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The Review of paperback SF

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## ★ PAPERBACK INFERNO ★

## Paperback Purgatory

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Hurst, Tom A. Jones, Paul Kincaid, Ken Lake,  
John Newsinger, Maureen Porter, Andy Sawyer,  
Martyn Taylor, Steven Tew, Sue Thomason,  
Mark Valentine.

**ARTWORK:-**

Colin Davies (cover)  
Steve Bruce (p.3; p.13)  
Keith Brooke (p.16)

Reorganisation at Century Hutchinson has  
resulted in the appearance of another new SF  
imprint, 'Legend'. The first Legend book is  
Greg Bear's EON, published as a large-format  
paperback (price £4.95). Legend are calling  
EON "the greatest science fiction novel of  
our time" and are planning a monthly programme  
of three new paperbacks, supported by regular  
releases from the Arrow, Hamlyn and Century  
backlists, and, next year, a move into hard-  
back publishing. They say "the timing of the  
move is dictated primarily by the number and  
quality of the new generation of writers now  
entering the field". I hope to review more  
books from Legend in future issues: EON will  
be reviewed in PI 70.

Perceptive readers will notice a slight re-  
arrangement of the contents in this issue of  
PI; those of you with a mathematical bent  
might even realise that there are slightly  
fewer reviews than there have been of late.  
This - for once! - has nothing to do with my  
health but is to do with a temporary extra  
capacity in the magazine reviews and an extra-  
long 'Closer Encounters'.

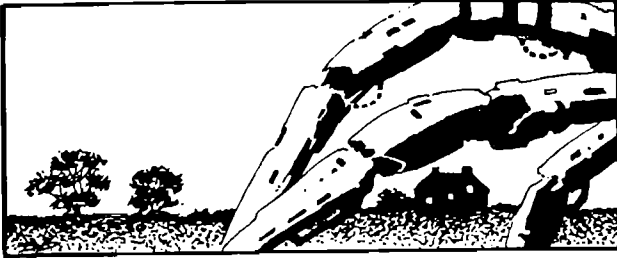
Edward James is back with a double dose of  
Analog/Asimov's, and from this issue we wel-  
come Richmond Hunt and the return of Fantasy  
& Science Fiction. I do feel that coverage of  
the magazine field is an important part of  
what PI ought to be doing, so I'm pleased that  
we've got back to F&SF again even though it's  
meant that various reviews - including two I  
KNOW I promised last time and about half the  
'capsules' I'd planned for this issue - are  
now squeezed out until next issue. I still  
think there's plenty of meat this time round;  
do let me know what you think as I welcome  
feedback even though I've not been able to  
run a proper lettercolumn over the past few  
issues.

Phil Nicholls and his word-processor are  
back too, so PI should look a bit less messy  
than the last issue. Thanks to all the team  
for bearing with me - and perhaps this is an  
opportune moment to wish everyone a very  
happy Winter Solstice and New Year. To all  
you writers (without whom...etc.): keep those  
quills scribbling at the parchment! all ye  
publishers - keep the parcels coming and make  
them SF! and all readers - keep reading: the  
others need the money! Waes Hael to you all.

On a more serious note: recently I start-  
ed receiving a spate of open/empty parcels.  
I'm sure this was due to nothing more sin-  
ister than excessive force used by the GPO  
is shipping them round the country, but I may  
not have received some review copies which  
have been sent to me, and this may have ex-  
tended to other mail. If you think I may be  
ignoring you, I may not have received the  
mail in the first place. (I think this is  
over now, but you see how easily paranoia  
grows...) If this might be the case, let me  
know.

