

Nov/Dec 2001 £2.50

3 220

The Critical Journal of the BSFA

EDITORIAL TEAM

- PRODUCTION AND GENERAL EDITING: Tony Cullen – 16 Weaver's Way, Camden, London NW1 0XE EMail: tony.cullen@dfee.gov.uk
- FEATURES, EDITORIAL AND LETTERS: Andrew M. Butler c/o Department of Arts and Media, D28 ASSH Faculty, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, High Wycombe HP11 2JZ. EMail: ambutler@enterprise.net
- BOOK REVIEWS: Steve Jeffery – 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon, OX5 2XA EMail: peverel@aol.com
- Associate Editor: Tanya Brown – Flat 8, Century House, Armoury Rd, London, SE8 4LH EMail: amaranth@avnet.co.uk

Vector 2 THE CRITICAL JOURNAL OF THE BSFA 2 2 2 2 0

Contents

- 3 The View from the Hugos editorial by Andrew M. Butler

letters to Vector

- 4 Inside Lovecraft's Mind

 Mark Greener on The Importance of Lovecraft's Style
- 6 Simian Similarities?

Colin Odell and Mitch Le Blanc on Planet of the Apes

8 Close to Midnight

Gary Wilkinson on Watchmen and the Magic of Alan Moore

13 Gods and Foreheads

Sandy Auden interviews Neil Gaiman

20 First Impressions

book reviews edited by Steve Jeffery

COVER & PAGE 14: Neil Gaiman, photographed by Sandy Auden

VECTOR

Published by the BSFA © 2001. ISSN - 0505 0448

All opinions are those of the individual contributors and should not necessarily be taken as the views of the editors or the BSFA.

The British Science Fiction Association Ltd.

Limited by guarantee. Company No. 921500. Registered Address: 1 Long Row Close, Everdon, Daventry NN11 3BE The BSFA is a non-profitmaking organisation, staffed entirely by unpaid volunteers.

BSFA Membership

UK RESIDENTS: £21 or £14 (unwaged) per year. Please enquire, or see the BSFA web page for overseas rates.

RENEWALS AND NEW MEMBERS – PAUL BILLINGER, 1 LONG ROW CLOSE, EVERDON, DAVENTRY, NORTHANTS NN11 3BE EMAIL: PAUL@EVERDON.ENTERPRISE-PLC.COM

USA ENQUIRIES – Cy Chauvin, 14248 Wilfred Street, Detroit, MI 48213 USA

PRINTED BY:

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

Surrey CR0 6JE

- LONDON MEETING COORDINATOR Paul Hood, 112 Meadowside, Eltham, London SE9 6BB EMail: paul@auden.demon.co.uk
- WEBMISTRESS Tanya Brown, Flat 8, Century House, Armoury Rd, London, SE8 4LH EMail: amaranth@avnet.co.uk

Other BSFA Publications

FOCUS – Simon Morden, 13 Egremont Drive, Sheriff Hill, Gateshead, NE9 5SE Email: focus.editor@cableinet.co.uk

MATRIX EDITORS – Gary Wilkinson (General and Film & Media), Email: gary_wilkinson@yahoo.com Janet Barron (Books), 3 Ullswater Road, Barnes, London SW13 9PL Email: ullswater@compuserve.com Martin Sketchley (Internet): Email: msketchley@blueyonder.co.uk Glenda Pringle (Magazines), 22 Mead Way, Kidlington, Oxon, OX5 2BJ Email: chris@kidlington66.freeserve.co.uk

BSFA WEB PAGE: http://www.bsfa.co.uk/

ORBITER WEB PAGE: http://www.orbiter.freeserve.co.uk/

BSFA Officials

- TREASURER Elizabeth Billinger, 1 Long Row Close, Everdon, Daventry, Northants NN11 3BE EMail: billinger@enterprise.net
- MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Paul Billinger, 1 Long Row Close, Everdon, Daventry, Northants NN11 3BE EMail: billinger@enterprise.net
- Publications Manager
 Vethy Taylor Eddeil
- Kathy Taylor EMail: peverel@aol.com
- ORBITERS Carol Ann Kerry-Green, 278 Victoria Avenue, Hull, HU5 3DZ Email:

metaphor@metaphor.karoo.co.uk

- AWARDS Tanya Brown, Flat 8, Century House, Armoury Rd, London, SE8 4LH EMail: amaranth@avnet.co.uk
- Publicity/Promotions Claire Brialey, 26 Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7HA EMail: cb@fishlifter.demon.co.uk AND Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Road, Croydon,

Editorial • Editorial • Editorial • Editorial • Editorial • Editorial • Editorial

The View from the Hugos

here's a sense, which we've been trumpeting for a couple of years now, that we are in a boom time for British science fiction. In the last eighteen months or so we've had a couple of novels which have been respected by gratifying large audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, and both seem to be making inroads Down Under in Australia. *Ash* and *Perdido Street Station* seem to be sweeping all before them.

Miéville is a recent addition to the ranks of published British writers, joining MacLeod, Meaney, Robson, Grimwood, Arden, Reynolds, Levy and others of recent vintage who I've no doubt forgotten, but Mary Gentle is of an earlier generation, as it were, who began publishing in the 1970s and broke through in the 1980s. That whole generation of 1980s and early 1990s writers is still with us, of course – Colin Greenland (who was the first British person to win the Arthur C. Clarke Award), Peter F. Hamilton, Stephen Baxter, Gwyneth Jones/Ann Halam (who have both had new novels out this year), lain M. Banks and again, no doubt, many others. Martin Millar, for so long a cult writer of dirty surrealist novels, produced a couple of pseudonymous fantasies and suddenly wins an award. What is going on?

For something *is* going on. Whatever the final result, award shortlists give a useful snapshot of the zeitgeist – the six very different novels which end up on, say, the Arthur C. Clarke Award shortlist through the passion, taste, and even horse-trading of the jury show that contemporary literary sf/fantasy is flourishing. And that something is also impacting upon genre science fiction, or on scientifiction perhaps, that strain of sf which was coalesced by Hugo Gernsback in the second half of the 1920s, and further shaped by John W. Campbell from the 1930s onward.

Take a look at the Hugo shortlist: Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber*, Ken MacLeod's *The Sky Road*, George R.R. Martin's *A Storm of Swords*, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, and Robert J. Sawyer's *Calculating God*. Two Canadian residents, two Brits and the sole US shortlistee is down for a work of fantasy. Compare this to last year when the list had novels by Greg Bear (who went on to win the Nebula), Lois McMaster Bujold, Neal Stephenson, Vernor Vinge (the winner), and J.K. Rowling. 1999 saw Mary Doria Russell, Robert J. Sawyer, Bruce Sterling, Connie Willis and Robert Charles Wilson on the shortlist (with Willis winning). So previous years have seen one, maybe two, non-USans on the shortlist; and this year there were four.

And in the rest of the categories there was a strong British presence: Dave/David Langford for short story and fan writer, Stephen Baxter for novelette and short story, Jim Burns for artist, *Chicken Run* for dramatic presentation (although this could be counted as American given DreamWorks finances), *Interzone* for semiprozine, Sue Mason for fan writer and *Plokta* for fanzine. Oh, and of course *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature*, a collection of essays on a writer who until recently was unchallenged in the field of British fantasy – but more of that later.

It was a year dominated by fantasy – if not in terms of overall numerical superiority, then at least with a surprising proportion of nominations for what is a science fiction award. Whatever the merits of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, they aren't science fictional. Nor does *Chicken Run* make any attempt to explain the intelligence of the chickens (genetic engineering?). The two otherwise successful British novels already mentioned are missing from the shortlist – one because Americans clearly don't pay that much attention to British editions, the other presumably because it was split into four. Both defy the generic purity of science fiction – or fantasy or horror for that matter. (The Hugo eligibility rules do currently allow an extra year of eligibility for non-US works, with *Perdido Street Station* being mentioned as a case in point.)

So your humble features editor was up for a Hugo, along with Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, possibly the first time a *Vector*

staff member has been so honoured whilst in the job. The news came in just after Eastercon, when I returned to find an email from the Hugo committee asking that I phone them the previous day, something impossible even given the time difference. I sent a curious email, and learnt that *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature* had been nominated for Best Related Book if we wished to accept the nomination. I sent a provisional acceptance and double-checked that my co-editors would agree; after literally seconds of anguished soul-searching and debate, they did. And so we were on the shortlist and sworn to secrecy. Believe me, a month is a long time in secrecy.

We had actually considered going to the Millennium Philcon anyway, where the award ceremony was to be, as Farah is a fan of Philadelphia. And since none of us anticipate being nominated a second time (but please surprise us...) the opportunity seemed to be, well, once in a lifetime. We added Paul and Elizabeth Billinger to the list of attendees, for moral support in the likely event of our lack of triumph. I had the added complication of having been counting down to a return trip to Australia in July/August and had already committed to going to the SFRA conference in May; having flown abroad three times in my whole life, I was to do it as many times again in a period of less than six months. (Remind me not to do this again.)

A recitation of What I Did On My Holidays would be tedious, so cut straight to the pre-Hugo reception, and a core sample of the Science Fiction Foundation and BSFA committee are suddenly rubbing shoulders with the great and the good. Tip: If you find yourself in this situation, take a hip flask. For eminently sensible reasons the event was dry, but boy did I need a drink. So over there's Pat Cadigan, and there's Sue Mason, and then there's Jo Walton, up for a Campbell-not-a-Hugo, and somewhere must have been Steve Baxter. Unusual company.

And then the ceremony itself, and alas the Brits did not meet up to the promise we had shown, although David Langford rightly won two awards. Best-related book went to Bob Eggleton's volume, and since he'd already won Best Artist, it does seem a little unfair. Indeed the runner-up James Gifford issued a statement that he would be challenging the decision of the judges since he'd won the first three rounds of the voting. *TP:GoL* came a lowly fourth, but had garnered most nominations. A moral victory.

Best Novel was almost an anti-climax: would it be MacLeod the libertarian's year? Would Hopkinson's clear support swing the day? Would Sawyer sweep all before him? Or would the single US citizen take the rocket ship? In fact J.K. Rowling won, although it's not even clear that she even knows she was nominated in the first place; certainly the person accepting the award had no authorial message. The VIP audience at the front of the hall was noticeably quiet in terms of applause, and the backlash was almost immediate.

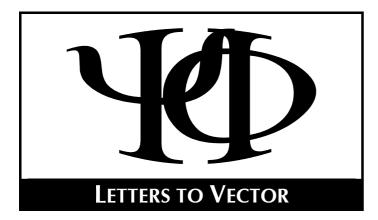
Is it because it is a children's novel? Or because it's a fantasy (which would have taken our Pratchett book out of the running)? Or is it because it's so popular – and therefore can't be any good?

Of course it coincides with that other boom in fiction, British YA fiction, and the works of Pullman, Halam, David Almond and others, all of whom are busting genre categories as much as their 'adult' colleagues. Rowling, it has to be said, is the only British author to win the Hugo for Best Novel aside from John Brunner and Arthur C. Clarke, but presumably it will have no impact on her career trajectory, if it is even acknowledged.

So the British are *still* coming, but from this one Sunday night it seems that not everyone is happy to have us. Keep watching the shortlists.

The Hugo-nominated Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature edited by Andrew M Butler, Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn is still available from the Science Fiction Foundation, 22 Addington Road, Reading RG1 5PT, UK, price £10 or US \$16 plus £1 or \$4 postage and packing; please make sterling cheques payable to "The Science Fiction Foundation" and dollar checks to "Edward James". All proceeds go to the Science Fiction Foundation and the Orangutan Foundation.

by Andrew M Butler Autumn 2001, High Wycombe



From Syd Foster, via email:

I happen to work at Waterstone's, and recent changes to the way the company runs itself have meant that we will be unable in future to keep on the shelf any book which hasn't sold for more than three months on average. The reason I bring this fact to your attention is that I have been frustrated to see that some of the best sf of the last few months has not been selling a single copy over several months, let alone the three copies we need to have sold since January, and so some of the only real sf authors at work today will no longer be stocked on our shelves.

Adam Roberts' Salt, for instance, has not sold a single copy, and nor had Linda Nagata's Vast until I read it and realised what a fantastic hard sf novel that really is, and started begging everyone I saw hanging around the sf section to buy it. There is a huge base of non-thinking Dr Who fans who just

buy every book regardless of reviews, ditto *Star Was* (excuse me, should that have read '*Wars*'?). and Asimov's bloated oeuvre of Foundation bollocks blocks off lots of shelf space too, and that's not mentioning the fat fantasies, but at least they don't claim to be sf! It's a constant struggle to get real sf into the shop, and keep it there. I know you can get your books cheaper from Amazon through the BSFA's own website, but if people don't get out into the shops and buy the real stuff, there simply will be none on the shelves for new readers to discover in the old-fashioned browsing way.

From Iain Emsley, via email:

There is a series called A Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snickett that Egmont are publishing over here. The first two volumes (*The Bad Beginning* and *The Reptile Room*) have been published here at £5.99 each. The series follows the trials and tribulations of the Baudelaire children, after the death of their parents as their distant relative, Count Olaf, tries to get hold of their fortune. Needless to say, things do not go well for them. The tone of the books reminds me of Gorey, especially the *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*.

It originated in the US, where I believe all thirteen volumes have now been published.

Definitely worth reading as the third volume comes out in September.

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.

Inside Lovecraft's Mind: The Importance of Style by Mark Greener

A COUPLE OF ISSUES AGO SCOTT MERRIFIELD LOOKED AT THE WORKS OF ROBERT E HOWARD, A DABBLER IN THE CTHULU MYTHOS AS WELL AS CREATOR OF CONAN. NOW MARK GREENER LOOKS AT CTHULU'S ONLIE BEGETTER, H P LOVECRAFT

hen I first read Lovecraft, I couldn't really understand his popularity. I couldn't even understand why I, a jaded dark-fantasy fan, found Lovecraft profoundly disturbing – and still do. After all, his prose breaks just about every stylistic rule for good writing. Indeed, some people even find his prose unreadable.

However, I believe that Lovecraft's prose style is a critical element in his enduring appeal. By breaking stylistic rules, by challenging our preconceptions of narrative form, Lovecraft creates a sense of displacement, distance and disorientation in the reader. This allows us to share his character's neurosis, inducing a deep sense of unease. In this way, he parallels some attempts by avant-garde artists to *share* an experience rather than communicate information *through* an artwork.

Certainly, even the most ardent Lovecraft supporter must accept that he can be difficult to read – even obscure – in places. *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (published 1941), Lovecraft's only novel, offers perhaps the best example. After all, you can get away with linguistic murder in a short story, and the reader is more willing to follow writers' experiments. A novel – even a relatively short novel – is a different proposition.

The opening of The Case of Charles Dexter Ward is

hardly punchy. In the second sentence, of fifty-one words, Ward's father watches his son's "aberration grow from a mere eccentricity to a dark mania involving both a possibility of murderous tendencies and a peculiar change in the apparent contents of his mind" (p. 5). Today, a sentence like that would never get past the subeditor. Indeed, many sentences in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* are long, rambling and complex. Sometimes *very* long, rambling and complex. And it's not a stylistic device confined to his novel: his short stories use the same tone.

Indeed, in many places, Lovecraft's prose, if not purple, is at least mauve. "...the slanting sunlight touches the Market House and ancient hill roofs and belfries with gold, and throws magic around the dreaming wharves where Providence Indiamen used to ride at anchor. After a long look he would grow almost dizzy with a poet's love for the sight..." (p. 12). Lovecraft's almost-purple prose is, perhaps, most apparent in the descriptions of horror. "A wailing ... protracted ululantly in rising and falling paroxysms. At times it became almost articulate, though no auditor could trace any definite words ... then a yell of utter, ultimate fright and stark madness wrenched from scores of human throats" (p. 41).

However, by this stage, you're so engrossed that the

prose style works. You almost feel the "utter, ultimate fright" and wonder if you're surrounded by "stark madness". In other words, you begin to share and experience rather than just read about the madness. And I believe it's this difference, which we'll return to later and is consistent with aesthetic theory, that makes Lovecraft such a powerful writer.

Lovecraft breaks many other rules loved by creative writing teachers. For instance, he often ignores the principle of 'showing, not telling'. There's little speech, which serves to further alienate the reader from the conventional rules of storytelling. There are few sympathetic characters. Lovecraft's worlds are dominated by the mad or obsessed. However, for me, Lovecraft's description of mad and obsessed mental states is unsurpassed in fantastic fiction.

Certainly, part of Lovecraft's attraction is the fascination of watching a neurosis work itself out on page. As Michael Moorcock comments in Wizardry and Wild Romance (1987): "... Lovecraft's unstable childhood might have turned anyone peculiar ..." (p. 74).

That much is undoubtedly true. However, I'm never convinced by psychological arguments suggesting Lovecraft's - or any other artist's difficult upbringing forged geniuses. As psychiatrist Anthony Storr points out in The Dynamics of Creation, childhood conflict can contribute to creativity, but "this is not the whole story" (p. 295). Creative people aren't actually neurotic - although they may show the symptoms. Rather, creative people have a strong ego (unlike the weak ego of the neurotic), Storr argues, and have a means to organize

and integrate their divided selves. Thus, though creativity they avoid the "displacement, denial, repression and other mechanisms of defence" common among neurotics (p. 282-

Certainly, too many people with as tough or tougher backgrounds are far from being creative, as a quick look around the streets of our major cities or prisons soon shows. Nevertheless, a difficult childhood might influence the expression of the intrinsic creativity. Or to paraphrase Lovecraft "...they do not form its absolute nucleus, they play a prominent part in its superficial form" (p. 7).

However, many writers and artists explore their neuroses. So why do Lovecraft's neuroses strike such a powerful chord? Why are they so deeply unsettling? As I've begun to suggest, I believe that part of the explanation lies in his prose style. Whether by serendipity or design, Lovecraft's prose creates a sense of alienation from the mundane world. The steady drip of prose that differs radically from that in the creative writing textbooks induces displacement, distance and disorientation. As a result, you begin to share rather than read about the neurosis.

Moorcock traces a legacy from the gothic novels to Lovecraft and the other Weird Tales writers (p. 46). However, gothic prose doesn't have to be obscure - Kim Wilkins's neogothic novel The Resurrectionists (2000) is the epitome of good fiction writing. And, of course, the pulps are, rightly, often praised for the clarity of their writing.

But not Lovecraft. Clark Ashton Smith is, perhaps, Lovecraft's closest stylistic contemporary. Smith's prose is, however, considerably crisper. Moorcock contrasts Smith's "intelligence" and "genuine love of language" to Lovecraft's "obsessive aggression" and "neurotic drone". Smith's tone "makes him readable [for Moorcock] where Lovecraft is not" (p. 76).

Smith's writing is unjustifiably ignored and is certainly more accessible than Lovecraft's style. But to me the form of Lovecraft's prose, especially as it accumulates over the course of a novella or a long short story such as "The Dunwich Horror" (1929) or "The Whisperer in the Darkness" (1931), induces a shared experience. (In other words it's more than just reading a story.) The cumulative effect of the writing style creates alienation that allows you to share Lovecraft's interior world. He makes few concessions for the reader: which is presumably why he can engage in this shared experience with some readers and not others.

The approach is similar, but less obvious, than William S. Burroughs' famous cut-up technique (and might explain why Lovecraft is almost as unfilmable as Burroughs). It's

> similar to the use of discordant music - by some modern classical composers as well as the extreme death metal bands - to create a sense of unease. And it's similar to many of modern arts attempts to force a re-evaluation of the objects around us and our sensibilities by challenging conventional form.

> Against this background, in a paper published recently in the British Journal of Aesthetics, Saam [sic] Trivedi, a philosopher at Simmons College in

ponders the nature of modern arts engagement with the punters. He asks why so many "appropriately backgrounded" people find avant-garde art "arid or baffling" - even when, as in the case of composer Schoenberg's serial techniques, for example – the approach aimed to improve communication with the audience.

Trivedi proposes a framework that stratifies styles of artistic communication into four categories. The first category contains artworks that communicate messages, especially moral, political or social. Secondly, there are the artworks that communicate mental states: emotion, feeling and mood. The third category encompasses two subcategories. In the first, the art form communicates information about the world, human condition or human nature. Examples of this sub-category include realistic portraits, King Lear, etc. The second sub-category communicates self-referential information about the art form's "meaning, structure and content". So piece of music might use certain themes and musical forms to "exemplify sonata form".

The final form involves communication with the artist through a shared experience. This contrasts with the other forms that use the artwork to communicate or transmit something. Trivedi describes this as a hope to "commune or communicate with the artist [his italics] via sharing with him a correct experiential understanding of the work". He adds that this correct understanding can be shared with other members of the audience. So if I find a modern

Lovecraft's

unstable

have turned

sculpture doesn't communicate with me, I really mean that I don't understand the work and, therefore, what the artist was trying to 'say'. In other words, I can't engage with the sculptor through "a shared, experiential understanding of the artwork".

Of course, these categories overlap. *ET* (1982) or *The Terminator* (1984) effectively communicate emotion, but you don't enter a shared relationship with the creators. In contrast, Lovecraft also commutates a mental state, but as I've argued, I believe the disorientation and distance from narrative norms means you *share* and *experience* his neurosis. It's a different approach to, attains a similar effect to, but is some ways more powerful than the stream of consciousness style of Virginia Woolf or James Joyce. Reading Lovecraft's fiction you share and experience the same virtual mental space as his "self-involved neurotics" (Moorcock p.117) rather than reading *about* them.

Whether Lovecraft developed his prose style deliberately or whether it came naturally, it's sometimes difficult to read and I doubt if it would survive subediting today. Indeed, I doubt if a modern Lovecraft would manage

to escape from the slush pile of a mainstream publisher – and of course even during his lifetime Lovecraft wasn't widely published. Today, Lovecraft would be, if he could get published at all, an avant-garde writer. But his unique prose style allows communication through a shared experience and might explain why so few writers induce the same sense of deep unease that Lovecraft's best stories seem to manage.

Editions Used:

Lovecraft, H P, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward (London: Panther, 1973).

Moorcock, Michael, Wizardry and Wild Romance (London: VGSF, 1988).

Storr, Anthony, *The Dynamics of Creation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).

Trivedi, Saam. "An epistemic dilemma for actual intentionalism." British Journal of Aesthetics 2001;41:192-206

© Mark Greener 2001.

