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#### **VECTOR**

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# Vector

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#### Editorial • Editorial

#### The View from the Back Garden

I've written it before and no doubt will write it again, but we live in science fictional times. 1999 was a science fiction year, Gerry Anderson and all that (did anyone mention The Artist Formerly Known As...?). As was 2000. (And indeed we did meet up and it was odd because we were all fully grown). And as for 2001, well, at least they've finally noticed and given a certain movie a re-release. I thought by now we'd be bored of black monoliths, but it's been a slow start.

2002, on the other hand, doesn't strike me as a science fiction year. I might have missed something, but it just doesn't have that ring about it. In fact, I'm not convinced that there will another science fictional year until 2010 – when we have a Heinleinian revolt on the moon to look forward to. And then it's nowt until 2112.

But before the year's out, at least I've experienced a couple of science fictional moments. For once, a lunar eclipse which occurred on a non-foggy night (when Halley's comet swung round a few years ago I swear it was thick fog the entire time), with the Moon turning a marvellous shade of red. To my shame, it struck me that I didn't know any more how eclipses occur – and why they are so rare when Earth and Moon are circling all the time.

And then, visiting the deepest countryside with some of the BSFA committee, the extraordinary sight of the International Space Station and the shuttle flying overhead. Sir Arthur C Clarke writes somewhere of standing on a New York hotel balcony with Stanley Kubrick, having agreed to do 2001 together. A bright light passes across the sky, and Kubrick is convinced it's a UFO. It was in fact a satellite, although

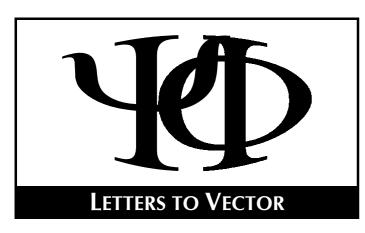
mysteriously it wasn't listed in the New York Times for that day.

Ever since reading about it, I've wanted to see a satellite, and wondered how it was possible to see something so small, so far away. Two or three decades on, and I've finally done it, finally seen it, two distinct lights coming into view one after another, crossing the sky for what seems a long time and yet is over in seconds, the light fading long before the horizon. With binoculars, we joked, you could probably see the go-faster stripes.

Now the countryside itself has become a 1970s science fiction novel, with movements limited, footpaths closed, a terrible disease ravaging the life stock, pyres of cattle burning... The knock-on effect of the closure of the countryside shows how interconnected the world really is – no farmland open, no tourism. No tourism, no hotel guests. No hotel guests, no laundry.

Samuel Delany writes somewhere: '[A]t some point an SF reader must put thought to what forces hold a society together – other than the police, law, and politics. An SF reader must be able to consider the relations between, say, the kind of work a people does, the kind of weather they have, and the kind of food they eat, as well as the relations between all three and what their society considers good and bad behaviour, as well as the kind of art that society produces'. The fuel protests of last year saw another kind of sf scenario, and the speed with which the current crisis took hold – with its knock-on effects on the political scene – shows how fragile stability actually is. Today I hear of an outbreak of Tuberculosis in Leicester – what's next? And what do we do when the world is more sciencefictional than the books we read?

#### by Andrew M Butler, Easter 2001



#### From Mike Cross, via email

Just a small addition to one of your reviews in the latest *Vector* [215]:

The Dragon Charmer is, as you (and presumably the publishers) say, 'Jan Siegel's second book', but 'Jan Siegel' is a pseudonym. The author has previously published books under the name of Amanda Hemingway.

This information doesn't exactly seem to be a secret – there was a photo of Jan Siegel in *Interzone* around the time of *Prospero's Children*'s first publication whose caption mentioned the fact – but it doesn't appear to be common knowledge. I don't think any of the reviews I've seen of Jan Siegel's books mention it.

As Amanda Hemingway she published five novels, at least one of which, *Pzyche* (1982) is science fiction. I still have my UK paperback copy of this somewhere, and I did read it long ago. I

think it was OK, but I didn't bother buying any of her subsequent books. At the time, I think *Pzyche* was referred to as a debut novel.

There are some pages devoted to the author at http://home-1.worldonline.nl/~wjtimmer/jansiegel/jansiegelx.html

#### From Blair H Allen:

I wish to thank KV Bailey for reviewing our Cerulean anthology of SF poetry and *Vector* for publishing the review... even though my old address P.O. and distribution centre neither forwarded the original contributor copy of *Vector* (with review) to me, nor replied to *Vector*'s queries as to what happened to it. I had moved to a new address due to real estate developers forcing my family and I from our rented house after living there for thirty years. Thanks to *Vector* for mailing a second copy (I sent IRCs) to our new address (for book orders as well): Blair H Allen, P.O. Box 162, Colton, CA 92324, USA. Copy in hand, I'd say *Vector* is an excellent zine covering the Science Fiction genre. Cheers to England drinking the wine of starlight from the raised goblet constellation!

We also heard nice words from former editor David V Barrett – Eds.

Letters to Vector should be sent to Andrew M Butler, D28, Department of Arts and Media, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, High Wycombe, HP11 2JZ or emailed to ambutler@enterprise.net and marked 'For publication'. We reserve the right to edit or shorten letters.

#### **Red Shifting – Corrections and Clarifications**

In the Book Review of the Year 2000 we rather confused things with our shortlists and winners – stymied as ever with the difference between the year of eligibility and the year of the award and the fact that no one is ever consistent as to which year the award is known by. For the record Bruce Sterling's Distraction, Ken MacLeod's The Sky Road and the Eric Brown short story 'Hunting the Slarque' (Interzone 141) and artwork by Jim Burns for Darwinia were all works which first appeared in

1999 in Britain and were rewarded at ceremonies in 2000. The various shortlists weren't the other candidates for the award made in 2000 but items which were published in 2000 and which will be or have been voted on in 2001. Hope that makes it clearer... My fault, not Steve Jeffery's – AMB

An error crept in to Andrew Butler's reply to a letter from Doreen Norman in *Vector* 216. The correct web address for Andromeda Books is http://www.andromedabook.co.uk/ Apologies for any inconvenience this may have caused.

## King Arthur, Puppies and Pine Martens An interview with Cherith Baldry conducted by Tanya Brown

CHERITH BALDRY HAS BEEN A REVIEWER FOR VECTOR FOR SOME TIME, BUT SHE ALSO HAS A CAREER IN WRITING CHILDREN'S FICTION. WITH A NUMBER OF NEW NOVELS ABOUT TO HIT THE SHELVES, AND A STORY 'UNDER THE SAFFRON TREE' IN INTERZONE, IT'S TIME WE SPOKE TO HER ABOUT HER WRITING.

THE INTERVIEW IS AN EDITED TRANSCRIPT OF THE ONE CONDUCTED AT THE BSFA LONDON MEETING.

**Tanya Brown**: I understand you have a new book out. *Exiled from Camelot*: due out in November last year, it still hasn't quite made it through the presses.

**Cherith Baldry**: It's being published by Green Knight, in the States. As far as I can tell from what the editor's prepared to divulge, a large printing job came into the printer and they pushed my book aside for bigger jobs.

**TB:** And when is it likely to appear?

**CB:** Fairly soon, I think. I'm now informed that it does exist as a physical object, but I haven't seen a copy yet.

**TB:** It's an Arthurian novel that uses the existing canon and some new characters and elements.

**CB:** All the named characters, except the villagers, are genuine Arthurian characters. Some of them don't come into the really well known legends – in other words the legend as transmitted by Malory, which is what people tend to know.

**TB:** Rather than Mordred, *Exiled from Camelot* features a lesser-known son

CB: Yes, Arthur's illegitimate son Loholt. He's not a nice young

**TB:** You're an Arthurian scholar, as well as using the myth as a basis for fiction. Why the fascination with the Arthurian myth?

**CB:** It goes back, actually, to when I was very small, at school. I had a brilliant teacher at a little village school, and she was taking two separate year groups in the same room. Looking back, she was obviously rushed off her feet. Every so often she would get us all together, and she would either read us a story or tell us a story. She told us all the stories that you can think of: Bible stories, Arthurian legends, Greek myths, Norse myths and so on. Ever since then I've been interested in that kind of thing.

**TB:** You implied there was a lot that Malory didn't transmit. How do you get to that? Where do you find the bits that Malory didn't include?

**CB:** In other Arthurian writers. The first writer of what you could definitely categorise as Arthurian romance was Chretien de Troyes, in France, in the twelfth century – which is quite a bit earlier than Malory. He was followed by various German writers, and by the anonymous writers who put together the French Vulgate cycle, which is probably the single most comprehensive version of the legends. An awful lot of stuff that appears in the Vulgate didn't make it into Malory. It's very much longer.

[Audience]: What about Geoffrey of Monmouth?

**CB:** He, I suppose, started it all off, a bit earlier than Chretien, in Britain: but he tells it very much as history, although as far as one can tell he made it all up. He doesn't tell it as an Arthurian romance with miraculous happenings; he just tells it as if it's an episode of British history.

TB: You focussed, in Exiled from Camelot, on the character of Sir

Kay, Arthur's foster brother. Why is he so interesting?

**CB:** Because he's so different from all the others. If you know your Arthurian legend you know that Kay is the stroppy one who always gets it wrong. You can go quite deeply into his psychology, which for some of the characters you can't: they're fairly two-dimensional. But Kay is very real.

**TB:** You refer to him at one point as 'the builder of Britain'; in your novel, it's made clear how much he's shaped the society, from Camelot outwards. Does he get much mention, after Arthur pulls the sword out of the stone, in Malory?

CB: To some extent. There's the story of Guenevere's abduction by Meliagaunt, which comes into Malory as a fairly late event in the Arthurian story, post-Grail Quest. In Malory he's a minor character, but as that story was first told by Chretien de Troyes he's guite important. And he's important in the same story in the Vulgate. He comes into a romance called Perlesvaus, which was written in French, but was certainly written by somebody who knew the Glastonbury area very well. In Perlesvaus Kay's a bit of a villain, because he kills Arthur's son Loholt. That's the seed of this novel. The way I've dealt with it in the novel is rather different from the way it's dealt with in Perlesvaus. Perlesvaus is a kind of rogue romance because it has ideas in it that were never taken up into the mainstream legend. For example, in that story, Queen Guenevere dies very early, whereas in Malory she survives just about everybody else, when the whole of the Round Table is broken and Arthur's gone off to Avalon. Perlesvaus is very different, and to a certain extent I was trying to look at the story of Kay within Perlesvaus and thinking 'Well, how can I reconcile that to the other tellings of the story such as Malory?' In Perlesvaus that particular strand of the story, involving Kay, isn't finished, and it's thought that Perlesvaus is one volume of a cycle like the Vulgate, of which the other parts have been lost. I also had to think about how that particular story could finish, and bring Kay back into Arthur's court to do the things that he did later on, in writers like Malory, where he's there from start to finish.

**TB:** You've explored Kay in some of your short fiction for Mike Ashley. Can you tell us about that?

**CB:** I started by wanting to write an Arthurian short story. There's a small press magazine called *The Round Table*, in the States, which I was targeting at the time – several years ago now. I was thinking of using Sir Gawain, because ever since I was at school Sir Gawain's always been my favourite knight. The idea just sat there, and I couldn't think of anything that I particularly wanted to write. I don't quite know how it was, but it came to me: 'Not Gawain, Kay'. Then I could see that there were all these potential plots just waiting to be written. Having Kay, I could have Gawain as well, because they very often appear in Arthurian legend as foils for each other. Gawain is always so wonderful and courteous

and successful, and Kay is always getting it wrong and being a pain in the neck, and annoying everybody! They make a wonderful contrast.

**TB:** In terms of other Arthurian writers – other writers who've used the Arthurian myth – who do you rate, and why?

**CB:** Thomas Berger's *Arthur Rex.* It's a comic, ironic take on the Arthurian legend: it is very, very funny, and yet it goes right into the depths of the tragedy as well. It is a tremendous piece of work, and it has a very good characterisation of Kay! I'd also recommend Fay Sampson's *Daughter of Tintagel*, which is a novel about Morgan le Fay. You might have seen it coming out in five separate short novels, of which the first is *Wisewoman's Telling*: it was subsequently published in one volume. That, I think, is the best take on Morgan that I've come across: streets ahead of *The Mists of Avalon*, in my opinion.

**TB:** So Marion Zimmer Bradley just didn't quite hit the nail?

**CB:** I don't think so. I get terribly irritated with this thing about Goddess-worship that seems to be so popular at the moment, because I think it's so woolly-minded. It's fine as a theme in her novel, and I think it works quite well; but I think she's been badly served by her fans, who take it all as being true, a real rendering of what the historical reality would be like. I found that very irritating indeed.

TB: Exiled from Camelot is your most recent work, but you've been writing for quite a while. When did you start writing? CB: I started writing, quite literally, when I was sitting on my granddad's knee. When I was a small child I was terribly unhealthy, and spent a lot of time off with school various bugs. grandparents lived with us, so I spent a lot of time with my grandfather. He used to tell stories, and he would make up cycles of stories. Every day there'd be a new episode. It just got into my mind that making up stories was something that people did: that you didn't have to have them out of books. It seemed to me quite normal that you got stories out of your own head. So I started writing about the age of five or six. But it was round about 1989 when things really started taking off. I did have things published before then, but not very much professionally.

**TB:** Was it a sudden decision to write professionally, full-time? You'd been teaching before that, hadn't you?

CB: Yes. In fact, I went on teaching until

1994. At the end of that year I was made redundant from my teaching job, and it seemed like a good idea to see if I could make it full-time writing.

**TB:** Most of what you've had published so far is children's books. Can you tell us about the Jenny Dale dog books?

**CB:** Very fortunately, at the time that my teaching job gave up on me, I got a job with the Writers' Advice Centre, reading children's books and writing reports on the manuscripts of aspiring writers. I'm still doing that. Louise Iordan, who's the boss there – she's an editor at Puffin - put me in touch with a book packager called Working Partners, who produce mass-market children's fiction series under one pseudonym, put together by several different writers. I did one series of those called 'Survive!'. I was half of 'Jack Dillon'. Those were all about natural disasters - volcanic eruptions, hurricanes and so on. While I was doing that, they had sold a series of six books, called 'Puppy Patrol', to Macmillan. Macmillan decided that instead of six books they wanted eight, so they had to look around pretty sharpish for two writers who were prepared to produce a book in about five seconds flat. They asked me if I would like to do it, and I couldn't turn down paying work! I was a bit dubious about writing books about dogs, because I'm a cat person myself. But anyway, I said I would do it and I did it, and they offered me some more. I've actually just finished the twelfth of those, which is number 42 in the series. I think it's going to run and run! I've just heard that they've sold over a million in the UK alone, and they're selling them all over the world as well.

**TB:** Are they fun to write?

**CB:** Yes, tremendous fun, but by the time I'd finished number 11, which was late 1999, I was getting a little bit fed up with them. I had a break from them – it was about a year between number 11 and number 12 – and when I came back to do number 12 it was all nice and fresh again and I enjoyed it. I think at one time I was doing rather too many of them.

**TB:** Was it easier to write the dog books than it was to write the natural disasters? It seems to me that the 'natural disaster' books are very much aimed at boys, and the dog books aren't. Is there a different voice?

**CB:** Definitely a different voice. I think I find it easier to write for boys than for girls, or to write unisex fiction, anyway. I don't like writing really girly stuff. The natural disasters were quite difficult to write because they had to be very thoroughly researched and accurate. There's a non-fiction section at the back of each book –

which I didn't have to write – all about what you do if, for example, you're caught in a hurricane. They had an expert who produced that, who was also available for me to consult. For example, when I was doing the 'hurricane' book, which is set in Florida, he sent me lots of photocopies of newspaper cuttings reporting their hurricanes. I got a lot of information through him that I wouldn't have had otherwise.

**TB:** *Mutiny in Space* is a science fiction adventure story. It starts off with rivet-counting, for which we have Carol Ann Kerry-Green [former editor of the BSFA's *Focus* magazine] to thank.

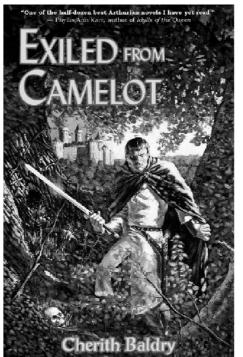
**CB:** Yes, she was talking about 'rivet-counting SF' as a term for hard SF where the technology matters. When I was starting *Mutiny in Space* I had the main character, who was a space cadet, on report for being rude to his commanding officer. He was crawling around on deck counting all the rivets on the ship. It was written for a series called Surfers, which is for reluctant readers – those who can

is for reluctant readers – those who can read quite readily, but are very reluctant to pick up a book. I don't think I'd write another one unless I was pretty sure that they were going to publish it, because if they turned it down there'd be perhaps one other place that I could submit it for publication. It's quite a lot of effort to put in if you're not going to get it published. [Audience]: When you say you're writing for people who are

reluctant readers, what is involved in that? Is your vocabulary different, or is it that it has to be more plot-driven? What is the formula?

**CB:** It's fairly short. *Mutiny in Space* was about twelve and a half thousand words, which really is only a decent short story. It's got to be plot-driven with fast action. The characters have to be strongly drawn, but you can't go into great psychological depth. I didn't worry too much when I was writing it about vocabulary and sentence structure.

**TB:** There was another series you were working on, 'Stories of the Six Worlds'. I found the setting of that very interesting. It's a binary system, two planets around one sun and four planets around the other. Presumably each story's set on a different planet. They're lost colonies: they remember coming from Earth but there's no contact any more. What was the premise of those?



Why did they stop?

CB: I can answer that better by telling you why they started! I wrote a book, a long time ago now, which was called City of the Dead. It was about an underground city that had developed from a nuclear fallout shelter. The basic premise of that book was that people there were living very regimented lives where they weren't allowed to think. A group of them got together and became fully human, finally breaking out and discovering that it was all right up top after all. Part of what happened to them - because of the way I think – was that they discovered the Christian faith. I submitted the book to some Christian publishers. It got universally turned down, but it was good enough to cause a certain amount of interest so that my name was known. Lion Publishing said that although they wouldn't publish that one, they would be very interested if I wrote them anything else. I wrote what eventually became The Book & the Phoenix, and eventually Lion turned that down also, and suggested that it would be more appropriately published by Kingsway, who were very strongly interested in publishing children's books with a Christian world view. I sent it to them and they took it, and eventually I published four in that particular series. They did quite well over here, although Christian fiction never sells enormous amounts. Kingsway then went into partnership with a much larger concern in the States, and three of my books went over to the States and were published there. They had the most revolting front covers that I've ever seen in my life! They didn't do terribly well in the United States, because they were at odds with the fundamentalist religious right, which thinks that science fiction is evil. The final upshot was that Kingsway gave up publishing children's fiction. I don't think it was entirely because of the 'Six Worlds' books! Kingsway in this country had been quite interested in publishing science fiction and fantasy, and the American partners were not interested in doing so over there. There was a fifth novel which was written but never actually appeared, which was a pity.

**TB:** Would you write more children's fiction with a Christian slant if there was a particular market for it?

**CB:** I would be interested, but I cannot write the sort of straight-down-the-line evangelical thing, where someone gets converted on page 87 and as soon as they're a Christian all's well with the world. I think it's dishonest: I can't do it. Kingsway previously didn't want that kind of thing: they wanted something that was much more intelligent. If I could write in a similar vein, I would be interested in doing it again. If it had to be much more fundamentalist, then I wouldn't be interested in doing it.

**TB:** You've got a trilogy coming out, which has the most glorious cover art. These are out in the spring from Macmillan. It's a children's fantasy series: *The Silver Horn, The Emerald Throne* and *The Lake of Darkness*.

**CB:** This was something that Macmillan broached to me a couple of years ago now. 'Puppy Patrol' is published by Macmillan too. This, I think, is a case of virtue not being its own reward. They wanted somebody who would write an animal fantasy, and they knew that I wrote fantasy as well as dog books, so they asked me if I would be interested in submitting a book proposal for this. The idea was that it was to appeal to the sort of kid who would enjoy Brian Jacques' Redwall, or Robin Jarvis's The Deptford Mice, but couldn't connect to such huge books as they are. Some kids are so frightened by the look of a volume the size of a Redwall book that they won't even try. This was to be that sort of thing, but to be shorter books. At one time we were thinking of making it into a series, and then they decided that they'd prefer it to be a trilogy. So I did guite a lot of world-building. It all takes place in a fantasy version of the Lake District, where they all go up and down rivers in boats. They're dressed animals: it's not Watership Down, it's Wind in the Willows. They have houses, they wear clothes, and they cook their food. It's a standard fantasy plot, really.

**TB:** Why pine martens?

**CB:** Why not? I like pine martens. They're original. There's a mixture of animals: there are four who make up the group that do all the adventuring. The pine marten is the hero but there's also a

vixen, a Scottish wildcat and a squirrel.

**TB:** You've written almost equal amounts of science fiction and fantasy in your work for children. Which do you prefer?

CB: I think I prefer fantasy, or science fiction that is on the fantasy end of the spectrum. The Six Worlds books were science fiction: some of the worlds had lost their technology, and were living a kind of medieval existence, which is really a fantasy setting rather than a science fiction setting. There's only one of the worlds which had survived with technology and a certain amount of limited space travel. The others had gone backwards. So, yes: fantasy, I think. I'm a literary person by education – I did my degree in English Literature – and I don't have sufficient scientific knowledge to write really hard SF novels, of the sort that Stephen Baxter comes out with. I wouldn't know where to start. Fantasy is much easier, and I also find that it's a good vehicle for ideas. Looking at people's emotions and different people's ambitions and fears and so on, through a fantasy plot, is perhaps easier than with a science fiction plot.

**TB:** You were talking about children being put off by big books. How do you think the average child is going to contend with having the first three Harry Potter books fairly short, and the fourth one much longer – more than twice the length of the previous one?