Finally: PI doesn't - by definition -  
review hardbacks, but every rule has an ex-  
ception and it is the festive season... so  
can I draw your attention to the first illu-  
strated edition (it says here) of the Anglo-  
Saxon poem BEOWULF, with text by Julian Glover  
and illustrations by Sheila Mackie (intro-  
duction by Magnus Magnusson). Julian Glover  
conceived a one-man performance of BEOWULF  
(reasoning correctly enough that epic poems  
in the oral tradition ought to be heard/per-  
formed, not read) and the text here is that  
which he adapted from various translations  
of the whole text. The colourful, complex  
plates by Mackie, based upon Anglo-Saxon art-  
ifacts, are illuminations rather than direct  
illustrations; symbolic and mysterious. The  
book (published by Alan Sutton) isn't cheap  
at £14.95 but it's worth consideration if  
the story of how Beowulf fought the monster  
Grendel and Grendel's mother and was event-  
ually killed by a dragon has ever thrilled  
you, and if you haven't read BEOWULF before  
you might find something like modern epic  
fantasy - only better, because it was firmly  
rooted in the real rather than imaginative  
lives of the people who first heard it.

## Closer Encounters



Philip K. Dick - - PUTTERING ABOUT IN A SMALL LAND (Paladin, 1987, 286pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

For years through the '50s and '60s Philip K. Dick wrote two SF and two mainstream novels a year. He found publishers for his SF; of the other work only CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST (1975) was published in his lifetime. PUTTERING ABOUT is the third mainstream novel to be published posthumously. The cover description is correct: this book is a masterpiece. Dick's paranoia was obviously justified as far as his treatment from publishers was concerned. How could they ignore work of this quality? Dick is going to become one of those authors whose position is only recognised after his or her death. I don't know if there was a plot to force him to abandon the mainstream, as this novel is a clear critique of U.S. post-war civilian developments leading to the consumer society. (Though writers like Grace Metallious and Charles Mergendahl did write novels revealing its vacancy and unhappiness, they did it without Dick's ability.) Some of the ideas and locations of this book were re-worked in his SF, but that re-working raises another question: did using an SF medium weaken Dick's argument, rather than elaborate and enforce it?

PUTTERING ABOUT describes a couple who work in California during WW II, then in the peace open a television sales and repair shop. They are moving apart. Roger Lindahl has been psychologically wrecked by growing up on a poor farm in the dustbowl and his wife cannot appreciate the hurt. Through their young son they meet another couple - he a go-ahead businessman, she a sort of earth-mother. Part of the publisher's blurb says 'the conclusion has the inevitability of a Greek tragedy' but the events of the final chapters I found unexpected.

The book is about the social implications of technology - how jobs in Californian aircraft factories were created by war, disappeared after but whose loss was made good by the social and economic consequences of television and white goods etc. The Lindahls meet the growth with too little capital and need more. Hence the easy entry of the other couple. However, Dick did not require an SF medium to deal with the effects of new technology, Lindahl's neurosis. Everything was available in contemporary life. He did not have to extrapolate the present into an SF future. Sometimes, at least, it seems SF has actually blurred reality rather than clarified it. This novel is the clear view of which DR BLOODMONEY is the confused and confusing SF correlative. The SF work set against the same background does not have the same power. As the mainstream novels become available Dick may be seen to have written allegories of his own time rather than prophecies of another future. However, by casting them in the genre he may have

made them of less significance than his subjects deserved, rather in the way that Nostradamus' quatrains are supposed to be hidden. Nostradamus may have known that 'In 1963 a President Kennedy will be killed in the USA' but if he did he did not write it down as such. Dick may have known that 'Life for many Americans now is typified by the terrible lives of the Lindahls', but he was not allowed to publish that, and the message was corrupted when it appeared in an SF format.

This relationship between a theme handled in a contemporary setting and an SF milieu is obviously one that will receive a much wider study over the next few years as Dick's other books finally appear. Dick's stature will be raised because of these works. Why a masterpiece such as this could only appear in an improper form is a question that must be answered. Who were the guilty people?

Harlan Ellison (ed.) - - DANGEROUS VISIONS (Gollancz, 1987, 544pp, £6.95)

Gardner Dozois (ed.) - - THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF BEST NEW SCIENCE FICTION (Robinson Publishing, 1987, 615pp, £4.95)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

How can we judge a mould-breaking anthology? One way, perhaps, is to look at stories which claim to have broken taboos, to be stories which otherwise wouldn't have been printed. If we're now dealing with themes which, thanks to DV, are commonplace, could we not look back at the original anthology and wonder what all the fuss was about? Or in other words, could the success or failure of DV lie in the possibility that the stories now don't shock, aren't 'dangerous'? So, although the Ellison and Dozois anthologies are not even meant to be competition, we might expect some sort of indirect influence. If DV had any effect, you might expect to see it mirrored in a contemporary 'best of..' anthology on the basis of 'what was once rebellion becomes part of the mainstream.'

