science Fantasy Novels of John Norman

MARY GENTLE

> Sex is an implement which may be used in controlling a slave girl. It is as useful as chains and the whip.
>
> *Beasts of Gor* -- John Norman, 1978

WHICH OF YOU BASTARDS OUT THERE LIKES READING RAPE FANTASIES?

Yes, that's a provocative question. I want to provoke. I want to know. *Someone* is keeping John Norman in business and twenty-four *Gor* titles in print.

As a reader, I hate reading a *genre* that includes John Norman. As a writer, I object to sharing a publishing category with *Gor*. As a woman, I protest against these novels' existence.

What do *Gor* fans read?

Like much present-day science fantasy, *Gor* has humans and aliens living in off-world semi-barbaric societies. Norman uses the stage setting of ERB's Barsoom -- silk, fur, leather, armour, chains, straps, bondage -- as triggers of sexual arousal. In any given *Gor* novel, there may be a plot going on somewhere in the background, a war or expedition or invasion, but this can take up only a dozen paragraphs in a 400 page novel. The Gorean hero spends the narrative enslaving women. His training techniques are well-known, under the popular term "brain-washing". Gorean "slave-girls" are conditioned to love their masters.

Women in collars and chains; women who suffer petty humiliations and drudgery; women branded, starved, caged, beaten; women who are cuffed, whipped, masturbated with a whip-handle on a public auction-block. And -- over and over again -- women who are repeatedly raped. Rape that results in love of rape, humiliation, bondage, domination. Love of being enslaved by men.

That's what *Gor* fans love.

Are you worried, gentle reader? Are you perturbed, or provoked? Are you labouring under a sense of grievance, saying to yourselves We aren't all like that! That's true. But I am reminded of a famous religious massacre. There are, protested members of the slaughtering army, many of our own faith in that town we are about to raze to the ground...

Kill the lot, advised some ecclesiastic. God will know His own.

I condemn anyone who's ever bought a *Gor* novel. Those of you who are unjustly accused can rest assured that feminists will know their own -- if they hear you explain, very carefully, the reason why. As for the others: pin back your ears and listen, it's about time you thought what it is you're doing.

"John Norman" (actually American philosophy teacher John Frederick Lange Jr) is a phenomenon. Those twenty-four fat novels can be found everywhere -- on railway station bookstalls, in WH Smith and John Menzies, in second-hand shops... one of the brand-names of SF. *Gor* novels sell. And what is *Gor*?

> She now wore only what Gorean men had given her, a scrap of slave livery, and a ring hammered about her neck. She looked at me, terrified. The guards' hands were on her upper arms. Their hands were tight.
>
> "What are they going to do!" she cried.
>
> "You are to be taken to the pens," I said.
>
> "The pens!" she asked.
>
> "There," I said, "you will be stripped and branded."
>
> "Branded?" she said. I do not think she understood me. Her Earth mind would find this hard to understand. She was not yet cognisant of Gorean realities. She would learn them swiftly. No choice would be given her...
>
> "No!" she screamed. "No!"
>
> "Then," I said, "you will be raped, and taught your womanhood. When you have learned your womanhood, you will be caged. Later you will be sold."...
>
> She looked at me... wildly. "What place is this?" she asked.
>
> "It is called Gor," I told her.
>
> "No!" she said. "That is only in stories!"
>
> I smiled.
>
> *Beasts of Gor*, 1978

Gor is, for a woman, the threat of the empty, dark road -- the all-pervasive non-specified threat of rape that male society uses to control women. John Norman writes undisguised rape-fantasies of a particularly mysogynist kind.

Would I object if, say, the fantasies gave "equal opportunities" to women and men; if they admitted they were only "let's pretend" games for the purposes of sexual gratification? Maybe not. My objection is to where *Gor* is congruent with the ideology of male domination and phallocentric sex. But given that this is the real world, maybe you can't have a bondage fantasy that is -- how shall I put it? -- non-discriminatory.

As far as Norman is concerned, however, that is not relevant. What differentiates the *Gor* books from other, similar novels is this: they pretend to be truth. Not merely by the literary double-bluff of pretending to be fact that is pretending to be fiction -- but in lecture upon endless lecture:

> Woman, like man, is the product of evolution, and, like man, is a complex genetic product, a product not only of natural selections but sexual selections. Natural selections suggest that a woman who wished to belong to a man, who wished to remain with him, who wished to have children, who wished to care for them, who loved them, would have an advantage, in the long run, as far as her genetic type was concerned, of surviving, over a woman who did not wish children, and so on. Female freedom, of a full sort, would not have been biologically practical.
>
> *Hunters of Gor*, 1974

That is a wonderful passage. Not for what it says -- and I don't intend to rehearse all the pros and cons of the biology-is-destiny argument: I recommend you to Robert Ardrey, Sally Fisher, Elaine Morgan, Lionel Tiger, and F Engels -- but for what it implies.

How reassuring it must be to read that, if you are anti-feminist. Feminism is biologically untenable. So are

extended families. So are matriarchies. So are single parents. So are widows. Fathers and fascists rule OK. By implication: if women want and love children, they must take the best possible care of them -- must be owned by a man. (You can't depend on other women for help in child-raising?) Also by implication: women must want husbands and families, because their worth depends upon having them, and must not want anything else. (Career women and lesbians die out?) Men own women. Rape is justifiable -- indeed, preferable to other forms of sex. This is natural. This is right.

This is bullshit.

The *Gor* novels contain a moral imperative: you must see that life is really like *Gor* (and if it isn't, it ought to be). It patently isn't and shouldn't be, you say? Ah, but that's because Earth society has pathologically conditioned you to believe that. The Gorean elements you see in our society are Real Human Nature coming to the surface. Anything else, like equal capabilities, superior intelligence, or independence, on the part of the Earth female, are just the way society has warped them. Heads *Gor* wins -- tails you lose.

> Your official position, whatever its political values, is a perversion not only of truth but of biology.
>
> *Fighting Slave of Gor*, 1980

The prose rhythms of the lectures are those of incantation, not rational argument. John Norman preaches not a moment's sexual satisfaction but a whole structure of society. Our society.

The *Gor* novels say: women are inferior, women are controlled by their insatiable sexual desires, women are not rational. They say, women desire to be made subordinate to men, women want to be raped, want to be mind-fucked, want to be slaves... in fact, it's women's responsibility, they are like this, and men can't be blamed for anything they do about it. Can they?

What men get from the novels is obvious: power-fantasies to compensate for inadequacies. Power and potency are the key wish-fulfilment elements here for the heterosexual male. On *Gor*, men are multi-orgasmic, never suffer embarrassing failures to perform, are never refused sex. And never have sexual demands made on them -- enslaved women do not demand, they beg. It is the ultimate in control for men who are afraid, not only of rejection and impotence, but of intimacy and the vulnerability that intimacy involves.

There are female *Gor* fans, I'm told. What fantasies of the female can *Gor* possibly satisfy?

> "The girl who is bought off the block," said Turbus, "knows that it is she herself, and only herself, who is desired. Nothing else, you understand, is being sold, only the girl."
>
> *Fighting Slave of Gor*, 1980
>
> "I never knew I would meet a man who could lust for me and desire me so much," I said, "that he would keep me as a slave."
>
> *Slave Girl of Gor*, 1977

Does a Gorean male wish to enslave a woman? Then she is (however briefly) the most important thing in the world to him. Does he wish to release her "true slave self"? Then he is concerned about her self. Does he wish to bring her to slave-orgasm? Then the man is (sometimes, for whatever reason) willing to spend time on her pleasure. Given cultural conditioning, and the female reader's propensity to see intimacy where the male reader sees a fuck, the phenomenon of the female *Gor* fan ceases to amaze.

Norman's is the quintessential paternal attitude towards women -- we know what you want, what you desire, what you need, what is good for you; and we'll give it to you whether you want it or not. You cannot be allowed to judge.

What do women want? To be what they are. According to Norman, women are natural slaves:

> It was my intention to teach the girl who she was, truly, to free at long last the hidden slave which was her secret self, her true self, that girl which, hitherto, had been permitted to emerge only in the disguise of dreams, that piteous girl, denied and suppressed....
>
> *Explorers of Gor*, 1979

Slave training methods as described by Norman are a textbook of brain-washing techniques. Starvation, beatings, sensory confusion, random reward-and-punishment, training (literally) as an animal... the human being reverts to child/parent behaviour and tries to placate by submission and obedience. Nothing to do with genetic theory -- Gorean female slaves love their masters for the same reason that hostages love their terrorists.

Women are tricky beasts, though. They *refuse* to admit their own nature. Men have to force them to admit it. In the *Gor* books, this comes in three ritual stages: Haughty Woman Scorns Our Hero, Ritual Humiliation of the Captive Woman, and The Female Capitulation to Biological Destiny. Any given episode of any *Gor* novel illustrates this

But isn't it all just trivial fantasising? Even if it were "just" fantasy, it would still be a matter for concern -- but according to John Norman, it is all true. Another book is illuminating here.

In 1974, DAW Books published a "non fiction" title by John Norman: *Imaginative Sex*. Some chapter headings:

> Ch 7: The Earth-Females-as-Tribute Fantasy
> Ch 8: The I-Am-Sold-In-A-Slave-Market Fantasy
> Ch 9: The Rites-of-Submission Fantasy
> Ch 44: The Slave-Girl-Exchange Fantasy

The latter appears to be a synopsis of an as-yet-unpublished *Gor* novel -- in fact, most of the chapters are *Gor* stripped of the "stage-sets" Norman borrows (from the Plains Indians, the Vikings, the Romans; and, above all, Edgar Rice Burroughs), reduced to plain sexual fantasy for the night world. But the daylight and the night-time worlds are not separate:

> Ch 4: The Wife-as-Whore Fantasy
> Ch 14: The Obnoxious-Woman-Shopper Fantasy
> Ch 24: The I-Want-An-"A"-Professor Fantasy
> Ch 35: The Outwitted-Female-Executive Fantasy

These are rape and revenge fantasies, the object being sexual gratification by re-building one's ego after the wear and tear of everyday existence. It's a progression from Gorean slave-girls to fantasising rape on shoppers and wives to -- what? Putting the theory into practice?

There is nothing inherently immoral or harmful about sexual fantasy: what matters is what fantasy. I'm not advocating censorship. You don't get rid of a disease by eradicating the symptoms. But I do *not* say, with Voltaire, that although I disagree with what you say, I will defend to the death your right to say it. I don't defend anyone's right to publish supposedly-justifiable-rape fantasies. But if they exist, I would sooner have them in sight than in the subworlds of pornography. I don't deny anyone their right to sexual fantasy, but when that fantasy attacks me as a woman, I claim the right to analyse it, dissect it, bring the unexamined assumptions in the *Gor* books to the attention of the readers. And protest. Fantasy is always part of the real world.

Can one speculate about how many sexual offenders may be addicted to *Gor* books? Cases have appeared in the national press, but links between fiction and action are hard to prove. It may be that there are fewer rapes than there would otherwise be, if would-be rapists didn't have *Gor* for an outlet.

Or it may be that seeing such fantasies legitimised in print makes their acting-out in life more possible.

If I believe anything about these books, it is that they reinforce social attitudes off the page and outside the bedroom --- attitudes to do with educational opportunities, marriage, children, pay, pensions, welfare, equality under the law, muggings, theft and rape. Because Norman says, with all the academic jargon and pseudo-science at his command, that a woman is, truly, genetically programmed to endure, enjoy, and become addicted to, degradation, slavery, and pain.

He is not the only one to have said it, nor, I fear, the only one to be believed.

The *Gor* books supply the wants of some readers, provoke avoidance-behaviour in others. Have you picked up the novels from bookshelves and read them; or, seeing the covers (that feature naked, bound, chained, or muzzled women) have you passed by on the other side?

This once, I don't take any of the excuses that avoidance behaviour dictates. I do not say *these are badly-written books so I won't read them*, or *these are socially frowned-on books so I won't read them*, or *these books threaten me, they will make me angry and depressed, so I won't read them*. Sometimes it's good to be angry. Sometimes it's good to be angry and protest.

And when do the protests stop? Oh, about the same time that the yearly *Gor* novel ceases to appear, and the incoming royalties are donated to the foundation of a Rape Crisis Centre. *That's* when.

FUTURISTIC GLOVELEATHER BLOUSON: SF AND THE NEW MAN

GWYNETH JONES

Whatever happened to the noble hero? Seventy years ago when a soldier boy went off to war he at least had the comfort, in his paralysing fear and plummeting self esteem, of a profusion of spine-stiffening rôle models. Adventure fiction of all kinds gave the young European or American no doubt about who he ought to be: and even some hope that he might manage to keep the faith. But at the moment, heroism is out of style. The young man has no guarantee that he won't be sent off to war, but no hope or belief in the battlefield. Maybe there were incredible acts of daring and courage on Goose Green, but what we remember is the Medical Officer's laconic comment: I know what colour adrenalin is now. It's brown. This is not to say that the foulness of trench warfare, the useless squandering of life, went totally uncondemned in 1916. But *in popular culture* the merciful veil of lies remained intact. Now no more. Indiana Jones is unashamedly a shit-scared coward. In the struggle of life, or any other battlefield-analogue, the young man knows that nothing is expected of him beyond amoral survival tactics and (if possible) superior fire power.

Science fiction is notoriously the men-only bar of fiction: where women (for a long time) scarcely appeared even as objects of desire. It would seem to be a good place to look for the development, or demise, of the twentieth century hero. How have men seen themselves, in the mirror of the future? And how has the image changed?