**CB:** I think they're probably going to think 'Whee! All that extra Harry Potter!'

**TB:** What do you think of the whole Harry Potter phenomenon?

**CB:** I think the books are great fun. They're stuffed full of the kind of thing that kids like. I'm surprised that it's become so big, because that is an incredible phenomenon. It hasn't happened before, and I doubt it will happen again. I don't think there's an enormous amount of depth to them: I don't think you can look at them as literature, but they are enormously attractive to young people. At one end of the children's fiction spectrum you've got the mass-market series fiction, like Puppy Patrol. At the other end you've got some books which are terribly worthy, and teachers and librarians really approve of them. But I sometimes think perhaps children don't actually enjoy them a lot.

**TB:** One of the writers who's being raised on a pedestal as an alternative to the Harry Potter books is Philip Pullman. What do you think of his books?

CB: I think he's an incredibly good writer. I don't want anyone to think that I'm anti-Philip Pullman. I don't think he'll ever have the following that Harry Potter has, because his books aren't as accessible. They don't have the immediate surface attractiveness of Harry Potter. I think they're very much better books and they'll probably survive longer. I do have my reservations about the kind of thing that he is actually saying to children. There's stuff in the Sally Lockhart trilogy (as was: I haven't read the fourth one yet), especially in volume 3, which I think is quite disturbing for a child. The child who read volume 1 and enjoyed it is going to get quite upset by the time they get to volume 3. I think it's pitched at a much older age group than the first one. This is a bit worrying, because once a child has read and enjoyed the first one, the immediate reaction is to go and read number 2. They don't wait for two or three years until they're a bit more mature.

[Audience]: Do you think there's a problem like that in the Harry Potter books?

**CB:** I certainly think that the ending of the fourth Harry Potter is much darker. I've got a friend who has two children of the right sort of age to be reading it, and she was a little bit worried about how her daughter would react to the end of the fourth book.

**TB:** Is it necessarily a problem? It can be part of growing up.

**CB:** It depends on the child, and it depends on the particular stage that the child is at. This is why I very strongly think that parents should read the books that their kids are reading.

**TB:** One example is Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* series. The first three books – the original trilogy – are definitely pitched at adolescents. There's coming-of-age themes and moral crises, but nothing more difficult.

CB: I don't think there's anything in the first three books of

Earthsea that would worry the average parent.

**TB:** The fourth book, *Tehanu* – which is now being published in the same volume as the other three – is a different matter. I read it at the right age, because I read the trilogy as a child and *Tehanu* as an adult, when it was published: but a lot of children now will go on and read the four novels as a single work. There are a lot of unsettling things in *Tehanu*.

**CB:** I think that's a pity, because I don't think that *Tehanu* is a children's book at all. The things that happen to the child, and the perversion of the mage who wants to kill them at the end ... I don't think a child would understand the emotions that were fuelling that man. I don't think they would see what his motivation was at all, and I think it would be very difficult for a parent to explain it. My elder son, who was quite a keen reader as a child, read *A Wizard of Earthsea* when he was about nine. That was fine, but he'd have been completely lost with *Tehanu*.

**TB:** Who else do you rate as a children's fantasy writer?

**CB:** Diana Wynne Jones, obviously: I think she's very good. There's depth in her stuff that there isn't in Rowling. Probably for that reason she is a rather more difficult read than Rowling. Again for that reason, she isn't going to get the enormous number of readers that Harry Potter does.

[Audience]: She does claim that she writes books that children enjoy: she doesn't write for children. Do you think that because of that, children may not get as much out of them?

**CB:** Yes, at least on the first reading. *I* don't think I get everything out of a Diana Wynne Jones book on first reading. I'm sure children don't. They maybe go back to it and reread it and find new things in it later.

TB: And what do you think of Diana's adult fiction?

**CB:** I don't think it's as good as her children's fiction. Considered as adult novels, they are incredibly readable: I think *Dark Lord of Derkholm* is wonderful, the way she plays with the idea of the fantasy kingdom that she set up in *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*. I think some of her children's fiction is outstanding: I wouldn't say that about the adult novels.

**TB:** You're somebody who has written both children's fiction and adult fiction: which do you find is easier?

**CB:** I don't find either of them particularly easy. I found the King Arthur book (*Exiled from Camelot*) fairly easy once I'd sorted out what I was going to do in it. I did all the thinking beforehand. It wasn't that difficult to write. The Venice book (*The Reliquary Ring*: not yet published) was actually quite hard to write.

**TB:** You say you don't think Diana Wynne Jones's adult fiction is as strong as her children's fiction. Are there other writers who you think can write for both children and adults?

**CB:** Le Guin? I don't know, because I have tremendous admiration for nearly everything she's written. I think in recent years she's got a little bit too much PC, and some of the fiction is showing that rather badly. Certainly, the great novels, like *The Dispossessed* and *The Left Hand of Darkness*, are going to be with us for a very long time.

**TB:** In your children's books, you've avoided being overly PC. You also said you didn't like forcing the Christian view on your readers. Do you ever feel the urge to push anything ideological?

**CB:** I don't like didactic writing in the guise of a story. If you're going to write fiction, then the story and the characters have to be the most important things: it's got to be as good as you can possibly make it. I think any writer's world view is going to come over in the fiction they write, but that's a different thing from deliberately trying to teach a lesson, which I don't much care for.

**TB:** I think that children perhaps don't notice someone coming to force a point of view on them. Maybe a child will just receive without realising.

**CB:** I think there are ideas that you'd want to put into children's fiction, like anti-drugs, anti-experimenting with sex, things about bullying – but they've got to be embedded in the story.

[Audience]: I wondered what you thought of Stephen Lawhead, both as an Arthurian writer and as a Christian writer who does tend to hit readers over the head with his beliefs.

**CB:** I really don't care much for his Arthurian fiction, which I know is an awful thing to say. People think I'll like it because it's Christian, but I don't, really, because he has a squeaky-clean Arthur which isn't really backed up by the legends at all, merely to get his ideas over.

[Audience]: Does the Christianity in the Arthurian mythos appeal to you?

**CB:** Yes, it does. If you go back to the original medieval texts, of course, there's a very strong Christian worldview there. But again, it's not hitting you over the head with a message, because everybody was Christian, apart from a few pagans who were there to have their heads cut off. It's quite comfortably there.

[Audience]: Do you think that's one reason you're interested in the Arthurian romance, rather than the earlier works?

**CB:** That's quite possible, yes. When I was first starting to write Arthurian stuff, I felt it was very remote because it's very remote as a time, and also quite remote in the way that they thought. One of the things that I could find that they did, and that I still do, is to attend Mass. It's a kind of meeting point. There's a Mass in *Exiled from Camelot* which is quite important to the structure of the story.

**TB:** You've published quite a number of short stories, including a couple of Shakespearean whodunits, one based on *The Merchant of Venice* – for which you've also written a study guide. What fascinates you about *The Merchant of Venice*? Are there other Shakespeare plays that you'd like to use as source material for fiction?

**CB:** I just like Shakespeare. *The Merchant of Venice* seems to me to be such an interesting play, because there are so many different issues raised by it. The characters are interesting, and there are so many ambiguities within it, so many questions that it raises and doesn't answer. It's very disturbing for a comedy to be ambiguous like that. You cannot honestly see those marriages at the end holding up for very long, which is what I wrote the short story about.

**TB:** From *The Merchant of Venice* to a future Venice: your short story 'The Reliquary Ring' in *Odyssey* 2 is also set in Venice, but it's a future Venice. You've expanded that into a novel of the same name. Which came first?

**CB:** The short story was the first thing I wrote about that particular Venetian society. I'm not sure, actually, whether it's a future Venice or an alternate universe: it's not the Venice that we know. I started the short story intending it to be the beginning of a novel. I then wrote another short story set in the same world, with some of the same characters but a completely separate story, and when I did the third one I took it to Milford, where they told me that this would make a pretty good novel! I went away and thought about it, and decided that if I put together what I'd written so far, and interwove it with some other ideas that I'd had, but hadn't actually committed to paper at that time, there were the bones of a novel there.

**TB:** Can you tell us a bit about it?

**CB:** Well, the society of Venice is a layered society, which I think to a certain extent is true of today's Venice, in that there's a great sense of the past there, the different periods coexisting together. In this particular society they have genetically-engineered human beings, otherwise known as genics, who are commodities. They're created in the labs of the Empire to the north, and then brought south and sold. They are effectively slaves. The basic idea of the novel is the way that genics become accepted as proper human beings. The thing that's interwoven with this is the story of the ring, which is discovered very early in the novel, which has a reliquary containing the hair of Christ. The way that's made use of fits in with the story about what happens to the genics.

**TB:** Are we ever going to see this novel?

**CB:** I hope so. My agent's got it at the moment: that's all I know.

TB: Cherith, thank you very much.

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## 'Niggers, all of them...': Revisiting the Racial Ideology of Robert E Howard. by Scott T Merrifield

THIS YEAR MARKS THE SIXTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SUICIDE OF AUTHOR ROBERT E HOWARD. HOWARD HAS A REPUTATION WHICH DOGS MANY WRITERS OF HIS OWN AGE, THAT OF BEING SEXIST AND RACIST. HERE SCOTT T MERRIFIELD SUGGESTS WE TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE EVIDENCE FOR THE LATTER CHARGE.

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Robert E Howard, the creator of Conan the Cimmerian, amongst many others, remains a controversial writer, especially for his depiction of women and race. Howard was a writer of pulp fiction who managed to spark controversy amongst science fiction and fantasy fans and writers alike. He produced violent, anachronistic and complex fiction, which mirrors the writer himself and the attitudes prevalent in society within the times that he lived. Take one example of a reaction to his work:

That Robert E Howard was neither a well-adjusted nor psychologically healthy individual is clear enough from the facts of his life: a brilliant young man with considerable literary ability [...] dominated by a stern father and an overwhelming mother, he expressed his pent-up rage in luridly violent pulp fantasies [... with] blunders of ignorance and a certain narrowness of outlook, which caused him to adopt the popular 'Aryan' racial ideas uncritically, although without much of what the later twentieth century would call racism. If blacks were incurably barbaric, that wasn't necessarily a bad thing in Howard's book.<sup>1</sup>

The above commentary, written by Darrell Schweitzer, typifies the outlook by the majority of science fiction and fantasy fans and critics (and some academics) of the fiction of Robert E Howard. The above ideology is further propagated by some of the most seminal science fiction writers and critics, most notably Michael Moorcock and L Sprague de Camp.

In Wizardry and Wild Romance, Moorcock's thesis upon the modern fantasy novel, he writes of Howard and his fiction as:

Commercially [un]successful [...] brash, hasty [and] careless [in] style [...] it was the personality of Conan – moody, savage, boyish in loyalties and his treatment of girls – which bound all this stuff together and made the stories somehow credible. If Conan was a projection of Howard's fantasy self, he was a very successfully-realised one.<sup>2</sup>

These two quotations from Schweitzer and Moorcock, placed side by side, describe Howard as psychologically at odds with himself, and a narrow-minded racist, whose work contains very little (if indeed any) cultural validity.

Howard is an enigmatic figure of immense complexity and contradiction, as is his fiction. Yet he remains one of the most influential writers of modern fantasy and science fiction of the twentieth century. Howard is a writer whose work has been constantly in and out of print, in one form or another, since his death in 1936; and who, along with Tolkien, can be said to have shaped modern fantasy as it is known today. Howard's science fiction and fantasy characters have spawned numerous pastiches (including a couple in Pratchett's Discworld novels), four films, and thousands of comic book adaptations. His work is still read on a colossal scale, by both male and female readers, world wide. Even as the old millennium ended, a new edition of Conan stories (for the first time in chronological order and freed from the editorial textual interference of L Sprague de Camp) was reprinted by Gollancz/Millennium as part of their Fantasy Masterworks series. The longevity of his fictional characters in the cultural consciousness of science fiction surely equates to being more than merely 'a sort pint-sized King Kong [...] given to impulsive violent action[s], sudden rough affection and bouts of melancholy'3

It is important to examine the views of L Sprague de Camp, Howard's main editor since the 1950s. De Camp, one of the foremost experts on Howardian fiction, writes that Howard's fiction output – in particular his Conan stories – are not:

[I]ntended to solve current social and economic problems; it has nothing to say about the faults of the foreign-aid program or the woes of disadvantaged ethnics or socialised medicine, or inflation. It is escapist fiction of the purest kind, in which the reader escapes clear out of the real world.<sup>5</sup>

For de Camp, fantasy fiction is 'pure entertainment' and 'escapist fiction of the purest kind'. This ideology is surprising and at once misleading. The first question that arises to the cultural and sf historian should be what is the reader trying to escape from?

Howard's literary canon is more than escapist entertainment and has significant cultural and historical relevance. During the 1920s and early 1930s Howard was writing at a time of great political, economic and social unrest; it was a time of Prohibition, the Great Depression resulting from the stock market crash of 1929, a radical change in the rôle of women in American society and the rise of racial equality, albeit in its earliest form.

Howard encapsulated his contemporary society, both its positive and large negative aspects, and the period of civilian unrest that early twentieth-century America was undergoing, especially regarding its attitudes towards the 'other'. It is my intention within this article to examine the racial attitudes and representations within some of Robert E Howard's fiction.

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Perhaps the most contentious subject within Howardian scholarship is that of race; especially his depiction of the African American. One of Howard's closest friends, Tevis Clyde Smith, writes that: 'Bob did not like negroes and jews'<sup>8</sup> and that Howard 'would have enjoyed the so called Civil War – would be willing to fight in a race war'.<sup>9</sup> Smith was in a position of great responsibility, a close friend of Howard's, who was asked to write about him on many occasions (writings which reached a worldwide readership of Howard admirers) and generally to safeguard the memory of one of the most influential popular writers of the twentieth century. Of course, Smith is not alone in this. In S M Stirling's introduction to *Trails In Darkness* (a volume of Howard's western pioneer fiction) he states quite categorically that:

Like most Southerners of his generation, Howard regarded blacks as inherently primitive and barbaric[...]

Unlike most Southerners of his generation, Howard did not subscribe to the Uncle Remus myth of happy, devoted darkies contentedly picking cotton.<sup>10</sup>

The above comment furthers the idea of Howard as racist, an idea that will carry into another generation of readers. I want to argue that Howard was not a racist but subtly undermined established prejudices of the white American, and was not just a man of his time.

As Rusty Burke, one of the more renowned of the Howard scholars, writes in his biographical and historical study of Tevis Clyde Smith that:

Both Clyde and Bob were [...] unabashed racists. Bob seemed to be able to 'give any man his due,' judging individuals on merit – this was probably true of Clyde, as well. But both men were given to sweeping racist generalities. In the South of the 1930s, they were firmly in the mainstream, and we may simply say they were products of their time.<sup>11</sup>

That fact that Clyde Smith was vehemently racist is indisputable and it is essential that I point out that discovered 'among [Tevis Clyde Smith's] papers after his death was literature from the National Association for the Advancement of White People, a right-wing, white supremacist organisation'. Clyde Smith was writing at the height of Howard's popularity in the late 1960s and 1970s in what has become known as the 'Howard boom' – where interest in Howard and Tolkien hit astronomical popularity both in the United States and in Europe.

Clyde Smith has been in a prime situation to propagate his own racial hatred and fear of the 'other' in American rural and urban society by adding his memoirs of his friendship with Howard to what has become collectively known as Howardiana. An abuse of such a position is inexcusable and has cast Howard's literary canon in an unfavourable light; by so doing he has propagated an ideology of white American supremacy.

This is, of course, not uncommon. The adding of one's own prejudices to an established writer/intellectual (whether critic, friend or pupil of the artist) has gone on for thousands of years. And with whatever intentions, this process has effected the author's original intentions upon an impressionable readership.

Clyde Smith, being privy to Howard's innermost thoughts (albeit for a short period of time), was in a ideal position to insert his prejudices into Howard's body of fiction by writing and being published in various fanzines all over the world. This is material (as with Howard's fantasy / horror and science fiction) which appeals to a mainly male adolescent readership, and by so doing could continue a racist ideology for at least another generation.

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In order to begin this discussion of race in Howard's fiction, I will first look at his most famous creation, Conan the Cimmerian. 'The Queen of the Black Coast' is a pivotal story in Howard's Conan series Whilst the Conan Stories are by no means his best, they are his best known and upon which his reputation rests. Many of the themes that arise in 'The Queen of the Black Coast' also appear, to a certain extent, in many other Conan stories that involve the black 'other'; for example, 'Shadows in Zamboula' and 'The Pool of the Black One'. The themes that frequently arise include the 'other' as brave, loyal, fearless and noble. More importantly, they are depicted as equal to the white man in his chivalric attitudes. The texts also encompass the depths of depravity, cowardice and fear that humanity can descend into, and these are emotions that encompass both white and black cultures.

'The Queen of the Black Coast' relates Conan's encounter with his first great love, Belit the Shemite 'woman, who led black raiders'. Conan the Cimmerian, having fled Argos for killing a judge, flees the city by jumping on board the 'Argus', which is captained by Tito, a 'licensed mastershipman of the ports of Argos [...] bound for Cush, to trade beads and silks and sugar and brasshilted swords to the black Kings'. However, whilst travelling towards Cut, the Argosies' ship is attacked by Belit's ship the 'Tigress'. After the heat of battle, Conan switches allegiance to Belit and falls in love with her. They then set sail and arrive at the mouth of the Zarkheba river, a river 'which is death'. Conan, Belit and her warrior crew are then attacked by a supernatural, half-human being and all except Conan are slaughtered. The story ends with Conan exacting vengeance on the creature and honouring his dead lover.

Whilst having a deceptively simple story-line, 'The Queen of the Black Coast' is striking for its depiction of the 'other's' bravery and allegiance to their queen and their social equality with both Conan and Belit in the midst of battle. In the heat of battle the white and the 'other' become equal, racial tension dissipates.

The proving of oneself in battle, it must be emphasised, is also essential to an accurate understanding of Howard and his fiction. Robert E Howard was a fanatical fitness enthusiast, and excelled at weightlifting, boxing and horse riding. Howard, like Conan, was very much the societal misfit, bullied as a child, and the only way he could prove his equality amongst his Texan contemporaries was through a régime of intense fitness fanaticism. Therefore the masculine warrior is an essential component in any understanding of equality with the 'other'.

Whilst the 'Argus' comes under attack from the 'Tigress' the 'other' is superior in his bravery in battle. Otherness becomes forgotten. Witness the battle scene:

[T]he warriors dancing on the narrow deck were in full view. These were painted and plumed, and mostly naked, brandishing spears and spotted shields [...] from the lofty gunwale, the black pirates drove down a volley of shafts that tore through the quilted jackets of the doomed sailormen, then sprang down, spear in hand to complete the slaughter. <sup>16</sup>

The fearlessness of the 'other' rivals and equals that of Conan, and places the element of fear into the Cimmerian 'up, lads [...] grab your steel and give these dogs a few knocks before they cut our throats'.<sup>17</sup>

The use of the term 'dogs' arises frequently in the Conan stories; in fact Belit uses it to order her own warriors to 'take up the jewels, dogs'. But this in itself in not an indication of racial hatred. The deployment of the word 'dog' is also used is conjunction with those who derive from non-black origins, including those of white extraction.

In Howard's Conan story 'A Witch Shall Be Born' a severely beaten and restrained Conan calls his 'white' captors 'dogs': 'If I could come down from this beam I'd make a dying dog out of you'.<sup>19</sup> The use of the term is used to *emphasise* the differentiation between friend and foe.

As has been mentioned earlier, Howard's fiction is problematical and close textual analysis will reveal his real racial ideologies. Whilst I have used one Conan text to illustrate Howard's racial ideology I would like now to further apply close textual investigation to some of his non-Conan texts.

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Perhaps the finest story written by Howard is a cosmic horror tale, somewhat along the lines of the Lovecraftian Cthulhu mythos, 'Pigeons from Hell'. It is a yarn set somewhere in mid-west Texas in the then present day (the early 1920s). The main protagonist Griswell and his friend John Branner take shelter in an old house which, unknown to them, is haunted. Griswell witnesses the supernatural murder of Banner, flees the house and encounters the local sheriff, Bruckner, who has just 'took a nigger over to the country-seat in the next county and was ridin' back late'. The house turns out to have been the property of a Anglo-French family named the Blassenvilles, a family ruined by the American Civil War after they emigrated there from the West Indies. Sheriff Bruckner relates the hideous incidents that happened in the house, to the black slaves, servants and family itself back in the 1860s. It is a house that no one has lived in since Elizabeth Blassenville fled in horror one night:

They owned all this land here. French-English family. Came here from the West Indies before the Louisiana Purchase. The Civil War ruined them, like it did so many. Some were killed in the War; most of the others died out. Nobody's lived in the Manor since 1890 when Miss Elizabeth Blassenville, the last of the line, fled from the old house one night like it was a plague spot, and never came back to it <sup>20</sup>

The Sheriff and Griswell then return to the house to confront the supernatural terror and prove Griswell's innocence of the murder of John Branner. There they discover the age-old secrets of the Blassenville household:

A scent of decay and mouldering vegetation blew on the faint wind, and Griswell grew faint with nausea, that rose from a frantic abhorrence of these black woods, these ancient plantation house that hid secrets of slavery and bloody pride and mysterious intrigues. He had thought of the South as a sunny, lazy land washed by soft breezes laden with spice and warm blossoms, where life ran tranquilly to the rhythm of black folksinging in sun-bathed cottonfields. But no he had discovered another, unsuspected side – a dark, brooding, fear-haunted side, and the discovery repelled him.<sup>21</sup>

The story itself is interesting in the fact that Howard has displayed the racist tendencies of the mid-west Texas, still heavily affected by its defeat during the Civil War at the hands of the unionist (and its inability to come to terms with that defeat), in the shape of Sheriff Bruckner, an explosive metaphor of masked, institutionalised bigotry and hatred within Texan authority. The protagonist in 'Pigeons from Hell' does not once refer to black Americans as 'niggers', whereas Sheriff Bruckner relates the supernatural appearance of the pigeons from hell of the title to Griswell. Bruckner describes the previous pigeon sightings by black Americans but with one exception:

Niggers, all of them except one man. A tramp. He was buildin' a fire in the yard, aimin' to camp there that night. I passed along there about dark, and he told me about the pigeons. I came back by there the next mornin'. The ashes of his fire were there, and his tin cup, and skillet where he'd fried pork, and his blankets looked like they'd been slept in. Nobody ever saw him again. That was twelve years ago. The niggers say they can see the pigeons, but no nigger would pass along this road between sun-down and sun-up. They say the pigeon are the souls of the Blassenvilles, let out of hell at sunset. The niggers say the red glare in the west in the light from hell...<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting the way that Howard does not allow his main protagonist Griswell to use the term 'blacks' or 'niggers', in fact he never refers to the blacks at all. This makes for an interesting plot device in as much as that it enabled Howard to highlight racial prejudices in American culture and society by demonstrating it in what Sheriff Bruckner is saying. Howard was writing powerful social commentary in an age where, as David Drake writes: 'black hatreds ruled everywhere'.23 Once again, Drake seems to have missed the point of Howard's work - as have so many Howard critics. Howard was not just a man of his time, who wrote of that time, but he divorced himself from the racist ideology of that time and place. The above quotation I just cited gives rise to the cry of Howard as racist. But Howard is mirroring the prejudices - and the word mirroring is important here - not just of his Texan countrymen but of white America as a whole, who were fearful of their place in society and the rôle black Americans were now beginning to play a part in it. In 'Pigeons from Hell' Howard rejects the racial hatred of his countrymen, sensing that 'underlying all [American society] was a [...] sick abhorrence [...] a reek of rot and decay'. 24 A repulsive fear of the 'other'.