The science fiction event movie of the summer – before, and indeed after, *John Carpenter's Ghosts of Mars* goes belly-up and Spielberg's *A.I.* – is yet another remake. This time it's of a film that spawned sequels, and prequels, and a television series. The original movie is thirty-three years old – but if you don't know the twist ending of the original or remake, and don't want to know it (although the original appears in a comedy movie due for release in November) then look away now...

Simian Similarities? by Colin Odell and Mitch Le Blanc

WARNING: This article contains major spoilers for the book and both films.

he recent hype surrounding Tim Burton's "re-imagining" of The Planet of the Apes has revived interest in both the original film and Pierre Boulle's novel La Planete des Singes (1963; translated by Xan Fielding 1963 and in 1964 in the UK given the less-than-auspicious title Monkey Planet). The original Planet of the Apes was released in 1968. and directed by Franklin J. Schaffner. Although ostensibly employing the same plot, each film (ignoring subsequent entries in the first franchise and the plethora of spin-offs) takes different elements from the book and applies it according to the outlook of the time it was made. It is interesting to note which themes from the novel come to the fore and also what the filmmakers chose to leave out. Indeed the closest you could get to the source would be to splice the two films together and superimpose Mark Wahlberg onto Charlton Heston's face. Or vice versa. The choice is yours.

One aspect of the book that is ignored by both films is the bookending tale that sees the discovery of Ulysse Merou's notes about his discoveries and adventures. These notes are found, romantically, in a bottle drifting through the cosmos by lovers Jinn and Phyllis, who cruise around in a solar powered interstellar craft. At the book's close, and marking a second twist ending, the story is discarded as preposterous and fanciful as it is revealed that this pair are apes. This plot device is wisely dropped in both films as any attempts to shoot a further twist would have been done in such a way that the suspicion of the viewer would be instantly aroused – it is a ploy that works best in an entirely literary context.

Perhaps the most important aspect of each story lies in where the action actually takes place. The most oft-remembered facet of the original film is the conclusion that sees a weary Charlton Heston, having just won his freedom to roam with sexy savage Nova, discover the remains of the Statue of Liberty half buried in the sand. At once he realises that the "bloody fools" – his ancestors – have allowed the apes to dominate, and this is what gives the film its impact. He has not travelled in space but merely in time; effectively never leaving Earth at all.

In contrast both the book and Burton's version have their hero transported far off into space, to land on alien soil. This relieves the audience (as humans) of their collective responsibility as a species. In Burton's film an accident within an ill-defined electromagnetic storm "kinda-thing" leads to Captain Davidson landing on a distant planet, while Boulle has his protagonists (like the original film there are more than one, although Boulle doesn't include the gratuitous blonde who turns into a shrivelled corpse) actively seek a planet similar to ours. Interestingly they choose the Betelgeuse system, Betelgeuse being the name, of course, of Burton's hyperactive bio-exorcist in Beetlejuice (1988). In the novel the hero discovers a doll at an archaeological dig, which means that humans were once the rulers of the planet - a scene played out in Schaffner's film. Realising that the human inhabitants were responsible for their evolutionary decline, he starts the journey home with his new human family, across the stars and back to an Earth that he left, due to relativistic differences, hundreds of years previously. When he arrives he is delighted to see that the symbol of his home, the Eiffel Tower (Eiffel was also the designer of the Statue of Liberty), is still standing proud over the Paris skyline. And then he realises that the reception committee that greets him is entirely simian in nature; Earth has succumbed to the same fate as its distant cousin.

Burton's film similarly sees a return to Earth but this time our hero faces the Lincoln memorial only to discover that the features are those of his ape archrival Thade and that Washington is now in ape hands. It is alleged that up to five different endings were filmed in order to throw off internet speculation and gauge which was the most appropriate, but in the end they just plumped for the one that had been written down nearly forty years before.

Both film versions - the former for budgetary reasons, the latter presumably for aesthetic and budgetary reasons - depart quite substantially from the book when it comes to the depiction of the technology available to the apes. The apes are fairly primitive in their attire and the level of technology they possess. They are characterised by their costumes which comprise sectarian robes or leather armour - tribal codification. The military apes in the first film version wield nothing more sophisticated than rifles - in the breathtaking introduction to their dominance we are shown the systematic rounding-up, hunting and slaughtering of terrified human tribes. It is actually the film's best scene and

normally overshadowed by the ending. In the aftermath, the proud hunters take pictures of themselves posing by mounds of human corpses, just as the American pioneers did to buffalos and the Indians.

However Burton's apes are denied even this level of destruction – the solitary gun in the possession of Thade's dying father (ironically played by NRA stalwart Charlton Heston) is a reminder of the destructive streak in humankind. Burton's apes may well have a highly disciplined army but in some sense you wonder what it's there for; there seems no need for war and, until the arrival of the outsider, there is no serious implication of a human threat.

In contrast the book sees ape society as technologically on a par with our own, the apes are (depending on status) exquisitely tailored, follow fashion and are part of a 'civilised' society. This is used primarily as a satirical device, with which Boulle holds a mirror up to our own society. The lack of technology in the films dilutes the satire that makes the book work so well as a plea for humanity. By portraying the apes as primitive we become removed from them, and can identify with the humans rather than despise their snivelling subservience. Obviously some elements remain, but the technological gap between humans and apes decreases with each subsequent film (even in the sequels to the first one) so that by Burton's version the ape dominance seems to be as much down to luck as it does to evolution. Burton prefers not to have his apes perform human tasks to mimic them, but to exceed them; his guitarists are more dextrous and his card sharks better cheats than their human counterparts. But while some elements of Boulle remain (the human dancing to the barrel organ for example) these are included purely for humour value rather than conveying any social commentary.

Schaffner's film has higher aspirations by using its apes to portray America's guilt at its treatment of its indigenous

population, the rise in anti-racism protests and the involvement of the US in the Vietnam war. It is about as liberal as a Hollywood blockbuster gets and, coupled with the downbeat ending, would be unlikely to be given the go-ahead in today's anodyne marketplace – certainly as a PG-rated "family" movie. Unfortunately, with the exception of the opening, it is these politics, together with Heston's earnestly stone-faced performance, that have dated the film rather than the effects. Indeed the only aspect of the apes themselves that seems dated is a direct comparison with the astonishing work by Rick Baker on Burton's film. By all other standards they are exemplary examples of the make-up art at its best (and highly deserving of the special Oscar that was awarded to it – make-up as a separate category was still over a decade away).

Despite expectations for inter-species sex it is plain that such an encounter was unlikely.

Another decision in the recent release is the dropping of the apes' caste system as well as integrating other forms of simian into the narrative. Boulle and Schaffner divide the apes into three distinct species which denote their respective roles in society; gorillas are hunters and warriors, orang-utans are the political and administrative personnel who lack original thought, while the chimpanzees are the creators and scientists, inquisitive and artistic. Naturally our hero sides with the chimps because the other species are products of mechanical indoctrination self-interest or regardless of consequence. Indeed it is the chimpanzees who recognise his ability to communicate and think:

heresy to ape doctrine. The chimpanzees are even willing to risk their own futures in order for the truth to be known in the name of science. This group identification helps the audience/reader quickly assess essentially alien social situations, provides political/social allegory and prevents matters getting bogged-down in over-explanation.

In Burton's world there is no caste system (although there is still a hierarchical power structure) to separate the various breeds. We are meant to identify with this multi-species society and relate it to our own - apes can be good, bad or indifferent regardless of their background, they are individuals. However it is worth noting that once again it is the daughter of a senator (like the President's daughter in Mars Attacks! [1996]) who has the foresight to recognise the stranger's intellect and campaigns for human rights. Quite how Ari manages to spot the otherworldly "sparkle" in Mark Wahlberg is anyone's guess, maybe it's the clothes, because he is not alone in being able to speak - all the other humans have this ability. The only thing that marks him out is that he does not buy into human servility and actively rebels against it. Whatever the native humans' hatred of their ape masters may be, they don't bother to do anything about it until they are shown the way by an extra-terrestrial, who they follow just as blindly as they do the apes. Will they never learn? Give it twenty years after the good Captain returns home and the apes will be back in power once more.

Key to much of Tim Burton's oeuvre lies in his adoption of that B-movie staple, the mad scientist (think *Frankenweenie*, the Inventor in *Edward Scissorhands* [1990], Alfred in *Batman* [1989], Vincent, the Martians, Ichabod Crane etc.) which allows him the opportunity to do grotesque things (witness the creatures in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* [1993]) and introduce surreal imagery in a genre-acceptable way. Not so *Planet of the Apes* which hardly skims the surface and remains

this film's most puzzling omission. Boulle's novel introduces us to several experiments on the caged humans and Ulysse's relationship with the sympathetic scientist chimpanzee Zira is key to his escape and subsequent discovery of ape culture. It is through his ability to talk that he finally convinces Zira of his intelligence and he even spends some time trying to master elements of the ape language. He also discovers that vivisection is being performed on humans to ascertain the level of their ability to communicate, indeed some are even lobotomised. Shocked, he realises that these are no different to the experiments humans perform on apes back on Earth. While the original film necessarily tones down these elements, they still provide a central core to the story, but in Burton's film they are surprisingly lacking.

The question of sex is again toned down in the original film, but the book deals with it on many levels. The party's first encounter with humans involves the naked Nova who they try to coax like a pretty animal. Later Ulysse spends many nights sleeping with her and is even forced into sexual intercourse with her, in order to provide his ape scientist captors with information on the mating habits of humans, hence justifying his worth as a subject. This is all implied in Schaffner's version but the book goes further and even touches on the concept of ape/human sex, an arrangement that the hero seems to be willing to try in order to show his gratitude for his ape saviour and deepest friend. But all is curtailed when Zira admits that "It's a shame, but I can't, I can't. You really are too unattractive"! The prospects for Ari and Capt. Davidson to get it on in Tim Burton's version really seem likely, but are swiftly brushed aside in favour of the more 'audience friendly' sight of Marky Mark snogging a Canadian synchronised swimmer. Cop out. Despite expectations for inter-species sex it is plain (12/PG-13 rating notwithstanding) that such an encounter was unlikely. Burton only seems to film sex for comedic value and in very small doses – the Martian windscreen-wipered voyeurs in *Mars Attacks!* and the brief intrusion on two apes in kinky foreplay as Ari leads the human captives out of the ape city are the only examples that spring to mind.

All three versions of *Planet of the Apes* discussed here offer much for the observer/reader to enjoy but perhaps surprisingly Tim Burton's version is the weakest on all bar some technical levels, dropping any political subtext of its predecessors in favour of safe box-office returns. It should be pointed out that the original film was a blockbuster of its day and in no way the B-movie that some modern commentators have designated it, in order to tie in with Burton's famous love of the B-movie aesthetic. It is surprising that Schaffner's film, such an overtly political movie, could come out of a major studio – ironically it is lower budget B-movies that generally offer social subtext because big studios won't take on the financial risk. Ultimately the book is more universally philosophical than either film version (if Burton's film even has a philosophy!) and still reads well as a product not just of its time, but beyond it too.

© Colin Odell and Mitch Le Blanc 2001

Colin Odell and Mitch Le Blanc are two of the most prolific writers around, having produced Pocket Essentials on David Lynch, Jackie Chan, Vampire Movies, Horror Movies, John Carpenter and Tim Burton. They've quite recovered from editing Matrix but possibly are still scarred by appearing in the Coventry Evening Telegraph.

ALAN MOORE IS ONE OF OUR LEADING SF WRITERS — WITHIN THE GENRE OF COMICS. GARY WILKINSON EXAMINES HIS MOST FAMOUS TITLE, AND LOOKS AHEAD TO A MOVIE VERSION OF ONE OF HIS WORKS.

Close to Midnight: Watchmen and the Magic of Alan Moore by Gary Wilkinson

"The War and Peace of comic books"

Terry Gilliam on Watchmen

Close-up of a red splattered yellow smiley badge. Zoom out. The badge lies in a red river – blood flowing in the gutter¹ of a New York street. Caption: "Rorschach's Journal October 12th 1985: Dog carcass in alley this morning, tire tread on burst stomach. This city is afraid of me. I have seen its true face."

And so begins Watchmen.

For a brief period of time, during the mid-eighties, it was not only perfectly acceptable to be seen reading a graphic novel on public transport but actually quite trendy. Works such as Frank Miller's Batman: The Dark Knight Returns and Bryan Talbot's The Adventures of Luther Arkwright were at the forefront of this boom in comics targeted at a more adult audience. But leading them all was Watchmen, the first graphic novel to win a Hugo (in the 'Other Forms' category, although its subsequent omission from lists of Hugos calls the award's status into question). The comic

was so influential that its version of the classic smiley became the badge of choice on many a lapel. Why? Because *Watchmen* told a gripping story using brilliant characters, was packed full of social commentary revolving around power and control, plus, and crucially, it also examined and deconstructed its own genre.

Watchmen was illustrated by Dave Gibbons (best known for 2000AD's Rogue Trooper and DC's Green Lantern) from a script written by Alan Moore. Moore was born in 1953 in Northampton and he has lived there ever since. The son of a brewery worker, he was brought up in complete poverty. He was expelled from a conservative secondary school (allegedly for dealing LSD), was not accepted anywhere else, and so gained no formal qualifications whatsoever. In 1971, unemployed, he began publishing the magazine Embryo with some friends. Eight years later, he was working as a cartoonist for the weekly music magazine Sounds, producing a detective story Roscoe Moscow under the pseudonym Curt Vile. However, eventually Moore concluded that he was a poor artist and decided to focus his efforts on script-writing for comics

instead. He contributed to Doctor Who Weekly and, like many of his contemporary British comic writers and artists such as Dave Gibbons, to 2000 A.D. Moore created many notable strips there, including The Ballad of Halo Jones, SKIZZ and D.R. & Quinch. He went on to work for Warrior, where he started Marvelman and the exceptional V for Vendetta for which he won the British Eagle Awards for Best Comics Writer in both 1982 and 1983. This brought him to the attention of America and Moore wrote a number of stories for DC. He revitalised The Saga of the Swamp Thing, breaking new ground by adding extra depth and maturity to the series, creating plots involving gun control, racism and environmentalism. In 1985 Moore submitted a proposal involving characters from Charlton, a defunct comic company that DC had bought out. When this fell through, Moore modified his proposal, creating new characters based on the Charlton originals, for a new twelve-part stand-alone comic series to be called Watchmen. The story would go on to achieve its real fame when it was collected as a graphic novel in 1987.

Watchmen is set in a contemporary alternative universe. The world is on the brink of nuclear annihilation. America

won the Vietnam war, there was no Watergate (Woodward and Bernstein were found dead in a parking garage) and Nixon is still president, having changed the law to enable him to serve more than two consecutive terms. But the main change in this world is that superheroes exist. In the story's present they are now onto their second generation but most have been outlawed, except for a couple of officially sanctioned government operatives.

At first glance the plot is simple.³

One of the 'watchmen' is murdered. Soon other heroes (and an old villain) are put out of the game. A 'mask-killer' is on the loose: who is he and why is he doing it? But *Watchmen* is much more than that, because within that basic plot, Moore has added layer after layer of complexity to create a true epic. The story covers three weeks in October 1985 but flashes back to cover over forty years of history.

In *Watchmen* Moore asked the question 'what would the world *really* be like if there actually were superheroes?' The usual treatment is to consider the world as being essentially unchanged by their presence, the heroes themselves eternal and static – like the characters in any TV series which has no long-term story arcs. Heroes do not age and they do not, often, die – even when they do it is almost always transient, as in the 'death' of Superman. They never really change the world, their endless conflicts are ultimately as meaningless as the clashes of the musclebound clowns of the World Wrestling Federation. This offered the reader of comics the same comforts as the watcher of soap-operas.

But Watchmen rejected that. Here superheroes are presented as real beings, and their presence has produced a world that has diverged greatly from ours. The blue-skinned Dr Manhattan, a former nuclear physicist who was transformed after being trapped in a misfiring experiment, is America's walking nuclear deterrent – the weapon that

enabled them to win the Vietnam War. He has complete control over molecular structures enabling him to do almost anything from teleportation, to synthesising elements like lithium, to actually seeing fundamental particles like gluinos. His very existence, along with such 'brains' as Ozymandias, has led to a massively increased advancement of science allowing, for instance, electric cars to become the norm and the creation of flamboyant architecture – the geodesic domes shown in every cityscape shot. However this does not mean all of humanity's problems are over and the downsides are political and military uncertainties caused by the presence of the superheroes.

Unlike most comic characters, then and now, those of *Watchmen*, like people in real life, are not clear-cut heroes and villains. Even though superheroes, these are real fully-rounded people – they even go to the toilet. However Moore does realise that superhero characters do tend to fall into clear archetypes. He acknowledges this, then twists them, playing with the reader's expectations. For instance, the character murdered at the beginning of *Watchmen* is The Comedian, a retired 'super-soldier' who was employed by the government. However, we soon learn, via

flashbacks, that instead of being a hero in the Captain America mould, the Comedian was a completely amoral, vicious thug and sadistic killer. Gibbons has said The Comedian's name and character were inspired by Graham Greene's novel *The Comedians* – the title refers to the *tontons macoutes*, the death squads run by the Haitian dictator Jean-Claude 'Papa Doc' Duvalier. Gibbons had a lot of input into the appearance of *Watchmen's* characters and came up with the

...the Comedian was a completely amoral, vicious thug...

idea of the smiley as The Comedian's – and hence Watchmen's – symbol.

I came up with this image of a sort of a very muscular Groucho Marx. Because there seemed to be something about Groucho Marx that made me think of people like G. Gordon Liddy. You know, with moustaches that make a man look kind of interesting. So, I ended up with this fearsome looking figure dressed in black leather. Kind of like a Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD, but kind of a super patriot incarnate, Arnold Schwarzenegger kind of character. How could we offset this? I know, give him one of those smiley face badges.⁴

Dr Manhattan comes from a long line of superheroes, such as Superman, with immense and varied powers. However, unlike Superman, who is always in touch with his own and everyone else's 'humanity', Dr Manhattan is so powerful, so different from those around him – not least becomes he lives in the past, present and future simultaneously, like Billy Pilgrim from Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* – that eventually he seems scarcely 'human' in any sense. He certainly has no Clark Kent aspect. Episode IV, which showcases Dr Manhattan, is Moore's personal favourite issue of the series and it is obvious that this character is one of the main keys for unlocking *Watchmen*.

If Dr Manhattan is Superman then Batman is represented in Watchmen by two different characters. The

second Nite Owl is a dilettante whose riches have allowed him to construct a number of gadgets. Costumed, he was a true hero – but when he was forced to retire he became weak, flabby and literally impotent. His ex-partner was Rorschach, the representative of the darker aspects of Batman. Rorschach is arguably the most interesting, and strangely most likeable, character in *Watchmen*. His name derives from the Rorschach ink-blot test, a psychiatric tool used for detecting psychosis. The test consists of abstract symmetrical ink-blot patterns which the test subject is asked to interpret. And Rorschach *is* psychotic. As Moore said in a recent television programme:

I think the most popular character in comics was the Wolverine character from the X-Men, who was a selfconfessed violent psychopath. And I thought ah, they really, really like the totally psychopathic vigilante character. You know, those driven, revenge-obsessed Batman figures - these creatures of the night. And I thought it would be kind of interesting to show what it would be like psychopathically to be that sort of person. You would be the next best thing to a serial killer. Nothing would interest you apart from your mission. You would be living in complete squalor. You would not have any friends. You would probably have a personal hygiene problem. You would have a horrible personality that would alienate everybody. You would just be obsessed with revenge and violence and punishing criminals."5

In the case of Rorschach this is totally true. An obvious influence is the character Travis Bickle, memorably portraved by Robert De Niro in Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*.

Compare this extract from Rorschach's diary, which directly follows the quote above: "The streets are extended gutters and the gutters are full of blood and when the drains finally scab over, all the vermin will drown" with Bickle's narration/diary: "All the animals come out at night... Some day a real rain'll come and wash all this scum off the streets." There is also a later scene where Rorschach's dejected walk through a red light district is very reminiscent of a similar scene in Taxi Driver, to the extent of copying De Niro's posture and background detail in a still from that scene that was used for the movie's poster.

Given that, why is Rorschach the most likeable character? Probably because he is such a straight arrow. Unlike all the other characters who are either two-faced, weak, or compromised (although some eventually achieve redemption), even "in the face of Armageddon" he will not compromise. He may be misguided⁶ but he will never retire from his fight against crime. Rorschach survived a terrible childhood and there is evidence that deep down he does really care; there are times when he shows compassion to the deserving. He also has a very dry sense of humour.

For Watchmen Moore also produced interesting, fully-rounded female superheroes. The second Silk Spectre is a woman who is bitter about her mother denying her a

normal childhood by training her up as her replacement. Confined to a nursing home, the original Silk Spectre is vicariously attempting to continue an adventurous life through her daughter's exploits. She is also rather proud of the 'cheesecake' image she had in her youth, something her daughter hates.

Much of the action of *Watchmen* takes place around one particular, but average, New York street intersection. Here, in contrast to his 'super' characters, Moore presents us with a variety of normal people, in particular a newsagent and a youth who hangs around his newsstand, both coincidentally called Bernie. During *Watchmen*, most of the other characters pass by them. The youth reads a pirate comic, *The Tales of the Black Freighter*, which forms the comic within a comic which Moore uses to reflect and refract the main plot.

This is another area where *Watchmen* goes from the ordinary into the extraordinary. In certain scenes Moore checkerboards the page – panels alternate between the actual *Black Freighter* comic and the real world that surrounds the comic reader Bernie at the time he is reading (or at other times they alternate between flash-back and present). The dialogue and other captions from each narrative stream overlap and comment on each other. As Moore himself says:

What it comes down to in comics is that you have complete control of both the verbal track and the image track, which you don't have in any other medium, including film. So a lot of effects are possible which simply can't be achieved anywhere else. You control the words and the pictures – and more importantly – you control the interplay between those

two elements in a way which not even film can achieve. There's a sort of 'underlanguage' at work there, that is neither the 'visuals' nor the 'verbals,' but a unique effect caused by a combination of the two.