The knight errant of other romantic fiction soon appeared in the new genre, and became essential to that phenomenon now known as space-opera. But a space-opera is never more than some other kind of adventure in fancy dress. The real hero of classic SF, or the classic hero of real SF, emerged as a rather different figure. HG Wells wrote as always about the little man muddling through, even as a time traveller or lunar explorer. Something of this diffidence remains, in the Asimov scientist. This is no Buck Rogers. A stranger to strenuous yuppie leisure activities, he is a desk-flying moderate; a hen-pecked teetotal barfly. Yet a kind of heroism emerges. This is the man of mind. His dull and commonplace homelife only emphasises the nobility of his struggles against the forces of evil. On re-examination, an Asimov story is surprisingly candid about the nature of these struggles. The fantasy element takes up very little space: the story is about securing grants and tenure, fear and backstabbing in the campus jungle; the dismal power of government approval. But the battlefield is real nonetheless, with the fate of the world generally hanging in the balance. The male reader is provided with an ideal not too far removed from his own experience: the lab, the office, the bar. This is a hero for a world without war: or at least a world where actual combat can be avoided -- and yet a young man can still fight the good fight.

The forces of evil are frequently personified in the scientist's grasping, amoral, sensualist wife. But this is not a considered political statement. Male SF writers at this time were a very innocent bunch, sharing the heads-down attitude of real life scientists. Outside of the development of product X they had few opinions on anything at all and simply reflected, without malice, the ideology around them.

The relationship between social change and SF is a curious one. SF readers and writers might be defined as a group of people able to combine rabid conservatism with an equally rabid passion for innovation (a highly appropriate combination for such an intensely American phenomenon). Science fiction on the popular model has and had no perceived need or desire for a revolution in sexual politics. But SF has enlarged its horizons to the point where it cannot resist any kind of revolution. On the letters page of last season's Interzone, a fan explains the position: *"How many modern SF readers have even heard of semiotics? Damn few: but I suspect that many of those who had, heard of it through SF -- which is more than you can say for any other genre..."*

The note of manic pride is most touching. Clearly then, it doesn't matter at all that the average modern SF reader would hardly know a radical separatist from a defective O ring. If the game is new, SF simply has to play.

Two forces then combine to assault male rôle models: in SF as in the world. War, the essential male metaphor, has changed fundamentally. Weapons of mass destruction have eroded the gender differential: a soldier on a real battlefield has become rather like a woman (that is, a helpless victim). At the same time, and perhaps not unconnected, there is the upsurge of feminism and gay pride: a vocal minority claiming that the traditional gender rules don't fit the phenomena anymore (if they ever did).

Undoubtedly, women writers have contributed a great deal to the development of the New Man. Woman writing SF as an escape into the desirable male world frequently develop a tacitly bisexual persona: a male character who is the writer's self, expressing her experience but without the handicap of being female. This character does not then obey the gender rules: against depth and complexity of characterisation, emotionalism, self questioning; complex relationships with others. A hero like Genly Ai, or Shevek in *The Dispossessed*, must have come as an incredible revelation at the time. The enormous popularity of Ursula LeGuin with male readers shows how welcome the revelation was.

In the old pulp stories male writers would sometimes include a girl in the expedition, not so much for sex interest (perish the thought), as to have a place to put the fear and trembling. Someone must scream when a sun explodes: and it certainly couldn't be any of the men. Women writers, often in deliberate and conscious reversal, have instituted the shockable and tearful hero. CJ Cherryh

has made male vulnerability almost an axiom of her fictional universe: plausibly linking this quality with the brittle pride of masculine aggression. The male is bound by nature to take on the universe single-handed: if he breaks under the strain, it is hardly surprising.

These are "men" invented by women for their own satisfaction. More telling perhaps are the women invented by men in the same era. Haldeman's bunkmates of *The Forever War* are not sex-objects. The fact that they are soldiers indicates that they are really men -- men whom men are permitted to embrace. They have no particular feminine attributes besides the names and pronouns. But by calling some of his troops men and some women, Haldeman can allow them all to weep and suffer, to console and be consoled; and still manage to save the appearances of the gender roles.

The *nouvelle vague* of feminism inspired several male SF writers to try on the mantle of caring, compassionate personhood. A bisexual future on the lines of that described by Marge Piercy in *Woman on the Edge of Time* can be discerned in Ed Bryant's sophisticated *Cinnabar* stories: where the first man to bear a child is remembered as a social benefactor. Other enthusiastic feminists betray a deep reluctance to give up the pattern of submission/domination. John Varley's male characters abase themselves before a pantheon of women, blacks, deaf mutes; who have become the new superior race. And the "new man" of the real world also lives in SF, in many, many starship captains and temporal-physicists who are now proud to do the washing up. Barry Novitski's story *Nuclear Fission* sums it all up: the self-congratulatory non-sexist, with a hopeless tin ear for the nuances of mutual respect. New man and the alternative Utopia have failed each other badly.

> Coyote's garden rose in a slow slope of earth from the surrounding lawn, the shape as it happened of Spider's left breast when she slept, though he never told her that. She would criticise him for perpetuating some fertility goddess myth or other. Whatever the image, it was a good functional design. Where the nipple would be, a pool of water slowly crested...

To make a garden in the shape of a lover's anatomy might be a pleasing conceit. But to do it on the sly is no compliment. It is hard to believe that Novitski doesn't realise he has given his right-on hero a girlie magazine to gloat over in private.

After the party comes the hangover. Feminist SF must, of its nature, continue to explore alternatives to the status quo. But mainstream futurism always responds speedily to changes in the present, so the time for whole-earthers and childbirth envy has passed. In the gloom of the *fin de siecle* there seems a growing agreement that only women will be optimistic, and male writers will also abandon all claim to the moral high ground. Stephen Donaldson's best-selling hero is a case in point. (Remember him? The rapist with leprosy). An anti-hero is a character who breaks the heroic mould, and remains central in defiance of that. Thomas Covenant is something different. He has heroic powers -- and would not be the focus of interest without them. What he lacks is a positive self image, a set of values on which to base his actions: and above all a final optimism about himself and the world. The paradoxical "success" of such a rôle model, with male readers whose own lives are generally perfectly comfortable, prosperous and healthy, may be taken as a sign of deep underlying malaise.

Another astonishingly popular male fantasy figure makes the statement even more clearly. The film *First Blood* is a completely male experience. No female characters, no female principle is invoked: in this it resembles greatly the old classic SF. But this is not a self satisfied macho romp. It is a self-accusatory fable of the American experience in Vietnam. Rambo plays the righteous, courageous, resourceful gook: the American forces (of law and order) play themselves -- in horrendous detail of brash stupidity, brutality and misplaced fire power. As if hoping to acquire the characteristics of a revered enemy, America cannibalises the successful Vietcong. But the attempt fails. The champion's magnificent (if gruesome) feats of prowess are totally meaningless. He has no objective but his own survival, and no hope of enjoying that: no support from any social structure; not a friend in the world. Rambo emerges as the despairing brainwashed tool of forces that despise him -- a final inversion that makes him the exact counterpart of the Manchurian Candidate of another era. But now the cynical forces are American top brass. One wonders how much of this information gets through, unconsciously perhaps, to the masses of young males who so fervently embrace John Rambo as their ideal.

Meanwhile in SF, Thomas Covenant the misunderstood gives way to a much more stylish operator. The name for a hero without a cause (when he isn't emoting dumb misery as the tormented male American psyche) -- is a mercenary. And a streetwise mercenary is the present hero of the future, epitomised in Henry Case of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*. Neither the authentically boring scientist, nor the butch galactic ranger, Case is the descendent of another line of SF heroes. He is the boy-jester of Theodore Sturgeon, Zelazny, Delany: the old soul in a slim young body; with a past and sorrows and a passionate interest in his personal appearance. Like those ambiguously glamorous heroes of Delany's *Nova* and "Time Seen As A Helix Of Semi-precious Stones", he inhabits a future continuum which is no different from the present except in hyperbole and decorative detail. He is caught up in great events, but neither expects nor desires to affect any outcome. He lives outside the law, but has no ambition to change it. But where the Delany or Zelazny character was able to make moral choices and to trust his friends, at least occasionally, Case is completely helpless. Or, to put it another way, completely free.

Like Rambo, Case is essentially a powerful, well-made tool. What he does is what he is. Case is designed for breaking into computer systems, not for killing (at least not primarily) -- but his position is the same. His power is not his own. It belongs to whoever has hired him. And when he does break free, he has no idea what to do with this tool that is himself.

> He still had his anger. That was like being rolled in some alley and waking to discover your wallet still in your pocket, untouched. He warmed himself with it, unable to give it a name or an object...

Anger without an object, a hero without a cause, a soldier without a battlefield. It is no accident that the "liberated woman" in *Neuromancer* finally "betrays" Case. Caught up in admiration of his own tragedy the new man, the obsolete walking *tool* is not yet ready even to consider a fresh direction.

These despairing self-portraits offer evidence that men secretly feel as much need as women -- in the late twentieth century -- to imagine new rôles for themselves. And SF is probably the place to do it. But the doubt and questioning must come from within. Neither imitating nor deriding feminism will solve the problem.

> She wanted a mirror. She wanted to see the weight of flesh that meant she could kill, the weight that would make her safe in the world outside the canyon. Her thick hand, with clumsy fingers like sausages, padded round her face. It was bearded and larger, but she knew also smooth and whole again. She chuckled to herself and the sound, rising deep out of that bloated chest, startled her and made her jump. She laughed at it again. "I am a man!"

The "she" in this passage is Geoff Ryman, speaking through the heroine of *The Warrior Who Carried Life*. Cara "becomes a man" to avenge her family. It is an audacious device, and not entirely successful, but Ryman is actually using fantasy to consider his own nature; albeit at one remove. Perhaps in future SF will produce more work like this -- conscious and thoughtful examinations of what it means to be a man.

Quotations from: "Nuclear Fission" by Barry Novitski ©1979 from the anthology *Kindred Spirits*, ed. Jeffrey M Elliot, Alyson Publications 1984.

Neuromancer by William Gibson, Grafton pbk, 1986.

The Warrior Who Carried Life by Geoff Ryman, Unwin/Unicorn, 1985.

FEMINIST UTOPIAS

JEAN WEBER

Utopia. 1: A place of ideal perfection, esp. in laws, government, and social conditions; 2: an impractical scheme for social improvement.
Feminism. 1: Theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes; 2: organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests.
(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Feminist utopian fiction (especially that written by women) concerns itself less with e[illegible] operty and labour-management arrangements than with social arrangements.* Who does the housework? Who cares for the children? What sort of relationships (including sexual) exist between adults? How are decisions made? Not all of the works discussed here are "utopian" in the sense of depicting a complete, functioning "ideal" society, but each story has elements that feminists consider necessary for such a society. Many of the writers explicitly note that any society will have tensions amongst its members, that in a real world not everyone will agree on what's "ideal"; some authors offer suggestions of ways to deal with this problem, others don't. Many writers contrast their "ideal" society with another, distinctly distopian one. Some focus almost exclusively on the distopia; an examination of what's wrong with one society is a prerequisite for choosing what to include in a better one. Of course, deciding what's "right" and "wrong" is a value-judgement, and my choice might be different from yours, or from any given author's.

The societies in feminist utopian fiction can be categorised in various ways; in this article I've divided them into those that include men, and those that don't. The women-only societies seem to cause more excitement with most people, so let's look at them first.

WOMEN-ONLY SOCIETIES

The most striking difference between women's and men's depictions of women-only societies is that male writers typically see them as lacking a vital component, and female writers typically don't. Indeed, Joanna Russ does a wonderful send-up of the theme in her short story "When It Changed"; her women are far from delighted to be "saved" by the arrival on the planet Whileaway of a spaceship full of men, after 30 generations of an all-female society.

Russ's Whileaway appears in a slightly different form in her novel *The Female Man*, wherein women from several different centuries and alternative Earths meet. This overtly feminist book pulls no punches in describing the negative side of our society, while comparing it to an alternative "present day" that is somewhat worse (World War II never occurred and the Depression continues), and two futures: one that is far worse than today (the "war between the sexes" has reached the mass killing stage) and one that is idealistic: the woman-only world of Whileaway.

In describing her utopia, Russ recognises that not everybody (even women) is nice, and that any non-coercive society must make arrangements to deal with unpleasant and disruptive people. She also recognises that childbearing and rearing is a burden as well as a joy, and that a culture where everyone is capable of childbearing would approach this subject with practical solutions, not platitudes.

James Tiptree Jnr. (a pseudonym for Alice Sheldon) makes a similarly satirical point in "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" three male astronauts return from a timewarp to an Earth populated only by women. Each of the men takes one of the stereotyped male responses to such a situation: one considers himself a "messiah", here to save the women from the terrible fate which has befallen them; another sees them as a vast collection of sexually-deprived people needing a good fuck; the third, embarrassed by the others, wishes to rescue the women from his mates (not realising that the women are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves). Again, the all-female society is quite different from our own: egalitarianism is a way of life (though it's clearly recognised that not everyone is equally capable): practicality wins over pretentions again.