In 'Old Garfield's Heart', a pioneer-like story set loosely within the Lovecraftian horror / science fiction mythos, Howard related the story of Jim Garfield, a western pioneer, who fought in the last Indian raid of San Jacinto in 1874. Prior to the battle he was in a skirmish with a 'band of Comanches' and was gravely wounded: 'Jim Garfield got a thrust in the breast with a lance'. However, Garfield did not die (in the mortal sense of death) even

though his human heart had been 'cleft in two'.27 A Lipian Indian chief named Ghost Man replaced his heart with 'the heart of a God the Lipians worshipped before the Comanches drove 'em out of their native hills.'28 Ghost Man 'took out what was left of my mortal heart, and put the heart of the god in my bosom. But it's his, and when I'm through with it, he'll come for it [...] the heart must be given back to Ghost Man'.29 This story is of particular relevance to the point that I'm trying to make, even though it is not a 'normal' science fiction story in any strict sense. This story clearly removes Howard from the category of racist to one of racial humanitarian. Howard has revealed to the reader his deep knowledge and, more importantly, respect for ethnic anthropology, culture and its values. The heart of a native American Indian, albeit the heart of an Indian god, has been explicitly placed within the body of an American white man. This, I believe, gives credence to my suggestion that Howard respected ethnic racial differences within his fiction. The tale is interesting in the fact that it places both white and ethnic within the same category of humanity - there is no hint of racial inferiority in favour of the white American settler as the supreme ruling being. Both white and 'other' hit a nirvana of racial equality, even though Garfield was the 'first white man in this country'.30 White American and American 'other' all possessed equal 'cosmic power [...] concentrated into [...] a human heart'.31

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The Robert Ervin Howard I have tried to depict in this article is very far removed from the Robert E Howard that critics such as L Sprague de Camp, Michael Moorcock, Darrell Schweitzer and Howard's friend Tevis Clyde Smith have written about. Robert Ervin Howard was a sophisticated political, social and economic cartographer of early twentieth-century America. He was a writer who wrote for the pulp fiction marker, but whose work transcended that of pure entertainment, and can now be seen as fiction of significant historical and cultural importance.

Robert Ervin Howard is far from the racist mid-western writer that claimants foisted upon him. The myth of Howard as racist has been propagated since his death by fans, critics and friends. Howard grew up in an era and a place where racist tendencies were high, but Howard breached the borders of prejudice, which exist in many forms, to reveal the dark sentiments of the men – and women – of early twentieth-century America.

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### **Paul Kincaid reviews** The Collected Stories by Arthur C Clarke

Tor, 2001, 966pp, \$29.95 ISBN 0312878214 and Victor Gollancz Science Fiction; 976pp, £20.00 ISBN 057507065X

Philip K Dick's Collected Stories came to six volumes. Theodore Sturgeon is on his way to ten volumes, although the early ones have too many previously unpublished stories that add little to his reputation. Arthur C Clarke warrants only a single volume, though it does present 104 stories in nearly a thousand large pages of small print, and it is shorn of all critical paraphernalia except for laconic introductions which say just enough and no more. Any future literary historian who counts shelf inches as a measure of importance, will get a very distorted view of the last half century.

Clarke's entire career as a short story writer is contained within these covers. It ranges from 'Travel By Wire' which appeared in Amateur Science Fiction Stories in December 1937, to 'Improving the Neighbourhood' which appeared in Nature in November 1999 (and the difference between the places of original publication says much for how far he has come between those two dates). Unlike Dick and Sturgeon, Clarke's Collected Stories has been put together while he is still very much alive, so there is always the chance that this volume will, in time, prove not to be complete. I doubt it; only six stories cover the 30 years since 'A Meeting With Medusa', and with the exception of a collaboration with Stephen Baxter ('The Wire Continuum', 1997, credited as a collaboration only in the contents list, not in the heading to the story itself) these are inconsequential pieces.

In any career that stretches over more than 60 years there are bound to be duds. To my mind the early stories and the most recent could, in the main, be trimmed from this collection without much loss. The most recent are generally the work of someone going through the motions, someone who has said as much as he has to say and is here repeating himself. In the earliest he wasn't taking his work seriously enough. I don't mean that they are comedies, though they often are and Clarke's attempts at humour are almost invariably the worst things here, but he hadn't discovered how daring science fiction would allow him to be. These tales do little more than nibble at the edge of the genre in a very unconvincing manner. If you were to hold up 'How We Went To Mars' from 1938 or 'Quarantine' from 1977 and say that these were the work of the most significant writer of science fiction from the last half of the twentieth century you would be laughed out of court. But between these two stories, generally between the mid-1940s and the early 1960s, Clarke was producing story after story that would knock the socks off the competition, stories which explored everything that science fiction would allow and came back with a view of the future at the same time convincing and amazing, full of technical wonders yet always humane.

You can watch him begin to discover his voice. In a story called 'The Awakening', first published in 1942, an all-powerful figure known only by the menacing name 'The Master' tries to escape death by having his body cryogenically frozen. But future history forgets him and he lies undisturbed for millennia until finally awakened by Man's inheritors, the insects. In a story called 'Nemesis', first published in 1950, a once-powerful figure known only as 'The Master' escapes the enemies who are closing in on him by having his body cryogenically frozen. But the world changes and it is many thousands of years before The Master wakes to find only one other person, a human of a more gentle age, who reads the Master's thoughts and kills him for them. Between these two stories, so close together in date and shape, there is a world of difference. The first, competently written, is simple in form: it is a dramatic way of presenting Clarke's ideas about our inheritors (a theme he will return to repeatedly throughout his career), and beyond the threat implied in the name we learn nothing about The Master. The second, while not much better written (Clarke would never be what one might call a stylist), is a far more complex work. Again we get the long view of history, but this time we also get glimpses of what makes The Master and, more importantly, what makes Trevindor, the future human he encounters. Indeed the climax of the story becomes not simply the revelation of how the world has changed during The Master's sleep, but the moral and cultural dilemma that the man from the past forces upon the man from the future.

This is not to say that 'Nemesis' is a model of characterisation in science fiction, but it is to say that Clarke is starting, in this story and others around this time, to recognise that what makes us human is the real engine of his fiction.

One way of illustrating this is to take the standard view of science fiction expounded by John W Campbell. The editor of Astounding, who was perhaps the most powerful and influential figure in the world of science fiction between the late 1930s and the mid-1950s, saw the genre as a means of glorifying man. Time and again you will find a consistent pattern developing through the stories he published: whenever man encounters the alien it is man who wins, and even when he is outgunned, man's intellect provides the ultimate weapon. It is a formula you will find recurring in the work of the great writers of Campbell's stable, Asimov and Heinlein, Van Vogt and the like; it is a formula that results as often as not in the lone hero, Heinlein's competent man, winning against the odds.

Clarke returns to this scenario frequently, yet subverts it nearly every time. In 'A Walk in the Dark' (1950), the lone hero is defeated by the alien in the darkness that surrounds him. In 'Breaking Strain' (1949) one character survives a Cold Equationstype situation by the simple but decidedly unheroic method of murdering his companion. 'Hide-and-Seek' (1949) looks like the archetypal Campbell story in that a man alone in a spacesuit on the tiny worldlet of Phobos manages by his own wit to escape the heavily armed warship that is pursuing him, except that in the end our sympathies are turned around and we are made to see the story from the perspective of the spaceship commander who was defeated. (This story was first published in Campbell's Astounding, though considering that Clarke was held up alongside Asimov and Heinlein as one of the giants of the genre it is surprising how few of his stories actually did appear there. Or maybe not that surprising when one considers how rarely Clarke's stories could be said to follow the Campbellian model.) Most often, Clarke subverted the Campbellian model by denying the role of the lone, competent hero; rather his isolated characters survive, as in 'Summertime on Icarus' (1960) or 'Maelstrom II' (1962), not through their own intellect but by the skill of a backup team. Clarke's most effective heroes are team players, not

There is one other crucial difference between Clarke's characters and those of the typical sf story of the time: Clarke's characters are generally married, not only that but the nature of the relationship and regret for what might be lost play a big part in the development of the character. Much of 'Maelstrom II', for instance, is taken up with the supposedly-dying hero thinking of his last message to home and family. These are not the independent figures who bestride so much mid-century science fiction.

Moreover, they are mortal figures. Personal and racial death occur with unexpected frequency throughout his work, usually accepted with an equanimity that is rare in a genre that rages so against the coming of the night that longevity and immortality are unquestioned facets of our notion of the future. One of the best of Clarke's later stories, for instance, is 'Transit of Earth' (1971), which offers a situation ripe for any competent hero to triumph against overwhelming odds: the last survivor of the first manned expedition to Mars has no way of returning home. In another age, this would have been a story about how he created a spaceship out of the most unlikely ingredients found on Mars; but for Clarke it is a story about coming to terms with death, and in the final paragraphs our hero simply and quietly walks away into the Martian desert. This story contains a specific reference to Robert Falcon Scott, and more than once in the brief story introductions there are references to this schoolboy hero standing, as he does, for honourable failure and noble self-sacrifice. It is the influence of Scott which runs through so much of Clarke's work that, despite American settings, American characters, mid-Atlantic language, marks Clarke out indelibly as a British science fiction writer.

Perhaps even more significant than 'Transit of Earth' is a short story from 1961 called 'Death and the Senator' in which a remote and powerful figure learns humanity by coming to terms with his own death. Accepting our death is the key to knowing who we are, and through that comes transcendence. As it does, for instance, in 2001: A Space Odyssey in which Bowman must die in order to become the Starchild, or in Childhood's End in which demon-like aliens, representatives of Hell and hence of death, offer our only way forward into the future. These quasi-religious

themes are represented in what are probably Clarke's two most famous stories, 'The Star' (1955), in which the Star of Bethlehem turns out to have been a supernova which destroyed an advanced civilisation, and 'The Nine Billion Names of God' (1953), in which a computer is used to spell out all the possible names of God and hence, in accordance with Buddhist tradition, bring about the end of the world. It is not that faith is the only way to address such immense issues as the end of humanity – Clarke does it often enough in a matter-of-fact way throughout this volume – but that faith and fate are two of the principal ways of addressing what it is to be human, and Clarke seems to be drawn repeatedly to the death of humanity as a way of considering what being human amounts to.

Certainly it is easy to hypothesise that as well as heroworshipping the noble sacrifice of Scott and his fellows, Clarke has also been inspired by a profound opposition to war. There are no stories here of daring exploits in the heat of battle or of triumph over an evil enemy; in fact the military hardly ever appear in these stories, and when they do, as for instance in 'Earthlight' (1951), they are seen in opposition to the life-enhancing, wonderexploring scientists whose duty is to the future rather than to a rigidly defined sense of the present. In 'Second Dawn' (1951) the terrible aftermath of a war is replaced by hope for the future through an unexpected new technology. Even at the height of the Cold War, Clarke persistently filled his stories with sympathetic Russian characters (those encountered on the space station in 2001: A Space Odyssey, for example, or in 'The Shining Ones' (1962)), while aliens are never invaders but objects of mystery or even of hope. We face more than enough implacable enemies in this collection: the glaciers advancing on a near-deserted London in 'The Forgotten Enemy' (1949) or the simple advance of evolution which will eventually replace humanity as the dominant race on Earth, as we see in 'Transience' (1949); clearly we don't need to manufacture enmities among ourselves. This humane quality is sometimes used facetiously, as in 'History Lesson' (1949) in which future Venusians learn about the long-extinct races of Earth by careful study of a surviving strip of film which turns out to bear the legend: 'A Walt Disney Production'. Nevertheless, this humane quality is one of the defining characteristics of Clarke's work.

In 'If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth...' (1951) we are told of the awe generated by looking at the Earth from the Moon. In this instance the Earth is a poisoned, burning land and those who look upon it are the few who survive in exile. Nevertheless, this view, with its concomitant sense of wonder, keeps reappearing throughout these stories. Wherever we are in time or space, Clarke is always looking back at the Earth, always looking back at its inhabitants and what they do to survive. At one point in this story he says: 'unless there was a goal, a future towards which it could work, the Colony would lose the will to live and neither machines nor skill nor science could save it then.' We here on Earth are a Colony as lonely, as desperate, as those few survivors on the Moon; and Clarke, in these stories, is forever looking to find, in space and in our humanity, the goal, the future towards which we must work.

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## Death and The Mummy

by Andrew M Butler

This summer sees a sequel to one of the better blockbusters of recent years, *The Mummy* (1999). Here Andrew M Butler turns his eye to the making of the earlier version in 1932, and speculates on Freud's concept of the death instinct.

There is a moment in a seminar by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan when he tells a student that: 'We are all completely agreed that love is a form of suicide.' Of course sex and death are topics

which have intermingled for millennia, so this insight should hardly come as a surprise to us. But I want to use it to anchor a discussion of *The Mummy* (1932) in particular, along with its

quasi-sequels and remakes, and horror films in general. *The Mummy*'s particular yoking together of love and death invites a discussion of Sigmund Freud's conception of the death instinct, and the revisions and extensions to this theory offered at various points by Lacan.

The Mummy was one of the first of a cycle of horror films made by Universal Studios during the 1930s. Universal was one of the smaller of the studios in Hollywood system, and specialised in programme pictures which were predominately aimed at filling rural markets across the United States. Alongside this it would make an occasional prestige picture. Under the reign of producer and studio head Carl Laemmle Universal enjoyed moderate success in the 1920s, and grew in reputation as 21-year-old Irving Thalberg was given control (Thalberg appears, thinly disguised, in F Scott Fitzgerald's The Last Tycoon). Two of Thalberg's most successful projects were epic horror tales based on classic French novels The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1923) and The Phantom of the Opera (1925). Both featured massive recreations of French locations and starred Lon Chaney under the disguise of heavy make-up. Chaney's films were characterised by the utter transformation he underwent: into a hunchback, a scarred phantom, even an armless knife-throwing thief.

Lon Chaney was the natural choice to play *Dracula* when Universal decided to make an adaptation. By then the studio had passed to Carl Laemmle Jr, who was a devotee of German folk tales and tales of the supernatural. Hollywood had previously shied away from depicting the unambiguously supernatural, unlike the German Expressionist cinema of the 1920s with titles such as the plagiarised version of *Dracula*, *Nosferatu* (1922), and indeed *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* (1919), *Faust* (1926) and even aspects of *Metropolis* (1926). Murderous events were at the hands of evil criminals rather than phenomena from beyond the grave. But Laemmle Jr was determined to make a film of a novel which his advisors told him was beyond the bounds of taste for his audience; but with Chaney anything was possible. This left Bela Lugosi, who had successfully played the rôle on stage, in the lurch.

But the plans of producer Laemmle and director Tod Browning went awry with the death of Chaney, and after a few auditions they went for Lugosi after all, albeit on a greatly reduced salary. Nevertheless under the director of Browning and the photography of Karl Freund (who had worked on Fritz Lang's Metropolis) Lugosi carved out the Dracula against which all others are compared, and the source of a thousand parodies. Dracula (1931) was so successful that they reused the concepts in sequels: Dracula's Daughter (1936), Son of Dracula (1943) and House of Dracula (1945). A similar process followed the success of the James Whale film version of Frankenstein (1931) which made a star of Boris Karloff as the Creature, with The Bride of Frankenstein (1935), Son of Frankenstein (1939), The Ghost of Frankenstein (1943), Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man (1943) House of Frankenstein (1944), and the inevitable Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948), although Bela Lugosi and Glen Strange had played the monster after 1942.

After the 1931 success of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* Universal sought a third monster to set a movie around, and settled on the figure of the Egyptian mummy. Script duties went to John Balderston, who was one of the writers of *Dracula* but also, and perhaps more relevantly, had been present at the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922-1923 by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon. The world had been gripped by a wave of Egyptomania, fuelled by the urban legend of the curse which had allegedly been unleashed by the disturbing of the tomb. Admittedly Lord Carnarvon died a few days after the opening, but Carter, the prime guilty party, lived on into his sixties.

The story of the mummy was not new, although it was not based directly on any literary source. One of the earliest mummy narratives seems to be Jane Webb Loudon's science fiction novel *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827) and Edgar Allan Poe's tale "Some Words with a Mummy" (1845).

Louisa Alcott, author of the classic *Little Women*, wrote a pseudonymous mummy narrative which influenced other writers before this book passed into obscurity along with a number of other thrillers she had penned. Sherlock Holmes creator Arthur Conan Doyle wrote two supernatural thrillers, 'The Ring of Thoth' and 'Lot No. 249'.

In 'The Ring of Thoth' Mr John Vansittart Smith, F.R.S., of 146a Gower Street becomes an expert on Egyptology and visits a collection of antiquities in the Louvre, Paris where he meets an attendant with skin like parchment. Smith observes the attendant performing some kind of ritual in front of a mummy, who is transformed from a great beauty to a decayed corpse. It turns out that the attendant is the son of a priest of Osiris and who had found an elixir of eternal life. He had fallen in love with the daughter of the governor, who died from the plague. Having spent centuries in search of the means to die, he has found it in the Ring of Thoth with the mummy of his dead love.

In 'Lot No. 249' the scene is Oxford, and Edward Bellingham has acquired all sorts of Egyptian relics, including a mummy. His neighbours think there is something odd going on in his rooms, and he himself is behaving suspiciously about it. The tension mounts when a fellow student is attacked by an unknown ruffian, and another one nearly drowns. Abercrombie pieces the mystery together:

'This fellow Bellingham, in his Eastern studies, has got hold of some infernal secret by which a mummy – or possibly only this particular mummy – can be temporarily brought to life. [...] The vitality which he could put into it was evidently only a passing thing, for I have seen it continually in its case as dead as this table. He has some elaborate p rocess, I fancy, by which he brings the thing to pass. '2

Whatever the process is, the secret is to be found in a papyrus scroll, which Smith insists on destroying along with the mummy. Between them, Conan Doyle's stories contain many of the elements of both the Freund and later versions of *The Mummy*.

In addition, the creator of *Dracula*, Bram Stoker, had written a mummy tale, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903). The mummy's curse had originated in this literary tradition, rather than in Egyptian archaeology, and it seems likely that it was given prominence by the works of Marie Corelli, who had had a best-seller with *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895)

The Mummy narrative, as explored in the Universal film and later sequels, is fairly basic. It is reused in the later Hammer Horror The Mummy (1959) with Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing and further quasi-sequels from Hammer, as well as in Stephen Sommers' tongue-in-cheek big budget remake The Mummy (1999) and no doubts its sequel, The Mummy Returns (2001). A party of British archaeologists are seeking Egyptian treasures and uncover a tomb including a mummy, despite being warned against digging there. One of the archaeologists unwittingly brings the priest back to life by reading an ancient scroll, and is driven mad in the process. An elderly Egyptian directs them to a spot where they dig and find the body of a buried princess. Ten years later the treasures are in the Cairo museum, and the mysterious Egyptian is back, trying to raise the body of the dead princess, and using the body of a living female, Helen, to achieve this. In the process he kills the elderly archaeologist who had dug her up, and tries to kill the archaeologist's son who has fallen in love with Helen. Helen resists, and the Egyptian is killed, but not before it is revealed that he was the mummy, reanimated ten years previously. The later cycle of quasi-sequels from Universal - The Mummy's Hand (1940), The Mummy's Tomb (1942), The Mummy's Chost (1944) and The Mummy's Curse (1944) - introduce a priest to go alongside the mummy, a distinction which the Cushing/Lee version maintains.

In some ways this was a remake of Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), even down to David Manners as the juvenile lead, as

there Dracula falls in love with Jonathan Harker's fiancée Mina Seward just as the ancient Egyptian goes for Helen. The added layer here is that Helen appears to be in some senses a reincarnation of the long dead princess; it is ironic that Francis Ford Coppola's allegedly faithful version *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) imports a love story in which Mina is the reincarnation of Elizabeth, whose death has precipitated Dracula's fall in an echo (perhaps unconscious) of *The Mummy*.

So we have a narrative of violent death, at the hands of a being that is dead, in some versions controlled by one who has cheated death – an Egyptian who has survived thousands of years in the case of the Cushing/Lee version. Not only is this story told by a number of directors, but it is told repeatedly. Why does this story, and indeed the other stories of the Universal horror cycle, hold such pleasures for us in such grisly material?