A picture can be set against text ironically, or it can be used to support the text, or it can be completely disjointed from the text - which forces the reader into looking at the scene in a new way. You can do this to some extent in film, in terms of striking interesting juxtapositions between the imagery and what the intent of the characters may be, but you cannot do it anywhere near as precisely as you can in comics. Here the reader has the ability to stop and linger over one

particular 'frame' and work out all of the meaning in that frame or panel, as opposed to having it flash by you at twenty-four frames per second in a cinema.⁷

In addition to using the pirate comic to comment on the immediate events of *Watchmen,* Moore also uses it to comment on the whole work. In fact you have to look here to decipher and, using a couple of clues elsewhere, extrapolate the – possible – 'real' ending of *Watchmen* that will occur beyond the last page.

Each chapter of *Watchmen* ends with a post-modern inclusion of an extract from an inventive text, such as the first Nite Owl's autobiography, which allows Moore to create extra levels of depth to his characterisation and adds to the impression that *Watchmen* takes place in a complete,

... they really, really like the totally psychopathic

vigilante

character...

real world.

Comics are, of course, both words and pictures and Watchmen is stuffed full with visual symbolism. The most obvious is its own version of the 'smiley'. This is the hippie badge mired in the blood of violence as the idealism of the sixties had been soured by the cynicism of the seventies and eighties - free-thinking socialist anarchy mutating into the nightmare of yuppie eighties Reaganomics. The smiley reappears many times, sometimes disguised and sometimes represented by just the 'splatter' shape. It is also reminiscent of another reoccurring symbol: the clock-face, time approaching midnight. Each episode, apart from the first and last, begins with this symbol. The time starts at eleven minutes to and advances by one minute per episode. As the time gets closer to midnight, an ominous red stain descends. The obvious interpretation is the clock from the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists which used the time as a current estimate of the chance of a nuclear war. Midnight represents Armageddon. The closest is has been in our world was two minutes to midnight after the USSR exploded their first hydrogen bomb.

A subtle touch regarding nuclear war is the appearance of references to Fat Man and Little Boy, the two atom bombs that help end World War II. The crucial event that leads up to the transfiguration of Dr Manhattan is a 'fat man' smashing his girlfriend's watch. We first see the fat man in the same panel as a 'little boy'. And as Rorschach takes his walk through the red-light district he passes a porno show featuring 'Enola Gay and the Little Boys.'

Another repeated visual theme is symmetry and broken

symmetry. For the most part the layout of the page is the multiple-symmetrical nine-panel grid which is then occasionally broken for effect. Symmetry is most obvious in chapter V, titled 'Fearful Symmetry'⁸, the true heart of the

... it's a kind of magic...

book, if not its literal centre, which is largely concerned with Rorschach – himself masked in an always changing but always symmetrical ink-blot mask and who uses a reflected 'R' as his signature. The whole chapter is symmetrical, both in layout and theme, arranged around a V shape. This refers back to *V* for *Vendetta* – whose eponymous hero renames himself 'V' after being imprisoned in 'Room Five' in the experimental block of a death camp.

Watchmen uses almost no 'whoosh' lines to show movement – Moore and Gibbons have other tricks for that – or sound effects. Gibbons also does an exceptional job in one of the often little-noticed aspect of comics: the lettering. Rorschach and Dr Manhattan have their own style of balloon indicating the peculiar qualities of their voices. The normal balloons used in the 'present-day' of Watchmen are polygons formed from 'hard-edged' line segments whilst those in the flashbacks are all curved, fluffy clouds, indicating a kinder, simpler, more gentle, more juvenile past.

Following *Watchmen's* success, Moore became a celebrity, mobbed at conventions. One story – possibly apocryphal, but by no means exaggerated – tells of Moore being followed into the toilets by star-struck fans. He hated all this attention and withdrew from comics fandom.

After Watchmen, Moore initiated many new projects

but most of these ideas have failed to be realised and many series remain unfinished. His most cherished proposition, the many-charactered, fractal-maths inspired, contemporary-set Big Numbers looked like a potential masterpiece but only two issues were produced. There were rumours that the FBI was chasing artist Bill Sienkiewicz and that he had fled into the night on seeing the script's terrifying difficulties.9 He has not worked in comics since. Moore eventually fell out with both DC and Marvel and recently set up his own comic company, ABC – America's Best Comics. Moore is now writing a large number of titles. The results have been mixed. Top Ten essentially Hill Street Blues in a precinct where everyone (and everything including the cats and mice) is a superhero - is good, but not up to Watchmen's standards. The League of Extraordinary Gentleman has an interesting idea - a 'super-team' made up of Victorian fictional characters including the Invisible Man, Jekyll/Hyde and Allan Quatermain, but the opening issues were let down by a slow plot. Other series feel ordinary - just another comic, not an Alan Moore comic. There is a feeling that possibly Moore is overproducing - the problem of many a comic writer. Moore actually refers to it in Watchmen - in a fictional end-of-episode article on the writer of his fictional pirate comic. And the reason for this prodigious output? Well, it's a kind of magic.

On his fortieth birthday in 1993 Moore declared himself a magician. Since then, like Blake, ¹⁰ William S. Burroughs and Clive Barker, he actively uses magic to facilitate his

work. He claims it gives him a "hack hyperdrive, where you can write five books a month... and you don't even get that tired".¹¹ Moore sees magic as a system to understand the 'cold mechanics' of an area beyond scientific reach, a 'landscape of the

imagination'. For a while, leading up to his conversion, he had been exploring a theory that the consciousness is a space – the 'ideaverse' where the raw materials of all creativity are located:

The question that everybody asks writers is: "where do you get your ideas from?" It seems like a banal question, but it's the only important question: where do ideas come from? For me, getting into magic was just a way of answering that...

First, there's nothing there, and then there's a vague unformed idea in the mind of the artist or writer. Then the idea takes on a little more form, and then, suddenly, it's a finished script or a finished drawing. Something has come into being out of nothing. It's the rabbit from the hat. That to me is the definition of magic. It covers a lot of other ground in that everything anyone has ever said about magic is true, it's a very rich landscape to explore and it certainly has an effect in some way or another on everything that I do. ¹²

When an idea is created, Moore claims – like Grant Morrison, writer of *The Invisibles* – it becomes real. As he says:

I read an interview with [cartoonist] Carol Lay recently where she mentioned that she had to take care not to draw anything too negative in her scripts because it would probably happen. Robert Crumb had agreed with her on this. He said that it's really a kind of mind over matter thing, you draw something and then it happens, which is why Crumb always draws his sex fantasies... You'll find yourself writing about events that haven't happened yet, and at the same time, you'll also find all kinds of eerie feedback between your text and life. When I started to notice that sort of stuff becoming predominant in my work, I realised I had a choice - I could either ignore it and assume that it is a product of my overtired perceptions, or I could explore it and see if there is anything interesting there... At the same time, I found that I couldn't progress any further with writing by strict rationality. If I wanted to go further with my writing, make it more intense, more powerful, make it say what I wanted it to say, I had to take a step beyond technique and rational ideas about writing, into something that was trans-rational if you will, this being magic.1

Not coincidentally, according to Moore, the gods of magic in many ancient pantheons are also the gods of writing. For early man writing or creating new ideas would be akin to magic - a connection that is still with us. For instance we still 'spell' out words.

Moore retains the awareness that this is a highly unconventional world-view:

I should imagine that, very reasonably, most of them would assume that all of this I've just spoken of is nothing more than the ramblings of a disintegrating mind, or that it's just some sort of glorified New Age way of talking about the work that I do¹⁴.

But Moore takes an essentially practical approach to his magic. Even if it only exists in his head, and as long as he remains "as creative and as functional as I was before I began my investigation and experimentation, then it's okay."15 To Moore's surprise, he has become even more productive since he began to experiment with magic: "Not I think that the standard of the work is better, necessarily...

It's about how

vulnerable we

make women,

and why.

It's a way of understanding your creativity."16

Ultimately, Moore wants to use his magic to work out the rules of the post-rational, postindustrial age he sees coming.

Something that points the way to this is From Hell, his most critically acclaimed work since Watchmen. This exploration of of the most notorious

unsolved crimes in history, the infamous 1888 Whitechapel murders by 'Jack the Ripper', was drawn by the Australian artist Eddie Campbell and took ten years to come out in serial form. From Hell was massively researched, as Moore's extensive footnotes testify. But this is more than just a scholarly journal. Moore humanises characters that have been caricatured into obscurity for decades; the murdered prostitutes become real people. As for the identity of Jack the Ripper himself, Moore points the finger at Sir William Gull, Queen Victoria's physician. The murders conceal a conspiracy that reaches to the highest level of society. Moore suggests that Prince Albert 'Eddy' Victor had fathered an illegitimate child, and when four Whitechapel prostitutes attempted to exploit this information, they were executed (the fifth victim was a case of mistaken identity).

Moore not only looks at the crimes themselves and the events around them with a forensic detail but also on their influence since, bringing in more recent notorious murderers, such as Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper, and Ian Brady and Myra Hindley. He also includes events as diverse as the birth of Hitler, Blake's visions and the advent of tabloid journalism in the contemporary reporting on the crime. John Merrick, The Elephant Man, also appears; his hospital sanctuary was a stone's throw away from the first murder.

Campbell's scratchy ink drawings evoke a dark and dirty Victorian London, where you can almost taste the soot. The East End is a literal hell-hole, overcrowded and crimeridden. The influence of Freemasonary, and hence Freemasonary-inspired magic, not just on the upper reaches of society but on the actual architecture - the literal substance of London – is also highlighted.

For one chapter, step-by-step, in a small, hellishly hot, room, Moore takes us through the murder and dissection of where the prostitutes drank.

That's what From Hell's about in the end - a pallid little Goth dancing for men down from the City, with

pictures of the victims on the walls. It's about how vulnerable we make women, and why. 17

Ironically, after a film version of Watchmen has languished development hell for many years – Terry Gilliam was attached at one time, though he now says it would be impossible to portray the depth and

breadth of the work outside of a mini-

series - we now have From Hell coming to our screens, starring Johnny Depp as Ripper-hunter Inspector Abberline and Nigel Hawthorne as Gull.

Although his output has varied, From Hell proves that Moore is still the genius of his field. As for Watchmen.

Mary Kelly – the Ripper's final atrocity. But our fascination with Jack the Ripper, Moore hypothesises, is a reflection of ourselves, and the society that we have become. Gull, in a fugue state that transports him to contemporary London, chastises us for allowing ourselves to become numb and soulless, whilst he engages in one of the most horrifying and bloody murder scenes ever. In an epilogue - Dance of the Gull Catchers - Moore looks at the history of investigations and inquiries into the Ripper and concludes we will never really know the truth. The 'Ripperologists' themselves are shown as an ever-growing mob of manic men carrying huge butterfly nets, and Moore himself eventually joins their ranks. Finally, as throughout, Moore turns the spotlight on the victims. On the last page he (and the reader) watches a stripper at the Whitechapel Pub

although the book ends where it began with a redsplattered smiley badge and Rorschach's diary, as indicated above, it is obvious that its true end is beyond the last page. And its influence has also extended long after its appearance. It did inspire a lot of rubbish - the worst excesses of the so called 'dark age' of comics, the age that let heroes kill. Watchmen was not really about violence, but it has been used to justify books that are, which is something Moore regrets. On the other hand, *Watchmen* also led to smarter comics and kick-started the 'British Invasion' that gave us the best work of Neil Gaiman, Grant Morrison, Garth Ennis and Warren Ellis. *Watchmen* proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that comics as a medium were capable of handling material, both in terms of subject and complexity, which was previously regarded as the exclusive domain of prose novels or cinema.

Watchmen is fifteen years old and the Cold War is over, though its brinkmanship threatens to return courtesy of President 'Dubya' Bush's anti-missile defence system plans. CCTV will soon be able to store the faces of 'enemies of the state', thus leading to mass arrests after protests. Fewer people are bothering to vote. The political status quo has become ever more reactionary. Watchmen's epitaph: Quis custodiet ipsos custodes – who watches the watchmen?¹⁸ is a question as relevant now, if not more so.

Finally, Moore's message is this: although he writes about superheroes, it is to ourselves that we should be looking for rescue. He wants more inspirational, truly heroic, heroes to motivate the young – Moore says that his strongest moral example in childhood wasn't his parents, "It was Superman." However, he also wants us to use our own potential, to become our own heroes. Although the presence of Dr Manhattan changes the world, adding lots of scientific marvels, it does not become an intrinsically 'better' place. *Watchmen* is as much a story of humanity saying it does not need superheroes as anything else. As Moore says:

One of the prettiest things Aleister Crowley ever said is "Every man and woman is a star." I believe that. In the human mind, the number of possible connections that can be made between neurones greatly exceeds the number of atoms in the universe. And most people watch *EastEnders*. I didn't start with any obvious genetic or financial benefits. I was not promising. I believe anybody could do this if they believed they could. We could be so much more potent than we are.²⁰

Notes

1. And already Moore is playing with us. The 'gutter' is also the technical term for the white space that separate a comic's panels from each other. As Scott Macleod says in *Understanding Comics*: "Here in the limbo of the gutter, human imagination takes two

separate images and transforms them into a single idea."

- 2. The majority of comics are written from a script similar in layout to a film script which describes the scene to drawn by the artist(s) and the dialogue to be added by the letterer. Moore scripts are *much* more detailed than the majority.
- 3. And derivative. Moore's acknowledges that *Watchmen*'s climax is an interpretation of 'The Architects of Fear,' an episode from the classic sf TV show *The Outer Limits*. Moore does, however, take the programme's main concept a lot further than the original did.
- 4. Quoted in *Watching the Detectives: An Internet Companion for Readers of Watchmen.* http://raven.ubalt.edu/staff/moulthrop/hypertexts/wm/
- 5. Channel 4's SF-UK
- 6. You cannot help thinking that if Moore was writing this today he would have Rorschach supporting 'Oklahoma Bomber' Timothy McVeigh.
- 7. Stanley Wiater and Stephen R. Bissette, Comic Book Rebels: Conversations with the Creators of the New Comics. New York: D.I. Fine, 1993.
- 8. Taken from Blake's "The Tyger".
- 9. Nick Hasted, Interview, "He does it with magic". *The Guardian* 1 lune 2000.
- 10. Blake is one of Moore's favourite artists. He contributed to the recent Tate retrospective on the artist, "Tygers of Wrath," at the Purcell Room.
- 11. Nick Hasted, interview, "He does it with magic". *The Guardian* 1 June 2000.
- 12. Matt Brady, interview, "Alan Moore, Practicing Magician". On the *AnotherUniverse* Website; also at http://www.nsacom.net/txt/Comics/Alan_Moore/Alan_Moore_interview_with_Another_Universe 100199.html
- 13. ditto
- 14. ditto
- 15. ditto
- 16. ditto
- 17. Nick Hasted, Interview, "He does it with magic". *The Guardian* 1 June 2000.
- 18. Juvenal, *Satires*, VI, 347. This, as indicated in *Watchmen*, was also used as the epigraph of the Tower Commission report in 1987 the investigation into the 'Arms to Iraq' arms-for-hostages scandal of the Reagan years.
- 19. Stanley Wiater and Stephen R Bissette, Comic Book Rebels.
- 20. Interview, He does it with magic. Nick Hasted The Guardian 1st June 2000.

© Gary Wilkinson 2001

Gary Wilkinson is the new editor of Matrix — Eds.

Gods and Foreheads: an email interview with Neil Gaiman by Sandy Auden

Step into a dangerous world. Sacrifice your sense of security and get ready to embrace unpredictability. There's a new Neil Gaiman novel on the shelves.

From the very beginning, Gaiman has delivered the unexpected, tinged with the deceptively familiar mythologies of our world. *American Gods* is no exception to the rule. The story was conceived nearly two years ago, when Gaiman wrote an outline for a new book and he admits, now, that he wasn't far out at the end. "I looked at the original outline after finishing *American Gods*," he started. "I always like to see at the end, how far I came

from the idea in the beginning. And while a lot of the particulars of the plot had changed, it was interesting to see how I finished it:

If Neverwhere was about the London underneath, this would be about the America between, and ontop-of, and around. It's an America with strange mythic depths. Ones that can hurt you. Or kill you. Or make you mad.

American Gods will be a big book, I hope. A sort of weird, sprawling picaresque epic, which starts out

relatively small and gets larger. Not horror, although I plan a few moments that are up there with

anything I did in *Sandman*, and not strictly fantasy either. I see it as a distorting mirror, really; a book of danger and secrets, of romance and magic.

It's about the soul of America, really. What people brought to America; what found them when they came; and the things that lie sleeping beneath it all.

"I think that that all remains pretty much true. Or at least, it seems to describe the book I ended up with."

American Gods tells the story of ex-con Shadow, who gets entangled in a war between the traditional Gods of mythology and the new Gods of TV and the Internet. His helper on his journey is his freshly dead wife. With such obvious genre overtones, it's unusual that the book has been placed in the category of Literature but Gaiman doesn't mind. "I think

that categorising it as Literature is probably a good thing. It certainly solves the problem of whether to try and

categorise it as fantasy, horror, thriller, murder mystery, ghost story, war story, short story collection, science fiction or travel writing – all of which, arguably, it is, and each of which would probably alienate a bunch of readers who don't think they like that sort of thing."

It wasn't his intention, at the outset, to write another Fantasy/Horror novel. "Mostly, I just set out to write a book about two people who meet on a plane, and what happens to them. Fantasy and Horror are metaphors, because sometimes we don't have the words to say things directly. There are things about America and about modern culture that it's much easier to talk about by concretising the metaphor. So it's a book with magic in, and with gods, and all of that. But it's also about stuff that's going on [today], just seen through fictional mirror. original plan was to write a

cool big book that contained a lot of things in its substance. And I think I may have done that."

But the birth of this "cool big book" was not as smooth

as Gaiman had hoped. "It took about a year more than I expected to write it. I figured it was a six months sort of a

book, but it kept growing. The final draft has come in at a hair over 190,000 words – which is about twice the length of *Neverwhere."*

And there were times when the future of the book was in serious doubt. "I finished the first draft in early October, and until January, I wasn't sure I'd ever crack the second draft. So I got on a plane and flew to a foreign country and holed up in an old house with barely any heating and no TV or, well, anything really. Then I just banged my head against it until, like an enormous, weird jigsaw puzzle, it all fell into place."

For Gaiman, writing seems to be a process where the glossy book cover hides a heart of anguish and turmoil, but he has his own reasons for carrying on.

"Somebody once said – and I think it was Raymond Chandler

who said it first, although lots of people have said it since: 'Writing is easy. You just stare at a piece of paper until your

forehead bleeds.'

"To non-writers, writing is the easiest profession in the world. They figure that the writing must be so easy, it's hardly worth mentioning. They come up to you at parties and say 'You're a writer – hey, I've got an *idea*. I'll tell you my idea, and you can write a book, and we'll split the money 50/50.'

"But nobody ever goes up to a builder and says 'I've got an idea for a house. I'll tell it to you, you build it, we'll split the money 50/50.'

"When it's just you and a blank sheet of paper and you don't know what happens next, it's the most depressing thing in the world. And when, five seconds ago you didn't know what happens next, and now you're writing away for dear life and it's something really cool, it's one of the most exhilarating things there can be.

"As for why I do it.... what makes you think I have a choice?"

© 2001 Sandy Auden.



It's about the soul

of America,

really. What

people brought to

America; what

found them when

they came; and

the things that lie

sleeping beneath

it all.

Sandy Auden writes for Starburst and The Alien Online at http://www.thealienonline.com – Eds.



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.

Poul Anderson – Mother of Kings

Reviewed by Andrew A. Adams

Tor, Sep 2001, 384 pp, \$27.95 ISBN 0-312-87448-0

Mother of Kings is closer to an historical novel than a fantasy. While there are fantastic elements, they are primarily minor magics performed by the main character, Gunnhild, the Mother of Kings of the title. This is very much her story, from her beginnings as the daughter of a minor lord, to her marriage to Eirik, son and successor of Harald Fairhair, the first King of all Norway. Eirik and his sons by Gunnhild gain and lose either all or parts of Norway a number of times throughout the book. While in exile from Norway their wanderings cover the Orkneys, York and Denmark, while Gunnhild's also include a foray into Finland to learn witch-ways from Finnish wizards. Her personal inner journey is as much about the struggle between Christianity and the Old Gods as it is about furthering the ambitions she holds for her husband and sons.

The book starts quite slowly and the style is rather stilted and stylised, much as the Norse Sagas upon which it is heavily based. The early years of Gunnhild and her personal magic are where the book diverges furthest from what is known of the period. Certainly many of the major characters are drawn from history (Harald Bluetooth, King of Denmark, and various kings of Wessex, Mercia and England are all well-documented historical figures). The quoted sources in the Afterword suggest that Anderson did a fair amount of research

before embarking on his fictionalised account.

As the book moves from the early life of Gunnhild to her period as Queen of Norway (in truth and so-named in exile), one becomes more used to the style, and some intense periods of action enliven the writing. This is even more apparent in the second half of the book where Gunnhild is Queen Mother (of an ever-shrinking band of Warrior Kings) of Norway, again in both truth and exile.

Anderson conveys well the position of women in such a culture: the dependence on guile and wit to hold power through their menfolk, the strictures society placed on them, and the strictures that could be circumscribed by one with sufficient power. The sense of Norse law, culture and savagery is also brought well to life. The importance of Skalds (poets who immortalise fame or infamy) is also highlighted through Anderson's use of epic poetry, though my knowledge is insufficient to say which, if any, of the epics contained in the book are historic poems and which Anderson may have created.

To a modern viewpoint, the characters are not that pleasant, being altogether too savage, ambitious, and with too little regard for life or a modern semblance of honour. Nevertheless, the story is compelling. While you do not necessarily identify with Gunnhild, it is a masterful piece of storytelling in bringing her in

particular, but also the other major characters, to life.

This is a fitting work for the end of a long and productive career. Poul Anderson pays direct tribute to his Scandinavian forebears by writing his own epic to celebrate his life and skill. May he rest in Heaven, drink long and heartily in Valhalla or rest quietly with the Earth spirits of the Finnmork – whichever he desired.

Ray Anthony – Empress

Ace, 2001, 412pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-9526287-1-6

Reviewed by Kathy Taylor

Empress is the first science fiction novel by the British author Ray Anthony. He has previously written *Interface*, a novel about interracial marriage, and the non-fiction work *Thinking Man's Guide* to *Pregnancy*, *Childbirth and Fatherhood*.