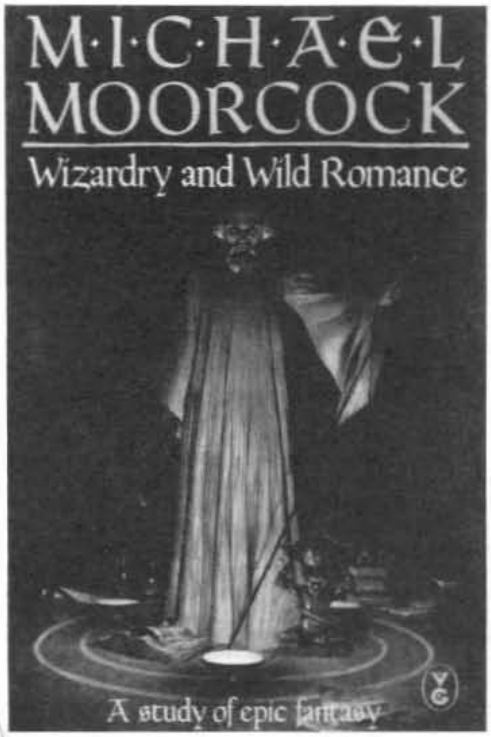
An early novel about a single-sex society is *Herland*, written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 1915. Herland is on Earth, but isolated from the rest of the world, in a valley where a natural disaster has killed all the men. One woman, and her descendants, was able to reproduce by parthenogenesis. The story takes place some 2000 years later, in our own time. Gilman's women live communally (sharing eating space, child-care and other "housekeeping" chores), but each has her private space. Their main occupations are agriculture and education, and they live very ecologically. They are trying to breed better people, improve the human race and their quality of life.
Gilman uses humour and satire heavily, overemphasising the value of "motherhood" to the point of absurdity. Some critics have taken her seriously, however I agree with Diane Cook that Gilman's constant harping on the topic is a dig at the themes of the anti-feminists and anti-suffragists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Sally Miller Gearhart contrasts a two-sex society much like our own with a women-only society in her feminist fantasy *The Wanderground*. Her two-sex society is definitely a distopia, incorporating all the worst features of a large city, focussing particularly on the treatment of women and on the rejection of the men by the earth itself. The women of the Wanderground, outside the city, are developing powers of telepathy, telekenesis, and other functions of the mind. Thus they are able to communicate and to do many things without machines and technology. They are very close to nature and can communicate with the spirits of plants and animals.

* Footnote

Diane Cook, in a paper titled "Yes, Virginia, there's always been women's science fiction -- feminist, even" presented at Aussiecon II and published in *Contrary Modes* (ed. Blackford, Blackford, Sussex & Talbot, Ebony Books, 1985), describes feminist utopian fiction thus:

> "Unlike much male-authored utopian fiction, feminist utopian fiction has been concerned not so much with viable strategies for the future as with envisaging what might lie beyond the complex political struggles its authors know lie ahead... These works imagine how we might think, how our language, actions and consciousness might be centred if they were released from the grasp of patriarchal power, and how our environments might consequently change. They may not outline the means of attaining utopia, but this is not important. Their value lies in their capacity to release feminist imaginations and thus to stimulate feminist dialogue."



THE HEROES AND HEROINES

Unfortunately the majority of imitators who came in recent years to fulfil the demands of publishers sensing a commercial market were attracted to what is presumably a compensatory fantasy of homicidal barbarians and grunting rapists. As a result they produced characters even more terrifyingly simple-minded than Conan himself. The appeal was never easy for me to understand, but I was given a clue some years ago when, as a guest of a fantasy convention, I appeared on a panel with a group of sword-and-sorcery writers who told the audience that the reason they wrote such fantasy was because they (and, they implied, the audience) felt inadequate to cope with the complexities of modern life. "Where today!" asked one, "can you put an arm hold around a man's throat and slip a knife into him between the third and fourth ribs and get away with it!" The answer was, of course, that the Marines were still looking for recruits. But maybe he meant, "Where can you do that and not have someone retaliate?" If that's the main appeal of such stories it probably explains why most people over the age of eighteen stop reading them.

One other less violently-disposed writer, whose characters were not mindless butchers, was Andre Norton. Although I find her protagonists somewhat too wholesome for my own taste, she has produced a great deal of good quality fantasy which has had a marked influence on the writers who came after her, particularly the women. Norton's sword-wielding riders of dragons and unicorns are young women. This doesn't make her fiction necessarily "feminist" (there's a tendency to claim feminism for any fantasy with a female leading character these days) and it's true that her use of women in what had traditionally been a male role is no more than simple reversal, but they offer a more palatable alternative to Gronk the Berserker. Her heroines are filled with a love of nature and display a caring sentimentality towards the world at large. If her people sometimes are a little too cute (are they trying to apologize for being active?) it's better to suffer that than to be subjected to characters who have the political sophistication of a stormtrooper and the sensitivity of a bad-tempered wolverine. Norton's influence has perhaps been unfortunate, in that sometimes one begins to think the only alternative to Brute is Cute, and one grows sick, these days, of a surfeit of healers, unicorns, nurturers and beast-tamers. One begins to long to come across a female protagonist called, say, Naomi the Castrator. One could tell her to look up John Norman, for a start (but more of that later. . . .)

Cute has by no means become the province of women fantasts. Many men, presumably also sickened by the plethora of barbarians, have produced extremely sentimental work. Violence, after all, is only the other side of the sentimental coin, as the behaviour of, for instance, concentration camp commandants frequently testifies.

M O O R C O C K

It is a relief to mention an excellent writer, one of the newer generation, Robin McKinley, whose central character Angharad ["Harry"] Crewe is a personable young woman who is able to bring just the right note of perfect credibility to a tale of wonder:

> Then she found that she remembered her parents together again; as if her mother had died recently, or her father five years ago — or as if the difference, which had seemed so important, no longer mattered. She remembered them with affection, but she looked across the swirled sand and small obstinate clumps of suckle and lilac. She remembered them with affection, but she brush and was content with where she was. A small voice whispered to her that she didn't even want to go Home again. She wanted to cross the desert and climb into the mountains in the east, the mountains no Homelander had ever climbed.
>
> *The Blue Sword*, 1982

McKinley is representative, in my view, of the best of the modern fantasts. There is nothing cute or apologetic about her characters, neither are they brutal, mindless or cruel. This is true of many others, including Patricia McKillip:

> She unlocked the gates, her fingers shaking in an anger that roused through her like a clean mountain wind. She snapped private calls into the dream-drugged minds about her, and, like pieces of dreams themselves, the animals moved toward her.
>
> *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*, 1980

With the exception of Wolfe and Harrison, most of the interesting fantasy at present seems to be coming from women. Joan Vinge, Lisa Goldstein, Elizabeth A. Lynn, Katherine Kurtz and a number of others have all done good and original work. Since the epic fantasy form has always tended to put rather more accent on personalities and relationships than, say, science fiction, it's an ideal form for good women writers to turn to their own uses. I would like to see a few more fantasies like Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* [1975], making genuinely original use of the genre. There's still a disappointing amount of simple role reversal, of strong, paternal background figures "helping" the heroine in her adventures, of leggy teenagers getting enthusiastic about being allowed to ride a lot of horses. One of the great cross-influences brought by a number of women writers who have chosen to write fantasy is that of the historical romance. Jean Plaidy, Norah Lofts and, on a somewhat different plane, Mary Renault seem to have spawned more than a few imitators who, rather than do the historical research, have chosen to set their timeless love-stories in fairy-tale lands even further divorced from reality than the worlds of Georgette Heyer and Baroness Orczy. There are by no means, I suppose, as pernicious as the male equivalent (i.e. John Norman), but they are almost as bad in some ways because they so often present conventional stereotypical images of male and female relationships, continuing to show men as "masterful" and women as fundamentally passive. Rambofiction makes much the same statements. Whether their authors realize it or not, they are involved in mass-production. Instead of carving their dolls at a factory bench, they are doing piece-work at home.

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Gearhart doesn't fall into the "everybody agrees" trap; her women disagree, often very strongly, but they don't use violence to force their views on each other -- they talk, and argue, and try for concensus, and go away if they can't agree. Anyone who's been involved in a consciousness-raising group, or a policy discussion at a women's centre, will recognise some of the discussions in this book!

The book reminds me of Suzy McKee Charnas' *Walk to the End of the World* and *Motherlines*, in its basic premise of a women's culture based on deliberate separation from male society (Russ and Tiptree's female societies were accidental). Charnas's books are strongly critical of men, yet show a certain amusement at the disagreements between "factions" of women. Much of *Motherlines* in particular sounds like women's-centre policy arguments to me. I'd hardly call Gearhart's or Charnas's societies "utopian" in the sense of being ideal, but their women are certainly struggling in that direction.

Sandi Hall's *The Godmothers* encompasses several timestreams, among which the main characters jump frequently. Somewhen in the future is a society of women trying to affect their past (to create their own present?); their society has utopian elements, depicted mainly in contrast with the tensions between men and women in our own times. One nice touch is the complete inability of the men to grasp the concept of a guerilla group without leaders.

Marion Zimmer Bradley has a single-sex (female) utopian society operating as a sub-group in her Darkover novels. The women of the so-called "Free Amazons" or Guild of Renunciates had small rôles in several of the early novels, but three books focus entiely upon them. *The Shattered Chain* introduces us to their background and customs; *Thendara House* and *City of Sorcery* take place largely within a Guild house and the lives of its women. The Renunciates live communally, though they are not required to live in a Guild house. Some love men, a few live with men, many bear children by men, but they swear allegiance to no one but each other. The contrast between most of Darkover society, which is patriarchal (occasionally in the extreme) and the Guild houses is striking, but Bradley does not depict her Amazon society as all sweetness and light. As in Russ or Gearhart, the women have differences of opinion and often argue them strongly. Again, I often feel I'm reading about a discussion taking place at the local women's centre.

TWO-SEX SOCIETIES

A modern "classic", and the finest feminist SF novel I've ever read, is Marge Piercy's *Woman On The Edge Of Time*. Two main timestreams (and one minor) overlap in the mind of Connie Ramos, a 35-year-old Mexican-American woman living in New York City on welfare. Connie has been confined to a mental institution for being "violent"; while in hospital, she visits Luciente, a woman who lives 150 years in the future. Luciente works hard to convince Connie that this future is a good one, but it will only come to exist if certain things happen in Connie's present. Connie does not immediately appreciate many of the facets of this future, because they clash with her value systems.

Some of the future society's solutions for male-female relationship problems are deliberately shocking: babies are produced in artificial wombs, from stored genetic material, so no-one knows who are the biological parents; this is to prevent adults feeling they "own" their children, and to remove a womans one advantage over men: the ability to bear children. Child-raising is done by both sexes, and a simple hormone treatment allows men as well as women to suckle infants. Each child has several "parents" -- adults responsible for their welfare -- but is educated by anyone the child chooses to learn from. Death, too, is treated quite differently: whenever possible, people choose when to die, and throw a party with their friends to mark their passing. The society is technological, but the people live in small, dispersed communities close to nature and don't abuse the environment. (An alternative future is briefly visited, where all the bad points of a large city are carried to extremes.)

A long-lost utopian novel, written by an Australian woman in 1879, was first published in 1984: *Handfasted* by Catherine Helen Spence depicts a society that has thrown off many of the fetters of 19th-century sexual and social constraints, especially those enslaving women. The male narrator, a young Australian doctor, discovers a lost colony of Scottish immigrants in a remote North American valley (Columba), who have been living isolated from the rest of the world for 200 years.

The central concept of the book is with the Columban practice of "handfasting", a sort of one-year trial marriage (a radical concept in 1879) and its moral implications for deeply Christian people. Spence also examines the status of children and has some unusual arrangements regarding education and learning (Columbans lack reading, writing and books, for all but a select few, for example). No-one lacks for the material necessities of life, there are well-developed cultural outlets, a minimum of laws, and a system of private "ownership" of land and goods but without any rights of inheritance; all of these are presented in the guise of "show the stranger what a good life we have".

But not everyone is delighted: the author recognises the arrangement's limitations (for example, people arn't allowed to travel outside the valley; if they leave, they may not return). Spence doesn't pretend to have an answer for every problem; her concern is primarily with the removal of restrictions on women. Interestingly, the women of Columba (while very "liberated" by the standards of 1879), lead lives similar to those considered "traditional" for women today: primarily concerned with home and children. Could Spence only imagine certain changes, or was she unwilling to be completely radical?

Another Australian novel, first published in censored form in 1947 and republished with all cuts restored and annotations of the changes, is *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* by M Barnard Eldershaw (a pseudonym for Marjorie Barnard and Flora Eldershaw, two novelists who were involved in the radical left in the 1920s and 30s). Two stories are interwoven: one of the present (mid-twentieth) century and one of the 24th century. The Depression and Second World War are contrasted with the technocratic socialist society of the future.

The authors don't depict the 24th century as a place where no-one is unhappy or dissatisfied, but they do show it as, in many ways, a vast improvement for the common man or woman. They don't go as deeply into questions of human relationships as do some of the other authors mentioned: most of the action takes place in the 20th century, whose immediate problems (and the possible consequences of the decisions being made at the time) were the authors' major concerns.

Elizabeth Lynn's *Chronicles of Tornor* cover several societies in the Land of Arun. The main focus of *The Dancers of Arun* (the second of the three volumes) is on a mixed-sex utopian group hidden away in a valley; Lynn examines the themes of multi-racialism, various sexual pairings or groupings, attitudes towards the handicapped, communal living, and the superiority of negotiation over conflict. Again, a contrast is drawn between the utopian group and the outside world, though by no means are the utopians depicted as always right or as having found the only right way: Lynn clearly recognises that what's best for some may not be best for others (let alone everyone), and that people need to be able to find their own way.

Ursula LeGuin makes several points about "single-sex" societies in *The Left Hand of Darkness*. The members of her (alien) society are neuter most of the time, but at intervals (similar to human female's menstrual periods) they become either male or female. Because every member of society is potentially a mother, and because sex is exceptionally important during the periods of "kemmer", her aliens have a society which is not differentiated by sex, and indeed find the concept absurd.

A similar notion is expressed in Mary Gentle's *Golden Witchbreed*, where the aliens are neuter until puberty, when they become one sex or the other for the rest of their lives. By that time, however, they've learnt a trade and have begun to make a place for themselves in society; since no-one knows which sex a child will turn out to be, all are raised the same, and the idea that males and females are inherently different is utterly absent.

This article provides a brief overview of feminist utopian fiction written by women. It is not intended to be

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GIVING TONGUE:

Notes on *Native Tongue* by Suzette Haden Elgin

MIKE CHRISTIE

In *Native Tongue*, Suzette Haden Elgin has tried to synthesize the ideas of three very different scientists -- Noam Chomsky, Benjamin Whorf and Kurt Gödel. None of these ideas is simple, andconsequently Elgin has set herself a daunting task. Whether she succeeds is arguable, but in the attempt she has produced an exceptionally interesting book.