The horror films of the 1920s had seen a working-out of the traumas of the Great War, in particular in the figures of the shell-shock victim, the wounded hero and the cripple. Whereas in earlier wars they would have died of their wounds or of their trauma, medical advances meant that they could survive. Disabled people were in existence in greater numbers than ever before. Barely had the wounds of the Great War begun to fade when the Great Depression arrived, with a requirement for entertainment to distract the impoverished. And in the 1940s, after a pause from horror in which Universal turned to the Sherlock Holmes stories and actor Basil Rathbone, a revitalised cycle of horror films began, often teaming up earlier monsters. The fact that this coincided with America's entry into another war can hardly be coincidental.

Sigmund Freud offers a possible explanation in what is translated as the death drive or, more accurately, the death instinct, in his 1920 paper 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'. Freud realised that railway disasters and accidents had given rise to traumatic neurosis, and the Great War had seen an even greater number of such cases. The patients returned to their experiences in their dreams:

'[D]reams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright.'<sup>3</sup>

The problem is quite why the patient should choose to relive such traumatic experiences. Freud had argued that the basic drive of humanity was the pleasure principle or libido. A drive for pleasure arose from the id, the unconscious. Obviously if the individual acted upon his or her desire every time, even if it were physically possible, society would collapse into anarchy. Society's will, if you like, or the willpower of the individual, holds the desire in check. This is known as the reality principle and is associated to some extent with the part of the psyche that Freud labelled the super-ego.

The blocking of a desire does not stop that desire, however. It can be repressed, but it will find some kind of outlet. If you imagine the libido as a river held back by the dam of the reality principle, or as pressurised steam contained within some kind of kettle, you will see that the pressure has to find some kind of release. This comes most commonly in the form of dreams, but it also occurs in jokes and slips of the tongue or in the process of making art; and in more serious cases as psychoses and neuroses, as actual physical conditions or symptoms. But this still does not explain why the patients relived traumatic events in such dreams. Human behaviour was seen by Freud as a negotiation between pleasure and the lack of pleasure, or unpleasure, but here there seemed to be an excess of unpleasure. Why is the individual so masochistic?

Freud linked this series of observations with behaviour he had observed in a child:

The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it [...] What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very

skilfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive 'o-o-o-o'. He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful 'da'.<sup>4</sup>

This was not the only unusual behaviour in the child: he had a habit of tossing his toys out of sight, again letting out a cry of 'o-o-o-o' as he did so. On the other hand, the child was remarkably well behaved in the frequent absences of his mother, not crying as much as would have been expected.

Freud made a leap to associate the cry of 'o-o-o-o' with the vowel sound in the word 'fort', which is German for 'gone', which made a balance with the cry of 'Da' which is German for 'there'. The child throwing a toy away is situating himself in the environment with a cry of 'gone', to mark the absence of the toy. Equally the child, apparently untraumatised by the absence of his mother, constantly restages the trauma of a lost toy – 'Gone!' – and then enacts the pleasure of its return – 'There!'. This ritual-like behaviour became known as the Fort-Da game and is crucial to the idea of the death instinct.

In the child's games with the toys, and the recurring nightmares of veterans of war, disasters and accidents, Freud notes a compulsion to repeat that which 'recalls from the past experiences which include no possibility of pleasure, and which can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction even to instinctive impulses which have since been repressed.' It is worth underlining that the compulsion to repeat is linked to experiences which give *no* pleasure, rather than those which result in gratification.

What seems to be happening in that in experiencing the disappearance of a toy, with the reassurance of an eventual reappearance, the child is building up a defence mechanism by which he can indeed deal with his mother's absence – indeed to deal with the absence which is death – and in turn to take control of death. Perhaps then the function of horror films, with their repeated deaths (which we know are enacted for us rather than real), and the continual return of the hero, albeit in another guise in another movie – indeed the return of the monster – may be serving a similar need to build up mechanisms to deal with traumatic events. Indeed, as I have already noted, the Mummy returned at precisely the point that a renewed war in Europe meant that American soldiers, indeed soldiers of the English speaking world, needed to be able to cope with death on an industrial scale.

If Freud had left it there, the idea would have been a useful one, but he moves on to advance theories which he virtually admits are more acts of faith than of scientific fact. Rather nervously Freud speculates about the possibility that animals have a fixed lifespan. Particular fish return to particular locations to spawn and die. He suggests that it may be that bodily cells even have a built-in destruct mechanism which leads the body to die. If this is true then it seems possible to locate the death instinct on a cellular level rather than in the ego.

But Freud doesn't leave it there: he argues that, paradoxically, the death instinct is a survival instinct. Because the body has a particular end which it desires, the death instinct does everything it can to preserve the body to meet that death. Freud seems to believe that the individual is aware that he or she was once nonorganic matter and will one day return to it. The death instinct is 'a need to restore an earlier state of things.'6

This return to an earlier state is discussed in seminars by Jacques Lacan. Lacan quotes the Marquis de Sade:

Nature wants atrocities and magnitude in crimes; the more our destructions are of this type, the more they will be agreeable to it. To be of even greater service to nature, one should seek to prevent the regeneration of the body that we bury. Murder only takes the first life of the individual whom we strike down; we should also seek to take his second life, if we are to be even more useful to nature. For nature wants

annihilation; it is beyond our capacity to achieve the scale of destruction it desires.'<sup>7</sup>

The best that we can hope for of the death instinct is a return to the moment of creation, to start again, because complete annihilation seems out of reach for humans. However the idea of the first and second deaths, raised here, is of use in understanding the rôle of death in the horror movie.

Lacan analyses a number of tragic plays – *Oedipus Rex, Antigone, Hamlet* – for the light they cast on the gap between these first and second deaths. In *Antigone* the eponymous heroine wishes to give her dead brother Polynices the proper burial and death rites he deserves, but she is forbidden to do so because her brother is perceived as a traitor. Her punishment by King Creon of Thrace is to be shut alive into a cave – a horrific suspension between life and death from which she escapes by hanging herself. The Egyptian Imhotep who is the eponymous Mummy is buried alive, for attempting to raise the dead princess, and in *Interview With The Vampire* Louis is briefly buried alive – if a vampire can be said to be alive. Such deaths, which may become physical as a second death, are social deaths, and lead to disruptions in the social order and deaths beyond the individuals immediately concerned.

In *Hamlet* we have the case of a man (the old king Hamlet) who has been murdered by his wife Gertrude and his brother Claudius but who cannot rest until his death has been avenged by Hamlet his son. Again it is the case of the proper rites being said; because he was murdered he has not been able to say his confessions and so has died unshriven, and is thus damned.

We can trace this revenge motif in any number of supernatural and horror movies, as beings who are suspended between life and death seek the means to gain a proper death. The heroes, often inexplicably and unfairly the targets for the revenge of the undead, can try to provide the second death for the avenger, but often fail to provide what nature, what instinct demands, in the form of annihilation. There is always a space for the return of the undead, for the return of the unavenged. Take as an example Freddy Krueger of the A Nightmare on Elm Street cycle. Krueger was originally a child molester who has been caught and burnt alive by the community, and who has thus died unmourned and unspoken for. He returns to seek vengeance on the children of the parents who have killed him. At the end of the first film (1984) it seems as if he has been vanguished, and he has been dealt the second death, but it is clear, even before the six sequels, that Krueger was not annihilated.

In *The Mummy* we have a further stage: the undead rises because the rites have been repeated by an unknowing archaeologist. Something similar happens in *Evil Dead II* (1987) when Ash inadvertently plays a tape recording of a ritual which raises spirits of the dead. It might also be connected to *Candyman* (1992) in which the words 'Candyman' repeated five times in front of a mirror leads to a grisly end. Language has the power to raise as well as to give a final resting place.

In turn the risen mummy Imhotep wishes to repeat earlier events, wanting to kill Helen so that she may rise again, to offer a first death to reach a second as it seems that they will then die together (and pass into the Egyptian afterlife?). In the Cushing/Lee version the mummy carries his love interest to the very pool where his sarcophagus has been lost, presumably to drown the body. However, she escapes, and the mummy is riddled with bullets, sinking finally out of sight beneath the waters. The desire again seems to be as much for annihilation as for life. It is unclear what Stephen Sommers's 1999 mummy wants after he has retrieved his love, but it is clear he has to kill a woman first to achieve it.

It is the love of the woman that leads to the second death of the mummy. His desire is a form of suicide, which brings us back to the quotation where I began. Lacan argues that Freud sees the death instinct as a limitation of the maturity of the libido or pleasure principle, and it holds it in check. One of Lacan's students says:

The animal is bound by death when he makes love, but he doesn't know anything about it.

To which Lacan responds:

'Whereas man knows it. He knows it and feels it. Student: That amounts to saying that he himself takes his own life. Through the other he wants his own death. Lacan: 'We are all completely agreed that love is a form of suicide.'<sup>8</sup>

The mummy wants to make love, wants a sexual partner of some description and in his quest for one alights on the love interest of the hero. Similarly in *Dracula* (1931), the ancient vampire's downfall is due to his desire for the woman the hero wants to marry. The various versions of *Frankenstein* are more complex, but an encounter with a bride leads to his destruction (in Shelley's original, the Creature and Frankenstein destroy each other's wives and are locked into protracted revenge to the death, with the Creature seeking a return to his organic past).

Of course the triangle between hero, villain and heroine is a staple of narrative, as the hero fights to defend his family, but the directness with which the monster in whatever form goes after the woman. It is almost as if he chooses the one woman in the world who will be fought over and who will guarantee his own death. The course of true love is here a course towards death. The monsters seek out the projections of their egos in an other and through that achieve peace and die.

The concepts of the death instinct and its related ideas explain the appeal of horror movies and why they so often come in cycles with monsters returning time after time. They offer a way for us to build up defence mechanisms against that which we fear, in particular the fear of death. At the same time there is a sense of sympathy for the monster in many of the films; we begin to identify with the vampires, mummies and wolfmen. This is perhaps because they dramatise the events of the death instinct, of the seeking for the proper death which will be final. The films also show our unease about ritual – either the absence of ritual or the improper repetition of ritual.

#### Notes

- 1 Jacques Lacan (1991) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book I:* 1953-1954: Freud's Papers on Technique edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated with notes by John Forrester New York: Norton, p. 149.
- Both mummy stories can be found in Arthur Conan Doyle (1979) *The Best Supernatural Tales of Arthur Conan Doyle* selected and introduced by E F Bleiler, New York: Dover.
- 3 Sigmund Freud, (1991) 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', in *On Metapsychology* Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 283.
- 4 lbid, p. 284.
- 5 lbid, p. 331.
- 6 Ibid, p. 331.
- 7 Cited in Jacques Lacan (1992) The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminars of Jacques Lacan VII edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated with notes by Dennis Porter, London: Routledge, p. 211.
- 8 Jacques Lacan (1991) The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book I: 1953-1954: Freud's Papers on Technique, p. 149).

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## Bookspotting – *Annabel and Bryony* – a sequel, half a century on by David V Barrett

DAVID V BARRETT EDITED VECTOR FROM ISSUE 126 (JUNE/JULY 1985) TO 150 (JUNE/JULY 1989), AND CONTINUED TO BE A REVIEWER AND LETTER WRITER UNTIL SUMMER 1995. AFTER TOO LONG A SILENCE (IN THESE PAGES) WE ARE HAPPY TO WELCOME HIM BACK.

It was Christmas Eve. Outside, the fields lay quietly under the cold moon. When they had lifted the baby Angela up to the window to see the lovely night, she had said, 'The stars are tingling!' Everyone knew at once what she meant, though Nick pretended not to.

From that first paragraph, at the age of nearly ten, I was captivated. It was 1962, and my family had just moved from a nasty modern housing estate in Mansfield to a parish more a collection of scattered hamlets than a village - just south of the Lake District. It was magical. When we unpacked, there was a library book I'd forgotten to return before we moved, a fairy story, of all things, when (peering through my grimy National Health glasses) I was already graduating from sftype adventure novels by John Pudney and Captain WE Johns to the real thing. But Annabel and Bryony by Marjorie Phillips was different. It was a fairy story, yes, but one that was a full-length novel -252 pages - and set in the present day (well, almost; it was published in 1953, the year after my birth), with the sort of characters familiar from Malcolm Saville and Arthur Ransome: four children together for the holidays.

Nick was the oldest, around thirteen,

then his cousin Virginia, his brother Dick, and Virginia's sister, Annabel, the youngest at about ten. After putting up the Christmas decorations the children find an imitation snowball on the mantelpiece. As Nick holds it, it grows in his arms, then falls to

the floor and splits open to reveal a person 'whose head didn't reach the top of the fireguard or the belt of Virginia's frock,' very young, lost and frightened: 'we Fairfolk cannot live in the Middle Kingdom in the winter.' She has to get back to her own land, returning through a flower - 'I can ask for passage from the Captain of the Garrison' - but when she tries, the children accompanying her, through one of the Christmas roses from the hall, they find the door locked. A cut flower is no use. From the beginning, magic has logic. And when they do travel down a living flower, they're captured by the terrifying Frost Fairies, and imprisoned with a group of fairies: Captain Cranesbill, Lieutenant Orchis, the two ensigns Berry and the irrepressible Cherry - and Bryony, Lord Tamus, a lieutenant of the Company of Enchanters. After a series of adventures, in which Annabel is able to lend her strength to Bryony's magic, they

eventually arrive at the realm of the Fair Folk – and we're only half way through the book. Throughout, the story is excellent on relationships between people, human or fairy; Annabel learns much about friendship, trust, honour, responsibility – and

courage. It's a wonderful book. I want to read more. The final words are 'Till the summer!' There must be a sequel... but there doesn't seem to be.

I write to Marjorie Phillips, via her publishers – the first time I've ever done this – and receive a reply. (Okay, so now we're all blasé about the number of authors we know, but imagine what this was like for a child!). It's a lovely letter (I kept it in the book,

but sadly, I've mislaid it in the last year or so); she's really pleased I enjoyed *Annabel and Bryony*, and yes, she has written sequels – the next one is *Annabel and Tawny* – but Oxford University Press aren't interested in publishing them – 'not costeffective in today's market' or some such (now horribly familiar) phrase; and she's sorry, but her children won't allow the manuscripts out of the house. Even then, I understood that last point. But it was frustrating to know that sequels existed, but that I would never read them.

Step ahead two decades. I'm a semidetached member of Leeds fandom, not yet been to a con, not yet editing *Vector*. On some no-doubt fairly drunken evening (most of them were) I'm talking to a guy called Paul Annis, later to be an associate editor on *Interzone*, and for some reason I mention *Annabel and Bryony*, and its gorgeous illustrations by Pauline Baynes,

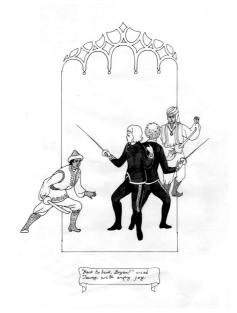
famous for her Narnia and some Tolkien work. Step ahead again nearly two decades, to today. I receive a letter from Paul (who I'd not been in touch with inbetween) via my publishers. A few years after I'd left the Leeds area he'd found a secondhand copy of

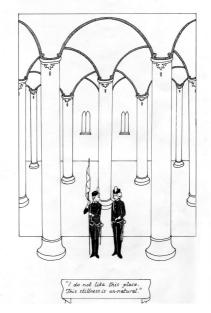
Annabel and Bryony. And now he's just learnt that the sequel Annabel and Tawny is about to be published! And astonishingly, he'd remembered that it was I who had first told him about Annabel some eighteen years ago.

I'd thought several times in the last few years of writing to Marjorie Phillips again, to let her know I still love her book, and how much her letter meant to me as a child, and now I'm an author myself, and so on; but I didn't – she'd have moved, she's probably no longer alive anyway. I wish I had, because now she isn't; and she would have been; she only died in 1998, aged 88. I'm sure she'd have loved to hear from me again, and now it's too late.

I've just read *Annabel and Bryony* again. It's still as delightful as ever, but now with an adult critic's eyes I'm very aware of the formality of the language and the author's habit of over-using colourful synonyms for 'said'; as a children's novel

it's very much a product of, ahem, the middle of the last century. But we still read the Narnia books with enjoyment, and the Borrowers books, and Alison Uttley's *A Traveller in Time*, and the rest. This is of a piece with those; times have changed, and





children's fiction; but its very datedness has a certain charm. 'On publication it received universally favourable reviews,' says Marjorie Phillips's daughter Vivien Gambrill, but the sequels remained unpublished, though the author considered them all to be 'better and more closely knit' than the first book. But now, forty-eight years after Annabel and Bryony first appeared in 1953, the sequel Annabel and Tawny will at last be published, in a small press edition; and if they manage to break even on it, there are two more Annabel novels to come.

There's more about Annabel and Bryony on a superb website by Susan Stepney, http://public.logica.com/~stepneys/sf/books/p/ phillips.htm. Here's the information from the publishers; and before anyone asks, no, there's no connection with a certain progressive rock band! 'Curved Air' is apparently what the sails of yachts do, and that's their main subject matter. I have no connection with them; I'm simply longing to read, at long, long last, the sequel to a beautiful book I first read nearly forty years

#### Annabel and Tawny by Marjorie Phillips (1910 - 1998)

Tawny is the Princess-Elect, who will some day replace the Queen, and she is under such strict discipline and is so lonely that Annabel, feeling sorry for her, insists on keeping her company. She is soon leading the Princess into mischief and even to what is

regarded as High Treason when the two of them ignore the Queen's direct order and accompany Bryony on a dangerous

The book will be in A5 format, softback, perfect bound with a laminated picture cover, with 18 half or full page line illustrations. These are by Marjorie's daughter, Vivien Gambrill, and the cover design is by her granddaughter, Rachel Dunn. Pagination, with illustrations and introductory matter, circa 224 pages. ISBN: 1 873146 14 3. Price circa £10.

To contact the publishers, write, telephone, or e-mail: Russell & Ghillian Potts, The Curved Air Press, 8 Sherard Road, London SE9 6EP Tel: + 44 (0)20 8850 6805 E-mail: rpotts@talk21.com

When the time comes, payment may be made by a cheque in UK pounds, or by International Money Order. By the time they need money they may be linked up to PAYPAL, a system for making and receiving credit card payments by e-mail. At this stage, they don't want people to start sending them money, all they need are expressions of interest.

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### **Cognitive Mapping 21: God**

### by Paul Kincaid

Science fiction, if it is anything at all, is rational. When primitive man looked out at the unreachable mountain tops, at the clouds, at the stars, he saw gods. When a science fiction

writer ventures above the clouds, out into the heavens. he discovers aliens. These aliens may be powerful or innocent, they may be godlike in countless different ways, but they are beings much like us. In the end, the science fiction writer says, wherever we may go we find ourselves.

Except that time and again, science fiction finds itself unable to escape God (or the Devil, which is much the same thing). In films such as Event Horizon (1997) and Contact (1997), space becomes a direct route to Hell or to Heaven. In television shows such as Babylon 5 the crew seek out the old ones, beings of godlike powers incomprehensibility. In The Sparrow a Jesuit priest journeys to meet aliens as part of a personal quest to

discover God. These are not isolated examples, the spiritual need and uncertainty brought on by millennial tremor bleeding across to infect the nearest available genre. This is an

His regret was that she was unlikely ever to know. He had meant to write everything down and put it into the time machine and hope that it would be recovered. It was strange. He was not a religious man in the usual sense. He was an agnostic. It was not conviction that had led him to defend religion against Monica's cynical contempt for it; it was rather lack of conviction in the ideal in which she had set her own faith, the ideal of science as a solver of all problems. He could not share her faith and there was nothing else but religion, though he could not believe in the kind of God of Christianity. The God seen as a mystical force of the mysteries of Christianity and other great religions had not been personal enough for him. His rational mind had told him that God did not exist in any personal form. His unconscious had told him that faith in science was not enough. He remembered the selfcontempt he had once felt and wondered why he had felt it.

Michael Moorcock - Behold the Man (1969)

ongoing fascination that

can be found throughout the history of science fiction, not with holiness or belief but with the sort of wonder and mystery that, before science fiction. could find expression only in religious belief.

Utopia by **Thomas** More (later Saint Thomas More) was about finding heaven on Earth, and later wondrous utopias or journeys were prone to be set on such ancient images of godhood, the Sun (City of the Sun by Tommaso Campanella [1623]) or the Moon (Francis Godwin's The Man in the Moone [1638]). When Olaf Stapledon sent his everyman to the heart of the universe in Star Maker (1937) it was in effect a spiritual pilgrimage to find a rationalist God. (The

pilgrimage is a form often taken by science fiction's version of the fantasy quest, cropping up in works as varied as Anthony Boucher's 'The Quest for Saint Aquin' [1951], David Zindell's Neverness [1988] and Dan Simmon's The Hyperion Cantos [1990].) That same intense celebration of the wonder of creation is to be found in the work of Stapledon's most important heir, Arthur C Clarke, notably in the ending of 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) in which the rewards of a physical journey across space are revealed to be a translation into something at least approaching godhead. There is an echo of this also in Eternal Light (1991) by Paul J McAuley, a novel which owes much to the breadth of vision and spiritual underpinning of 2001.

What we get in *Star Maker* or *Eternal Light* or a story such as 'Kyrie' (1968) by Poul Anderson, is the sense that some sort of a religious feeling is the only possible emotional response to the majesty of the universe. More often, however, science fiction writers engage directly with religious imagery and notions of god to either advocate or challenge belief. James Blish, in one of the finest and most direct treatments of religious issues in science fiction, *A Case of Conscience* (1958), introduces a world which knows no evil, and examines the ethical conflicts presented when such people encounter our own belief systems.

Even aside from writers who are priests – such as Father Andrew M Greely, author of *God Game* (1986) – there are enough writers whose own religious beliefs inform their fiction. A Canticle for Leibowitz by Walter M. Miller (1960)

predicates the survival of Catholicism beyond the apocalypse: even the flimsiest of material enough for the belief which is necessary for humankind's survival. If the tradition of lewish humour means that there is a jokier surface to stories such as 'On Venus, Have We Got a Rabbi' by William Tenn (1974) or 'I'm Looking for Kadak' by Harlan Ellison (1974), beneath the surface there is still the assumption of belief.