This book is one of the worst I've ever read. Only the fact I had to review it kept me reading it at all. It's not just mediocre; it's dreadful. The novel starts with a massive fourteen-page 'History' info-dump, which is also boring. It aims, I assume, to give a galactic sweep and long scale military background to the novel. Such a device has worked well in the classic Foundation series or, more recently, some of the Honor Harrington books. Now, I quite like some military sf, and even if I didn't agree with the philosophy all-too-obviously propounded in the overlong prelude, I was still willing the book to catch fire. It didn't.

The start of the novel proper introduces one of the three main protagonists in the novel, Morturina, who at the age of nine has just become Empress. This character started and remained achingly unconvincing and uninteresting. She accepts everything calmly and without curiosity, and the limit of any 'childish indiscretion' portrayed is a slight tendency to stare. And just because she is now Empress, she can, of course, study and understand imperial geopolitics etc. At every

point through the book she makes just the right decision, although there is some attempt at justification by the hodgepodge of science thrown in, such as the living brains she is linked to, and telepathic advisors. Cloning appears briefly but the ramifications – let alone the ethics – of having cloned 'sisters' who appear almost mindless are never considered.

The second main protagonist is the shadow Empress, her cousin Hial. Although still two-dimensional she is slightly more interesting than her cousin, if only for the Darth Vader moment during her interview with a traitor. However, she is really a villain to boo in the *Buck Rogers* tradition, rather than anything more interesting.

The third major protagonist is Kazii-Ra. At this point I have to be careful not to give away what little of a plot there is so I will say only that I found him unconvincing and his 'culture' unpleasant and improbable.

In summary the book has poor characterisation and limited plot. It is not a page-turner and the writing frequently drags. Someone out there may like it, the editor at Ace obviously saw something, but I honestly cannot recommend it in any way.

[Ace, PO Box 10289, London SW17 9ZF, www.acebooksonline.com]

Piers Anthony – *How Precious Was That While* Reviewed by Andy Sawyer

Tor, 2001, 352pp, \$25.95 ISBN 0-312-87464-2

Piers Anthony is a writer of emblematic, metaphysical metafictions. There, that probably stunned you. If you're like me, you haven't read any of his books for several years - it might be the result of discovering that the fourteenth Xanth novel simply recapitulates the plots of the previous thirteen and tells you what is to happen in the next, or it might be that titles like The Colour of Her Panties raised eyebrows at the office when you started reading it during tea-break. But simply because books are aimed at an audience of under-thirteens, and are about sex, doesn't make them any the less emblematic. And while, for most of its part, the Incarnations of Immortality series suffers from the coy sexuality, cartoon characterisation and lack of identification of place and people which mars much of his work, its final two volumes are, I think, most effective debates on metaphysic - while the series as a whole is a valuable examination of moral questions such as sin, good and evil, and the function of death for an audience which is rarely offered such fare except from a fundamentalist stance. Terry Pratchett does it much better, of course, as writing, humour and moral examination, but Piers Anthony did it first.

How Precious Was That While is the second autobiographical volume by Anthony (the first was Bio of an Ogre). In many ways, it is an extraordinary work of self-justification. For example, in the context of describing his fall-out with Harlan Ellison, Anthony writes "If I had to give advice to anyone who didn't know me about dealing with Piers Anthony, it would be 'Don't cross him, he'll destroy you.'" Presumably, he thinks this makes him sound tough: it sounds, instead, rather bad-tempered. Anthony takes the opportunity to vent his feelings on publishers who he feels have cheated him, there is splenetic spluttering about criticism (as Anthony quotes it, quite justified) from Damon Knight about one of

Anthony's stories at a Milford conference, and an inconsequential anecdote about a confusing letter from Sri Lanka which may or may not have come (but it seems, probably didn't) from Arthur C. Clarke.

All this is rather odd, but when Anthony isn't paying off old scores he is worth reading on both his own writing and the sf writing trade in general: for instance, his wry description of the trials of a writer struggling with his first novel is very funny. He's good on his relationship with his own fans. He certainly has something sympathetic in his fiction to which troubled young girls respond and one of the more attractive sides of his grumpishness is when it is directed at people in bookstores who have been rude to his readers. He publishes a number of poems from people who have responded to his persona (including a moving poem about loss by British writer Justina Robson), and while his agony-uncle approach to his fiction isn't to my taste it's clearly what has made him successful and rich. One cannot help cringe in embarrassment at the way he blusters at his enemies, but his psychological openness is fascinating and one has to admire his honesty.

Fans of Anthony will already be reading this book, while those alienated by his flaws will almost certainly not bother. This is probably a mistake. A figure who attracts as many readers as Anthony is one too easily dismissed. Early in the book, he mentions his latest project, which I have not come across: a huge historical series. It sounds interesting. Also interesting is a chapter on the association of songs with his fiction, which sheds light on the effective way song, especially folk-song, provides motifs to counterpoint his plots. And finally, his mixed relationships with his parents (his early childhood as the son of two people dedicating their lives to refugees in the Spanish Civil War sheds light on his later life

and perhaps offers a clue to his passion for "honour" and "justice") makes this a biography with a narrative focus on people and character. He does not convince, I think, about the

status of his novels as works of art, but he does about their moral seriousness and his ambition as a writer.

Greg Bear - The Forge of God

Tor, 2001 (first published 1987), 473pp, \$16.95 ISBN 0-765-30107-5

Reviewed by Chris Amies

This is a book about the end of the world. The cataclysm comes after mysterious artefacts, apparently part of the natural world but not quite good enough fakes to pass muster, appear in parts of Australia, Mongolia and the USA. A dying alien gives a message of impending doom.

The engine of destruction – possibly neutron/antineutron bombs at the Earth's core - gives the people of Earth time enough to realise that few if any will live to tell the tale; and the novel, whose parts are headed with lines from the Requiem Mass, is the story of some of those who will die, and some who will survive. (There's a counter-movement, as there is in these things; hardly any authors are rash enough to destroy humanity entirely while breaking up the planet.) The death of Earth is mirrored in the slow death of a man stricken with cancer, and much of the story is seen from the viewpoint of his friends as they come to terms with his death and their own. In the novel's large-scale set-piece near the end, an iconic piece of American landscape is torn apart, the part standing in for the whole of the world, but even there the abiding image is of people riding the collapsing landscape down. "I don't want that... panic, when it comes. I want to

know and sit and watch as much of it as I can. Maybe that's the best seat in the house." He pointed to the mottled rock face. "Up on top somewhere." (p. 373).

The characterisation, the building of personalities within the framework of the story, is what makes this novel stand out from others on a similar theme. Greg Bear has populated his world with believable characters, and the loss of each one of them is mapped out. His characters are tested in the furnace that gives the novel its name – the final test, what do you do if you know that you and all those around you are going to die, and even fighting is futile? And what if you know that you will survive but billions will not? Many of them rage against the dying of the light, as Dylan Thomas put it, but in the end the light dies anyway. "We've been sitting in our tree chirping like foolish birds for over a century now, wondering why no other birds answered. The galactic skies are full of hawks, that's why." (p. 315).

In the end this is a very optimistic story; like the pioneers who struck out across the wilderness, the navigators who set sail into unknown seas, mankind goes on, leaving the cradle even though unwillingly. What survives is the humanity.

Paul Brandon – Swim the Moon

Tor, 2001, 380pp, \$25.95 ISBN 0-312-87794-3

Reviewed by Cherith Baldry

Richard Brennan, the protagonist and narrator of this novel, is a Scottish folk fiddle player, who has left his home for

Australia as a way of escaping from the grief of his wife's death. The death of his father, some years later, forces him to return for the funeral; this begins a process in which Richard finally admits his deep sense of identification with his own land, and decides to return permanently. He makes his home in an isolated bothy which has belonged to his family for generations. Once there, he has to confront the strangeness which stretches back into the past and influences his life in the present day.

This is an intensely focused book, narrow in the sense that there are remarkably few characters, and few settings apart from the bothy and the surrounding landscape. At the same time, it doesn't feel thin or restrictive. There's a deep exploration of Richard's character and emotions. The mystery of the woman, Ailish, who becomes his obsession and his love, will probably not seem so

mysterious to the reader, but this doesn't matter. More important is the skilful development of how Richard comes to

understand the truth of his situation and his own nature, and how the two characters work out a destiny which is not under their control.

The writing is precise and very rich in its appeal to the senses; the characters and the remote Scottish landscape come over vividly. Another thread is the importance of music, both to Richard himself and as part of the quality of the book. The atmosphere deepens as the legend draws closer to everyday life and Richard's world becomes stranger. The ending is beautiful and inevitable.

The one thread which I felt didn't quite fit with the rest of the book is the story of Richard's dead wife. Her importance to him comes over powerfully; what isn't so successful is the way she somehow ceases to be important, and her death isn't knitted into the fabric of the story. But to comment on this is just to draw attention to how everything else comes together so superbly well.

The back cover includes praise from Charles de Lint, and a great deal of the book is reminiscent of de Lint, without being

Tor, 2001, 255pp, \$23.95 ISBN 0-312-85927-9

derivative. Anyone who enjoys de Lint's work is likely to enjoy this, as I did; I recommend it.



Steven Brust – *Issola*

Reviewed by Tanya Brown

Issola is the ninth volume, by publication date and by internal chronology, in Brust's Vlad Taltos sequence. Those familiar with the setting – Vlad is a human assassin, retired, in the elvish Dragaeran Empire – will find in this novel a welcome

return to the witty, mannered heroics of the earlier books in the series. Those who have but lately discovered Vlad Taltos and his friends and familiars may find *Issola* rather more opaque, though hopefully no less enjoyable.

17

The Taltos novels are each named for one of Dragaera's seventeen noble houses: the Issola are noted for "grace, elegance and manners", but also for the subtle strike. Vlad Taltos, living rough in the northern forest after the events of *Orca*, is tracked down by the impeccably-groomed Lady Teldra, the Issola chatelaine of his friend Morrolan's floating castle. This, it transpires, is no mere social visit, but a call to arms.

Morrolan and his cousin Aliera have been captured by the Jenoine, former planetary overlords more powerful than gods who are rumoured to have created the Dragaeran race. They are hated and feared by the few who know of their existence: even fewer realise that the ancient evil is still a threat. Vlad Taltos, with the sorcerous assistance of undead Sethra Lavode and the diplomatic skills of Lady Teldra, is determined to rescue his friends. As the quest commences, it rapidly becomes clear that his career as an assassin may not be over after all.

Vlad, returning to a broader social milieu after his time in the literal and figurative wilderness, begins to mellow, becoming less of the archetypal wise-guy loner. Perhaps it's the civilising effect of Lady Teldra's company: at any rate, the ice has begun to thaw, and Vlad is a more sympathetic character than he has been for several volumes. The novel's final, shocking conflict suggests interesting times ahead for the erstwhile assassin, and more epic themes than the Chandleresque intrigues of earlier novels.

In *Issola*, Brust reveals more about Dragaera than ever before. Apparent inconsistencies in the backstory are clarified, and obscure utterances assume new meaning. The imprisonment of Vlad's two friends is as plain a case of alien abduction as ever occurred in a fantasy novel. Fantasy? While the setting is certainly fantastical – sorcery, rivers of primordial chaos and the like, not to mention the elves – this is also a novel of alien invasion, grounded as much in genetic engineering and psychosocial experimentation as in legend, heroism and enchantment. What's recounted here as ancient history – including some fascinating insights on the role of the gods, and the truth behind the instinctive superiority of Dragaerans – would be the mythology of another, more magically-inclined world.

And, yes, Deverra makes a fleeting appearance.

Michael Cobley – Shadowkings

Earthlight, 2001, 372pp, £10.00 ISBN 0-7432-0717-3

Reviewed by Vikki Lee

Shadowkings, Book One of the Shadowkings trilogy, is a debut novel for young Scottish writer Michael Cobley.

It is sixteen years since the Khatrimantine Empire was defeated by the marauding Mogaun hordes, destroying Rootpower magic in the process. Ikarno Mazaret, commander

of the Knights of the Fathertree, will never accept this defeat and, despite the horrendous odds, continues to resist total Mogaun rule, aided by Suviel, a young Earthmother Mage, and Tauric, heir to the Imperial Throne. Not only do they have to find a way to defeat the Mogaun, they have to prevent the return of the Lord of Twilight, the Mogaun's evil deity – split asunder by Rootpower magic.

The Mogaun horde continues to rampage across the empire, and the various warlords vie for power amongst themselves as much as for power over the Khatrimantans. Byrnak, one of the warlords, is struggling alone with forces he doesn't understand. He is increasingly compelled to aid the return of the Lord of Twilight by becoming a Shadowking – a host for one of the five scattered souls of the Lord of

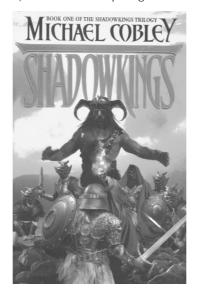
Twilight. Though reluctant at first, Byrnak's growing power in the horde and his vision of himself as leader of his deity's armies convince him of his destiny, though one that is not necessarily agreeable to all Mogaun.

This is indeed a complex plot-line which takes a little while to get into. The Khatrimantan thread is fairly straightforward: a young heir has to grow up and learn about the real world; a

mage seeks a magical object to help overthrow the invaders; and a knight in shining armour must plan the downfall of a conquering horde against mind-boggling odds. The Mogaun, on the other hand, are not just evil conquerors but pawns of a greater power, and the twists, turns and politics of this relationship are most intriguing. One actually cares about some of the Mogaun and what happens to them.

Cobley has written an engrossing tale which tries to inject something new into the 'conquered nation fights back' form of fantasy. He not only gets the reader on the good guys' side, but also on-side with many of the bad guys. I have to admit, at times I found it a little hard going as the full extent of the plot developed, but I felt rewarded for sticking with it by the unforeseen developments towards the end. I'd

recommend this to fantasy readers and look forward to the next book in the series.



Paul Cornell – Something More

Gollancz, 2001, 422pp, £10.99 ISBN 0-57507-203-2

Reviewed by Robert W. Hayler

Following an economic collapse, Britain is ruled by family dynasties. Representatives of some of these families are sent to Heartsease – a large country house which is unoccupied but strangely well-kept. The purpose of Heartsease, and its terrible importance, is revealed through a series of supernatural interventions. The big picture turns out to be very complex and mad indeed.

This book is farcical. The writing is pedestrian throughout: never terrible, yet never good enough to engage. The dialogue is poor and Cornell's editor should have pointed out that the overuse of the word "fuck" does not add realism or emphasis,

but becomes, rather, tiresome and unimaginative.

Also tiresome, unfortunately, are the only instances of the language coming alive. When called on to describe an act of violence, torture or death, no lip-smacking, salacious or exploitative detail is left out. This loving attention makes for depressing reading.

The plotting of the book ranges from barely credible to inept. For example, the reverse-time countdown through twenty years of birthdays that occupies (more or less) alternate chapters suggests genuine ambition. Unfortunately though, when the punch-line is revealed, it is of such teeth-grinding,

eye-rolling stupidity that the mojo-stealing sequence in the second Austin Powers movie actually makes more sense.

There is, however, one interesting character and one interesting idea in this book. The idea, lifted in part from Farmer's *Riverworld* sequence, is that once we die we wake inhabiting another, indestructible, body on one of two mysterious planets. On these planets a war is taking place and one army is actually led by a reincarnation of Jesus. Obviously, to avoid a swift descent into the ludicrous this needs to be handled either very delicately or very brazenly. Cornell does neither. He fluffs around it and misses his chance.

The interesting character is Booth Hawtrey, an Everyman

chosen seemingly at random to be rebuilt with an immortal alien physiology. His situation and personality are allowed a moral depth which is successfully handled. That's your lot, though.

It is, of course, possible to produce beautiful, engaging, meaningful pulp. Cornell hasn't even managed this. Instead he hedges his bets. Jokey chapter headings ("Thirteen: Ruth Does an Alice in the Maze", "Seventeen: Arrrgggggghhhhhhhhhh!") suggest we shouldn't take it too seriously, and yet the embarrassing ruminations we are treated to on love, memory, and identity are full of non-ironic high-minded pretensions. I recommend not wasting your time on this.

Greg Cox - Star Trek: The Eugenics Wars - The Rise and Fall of Khan Noonien Singh

Pocket Books, 2001, 404pp, £14.99 ISBN 0-673-02127-

Reviewed by Lesley Hatch

Khan Noonien Singh has long been one of my favourite characters, and one of the most memorable in the *Star Trek* universe, and it was with considerable pleasure that I started this novel.

There are two story-lines. In one, Captain James Kirk is required to evaluate a request from a group of colonists who wish to join the United Federation of Planets, which seems simple enough. However, the colonists in question are the result of genetic engineering, and thus their request needs careful consideration. Acting on advice from Spock, Kirk begins research into the events that led up to the Eugenics Wars, and thus his mission forms the backdrop to what, for me, is an exceptionally well-crafted story.

Khan's tale begins in 1974, when Gary Seven, agent for a group of highly advanced aliens, starts to investigate the disappearance of a number of Russian geneticists and biochemists. Seven's investigation leads to the discovery of the Chrysalis Base, home to the missing scientists, and his first meeting with Khan, who at this point is a child of

four. This is the beginning of a series of encounters between Khan and Seven, each taking place at unexpected times and in unusual places, and which neatly encapsulate Khan's development from child to adult

Back in real time, Kirk is experiencing some difficulty of his own in accomplishing his mission, given that the colonists have decided to invite the Klingons along as well, so they can evaluate the respective parties, and things do not go well, to say the least. Events in both story-lines culminate in something of a cliff-hanger for all involved.

Greg has done an excellent job of creating a history of one person from some very sketchy information. Khan is a character we can believe in and sympathise with, as a virtual superhuman in what is to him a mundane world. Equally intriguing is the dilemma facing Kirk and company which concludes this novel. I'll certainly look forward to the next volume in this series.

Raymond E. Feist & William Forstchen – Honoured Enemy Voyager, 2001, 323pp, £17.99, ISBN 0-00-224718-6 Reviewed by Vikki Lee

Writing with William Forstchen, Feist re-visits Midkemia in a new series called Legends of the Riftwar. Honoured Enemy is set around the time of the Riftwar and chronologically a few years after the gate between Midkemia and Kelewan has been firmly closed. Captain Dennis Hartraft is the leader of a band of Kingdom soldiers known as Hartraft's Marauders, and he finds himself regretting the loss of several men when a simple ambush of Tsurani warriors goes wrong and turns into a bloodbath. The ambush was exposed and triggered by a priest on the run from the Tsurani, and he joins Dennis's group until he can reach safety.

When the Marauders reach a frontier garrison, all is not as it appears. It has apparently been attacked by the Tsurani, but something isn't quite right, and Hartraft and his trusted aides can't put their finger on what it is. Close by, a Tsurani general is having a similar problem — his troops having been apparently ambushed by Kingdom soldiers. A trap to lure the two armies together turns out to be planned by a migrating army of the dreaded Moredhel, Dark Elves, and when they spring their trap, both armies are forced to flee, pursued by the Elven army. Following a confrontation on the run, a grudging truce is called and the two armies merge in retreat, whilst planning a way to defeat the Moredhel. The truce, of course, is

most uneasy, as both the Kingdom and Tsurani warriors simply want to 'have at each other' and settle things amongst themselves. There is still, however, the matter of the Moredhel army.

This is a welcome trip back for fans of Feist's writing, and one or two characters who survived the Riftwar are revived for this tale. The plot itself is quite simple, though there are one or two sub-plots that really add spice to the whole. In fact, the enmity between the two groups at times gets a little wearing, and one wishes they could just be given their head to beat the crap out of each other and be done with it (we know who will win anyway). The sub-plots, however, run in and out of the whole, and here lies the meat of the story. The priest is more than he seems, and the leader of the Moredhel has a certain score to settle with an Elven tracker in the Kingdom forces.

As with all of Feist's books, the writing style is instantly engaging and very... Feist! For fans unsure about the effect of Forstchen's involvement, worry not, it reads as if written only by Feist himself. It's a stand-alone story, and I can recommend it to readers who've not tried Feist before, as well as to his regular followers.

Jack Finney – Time and Again

Gollancz (Fantasy Masterworks #20), 2001 (orig. 1970), 399pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-575-07360-8

Reviewed by Claire Brialey

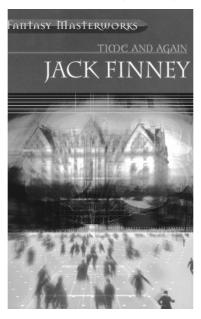
This is a welcome reprinting of a book that you really have to look at as well as read: an illustrated novel with pictures that are, in some ways, the main purpose of the story.

There are all sorts of reasons to like this novel: because it

takes you to an unfamiliar time and place which are therefore waiting to be discovered (no cheesy cameo roles for famous historical figures); because it makes the present real as well by detailing the time travel project that frames the main plot; and because it will make you want to go to New York. Unfortunately it made me want to go to New York in 1882. Jack Finney almost makes that seem possible, not only through the pictures but by making time travel potentially accessible to everyone; he completely ducks the issue of a time machine and allows his characters to do it all with hypnotism.

As a conventional love story, it's relatively unexciting; the present-day love interest is disposed of too conveniently, the one in the past isn't all that great, and the hero isn't especially sympathetic either. Maybe things were different in

1970. (But some things certainly weren't: paranoia both about



Liberty.

the government and attributed to the government was evidently a popular meme in America long before *The X-Files*.)

However, the real love story is with the past, and specifically with late nineteenth century New York. The

pictures which make this so distinctive are of the city and the period, not any of the main characters. The only thing I regret, as much now as on a first reading, is that so many of them aren't photos; given that Finney makes such a production out of one of the characters having a top-of-the-range modern 1882 camera, it's rather model disappointment for so many of illustrations to be sketches, or even sketched reproductions of photographs. Although the hero's artistic talents are deemed vital to the project, it robs the pictures and thus the story of an authenticity they deserve.

The main plot is very neatly constructed and – given the 'control' efforts taken by the project not to impact in any way at all on the past and thus the present or the future – there's a well thought-through time-travel plot device to bring about a pleasing conclusion in entirely the right time and place. And watch out for the Statue of

Michael Flynn – *In the Country of the Blind* Reviewed by Steve Jeffery

Tor, 2001, 428pp, \$27.95 ISBN 0-312-87444-8

The last 50 pages or so of this book comprise an Afterword titled 'An Introduction to Cliology', originally published (as 'An Introduction to Psychohistory') as an article in *Analog*, complete with graphs, tables and equations, compiled from Flynn's "humorous talks in statistics" at sf conventions, and appended here at the request of sf readers. Curious people, these sf fans.