Native Tongue is a dystopia. Women have been declared legal minors, and a claustrophobically authoritarian male-dominated society has arisen, whose power-structure is centred on the "Lines". These are the families who control the ability to learn alien languages, and hence who control trade. The story centres on the women of the Lines.

Their struggle for freedom and equality is doomed if they take the course of armed struggle. They have been demoralized more thoroughly than most enslaved races have ever been. However, Elgin proposes linguistics coming to their aid, via a women's language, Láadan. It is the scientific theories she invokes, and the fusion of them that she proposes, that is the subject of this article.

First, though, I should say something about the scientists involved, as not everyone is familiar with all of them. The best known of the three, and certainly the one whose ideas have been most used in SF, is probably Benjamin Whorf. Whorf was a linguist who produced what is generally known as the Whorf hypothesis. In its strongest form, it runs something like this: "The language you speak has a determining influence on the way you think." This has been widely used in SF in such books as Delany's *Babel-17* and Orwell's *1984*, but the best example of a more straightforward application of the Whorf hypothesis in SF is probably Jack Vance's *Languages of Pao*. Here's a quote that redefines the hypothesis in more vivid terms:

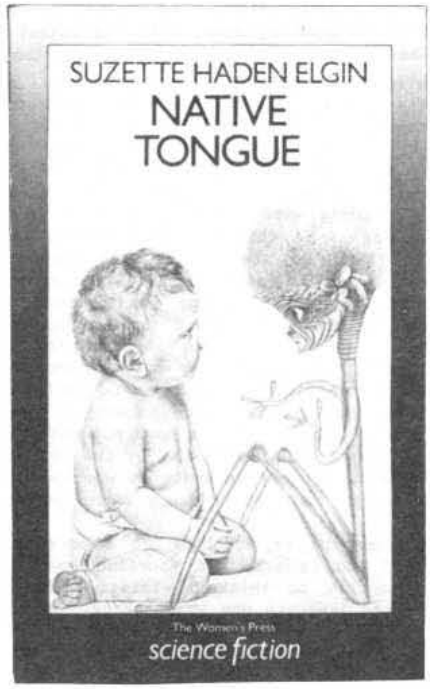
> Think of a language as the contour of a watershed, stopping flow in certain directions, channelling it in others. Language controls the mechanism of your mind. When people speak different languages, their minds work differently and they act differently.
>
> (p47, Mayflower edition)

And here Vance shows how the Whorf hypothesis can be used to perform cultural engineering:

> "You have not grasped the essential point," said Palafox. "Paonese is a passive dispassionate language. It presents the world in two dimensions, without tension or contrast. A people speaking Paonese, theoretically, ought to be docile, passive, without strong personality development -- in fact, exactly as the Paonese people are. The new language will be based on the contrast and comparison of strength, with a grammar simple and direct. To illustrate, consider the sentence, 'The farmer chops down a tree.' (Literally rendered from the Paonese in which the two men spoke, the sentence was; 'Farmer *in state of exertion;* tree *in state of subjection to attack.*') "In the new language the sentence becomes: 'The farmer overcomes the inertia of the axe, the axe breaks asunder the resistance of the tree.' Or perhaps: 'The farmer vanquishes the tree, using the weapon-instrument of the axe.'"

It should be emphasized that this is a strong reading of the Whorf hypothesis, and it is very doubtful that Whorf himself would have subscribed to it; however it is clear from *Native Tongue* that Elgin is assuming this version, at least for this book.

The ideas of Noam Chomsky are also quite necessary to an understanding of the book. Chomsky proposed a linguistic theory called Transformational Grammar, and as part of this theory described what he called "deep structure". This is an idea that can be seen as being in opposition to Whorf. Chomsky proposes that the essential linguistic form of a sentence is not its surface structure -- i.e. the words you see or hear -- but instead, something deeper, the "base component" as it is called. This base component when input into Chomskian grammer can generate either, "The man hit the ball," or "The ball was hit by the man", depending on how you choose to apply the rules of the grammar -- a stylistic decision, not a linguistic one. Now it is possible to read this as saying that the deep structure is the semantic component, or the meaning of the sentences, and it is also theorised that the same base component is used for all human languages -- that is, they have the same deep structure. These last two extensions are not believed by Chomsky himself, but there are linguists who do believe them, and this is the point of view which Elgin seems to subscribe to.



There isn't much SF based on Chomskian ideas. It can be argued that to communicate with aliens, we will need to have some considerable overlap in the base component used by the two races if the strong version of Chomsky's theories (the last two extensions mentioned above in particular) turns out to be true. This is because the conception of reality held in our heads is obviously directly and closely related to the base component of the language we speak, and to the semantic units available to us.

Our mental manipulation of reality may be done on a verbal or non-verbal level (there is some lively debate on this point among linguists) but if there is little overlap in the base components, talking to an alien would mean that your own representation of reality would be turned into words (the "meaning" of which might have been agreed by some hypothetical contact workers from the two races) and then as the alien reads these words, they would be decoded into a representation of reality in his brain. This can't be the same as the representation in your brain (that was our assumption) so *regardless* of what mechanism you use to agree the meaning of words, there is no

sensible way you can claim that you and the alien understand each other. This is perhaps a theoretical justification for stories about the impossibility of communicating with aliens, such as Terry Carr's "The Dance of the Changer and the Three", and Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey".

Another essential part of Chomsky's work is the idea that language is not a skill, acquired by deduction and trial and error, but is instead an organ, like the heart or the kidneys. It grows, feeds on whatever is in its environment, and reaches an adult state. The final state is dependent on the potential of the original, however, just as the heart cannot grow into a lung. This view, that language using is a genetically inherited trait, appears in *Native Tongue* very explicitly. Elgin uses both Chomskian and Whorfian ideas side by side, with the intent perhaps of showing that they are not at all mutually exclusive.

The Interface in *Native Tongue* is an excellent example of the Chomskian ideas, because it implies that to speak the language of an alien (and let's assume that its overlap with our base component is large, but not complete) one must first go about acquiring its worldview. Growing up with it is a very sure way of sharing its perception of reality, and hence being able to usefully speak its language. So children, from a very early age, spend a great deal of their time with aliens. Non-humanoid aliens on the other hand, are impossible to communicate with because of the limitations mentioned above. Some children are given hallucinogenic drugs; although they do seem to succeed in acquiring the non-humanoid's view of the world, they are rendered incapable of normal human communication. This would be because they no longer have the same base component (a genetically determined part of a human, it has been suggested, but here reshaped, or at least made malleable, by the hallucinogens) and so the utterances they generate in whatever form can no longer be mapped onto an ordinary human perception of reality.

With the concept of Encoding we come closer to a fusion of Whorf and Chomsky. A Whorfian would not deny that it is possible to think of things which are not catered to by the language one is speaking. He would say that it is unlikely that the concept would surface in the speaker's mind, because his language does not predispose him to think of that concept by providing a handy lexicalization. Elgin acknowledges this in the discussion of Encodings at the head of Chapter Two. The belief that a language is not necessarily a full crystallisation of reality is compatible with both theories; Whorf, obviously, as it is almost a paraphrase of the Whorf hypothesis, and Chomsky, for whom the generative grammar that turns the base component into an utterance is the tool that can be incomplete and that fails to let a language map onto reality. Hence Encoding is a consistent (and fascinating) device in the plot.

The major Whorfian device in the book is Láadan, the language invented by women for their emancipation. Láadan is a tool to develop children's perceptions of reality, and to imprint them with the worldview inherent in the language. In the terms we have been using, Encoding is the process by which a Chomskian deep structural element is identified and brought into the language for Whorfian use. But what is this Whorfian use? Elgin gives us only hints and clues, and to interpret them, we must first consider the third of the three scientists mentioned above, Kurt Gödel.

Gödel's ideas are counter-intuitive, and quite difficult to grasp if you haven't come across them before. Perhaps the best way to see what is going on is to say, "This sentence is false," and then to try to decide whether the sentence really is false. Well, if it's false, that means that whatever it says is wrong. But it says it's false. So we must take it that that means it's true. Okay, if it's true, we have to believe what it says. But it says it's false, so it can't be true.....

Quite soon after encountering a sentence like this for the first time, you just give up with a grin and say, "Well, who cares whether it's true or false." That's fine for human beings, but what Gödel did was to take the central idea of this sentence and transform it into a mathematical idea. Essentially, what is often called the Gödel statement can be roughly translated into English as follows: "This formula cannot be proved in this mathematical system."

A very similar chain of argument to that followed earlier will lead you to the conclusion that this is indeed a true statement. *However*, and this is the crux of the matter, we figured out that it was true by reasoning outside the mathematical system. The system itself couldn't have done it. So the conclusion we are left with is that the mathematical system we used can't tell us everything -- there are true facts in the world which it doesn't know anything about.

How does this relate to *Native Tongue*? Well, Gödel showed that the above line of reasoning applies not to just one formal system, but to anything at all that can be represented as a formal system. Elgin is saying that the political system can be regarded as a formal system, and that it is then subject to Gödelian self-destruction, and that the agent of this self-destruction is Láadan. It's probably worth mapping out explicitly the relationships between the use of the Whorf hypothesis in the book and Gödel's theorem; such a mapping would go like this:

Gödel	Native Tongue (Whorf hypothesis)
A formal system	A power structure
Statements in the formal system	English sentence
Self-referential statements (and metastatements)	Láadan sentences
Gödel statement	Use of Láadan
Unprovability of Gödel statement	Incapacity of the powerstructure to use Láadan
Truth of the Gödel statement	The ascendance of Láadan
The incompleteness of the formal system	The dissolution of the powerstructure

How do the women in *Native Tongue* emancipate themselves? We know from the preface that they do, and yet Elgin nowhere explicitly shows us anything we can seriously interpret as a revolution. There is also no hint in the book of any revolutionary movement other than the Láadan group. The mapping above points to the existence of Láadan as the key, but just what, exactly, does it *do*? Láadan is not going to change the men -- Elgin specifically states that Láadan is a women's language. Hence the women must change, to the extent that revolution becomes not only possible but inevitable. Given the Láadan vocabulary in the appendix, and given the philosophy of the language, it seems very probable that the effect is to (by Whorfian means) render the idea of a power relationship almost an obscenity -- so that someone whose native tongue is Láadan would react far more vigorously and emotionally against another person exerting or attempting to exert dominance over them in the way that is acceptable in the book and in the real world. Raising a generation who were rebellious not because of any ideological training, but simply because of the way they thought, would be a sure way of destroying the political status quo.

However, there is more to the Whorf and Gödel synthesis than this. A quote from the book is relevant here, pointing at something not yet discussed:

> They marvelled, sometimes, in the Lines, at the efficiency of the mental filters that kept from the masters even the realization that they were slavers.....allowed to be slavers by the grace of the slaves, but slavers nonetheless.
>
> (p96, Women's Press Edition)

In other words, the non-Linguists in the world of *Native Tongue* are labouring under an incorrect perception of reality. But what causes this, what perpetuates it? Not the language they speak (nominally English) for at least two reasons: firstly, Elgin nowhere even hints that language may be to blame for this particular misapprehension, and secondly, the error is of a different order to the cruelty of the men in their power relationships. It is a cultural error, not a personal one. The central idea from Whorf, that of distortion of perception, has been taken out of its usual context and expanded to represent a culture. Another quote points this up more clearly, this time from the heading to Chapter Thirteen:

Reformulation One, Gödel's Theorem:
For any language there are perceptions which it cannot express because they would result in its indirect self-destruction.
Reformulation One-Prime, Gödel's Theorem:
For any culture, there are languages which it cannot use because they would result in its indirect self-destruction.

Elgin proposes a two-stage process. Firstly the use of a language will create particular patterns of thought, perhaps rebellious patterns in the sense described above. Then this pattern of thought will create a new culture in exactly the same way. The relationship between these two processes can be mapped out as we did earlier for Gödel and Whorf:

Language	Culture
English -- the established language	Male dominance -- the established political situation
Láadan -- the created language	An egalitarian society -- a utopia
Teaching Láadan	Preparing for revolution
An Encoding	A subversive idea
Writing down Encodings	Original political thought

It is noticeable that there is no mapping represented above for the actual act of revolution. This is not really a gap; the mapping presented earlier, of Gödel to Whorf, is, in its entirety, representative of the revolutionary act. Elgin does fail to show any of the mechanics in the book, and this must, I think, be regarded as a flaw in the book, interesting though the subsequent literary detective work may be.

The two stage process that is invoked to trigger the revolution means that Elgin is not making the claim that a language is in itself a formal system. Instead of applying Gödel to the language, she applies Whorf to politics, and Gödel to the result. This is the synthesis that Elgin was after. How well it works depends on how believable you find the transition to equality that Elgin fails to show us -- surely, as mentioned above, the major problem with the book.

The flaw is not, I think, a fatal one. The ideas in the book are some of the most stimulating to appear in SF, and Elgin does the complexity of the ideas full justice, even if the plot machinery fails perhaps to bear the weight it is asked to.

To recap, then, we have a feminist dystopia -- women are appallingly treated, and are regarded as legally and factually lesser beings than men. No ordinary revolution is possible, but the power that rests in the linguists' hands rests also in the hands of the women of the Lines, and this power is put to use by the methods described above to generate first a psychological atmosphere in which revolution becomes possible, and second, the revolution itself.

Several fasinating points raised by the book remain completely unanswered, however. For example, to what extent is the representation of revolution as a byproduct of conditioning a valid one? Is it really an attitude of mind, and not any ideological motive, that prompts someone to join a fight for a political ideal? And if it is, are all political arenas capable of being represented in microcosm as personal psychological conflicts, or will necessary subtleties be lost? And if they are lost, what are the implications for conditioning someone by this means to react politically on the basis of this apparently incomplete mental representation? Let us hope that Elgin picks up one or more of these gauntlets in her next book.