If Towing Jehovah by James Morrow (1994), in which a God floats dead in the ocean (or Donald Barthelme's The Dead Father [1975] which employs a similar conceit though in this instance the gigantic figure being dragged across the landscape is not literally God

but Father), or *The Sparrow* by Mary Doria Russell, in which a quest for God ends in horror and humiliation, seem to undermine belief in God, it is that very belief which comes through in the end as vital for healing and resolution. God may be dead but God lives on.

There are many more science fiction writers, however, who are uncomfortable with such contradictions. In a post-Niestchean age they are looking for the rational, the

apprehendable, in the universe. Such writers are more likely to undermine religion or its trappings, rather than God; in the way, for instance, that Michael Bishop brings Judas Iscariot back in virtual reality to be acquitted of his crimes in 'I, Iscariot' (1995).

In Harry Harrison's 'The Streets of Ashkelon' (1962) a missionary finds that his unwelcome fate is to re-enact the story of the New Testament just as he has told it to his alien flock. The way of Christ leads only to a painful death by crucifixion, a view expressed also by Michael Moorcock in 'Behold the Man'. In this story of a time traveller who discovers that the historic Christ was an imbecile, the trappings of belief have to be preserved even at the cost of the time traveller fulfilling Christ's destiny. In fact, belief is the only way left to apprehend and understand the world; although Glogauer has used the scientific device of a time machine to return to Biblical times (re-enacting a journey take by many other time travellers, notably in Robert Silverberg's The Masks of Time [1968] or Garry Kilworth's 'Let's Go to Golgotha' [1974]), science itself is not reliable enough to replace our need for belief. This need for belief is a theme that crops up frequently, often satirically, though always with an underlying acceptance, though what we put our faith in may not always follow the recognised pattern of religion. For Philip K Dick, God is a far from common man, Mao Tse Tung, in 'Faith of Our Fathers' (1967), while M John Harrison goes even further, making Him a huge pair of fat, unthinking brothers in In Viriconium (1982), and a huge dung beetle in 'Settling the

World' (1975).

It is, however, Arthur C Clarke who has done most to conventional challenge religious notions in his science fiction. In Childhood's End (1953), for instance, it is the demons of conventional Christian mythology who turn out to be the saviours of humanity. While in 'The Star' (1955), a stark and powerful precursor for The Sparrow, a Jesuit on a mission to another world discovers that the star which shone over Bethlehem did so only at the cost of an

But if such stories seem to ask us to question what it is we believe, remember the ending of 'The Nine Billion Names of God' (1953) in which the stars go out in perfect and chilling accord

advanced civilisation.

with Buddhist belief. These stories, however they may seem, do not deny God: no matter how we may be challenged to examine the nature of our belief, the fact of belief is still there underlining all these stories. For dreams and wonders that make us look up at the skies and conjure stories of space and aliens and other worlds are exactly the dreams and wonders that make us look up and see gods and spirits and heavens.

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'There's an old Jewish story that says in the beginning God was everywhere and everything, a totality. But to make creation, God had to remove Himself from some part of the universe, so something besides Himself could exist. So He breathed in, and in the places where God withdrew, there creation exists.'

'So God just leaves?' John asked, angry where Emilio had been desolate. 'Abandons creation? You're on your own, apes. Good luck!'

'No. He watches. He rejoices. He weeps. He observes the moral drama of human life and gives meaning to it by caring passionately about us, and remembering.'

'Matthew ten, verse twenty-nine,' Vincenzo Giuliani said quietly. "Not one sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it." 'But the sparrow still falls,' Felipe said.

Mary Doria Russell – The Sparrow (1996)



## First Impressions

## Book Reviews edited by Steve Jeffery

All novels marked: 

are eligible for the 2001 BSFA Award for Best Novel. All collections and anthologies marked: 

contain stories that are eligible for the 2001 BSFA Award for Best Short Fiction.

Mike Ashley – The Time Machines: The Story of the Science-Fiction Pulp Magazines from the beginning to 1950

Liverpool University Press, 2000, 300 pp, hb £32.00 ISBN 0-85323-855-3, pb £12.95 ISBN 0-85323-685-0

**Reviewed by Mark Plummer** 

Against the expectations of many, the science fiction magazine has survived into the 21st century, but its position is hardly

secure. In a field of falling circulations and decreasing frequencies of publication, and as some of the oldest titles retreat onto the internet, Britain's Interzone is now the only monthly English-language print sf magazine remaining. Despite this, researcher and historian Mike Ashley is still an optimist, arguing that the modern magazines are more than ever a haven for quality science fiction writing, the "cauldron from which much new talent emerges". However, it was not ever thus. The earliest writing in the pulp magazines formed the core of science fiction and defined the genre for good and ill, publishing many of the classic that are still read today and much of the rubbish that earned sf a reputation as literary trash.

It's a story originally told by Ashley in his four-volume *History of the Science Fiction Magazines*. Published between 1974 and 1978, these books were part

history, part checklist and part anthology, and were (and are) useful and fascinating works in all these respects. But this original history is over twenty-five years old and now hard to

find, as well as only taking the story up to 1965. The new history – all non-fiction this time, and in three volumes, of which this is the first-is rewritten, updated

and expanded, and will ultimately bring the story up to date.

On one level, the book is an excellent source of hard information, and Ashley's reputation is such that we can expect impeccable scholarship. As well as the narrative itself, appendices add a checklist for each of the magazines (especially useful given the often erratic publishing schedules), a summary of non-English language titles, and directories of editors/publishers and cover artists, the latter so often uncredited on the magazines themselves.

However, the core of the text is the story of the genre pulp magazines-which, for the period in question, is pretty much the story of science fiction itself. And a fascinating story it is too, from the earliest days of magazine publishing, through the

evolution of genre writing within the generalist pulp magazines, to the development of specialist sf titles in the second quarter of the Twentieth Century and their eventual



demise in the aftermath of World War Two as the new digests came to the fore, all set to revitalise sf for a new decade.

It's often a story of blatant commercial opportunism, and even blind luck; but it's more often about rabid enthusiasm with the early editors, themselves devoted fans of sf, working to make something of the infant genre and impose their vision. As one might expect, the figure of John W Campbell looms large, bringing new standards to a field mired in primitive adventure stories, but there's also Ray Palmer taking *Amazing Stories* to new heights of popularity (and depths of sensationalism) with his "Shaver Mysteries", and of course founding father Hugo Gernsback with his rigid views of what was and was not sf. And, like them, Mike Ashley is a fan too,

although not an uncritical one, acknowledging that "pulp" was all too often more than simply a description of the kind of paper on which the magazines were printed.

You don't need to be a fan of sf magazines to get something out of this book, although if you're not already a convert it may give you the urge to explore the field at first hand. This is a worthy addition to the series of Liverpool University Press Science Fiction Texts and Studies and on the strength of this first volume there is every reason to believe that the complete three-volume history as a whole will live up to Mike Ashley's aspirations and become truly "the lastest word on the entire history of the science-fiction magazine."

#### **Stephen Baxter – Deep Future**

Gollancz, 2001, 215pp, £18.00 ISBN 0-575-07195-8

#### **Reviewed by Stuart Carter**

Stephen Baxter's fiction - (plot + story) = Deep Future.

It's blindingly obvious, really; in fact you have to wonder why it's taken him this long to produce a *Deep Future*. The inner dust jacket alone will set your mouth watering, I promise. Starting very tamely by asking "How different will life be at the end of the 21st century?" Baxter edges onwards to "...Can we make a home on the harsh planets...of our solar system?" before finally going all-out Extropian and asking "[..] Can we survive the end of time itself?" That's the kind of thing the deep future is going to involve. Whew!

If the less adventurous of you are already trying to tiptoe out the back then let me reassure you now. There's no crazy transcendent New Age stuff (this is Stephen Baxter, remember!) only a reasoned and engaging look at where we might be going and how long it might take us to get there.

In truth, less than 10% of this book is about the "deep future", which is millions, billions and even trillions of years down the line. Most of it is about more familiar and conceivable periods; that is, within the next thousand years or so. There's talk of mining asteroids, colonising the planets, terraforming Mars and other heady ideas leavened with critiques of NASA and the Space Shuttle. Ensuing chapters leap exponentially forward in time so we meet star-makers, black hole miners and finally a "humanity" – in fact an entire universe – of cold plasma.

I couldn't shake the impression that *Deep Future* isn't quite sure what it wants to be: it's not hard science but nor is it sf, and Baxter's remit seems too wide to make it as "Pop science", so my main concern about *Deep Future* was that it's neither fish nor fowl, unsure of the readership it might be aimed at.

That said, this is a fascinating read overflowing with ideas and wonders, one that resonates strongly with Arthur C Clarke's *Profiles of the Future* (a book that had a powerful effect on me when I was young) and, consciously or not, only adds to the already strong sense of Baxter as Clarke's natural successor. [The revised Gollancz 1999 edition of *Profiles of the Future* was reviewed by Andy Sawyer in V210 – ed.]

My main grumble about *Deep Future* is that it's much too short – which is of course, also a compliment. Looking forward to reading it, I zipped through and was staring at the barcode almost before I realised, still hungry for more. The writing is clear and concise; the chapters well organised and thought provoking. Ideas, propositions and speculations fly off the pages, propelling you through the book with dizzying speed, but too many of them, particularly in the later chapters, deserve more detailed treatment – as in Baxter's fiction, perhaps?

There is a "Further Reading" section included, but for £18 I really wanted more in *this* book.

## Michael Benson – Vintage Science Fiction Films: 1896-1949 McFarland Classics, 1985, 219pp, pb, £23.75 ISBN 0-7864-0936-3 Reviewed by Gary S Dalkin

This book is clearly a labour of love, doing what it sets out to do very well indeed; chronicle virtually every known sf film made up to the point when mainstream Hollywood features discovered the genre at the dawn of the 1950's. Divided into three main sections – Silents, Sound: 1929-1949, Serials: 1915-1949 – *Vintage Science Fiction Films, 1986-1949* is completed by a detailed 52-page filmography, a solid bibliography which serves as an excellent reading list, and an extensive index.

But, beyond *Metropolis* (1926) and *Things to Come* (1936) (both given reasonably detailed coverage), you may be wondering what science fiction films were there? Benson finds plenty. Given that for decades the natural home of sf was the short story, it is fascinating to discover the sheer number of short sf movies that were made in the first two decades of cinema. Of course we have heard of George Méliès and his humorous special-effect trick fantasies such as *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), but there were hundreds more one and two reel films which often, like many sf short stories, explored a single science fiction idea. Just one example is 1909's *The Doctor's Experiment; or, Reversing Darwin's Theory*, in which a scientist invents a serum which makes men revert into apes. The problem with writing about such films is that many no longer exist, leaving the reader with tantalising hints of a lost

history. Sometimes, especially when documenting the first two decades of cinema, the book is little more than a catalogue, as Benson himself has not seen the films and can only report the often scant information he has been able to find. Even so, it is illuminating to find that a version of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea was made in 1916, for which a flooded tank 80 feet deep was constructed. It puts *The Abyss* (1989) into perspective.

The 'Sound' part of the book is dominated by films we usually consider horror - the Universal Frankenstein series and King Kong (1933), alongside the HG Wells adaptation The Island of Lost Souls (1932), and countless mad scientist movies of little merit. Benson tells us something of the making of these films and of the personalities behind them, though he doesn't go into much anecdotal detail, and nor does he offer anything in the way of analysis beyond placing the films in the context of their times. At least this approach is refreshingly free from pretentious film-school theorising. The section on 'Serials' overlaps the silent and sound eras, the form being exemplified by the three Flash Gordon (1936-39) chapterplays. Benson is very good on these, bringing to life a lost world with a cleareyed fondness. As an authoritative history of an overlooked part of genre history this exceptionally good book belongs in every serious film and sf buff's library.

#### Carol Berg – Transformation

Reviewed by Vikki Lee

Orbit, 2001, 506pp, £9.99, ISBN 1-84149-075-X

*Transformation* is a first novel from this American author and is billed on the cover as 'Book One of The Rai-Kirah'.

The Ezzarian, Seyonne, has been a slave for sixteen years, half of his life, and he is about to begin service with a new master, The Dherzi Prince Aleksander. Having been conquered by the Dherzi all those years ago when his slavery began, Seyonne is under no illusion about the brutality his new master is famed for. In case he wasn't aware, Seyonne gets an early introduction when he is incorrectly branded for the Prince's service. A beating swiftly follows when he refuses to obey an order to exact direct revenge on his antagonist.

Unusually for a slave, Seyonne can read and write, and it is for this purpose Aleksander needs him. As a former Warden of Souls in his homeland of Ezzaria, Seyonne has been stripped of any magic he had, so it is with trepidation that he finds his 'talent' being re-kindled. As a hunter and banisher of demons, only one thing can possibly affect him in such a way. When the Dherzi Empire begins negotiations for an alliance with the Khelid nation, Seyonne realises that the Khelid Ambassador is demon-possessed — but much worse than that, this demon

obviously has an agenda.

Seyonne now has a difficult task: he dare not allow his power to be discovered as a second stripping of this would certainly prove fatal. However, as much as he loathes his vicious, spiteful and selfish master, he cannot allow the demon to succeed unchallenged. As Seyonne changes and gets to grips with the problem his master changes too (*literally!*), and very soon Seyonne is all that stands between the Dherzi Empire and total ruin.

This is a rather wonderful tale of a growing relationship between a master and his slave. The cruel Aleksander turns out to have a depth of character which belies his reputation. The characters are well drawn, the action fast paced, and the world is believable and compact – never too much information, but always enough to keep the tale rolling along. There are a lot of surprises along the way, and the developing relationship is skillfully handled. I would highly recommend this book as pure entertainment and will certainly be looking out for future books in this series.

#### Ben Bova - Jupiter

Hodder and Stoughton, 2000, 433pp, £16.99 ISBN 0-340-76764-2; NEL, 2001, 433pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-340-76765-0; Tor, 2001, 368pp, \$24.95 ISBN 0-312-87217-8

#### **Reviewed by John Newsinger**

Ben Bova is not a great writer. But he knows his limitations and working within them he regularly turns out enjoyable, well-crafted fiction. His latest effort, *Jupiter*, is a novel of space

exploration, pitting humanity against the perils of a hostile environment in pursuit of first contact. The story is cleverly structured: political intrigue, moral dilemmas, the excitement of discovery, danger, and, of course, the immense scale of the object of our explorers' attentions, the planet Jupiter.

Bova's protagonist is a young, somewhat naïve, scientist, Grant Archer, who is sent to spy on the activities of the Jupiter research station. He is an adherent of a Christian fundamentalist church, the New Morality, that has considerable political clout on Earth and is determined to bring scientific research under its control. While it is known that there is life on Jupiter, huge balloon creatures, alien birds and spider kites that live in the atmosphere, New Morality fears that the scientists are secretly attempting to make contact with intelligent life in the planet's oceans. This offends against Holy Writ and must not be allowed at any cost.

For Grant, this creates a dilemma: as a scientist he eventually finds himself possessed by the project but, at the same time, he is fearful of the personal consequences of defying the New Morality, a defiance made all the more

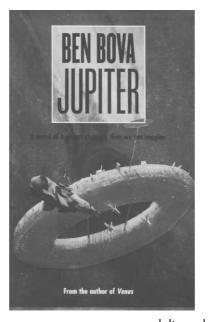
difficult by the fact that he is a believer himself. Of course, to a British readership this particular debate is somewhat abstract. Religious fundamentalism is not, thankfully, a potent force in

British politics or culture. The situation is very different in the States where Bova's target is alive and kicking, and listened to in the corridors of power. George W. Bush is apparently a believer himself. Even so it still seems a bit of an easy target.

The problem with Bova's writing, however, derives from the weaknesses of his characterisation and from his portrayal of human relationships and interactions. His characters are resolutely cardboard and impossible to identify with. But that is not what they are there for. They are there to explore Jupiter's oceans, ten times wider than the Earth and five hundred times deeper, and to discover intelligent life. Time is short as the New Morality is determined to close the research station down. The dangers are considerable, but in the end Grant shows the right stuff.

What we have here is a competent novel of space exploration, suitable for a

young adult reader or for a journey on Virgin trains. Very much a bread and butter novel, no great surprises, no shifts in one's perception of the world, but inoffensively enjoyable. The scientist as hero is certainly more acceptable than the space marine.



## Ben Bova – The Precipice: The Asteroid Wars: 1 Reviewed by Mark Greener

Those were the days. Men were real men, women were real women, and ... well you know the rest. *The Precipice* harks back to sf's good ol' days. It's a galactic romp in the tradition of golden age pulp sf. All that's missing is a BEM.

Global warming has left the world teetering on the brink of

Hodder & Stoughton 2001 439pp £17.99 ISBN 0-340-76960-2

social and economic collapse. 'Real man' Dan Randolph – a "solidly built welterweight" in "trim physical shape" despite being in his sixties, and with "a strong stubborn jaw" – runs a space launch company that faces bankruptcy. He is persuaded by entrepreneur Martin Humphries that rebuilding the earth,

and his company, means exploiting the mineral-rich asteroids. You soon know that Humphries is the villain. He's short, "a

little on the pudgy side", his skin "doughy white" and his dark hair "slicked back".

Asteroid mining is economically viable only because scientists devised fusion reactors small enough to power a spaceship. Randolph hires the 'real women' to pilot his 'mighty starship': Amanda, who looks like "an angelic schoolgirl" with "a curvaceous figure", and Pancho, "lean and stringy" with "long slim legs". However, Randolph's attempts to reach the mineral-rich asteroids are hindered at every turn by cross, double cross, duplicity, and red tape. The war is on...

It would be easy to criticise *The Precipice*. The premise is debatable, the characterisation thin and verging on sexist (I lost count of the references to Amanda's figure), the story – with the exception of a well-executed twist in the tail – largely predictable. But the book ultimately works

for two reasons. Firstly, Bova is a remarkable storyteller. The narrative pace carries you forward with almost irresistible force. In the hands of a less skilful storyteller, *The Precipice* could have been awful. But with Bova's deft narrative handling it works – as entertainment.

Secondly, Bova's enthusiasm pervades every paragraph. He

comes across as endearingly passionate about sf and interplanetary travel. Bova alludes to political intrigue and

**Author of MARS** 

The Asteroid Wars: 1

tensions between the moon and earth. He mentions the rise of a Luddite "New Morality" movement on earth that wants to limit access to the latest technology. He hints at the damage wrought by the environmental catastrophe. Any could have served as subplots to add depth to the book. But Bova largely ignores the implications. He seems to be straining at the leash to get his characters out *there*.

Bova's surface gloss makes the book seem contemporary. There's a hint of fashionable environmental concerns. There's mention of nano-technology, telomerase and fusion reactions. But beneath the surface, *The Precipice* differs little from the pulp fiction of Asimov, Doc Smith and Heinlein. It's like the New Wave, cyberpunk and slipstream never happened.

Whether you'll enjoy The Precipice

depends on how you approach it. Treat it as pulp fiction, make few demands and you'll probably enjoy it. *The Precipice* is unpretentious, undemanding – and unputdownable. If you expect your intellect to be stimulated or challenged, if you expect to leave with new insights into society or the human condition, you'll probably be disappointed.



Sarob Science Fiction & Fantasy, 2000, 174pp, £19.50 ISBN 1-902-30912-X

#### Reviewed by Andrew Seaman

Parallax View, from the Welsh-based small press Sarob, until recently better known as a supernatural fiction imprint, brings together solo and collaborative pieces by Brooke and Brown, two stalwarts of the *Interzone*-inspired New Wave of British Science Fiction. Seven of the eight pieces published here first appeared in that magazine; the other is from the recently launched *Spectrum SF*.

What's evident throughout the collection is the authors' not inconsiderable skill in taking traditional sfnal themes and, by and large, successfully reworking them for a modern audience, here with particular emphasis on the themes of the alien, and physical and/or psychological sacrifice. The parallax view offered arises not only from the collaboration of two writers whose respective styles happily complement each other, but also from the twin perspective of the human and the 'other' explored in their fictions. Brooke's 'Jurassic and the Great Tree' is an atmospheric journey into an alien heart of darkness, while the co-authored 'Under Antares' is a powerful tale of ritual and paternal sacrifice of almost Biblical intensity, on a planet orbiting the eponymous star. Most effective of all is 'The Denebian Cycle', a story of human survival and sexual politics in an alien ecology, whose denouement, if not entirely unexpected, carries a chilling power.

Elsewhere 'The Flight of the *Oh Carollian*' provides an intriguing variation on the theme of the tortured starship pilot, while equally driven characters play central roles in

'Appassionata' and 'Sugar and Spice', stories that explore the potentially tragic psychological extremes of the artistic temperament.

Many of these pieces have an old-fashioned, almost nostalgic, feel to them, quintessentially British in their concern with character and landscape rather than explosive action. This achieves perhaps its finest expression in Brown's lyrical 'A Prayer for the Dead', which juxtaposes cosmic events with the childhood's end of its youthful protagonist. The best of them recall short fiction writers of the calibre of Bob Shaw and Michael Coney and that, you don't need me to tell you, is No Bad Thing. Fans of the two authors will no doubt have read these stories before, but may want them preserved for posterity between hard covers. Physically, this is a handsomely produced book with hand-sewn binding in a strictly limited edition of 250 copies, featuring a proficient black and white cover and four internal illustrations by Dominic E Harman, plus an introduction by Stephen Baxter. It's sure to appeal to devotees, or collectors, but perhaps not to the casual buyer (especially at a price of £19.50). However, if copies are still available, this volume, in terms of both its content and production values, is well worth seeking out.

[Sarob Press: "Brynderwen", 41 Forest View, Mountain Ash, CF45 3DU, Wales. E-mail: sarobpress@freeuk.com Website: http://home.freeuk.net/sarobpress/]

### Jonathan Carroll – The Wooden Sea

**Reviewed by Cherith Baldry** 

The Wooden Sea is the story of Frannie McCabe, ex-teenage hoodlum, currently small town cop in pursuit of a murderer, and unknown to himself a vital component in the ordering of the universe. An apparently minor incident, the death of a dog in his office, is the first event of a sequence which will change his life. As gradually the everyday becomes stranger and more

Tor, 2001, 302pp, \$23.95 ISBN 0-312-87823-0

surreal, Frannie himself develops, comes to understand more, revealing the book's many layers of meaning.