The book itself is equally curious, originally published in

somewhat different form in 1990, and parts appearing as a serial and linked novelette in *Analog*.

Real estate developer and ex-reporter Sally Beaumont stumbles on a cache of old files in a rundown factory. They seem to be written by a Brady Quinn sometime in the mid-late 19th century. Thinking it would make a nice name for her proposed new development, she looks up the name on the web and uncovers evidence of what seems to be a 100-year-old secret organisation calling itself the Babbage Society meddling with crux points in history. This triggers an immediate reaction, which leads to an assassination attempt on Sally and the kidnapping of one of her friends. In retaliation Sally lets lose a worm into the Web (she just happens to be accomplished hacker, by the way), dumping

all references to Quinn and any other names in the files into public view. This provokes another attempt on her life, and her rescue (although grudging) by yet another hidden society, who have also been exposed by her program. From then on, it gets complicated, as more and more hidden societies, either

independently, all devoted to guiding history to their own ends, come tumbling out the woodwork.

This is good fun, and genuinely engaging, although it doesn't quite match the darker paranoia of other secret society conspiracy thrillers such as Eco's Foucault's Pendulum or Theodore Roszak's Flicker. Against that are rather too many

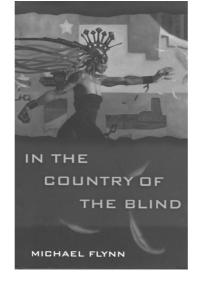
places where it is necessary to suspend disbelief We've

splintered from the original Babbage Society, or formed

already encountered Sally's timely and unexpected hacking skills. But Flynn seems have odd ideas about the mechanics of hacking. When someone discovers yet another worm burrowing through their databases, they merely pull it up on screen to read the code which contains the line "Autocopy to Q file". Or perhaps Flynn thinks that executable programs drag their source code around with them. Elsewhere, Sally's new helpers, the Association, go to the considerable trouble of giving her a complete new identity and even a new face to protect her from her pursuers, and coaching in her new persona, but then her tutor persists in calling her 'Ms Beaumont' during these sessions.

There is a continual sense of Flynn not quite following through elements of the book that could have turned *Country*... from

an engaging thriller/romance to something darker and more challenging. The villain of the piece (or one of them) turns out to have a peculiar sexual kink, which almost makes him a genuinely pathetic figure, but Flynn draws back at the end to erase any sympathy that might have developed (including his



mistress being brutally murdered) by having him transfer his attentions too obviously (and out of character) to Sally. And when the real murderer traps Sally, he can't resist lecturing her on his plans at length, allowing the cavalry to arrive and save the day. It's a shame; there's a really intriguing idea in here,

some good, tight action scenes, a genuinely resourceful heroine and a baddie with more than his own share of problems. But it doesn't quite all add up to fulfil the promise of the novel it could have been.

Fred Gambino – *Ground Zero*Jane Frank – *The Art of Richard Powers*Ron Miller & Frederick C. Durant III – *The Art of Chesley Bonestall*Paper Tiger, 2001, 112pp, £20.00 ISBN 1-85585-891-6

Paper Tiger, 2001, 128pp, £20.00 ISBN 1-85585-890-8

Reviewed by Steve Jeffery

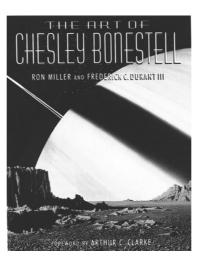
Fred Gambino needs no introduction. His work will be instantly familiar to anyone who has been collecting Gollancz's SF Masterworks series, or the novels of David Brin, Elizabeth Moon's 'Serrano Legacy' series, Robert Silverberg and many others. The illustrations, reproduced here without the distraction superimposed book titles and blurb, are of course gorgeous and arresting. But for me. what makes art books like this one fascinating is the insight into composition process: why a particular image was chosen, the choice of medium and particular effects. Ground Zero, as much as being a stunning showcase, details Gambino's development as an illustrator firmly grounded in the digital age (although in some cases, as with the cover for Brin and Benford's Heart of the Comet or Niven's The World of Ptavvs, you'd be hard put to tell the difference Gambino's painstakingly between detailed acrylic brushwork and later rendered images). Where digital technology does not always come off (although the technology is getting better all the time) is figure work, and some of the wholly CG figures, such as the alien lizards for Turtledove's Colonization series, look too obviously false. Matting and photographic references, along with such programs as Poser, get around this for human figures, and one of my

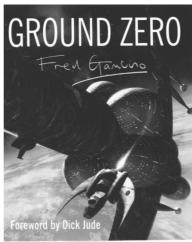
favourite images here (can we still call them paintings?) is that for Silverberg's *Nightwings*, with its dramatic crushing perspective.

Richard Powers' approach, in a career spanning some 40 years from the 1950s to the 1990s, is one he terms abstract surrealism, an exploitation of the physical

properties of paint, drips and smears and attenuated, ethereal images that typified many of the sf magazine and book covers of the '50s to the mid '70s, but that seems to have fallen out of favour for the more 'illustrative' techniques of the last two decades. Like Bonestell, Powers was not a great fan of written sf, but he and the genre came together at just the right time, when the new mood of experimentalism in design allowed him the artistic freedom to pursue his own abstract and distinctive style.

In addition to the paintings, *The Art of Richard Powers* contains a foreword by friend and fellow artist Vincent di Fate, a



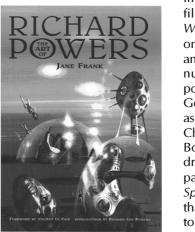


biography by Powers' son, Richard Gid Powers, and a discussion of Powers' surrealist style and methods by Jane Frank, and is rounded off by an impressive illustrated nine page checklist of the hundreds of book covers Powers contributed during his career.

But it is The Art of Chesley Bonestell that must take pride of place as the flagship of Paper Tiger's publications. This really is a beautiful and impressive volume, from its striking cover ('Saturn as Seen from Miamas'), which is also reproduced inside from The Conquest of Space (1949) to a detailed biography and career of probably the premier astronomical illustrator of the 20th century - including the recipe for a 'Bonestell', a heady brandy vermouth cocktail. Bonestell thought of himself not as a sf illustrator (indeed, he appeared rather embarrassed by his 1974 Special Achievement Hugo) or even a fine artist, but as an astronomical illustrator, the David Hardy of his day. For Bonestell, accuracy and attention to detail was paramount, even in his celebrated views of planets seen from remote moons that no-one would see (or really believe as anything other than sfnal imagination) until the Voyager mission. Not that Bonestell didn't allow his imagination to roam free; a number of

paintings are of cities devastated by catastrophe: the shadow of the nuclear bomb hanging heavily in the public consciousness of the '50s and '60s.

Bonestell's actual sf output in terms of book and magazine covers was relatively small: a dozen covers for *Astounding* and thirty-eight for *F&SF*, while other sf work



included that as a matte painter on such sf films as Destination Moon, The War of the Worlds and When Worlds Collide, and also on non-genre classics such as Citizen Kane The Magnificent Ambersons. A number of architectural commissions and posters, from New York skyscrapers to the Golden Gate Bridge, are included as well as some surprisingly delicate traditional Chinese landscape paintings. But it is Bonestell's space paintings, and his dramatic and stunning planetscapes, particularly those from The Conquest of Space and The World We Live In (1955) that will draw sf fans back time and again to this book. A treasure and a real delight.

Christopher Golden – Spike & Dru: Pretty Maids All in a Row Thomas E. Sniegoski – Angel: Soul Trade The Burning Th

Pocket Books, 2001, 353pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-7434-1892-1 Pocket Books, 2001, 325pp, £5.99 ISBN 0-7434-0699-0 Pocket Books, 2001, 274pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-7434-1893-X

Reviewed by Gary Wilkinson

New York, 1940: to celebrate the anniversary of Dru becoming a vampire Spike wants to give her the legendary magic necklace, Freya's Strand. The two travel to Norway and bargain with the necklace's current owner, the ice-demon Skymir. All he wants for it is the elimination of the current Slayer and her possible replacements. Pretty Maids starts well - an early scene where the vampires take over a U-boat is particularly good - but unfortunately deteriorates once Spike and Dru start their mission. There is a repetitive middle section with a confusing plethora of secondary characters. Even accepting this is somewhat fantastic; Spike and Dru seem to travel back and forth across war-torn Europe, and even to America and back, all too easily. Making the series' villains the stars of the show is a mistake, especially as they are depicted here, and the humour that Buffy is famous for is completely absent. It tries for Grand Guignol but comes over as simply nasty.

Soul Trade is much better. There is plenty of humour and the horror is horribly good. The writing itself is a bit ropy in places but you cannot expect miracles with this sort of book and, unless I am reading too much into it, it has a lot to say about drug-taking and the nature of greed and addiction.

Angel and his crew investigate the reason for a little girl's

coma. It turns out her father has exchanged his gambling debts for her soul. But who is collecting the souls and why? There are good bad-guys and Soul Trade would look good on screen; pity the ending is a predictable disappointment. Unseen: The Burning is the first part of a Buffy The Vampire Slaver/Angel cross-over trilogy. The plot is fairly complicated. In Sunnydale, Buffy and the rest of Scooby Gang try to find the brother of an old friend of hers who had obviously meddled in things beyond his control. Meanwhile a mysterious shadow creature has been spotted stalking the local parks. Her investigations into both will eventually take her to the City of Angel[s]. However, over in LA, Angel is himself investigating a weird telekinetic force that is creating havoc in a local prison whilst Cordelia stumbles over a gang of runaway girls who all want to be vampires (they have all been reading way too many Anne Rice novels). This one does have its moments, but in the end it is not too good: the authors do not really get into the characters as we are used to seeing them on TV. The language is very ropy; at times it drops into a semi-jokey slang that is fine in dialogue but really grates here when it is used as narrative. The Burning ends on a cliff-hanger but I must confess I am not that keen in wanting to read the rest.

Ann Halam – Dr Franklin's Island 🕮

Dolphin (Orion) 2001, 215pp, £4.99 ISBN 1-85881-396-4

Reviewed by Tanya Brown

Gwyneth Jones' latest novel as Ann Halam takes a traditional adventure scenario – three teenage castaways, survivors of an air crash – and turns it into more than just a survival story.

Semirah is a shy, chubby teenager who's won a place on a conservation holiday in Ecuador. Failing to make friends with any of her fellow travellers at the airport, she is overwhelmed when Cool Girl – Miranda, whose parents are anthropologists – seems to befriend her on the plane. When disaster strikes, Semi and Miranda find themselves marooned on a tropical island with only the belligerent Arnie for company. Between them they manage to survive, and to cope with the horrors of their situation: body parts in the lagoon, the inevitable sharks, and the challenge of staying alive.

Then the trouble really starts. Arnie disappears, and the two girls give him up for lost. Weeks later, they stumble across a hidden route into the centre of the island, and find themselves surrounded by armed men. They are introduced to Dr Skinner

(nervously alcoholic) and to his boss, Dr Franklin. Dr Franklin has plans for the castaways, and there is no hope of escape or rescue. Even sensible Miranda begins to panic: Dr Franklin's

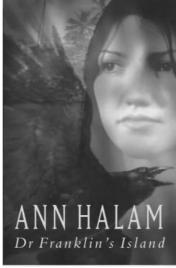
research concerns genetic engineering, and Semi and Miranda are ideal specimens.

"Nothing like it has ever been written before" claims the

back cover: some readers, however, may spot more than a passing resemblance to H.G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. Dr Franklin is certainly the literary descendant of Wells' archetypal mad scientist. However, his methods are quite different – science, after all, has progressed – and his stated goals are laudably altruistic.

Ann Halam is not here exploring racial and economic equality (as has been persuasively argued regarding the Wells novel) but the transcending nature of friendship, and the lessons that can be learnt as two people come to know each other well. There's more of the beauty and mystery of transformation in this novel than in Wells' dark and menacing tale: while Semi and Miranda react with realistic horror, they retain enough humanity to appreciate the gifts that are being forced upon them.

the gifts that are being forced upon them. Perhaps the fact that Semi, the narrator, is a victim rather than a horrified observer, helps to make the story emotionally affecting.



Harry Harrison - 50 In 50: A Collection of Short Stories, One For Each of Fifty Years

Tor, 2001, 623pp, \$29.95 ISBN 0-312-87789-7

Reviewed by L. J. Hurst

Harry Harrison is difficult to classify – as in his Deathworld novels, an attempt to produce a definition that seems safe and satisfactory will turn around and blow up in your face. There is

the Harrison who wrote *Make Room!* Make Room! (1966) on over-population, the Harrison who specified a complete dinosaur habitat; there is the Harrison who could describe a

Viking colony so fully that his anachronisms seemed scarcely noticeable, and the Harrison of transatlantic tunnels, stainless steel ratholes, galactic heroes and I don't know what else.

Strange for a man who started out by making his living as a commercial artist, that he could create so many other worlds so fully. Or perhaps I underestimate the mental capital carried by a draughtsman after the Second World War.

However, readers have also noticed that Harrison is not his own best friend. "Parodies of parodies" is how much of his work has been described, with the implication that something has been lost in each level of reproduction. The later Stainless Steel Rat novels bear that out.

Harrison, though, did not publish his first novel, *Deathworld*, until 1960; he published his first short story 'Rock Diver' in 1951. Now he has collected fifty of his short stories, grouping them by theme, in this big volume. There are stories on overpopulation (his 'Roommates' (1965) is often confused with J. G. Ballard's earlier 'Billennium' (1961)), robots, space adventure – nine sections in all, and some of them well-known from anthology appearances. However, this collating of themes means that 'Rock Diver' does not appear

until page 200, so it is impossible to identify the sequence in which Harrison wrote, especially this volume has neither an acknowledgements page nor a bibliography.

Harrison carries morality from story to story – 'The Streets of Ashkelon' (1962), in which an evangelist's visit to a new world ends in a re-creation of the Crucifixion, is one of his best known. It ends with a belief that in a world in which only right is done, the transmission of the knowledge of wrong is itself evil, an intense metaphysical point. However, in 'Mute Milton' (annoyingly I cannot date this), another well-known story, two Negroes talk at a bus station in the Deep South, one revealing that he has invented wireless transmission of energy just before he is stupidly killed by a red-neck cop, and the moral of that story can read as no more than a utilitarian one – racism does not make business sense to inventors.

Harrison actually closes with a story he contributed to *Nature* in 1999. Perhaps more fitting, though, would have been 'Portrait of the Artist', about the replacement of a commercial artist drawing comics by a robot, because that ends with a terrible and dark piece of irony. It would have summed up so much of Harrison's work.

Nalo Hopkinson – *Midnight Robber*

Warner Aspect, 2000, 329pp, £10.99 ISBN 0-446-67560-1

Reviewed by Farah Mendlesohn

Nalo Hopkinson's first book, *Brown Girl in the Ring*, won the Philip K. Dick award for the best first novel and made Hopkinson a star in the American sf community. Her subsequent anthology, *Whispers from the Cotton Tree Root* (nominated for this year's World Fantasy Awards), and her recent short story collection, *Skin Folk*, have reinforced the impression of a phenomenally talented writer with a very distinctive voice. *Midnight Robber* was nominated for the

Nebula, and at the time of writing is short-listed for the Hugo. [Since won by a book written for eight-year-olds.] But Hopkinson's work has so far made little impression in the UK, in part because her first novel and subsequent short stories are easily categorised as slipstream. Perhaps because Brown Girl is written in strong Jamaican-Canadian dialect, drawing on the previously (for sf) untapped root of African and Caribbean mythologies, it has been too easy to sideline this novel as 'magic realism' while ignoring the clearly futuristic setting and classic sf themes of body stealing, societal disintegration and new science.

Midnight Robber, while retaining the dreaminess and the slippage between reality and fantasy that characterise magic realism, is unavoidably a science fiction novel. Beginning on the planet of Toussaint, this is a colonisation story. Such stories frequently irritate with their

high survival rates, but Hopkinson avoids this pitfall, and *Midnight Robber's* realistic depiction of the dangers of colonisation is perhaps one of the best of the genre. Toussaint, inhabited by colonists of predominantly Caribbean background, has developed a culture of laid-back cooperation, of carnival and of duelling. Central to this society is a relaxed attitude to love and to loving, but the story opens in a family in which love and jealousy have become inextricably intertwined, feeding from each other until disaster strikes and Antonio, mayor of the town and father of Tan-Tan, is exiled for

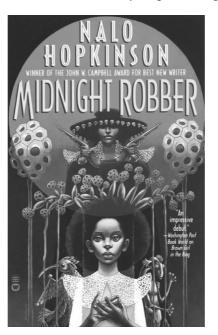
the murder of his rival. Even then his jealousy feeds the plot as he steals his daughter and takes her with him to the planet of exile, the brutal world of New Half-Way Tree.

Midnight Robber is Tan-Tan's story, but a story told double and triple: framing the novel are the traditional tales of the Robber Queen who robs the rich and protects the poor, a favourite figure at festival with her junkanoo hat and her rhyming challenges. By playing with the mutability of

Caribbean folklore, its African origins and appropriation of other myth traditions, and the incorporation of historical events, Hopkinson provides an unusually fluid landscape of story in which myth and religion are active, vibrant modes of coming to terms with a strange new world. Within these tales Tan-Tan, abused by her father and trapped by the brutality of the exiles on New Half-Way Tree, seeks identity and salvation, while around her exploits a second generation of Robber Queen stories accrete. The three elements are interwoven but distinct, language and metre indicating the status of the story.

Tan-Tan's adventures in New Half-Way Tree resolve her bitterness and lead to a new life with a new man, but also change the lives of Toussaint exiles. Living in hostility to the planet, in fear of their fellow colonists and with the contempt of the civilised for the forests and its inhabitants, the citizens of New Half-Way

Tree have barely explored their surroundings while maintaining an assumption that they comprehend their context. Tan-Tan's adventures take us into the heart of the planet and its inhabitants (curiously reminiscent of Weinbaum's alien, Tweel, in *A Martian Odyssey*) lead us further so that what begins as a colonisation narrative proceeds into alien contact and an exploration of the relationship between domestic and colonial brutalisation. However, although Hopkinson's work is clearly politicised, it is not polemical: characters are complex and well-rounded; evil is



done through rage, frustration and jealousy, rather than because of some intrinsic qualities of types. Hopkinson's worlds are finely wrought; Midnight Robber's aliens take us into a world of wonder, and the language leads us into a perhaps more alien world of non-Anglocentric science fiction.

S.T. Joshi – A Dreamer and a Visionary, H.P. Lovecraft in his Time Liverpool University Press, 2001, 422pp, £17.95 (pb) ISBN 0-85323-946-0 (slipcased hardcover £44.95, ISBN 0-85323-936-3)

Reviewed by Gary Wilkinson

H.P. Lovecraft is arguably one of the most influential horror and science fiction authors of the 20th century. S.T. Joshi's work is another addition to the extensive scholarship on the author, but this detailed biography concentrates on the man rather than his work, the fact over the fiction. Initially the book seems off-putting, with a fearfully complex genealogy leading up to Lovecraft's birth on page ten. However, once beyond that, the story becomes fascinating. Although hardly the most active person, Lovecraft's short life was full of incident. And Joshi has plenty of material to go on, as Lovecraft, and the huge circle of his friends that he built up during his lifetime, were very active letter writers.

The title comes from the epigraph by Lovecraft himself: "...from earliest childhood I have been a dreamer and visionary." Lovecraft really was a dreamer (or "nightmarer" as he put it), and his fiction clearly influenced by terrible nightmares during childhood. Joshi also identifies three major influences in his literary development. Early interests in the Greek and Roman classics were later supplemented by that of Poe – or as Lovecraft himself melodramatically puts it, "Then I struck EDGAR ALLAN POE!! It was my downfall, and at the age of eight I saw the blue firmament of Argos and Sicily darkened by the miasmal exhalations of the tomb!" The final influence was science, and particularly astronomy. In fact, it was news to me just how involved in amateur science Lovecraft was. Joshi makes a good, if not entirely convincing, claim that Lovecraft's realisation that his lack of ability in algebra would compromise the prospect of a career in science and led to

a breakdown.

Joshi covers Lovecraft's writing career from amateur to professional in some detail, and has fun with the infighting among Lovecraft's fellow amateur journalists. There is also insight into his short marriage, when Lovecraft briefly moved to New York from his beloved Providence, New England.

Owing to his lack of regular income, Lovecraft lived in poverty for much of his life. Here Joshi's book verges on humour describing Lovecraft's prolonged searches for cheap suits, drinking a ten year-old can of cocoa (tasting "somewhat earthy"), and his happiness on obtaining a paraffin heater for his New York room so he can finally have hot beans and bread three times a day. This becomes less funny when Joshi speculates that Lovecraft's poor diet could have contributed to his early death from probable stomach and/or bowel cancer and kidney disease.

Joshi gives brief criticism to all of the major works. He is perhaps somewhat apologetic for Lovecraft's 'adjectivitis', although he does properly criticise some of his truly awful poetry. And he is not afraid to tackle the thorny issue of Lovecraft's racism.

Joshi gives an overview of a life from precocious lonely childhood through eccentric adulthood to brave final moments. It paints a picture of Lovecraft as a miserly nearfailure who struggled to be published during his lifetime, but just about lived the life he wanted, but whose body of work carries on long after his death.

Mercedes Lackey – Brightly Burning 🛄

Reviewed by Fiona Grove

Mercedes Lackey's Brightly Burning is a standalone story, albeit linked to her Valdemar series, which looks at the legend of Lavan Firestorm, and tells the story so often referred to in other Valdemar books. Like most books by Lackey, I found this exceptionally easy to read, and finished it in a day.

The story tells of a young man recently arrived with his family in Haven, the capital of Valdemar. Lavan does not fit in, and is sent to a guild school where he becomes subject to bullying of a particularly nasty kind. This results in his previously unknown and, as yet, out of control 'gift' beginning to show itself. This makes Lavan ill, but his family think he is only trying to avoid going to school and will not believe that bullying can occur in that environment. With no one to protect the younger students Lavan starts to find ways of avoiding the bullies, but they become wise and corner him in a classroom one day, with disastrous consequences to the people who choose to pick on other students. It is only after a

Gollancz London 406pp, £9.99 ISBN 0-57507-200-8

particularly nasty incident of bullying which results in accusations of murder that Lavan is chosen to be a herald.