An earlier and much shorter verson of this article has appeared in Caroline Mullan's fanzine The Mirror Crack'd.

Women Wizards? Yes - Now!

by Sue Thomason

• Continued from p8

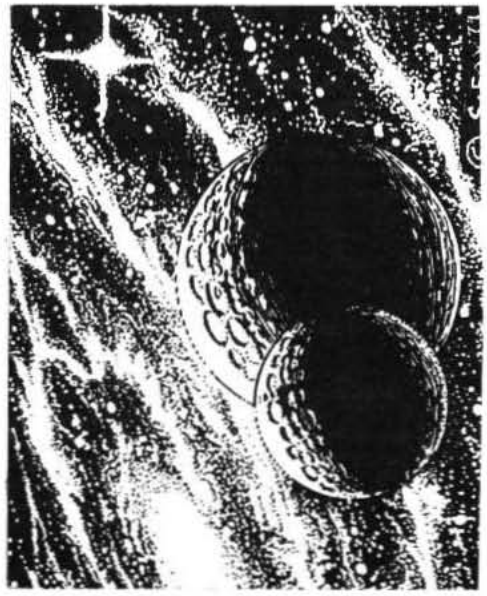
hawk. After he (re)names her for the first time, she dreams of her mother for the first time. Compare the anguish of Shevek in *The Dispossessed*, whose love and pursuit of the Truth is shown to be rooted in his perception of his mother as cold, rejecting, ambitious for her career to the neglect of her partner and child.

While considering women's magic, it is interesting to remember the parallel between magical talent and intelligence, magical training and higher education. Ogion says of the young Sparrowhawk, "to keep dark the mind of the mageborn, that is a dangerous thing." But women are not usually admitted to Roke, even as dinner-guests: "It was seldom that any woman sat in the halls of the Great House". Serret's mind is kept dark, although she asks the untrained Sparrowhawk for teaching. Perhaps as a direct result, she turns to darkness. Sparrowhawk's witch-aunt, who brings him up and gives him his first teaching in magic and the True Speech, is described as "an ignorant woman among ignorant folk". What chance is she given in the trilogy to be anything else?

The implications of all this are that Wizardry goes with men, the Logos, Apollonian balance and order, rationality, the Light. Women go with sex and the dark, sterility, death. The all-male school is right and proper. The all-female school is unnatural and twisted.

Now let us consider naming magic and the True Speech, the basis of all magical knowledge/action in Earthsea. Naming magic works because it is done in the True Speech, the Speech of the Making. (Here again the link between magic and fantasy-writing is strong.) True speech is the ur-language, from which all other language in Earthsea developed, just as myth is the ur-story. If "truth is a matter of the imagination" in Earthsea, then true imagination can truly create, and true imagination is expressed (and formed) by True Speech. That's why Sparrowhawk upholds the Logos, as opposed to the Eros (which is usually seen as both a feminine and a life principle). LeGuin's magic is a powerful one, but it is a skill she denies to other women.

Now I have analysed my unease. I am happier with the Earthsea trilogy, I will happily re-read them again. But I'm still left with the question, how can a woman, a woman who thinks of herself as a feminist, how can a woman write books like that?



BOOKS

REVIEWS EDITED BY
Paul Kincaid

CONSIDER PHLEBAS - Iain M. Banks
[Macmillan, 1987, 471pp, £9.95]
Reviewed by Maureen Porter

CONSIDER IAIN BANKS, WRITER OF BLACK comedies, metamorphosed into Iain M Banks, writer of science fiction. What sort of science fiction would he produce, we wondered, considering the characterisation and detail of his previous work? Space opera hardly seemed likely, but nevertheless that is what we have with *Consider Phlebas* and I must admit that while his foray into the genre isn't entirely successful, it is a cut above the average.

The scene opens in what might be regarded as typically Banksian fashion with the main character, Bora Horza Gobuchul, chained to a dungeon wall, about to drown in sewage. Things do not improve once he is conveniently rescued in the nick of time. The universe is at war and Horza is working with the Idirans, not necessarily because he believes in their right to win, but because he is totally opposed to the beliefs of the Culture and its totalitarian technocracy. It's an interesting dilemma and one which never receives entirely adequate discussion.

The nature of space opera being what is it, Horza is then dispatched to capture a Mind belonging to a Culture spacecraft which has hidden itself on a dead world, inevitably goes round the very long way, taking up with and eventually taking over a band of mercenaries to help him in his ultimately abortive quest, and seeing plenty of action en route.

This novel succeeds in creating a believable universe. The politics of the two opponents is ambiguous; one sees good and bad in both. More than that, one has a sense of the broad sweep of his universe, of time and space passing as they travel from planet to planet, and of a wide variety of different societies and cultures developing. It's not a pleasant universe, but it feels authentic.

Surprisingly, where Banks does come unstuck is with his characters. Horza is a Changer, capable of changing his physical form to suit his own ends, yet we are never given any explanation of how this is so. He is clearly an unusual man in many respects but at the end of the book one knows not much more than one did at the beginning, although he is undoubtedly an attractive character. His major opponent, Balveda, struggles uneasily with the dichotomy of respecting and loathing Horza simultaneously. Likewise, the other characters never really develop to the stage where one believes in them as people. Apart from the mercenary Yalson, they flit archetypally through the action never doing anything more than filling the roles assigned.

The ultimate weakness of the novel lies in the last 190 pages, which are devoted to exploring Schar's World in search of the Mind. From the moment they discover the dead Changer colony, their own fate is sealed, but oh so slowly. Too slowly - the ending is jumping up and down in impatience but they refuse to meet it at anything more than snail's pace. And the final scenes of carnage make *King Lear* seem quite cosy by comparison. No remote chance of a sequel as the subsequent demise of those who survive this is lovingly chronicled in an afterword. And oddly enough, I find that quite satisfactory, much as I mourn the wasted chances of character development in the plot. All in all, an unusually literate and, on the whole, successful space opera.

HEGIRA - Greg Bear
[Gollancz, 1987, 222pp, £2.95]
Reviewed by David Wingrove

GREG BEAR MIGHT BE KNOWN TO READERS from *Blood Music* (1983) and *Eon* (1985), both impressive works which rank with the best of modern SF. *Hegira* was first published in 1979 by Ace in the States and was Bear's first novel. Further, David Samuelson (in *20th Century Science Fiction Writers*) says it was written in 1973, when Bear was 22. Polished and revised for its first UK publication, it remains very much a young man's book - an adventurous and flawed novel with all the delights and disappointments of its type, comparable to early Delany or Sterling's *Involution Ocean*. The descriptive writing is good, but the plot all too often drifts. Back then, Bear hadn't learned pacing, nor how to control his tendency towards poetic self-indulgence.

Hegira itself is an artificial environment 249,000 kilometres in diameter, with vast, thousand kilometre tall obelisks covered in information. We are introduced into this enigmatic world slowly, tracing the story of three men as they travel north to the Wall. We begin in antiquity and end in the high-tech future, but the denouement, when it comes, is not as satisfying as might have been expected. It's as if the sheer scale of the thing escaped the young writer, resulting in something of a patchwork, thinly spread. Bear picks up elements of transformed Christianity, presents us with a sea journey, witnesses the fall of an obelisk and the appearance of the real stars as the sky splits apart. A man gets his lover back, as if from the dead, and another man comes home. These are small satisfactions, but the big idea, so well developed in *Blood Music* and *Eon*, never quite comes to life. *Hegira* deserved epic treatment, and it gets a slow-paced pastoral. That said, it is an enjoyable book, far superior to most first novels, and an insight into the artistic development of one of our best writers.

WRITERS OF THE FUTURE - Algis Budrys (Ed.)
[New Era, 1986, 354pp, £2.75]
MIRRORSHADES: THE CYBERPUNK ANTHOLOGY - Bruce Sterling (Ed.)
[Arbor House, 1986, 239pp, $16.95]
Reviewed by Paul Kincaid

NEW WRITERS TRADITIONALLY LEARN their craft producing short stories, but with the death of the old pulps and the original anthologies, the market for these fledgling efforts is limited. Which is why one can only praise the *Writers of the Future* venture. Whatever one may think of the recent work of L. Ron Hubbard, his sponsorship of this competition has done science fiction a great service. Not that one expects to find, among these first hesitant fictions, works of astounding power or achievement. All are well worthy of publication, but they would be the makeweights of a magazine, not the stars of any issue. Collected here, though, we can see them more for what they portend than for what they achieve.

Faults abound. There is a uniform tendency to spell things out, to set the scene slowly and patiently. None trust their abilities enough to hint or suggest or let the reader do any of the work. And though each writer produces some new twist or perspective, they are all variations on familiar themes. No-one has attempted to to use science fiction for something unexpected or daring. Nevertheless, there is talent and promise enough, for instance, in Leonard Carpenter's 'The Ebbing' in which a desert of the imagination reclaims a Californian suburb, and 'Anthony's Wives' by Randell Crump in which an old man finds his wife always needs burial. Carpenter came second in the first quarter of the competition, Crump was third in the second quarter, but the three winners featured here hardly seem to come up to the same level. And one must question the decision of the judges when the best story, a very assured piece by Karen Joy Fowler, gets in only as runner up without even making third place.

None of the Writers of the Future, interestingly enough, adopt any of the currently fashionable modes of SF, in particular cyberpunk. But then it is difficult to work out what cyberpunk was. *Mirrorshades*, the definitive anthology and last gasp of the movement, provides no clues. Nothing seems to link the stories here beyond the dictat of editor Bruce Sterling.

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Some tales conform to what one might expect: hard-edged, near-future adventures close to the street and a computerised today. Excellent examples are 'Snake Eyes' by Tom Maddox and 'Rock On' by Pat Cadigan, which also brings in that other cyberpunk icon, rock'n'roll. But how does Rudy Rucker's feeble joke without a punchline belong here, or Greg Bear's wonderfully atmospheric account of church statues coming to life?

All the stories have been published before, and some, like the incredibly weak 'Red Star, Winter Orbit' by Sterling and William Gibson, are already too familiar. The works, particularly of Maddox, Cadigan, Bear, and best of the lot James Patrick Kelly's 'Solstice', show assured and talented writers at work. But I can't help feeling that the *Writers of the Future* anthology offers a better hope for the future than the already defunct creed of cyberpunk.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S JULY 20, 2019: A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE 21ST CENTURY
[Grafton, 1987, 281pp, £14.95]
Reviewed by Edward James

ON JULY 20 2019 THEY WILL, OF COURSE, be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first landing on the Moon. The Introduction is written by the 102-year-old Arthur C.Clarke in the (newish) lunar base, Clavius City, as he muses on the past, while waiting for the octogenarians Armstrong and Aldrin to make a broadcast. This is followed by an excerpt from 'The Path to 2019', the inaugural speech of the US President in 1993, bemoaning the lack of progress in space exploration, and a 2019 historian's look at what had happened in 1969, and since 1993. So far, well and good. But then, in chapter 3, we jump to 'A Day in the Hospital', and the mood is broken. From there on, most of the articles are firmly written in 1986, looking forward to the year 2019. In six of the subsequent 13 chapters - 'Space Station', 'House Arrest' (on future crime prevention), 'Office', 'Psychiatry', 'Death' and 'War' - the approach is science fictional, viewing the past from July 20, 2019; in the rest we have undisguised 1980s futurology. This lack of uniformity is a flaw in what is often a very interesting book; another flaw - the illustrations, a mixed bag, occasionally illustrating nothing in particular, with captions that at times are worse than useless.

Some of these problems no doubt relate to the peculiar nature of the production, which ought to be explained for those who don't read *Locus*. In March *Locus* announced that the book was not written or edited by Clarke at all, but by the *Omni* team: Clarke just wrote the introduction and lent his name. In the April issue it published a letter from Clarke vehemently denying this, and saying that he had edited it, made many corrections, and wrote critiques and commentary on the chapters. "Unfortunately, I was never sent the final proofs, so could not detect some stupid caption writing." A legal wrangle is now going on between the US publishers, Macmillans, and *Omni*, over the way in which the impression was given to "the unwary reader" that it was all his own work. Presumably the Grafton edition is identical. There, *on the dust jacket*, you learn that the various chapters are written by different authors (only one, G.Harry Stine, for 'Office', well-known to SF readers), but in the actual book this information is restricted to an acknowledgments page which implies that these people had *helped* Clarke with the chapters. A publishing mess, therefore, which really needs a second edition (and a rewrite of two-thirds of the chapters) to sort it out. That's unlikely to happen, and that's a pity; there's a lot of very interesting speculation here on the ways in which the world might change, and might change us. It could so easily have been a good book, if more care and intelligence had been bestowed on it by a publisher who believed that books were different from corn-flake packets.

MASTER OF HIS FATE - J.Maclaren Cobben
[Greenhill, 1987, 249pp, £8.95]
Reviewed by Tom Jones

ANOTHER FROM GREENHILL'S SERIES OF 'old masters'. I seem to be becoming *Vector's* specialist on these having reviewed two others recently, so I won't repeat my general comments except to say I have the highest regard for Brian Stableford's expertise.

This story is based on the theme of one human being's ability to draw the 'life force' from another creature for his own use. We follow Dr Lefevre in his attempts to revive the victims and understand what is happening. Whilst he makes no deliberate attempt to track down the perpetrator, that lot falls to him. The book also focuses on Julius Courtney, a supremely gifted and magnetic individual and friend of Lefevre.

The story is well told and the style not too anachronistic, but some of the comments are. In describing a dinner party, for example, we have:

> These questions were mostly ignorant and thoughtless ... When the ladies retired from the table, however, more particular and curious queries were pressed upon him.