The plot is complex, and it would do the book no service to try to summarise it. The sense of place is important, the local community coming over vividly, with a great deal of imaginative detail. Time, in contrast, is flexible, as Frannie

moves back and forth through his own life, or encounters different versions of himself, with a dazzling complexity that never overwhelms the story.

The novel examines ideas of choice, of how the past influences the present, of how people become the sum of their experiences. The title, drawn from the question, "How do you row a boat on a wooden sea?" suggests the answers that lie within apparent illogicality. The only fault I have to find is that the root cause of events, the underlying purpose that is the reason for what happens, isn't as strong or compelling as the events themselves.

For the bulk of the book, Frannie tells his own story. The

tone is wry, wisecracking, and at the same time capable of depth. It's a voice which can vary from being funny to sensitive within a few lines, but is always firmly rooted in the character. His personal view of the town and its inhabitants brings them to life, and the revelation of his own character – sometimes conscious, sometimes not – is impressive.

I didn't know the work of Jonathan Carroll before I read this book. It's not the sort of thing that I normally go out looking for, but I'd hate to have missed it. On the strength of it, I'll certainly be wanting more. It's intriguing, full of suspense and the genuine sense of wonder that it still a vital part of good science fiction and fantasy. I recommend it highly.

#### A.E. Cunningham (ed.) - Jack Vance: Critical Appreciations and a Bibliography

The British Library, 2000, 232pp, £15.00 ISBN 0-7123-1102-5; Limited Edition available at £40.00 ISBN 0-7123-1103-3

#### **Reviewed by Storm Constantine**

This is primarily a book for Vance enthusiasts, but if he is one of your favourite writers, then it is a treasure house. It is a warm and affectionate tribute, and with enough tantalising quotes from Vance's best work to attract new readers, should they take the time to read these lively and colourful essays.

lack Vance has never quite received the public credit and attention he deserves for his contributions to sf and fantasy. He is often cited as a major influence and inspiration by many successful authors, yet most of his books have been long out of print. Often, he has been criticised for his baroque and archaic style, but to the Vance aficionado, he is a master of language, wit and imagination. Now, as Vance is in his eighties, there is renewed interest, with reprints and new editions of his work and also this collection of eleven essays. I'm glad he's still around to enjoy the well-deserved praise. Masters of the craft, many of whom are friends of Vance, contribute to the book which, as Terry Dowling puts it in his offering 'Fruit From the Tree of Life', "...isn't intended as a book of critical essays, but rather as a selection of heartfelt and appreciations." And so they are.

Contributors such as Harlan Ellison, Gene Wolfe, Dan Simmons and David Langford indulge themselves in telling us why they love Vance's writing. David Mathew's 'From Phade to Wayness: the Changing Role of Women' discusses Vance's approach to female characters throughout his work, AE Cunningham gives us a full bibliography (to help track down those out-of-print titles you've always wanted to read) and Charles F Miller's contribution 'Publishing Jack Vance' documents the writer's career. There is also an article by Vance himself, which gives fascinating glimpses into his life – a very rich, full and varied one, to be sure. Is there anything this man hasn't done? The photo archive spans the last century, from pictures of Vance on his mother's knee in 1916 to a book signing in 1990.

As a fan of Vance myself, I devoured this book gleefully, relishing the insights into his life and work. It makes me look to my shelf of Vance books and decide which one I'll take down first to re-read. How can anyone resist a writer who could pen the lines: "While we are alive we should sit among colored lights and taste good wines, and discuss our adventures in far places; when we are dead, the opportunity is past"?

#### Kara Dalkey – Genpei Reviewed by Vikki Lee

Tor, 2001, 445pp, \$25.95, ISBN 0-312-89071-0

This is one of those novels that doesn't really fit neatly into our genre, but deserves a mention here anyway. Based entirely in 12th century Japan, it is a telling of the wars that ended the Heian period of rule. In a fantasy sense, it is the story of the rise and fall of two Japanese clans, the Minomoto and the Taira, as well as the fortunes of the Imperial family during that period.

Young Taira no Kiyomori has a mysterious meeting with the Goddess Benzaiten, mistress of art and music and daughter of the Dragon King, whom the Taira clan worships. From this meeting Kiyomori learns that his clan is heading for greatness and that he, unbelievably, is of imperial blood. Benzaiten reveals to Kiyomori that a grandson of his will one day sit the imperial throne as Emperor, though this can only be achieved via a pact with the Dragon Lord. Kiyomori must marry Benzaiten, who is willing to take earthly form in order to aid the Taira's rise and bear the sons required for the task. In payment, however, Kiyomori vows to build the "greatest shrine the Empire has yet seen", dedicated to the Dragon Lord on the sacred island of Miyajima. Later, a further task is required to continue the Taira's success, and this will prove more difficult.

At this time, the ruling Emperor is Toba, but he retires in

favour of his eldest son, Sutoku, who is known as the Shin-In. The Imperial line of succession is much complicated because Emperors can be succeeded/retired before their deaths for various reasons. His reign, and therefore that of his brother, Konoe, is short, allowing the succession of Go-Shirakawa, who is the main Imperial player during this period. Unfortunately the Shin-In does not leave the world peacefully and remains in spirit-form to confound the rise of the Taira.

Yoshitomo, leader of the Minomoto clan, also has great plans for his clan, but he eventually leads his clan to ruin against the Taira. With the Minotmoto defeated, Kiyomori makes one deadly mistake; he breaks a cardinal rule and allows exile instead of death for three bastard sons of the Minomoto. The Minomoto will one day rise again.

This is a truly engrossing read. There is a little confusion at times because many members of the same clan have very similar names, but Dalkey tackles this well by never having too many of them active in the story at any one time. Full of politics, war, spiritualism and honour, this book gives a real flavour of 12th century Japan. A must for anyone who enjoys the writing of Guy Kay and Judith Tarr and likes their fantasy to have an air of factuality built in.

#### Reviewed by Iain Emsley

Svaha is defined as the time between seeing the lightning and hearing the thunder; or the waiting for a promise to be fulfilled. Svaha (1989, reissued 2000) is a novel full of movement towards hope, in which the onus is on individual change. In many ways, this is a book of two tales, both heading towards similar conclusions, yet never fully intersecting.

In a post-holocaust world, the Indian population has retreated to their own enclaves, rich with technology, abandoning the ruined cities. Gahzee leaves his enclave to recover a chip from a damaged flyer, which has been taken by the city dwellers. Lisa, a messenger, has the chip stolen from her and is forced by her Chinese masters to recover it before the Yakuza do. After her friend's murder, she seeks the help of the Ragman. Gahzee finds himself having to create a new clan when he meets Lisa and the coyote that seems able to cross the border between Realtime and Dreamtime.

Meanwhile, whilst investigating an industrial accident, Philip Yip becomes involved with Goro, a Yakuza, and his lawyer, Miko. Realising the extent of police corruption, he tries to fight back, telling the Ragman where the chip is. After Yip's death, Miko finds her own way to escape the Yakuza teaching that has informed her past.

De Lint draws upon the latent magic in the city: the promise of hope for individuals. All of the characters find themselves confronting their core beliefs and renewing them. As Gahzee teaches Lisa about Indian magic and the truth behind retreat from the world, his own eyes are opened to a new path: that of teaching and reconstruction. Miko has the comforts of her life stripped away and has to find the strength to challenge Goro.

Using a cyberpunk setting, de Lint delights in making the unfamiliar familiar. The wasteland between the city and enclave opens itself up as a potent area for change, rather than remaining a poisoned barrier separating the cultures. Whilst perhaps not his best novel, Svaha does give the reader a potted guide to de Lint territory.

#### L. Sprague de Camp & Fletcher Pratt - The Compleat Enchanter

Millennium (Fantasy Masterworks 10), 2000, 533p, £6.99 ISBN 1-85973-757-6

#### Reviewed by Iain Emsley

The Compleat Enchanter collects the misadventures of Harold Shea, who finds himself catapulted into various alternative worlds, each based on a different set of myths or fantasies

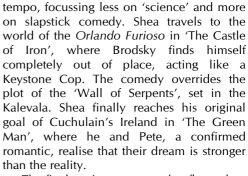
taken from literature. These stories introduce the concept of a scientifically rigorous magic, whilst Harold careers around the various worlds of these comic fantasies. There are two distinct parts to this series; the stories published in Unknown, circa 1941, which are more influenced by Campbell's editorial strictures, and those written a dozen years later which rely more upon fantastic adventures.

published Originally in Unknown magazine, 'The Roaring Trumpet' and 'The Mathematics of Magic' introduce Harold Shea and Doc Chalmers. In 'The Roaring Trumpet', Shea finds himself transported to a Norse Fantasy in which the gods are preparing for Ragnarok. Beginning his explorations into the laws of magic Shea has to abandon his Scout

handbook and reliance on science. On his return to this universe, he relates his adventure to Doc Chalmers and they travel into the world of the Faerie Queen in 'The Mathematics of Magic'. Meeting Belphebe, they become involved in the war between the magicians and Gloriana. However, Doc does not

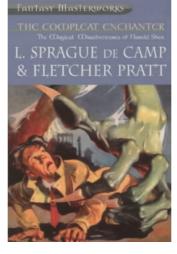
return with them, causing Harold problems when Pete Brodsky begins to investigate the disappearance.

The second part of the collection marks a sharp change in



The final stories are somewhat flatter than the ones published in *Unknown*. While Doc and Harold make their initial investigations, the fantastical elements are undercut by their 'scientific' presentation of magic and their humour, which lightens the atmosphere.

They also maintain a constant sense of wonder when they are catapulted through the portals. However, when Doc leaves, the stories rely on slapstick style and quick fixes rather than substance. Despite its faults, this collection is a treat to dip into.



#### Edward L. Ferman & Gordon van Gelder (eds.) - The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction: The 50th Anniversary Anthology Tor Books 1999, 381 pp, \$15.95 ISBN 0-312-86973

#### **Reviewed by Chris Hill**

Despite the misleading title (and more on that later) this anthology is a selection of stories from F&SF 1993-1999. Like all such anthologies, it is a mixture of good, bad and indifferent.

Starting with the good stuff: Dale Bailey's 'Quinn's Way' starts off almost like a response to Bradbury's Something Wicked This Way Comes but ends with a damning indictment, not so much of child abuse itself, but of the people who stand by and do nothing. Elizabeth Hand's story of love and redemption on a spiritual commune, 'Last Summer at Mars Hill', is mainly excellent, but the ending perhaps lacks

toughness. Esther Friesner's grim 'A Birthday' postulates how a particularly puritanical society could punish women who have had abortions. Rachel Pollack's 'The Fool, the Stick and the Princess' is an amusing take on the inevitable success of youngest sons in fairy stories and Bruce Holland Rogers examines the links between the desire for longevity and the fascination of death in 'Lifeboat in a Burning Sea'. Other highlights include Bradley Denton's tale of pop-star worship 'We Love Lydia Love' and Maureen McHugh's post-American Civil War alternative history 'The Lincoln Train'.

On the downside we have a so-so piece of whimsy from

Ray Bradbury 'Another Fine Mess' and squibs from Harlan Ellison and Terry Bisson. Both Ursula Le Guin's 'Solitude' and Tanith Lee's 'All the Birds of Hell' have some interesting ideas but do not really go anywhere with them. 'Paul and Me' by Michael Blumlein examines the decline of a myth, but since it concerns Paul Bunyan it perhaps lacks resonance for non-American readers. Similarly Robert Reed's 'First Tuesday' only works if you have the natural respect that American readers are more likely to have for the office of U.S. President. The only really bad story is Ray Vukcevich's 'The Finger', a one-joke story that should never have been published, let alone anthologised.

The remaining half-dozen stories work okay, without being outstanding. As a final treat, included is one of Paul Di

Filippo's wry sideways looks at the sf industry.

Overall, an above average anthology and worth reading. But returning to my first comment, in his introduction, Gordon van Gelder says that they considered putting together a fifty-year retrospective but decided not to on the grounds that many of the best earlier stories had been anthologised and many newer ones had not. I cannot help but feel that this is a missed opportunity. While there are some fine stories here (and some of which have been anthologised before) a proper retrospective, perhaps with some critical reflection on the history of the magazine, would have been more interesting. After all, it is not often that a genre magazine lasts this long and a proper celebratory volume would have been welcome.

#### Michael Flynn - Falling Stars

#### **Reviewed by Colin Bird**

This book provides the "triumphant conclusion" (the publisher's strapline – not mine!) to Flynn's four volume future history which mixes dynastic intrigue, technological prognostication and space-faring adventure in equal parts. For

completists the previous volumes comprise *Lodestar*, *Rogue Star* and *Firestar*.

It's 2017: there's an economic downturn and the President needs to raid the NASA budget to prop up his Social Security spending. Meanwhile a big mother of an asteroid is heading our way and the politicians are too busy squabbling to tackle the impending catastrophe. Mariesa van Huyten, leader of a vast industrial corporation and the visionary who foresaw the impending threat from a big rock, attempts to initiate a mission to reach the asteroid and to destroy or deflect it.

Mariesa is not too popular on Earth since it was her exploratory mission to the asteroid known as the 'Bean' which triggered its alien engines and set it on collision course. As the rescue mission progresses the situation becomes even grimmer when further asteroids are moved

out of their existing orbits and hurled towards the Earth by the same process.

Flynn's characters speculate that aliens may be testing

humanity's worthiness by presenting us with possible extinction unless we can unite and develop the technology to negate the threat to our home planet. This theory fits consistently into the author's heroic vision of the future; his

vast Dickensian cast of characters reek of the kind of can-do spirit that made America the country it is (at least in the minds of most of its citizens). They tackle a host of problems with gritty resolve fuelled by honest altruism.

Tor, 2001, 414pp, \$25.95 ISBN 0-312-87443-X

Flynn's optimism is, it must be said, served up with considerable verve and literary skill and his story is told with a compelling feel for authenticity. The novel is riddled with thoroughly worked out technological advances and the author, in his acknowledgement, observes how real breakthroughs render his speculation obsolete almost before it leaves his word processor.

Falling Stars suffers marginally from the weight of anticipation forged in the previous volumes. The conclusion to the central asteroid threat, when it arrives, seems rushed and predictable. But you

have to admire Flynn's technique and ability to control such a complex array of characters; I look forward to his next book.



#### Robin Hobb – *Ship of Destiny* Reviewed by Lesley Hatch

This is the third in the 'Liveship Trader' series of novels, and it lives up to its predecessors with no trouble at all. The events in the lives of the various characters take place over the course of one year, and they begin with the serpent named She Who Remembers, newly freed from her imprisonment on an island, intent on finding others of her kind so that she can lead them to the cocooning grounds where they can fulfil their destiny and become dragons.

As for the human protagonists, they are all in various difficult situations, both on land and at sea, and that is putting it mildly. For some of them, an earthquake results in a new way of life: for others, the abduction of the Satrap of Jamaillia results in a kind of civil war which only gets resolved when the Old and New Traders, together with former slaves and fisher folk, form an uneasy alliance to repel the invaders. Out on the high seas, the liveship Paragon is on the trail of the Vivacia, another liveship.

Voyager, 2001, 903pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-00-649887-6

Aside from the action which takes place in the various locations, there are startling revelations for all concerned, not the least of which is the nature of the connection between the liveships and the dragons.

And then there is Tintaglia, last of the dragons, freed during the events leading up to the earthquake, who demands the assistance of the humans and liveships in assisting 'her' serpents to reach the newly-created cocooning grounds: in return, she assists them in repelling any potential invaders, albeit somewhat grudgingly.

How all these disparate threads, coupled with the emotions and experiences of the various characters, get drawn together, is a masterpiece of creative writing and imagination. It would be unfair of me to reveal the various twists and turns in the plot, so I will conclude by saying that Hobb has done an excellent job, and I would definitely recommend this novel to anyone who wants a compelling, enthralling read.

#### Kim Hunter – Knight's Dawn: Book 1 of The Red Pavilions 🕮

Orbit, 2001, 374pp, £9.99 ISBN 1-841149-031-8

#### Reviewed by NM Browne

A knight known only as 'Soldier' wakes from a battle in a place where no battle has been for more than a hundred years. He is escorted to the nearest city, Zamerkand, by a hunter and accompanied by a talking raven. He also wears a talking scabbard that warns him of unnoticed danger. In this world everything stands at the brink of chaos and decay because the King Magus, who keeps the balance of good and evil, has been ill for fifty years and lost the plot. I sympathise. Soldier escapes execution in the Zamerkand by marrying the intermittently mad Queen of Zamerkand's intermittently mad and partially disfigured sister, Lanya. Soldier shows courage and skill while serving with the band of mercenaries of the Red Pavilion. He gets promoted, makes a few enemies, rescues a young wizard, finds a dragon's egg, and various people try to kill him. Eventually he is sent on a quest to find a wizard to restore the sanity of the Queen and her sister. As you may gather Soldier has an eventful life. The story is well paced and I found that enough happened often enough to keep the pages turning, though I found the ending anticlimactic and Soldier himself problematic.

The problem is that 'Soldier' is an amnesiac warrior with a startling lack of curiosity about his past, except when his dark side takes over and he becomes horribly but unconvincingly violent. This lack of a past and corresponding lack of motivation made it difficult to identify with his guest. He knows nothing of the world he finds himself in and his ignorance in an odd way insulated me from any sense of intimacy or of real engagement with his world; he didn't understand what was going on and I'm not sure I did either. In fact, I don't think I really understood this book. I wasn't sure whether its tone was intended to be heroic, comic, ironic or dramatic, or all of them at different times. I wasn't sure if it was supposed to be a kind of adult fairytale, in which case the absence of characterisation could be seen as part of the charm. If that was the intention I don't feel the writer guite pulled it off. However, it is only the first book of a fantasy series and it may all become clearer in the next instalment. I hope so.

#### Valery Leith – The Riddled Night 🕮

#### **Reviewed by Kathy Taylor**

The Riddled Night is the sequel to The Company of Glass. It forms the second book in the Everien series, and one that makes no allowance for any reader who has not read the first book. For those who have read the first novel this may be an advantage, as there are no dreary expositional discussions and

no bulking out of the novel with long explanations of what has gone before. However, on behalf of those of us who have not, I would plead for a summary section on 'what has gone before' at the start.

The novel has many plot threads and switches between different viewpoints, the major ones being those of Tash, Istar, Pallo, Tarquin, Ixo, and Liaku. Tash is a Pharician warlord who has recently conquered and declared himself ruler of Everien. Although he has used the Knowledge of the ancient Evarians to take the land, his rulership is insecure. This insecurity is reflected neatly in the strange and uncooperative castle of Jai Khalar he lives in. One of the plot strands deals with Tash's attempts to win over the clans and defeat the rebels. Istar is one of the rebel leaders. She was adopted into the Clan of the Seahawk and is an Honorary, "pledged to a warrior's life in the absence of a male protector in her own

family." She is also the head of her household and for the first part of the novel her focus is on the fate of her two sisters, rather than her commitment to the rebellion and hunting the

Sekk. Pallo is one of Istar's people. In her absence, he attends a meeting of the rebel chiefs. Pallo is subsequently sent to help break into the fire houses on a mission to prevent Tash obtaining more of the Knowledge that he is using to suppress rebellion.

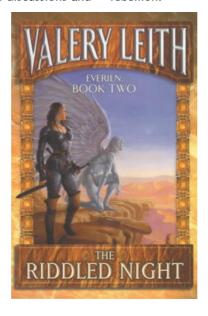
> Istar's adoptive father, Tarquin, is an ex-member of the Seahawk Throughout the book he follows a different path, moving back and forth through time and to a different reality. It is only toward the end of the novel that his actions and those of other characters affect each other. Ixo is a member of one of the clans and Tash's mistress. Liaku, one of the most interesting characters, is a bird girl. She encounters the Sky Falcon and later becomes part of the party sent by the Emperor to support Tash. All of these and other characters are well drawn. Their actions arise logically out of their backgrounds and their individual needs

Gollancz, 2001, 517 pp, £10.99 ISBN 0-575-07075-7

With the shelves full of mind candy and fantasy clones it is a real pleasure to read as complex and original a work as The Riddled Night. Valery Leith has produced a fascinating tapestry of a book,

Tor, 2001, 351pp, \$14.95 ISBN 0-312-85664-4

which is well worth reading. I would, however, recommend reading the previous book in the series first.



#### Richard Matheson – The Incredible Shrinking Man **Reviewed by Chris Hill**

Scott Carey is shrinking, a steady seventh of an inch a day. As he battles for survival in his own basement in the last few days before he shrinks away to nothing, he reflects on the process

that has led him to this point.

The book was originally published in 1956 (as The Shrinking Man). It is quite a tough-minded book. Matheson makes no attempt to turn Scott into a standard hero. He does not accept his fate with good grace; he is bad-tempered, selfish and at times even cruel. Particularly well done is the depiction of the deterioration of his relationship with his wife as his becomes increasingly an object of pity to her. Unfortunately, you are only shown him after his affliction starts, so you have

no idea what he was like before. This leads you to suspect that he was always a bad-tempered and unhappy man.

26

The sections spent on his survival in the cellar worked less well for me. I have never been particularly interested in 'wilderness survival' stories (as this, essentially, is). It also has a rather inconclusive ending, as if Matheson was unsure quite how to tie things up.

The volume also includes a number of short stories. Several of these are quite well known for their film or television adaptations. 'Nightmare at 20,000 Feet' was a *Twilight Zone* episode (particularly remembered for starring a pre-*Star Trek* William Shatner), and 'Duel' was turned into an effective thriller by Steven Spielberg in his directorial debut. The others are mainly urban horror stories. In 'The



Distributor' a man moves into a town and sets out to destroy his neighbours before moving on again. An executive's sanity is threatened by a fly that he just cannot seem to kill in 'Shoofly'. In 'Mantage' a novelist lives only the significant moments of his life, flipping past the day-to-day events. Several of the stories are in the 'short sharp shock' style of horror writing, vaguely reminiscent of *Tales of the Unexpected* (for example, 'By Appointment Only', about a malignant dentist.)