The book then follows his traineeship, and his friendship with Tuck, a fellow heraldic trainee who offers Lavan respite from his family problems by offering an alternative family for holidays. The two boys find that, due to their unusual talents and friendship, they are pushed through heraldic training at a faster pace than is usual, in order to place them in a position where they can help Valdemar in its ongoing war against Karse. Once on the border, where the fighting is not going in Valdemar's favour, it rapidly becomes apparent that the only person capable of resisting some of the magically crafted monsters thrown at the army is Lavan.

This is a predictable book, but enjoyable for those who follow the books about Valdemar, and answers questions raised by references in other books to Lavan and his life.

Stephen Lawhead – The Mystic Rose 📖

Reviewed by Iain Emsley

In The Mystic Rose, Lawhead concludes his Celtic Crusades trilogy in which three generations of the St Clair family have undertaken their own pilgrimage whilst participating in the historical Crusades. Murdo and Duncan have previously joined the Crusades, recovering religious artefacts and bringing them back from the Holy Lands to Harper Collins, 2001, 435pp, £17.99, ISBN 0-00-244667-8

safety in the Orkney Islands. However, in this novel, Lawhead moves his action to the Pilgrimage trails of Spain.

Duncan is taking his daughter Caitriona around the places where the events of The Black Rood took place when de Bracineaux, the Knights Templar's commander, murders him. Caitriona seeks vengeance and steals into his quarters but is prevented from killing him. Instead Brother Andrew, the St Clair's ghostly protector, guides her to a letter from Archbishop Bertrano, which she steals, that details the whereabouts of the Mystic Rose, the cup from the Last Supper. Caitriona arranges for some Norse knights to be released from prison and travels to Santiago di Compostella with her retinue to question Bertrano. However, de Bracineaux follows her to Spain, beginning a game of cat and mouse. In the series's other timeframe, in the aftermath of the First World War, Brother Murray continues his education into the history of the Célé Dé, following the diaries of his ancestors in his own hour of need.

There is a sense that Lawhead has revisited *Byzantium*, using this trilogy to enlarge upon the theme of re-discovery of individual faith. Whereas *Byzantium* had ended with all the main characters renewing their faith, in *The Mystic Rose* the artefacts are re-hidden, awaiting their rediscovery in another age of need. Thus, Lawhead marries his historical tale with Arthurian myth and the promise of the king that is to be reborn in the hour of need.

Lawhead concludes this sweeping trilogy in a satisfying manner, involving the somewhat naive St Clair family with the schemes of Rome. *The Mystic Rose* finishes this enjoyable series with a sense of hope and freedom.

Ursula Le Guin - The Lathe of Heaven

Gollancz (SF Masterworks 44), 2001 (1971), 184pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-85798-951-1

Reviewed by Carol Ann Kerry-Green

What would happen if your dreams could change the world? If you woke up next morning and found out that your aunt had died in a car crash several months ago, but that was last night's dream, and yesterday she'd been sleeping on the couch in the living room, getting under foot – until you dreamed.

This is the dilemma facing George Orr. He has effective dreams, he can change the world around him, and it frightens him. Arrested for using other people's pharm cards to obtain sleeping tablets, Orr is referred to George Haber, a psychologist and dream expert. At first Haber is sceptical, until he is there when Orr dreams, and the picture of Mount Hood becomes a picture of a stallion and later still a real view of Mount Hood. Haber begins to manipulate Orr's dreams to change the world, as he believes, for the better. He tells Orr to dream of a world where he doesn't feel crowded in by the population, so Orr dreams of a plague that wiped out half of humanity. A dream that race

issues are a thing of the past results in everyone being the same monotone grey colour. Another time he tells him to dream that there is peace on earth, so Orr dreams of an alien invasion. Orr dreams to order, but the logic behind his dreams might not be what Haber was thinking of.

As Orr fights Haber to gain control over his own dreams, he is helped by attorney Heather Lelache and by the aliens that Orr himself had dreamed into existence. Only the aliens know how his dreams work, only they can help him overcome Haber. But Haber has been modifying the equipment he uses to help Orr sleep, and believes he can dream effectively himself now.

This is a novel that repays several careful readings, and I am pleased to see it re-issued by Gollancz. As always with Le Guin, it is beautifully written and executed. If you've not read this one before, it is well worth the effort. And if you have, then it's equally worth a revisit the world of George Orr and his dreams.

Charles de Lint – Forests Of The Heart

Gollancz, 2001, 397pp, £17.99 ISBN 0-575-07232-6 (tbp £10.99 ISBN 0-575-07233-4) & Tor, 2000, 400pp, \$27.95 ISBN 0-312-86519-8

Reviewed by Sue Thomason

Many years ago when I started writing fantasy, one of the first pieces of really good advice I took on board was "Don't mix mythologies". Sticking to one source culture is a sensible way to create a believable society with a believable technology, religion, environment, etc.

But what happens if your source culture is modern North America? Your source people are then mostly first-/second-/third- or whatever generation immigrants; they call themselves "French Canadians" and "Irish-Americans"; they acknowledge their mixed cultural heritage. So suppose the mythological beings associated with all of those cultures are real, and present in association with 'their' humans? In that case, you have mythological beings facing all the same problems: of dispossession and/or a sense of alienation from the land they are now living in, of prejudice, cultural disruption, uneasy interactions with beings from very different cultures...

It happens in a city called Newford. Hanging around some of the town's Irish bars are a group of disaffected and displaced Gentry, Irish faery beings who emigrated with their people, who don't belong to the land, and who therefore have nothing to fuel their existence but frustration, boredom, anger and violence...

Also in Newford is Bettina San Miguel, "part Indio, part Mexican, part something older still", a curandera who

hasn't fully come into her power. The story follows Bettina's quest to find her power, discover and acknowledge the truth about herself and her family history, and become part of a community of friends, an intentional community replacing the traditional communities which have been destroyed or abandoned by modern life. Bettina's story is intertwined with others: Donal is also seeking his power and his cultural roots, and opens himself to possession by a Great Power from his own mythology. Tommy is an Indian; his mythological beings see themselves as the ones who were here in the first place, and who are being killed by the urbanisation of their traditional lands. Ellie has a privileged background and a mundane outlook on life; she isn't sure about all this magic stuff, especially when she can't avoid getting involved.

The weakest thing about this book is its Big Bad Guy, a manifestation of the Dark Side of the Green Man, who is uni-dimensionally Evil, set up to be vanquished, and really not terribly credible in context. The main storylines (quest for understanding, quest for roots and home) don't need a comic-book supervillain, and I feel the book would be stronger without him. However it's a thought-provoking and gripping modern urban(ish) fantasy, and thoroughly recommended.

David Mackay - The Fantasy Role-Playing Game: a New Performing Art

McFarland, 2001, 201pp, £30.40 ISBN 0-7864-081-4

Reviewed by Andy Sawyer

There have been a number of academic studies of role-playing games recently, with, in particular, books like Kurt Lancaster's Warlocks and Warpdrive offering interesting insights into a number of "interactive and virtual environments" of which role-playing is one. Mackay's take on roleplaying is highly theoretical, although it is also based upon his own extensive experience of gaming in a variety of scenarios. Both these stances make it somewhat difficult to read without some understanding of recent theories of performance art or gaming itself, although the gaming background is well presented.

Mackay offers his argument in four parts, covering the cultural, formal, social and aesthetic structures of gaming. Gaming itself stands at an interesting angle to sf and fantasy. The relationship of generic games like *Dungeons and Dragons* to Tolkien is well-known. Less well-known perhaps is the influence of H.G. Wells, who adapted the war-games played by military strategists into 'Little Wars' (Mackay dates this as 1915 and 1913 on separate pages: the earlier date seems to be the correct one.)

A number of interesting insights into the process of gaming arise; Mackay notes the different "frames" within which gamers operate as they interact as individuals, as players of a game within the rules set out by the designers and the gamemaster of that particular section, and as characters within a "virtual" imagined realm. The word "score" as the "palette of performance", determined partly by choice but partly by the whole range of popular cultural images open to the gamer, suggests a musical analogy. There are analogies with hypertext in the description of gamers shifting/flickering from frame to frame in the context of a performance, and also with the purely literary theories of writers like Barthes.

There are a number of questions which this approach suggests. Can an art-form be purely a performance art without an audience? Daniel Mackay cites the Russian theorist Bakhtin: "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it". And how far is this an "autonomous" artform rather

than a "parasitic" one? At one point Mackay writes (though whatever imposition of value he intends is difficult to tease from his sentences), "This mere appearance of another world is really nothing more than the cut-and-pasted, remixed, sampled recapitulation of popular culture. This product art is born of the very real advertising and marketing mentality of this reality. *Dragonlance* books are published because dragons This sounds like the distancing process of postmodernism: to take another stance, what we think of as 'timeless' institutions could be said to be, themselves, forms of "role-playing games". He later argues, if I read him rightly, that what seems to lay heavy stress upon the shaping process of consumer-capitalist icons upon the individual player allows for more autonomy, ("culture is revealed through people") and that the rpg performance "falls through the cracks of cultural commodities" because it is irreproducible. The mechanical performance may be recorded, but the experience is based upon a particular set of interior processes. This would seem to suggest that, despite the trappings of consumerist objects around the gaming culture and the essentially second-hand constructs of its scenarios, the very act of participating in creating a successful game liberates the player. But it is also a very temporary liberation: the aesthetic experience of a roleplaying game is something which perhaps becomes fuller as a memory or gestalt rather than the experience itself.

So, this is a book which is more than a how-to guide. It's certainly of interest, although a price of £30 makes it a book only the academic library or most serious gamer would buy. And a few apparent slips (the double dating for the Wells reference, the citing of Verne among examples of fantasy "first happening" in England) would seem to be careless. Nevertheless, Mackay offers solid groundwork for the growing feeling that the present-day rpg might be a kind of "oral predecessor" to a new interactive, technology-based narrative form and this might be a book to which future scholars will come back.

Patricia A McKillip -The Riddle-Master's Game

Gollancz, 2001, 622pp, £8.99 ISBN 1-85798-796-9

Reviewed by Lynne Bispham

Some twenty years ago, I read The Riddle-Master Of Hed, the first book of Patricia McKillip's fantasy trilogy, the Chronicles Of Morgon, Prince Of Hed, and was immediately hooked, reading volumes two and three, Heir Of Sea And Fire and Harpist In The Wind, in guick succession. It was with some trepidation that I opened The Riddle-Master's Game, which brings all three novels together as Gollancz Fantasy Masterworks No. 19. Could they possibly be as good as I remembered? Well, the answer is a definite "yes". Even after two decades in which the fantasy genre has changed and expanded considerably, the strange, exotic landscape of the books still works its spell. Here are land-rulers, kings and princes magically linked to the well-being of their kingdoms whose powers pass to their land-heirs on their deaths. Here are: wizards, dead kings whose descendants must bind them lest they rise from their graves and ravage the land, men who can become trees, wolves or ravens, knowledge contained in riddles, ancient prophecy of the ending of an age, and a war that has been fought for thousands of years.

In *The Riddle-Master Of Hed*, Morgon, Prince of Hed, land-ruler of a quiet backwater inhabited by peaceful farmers, and yet also the winner of a riddle contest against a dead king, finds his life threatened by malevolent beings with

unimaginable powers, shape-changers who can kill and take the place of their victims. The identity of these creatures, and the reasons for their interest in the Prince of Hed, seem to lie with an unanswered riddle: the meaning of the three stars on Morgon's forehead and on the harp and the sword that were made for him centuries before his birth. Morgon decides that he will only find the answer to these mysteries by consulting the High One, the law-giver and sustainer of life who resides on Erlenstar Mountain. Guided by Deth, the High One's Harpist, Morgon undertakes the journey to the High One's home. What he discovers upon his arrival is both shocking and unexpected.

In *Heir Of Sea And Fire*, a year has passed and Morgon has not returned from Erlenstar Mountain. Rumour has him dead, but the land-rule has not passed to his brother and heir. Raederle, daughter of the land-ruler of Aum, and Morgon's betrothed, decides to follow him to the home of the High One, her journey forcing her to discover the unpalatable truth about her own remarkable powers.

The journeys made by Morgon and Raederle raise more questions than they answer, but the various threads of the plot, the riddle of the Starbearer, the identity and purpose of the shape-changers, and the role played in all of this by Deth are brought together in *Harpist In The Wind*, when, in the midst of war, Morgon finally confronts his destiny.

After twenty years, The Riddle-Master's Game remains a

wonderfully rich and inventive fantasy. It repays re-reading, and now that it is re-issued as a Fantasy Masterwork, it deserves to gain many new and appreciative readers.

L.E. Modesitt, Jr. – Empire & Ecolitan

Reviewed by Stuart Carter

Did you ever have one of those 'air band' radios as a kid – the kind that, with the flick of a switch, let you listen to *real* pilots' in-flight conversations? They were pretty good fun for a while: until you discover that real pilots don't talk about things that are (a) interesting, or (b) comprehensible to non-pilots. Perhaps this is the point of *Empire & Ecolitan*, to portray the real life of secret agents, because there are *pages* of in-flight exchanges in this book.

This is a collected edition of two (of four) books, *The Ecolitan Operation* (1989) and *The Ecologic Secession* (1990). Both revolve around Major Jimjoy Wright, a Special Operative of the Imperial Galactic Empire, an ancient and venomous organisation devoted to preserving and propagating bureaucracy across the galaxy. Major Jimjoy Wright is its devoted servant. He has killed, and still regularly does kill, tens of thousands of people. Wright doesn't speak much, he doesn't usually say anything interesting when he does speak, and he spends most of his time either pretending to be someone else or doing callisthenics. James Bond he isn't.

The Ecolitan of the title is a secret 'Foundation' type institute of eco-warriors on the Imperial colony world of Accord. The effervescent Major Wright is dispatched to Accord to check what's growing in the Ecolitan window boxes—but he's been

Tor, 2001, 559pp, \$17.95 ISBN 0-312-87879-6

set up by the Empire, who actually want rid of him for being just too good at his job.

That this is an initially intriguing and potentially intelligent idea only makes *Empire & Ecolitan*'s failure to engage the readers' interest all the more disappointing. This could have been a genuinely resonant and penetrating satire on the idiocy of unrestricted and unconsidered economic growth (even more so today than when the books were first published 12 years ago). The Empire knows little and cares less about the Kyoto Accord...oops, sorry, I mean 'ecological issues', and is dead set upon crushing the band of plucky Ecolitan revolutionaries that do. Unfortunately Major Wright is an uninteresting killing machine, and the story itself moves at such a leaden pace and with such complete lack of verve that it becomes a sub-sub-Stainless Steel Rat adventure, quite lost without Harrison's wonderful humour and Jim di Griz's daredevil charm.

I didn't even begin to care about the good intentions of the Ecolitans, about the Empire's evil plans or the horrifying megadeaths engendered by Major Wright. By the middle of this book all I cared about was getting through it and reading something else.

Ward Moore – Bring the Jubilee

Reviewed by Mark Greener

It's 1938. The Confederacy won the American Civil War and the 26 Northern states are economically destitute. Some people in the Northern states live as freemen on the edge of poverty. Others sell themselves into indenture, which can be little better than slavery. Hodge Backmaker comes from a proud freeman family. But he's little use on the homestead: his interests are intellectual and bookish. So he leaves for New York.

Backmaker is mugged almost as soon as he sets foot in Manhattan. But he finds a mentor in Roger Tyss, a revolutionary printer and bookseller. Among Tyss's dusty shelves, Backmaker discovers his true calling as an historian. After rejections from conventional colleges, he joins the intellectual community of Haggershaven, where one of the fellows plans to build a time machine...

Bring the Jubilee, one of the most famous alternative history novels, has been in print since 1953. It certainly deserves to remain in the bookshops. Jubilee is well written, with much of its strength coming from the details: for example, Shaw is an "obscure Irish theologian"; Jung the Swiss Police Chief; Picasso a "popular academician". In particular, the characters, even relatively minor players, are brilliantly drawn.

I love the intellectual puzzles posed by alternative histories. But I didn't really mind that for much of *Jubilee* it's easy to forget it's an alternative history. I didn't mind that the implications of the historical changes are not as pervasive as in, for example, Dick's *The Man In The High Castle*. And despite being familiar from stories from *The Three Musketeers* to *Star Wars*, I was engrossed by this tale of 'the boy from the sticks makes good'.

Moreover, *Jubilee* remains relevant in several ways Moore surely never anticipated. To take one example:

Gollancz (SF Masterworks 42), 2001, 194pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-85798-764-0

Haggershaven is a place without "formal requirements for fellowship" – a place to "pool all knowledge and hold none back from scholars anywhere". It could almost be a manifesto for the Internet.

Nevertheless, I feel that *Jubilee* is flawed. The first sentence reveals that a time machine is the key to the story: "Although I am writing this in the year 1877, I was not born until 1921." Yet the logistics don't add up. The technological implementation of modern physics is so complex that no one can master it all. And funding modern physics experiments is often beyond the means of a country, let alone an individual. The Northern states are economically and intellectually impoverished. Yet, a couple of people from Haggershaven manage, using the inheritance of one rich Spaniard woman Backmaker rescues, to obtain the equipment and materials they need to build the time machine – in the barn. And it works first time. Quaint, but implausible.

But it's the two key coincidences that finally broke my credulity. Firstly, when Backmaker is attacked in Manhattan, a kindly alcoholic rescues him and introduces him to Tyss, who indulges Backmaker's intellectual curiosity. It just seems too easy. Making Backmaker endure some hardship first would have made the coincidence more believable. I don't want to reveal the second coincidence — which would ruin the book. However, the novel spins, for me, on a coincidence-too-far.

Despite these qualms, *Bring the Jubilee* is worth reading. And it's worth a place on any sf fan's shelves. It certainly deserves its place as a Masterwork. But for me, at least, it's not – quite – a true classic.

Andre Norton & Rosemary Edgehill - Leopard in Exile: Carolus Rex Book II

Tor, 2001, 347pp, \$24.95 ISBN 0-312-86428-0

Reviewed by Penny Hill

Although a second volume [to Shadow of Albion], this book worked reasonably well in isolation. The tone is similar to that of the Georgette Heyer Regency romances it tries to emulate but this tone clashes with the more adventurous elements of the plot. Whilst some aspects of the Regency romance are kept, such as the attention to detail on costume, others are discarded - as when Sarah, while travelling, decides to dispense with a maid, something no woman of the time would have done, no matter how free-spirited an American she was.

This leads to an uneasy mix in tone. On the one hand you have the adoration of the aristocracy and essentially conservative elements that make up a Regency style romance; on the other you have American revolutionary sentiments. These may be minor quibbles but they did leave me with an underlying sense of unease. After all, a revolution that restores a monarchy is surely a counter-revolution?

As an alternate history, it's rather amusing. I needed a map of the American colonies as my American geography is rather poor, and trying to cope with who ruled which state was deeply confusing. Our authors, however, could have done

with a map of Britain, as even travelling incognito, the Duke of Wessex would not have gone to America via the fens. Surely he would have left from either Bristol or Liverpool? Also, the title of Duke tended to be bestowed on siblings to the Crown and this Duke isn't closely related enough to the royal family, nor is it established where his ducal estates are.

One sad lapse in tone was in the use of footnotes, which were used to display the amount of research the authors had done, tending to break the suspension of disbelief. This information would have been better conveyed outside the body of the novel - if indeed it needed to be conveyed explicitly at all.

I found the intrusion of the world of faery to be so low-key as to make me wonder whether it was necessary. Very little was added by these scenes. The same was true of the key mcguffin, the Holy Grail itself, the quest for which seemed too easy. It was also unclear why Meriel couldn't explain her actions to Sarah, unless it was for the convenience of the plot. All in all, it was a light and amusing romp with a couple of irritating touches. Enjoyable, but not to be taken seriously.

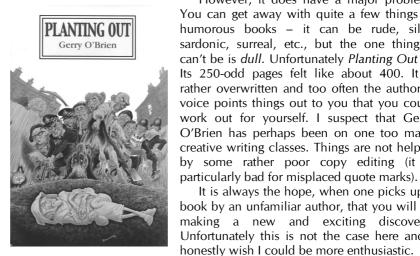
Gerry O'Brien – *Planting Out*

Colin Smythe Ltd, 2001, 257pp, £14.99 ISBN 0-86140-440-8

Reviewed by Chris Hill

Brother Stephanus, The Gardener, of the Abbey of Saint Michael and Saint Richard, has just died. But his corpse isn't happy about the Abbot's plans to turn the Abbey's oldest denizen into a saint for the pilgrim trade, so it walks out to find somewhere more peaceful to rest. Unfortunately the body has also eaten a prototype microchip stolen from a research establishment, and the Chip (sic) is equally unwilling to take its fate lying down. With various parties after either the body or the Chip, the chase is on...

Planting Out has a number of things going for it. It has an unusual plot and some amusing characters (although the humour is the sort to make you snort quietly to yourself rather than laugh out loud) and a great sense of place (an imaginary London borough on the Thames).



However, it does have a major problem. You can get away with quite a few things in humorous books - it can be rude, silly, sardonic, surreal, etc., but the one thing it can't be is dull. Unfortunately Planting Out is. Its 250-odd pages felt like about 400. It is rather overwritten and too often the authorial voice points things out to you that you could work out for yourself. I suspect that Gerry O'Brien has perhaps been on one too many creative writing classes. Things are not helped by some rather poor copy editing (it is

It is always the hope, when one picks up a book by an unfamiliar author, that you will be making a new and exciting discovery. Unfortunately this is not the case here and I honestly wish I could be more enthusiastic.

David Pringle (ed.) – The Ant-Men of Tibet, and Other Stories **Reviewed by Andrew Seaman**

Big Engine, 2001, 255pp, £8.99 ISBN 1-903468-02-7

Originally intended to be published by the Pulp Fictions imprint shortly before it folded, Ben Jeapes of Big Engine has stepped in to rescue this collection of stories drawn from the pages of Interzone during the mid to late 1990s. Contrary to what you might expect the stories contained within its pages don't reflect the magazine's reputation as a hotbed of the "radical hard sf" it was supposed to have pioneered, running as they do the gamut of space opera, comic sf and contemporary fantasy. Although they might not be at the bleeding edge of current genre fiction, these stories are, as David Pringle says in his "enjoyable introduction, undoubtedly entertainments."