As for the working class, Courtney's servant says (in typical ungrammatical style):

> Yes sir, he do sometimes have 'em (moods) black. He don't seem to take no pride in himself, as he do usual - don't seem to care somehow if he look a gentleman or a common man.

Okay, this may have been a true reflection of society in 1890 when the book was first published but I found it distracted from the story.

Julius, far from being a demi-god, I found a drip. He is often described as observing something closely, no doubt to give us the impression he is a deep thinker. His speech is full of quotes and vague bits of philosophy/mysticism/animism rather than being highly intelligent and penetrating. Creating such a character is very difficult and Cobben fails.

Brian Stableford produces another interesting afterword setting the story in context, pity he's only allowed one page.

Whilst Greenhill may have thought there was merit in reproducing the book "exactly as the original edition" that means we don't get many words per page. The book provides probably under 30,000 words, hardly what we expect from a novel.

This is better than the other two books I've read and it's easy to read, when the anachronisms didn't jar, but it's no better than that and even with the historical interest I don't think it's value for money at £8.95.

RADIO FREE ALBEMUTH - Philip K. Dick
[Grafton, 1987, 286pp, £2.95]
Reviewed by L.J.Hurst

PHILIP K. DICK GAVE THE FINAL, CORRected manuscript of this novel to Tim Powers for Powers' private collection. This implies that Dick did not think the book to be publishable - either because of his experience of publishers' acceptances (or non-acceptances of his mainstream work while he was alive), or for other reasons.

The book is in three parts - 'Phil', 'Nicholas' and 'Phil' again. Phil is Dick himself, and Nicholas is a fictional friend, convinced that a vast supernatural being communicates with him in his sleep and later works miracles. The world moves towards totalitarian oppression - the USA under a President vaguely like Nixon. The President, who has the support of a moral majority youth league, is either a communist plant or a psychopath or both. The supernatural being is revealed as a benign alien from Fomalhaut, and thus not to the interests of the world's leaders on any side of the divide. VALIS is therefore destroyed. After this, and the failure of Nicholas' resistance to the fascists before his execution, a few notes of hope are heard as Phil ends in a prison detail. Although each section is narrated by the person in its title, their voices are not very different.

Essentially, *Radio Free Albemuth* is one version of Dick's experience which he wrote about in *VALIS* and elsewhere, because the divided experience of Phil and Nicholas in this book is the divided experience of the narrator and Horselover Fats in *VALIS*. Reading Dick's autobiographical material it is clear that he felt he was or had been in contact with a

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consciousness like VALIS's and that there was little he thought was fictional in these books. From its style *Radio Free Albemuth* (the title seems to have almost no significance and is only mentioned once in the book) seems a late novel, but whether it was envisaged as a separate work or was just an attempt abandoned and succeeded by *VALIS* I don't know. It is a synoptic novel in that it repeats most of Dick's best known themes, but while it is more than just a novel for completists some purchasers may feel unhappy that it covers ground previously treated in books many consider Dick's best, and covers no more.

OTHER EDENS - Christopher Evans & Robert Holdstock (Eds)
[Unwin, 1987, 237pp, £2.95]
Reviewed by David V. Barrett

LET'S GET THE COMPLAINTS OUT OF THE way first, then see what's left.

The author's in this anthology are billed as "the brightest stars of British SF and fantasy" rather than "among the brightest stars"; does this mean that J.G.Ballard, Richard Cowper, Chris Priest, Bob Shaw and a score of others are no longer stars? It's also disturbing that only 3 of the 14 authors - Tanith Lee, R.M.Lamming and Lisa Tuttle - are women, when there are so many other good British female SF writers out there.

That's the authors; how about the stories? I'm disappointed there's only one 'experimental form' story here, a 'Triptych' by Garry Kilworth. It seems that the only lesson British writers have learnt from the New Wave of the 60s is to run as far as possible away from it. Instead of avoiding its excesses but learning from its freshness, most of these authors - on the evidence of *this* collection - have thrown out the clean baby with the mucky water, and determined to write safe, unremarkable stories; their reaction to 'innovative' appears similar to Sir Humphrey Appleby's.

And this makes, of course, for a safe but unremarkable book. Is this the fault of writers, editors or both? Perhaps when asked to submit a story to an anthology, writers feel they have more chance of acceptance if they don't take risks.

That's the complaints; what's left?

A surprising number of stories which recognise implicitly that human relationships - parent and child, friends, lovers - are still the most important thing, whatever the setting.

A couple of mythic stories: Holdstock's 'Scarrowfell' and Keith Roberts' 'Piper's Wait', both well up to the standard of their recent work.

Several stories either overtly or implicitly about sex, of which Lisa Tuttle's 'The Wound' is the most interesting; you realise how it will end half way through, but it's a novel idea it would be unfair to reveal.

Kilworth's 'Triptych' is three stories linked by the themes of reversal of our society's expectations, and by death; strange, disturbing, and the only stories in this volume that demand to be reread. Don't expect them to be easy, though.

M.John Harrison's 'Small Heirlooms' loses itself in to much small detail, and Michael Moorcock's 'The Frozen Cardinal', while a fascinating idea, seems only half a story; both are well written, but unsatisfying.

In fact this is a criticism that can be leveled at many of the stories: they display an excellent (and often distinctively British) literary style, but their ideas, plots, conclusions and SF star quality are lacking in either originality or development.

Verdict: 6 out of 10. Could do better. If there is a second volume, and I echo Evans and Holdstock's hope that there is, I hope they are prepared to take more risks. *Then* we'll see the stars shine.

THE HOUR OF THE THIN OX - Colin Greenland
[Unwin, 1987, 186pp, £9.95]
Reviewed by Paul Brazier

I DIDN'T LIKE THIS BOOK WHEN I FIRST read it. It seemed to be just another pot-boiler fantasy. But Greenland has written a couple of thoughtful books before, so I decided to look again.

On closer inspection I found the biggest flaw is length. This book is much too short. As a rite of passage novel (among many other facets) it is unsettling that key episodes which are referred to late in the book are not included in the previous narrative, and apparently major characters early on are not mentioned again. Whilst this is perfectly acceptable as a realistic description of what happens in wartime, in such a carefully constructed book where so many early episodes presage later major events, this appears very careless.

The trouble is, the writing is exquisitely detailed and polished. Not careless at all. Certainly there is enough material here for a lesser author to have turned it into a flaccid sprawling trilogy, so the tautness of the writing is commendable. But I can't help feeling that the brevity has been overdone. Events take two days which would have been happier over two years - yet events which take two years seem to happen almost instantly. The boredom and impatience of an army waiting to get to grips with the enemy is mentioned but never really conveyed. The central character's dilemma of deserting in order to fight is not depicted as a major trauma - but why, other than loyalty to the state in whose army you serve, would you want to fight its invaders? And she seems, at the end, to be sexually sophisticated, whereas her only sexual encounters before this have been brutish, nasty and unsatisfying, and undertaken because she is lonely. I would also quibble over a society which manufactures and uses bicycles having to steal revolving guns from the enemy it is invading: bicycles are an order of sophistication higher than guns both in civilisation and in industrial ability.

Despite these cavils I recommend this book. In a world of sprawling, shapeless books, it is terse and well-shaped. It shows a sensitive writer still feeling his way in the genre he has chosen, but as this is certainly the most accessible of his books to date, it also demonstrates he is going in the right direction.

THE DAYMAKER - Ann Halam
[Orchard Books, 1987, 174pp, £7.50]
Reviewed by Maureen Porter

TO QUOTE THE BLURB ON THE INSIDE front cover, "*The Daymaker* is a stunning and substantial novel from an accomplished writer. A rich and lovingly thought-out fantasy world, combined with a tensely gripping plot, is a sure recipe for enjoyment". Which says it all, but at the same time I have to confess to being somewhat disappointed by this latest novel by Ann Halam, better known to *Vector* readers as Gwyneth Jones. Maybe I was expecting too much, following on from *King Death's Garden*, one of the finest fantasy novels I read during 1986, and a hard act to follow. What irritates me even more is that I find it difficult to pinpoint what it is I find so disatisfying about the story.

The Daymaker is set in a post-technological society, reminiscent of our own medieval period, each small community keeping very much to itself and its own lands. There is a wealth of difference between attitudes out in the rural areas and those in the towns. Most importantly, magic exists, and is, effectively, the religion of this, inevitably, matriarchal society. Magic governs society, holds it together, and if the balance is disturbed, everything falls apart. Zanne, daughter of the head covener of a hamlet, exhibits both a strong magical skill, and an affinity for the long unused technology, and is eventually sent away to learn to control her skills. She learns that she is the only one who can shut down the 'daymakers' of this previous civilisation, places we would recognise as power stations, and thus her life's work is determined.

The blurb is correct in asserting that Ms Jones has created a rich fantasy world. It's believable, workable, recognisable as a realistic society. I feel however that a solidly-constructed world and a delightfully human and wilful heroine have been sacrificed to a predictable, off-the-peg fantasy plot, albeit hedged around with some interesting moral dilemmas. In reading this novel through once more I have an increas-

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ing impression that I'm reading an early draft of what might be a well-constructed and strongly argued novel. As it is, I feel that *The Daymaker* in its current form is not adequately resolved, nor as well polished as one might hope or expect. But don't let that deter you. Predictability of plot aside, it is well worth reading if only to see how an imaginary world should be created.

THE BLIND SPOT - Austin Hall & Homer Eon Flint
[Greenhill, 1987, 254pp, £8.95]
Reviewed by Martyn Taylor

GREENHILL ARE A REPRINT HOUSE SPECIALISING in the maybe seminal but certainly unavailable; a worthwhile exercise in a genre as young and aggressively self conscious as SF, so that we may be reminded of actual as well as perceived roots, the better to understand today (and tomorrow).

Brian Stableford (Greenhill's Commissioning Editor) says "Hall ... and ... Flint were two of the writers who produced fantastic stories for the American pulp magazines", and Hall was massively productive too. So no-one ought to come to this novel in search of finely crafted prose, deep insight or 'realistic' characters - these qualities were never intended to be present. What we have is a parallel world story, a gateway story, an invasion by advanced but doomed society story, a cliffhanger detective story. By way of protagonist we have two genii - the good guy and the swarthy, foreign bad guy, not one but three square-jawed Horatios in desperate search of a bridge, several hussars and a number of characters labelled 'female' (though to be frank the dog is more convincingly portrayed). Had this book been published for the first time today (and with a few fashion changes it could be) I, for one, would not have been interested. I don't mind cliché but I like mine dished up with style and humour.

Of course Hall and Flint did not know they were writing clichés, because they weren't, then. Neither were they as style aware as any genre writer must be today. For instance, they didn't know the multiple narrative technique must be handled with a lot more acuity than they manage if it is to work (doesn't it?). Like bees, not having been told it is physically impossible, they just went ahead and flew. As Stableford again says, "they possessed an infectious enthusiasm .. which makes their best work readable and interesting". Interesting, yes. This is an interesting book, irritating in parts, laughable and often ludicrous, technically flawed right through yet overcoming its deficiencies and keeping this reader hooked to the end. Enthusiasm and 'innocent indulgence' are its strengths, this echo from a less knowing, cynical age. Whether it is 'good' or not is irrelevant. It exists once more, and that is wonder enough. Thank you Greenhill.

Greenhill "welcome readers' suggestions for books that might be added to this series." Contact them at 3 Barham Avenue, Elstree, Herts WD6 3PW.

SEPULCHRE - James Herbert
[Hodder & Stoughton, 1987, 316pp, £10.95]
Reviewed by John Newsinger

JAMES HERBERT HAS PRETENSIONS TO being a great writer. Instead over the years he has produced a string of competently written popular horror novels to a tried and tested formula, and really you either like them or don't. I do like them and look forward to each new novel as it comes off the presses. Consequently it is a pleasure to review his latest epistle, *Sepulchre*. The book is essentially a thriller, pitting a conventional ex-SAS superhero, Halloran, a contemporary knight in tarnished armour, against various evils both natural and unnatural. Both the IRA and the PLO are plucked from the demonology of the political right and parade across the pages, committing the mundane evils of everyday terrorism. According to Herbert part of PLO training includes biting the heads off live chickens, whereas, of course, us lefties know for a fact that this is really how the SAS and CIA train! All this is routine stuff for hard man Halloran. However, he is also confronted by an older, ancient evil, an evil that exploits and feeds on human weakness and perversity for its own survival. Herbert is no great hand at characterisation and one cannot, for example, imagine him creating so finely drawn a character as Clive Barker's celebrated razor eater. Nevertheless, what he does he does well. The book reeks atmosphere: the old house with its hidden sepulchre, the grounds patrolled by jackals, the hidden evil lurking in the lake, the lodge house with its unseen watcher. Herbert successfully creates a nightmare landscape through which his somewhat shallow characters proceed on their respective ways to perdition or salvation.

One scene, the torture and sacrifice of a young kidnap victim, is superbly realised and brilliantly sets the stamp of evil on the book. It gives it the credibility that distinguishes between the horrific and the plain silly.

Herbert is also an accomplished judge of pace and keeps the narrative moving at a rate that makes it difficult for his devotees to put the book down. Gradually Halloran begins to grasp the nature of the game he is involved in but only at the end does he realise the immensity of the evil he confronts. He moves in to rescue the woman he loves from the corruption of her own desires, bringing not peace but a sword, and wreaking terrible vengence on an ancient evil to cheers all round.

A profoundly reactionary book. I enjoyed every page of it. There is also a fine photographic portrait of the author on the back of the sleeve that reveals a remarkable resemblance to some of his more dubious characters. This must be worth the price of the book on its own.