This is an interesting collection and worth having for the title story alone. One criticism – there is no copyright information on the individual stories which makes it impossible to judge them in their original context.

## Anne McCaffrey – The Skies of Pern Reviewed by Lesley Hatch

Bantam, 2001, 447 pages, £16.99 ISBN 0593-04330-8

This novel picks up immediately after the events in *All The Weyrs Of Pern*, in which the dragonriders take the first steps towards ridding Pern of Thread forever, using the instructions from the original computer left by the colonists; they, and the various Craft Masters, also learn a lot from the computer, which vastly improves their lives and those of the ordinary people of Pern. However, these improvements are not without repercussions for two groups of people: the dragonriders, who have to face the fact that, in a few years, they will no longer be needed to destroy Thread and will therefore have to find other occupations, and the Abominators, who are very much against the whole concept of modernisation and decide to take action.

As the novel opens, several of these Abominators are serving out their punishment, either in exile or as miners, for previous attacks. However, things change when a meteorite crashes on a mining settlement and one of the Abominators escapes to form another group of dissenters: their activities do not go unnoticed.

Things get further complicated when an asteroid lands in

the sea, causing tidal waves and necessitating a massive rescue operation by the dragons and their riders. This leads to the discovery of an additional, and highly useful ability the dragons have that no-one has really suspected.

Aside from these two elements of the novel, the dragonriders realise that their future may lie in becoming astronomers, and plans are made for a series of observatories to be constructed so that a watch can be kept on the skies around Pern for any further asteroids.

Not unexpectedly, there are several people less than happy to hear about these plans, and one in particular is receptive to the overtures of the surviving Abominators following a thwarted attack and the death of a ringleader, so the future is not as certain as people think.

Although the novel ends optimistically, there is still Thread to fight and there are still problems to solve on the land (with the recalcitrant Lord Holders) and in the skies and the way is open for a further volume in the Pern series.

#### Ian McDonald – Ares Express 🛄

**Reviewed by Steve Jeffery** 

Seen only in unbound proof but due in April, McDonald's long awaited return to the world of *Desolation Road* (to be reissued simultaneously in paperback by Earthlight) does not disappoint. *Ares Express* is the most entertaining and enjoyable

skiffy romp of 2001 so far, and I strongly

suspect of the year as a whole. Our Feisty and Resourceful (But Cute

With It) Heroine is the gloriously named Sweetness Octave Glorious Honey-Bun Asiim Engineer 12<sup>th</sup>, whose father is Naon Sextus Solstice-Rising Engineer 11<sup>th</sup>, chief engineer and driver of the Bethlehem Ares Railroads Class 22 Heavy Fusion Hauler *Catherine of Tharsis*, and whose uncle is a signal stop light. Already we are firmly in McDonald territory, although one warped (and perhaps even wefted) out of Ray Bradbury by way of lain M Banks' Culture (those names!) and the opening of McDonald's *Hearts*, *Hands and Voices* ("grandfather was a tree").

But back to Sweetness Octave Glorious Honey-Bun Asiim Engineer 12<sup>th</sup>, who at this moment is standing, hair streaming and precariously perched, like mcdonald ares express

Simon and Schuster, 2001, 322pp, £16.99 ISBN 0-684-86151-8

Kate Winslett in *Titanic*, at the prow of the *Catherine of Tharsis* as it speeds down the endless twin silver rails across the Martian desert towards Borealis Junction. And unlike Kate Winslett, and to the outrage of her father, glancing up through

the catwalk grille on which she perches, and the amusement of her mother, Child'a'Grace, she is not wearing any knickers.

What Sweetness wants, more than anything, is to be an Engineer herself and drive a speeding train across the great deserts and wastes of Mars. Two hundred years of rigid caste-bound tradition of arranged marriages among the railroad folk means that future will pass to her brother Sleevel, and all that the nearly-nine Sweetness can look forward to is to end up as a wife of a Ninth Avata Steward, brewing samovars of mint tea on the Llangonedd run. This is no future for a Feisty and Resourceful (But Cute With It) Heroine. And, indeed, and fortunately for the reader more interested in thrilling escapades and hairsbreadth escapes, it turns out not to be her future at all. Instead, taking the somewhat gnomic advice of a lizard-man fortune teller ("Expect the unexpected. Always carry a change of underwear. Read a little every day. Your body odour is often worse than you think."), she escapes with an urchin stowaway on her wedding day to fall into the clutches of religious demagogue Devastation Harx and his flying cathedral powered by purple-suited acolyte bicyclists.

Harx has a mission: he wants to bring down the AI Angels, liberated by the disembodied and uploaded St Catherine, who control and maintain the environment, and indeed reality, of Mars. Sweetness, though, is not at all convinced of his ability to take them on "with an inflatable bouncy church, a mail order business, a bunch of dysfunctional cyclists in purple...and win?" Some of the Angels, it has to be said, are not always up to the job, occasionally going senile or breaking down and leaving large areas of reality dysfunction dotted around the landscape.

Rejecting a life of purple thralldom and saddle sores as even less rewarding than brewing samovars of mint tea, Sweetness escapes, cripples the airship with the help of a couple of gay performance artists, is captured and escapes again, is nearly turned into living fetish furniture by child slavers, and finally gets to drive a train and play a pivotal role in a three-cornered battle between Devastation Harx, an anarchist circus troupe and St Catherine's Al Angels.

A number of writers will tell you that their books or stories are written to a soundtrack. If so, McDonald is an unabashed Prog Rock oldie. Titles and snippets of lyrics filter through into the text, from Pink Floyd to Genesis' 'Supper's Ready' and Van Morrison. These, together with a generous scattering of skiffy nods, from Wells ("minds immeasurably superior to man's") to the "Stapledon Regional Comedy Theatre", and a set of parallel/alternate worlds which embody alternate sfnal visions of Mars, sometimes threaten to turn *Ares Express* into a palimpsest of references like a lighthearted version of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Happily, it never quite tips over this far. McDonald never forgets that the story is the important thing, rather than the jokes and authorial asides that embellish it. An engaging, page-turning, and frequently hilarious, delight.

#### L.E. Modesitt Jr. – Darksong Rising 🕮

#### **Reviewed by Alan Fraser**

Back in 1997 LE Modesitt Jr. released two books with the same theme – women from a modern society facing gender prejudice in a backward one, as well as many other threats. One was *Fall Of Angels*, in his Recluce series – all but one of the officers of the military starship Winterlance are female, and

when it crash-lands on a backward planet they are seen as "an affront to hearth and home". The other was *The Soprano Sorceress*, first in a new series, where voice teacher and former opera singer Anna Marshall was plucked from an unhappy life in Ames, lowa, to the feudal world of Erde (where music is magic) to help the forces of harmony in the kingdom of Defalk combat the threat of evil forces using discord. *Darksong Rising*, Book 3 of 'The Spellsong Cycle', is the second sequel to *The Soprano Sorceress*, following *The Spellsong War*.

The second book started with Anna as Regent of Defalk facing invasion from several of her neighbouring states, which she defeats using her voice to invoke good magic ("Clearsong"). Here Anna faces not only invasions from East and West, but also internal strife, as the hereditary lords of Defalk prove that they are not only

prepared to kill, but also to die, to thwart her feminist agenda for their country. Even the boy for whom she is Regent (who has an incredibly silly name that I won't reveal here) does not approve of her reforms – loud voices are telling him they're for the worst. Anna must defeat both military force and the black

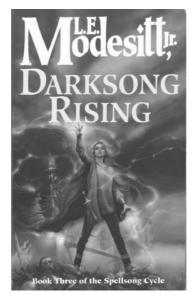
magic of "Darksong", invoked by drums, which has been banned in Erde for centuries, before she can start trying to change the hearts and minds of the people. (Clearsong and Darksong are also the names of Erde's two moons, so the title has a double significance.)

I've remarked in the past that Modesitt's editors have been too lax with him, allowing books that are far too bloated to be published. This volume suffers from that fault much less than others, but it could still do with tightening up. For example, we got the message long ago in both this series and that of Recluce that magic makes its practitioners ravenously hungry, so the pencil-thin Anna is forced to eat gargantuan meals. We don't need to be told this every time she sits down to one! Also, plot-wise this is very much a reworking of The Spellsong War, and Anna's character moves on hardly at all during the story. She continually agonises over her lost children on Earth, the fact she is always using her magical powers to kill people, and also whether or not to start a relationship with the supportive Lord Jecks. In fact, at times she's a real pain.

Orbit, 2001, 582pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-84149-011-3

Modesitt's next book set on Erde will be

called *The Shadow Sorceress*. It's not a continuation of this series, so will not, I understand, feature Anna, even though her story is not entirely resolved. *Darksong Rising*, though not entirely successful, nevertheless has its good moments!



#### Kim Mohan (ed) - More Amazing Stories

#### **Reviewed by Sue Thomason**

Billed as "the very last issue of *Amazing Stories*", this anthology contains 21 items, five of which have previously appeared in issues of *Amazing Stories* the magazine (the rest are first publications). The "featured authors" mentioned on the cover are Ursula Le Guin (whose story 'Unchosen Love' examines the complexities of *sedoretu* marriage on O, which are not unrelated to the potential complexities of most relationships in most times and places), Philip K Dick (whose gentle, cold mindbender 'The Builder' predates every other item in the collection by 40-plus years), and Robert Silverberg (who contributes an essay on Dick's short fiction). The other

Tor, 2000, 320pp, \$14.95 ISBN 0-312-87437-5

outstanding stories for me in this very high-quality collection include Eleanor Arnason's 'The Gauze Banner' (her stories have the plain, pithy, necessary quality of good bread), LA Taylor's 'Visitors' (about some people visiting a smart house, and a wonderful example of how much you need to tell – or not tell – in a story), Don Webb's 'Tamarii Notebook' (your basic anthropologist-records-fascinating-culture scenario – almost), and 'Household Words, or, The Powers-That-Be' by Howard Waldrop. (An accurate but totally inadequate precis of Waldrop's story is that it's a reworking of a well-known Charles Dickens novel; his flavour equivalent is an insane

combination that nobody in their right mind would serve up – chocolate-covered pickled onions with garlic ice-cream – that nevertheless tastes *wonderful*, and leaves one wondering why nobody ever thought of doing such a clever thing before...) Your own favourites will probably be different. Flavours range from the quasifactual to the scientifictional, through cyberpunk, various sorts of hard and soft sf, to neo-mythology

and fantasy; also from bitter tragedy through various kinds of serious and unserious storytelling to irony, satire and comedy.

It's a good collection. It's a very good collection. It's a very fine demonstration (set of demonstrations) of how well the short story format suits what-if, playing-with-ideas fiction. Saying enough, but not too much, is a wonderful art. This collection does that.

#### Michael Moorcock – The Dreamthief's Daughter 🕮

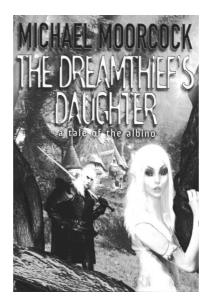
Earthlight, 2001, 342pp, £16.99, ISBN 0-684-861313

#### **Reviewed by Carol Ann Kerry-Green**

In The Dreamthief's Daughter, Moorcock returns to one of his best known characters, Elric of Melniboné. But this novel isn't only about Elric, it's about Count Ulric von Bek and Nazi Germany. Ulric is the last bastion of the von Bek family. He lives a life of solitude in his ancestral home, his albinism making him reluctant to mix with his neighbours. Instead he immerses himself in his studies and practices his sword-fighting skills with Ravenbrand, the sword handed down the generations of his family. Until, that is, his world is shattered by the arrival of his Nazi cousin, Gaynor von Minct, and his henchman Klosterheim, who wants the sword and the Grail (supposedly in the care of the von Bek family) for Hitler.

Refusing to hand over the sword and knowing nothing of the Grail, von Bek is incarcerated by the Nazis in a concentration camp and tortured. When it appears he can

take no more beatings, von Bek has a vision of his doppleganger inside his cell and finds his sword has been magically restored to him. His escape from the camp is aided



by Oona, another albino, and the English secret agent Bastable. They take him into another world, to Morn and the Off Moo, where von Bek learns of the Multiverse, and that he is only one of many versions of himself.

Meanwhile, as Gaynor invades Morn and the Multiverse, Elric of Melniboné is also fighting Gaynor (in another incarnation) at the walls of Tanelorn. Deprived of his body, Elric wanders the Multiverse until he meets Oona, the Dreamthief's daughter. In order to beat back the attack on Tanelorn and the Multiverse, Elric merges with von Bek, to become one champion.

Moorcock blends the world of Nazi Germany and the fate of the Multiverse with skill. I was captivated by this tale from the beginning, a tale of the Grail set in a different genre than the Arthurian. *The* 

*Dreamthief's Daughter* is the first of a new trilogy from Moorcock and in this first book he marries modern history with fantasy to create an intriguing hybrid.

## Adam Nichols – *The Curer: The Whiteblade Saga, Book Three* Reviewed by Lesley Hatch

Gollancz, 2001, 440 pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-85798-531-1

This novel, the third and final volume of The Whiteblade Saga, concludes the story of Elinor Whiteblade, a woman warrior who possesses a magical sword which equally helps and hinders her in her life. She does not, however, make her

The story begins with Pawli, a young lad currently residing with his uncle Bryn, the Curer of the title. Pawli is convinced he has seen some approaching menace, but has no idea of what it is. The arrival of Khurdis Blackeye, one-time pupil of Bryn, does little to help matters, especially as Bryn is in a druginduced stupor. Khurdis' visit leaves behind a very disgruntled Pawli, who is less than understanding when Bryn eventually returns to the real world. Bryn's continual refusal to teach his nephew the art of far-seeing results in Pawli running away, something he makes a habit of in this novel. He is in the process of deciding what to do with his life when a stranger arrives in the area, seeking a place to shelter. The stranger – Roe – turns out to be something of a mystery, given to long silences and considerable reticence about his origins.

The advent of some bandits at the nearby village causes its

occupants to seek Bryn's help: this results in a confrontation between Bryn and Khurdis, who turns out to have more power than Bryn had expected, and who seems to be on the side of the bandits. These events culminate in Roe's true identity being revealed, and things rapidly get more complicated from that point onwards.

The main sequence of events centres around Elinor and Pawli attempting to rescue Bryn from his drug-induced fartravelling (what we call astral travel). They follow him using the same method, and find themselves in an alternative world peopled by numerous strange creatures, all fellow travellers. Add to this the fact that Khurdis gets taken over by Tancred, an ancient sorcerer with plans to dominate the real world, and things go from bad to worse very quickly.

I enjoyed this novel, which provides a fitting (if unexpected) conclusion to the trilogy, and there is scope for a spin-off. If I had one criticism, it would have to be that the main characters are too fond of introspection and soulsearching. This is, however, a tiny criticism which did not detract from my enjoyment of a well-written, intriguing, novel.

#### Mel Odom – Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Revenant Jeff Mariotte – Angel: Hollywood Noir

Pocket, 2001, 386pp, £5.99 ISBN 0-7434-0035-6 Pocket, 2001, 292pp, £5.99 ISBN 0-7434-0697-4

#### **Reviewed by Susan Sandys**

appearance right away.

Revenant is set in a kind of parallel early third season world, where Angel is best mates with everyone and Faith is never mentioned. The plot involves "guei" – Chinese lost souls roaming the earth bent on revenge. There is Asian gang

warfare on the streets of Sunnydale and a mysterious Chinese business man arrives in town.

With its portrayal of mindless racism – for example, a pair of elderly Japanese women are attacked by vengeful white

teenagers – this is an unexpectedly dark novel. The lighter plot elements – Xander falling in love with a mysterious swordswoman, the sexual tension between Buffy and Angel – are well handled.

The villains are satisfying, with a wonderful Chinese dragon demon taking centre stage, and the demon gang members are revolting. This is a very enjoyable novel, but it suffers from being shoehorned into the early third season and does not quite fit into the Buffy world as we know it.

Angel: Hollywood Noir is light hearted and funny. This is set in early first season. Doyle (for he is still alive) has a vision involving a cigarette girl named Betty McCoy. The problem is that she died in 1964. A private eye, who has been dead for fifty years, is accidentally resurrected and careers around Los Angeles shooting people and, horror of horrors, smoking in public! The villain of the piece is an ex-hood turned Government Official in charge of the Water Department. He

suffers from not being remotely scary, even in the final confrontation with Angel.

There are some nice set pieces: Angel fighting the resurrected PI while Cordelia and the PI's female helper chat about bulgy facial deformities and both fighters being dead; Doyle also in a cemetery waiting for something to happen and Cordelia flirting information out of a bored night worker.

As with the Buffy novel, the character voices work well, but it shares the problem of a constricted time scale. This is the sixth Angel novel and they are all set in this period. It may be that the writers simply do not know what is going to happen in the Buffy/Angel universe but it would be nice to see a little variation. These criticisms aside, both novels were well-written and great fun to read.

#### Terry Pratchett, adapted Stephen Briggs, illustrated Graham Higgins - Guards! Guards!

Gollancz, 2000, 122pp, £9.99 ISBN 0-575-07071-4

#### **Reviewed by Sue Thomason**

It can't be easy, transforming over 300 pages of text into

around 100 pages of (mostly) illustration, and claiming that these two products are, in fact, the same book. Or at least, the same story. Or, would I tell a lie, two different takes on the same story, for (presumably) two rather different target audiences. Guards! Guards! the graphic novel has lost many of the minor characters and plot ramifications of Guards! Guards! the text novel, together with nearly all the perfectly descriptive passages, while preserving the essence of the original, and indeed adding to it things that Pratchett himself would certainly have included if he was a cartoonist. (The Discworld's favourite biscuits, the terrible fate of the Patrician's little dog, the moonlighting superheros in town for a spot of dragon-hunting, and the charming scene of a couple of people fishing on the Ankh are a few of my favourites.) The Death of Rats, who seems

to have turned into the Alfred Hitchcock of Discworld graphic novels, also puts in a couple of discreet appearances.

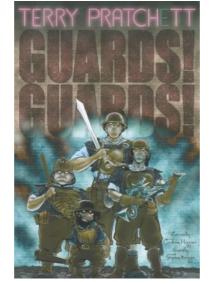
I enjoyed this thoroughly, and only have a few minor quibbles. There are two double-page spreads which don't "read" very easily, and I'm not sure they'd actually make sense to someone who hadn't read the full-text novel (pp 96-97 and pp 102-103; both of these "scenes" involve a lot of rapid

location/point-of-view changes without explanatory text). And

there's a misplaced joke on page 25 (Carrot is trying to guess the Librarian's charade interpretation of the title of a stolen book, *The Summoning Of Dragons.*) It's a good joke, but it's not something *Carrot* would say. Vimes certainly, Nobby quite possibly, maybe even Colon... but not Carrot. He's far too unsophisticated and Nice to be cynical about politicians...

For anyone who has somehow missed the Discworld's stately peregrination across the literary firmament, I should maybe mention that the book (both versions) is a hardboiled, tough-minded and laconic(ish) look at the life of the Ankh-Morpork City Watch. The Night Watch. The people whose mission, in most sf and fantasy worlds, is to get shot about 30 seconds into Chapter 2. It's also about how to breed dragons, and why summoning them is maybe not an

altogether Good Idea. And it's about the Rightful King and the Rule of Law. It's about people's hopes, dreams and expectations; how sometimes they can be maintained in the face of Reality, and sometimes not. In fact it's a typical piece of Pratchett; Serious Philosophy masquerading as frothy fantasy (or possibly vice versa). I love it. If you don't know it already, do try it.



#### James Sallis – Time's Hammer: The collected short fiction of James Sallis Reviewed by Mark Plummer

Toxic, 2000, 398pp, £9.99 ISBN 1-902002-28-8

James Sallis is no science fiction loyalist. He initially made his home in the magazine *New Worlds* during Michael Moorcock's editorial tenure in the late Sixties (he briefly edited the magazine himself) and the series anthologies such as *Orbit* and *Nova*, while more recently stories have appeared in magazines such as *Asimov's*, *F&SF* and *Amazing*. But alongside this he has also contributed stories to crime and mystery publications such as *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, and a whole raft of small press 'literary' magazines with 'bakers' dozens circulations'. And this while writing the occasional crime novel, a book of sf criticism, and editing a couple of volumes about jazz guitarists.

John Clute, in *The Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction*, notes the "gnomic brevity" of much of Sallis's work, and the latter

part of the contention is immediately apparent: this 400-page volume features 49 stories split into two volumes, each with an introduction. The first deals with stories taken primarily from sf publications, the second with those from the mystery magazines, but the distinction isn't rigidly enforced. And anyway, there is little here that meets the conventional expectations of genre. Clute refers to "[h]is clearly acknowledged models in the French avant garde" and Sallis himself says, in the introduction to the first volume, "in speaking of science fiction, what I load onto the truck is almost certainly quite different from the cargo you take off."

But while Sallis avoids attaching himself to any genre, his devotion is to the short story, as both reader and writer. And it's tempting to conclude that the emphasis is firmly on 'short'

- some of these pieces only run to two or three pages-and emphatically not on 'story', at least in the conventional sense. There's a real economy of style on display here, with writing that creates a mood, an atmosphere, rather than developing an idea to (or indeed beyond) its full extent. And the cumulative effect can be a bit much, leading to a tendency for stories to slide off the eye. This is a book best read in short bursts rather than in one concentrated effort.

But if your tastes run beyond traditional science fiction, to

the 'working man's metaphysical fiction' of New Worlds and the publications that uphold those values today, this book does repay the effort. Sallis's work is best described by reference to the writing he himself prefers: "I sought edge literature, yes, but also people writing at the edge, writers not so much lighting out for the territory as dragging the territory back with them farting and belching and smelling unmistakably ripe to civilization."