Some of the content is supplied by writers whose careers were, at the time, already established, but Pringle also includes work from professionals, new inexperience occasionally shows. Like Stephen Baxter, whose Wellsian pastiche leads the collection, they will undoubtedly go on to produce far better work in the future. For example, although they both contain some promising writing, Nicola Caines' 'Civilization' and Jayme Lynn Blaschke's 'The Dust' are ultimately let down by the handling of their runof-the-mill skiffy ideas. Even the more experienced Chris Beckett's initially intriguing 'The Warrior Half-and-Half' is spoiled by its.

weak ending.

However, the chilly brilliance of Alastair Reynolds' recent novels is foreshadowed by his story, 'Byrd Land Six' in which researchers at an Antarctic research facility find themselves having to deal with an isolation far greater and more dangerous than the continent itself, while Eugene Byrne and Peter T. Garratt both successfully negotiate that most difficult of sub-genres, comic sf/fantasy, in the highly entertaining 'Alfred's Imaginary Pestilence' and 'The Collectivization of Transylvania'. The versatility and skill of Molly Brown as a writer of short fiction is also amply demonstrated by 'The Vengeance of Grandmother Wu', a humorous, but also moving, tale of supernatural revenge from beyond the grave in London's Chinatown.

Particularly impressive are Keith Brooke's historical timeslip

fantasy 'The People of the Sea' with its atmospheric evocation of the past and alternative future of the peoples of the Essex coast (not a traditionally well-used genre setting!) and Eric Brown's 'Vulpheous', a tale of obsession and sacrifice forming part of his Tartarus sequence set on an alien world destined to destroyed when its sun goes nova. Both pieces demonstrate their authors' considerable strengths, most recently displayed in their collaborative collection Parallax View (reviewed in Vector 217).

So, some hits, some misses. Some authors who have gone on to bigger and better things and some that have still to make a major impression in the genre. Even so, a collection (and, equally importantly, a magazine and a new British publisher) that deserve your attention

Mickey Zucker Reichert - Flightless Falcon **Reviewed by Lesley Hatch**

In a radical departure from her Renshai novels, Reichert has given us a seemingly straightforward story of Tamison, a young miner whose life changes radically when most of his male relatives are killed in a cave-in, and he himself is only rescued after two days. This event leaves him with a fear of confined spaces and he is eventually dispensed with by the mining guild. To support his family, he ultimately finds employment as a dock worker, but this is a precarious living at best, and when the work runs out he is driven to theft. However, he is caught and sentenced to four years' imprisonment, at the end of which he discovers that his wife and family have disappeared. Believing they have been taken into slavery, he gives himself a new name and sets off to find and rescue them. His companions are a dog, a fortune teller, a guardsman and a mysterious confidence trickster. They all embark on the quest to achieve this aim, which seems simple enough. The only stumbling block is that our unlikely hero will have to confront and defeat his claustrophobia in order to deliver his family Gollancz, 2001, 323pp, £6.99 ISBN No. 1 85798 784 5

from slavery.

Things are not what they seem, however, as Tamison gradually finds out, in much the same way as the main character in Kafka's The Trial makes this discovery as his story progresses. For much of the novel, Tamison is kept in ignorance of his companions' true aims and origins. This is quite well-crafted and has any number of twists and turns which kept this reader guessing as to what was going to happen next to our protagonist and his group of helpers.

How Tamison overcomes all the obstacles that are thrown in his way - and there are quite a few - makes for an interesting read, and a fast one: I finished this novel in two days. If I had one tiny criticism, and it is only a tiny one, it is that Tamison is given to a little too much introspection, harking back to when times were good. That aside, I did enjoy the story, which makes a refreshing change, for me, from the author's Renshai novels.

Jessica Rydill – Children of the Shaman 🛄

Orbit, 2001, 400pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-84149-063-6

Reviewed by Kathy Taylor

Children of the Shaman follows the travels of Annat and her brother Malchik. They have been raised in the countryside by their aunt Yuste but she is now ill and thus returns them to their father Yuda's care. Yuda, the Shaman of the title, takes them with him along the steam railroad to the frozen lands of Gard Ademar.

It is from conflict that adventure arises and internally and externally these teenagers have it in spades. Socially they are from a mixed heritage; Yuda is a Wanderer and their mother was a Doxan. The Wanderer people are an analogy of the Jewish faith and culture. Doxan is probably from Orthodoxian, as in the Orthodox Church. It is a less complete analogy to the Christian church but the religious and social conflict between the two groups clearly echoes the position of Jews in Christian medieval Europe. Added to this Yuda had walked out on the children and their mother some years back, something Malchik in particular finds it hard to get past. Oh yes, and Yuda is a divko, an active homosexual, which is also against the Wanderer laws. Externally the conflict comes from the clash between these faiths, and between those building the railroad and their opponents. As a third component to the mix there is a strong magical element which leads to the fight scenes.

The novel is well-written with the pace reflecting the narrative. There are some rapidly moving fight scenes and reasonable tautly-written emotional ones. These are balanced by some slower scenes describing scenery and other quieter events. The prose itself is largely invisible, not getting in the way of the story but not in itself notable except for some few sections of description with Malchik.

By using the Jewish culture as a basis for the Wanderers, Jessica Rydill has produced a richly textured background for Yuda and his children – from the belief that they must always wander and never have a true home, to the legend of the golem. This background helps present them as established characters with genuine problems and motivations. Against that, however, there is however a tendency to present simple answers to the more complex emotional issues. The Doxan faith, which has echoes of both Islam and Christianity, is more thinly sketched out. Its culture, and those of the secondary characters belonging to it, are never really substantiated.

Despite some flaws the work is sufficiently polished that it is difficult to believe this is a first novel. Children of the Shaman is not a great new work in the annals of fantasy, but few early works are. It is however a pleasant and interesting read, and the author is one worth keeping an eye on.

Reviewed by Alan Fraser

Susan Shwartz was previously unknown to me, although she has published both fantasy novels and tie-in *Star Trek* work. Second Chances is billed as a sfnal reworking of Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim, about a man's search for redemption after disgrace. Conrad has provided source material for sf writers before – both Michael Bishop and Lucius Shepard have

written books based on *Heart Of Darkness* and Robert Silverberg's *The Secret Sharer* was based on the 1912 Conrad story of the same name.

I'm told that lovers of military sf will love this, but I have to admit I can't really class myself as one, so I'm not rushing to recommend it to anyone. The only 'military sf' book I've consciously read seemed to me just to be an adaptation of Midshipman C.S. Forester's Mr. Hornblower in space. What jarred then was the adoption of an 18th century Royal Navy "code of honour", which seems both inflexible and inhuman today, let alone for a space-going navy centuries from now. This is also the problem for me with Second Chances: what worked well for Joseph Conrad's readers in 1900 doesn't really work for Shwartz's potential readership in 2001.

Set several hundred years from now,

human space is in disarray after a devastating decades-long war between the Earth-based Alliance and three secessionist planets. Merciless pirates from the "No Man's Worlds" are preying on the few ships venturing between the stars. Now peace has been declared, Alliance Fleet officers are being seconded to protect civilian ships. Jim (we are deliberately never told his last name) is Weapons Officer aboard the *Irian Jaya*, heading for a depleted planet with ten thousand colonists in frozen sleep. The ship is a tempting prize for pirates wanting breeding stock and slaves. Crippled by a pirate attack

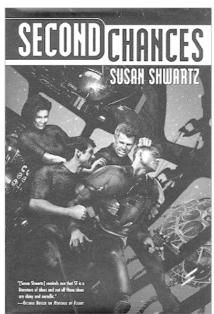
and with one of the ten colonist pods destroyed, the *Irian Jaya* is a sitting duck as it limps to its destination. Faced with a captain who cares more about the damage to his bonus than to his ship, and with treachery amongst his shipmates, Jim joins the rest of the crew as they flee the ship. When they reach port, knowing he abandoned the ship and people it was his

duty to protect, Jim chooses to take the blame for the debacle, and is courtmartialled for desertion.

We are introduced to Commander Caroline Marlow, an officer in the Alliance Fleet who has recently been rescued after spending 20 years frozen in a lost evacuation pod. (A male Marlow is the narrator of both Conrad's Lord Jim and Heart Of Darkness.) Even more dislocated than Iim, she feels sympathy for him during his trial and subsequent disgrace. Marlow arranges work for him on a distant planet, and their paths cross now and then as Jim time and again runs from exposure or personal involvement. Eventually she finds him the mission that will allow Jim to restore his honour - a chance to strike back in a covert assignment to a planet believed to be about to become an important pirate base in the No Man's

Worlds. Jim has settled to become a respected community leader, when the pirates arrive...

Sadly I found Jim's continual whining annoying, and when he finally finds his place he starts spouting stuff about personal growth horribly reminiscent of current management seminars. Also, a modern reader is likely to neither agree with nor understand what Jim does in the end. My favourite aspect of the book was the attention paid to building up the universe in which the action takes place. I hope Shwartz can revisit it with more success and a plot of her own invention.



Robert Silverberg – The Stochastic Man

Reviewed by N. M. Browne

This is one of Gollancz's yellow-jacketed Collectors' Edition series and is well worth the reissue.

I was initially confused by the dating of the story (first published in 1975), which is set in the author's near future and our recent past. The story takes the form of a first-person narrative and the future setting of the story is to be inferred by constant references to events, people, objects which did not exist in 1970s USA. (As I'm ignorant of much of what did exist in 1970s USA this meant that I had to concentrate quite hard to work out in which ways Silverberg's vision of the latter part of the 20th century differed from the real thing. Other readers may well not have this problem.)

The story itself is relatively slight. Lew Nichols is a professional forecaster whose gift for scientific prediction makes him a valuable member of the political team trying to propel Paul Quinn to the White House. He meets a man, Carvajal, who really can see the future, learns how to do it and is sacked by his employer. There is a sub-plot whereby his wife is converted to the 'Transit' creed, a distillation of Eastern philosophies that demands non-attachment and is predicated

Gollancz, 2001, 229pp, £10.99 ISBN 0-575-05123-X

on a belief that the universe is in a state of constant flux. His wife behaves eccentrically as part of her faith that everything changes, at the same time as Lew behaves equally oddly because he believes the future is immutable.

Apart from the cogent writing, the book is compelling because it grapples with the question of whether a future that can be foreseen must be foreordained – an argument that has kept quite a few theologians busy too. Lew follows the view of Carvajal that what is foreseen must happen. This leads him to do things only because Carvajal says that he has seen him do them. He has been told that attempts to change the future are futile and thus never puts Carvajal's conviction to the test. His guru's life has been blighted because he has seen the hour of his death and yet initially Lew sees several possible deaths for himself, so that the narrator's view that everything is predictable is subtly undercut by the plurality of futures he perceives. Are we intended to believe Carvajal's explanation that there is only one true future? The narrator believes him, but should we?

Paul Simpson and Ruth Thomas - Farscape: The Illustrated Season 2 Companion

Titan Books, 2001, 158pp, £9.99 ISBN 1-84023-308-7

Reviewed by Steve Jeffery

Farscape, now midway into Season 3 on BBC2 in the UK, is one of the most experimental, inventive and absorbing sf series in a long time. From a slightly shaky start which gave the impression of 'Muppets in Space', by Season 2 it started to take some extraordinary risks in terms of character and plot development as later episodes started to fill in parts of the back story. Not all of them come off, it has to be said, but this is part of what makes it so fascinating. The writers, directors and actors all seem determined to see just how far they can push things beyond the boundaries of the audience's expectations. Certainly, this is the impression given by a lot of the interviewees in the book, who seem to be in a state of gratified bemusement about how much they are allowed, indeed encouraged, to get away with in the scripts and acting. (Ben Browder's full-volume rendition of The Star-Spangled Banner to prevent Scorpius's implanted chip taking over the actions of his character, John Crighton, in 'Liars, Guns and Money: Part 1' was a piece of on-set improvisation that, however bizarre, seemed more effective, and resonant with the character, than Crighton yelling something like "Get out of my head.")

After a Foreword from Brian Henson and bracketed by two brief transitional chapters, 'Into Season Two' and the closing 'Into Season Three', *The Illustrated Season 2 Companion* is divided into four main sections: Episodes, Script to Screen,

Characters and Effects. (There is also a three page 'Lexicon' at the back of the book, but this is pretty much disposable; even though I've watched all the episodes to date, I don't recall 80% of these terms, and they omit the most often-used general purpose expletive in the series, "frell". Anyway, part of Farscape's charm is the way Crighton (due to the Babel Fishlike notion of 'translator microbes') can come out with the most outrageous US anachronisms and still be understood by the rest of the crew, even if some of them do get some strange looks.)

One of the problems with these type of books (as with the various *Buffy* season guides) is the temptation to cheat by reading ahead. At least with *Farscape*, season three is currently showing on BBC2, but *The Illustrated Season 2 Companion* does contain a significant spoiler, having set things up with the death of a major character at the end of season two, by introducing the follow-up cast in the closing 'Into Season Three'.

At just over 150 pages, this feels slight when compared to, say, the *Buffy* 'Watcher' guides (on which it is clearly modelled) and at £9.99 seems rather overpriced. While interesting for the various interviews and comments on the episodes and direction of the series as a whole, it is just as likely to confuse as enlighten anyone who hasn't already seen the series

lan Stewart & Jack Cohen – Wheelers

Earthlight, 2001 (first published 2000), 505pp, £10.00 ISBN 0-743-20743-2

Reviewed by Gary S. Dalkin

The opening chapter introduces a *Stargate*-like scenario, involving the excavating of the Sphinx, and the theory that the ancient Egyptians were up to something. It also includes the startling information that the Sphinx was "Restored by the

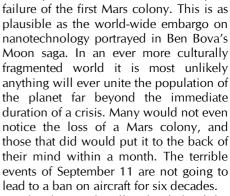
eighteenth dynasty in 1500AD..." (page 5). Chapter Two is set in 2210 and reveals "In 2270, what used to be Tanzania and Kenya had become the Nyamwezi Condominium." Two dating errors in the first 16 pages is evidence a book has not been properly edited. What makes this particularly irksome is that *Wheelers* predicates its set-up on established Egyptian chronology being out by 2000 years. When the accurate establishment of dates is vital it becomes difficult to take seriously a story where the authors cannot be bothered to check their own chronology.

Despite being set in 2210, Stewart and Cohen's characters display the attitudes and speak in the dialogue of contemporary television ciphers. Particularly irritating are three reality TV producers looking for the latest gimmick. And the latest gimmick is straight out of

Longitude, circa 1998. Wheelers is filled with ill-conceived notions such as computers which explain not only who is phoning, but exactly who they are: "The caller is Ruth Bowser, your agent." As if our hero didn't know. All of which is to say this is a clumsy book which creates an entirely unconvincing world of two centuries from now. Let's pause for a minute, or

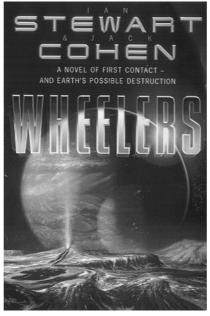
sixty years...

There has been a 60-year hiatus, dubbed The Pause, on technological development following world-wide antitechnology riots after a computer error led to the catastrophic



The shame of it all is that behind the badly conceived future and clichéd characters is a reasonably engaging and ambitious hard sf story struggling to get out, with some interesting speculation, some novel Zen monk miners, and an imaginative variation on the denizens of Jupiter's skies. Unfortunately it seems the authors are writing down. Both are

authors are writing down. Both are scientists and are capable of far better than this. Cohen wrote BBC2's *The Natural History of the Alien*, while Stewart's *Does God Play Dice* suggests he is barely trying here. It is time the authors realised just how high the standard is for this sort of thing; a crash course in Baxter, Bear, Brin and Egan should bring them up to speed.



Peter Swirski – Between Literature and Science: Poe, Lem, and Explorations in Aesthetics, Cognitive Science, and Literary Knowledge

Liverpool University Press, 2001, 183pp, £15.99 paperback ISBN 0-85323-906-1 (£29.95 hardback ISBN 0-85323-896-0)

Reviewed by Brian Stableford

Between Literature and Science offers detailed examinations of Edgar Poe's Eureka (1848) and Stanislaw Lem's The Invincible (1964), analysing the ideas contained in each book within a broad philosophical framework. The advantage of 150 years of hindsight allows Swirski to conclude that the epistemology and cosmology outlined in Poe's book, though highly original, are not much good; the absence of that crucial extra century allows him to be a little more complimentary about Lem's ideas about artificial intelligence and mechanical evolution, on the grounds that they have not yet been shown to be seriously mistaken.

Although Swirski's analyses are, so far as I can judge, quite accurate, I cannot help but feel that poor Poe is a rather soft target. One does not expect a modern academic to make allowances for the fact that his subject was labouring under such everyday handicaps as starvation and near-universal hostility, but taking Poe to task for failing, in 1848, to anticipate the modern philosophy of science and the discoveries of modern telescopes does seem a trifle harsh. If Swirski had only been scrupulous enough to compare Poe's experiment in visionary cosmology with such august predecessors as Swedenborg's Arcana of Heaven and Humphry Davy's Consolations in Travel, or Poe's attempt to find a poetic element in scientific method with such contemporary works as Robert Hunt's The Poetry of Science,

he might have enabled his readers to make a fairer (and far more generous) estimate of Poe's spectacular achievements.

By the same token, Swirski might have seen fit to mention, or even take into account, the fact that Stanislaw Lem was neither the first nor the only writer of imaginative fiction to investigate such notions as confrontation with the alien and the possibilities of inorganic evolution – but a glance at his bibliography testifies eloquently to the fact that, like the vast majority of academics, he is deeply reluctant to read anything other than books by his fellow academics. This is, in essence, an exercise in slumming by a philosopher in search of a (relatively) fashionable hook on which to hang his esoteric ruminations.

Although *Between Literature and Science* is manifestly a portmanteau of two disparate essays, Swirski make a feeble attempt to pretend that the book is a whole by earnestly and portentously extracting from his analyses the conclusion that the study of science fiction might benefit from an interdisciplinary approach. Who but a moron, one might wonder, could ever have thought otherwise? We must, however, remember that this man lives in the groves of 20th-century Academe, which are far more remote from mere common sense than any realm that Edgar Poe – in spite of his being the most daring and original writer of his era – would ever have dared, or bothered, to imagine.

Liz Williams – The Ghost Sister 🛄

Reviewed by Penny Hill

Bantam, 2001, 339pp, \$5.99 ISBN 0-553-58374-3

I came to this novel with some wariness because I have become cynical about how original a new world can be. Well, this was definitely the novel to restore my faith in the originality and life of the genre. Within the first few pages I was drawn into a exciting and convincing world, isolated from, but part of, a wider universe that I could recognise as having grown out of our own. The lost technology underpinning this world was evoked in such a way as to be a believable part of the background and then a more urgent raison d'etre for the society within it.

These lost humans are more alien than many a man in a rubber suit, yet the social set-up was successfully illustrated through the character of Mevennen, the misfit or "Ghost Sister" of the title. Her disability makes clear to us how different this society is from our own. Liz Williams' characters are distinctive and interesting people to whom I quickly warmed, even before I was able to understand what made them different and special.

The split narrative worked well, following three viewpoint characters, Eleres, Mevennen and Shu, whose experiences of the world complement each other, so that the reader gradually

builds up a picture of what is going on. There was a genuine tension and excitement in the switches from one narrative track to another, leaving the reader eager to discover what had been happening from the new viewpoint.

Throughout the novel I could feel echoes of *The Sparrow*, in the reality of the characters and the moral dilemmas which their environment imposes upon them. There was a strong sense of a moral struggle here as Shu, the character perhaps closest to the narrator, searches for the right action to take, whether to intervene to change society or to allow barbarism and culture to flourish together.

The book draws to a well-handled climax, with closed-minded people on both sides making the situation worse while Shu seeks a way to restore and repair the damage that has been done. Shu learns from her experiences and allows them to change her – a sign of her maturity which contrasts with Bel's attempts to re-cast the world into an easier pattern. Liz Williams' next book has a completely different, and equally intriguing, setting. If she ever intends to revisit this universe, however, there is much more left to explore.

Tad Williams – Sea of Silver Light Reviewed by Jain Emsley

Tad Williams has led the reader on a merry, but thrilling, dance throughout the Otherland series, freely crossing the boundaries between fantasy and science fiction. In *Sea of Silver Light*, the fourth volume, he continues the quest for the truth behind the Grail system in a drastically changed world that has been taken over by the Other.

Orbit, 2001, 922p, £17.99 ISBN 1-85723-991-1

Renie and !Xabbu awake on the black mountain created after the fall of Troy and begin their descent down to the new land, along with Felix Jongleur. Their artificial personae have been stripped, but also render the Grail Brotherhood and Jongleur unable to escape from Otherland. Paul Jonas wakes up in Kunohara's simulation, where he rescues Martine, the

blind programmer, from a scorpion. As before, they find themselves following a river that flows between the simulations, after escaping an attack by John Dread. Dread has taken control of the Grail system and seeks to destroy the travellers in his new guise of being a god. He has taken on a partner, Dulcie, to hack into the system, but is unaware that she has a different agenda.

Meanwhile, two sources seek to attack the Grail system from the outside. Sellers, who has been watching Renie and her companions from his hideaway on a military base, begins his own assault on the system, seeking to give himself his own freedom from his crippled body. Aided by Sellers, Olga Pirofsky, who once presented a television show that encouraged access to the system, enters Jongleur's fortress to attack the computers themselves. Neither are fully prepared for the truth that lies behind the system.

Williams has pushed the edges of fantasy into new areas, re-mixing traditional fantasy settings with the virtual world of cyberspace. Each character has the chance to extend the boundaries of Otherland by creating their own new stories and the cyberspace realm thus becomes a Dreamtime, where the gods are being created for a new generation. Martine realises that she has been instrumental in placing many of the stories

into the original system, thus reinforcing !Xabbu's comment about the dream dreaming them. The Other has drawn from the stories that have been fed into it, from fairy tales to animé (for example the Neon Genesis Evangelion series) and recreates them with a new vitality, so adding a new take on the cultural sources of fantasy.