DR ADDER - K.W.Jeter
[Grafton, 1987, 252pp, £2.95]
DEATH ARMS - K.W.Jeter
[Morrigan, 1987, 183pp, £10.95]
THE GLASS HAMMER - K.W.Jeter
[Grafton, 1987]
Reviewed by Mike Moir

SOMEWHERE, I BELIEVE, THERE IS AN alternative universe where the most recent series of 'first novel' Ace Specials appeared much earlier, in fact in 1972. The finest of the series was *Dr Adder*. A whole new cult of American SF grew out of this title and they called it Video-Sleeze. Years later a guy called Bill Gibson came along and had terrible problems getting the acclaim he deserved because everyone wrongly thought "He's just another imitation of the great KW".

Meanwhile back in our universe the opposite has almost happened. KW (literally pronounced Kay-Double-You) really did write *Dr Adder* in 1972, but no-one would publish it. It is incredibly imaginative, brilliant, disgusting, perverted and depraved. Finally in the post-Gibson late-80s it has seen general publication. *Dr Adder* could be mistaken for cyberpunk but it is not, it is something quite different. Alas there is not enough space to try to define what it is.

Dr Adder is a moral tale of country boy, Limmit (from a giant-chicken farm brothel) and his exploits while searching for fame and fortune in the big city, Los Angeles. LA is dominated by the Interface, a non-stop strip offering the latest craze in multiple amputee prostitutes and much worse. King of the Interface is the legendary Dr Adder, who wants the 'death arm' that Limmit has brought with him. Jeter's imagination is endless and the pace never lets up. The major danger is that you may be revolted rather than enthralled, but Jeter does not revel in his depraved imagination, every horror is shown to be as disgusting as it truly is, nothing is glorified.

Non-publication of *Dr Adder* did not dissuade KW and, while churning out the odd lesser work for Laser and DAW, he wrote a companion novel, *Death Arms*. This lacks some of the life of *Dr Adder* and leaves out most of the unsavoury sex. In its place is an even more bizarre sense of humour and a rather unlikely SF plot. The novel is still of high calibre and the appalling pun at the end still makes me cringe.

Death Arms is again about a ruined LA and another country boy, Legger, come to hunt his fortune. It is a novel about 'wild talents', or rather

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very peculiar psionic powers. Perhaps Jeter's greatest strength is in making the familiar into the horrible. The scene where the hero is attacked by the contents of his deep freeze could have been very silly, but suitably Jeter makes it quite chilling.

After Bluejay finally agreed to publish *Dr Adder*, only a few years ago, KW completed the trilogy with *The Glass Hammer*. The critical acclaim for *Dr Adder* obviously encouraged him to try even harder. *The Glass Hammer* is a very fine novel, with a tight complex plot that defies description. Suffice to say one of the sub plots alone would have made a great novel. Most of all in this novel you get the feeling Jeter would like to gain the literary position vacated by his close friend Philip K. Dick, and here at least you get the idea he could do it.

One final question: what is a trilogy? I have decided it is simply something publishers like to publish. The only connection between these three novels is that they all concern future LAs, contain separated father-son relationships and are written by the same man. This could be the perfect situation: the author gets to write three novels exploring in depth a single theme, we, the readers, get three interesting novels, and the publisher thinks he has published yet another trilogy - an all-win solution. I predict we will see more of this.

DAGGERSPELL - Katharine Kerr
[Grafton, 1987, 415pp, £10.95]
Reviewed by Mark Valentine

THE MOST ENTERTAINING ASPECT OF THIS first novel was trying to work out which fantasy cliché, if any, it does not possess. The very title seems calculated to conflate the idea of 'sword and sorcery' into one resonant word, to make it easy for addicts of the genre to recognise. But, yes, it's book one of a trilogy, and we are given a map of the imaginary realm in question, and a note on the pronunciation of words in the fictional language which, we are assured, is Celtic in construction; and there's a wizard, and wars, and feudalism, and some superficial flourishes of mysticism drawing on the concept of destiny and interweaving of fates explored by Brian Bates in *The Way of Wyrd* though with nothing like the same coherence. The protagonist is female which used to be a hopeful departure from the norm but is now becoming quite *de rigueur*. The more acute reader will have divined by now that I am not about to praise this work for its originality. Really the only wonder is that Mills and Boon haven't realised that the fantasy market can be packaged as a formula and produce a series like their perennial romances. Had they done so, this title would have fitted nicely into their list - but then so would dozens of indistinguishable others. An aficionado of these mundane fantasies might reasonably expect me to judge this book for what it is; as for that, I would say that the magic is less erratic and mechanically evoked than some I have read, but landscape and dialogue are rather flat; one other plus is that the work is quite well paced, so that we are not crammed with exotic characters, titles, places and lineages in the first few chapters as so often happens with fantasy trilogies. But I have to return to my original theme to remark that all aspiring writers in this genre should try to remember that their precursors - Morris, Dunsany, Tolkein - wrote from a desire to express a personal vision, and did so in ways which were then unfamiliar; endless imitations of their work are as far from the original spirit as it is possible to imagine; if indeed it *is* possible for modern fantasy authors to imagine, which seems increasingly improbable.

THE FALL OF THE FAMILIES - Phillip Mann
[Gollancz, 1987, 298pp, £11.95]
Reviewed by Barbara Davies

PHILLIP MANN BEGAN 'THE STORY OF THE Gardener' last year with *Master of Paxwax*. *The Fall of the Families* continues and concludes that story. Where the first book was essentially an optimistic tale of the rise of Pawl Paxwax, the second chronicles his fall and the fall of all humankind.

The Inner Circle, representatives of those remnants of aliens surviving Man's conquest of space, helped Pawl to become the powerful leader of the Fifth family, to withstand the aggression of the other families and to marry the woman he loved. Their ulterior motive now becomes clear - revenge. Odin the Gerbes, a snail-like alien, once Pawl's staunchest friend now becomes the instrument of his manipulation and betrayal - albeit reluctantly. By contriving to kill Pawl's wife and laying the blame on the other families Odin causes Pawl to aid the aliens in their destruction. This is achieved by yet more betrayal and by the use of frightening aliens like the Hooded Parasol and the Hammer. Meanwhile, three mysterious planets have appeared from the gaseous area of space known as the Emerald Lake. Ultima Thule, planet of weird creation; Erix, planet of death; and their sun, Candle, also have their part to play in Pawl's destiny.

Very few authors would have had the courage to destroy such a detailed creation as this so quickly and thoroughly. There can be no sequels. Yet it is clear that this is no whim but part of a detailed plan. The two books form a whole. The characters met in the first are built on in the second, yet there are also new characters and situations to keep the interest. The emphasis this time is more on the aliens - a great deal of thought has gone into the creatures to make them strangely beautiful, yet deadly and convincing. Odin, in particular, is a truly tragic creation. The atmosphere of betrayal and inevitable doom pervades everything.

I found his book profoundly depressing as the characters journeyed to their fate, yet for all that it is a gripping read. There are some fascinating creatures and planets that will remain with me for quite a while.

THE DREAM WALL - Graham Dunstan Martin
[Unwin, 1987, 231pp, £2.95]
Reviewed by Jon Wallace

THIS IS GRAHAM DUNSTAN MARTIN'S SECond SF novel and like his first, *Time-Slip*, it is set after a radical change in society as we know it. This change is the revolution of 2009. The novel starts in 2116, and right from the start we are made aware that this is a communist Britain which owes more to fifties Russia than 22nd century technology.

> ... the plumbing in Mao Apartment Block had had 'the Muscovite jumps' since early February ... it had developed a racking cough, and the water that vomited in spasms out of its taps was no longer yellow, but greenish brown.

The book continues in this vein, with machine-gun toting police, identity card checks and queues for everything, until a fairly stereotyped Soviet-style society is portrayed, complete with Soviet-style higher echelons, with Russo-British names like Clegg-Molotov and Ludmilla Hecklestone. All very hearty, and it's this heartiness which is almost the downfall of a plot which requires a lot of suspension of disbelief to be at all plausible. It is well-nigh impossible to get involved with the characters and their dilemmas, when you keep coming across something intrusively (and heavy-handedly) humorous like Engelsburgh, Leninpool or the People's Friends (the military police) (or is that just funny in Scotland?). There is humour enough in the people that lightness elsewhere takes away from the seriousness of the plot.

The main characters (as in *Time-Slip*) are Scottish, and remind us by saying 'och' and 'jings' occasionally (105 years after the Revolution?), the rest are similar cultural and social stereotypes. The plot revolves round twin themes (linked in dreams) of repression in 2116 and how the Revolution came about in 2007. Nothing really very different there.

But once into the body of the book, Martin's writing has the power to make you discount the occasional absurdity and make you interested in the fate of his time-twinned protagonists. Towards the end again, however, he crams a lot into the flimsy structure, it fails and the ending is the obvious one.

It all has a very period, very British feel. And is a refreshing change from transAtlantic SF.

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THE LEGACY OF HEROT - Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle & Steven Barnes
[Gollancz, 1987, 352pp, £10.95]
Reviewed by Ken Lake

Q: WHY HAS THE RESPECTED SF HOUSE OF Gollancz published this book?
A: Because the names Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle will sell anything. Even this farrago of nonsense, 352 pages devoted to a single battle - compounded by stupidity deliberately written in by the authors, abetted by the characters' penchant for saying everything eight times, and punctuated by corny little literary quotations from everything - *Beowulf*, Kipling, Montaigne, Rosetti, you name it.

The problem for British readers of a great deal of American SF is that the characters act like children. This time we have a plot which 'explains' this - everyone's been brain-damaged (they call it Hibernation Instability) by "the long sleep" between the stars on the ship *National Geographic* which took our scientist colonists to the settlement of Avalon on the island of Camelot ('nuff sed?).

Faced with a single, simple and (one would have thought) none too terrible native animal foe, the whole colony falls to pieces and dies in droves with a great deal of faces being bitten off, victims in their throes, vomiting by bystanders and accusations from all and sundry that Our Hero, the strangely named Cadmann (with two 'n's) Weyland, is to blame for it all. Cadmann, who is Heinlein's archetypal 'competent man', does it all single handed, singing in Welsh with his own translations to fill out the pages, impregnating the woman he does not love while honouring the married one whom he does by ignoring her, and generally acting like an all-time pain in the tuchus. He even gets to build his dream house - and to defend it almost to the death while all around panic and scream.

In the beginning, the authors refer to our own Dr Jack Cohen; they then instal him in the plot as Dr Ernst Cohen, almost half-witted, and fairly speedily kill him off. If I were Jack, I'd sue.

But the real problem with this book is its sheer dreary stretches of *boring* but aimless activity, and the *boring* way the colonists - equipped with the usual derivative American names and saddled (in the 22nd century yet) with faked-up indicators like the Carlos who interjects Mexican Spanish into every sentence, the civilian leader who couldn't organise a pissup in a brewery and always collapses when faced with obvious stupidity - are made by their creators to put themselves constantly into situation from which the average five-year-old child could extricate itself in moments but which they are totally unable to solve.

Niven *has* written a lot of good stuff; Pournelle can also put together meaningful if vicious plots with somewhat-more-than-cardboard characters. I do not have it in me to blame Steven Barnes for this mess - I guess it's just a case of too many cooks.

IN THE DUTCH MOUNTAINS - Cees Nooteboom
[Viking, 1987, 128pp, £10.95]
Reviewed by K.V.Bailey

WHAT ARE THE DUTCH MOUNTAINS? SOUTH Holland if you like, but Nooteboom's imaginary territory is the 'wild country'. In so far as it is given geographical identity, this seems to be a kind of 'alternative' provincial Holland, somewhat co-extensive with the old Hapsburg dominions stretching down the Rhine corridor and expanding into the alpine principalities of Tyrol, Styria and Carinthia. These are fictively (in, as the author puts it, a 'once upon a time' and consequently 'extra-temporal and extra-territorial' mode of reality) simply the lands of estrangement, of exile from that mundane North where circuses and theatres have been ousted by television. Kai and Lucia, the illusionist protagonists, go to perform there, but Kai is rapt away from the theatre by the Snow Queen and taken to her palace - not as in Andersen's story in Finland, but high in the cold mountains.

Lucia's quest to find Kai follows roughly the pattern of Gerda's to find Kay in Andersen's 'The Snow Queen'. The author (in his own country - and now in Europe - a distinguished poet and novelist, annually migrating from the Netherlands to a remote part of Spain) assumes the persona of an Aragonese Inspector of Roads and spare-time writer who, returning in summer to the empty school of his boyhood, sits at his old desk to compose his transposition of and variation on Hans Andersen's masterpiece. Inserted are digressions, among other things, on mythology, religion, travel, history, dictionaries, monasteries, fairy-tales and philosophy; but all are integrated plausibly and enhancingly.

As for the narrative itself, it is much, and Platonically, concerned with wholeness and division, perfection and imperfection. Kai and Lucia, in their separation, experience strange but impermanent environments, emotional and sexual encounters; Kai's astringent and Kafkaesque; Lucia's fulfilling and Dionysian. At the death of the 'guides' through these respective solitary passages a reunion is achieved. Andersen's tale ends with the Grandmother quoting the biblical qualification for the Kingdom of Heaven: "Unless ye become as little children ..."; Nooteboom's fictional author discerns "a primitive way to represent fate" in the deserted school playground's hopscotch maze, around which he skips. "You complete a circuit and things go well or badly, something like that."

A word of praise for David Davies's jacket illustration embodying the key symbol of Kai and Lucia reflected in their fractured dressing room mirror; and for the skill of the translator, Adrienne Dixon - particularly for her treatment of the author's Nabokovian delight in word-play, where Dutch, Spanish, Latin and English are the dominant counters.

GRAINNE - Keith Roberts
[Kerosina, 1987, 175pp, £12.50, Collector's Edition £35]
Reviewed by Helen McNabb

GRAINNE, IN IRISH MYTHOLOGY, WAS A princess who cast a 'geis', a kind of spell, on Diarmid which caused him to betray his king and run off with her. Gráinne in this book, as seen through the eyes of Alister Bevan, her Diarmid, is, or becomes, something close to a goddess, a woman of power, of strength, a woman beyond conventions. She is the centrepoint of Bevan's life, the pivot, everything is seen and interpreted in relation to her. She is, I suspect, the culmination of many of the women of whom Roberts has written. The illustration bears a strong resemblance to Kaeti, the earlier ones were aspects of the ideal, with Gráinne he has perhaps attempted to put the ideal onto paper.