#### James H. Schmitz – The Witches of Karres

#### **Reviewed by Tanya Brown**

The late James H Schmitz's delightful space opera, optioned several times for film but never yet making it to the screen, has - after years of unavailability - been reissued as a Gollancz yellowback Collector's Edition. Originally published in 1966, it's aged well. There's a tinge of EE 'Doc' Smith about Schmitz's Galactic Empire, but his heroine (the redoubtable ten-year-old witch Goth) and her initially reluctant rescuer, Captain Pausert, have enough wit and energy to charm the jaded palates of today's readers.

Captain Pausert visits Porlumma to trade. After a business failure on his home planet of Nikkeldepain, his luck's turned. He's sold nearly all his cargo for a handsome profit, and he's won wagers and races enough to keep him - and bride-to-be Illyla, daughter of Counsellor Onswud – in considerable style.

But has his luck turned enough? By the time he leaves Porlumma - rather hastily - he's rescued three little slavegirls from their oppressive masters. Pausert, innocent and pure of heart, perhaps doesn't give proper weight to the obvious distress of those masters, who seem willing to sell their slaves for a pittance. How could three small girls be a threat to grown men?

And what is the Sheewash Drive which catapults his ship halfway across the Empire? "The one you have to do it with yourself," explains The Leewit (an adorable six-year-old blonde) helpfully. The captain's rather slow. It takes him a

while to work out that his passengers are witches from the

Gollancz, 2000, 344pp, £10.99 ISBN 057507- 144-3

prohibited - and nomadic - planet of Karres. In fact, this realisation comes too late for him to avoid bankruptcy, betrayal and banishment.

The Captain and Goth go on the run, pursued by a glamorous interstellar spy, space pirates, and some transdimensional aliens. The Sheewash Drive may get them out of some tight corners, but everyone wants it for themselves. Captain Pausert's also haunted by a magical entity called a vatch, which believes the Captain is something it's dreamt up, and is terribly amused by the whole affair. Can things get any worse? Can his luck change again?

The answer to both questions, of course, is 'yes'. After a series of incredible escapades, and some entirely unexpected revelations about his Great-Uncle Threbus, the Captain finds himself once more in fortune's favour. There are happy endings for those who deserve them, and just desserts for most of the villains. It's that sort of a book.

The Witches of Karres is an enjoyable, episodic romp. Schmitz, who believed in ESP, created a klatha magic that is both practical and consistent, and doesn't detract from the sfnal elements of the tale. Goth is a convincing pre-adolescent heroine, and the Captain is as clean-cut as any Golden Age hero. Fun, funny, and intelligent: an exemplary space opera.

#### Sheri S. Tepper – Beauty

#### **Reviewed by Lynne Bispham**

First published in 1991, this ingenious reinterpretation of wellknown fairy tales is a welcome addition to Gollancz's 'Fantasy Masterworks.' The novel contains many elements recognisable from folk and fairy tales and modern fantasy: Seven League

Boots, a Magic Mirror, even a Dark Lord - but they appear in clever, unexpected and meaningful ways. We first meet the eponymous heroine, daughter of a certain Duke of Westfaire, in the fourteenth century, when she is almost sixteen years old, and about to acquire a new stepmother who is undoubtedly wicked. In this version of the familiar Sleeping Beauty story, however, Beauty evades Carabosse's curse and it is her half-sister, Beloved, who is cast into a sleep of a hundred years. Leaving Castle Westfaire and its sleeping inhabitants, Beauty resolves to seek her mysteriously absent mother, a fairy, who, in the customary manner has left her "the means to find her" - in this case, a ring, needles and three hanks of thread! At this point, the book takes a very different turn from the traditional tale, for Beauty is accosted by a

group of time-travelling documentary makers from the far future who force her to return with them to their own time, the

twenty-second century. This turns out to be a ghastly time in which all beauty has vanished from the world.

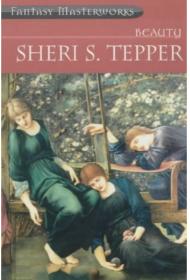
Millennium (Fantasy Masterworks 14), 2001, 476pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-857798-722-5

Fortunately, Beauty manages to return to fourteenth century Europe via twentieth century America and Faery. As she

journeys she finds that the story of her life is interwoven with the author's idiosyncratic variants on the stories of Snow White, Cinderella and Thomas the Rhymer, and she determines that if the terrible future she has seen cannot be averted, she will find a way for beauty to be preserved.

Much has been written about the importance and meaning of traditional fairy tales, and this novel does have a 'message,' although it is never didactic, leaving the reader to discover its meaning in much the same way as Beauty herself discovers the truth about Carabosse's spell. It is a book that repays re-reading, and I recommend it with the minor reservation that it is not a typical modern fantasy but comes a bit out of left field, and may not appeal to those who their fantasy to be in the straightforward action-adventure mode. Most readers, I suspect, will be enchanted by its

original slant on stories that everyone knows so well.



#### Sheri S. Tepper – *The Fresco*

Reviewed by Vikki Lee

Gollancz, 2001, 406pp, £10-99 ISBN 0-575-07192-3

Sheri Tepper is an acknowledged master of the fantasy genre and an author whose latest book I always await eagerly. In this latest offering, *The Fresco*, Tepper explores all her usual themes through the arrival on Earth of extra-terrestrials.

Benita Alvarez is a mother of two and wife to a drunken thug. Out one day in the hills, she is approached by aliens and given the task of being their representative on Earth. The aliens, known throughout as the Pistach, have been watching Benita and have chosen her as a 'middle of the road' earthling with no particular axe to grind – either racially, politically or religiously. From Benita's point of view, the large amount of cash given to her by the Pistach allow her to finally walk away from her drunken husband and a house on the brink of being foreclosed.

Having delivered a communication tool to her local senator, Benita finds herself on her way to Washington to meet the President and First Lady. As one would expect, there are two ways of looking at the Pistach, and their professed aim of bringing Earth up to standard so it can be invited to join a planetary confederation of intelligent species. The President believes the aliens to be benevolent. His political rivals, however, are out to prove otherwise and want to go to war.

It is only when two or three other alien races arrive secretly on Earth and make contact with the President's enemies that one begins to see where this book is going. All the other aliens are predators, and they are seeking hunting rights on Earth.

In her secret flat in Washington, the pressure is beginning to mount on Benita. The predators have taken her husband and are using him to find her. They also have her son, who, strangely enough, is a chip off the old (father's) block; the daughter is just like her mother, of course, and they aim to deliver her to the bad guys.

There is, I'm sure, a really good story in here, but as is so often the case with Tepper, she uses the story to bang her ideological drum at every turn. Population control leads the litany, along with male domination of females and every kind of green issue she can squeeze in. Normally, she crafts a lot of these into her story so that they impinge only a little on the whole, but this time around she has at them with a will. It was all going well until, well, you have to read this book to believe it folks — to tell you any more would be to tell you the punchline before you hear the joke. Tepper usually does far better than this. I'm very disappointed indeed.

### Harry Turtledove – *The Great War: Breakthroughs* Reviewed by Mark Plummer

"Might-have-beens was a stupid game, when you came down to it. Looking back on things, you couldn't help but see they'd come out the way they had to come out."

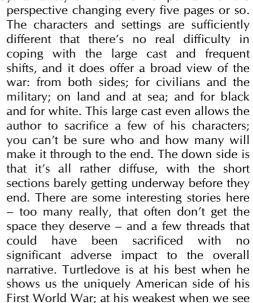
Ionathan Moss, an American pilot, is reluctant to speculate about the First World War and how things might have been otherwise. But the war in which Moss fights is one where the protagonists that face each other across the wastes of No-Man's Land are all American, where the armies are entrenched along the Roanoake rather than the Somme, and where the battles rage through Virginia and Tennessee rather than Flanders. This world, where another civil war between the USA and CSA breaks out in 1914, was set up in How Few Remain and developed in the two previous 'Great War books': American Front and Walk in Hell. Now it's 1917 and the war has bogged down in the trenches, just like the Western Front in Europe, with both sides seeking the elusive 'breakthrough'. The progressive Union commanders see the

future in the new "barrels" – or "tanks" as the CSA call them, in common with the British allies – although they're still constrained by the conservative policies of the War Department. Meanwhile, the Confederacy is running low on manpower and resources, and is even forced to recruit black soldiers to fight in the front line. And how will events in

Europe impact on this American Front?

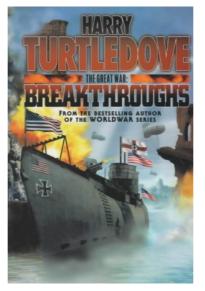
Like previous volumes in this and other series, Harry Turtledove employs a variety of narrative viewpoints with the

Hodder and Stoughton, 2001, 486pp, £17.99, ISBN 0-340-71549-9



the 'real' war in Europe with different accents.

Interestingly for something that claims to be the third volume of a tetralogy, there does seem to be a degree of closure in a number of respects. The fourth volume offers intriguing possibilities for a fascinating alternative history premise.



## Leonard F. Wheater – *Kubrick's 2001: A Triple Allegory* Reviewed by Gary S Dalkin

Scarecrow Press Inc., 2000, 181pp, hb £30.99 ISBN 0-8108-3796-X

Somewhere in the annals of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, there is a sketch in which an extraordinarily enthusiastic and pretentious critic, played by John Cleese in full manic flow, finds staggering levels of meaning in the work of an obsessive

trainspotter. The sketch is memorable not just because it is hilarious, but because it so accurately punctures the absurdities of much modern critical thought. *Kubrick's 2001: A Triple Allegory* inevitably brings to mind that fabulous skit.

Leonard F Wheater is not a professional academic theorist, but a respected, now retired, economist and environmentalist with a PhD from Harvard. He is associate editor of the *Journal of Regional Science*. His thesis is that the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), rather than being vague and open to numerous interpretations, contains three highly specific allegories. The first, an allegory of Homer's *The Odyssey*. The second, an allegory of an idea, what he perceives as Arthur C Clarke's "man-machine symbiosis". The third, an allegory of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

It's no secret from the title that 2001: A Space Odyssey has some connection with Homer's Odyssey. Nor, given the clear theme of transcendence which runs through the film, combined with the use of Richard Strauss' tone poem, Also sprach Zarathustra – tone poem after Nietzsche, Op. 30 (1895-6) that there is a link to Nietzsche's most famous work. It is certain that many of the points Wheater makes are both ingenious and perceptive; and certainly if this book were part of a range such as the excellent Pocket Essentials, selling for £2.99, I would suggest everyone rush out and grab a copy if only to argue with the ideas presented. However, for a book priced at over £30, this leaves a lot to be desired.

Wheater makes such inadmissible mistakes as drawing on evidence from Clarke's novel written in parallel with the film to confirm to his own satisfaction things one just isn't able to draw from the finished film; yet when it suits his purpose he discounts Clarke entirely, implying every detail of the film was consciously created by Kubrick – hence the title. He suggests

that Clarke left all the allegorical elements out of his novel because he wasn't aware of them. If so, it leaves one to wonder just why Clarke was on the film at all, if everything really was Kubrick's work. It is rather more likely that Clarke did not consider such details essential to the book because they are accidental, incidental, or non-existent, read into the film by Wheater. The author fails to provide convincing reasons why Kubrick would go to such extraordinary lengths to bury three simultaneous allegories within the film, or even how such a thing could have been consciously possible. There is also an off-putting smugness over what Wheater sees as his revelation of the true meaning of the film, which he notes has been missed by thirty years of in-depth critical analysis. Finally, he fails to make his case by putting 'Kubrick's' allegories within the wider context of the director's body of work surely if he buried these monolith messages here, Kubrick did even more extraordinarily sophisticated things in his later films. Nor does Wheater have any interest in analysing the film within the context of Clarke's work. While I certainly agree with Wheater regarding the stature of 2001: A Space Odyssey, such passages as this can only recall *Monty Python*:

"...it is indeed plausible that HEYWOOD R. FLOYD encodes Helen as **HE**, wooden horse as **WOOD**, and Troy as **OY**... **Y** is Spanish for and. **R**,**F**, and **L**, in turn, are in **ReFL**ect. And **D** could stand for downfall, demise, death, doom or destruction, of which the first – downfall – best fits "the fall of Troy". When you put these pieces together, Heywood R. Floyd inflates to Helen and Wooden Horse Reflect Troy's Downfall."

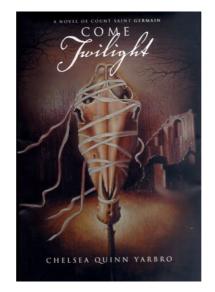
#### Chelsea Quinn Yarbro - Come Twilight

#### **Reviewed by Brian Stableford**

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's series of novels detailing the life and peculiar loves of the undead Count Saint-Germain began in 1978 with the publication of *Hotel Transylvania*, and will presumably continue for as long as there are lacunae in his four-and-a-half-millennia-long biography still to be filled. What began as flamboyant melodrama has gradually transformed itself into something far richer and uniquely strange: an intellectually serious and affectively powerful commentary on the entire sweep of human history, as seen from a viewpoint which has been educated by centuries of hardship not merely to superior wisdom but to scrupulous morality and – most effectively of all – to ardent compassion.

Earlier volumes of the series took care to involve its hero in

the evolution of interesting times: major turning points of history at which exceptional human individuals could be studied and evaluated. Over time, however, its author has become less interested in great crises, heroes and villains, and more interested in the broader movements of history and the lives of men and women typical of their times. The four parts of Come Twilight range from the seventh to the twelfth centuries, describing the four occasions when Saint-German had occasion to pass through a wild region of what is now north-eastern Spain. On the first of these journeys he is led by charity and necessity to make a vampire out of a woman named Csimenae without first subjecting her to the education normally required by other recruits to his bloodline. The unfortunate consequences of this well-meant error unfold over the next half-millennium, blighting the entire region.



Tor, October 2000, 479pp, \$27.95 ISBN 0-312-87330-1

At every return Saint-Germain tries to repair the ugly situation, but the quest is hopeless; in immortalising Csimenae he has immortalised her faults. In the meantime, the history of the Iberian peninsula extends from the dying remnants of the Visigothic Empire through the Moorish conquest to the resurgence of Christendom, reflecting in its own patchwork fashion a heart-rendingly similar tragedy of relentless vanity, cruel opportunism, cynical hypocrisy and imbecilic inflexibility: an evil pattern which no one man, however exceptional, could ever have contrived to interrupt.

Without Saint-Germain to observe them, adapt to them and contrive what small ameliorations he can, the events of *Come Twilight* could hardly be seen as anything but a chronicle of

despair, but Saint-Germain is always present to remind us of what hindsight has taught us: that individual and social progress is not merely possible but defiantly resistant to annihilation. In earlier volumes of the series the vampire count has played the saviour to rare but worthy individuals, but he has never come so close before in his resemblance to the Saviour, graciously bearing the brunt of other men's sins while patiently and politely endeavouring to guide the damned towards the light. He achieves little, but he does not fail; the failure is humankind's, and it is not absolute. Painfully slow it may be, but the movement is towards the light. As the guietest element of the series to date, Come Twilight is perhaps also the most magisterial, the most exact and the most effective.



These are some of the other books we have seen recently. A mention here does not necessarily preclude a review in a later issue of Vector.

#### **IG** Ballard - The Voices of Time

Phoenix, 2001, 197pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-575-40130-3

#### JG Ballard - The Terminal Beach

Phoenix, 2001, 221pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-575-40131-1 Two reissues of classic Ballard collections. *The Voices of Time*, taking its title from the lead story in which a scientist inscribes a complicated series of patterns in the floor of an empty swimming pool, was originally published in somewhat different form as *The Four Dimensional Nightmare* (1963). This follows the revised Gollancz edition (1974), with two stories, 'Prima Belladonna' and' Studio5, the Stars' replaced with 'The Overloaded Man' and 'Thirteen to Centaurus'. Other stories include 'The Sound-Sweep', 'The Garden of Time', 'The Watch-Towers' and 'Chronopolis'.

The Terminal Beach (1964, UK – apparently not to be confused with a US edition, Terminal Beach (1964), which contains only two stories in common) includes 12 stories, from the frozen, entropic landcape of the title story, to the surreal humour of 'The Drowned Giant' and the Oedipal fantasy of 'The Gioconda of the Twilight Noon'.

#### Chris Bunch - The Empire Stone

Orbit, 2001, 359pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-84149-033-4 The tale of Pierrol, dwarf, thief and jeweller, on a quest to gain possession of the fabulous gem of the title (reputed to bring untold wealth and power to its owner) is "for the most part engagingly written and inventive", thought Vikki Lee, reviewing this in V211, although rather let down by a laboured running joke throughout about the supposed sexual prowess of dwarves.

#### Lord Dunsany - The King of Elfland's Daughter

Millennium, 2001, 240pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-85798-790-X How the lord of Erl sent his eldest son, Alveric, to the Land of Faery to win the hand of Lirazel, the King of Elfland's daughter, and why inviting the rule of magic to a kingdom is a mixed blessing, is the fifteenth in Millennium's 'Fantasy Masterworks' series. Dunsany writes "like... a poet who got drunk on the prose of the King James Bible, and has yet to become sober", writes Neil Gaiman in his introduction. And the choice of cover is equally exquisite, a detail from Waterhouse's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*.

#### David Farland - Wizardborn 🕮

Earthlight, 2001, 424pp, £10.00 ISBN 0-684-86061-9 Third volume of Farland's 'The Runelords' series, which opened with *The Sum of All Men* (reviewed by John Oram in V200). The young king, Gaborn Val Orden, has lost the powers that allow him to protect his people against the inhuman reavers, and must put his trust in a nine year old girl, the Wizardborn apprentice Averan. Meanwhile, Raj Ahten, the Wolf Lord, finds he must strip himself of all humanity to confront and defeat the reavers in his homeland.

#### **Guy Gavriel Kay - Lord of Emperors**

Earthlight, 2001, 531pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-7434-0825-X The second book in 'The Sarantine Mosaic' and sequel to Sailing to Sarantium. Crispin the mosaicist has reached the fabled city of Sarantium to complete his commission for the Emperor, but finds himself drawn into a complex web of intrigue, politics and preparations for war. "Kay at his very very best" wrote Vikki Lee, reviewing this in hardback in V212. "The Sarantine Mosaic [is] an example of fantasy that will stand the test of time... I recommend you read and savour just how fantasy should be done."

#### Stephen Lawhead - The Black Rood

Voyager, 2001, 518pp, £5.99 ISBN 0-00-648322-4

#### Stephen Lawhead - The Mystic Rose 🕮

Voyager, 2001, 435pp, £17.99 ISBN 0-00-224667-8 The second and third volumes of Lawhead's 'The Celtic Crusades'. *The Black Rood* was reviewed by Cherith Baldry in V212, and is republished in paperback to coincide with the release of the concluding volume, *The Mystic Rose*, which we hope to review shortly.

#### John Meaney - Paradox

Bantam, 2001, 540pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-553-50589-0 Shortlisted for the BSFA Award, and previously reviewed by Jon Wallace in V213. Tom Corcorigan witnesses the killing of a fleeing woman by a militia squad, a woman who the day before had presented him with a small gift. That gift takes Tom on a journey from the bottom to top levels of the highly stratified society of Nulaperion, from the marketplace to the ruling Logic Lords and Oracles who maintain a despotic status quo through their ability to truecast the future.

#### Linda Nagata - Vast

Millennium, 2001, 359pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-85798-745-4 A vast semi-organic spaceship, the Null Boundary, millennia-old, flees an unmanned Chenzeme battle courser. Aboard are four survivors of the Chenzeme's destruction of the human settlement of Deception Well. One is an electronic ghost, purging his memories every 90 seconds. Another carries the charismata of a cult virus, a Chenzeme weapon against humanity, but which allows him to communicate with the colony of semi-aware Chenzeme philosopher cells seeded on the Null Boundary's hull. To escape or defeat the Chenzeme, to fool the courser that has dogged their course for the past 15 years, they have to become Chenzeme. But how far can they take that and still retain their humanity? Reviewed in hardback by Rob Hayler in V212, and now released in paperback: "In many important ways, a triumph."

#### Geoff Ryman – Lust 🕮

Flamingo (HarperCollins), 2001, 400pp, £9.99 ISBN 0-00-225987-7 Fantasy, sf, mainstream? I'm not sure. Michael Blasco discovers he has the ability to call up copies of people, either those he knows, or figures from the past. A little

experimentation confirms that while they seem real enough at the time, after he sends them away no-one else remembers them and that anything they do is immediately undone. And that the only thing they have in common is that he must be sexually attracted to them. Picasso is overwhelming, Alexander the Great a reeking, terrified barbarian, Lawrence of Arabia is completely barking and Billie Holliday pities him. But gradually Michael begins to worry about the morality of what he is doing, and where his "Angels" go to when he dismisses

them.

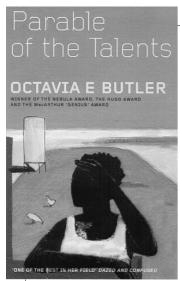
#### **HG** Wells - The First Men in the Moon

Millennium, 2001, 196pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-85798-746-2 A second outing for Wells in Millennium's 'SF Masterworks' series (this is No. 38). This edition, 100 years after its first publication, carries an intoduction by Arthur C Clarke, and an (uncredited) postscript essay 'HG Wells and his Critics'.

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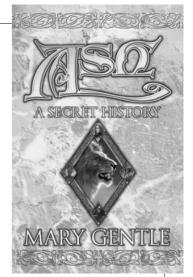
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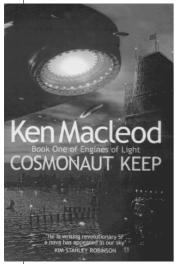
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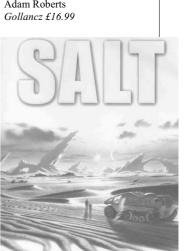
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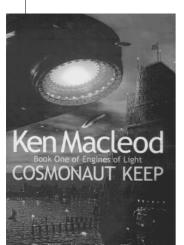
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