Otherland takes on a life of its own as a strong subcreation. It becomes intimately bound into its own mythology, requiring the stories to be retold to reinforce their potency. Rather than acting as a passive recipient, the world creates its own rules, to which the participants must react. Whereas the previous volumes concentrated on discovering the personalities behind the various masks, Williams here concentrates on discovering the true lay of the land and the paths made from its stories.

The Otherland series clearly stands out as an extraordinary series, not only in its groundbreaking approach to fantasy, but also in its diversity of characters. Tad Williams manages to weave a myriad of plots and subplots together, yet manages to avoid obvious endings and twists, as witnessed at the end of *Mountain of Black Glass*. This series will become one the 'must reads' of modern fantasy.

Jack Williamson – Terraforming Earth

Tor, 2001, 347pp, \$24.95 ISBN 0-312-87200-3

Reviewed by L. J. Hurst

This is a novel from a man who invented the word: Jack Williamson coined "terraforming" in his novel Seetee Ship (1942). Familiar as the idea may seem, it is still unfamiliar enough to be rejected by the spellchecker of my word processor, but Williamson might not be surprised that different technologies fail to stay in step. He published his first short story as long ago as 1928, yet has continued to produce science fiction that is still relevant – he also invented the term "genetic engineering", for instance, and where would the news headlines be without that term?

"Terraforming Earth" sounds oxymoronic. I assumed that it might have overtones like Gandhi's answer to a question on western civilisation (he thought that it would be a good idea), but in fact this novel is something different. The jacket blurb – "after a catastrophic impact by a huge meteor ... successive generations undertake the enormous challenge of restoring life to a barren planet" – is inaccurate. The significant thing about this story is that there is no succession. From a Moon-base hastily occupied at the time of the disaster, robots grow cloned children to return to Earth when the conditions seem possible. Over and over, new clones tell their stories of the return and their discoveries (the robots are not close enough to see what is happening in detail). And over and over, sometimes after only a half page – there is silence as a new disaster kills the clones. Of course, in the centuries between the robots'

decisions, geology and evolution take their manifold paths and each time the humans return they find something new.

With only five humans to clone from, and Williamson's implicit belief that germ-plasm is destiny, his characters may find different Earths on their return but their actions become more and more ritualised, as if it were not new individuals returning, but five souls being reborn without learning anything. So, about halfway through the novel, the different geologies and ecologies to which the humans return cease to matter, and instead, what were once separated lovers and failed relationships struggle to re-unite. Meanwhile, some life evolves into intelligence, as aliens from distant space take advantage of the robots' long periods of inactivity between generating new human explorers and plant themselves on the re-growing Earth.

With so much repetition we could be in the world of Nietzsche and his philosophies. I would have thought that the robots should have a copy of Olaf Stapledon's Last And First Men in their Moon library, as it uses this idea on a universal scale, but they don't. So to end on a point of comparison – anyone who likes Terraforming Earth should also read Last And First Men, to see how Williamson's view of human evolution diverges from something more visionary.

Jane Yolen – Sister Emily's Lightship

Tor, 2000, 300pp, \$13.95 ISBN 0-312-87523-1

Reviewed by Cherith Baldry

This is a collection of Jane Yolen's short fiction, most of which has appeared elsewhere; three stories out of twenty-eight are new, and some of the others are accessible, e.g. in the collections of modern fairy tales edited by Datlow & Windling.

Still, her fans will like to have the collection, and for those who don't yet know Yolen's work, this is a good place to start.

Emily Dickinson and space ships don't, at first glance, go together, but the title story in the collection, which deservedly won the Nebula, is superb. The contrast between the freedom of star travel and the restricted life led by the historical Emily Dickinson is worked out perfectly in the story, and

Dickinson's character walks out of her poetry and on to Yolen's page. For me, it's worth having the collection for this story alone.

The other Nebula Award-winning story here, 'Lost Girls' is Yolen's take on *Peter Pan*. The idea of replacing the Lost Boys with girls, and the idea of what it means to be Wendy, could have been excruciating in its political correctness. Instead, Yolen embodies feminist ideas while playing outrageous games with the original, and creates something both thought-provoking and very funny.

This isn't the only story where Jane Yolen plays with well-

known tales. 'Granny Rumple' is a new version of 'Rumplestiltskin', offering a different and darker view of what that story is saying, while 'The Thirteenth Fey' is another version of 'Sleeping Beauty'. Yolen makes us look at old themes in new ways. On a lighter note, 'The Gift of the Magicians, with Apologies to You Know Who' ties 'Beauty and the Beast' into the O. Henry story, and I can't begin to describe what she does to *Dick Whittington* in 'Dick W. and his Pussy; or, Tess and Her Adequate Dick'.

It's true of any collection that not all the stories will be equally successful. I have never liked the series of novels which began with *Sister Light, Sister Dark* as much as Yolen's

other work, so the story set in that world, 'Blood Sister' didn't make much impression on me. But I know very well that many people would disagree.

Something which comes across very strongly in this book is Yolen's deep knowledge and understanding of fairy tale and folk tale, her love for these forms, and the depth she sees in them. In 'The Traveler and the Tale' she explores their origins and their power. Her writing is wise and witty, and she handles language like an angel. It should be obvious by now that I liked this collection a lot. If you're new to her work, buy it and read it, or you'll never know what you're missing.

Timothy Zahn – Angelmass

Reviewed by Colin Bird

I admit that when I started reading this book I had in mind that the author is primarily known for his 'wookie' books rather than for his original science fiction, but *Angelmass*

demonstrates exactly why the LucasFilm MegaCorp signed this guy up. His prose is concise, his characters are bland and inoffensive and he marshals a multi-stranded narrative ably. I ended up enjoying this novel, despite my preconceptions, albeit with a few caveats which we'll come back to.

Angelmass is set in a universe dominated by the Pax, a militaristic federation of human colonies centred on Earth. However, one group of colonies defies the Pax. The Empyrium 'angels' (bizarre subatomic uses particles emitted by the black hole Angelmass) as honesty monitors. The angels appear to influence those exposed to their radiation following only ethical courses of action, a property which the Empyrium incorporates into a system government where potential leaders must consent to having their behaviour modified for the greater good. The Pax

fears the true nature of the angels is not so beneficent and that they are an alien invasion force which, after conquering the Empyrium, will turn its attention to the Pax.

Jereko Kosta, a Pax academic, is the man chosen to go undercover into the angel-controlled Empyrium, to determine

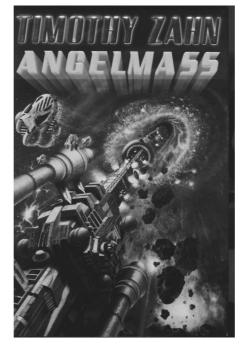
the true nature of the threat, and if possible, to neutralise it. But Kosta's task is complicated by the attentions of a teenage thief, Chandris, and the crew of an angel hunting spaceship.

Tor, 2001, 430pp, \$27.95 ISBN 0-312-87828-1

It's a diverting enough tale and the moral questions posed by the angels (a strange meeting of particle physics and religion) are intriguingly developed up to a point and then conveniently dropped so that Zahn can cut loose an almighty space battle climax which George Lucas would be proud of. It's this trade-off between widescreen action and in-depth character motivation where the book suffers. Zahn seems unable to tackle the true implications of the public acceptance of a race of alien ethical mind police. And I can rarely remember a spy novel that musters so little tension as to whether the hero's duplicity will be exposed.

This is comfortable fiction. And read as such it is fast moving, sprinkled with a few tantalisingly original ideas and

passes the time engagingly just like a good summer blockbuster movie.





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

Chris Bunch and Allan Cole – Sten 7: Vortex

Orbit, 2001, 403pp, £5.99 ISBN 1-84149-082-2

Chris Bunch and Allan Cole - Sten 8: Empire's End

Orbit, 2001, 522pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-84149-083-0

The final two volumes in this "action packed sf adventure" series featuring Sten, Imperial bodyguard, spy, assassin, renegade and adventurer, against a backdrop of a galactic empire riven by chaos and civil war. Stuart Carter reviewed the first two volumes in the

series, Sten and The Wolf Worlds in Vectors 213 and 215 respectively.

Ben Bova -The Precipice

NEL, 2001, 439pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-340-76961-0 The Precipice is Book One of Bova's 'The Asteroid Wars', and was reviewed in the Hodder and Stoughton hardback edition by Mark Greener in V217. A curiously old fashioned story about entrepreneurial asteroid mining against a backdrop of a ailing Earth, Mark felt, "The Precipice harks back to the sf's good old days. It's a galactic romp in the tradition of golden age sf. [...] like the New Wave, cyberpunk and slipstream never happened". On the downside, Mark observed "the premise is debatable, the characterisation thin and verging on sexist" but carries through because "Bova is a remarkable storyteller. The narrative pace carries you through with almost irresistible force."

Mark Chadbourn – Always Forever

Gollancz, 2001, 451pp, £10.99 ISBN 0-575-07254-7

Mark Chadbourn - Darkest Hour

Gollancz, 2001, 467pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-85798-766-7

The final two volumes of Chadbourn's Arthurian-flavoured 'Age of Misrule' dark fantasy trilogy, which began with *World's End* (reviewed in V209). *Darkest Hour*, the second volume, was previously reviewed by Cherith Baldry in V216, and is now released in mass market edition to coincide with the trade paperback publication of the concluding volume, *Always Forever*.

Simon Clarke - Night of the Triffids

New English Library, 2001, 469pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-340-76601-8 Thirty years after Bill Masen woke to a world gone blind and a monstrous vegetable threat brought to Earth by a meteor shower, his son David wakes to a world plunged again into darkness and in which an old, but not quite forgotten, enemy stirs... This sequel to Wyndham's classic was first reviewed in its hardback edition by Mark Plummer in V219, who felt "Clark's book does seem to have been written out of a genuine love and admiration for Wyndham's work, but it can't capture the power of the original."

Philip K. Dick - VALIS

Gollancz (SF Masterworks 43), 2001, 271pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-85798-339-4 A masterpiece of philosophical and cosmological sf or the first signs of a man finally going off the edge? Endlessly fascinating, even twenty years after publication, as Dick (who appears in the book both as himself and as the hapless Horselover Fat – an etymological play on his own name) attempts to come to terms with what appears to be a divine revelation from a mysterious intelligence calling itself VALIS (Vast Active Living Intelligence System). Whether you regard this stage of Dick's career as deeply profound or dotty, Dick's wry wit and mapcap humour shine though even his darker speculations. A deserved classic.

E.R. Eddison – Mistress of Mistresses

Gollancz (Fantasy Masterworks 21), 2001, 401pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-575-07284-9 King Mezentius is at the end of a long reign, but leaves a weakling heir to the throne of the Three Kingdoms. Duke Barganax and Horius Parry, the terrifying vicar of Rerek plot that the new king's reign will be much shorter than his father's. Between them stands Lessingham, Parry's cousin, trusted by both sides, while behind all is the Lady Fiorinda, waiting to test her own powers. First published in 1935, Eddison's tale of treachery intrigue and magic is described by Gwyneth Jones as "Sumptuous costume drama, sinewy and rich archaic language, strange passionate deeds of nobility and intrigue." (and whose own recent novel *Bold As Love* (Gollancz 2001) features a character called Fiorinda.)

Steven Erikson - The Deadhouse Gates

Bantam, 2001, 960pp, £6.99 ISBN 0-553-81311-0 This is the mass-market edition of the second volume in Erikson's dense and elliptical 'The Malazan Book of the Fallen' series. Both the first two volumes were reviewed by Vikki Lee France, starting with Gardens of the Moon (V209) and the trade paperback edition of The Deadhouse Gates in V214 before finally conceding defeat at not being able to connect to the series at all: "[While] the various groups and the stories they are involved in work very well ...there is simply too much going on and [the story] jumps around all over the place and from one group to another without ever really resolving anything".

David Feintuch - Children of Hope

Orbit, 2001, 650pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-84149-070-9 The seventh volume in the 'Seafort Saga' brings the war with the aliens to a conclusion, but leaving a ruined Earth, its ecology and economy shattered and the outer colonies all but abandoned. Time is running out for the colonists of Hope Nation, who finds themselves on their own, and sliding towards a civil war that even Nicholas Seafort may not be able to avert.

Christopher Golden - The Lost Slayer, Part 1: Prophecies

Pocket Books, 2001, 136pp, £2.99 ISBN 0-7434-3019-0

Christopher Golden – *The Lost Slayer, Part 2: Dark Times*Pocket Books, 2001, 138pp, £2.99 ISBN 0-7434-3020-4

The first two parts of a serial novel tie-in to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and chronologically set somewhere around the beginning of the fourth season, *The Lost Slayer* sends Buffy into an alternate future Sunnydale – one ruled by vampires, and whose Scooby Gang is a meaner and more battle-hardened bunch than the one in her own time. Two further parts, *King of the Dead* and *Original Sins*, are set for publication in October and November.

Brian Lumley - Psychomech 🛄

Tor, 2001, 334pp, \$15.95 ISBN 0-312-85371-8 With perhaps unfortunate timing, this is a US reprint of the first of Lumley's mid-1980s 'Psychomech' trilogy (*Psychomech, Psychosphere* and *Psychamok*), which starts with the protagonist, Richard Garrison, losing his sight in a terrorist bomb attack. But does the offer of dying millionaire Thomas Schroder, whose life Garrison saved, to restore his sight come with a catch?

Wil McCarthy - The Collapsium

Gollancz, 2001, 325pp, £6.99 ISBN1-85798-326-2 "[A] veritable box of delights" was the opinion of Vector reviewer Andrew Seaman, reviewing the trade paperback first edition of McCarthy's second novel in V215, and drawing comparisons with the mixture of almost magical exotic technology (including the collapsium of the title – formed from particle-sized black holes) and rules of etiquette in works such as Moorcock's 'Dancers At the End of Time' sequence and Walter Jon Williams' Aristoi. McCarthy spins a sense-of-wonder story of near catastrophe caused by ambitious rivalry structured on a far-future fairytale of manners and morality underpinned by speculative edge scientific ideas and references.

Elizabeth Moon – Against the Odds

Orbit, 2001, 548pp, £6.99 ISBN 1-84149-079-2 In the 7th and final of volume of 'The Serrano Legacy', the Imperial Fleet of the Familias Regnant is tearing itself apart in the mutiny which erupted in the previous volume, *Change of Command*, while Esmay Suiza-Serrano finds herself the victim of Family politics, and unable to prevent herself being drawn into the conflict.

Stan Nicholls - Warriors of the Tempest

Gollancz, 2001, 280pp, £5.99 ISBN 1-85798-562-1 The third book in Stan Nicholls' 'Orcs, First Blood' series now in mass market paperback edition. This was reviewed on first publication by Kathy Taylor in V216, who praised the book and the series as a whole: "[M]ore than just an excellent fantasy adventure [...] Stan Nicholls has something to say."

Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc - Tim Burton

Pocket Essentials, 2001, 96pp, £3.99 ISBN 1-903047-62-5 A handy and informative little reference to the work of the man responsible for such splendid and visually arresting gems as Edward Scissorhands, Beetlejuice, The Nightmare Before Christmas, Mars Attacks!, Ed Wood and Sleepy Hollow. Rapidly updated at the last minute for the release of Burton's remake of Planet of the Apes which gets a qualified vote of approval from the authors.

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro - Come Twilight

Tor, 2001, 479pp, \$17.95 tpb ISBN 0-312-87371-9 Continuing Yarbro's four-and-a-half-millennia-long biography of the vampire Count Saint-Germain, which was reviewed by Brian Stableford in V217, lauding it as "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 scupulous morality and - most effectively of all - to ardent compassion." Come Twilight finds its undead protagonist caught up in the bloody transition of sixth century Spain from the worship of old gods and animal sacrifice to the newer religions of Christianity and Islam and through to the resurgence of Christendom in the twelfth century. As the events of history unfold, Saint-Germain is also attempting to undo the havoc caused by his hasty but well-meaning siring of the beautiful and tempestuous Csimenae.

S.M Stirling – T2: Infiltrator

Gollancz, 2001, 389pp, £9.99 ISBN 0-575-07155-9 This is a trade paperback spin-off from James Cameron's two Terminator films. After the events of Terminator 2: Judgement Day, Sarah and John Connor flee to South America, but then Sarah spots what she thinks is another 'Arnie' Terminator. However, this turns out be not a robot but a man, Dieter, on whom the Cyberdyne robots were modelled. Apparently Cyberdyne is back up and running, and so Sarah, Connor and Dieter must go back to finish the job. But another, even more highly developed (and 'female') Terminator unit stands in their way. Just how closely Infiltrator models the storyline of the new Terminator film remains to be seen.

Vector #220 – Index of Books Reviewed

Poul Anderson – Mother of Kings [AA]	15	S.T. Joshi – A Dreamer and a Visionary [GW]	24
Ray Anthony – Empress [KT]	16	Mercedes Lackey – Brightly Burning [FG]	24
Piers Anthony – How Precious Was That While [ASaw]	1 <i>7</i>	Stephen Lawhead – The Mystic Rose [IE]	24
Greg Bear – The Forge of God [CA]	1 <i>7</i>	Michelle Le Blanc and Colin Odell- Tim Burton [P]	35
Ben Bova – The Precipice [P]	34	Ursula Le Guin - The Lathe of Heaven [CAKG]	25
Paul Brandon – Swim the Moon [CBal]	1 <i>7</i>	Charles de Lint – Forests Of The Heart [ST]	25
Steven Brust – Issola [TB]	1 <i>7</i>	Brian Lumley - Psychomech [P]	35
Jack Cohen & Ian Stewart- Wheelers [GSD]	31	Wil McCarthy – The Collapsium [P]	35
Chris Bunch and Allan Cole – Sten 7: Vortex [P]	34	David Mackay - The Fantasy Role-Playing Game [ASaw]	26
Chris Bunch and Allan Cole – Sten 8: Empire's End [P]	34	Jeff Mariotte & Nancy Holder– Unseen – The Burning [GW]	22
Mark Chadbourn – Always Forever [P]	35	Patricia A. McKillip – The Riddle-Master's Game [LB]	26
Mark Chadbourn – Darkest Hour [P]	35	Ron Miller and Frederick C. Durant III – The Art of	
Simon Clarke – Night of the Triffids [P]	35	Chesley Bonestall [SJ]	21
Michael Cobley – Shadowkings [VL]	18	L.E. Modesitt, Jr. – Empire & Ecolitan [SC]	27
Allan Cole and Chris Bunch– Sten 7: Vortex [P]	34	Elizabeth Moon – Against the Odds [P]	35
Allan Cole and Chris Bunch– Sten 8: Empire's End [P]	34	Ward Moore – Bring the Jubilee [MG]	27
Paul Cornell – Something More [RWH]	18	Stan Nicholls – Warriors of the Tempest [P]	35
Greg Cox - The Rise and Fall of Khan Noonien Singh [LHat]	19	Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc – Tim Burton [P]	35
Philip K. Dick –VALIS [P]	35	Andre Norton and Rosemary Edgehill	
Frederick C. Durant III and Ron Miller		– Leopard in Exile [PH]	28
The Art of Chesley Bonestall [SJ]	21	Gerry O'Brien – Planting Out [CH]	28
E.R. Eddison – Mistress of Mistresses [P]	35	David Pringle (ed.) – The Ant-Men of Tibet,	
Rosemary Edgehill and Andre Norton		and Other Stories [ASea]	28
– Leopard in Exile [PH]	28	Mickey Zucker Reichert – Flightless Falcon [LHat]	29
Steven Erikson – The Deadhouse Gates [P]	35	Jessica Rydill – Children of the Shaman [KT]	29
David Feintuch – Children of Hope [P]	35	Susan Shwartz – Second Chances [AF]	30
Raymond E. Feist & William Forstchen		Robert Silverberg – The Stochastic Man [NMB]	30
– Honoured Enemy [VL]	19	Paul Simpson and Ruth Thomas – Farscape: The Illustrated	
Jack Finney – Time and Again [CBr]	20	Season 2 Companion [SJ]	31
Michael Flynn – In the Country of the Blind [SJ]	20	Thomas E. Sniegoski – Angel: Soul Trade [GW]	22
William Forstchen and Raymond E. Feist		Ian Stewart & Jack Cohen – Wheelers [GSD]	31
Honoured Enemy [VL]	19	S.M. Stirling – T2: Infiltrator [P]	36
Jane Frank – The Art of Richard Powers [SJ]	21	Peter Swirski – Between Literature and Science [BS]	32
Fred Gambino – Ground Zero [SJ]	21	Ruth Thomas and Paul Simpson – Farscape: The Illustrated	
Christopher Golden – Spike & Dru: Pretty Maids All in		Season 2 Companion [SJ]	31
a Row [GW]	22	Liz Williams – The Ghost Sister [PH]	32
Christopher Golden – The Lost Slayer, Part 1: Prophecies [P]	35	Tad Williams – Sea of Silver Light [IE]	32
Christopher Golden – The Lost Slayer, Part 2: Dark Times [P]	35	Jack Williamson – Terraforming Earth [LJH]	33
Ann Halam – Dr Franklin's Island [TB]	22	Chelsea Quinn Yarbro – Come Twilight [P]	36
Harry Harrison – 50 In 50 [LJH]	22	Jane Yolen – Sister Emily's Lightship [CBal]	33
Nancy Holder & Jeff Mariotte – Unseen – The Burning [GW]	22	Timothy Zahn – Angelmass [CBir]	34
Nalo Hopkinson – Midnight Robber [FM]	23		

Reviewer's Key: AA = Andrew A. Adams; AF = Alan Fraser; ASaw = Andy Sawyer; ASea = Andrew Seaman; BS = Brian Stableford; CA = Chris Amies; CAKG = Carol Ann Kerry-Green; CBal = Cherith Baldry; CBir = Colin Bird; CBr = Claire Brialey; CH = Chris Hill; FG = Fiona Grove; FM = Farah Mendelsohn; GSD = Gary S. Dalkin; GW = Gary Wilkinson; IE = Ian Emsley; KT = Kathy Taylor; LB = Lynne Bispham; LHat = Lesley Hatch; LJH = L.J. Hurst; MG = Mark Greener; NMB = N.M. Browne; P = Particles; PH = Penny Hill; RWH = Robert W. Hayler; SC = Stuart Carter; SJ = Steve Jeffery; ST = Sue Thomason; TB = Tanya Brown; VL = Vikki Lee.