Early in the novel there's an exchange between Bevan and the doctor:

> 'There's no real story as yet. It's all been background.'
> 'There is a story. But it seems to lie outside the words.'

There lies both the weakness and the strength of the novel; there *is* a story beyond Bevan, it is elusive, deliberately so, it is full of references, allusions and unanswered questions. At another point the doctor says: "You make the town a stage set. Nothing moving." Like Bevan, Roberts has done this deliberately, it is his choice to pare down the narrative to an almost impressionistic level, to create a series of pictures like a storyboard for a film. The bed in what, or may not, be a hospital; the school; the dreadful mother; the arts school; a succession of frozen moments building into a collage of a life. Bevan's biography is clear enough, the narrative isn't difficult in that sense, but where it deals with Gráinne and the movement she begins, the possible future glimpsed at the end, it doesn't fully succeed, the point is hard to find, like a needle in a haystack it's there but you're only aware of it if you sit on it.

Gráinne is only ever seen through Bevan, her mystery and her power are diluted, reported at third hand their significance is lessened; she remains a shadowy figure. She should have vividness, light and life, there should be a personality, a force felt in her presence by the reader, not just reported by Bevan, and I regret that I didn't feel it. Her significance, her movement, the women who will change the world after the next world war are even hazier. On first reading the conclusion baffled me, on second reading what Roberts intended was clearer but it remains unfocussed, the clarity of the earlier pictures replace by a need to grope after the meaning.

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All this sounds as if I dislike the book. I don't, I enjoyed it, it is quite beautifully written with a deceptively easy, flowing prose which smooths the chosen disjointed style of the narrative. If I am disappointed it is because I feel that it fails to achieve what it strives towards. It is a book which I recommend despite any reservations, written with great skill and authority, although how much is fiction (science or otherwise), how much is autobiography and how much is observation I couldn't begin to say, that is something everyone will decide for themselves.

A HERON CAUGHT IN WEEDS - Keith Roberts
(Kerosina, 1987, 46pp)
Reviewed by Garry Kilworth

KEITH ROBERTS' *INTRODUCTION* TO HIS poetry has a slightly apologetic tone because he says: "Basically ... I don't know what poetry is; I never have." I can't help him here, having no pat definition to offer, but I can say that *A Heron Caught In Weeds* fulfils the basic criterion of poetry: it evokes emotions and sensations. The images produced are quite startling and their impact upon the brain leaves one in no doubt that what is on the page, is poetry. These are not the silk-tongued verses of the gentle muse however: these are poems with their gloves off, engaged in bare-knuckle fighting. *Grainne*, a one poem section, consists of a series of images and symbols (Roberts is not fond of similes) that form a picture which I can only describe as violently pastoral, closer to Yeats and Edward Thomas (acknowledged) than, say, Hughes. The landscape becomes the person becomes the landscape. One of the best poems in the book comes from the next section, *Spanbroekmolen*, entitled 'Home Thoughts from a Coach', which includes the line: "Forward and back, my Grandad, bloody Wipers ...", illustrating superb use of double-imagery, vehicle mechanical devices to clear the way for the drive toward "a terror indefinable". Most of the poems in this section deal with the First World War after-the-fact, the fossils of tanks and guns illustrating futility. There follows *The Human Condition*, a series of sketches, simply drawn, but with keen observation. Finally, *People and Places*, which returns to more complicated imagery. My favourite, in the whole book, is 'Sanctuary Wood', which terminates with the stunning line: "Your hands melt iron". Not all the poems evoke a response, but one doesn't expect such. There are greater and lesser pieces forming the whole, and the whole is certainly worth obtaining, if you like your poetry sharp and sensual.

MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN - H.F.Saint
(Viking, 1987, 396pp, £10.95)
Reviewed by Paul Kincaid

LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT RIGHT FROM the start: this is the best story about invisibility I've come across. Far more than all the other authors who've dabbled with the idea, from Wells to Silverberg and Dozois by way of God knows how many others, Saint has worked out the effects of invisibility and provides a serious and believeable look at how to cope with these effects. Along the way he also manages to write a book that is consistently amusing and often downright funny. At times the comedy may be a bit forced - a fevered bout of love-making in an otherwise deserted commuter train as it pulls into a crowded station is the sort of situation that leaves one groaning at the predictability rather more than one admires the humour - but as the invisible hero starts to make himself comfortable in the clubs and apartments of New York the laughs come much more naturally.

Nick Halloway is a securities analyst who visits a small research establishment more in the hope of an affaire with a journalist friend than for any serious business reason. Then a freak accident renders Nick, and a small globe of New Jersey around him, absolutely invisible. From that point on he must learn to cope with the major and minor inconveniences of being invisible; like still being able to see when he closes his eyes, like food being visible in his stomach as it slowly digests, like getting through revolving doors, and like earning a living. All this is complicated by a dogged government agent who has decided that Nick is the ideal subject for tests Nick wants to avoid at all costs. No one can be completely invisible, so Nick leaves a subtle trail wherever he goes, making him a hunted man through a modern New York that can be remarkable hostile to an invisible man.

The result is a tense adventure story, a fine comedy, and a subtle and moving account of one man's experiences. Only towards the end, when a love story is added somewhat unconvincingly to the stew, does Saint lose the sure touch he has hitherto shown. But for that, *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* is a quite remarkable first novel.

THE SHORE OF WOMEN - Pamela Sargent
(Chatto, 1987, 469pp, £10.95)
Reviewed by Sue Thomason

THERE SEEMS TO BE A FASHION FOR future-fantasy examinations of the 'two cultures' problem, in which the Technophiles meet the Ecofreaks. The Technophiles are usually presented as an enclosed and ultimately sterile cultural enclave whose prime concern is preservation of their existing knowledge and lifestyle. The Ecofreaks lead more vital lives, deeply and intimately linked with the Natural Order. They are often concered with the restoration and nurturing of a violated Earth, and usually practice the kind of Neo-Paganism once described to me, cruelly but accurately, as "the Friends of the Earth at prayer".

The Shore of Women is based on a blending of this theme with an updated Amazon legend. It's set in a post-nuclear-holocaust America in which the women have decided that men, having screwed up the world once, aren't to be trusted with technology any more. This has created a sex-rôle split to end all sex-rôle splits. Women live extended lives in the automated walled cities, dedicating themselves to pure research, status, and manipulative love affairs. Men roam the countryside in bands, scratching a violent, hand-to-mouth (and usually short) existence from the land, their level of 'civilisation' deliberately kept low by the women. Every time the men look like settling down and inventing agriculture, the women get out their flying saucers and zap guns and clean the vermin up, in case they're about to get round to inventing military dictatorships again. To reinforce this state of affairs, men are conditioned to worship various aspects of the Goddess, in her electronic temples which provide recorded sexual fantasies as bribes/rewards. Occasionally, men are "called to the Wall" as semen donors, and presented with male toddlers (borne and raised by the women) as a sign of the Goddess' special favour.

The book follows the adventures of Birana, expelled from the city with her mother on a charge of murder. Posing as an incarnation of the Goddess she meets up with Arvil, a strong-yet-sensitive young man of exceptional intelligence. The rest of the book is basically a straight (pun intended) love story, a kind of future-history *Clan of the Cave Bear* without the lectures on flint-chipping.

I found this an essentially unchallenging book, based on the false clichés of feminism and romantic love. On the positive side, it is competently plotted and smoothly written. Another 'train book', easy to film and very much the sort of thing I'd expect to turn up (in paperback) on railway bookstalls.

STAR OF GYPSIES - Robert Silverberg
(Gollancz, 1987, 397pp, £11.95)
Reviewed by Keith Freeman

SILVERBERG STARTED AS A WRITER OF Space Operas, went on to deride them and stated he was giving up writing. He didn't, but he did start producing books (*Born With the Dead*) that were well written downbeat 'semi-new-wave'. Classifying his third epoch is more difficult - it started with his *Majipoor* chronicles and is continued with this present book, which I put down as well written space opera. My only proof is to attempt a plot summary.

Many years in the future man has evolved a Stellar empire - there appear to be no intelligent aliens - with two rulers, the Emperor and the King of the Gypsies. The Gypsies, it

transpires, fled from a planet whose surface was about to be destroyed by its sun. The few who escaped arrived on Earth and founded Atlantis, which in its turn succumbed to catastrophe, and the Gypsies became wanderers.

Their fortunes were somewhat restored when it was found they could 'drive' starships far better than non-Gypsies. This is told by Yakoub, King of the Gypsies, in solitary self-imposed exile, and we learn of his life's ups and downs - slave, prince, slave, ?, slave, king. His exile is interrupted - the 15th Emperor is dying and his son has usurped his throne. The plan to remove his son is interrupted by his 'rescue' by the 16th Emperor's troops who rush him to the Empire's capital. The Emperor is one of three contenders for the position and the other two quickly arrive. The civil war that ensues ends with all three killed and Yakoub becomes both King and Emperor.

Star of Gypsies slows up, peculiarly, just when the action (as opposed to the earlier 'reflective' part) starts. Silverberg's lack of logic annoys me. It has Yakoub stressing that when he first learnt 'ghosting' (out of body projection) he didn't know he could travel back in time as easily as about in space. Later Yakoub is in a cell moaning that he doesn't know what's going on - he could simply ghost out and see for himself. But I suspect at this point Silverberg had forgotten ghosting wasn't only a time travelling gimic!

BROTHER & OTHER STORIES - Clifford D. Simak
[Severn House, 1987, 165pp, £8.95]
Reviewed by Ken Lake

ABERDONIAN FAN FRANCIS LYALL INTRODUCES this Eagle-comic-dust-wrappered short collection (only 159 pages in very large type) of four stories: 'Kindergarten', (1953), an old *Galaxy* favourite that wears well; 'Over the River and Through the Woods' (1965) from *Amazing Stories*; 'Auk House' and the title story 'Brother' (both 1977) from *Stellar Short Stories* and *F and SF* respectively.

With five other titles under its belt, Severn House seem set to create a new corpus of reprint Simak, not all of it suitable for today's readership (for example, *The Cosmic Engineers* combined racism, sexism, juvenilia and xenophobia for starters); the present collection is the usual random mixture with no discernable pattern of selection.

All Simak's characters in these pieces share his own unfortunate habit of talking Bookish, a language created by making reported speech sound like straight prose. Noted for his 'folksy' approach to humanity, guileless and trusting - apart from the military which is always vicious and insane, and the manufacturing class who are grasping and scheming - Simak has a simplistic view which well suits his subjects.

The first two stories are really set pieces - there's virtually no action, merely human interaction at the verbal level with a tricksy submeaning that's rather too trite for today's readers. The first is into Space exploration but never budges from Simak's home county in Wisconsin; the second involves time travel in the same milieu. In the third we have the 'alternate worlds' theory and here we do get some action; I was intrigued to find the protagonist to be a Norman Rockwell type painter, for my own notes had cast Simak in that rôle already with the same trite painter as exemplar.

The machine that materialises in the countryside, stirs up the Army, endears itself to the 'little people' and brings gifts from the all-wise aliens is the star of the fourth tale, which goes on rather too long but - like most Simak - has its heart in the right place. Cute, tricksy, trite, folksy, take your pick of adjectives but you will have to recognise the hand of an accomplished pulp author.

The strange thing is that in the 60s and 70s Simak created at least a dozen really worthwhile novels, books to which one can return again and again with pleasure. Why, one wonders, is the publisher resurrecting this subgenre selection when there are such good pickings to be had?

GABRIEL - Lisa Tuttle
[Severn House, 1987, 216pp, £8.95]
Reviewed by Paul J. McAuley

TEN YEARS AFTER DINAH ARCHER'S HUSband, Gabriel, committed suicide, she receives a birthday card "To my Darling Wife" apparently signed by him. Coincidentally, she accepts the offer of a job in New Orleans, where she had lived with Gabriel until his death. Soon she is accosted by a young boy, Ben, who turns out to be Gabriel's son by the other woman in the *menage a trois*, fueled by LSD, that ended in Gabriel's suicide. But Ben is more than he seems: for why does he want to kill her and himself? Is he his own father's reincarnation?

In her own words, many of Lisa Tuttle's fictions are "Dark fantasy, disturbing stories set in the real world." *Gabriel*, a ghost story without a ghost, a story of sexual obsession and the persistence of desire, easily fits into that category; but while Lisa Tuttle has proven her worth as a writer of powerful short stories, here things don't quite come together. Although the writing is taut and intelligent, and the characterisation (especially of Gabriel Archer, whose brooding personality literally haunts the text) is consistently acute, the plotting detracts from the whole. Too much is made of subplots involving Dinah's job at a keep-fit emporium, and a conventional romance (designed, I suspect, to counterpoint the darker emotions of the main plot but never successfully meshing with it), giving the whole the feel of an inflated novella. This, and a hesitant, episodic approach, ultimately detract from the subtle build-up to the final confrontation between Dinah and Gabriel/Ben, while the lack of any previous rationalisation, beyond a brief, inconsequential discussion of reincarnation, reduces the final revelation to mere *deus ex machina*. Still, if this is a flawed work, it is flawed on its own terms: *Gabriel*, especially its first fifty pages, is streets ahead of most genre writing.

• Continued from p16

an in-depth analysis, nor a literary critique. Although I have discussed only works by women, by no means do I consider only women to be feminists. However, in a short paper one must draw the line somewhere, so I have omitted works by men which cover much the same subject matter. I have included all the relevant books and stories in my personal collection, but I expect the list is incomplete (especially as regards short works). I would be delighted to learn of other fiction to add to my list.

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