1967, when Ellison assembled '32 soothsayers' to kick the shit out of SF's complacency, was a long time ago... In fact, the most dated part of the book is the introduction and the editorial matter. Whatever happened to the 'speculative fiction' Ellison beats the drum so loudly for? It certainly didn't drive out the Old Wave, judging by the success of ex-Golden Agers since, nor did it put up much of a defence against the plodding blockbusters of identikit 'in-the-glorious-tradition-of' fantasy. And dear old Harlan goes overboard so much about what Terrific Writers all these people are that you wonder no why half of them haven't got Nobel Prizes while the other half command six figure advances for their cookbooks. It's worth pointing out that DV wasn't specifically a showcase for 'young, unconventional' talents (some of its contributors were no spring chickens even in 1967) but for breaking down editorially-imposed taboos and encouraging 'new writing styles, bold departures, unpopular thoughts' - and different stories. Nevertheless, even allowing for Harlan's hyperbole, it's worth thinking about what people did after DV. If inclusion in the Nicholls ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION or Wingrove SCIENCE FICTION SOURCE BOOK is indicative of a certain output of SF - then for Howard Rodman, James Cross or Larry Eisenberg, not a lot. Others - David R. Bunch, Joe L. Hensley, Sonja Dorman, Kris Neville - are writers who warrant entry, often great praise (Bunch is 'one of the field's

true originals', says the SOURCE BOOK) but for whatever reason (scanty output, concentration on other fields) are not household names in SF. Others have quite simply not lived up to what DV seemed to promise. Philip Jose Farmer's contribution, 'Riders of the Purple Wage', is this writer as his parodic best. His recent fiction disappoints, partly because he epitomises the SF writer who has brilliant ideas but rarely extends them thoroughly or consistently. 'Riders' - the longest story in DV - shows him as a better writer than many now think. True, I have a weakness for OTT parody (as in the opening dream-episode and the passage entitled 'Sexual Implications of the Charge of the Light Brigade' but beneath it all is also a wise comment on the possibilities of a society where affluence, education and art are open to all.

In many ways, 'Riders' is the archetype DV story. Among the assumptions it makes are that people have at least heard of Joyce, FINNEGAN'S WAKE and the structures and language therein, Freud and the jargon of psychoanalysis, and that they won't faint with horror at sexual-symbolic dream passages and will stick with a story which is unconventionally written. I think it's a success: I'm also prepared to entertain suggestions that it's not. What's important is that stories like this get published. Would any SF magazine today publish a story like this, save INTERZONE?

Other writers - Ellison himself, Dick, Ballard, Brunner, Aldiss, Delany - have consolidated their reputations and in some (if not all) cases their contributions are among the best. Leiber's 'Gonna Roll the Bones' won both Nebula and Hugo awards and Delany's 'Aye, and Gomorrah' won a Nebula. Most of the DV writers are writing, and known, today; some fashionable, others not. For what it's worth, Knight and Silverberg both have contributions to the Dozois anthology.

But how 'dangerous' are these 'visions'? It seems that when asked to pick a 'dangerous' theme, SF writers choose Sex or Religion. Yet most of the DV stories which deal with these areas come across as if they are deliberately avoiding any controversial explorations. Is this the taming hand of time I suggested in my first paragraph, or are they just not very good stories? Del Rey's rather trite 'Evensong', for instance, with God on the run from Man, is nothing more than a version of the 'Shaggy God', and virtually all the stories which involve religion or God aim and hit at the kind of frivolous or bathetic tone we see in that kind of thing. Exceptions are Silverberg's less overt story of manipulation and conscience, 'Flies', Dick's 'Faith of Our Fathers' with its bleak yet humanitarian ending, and perhaps Hensley's 'Lord Randy, My Son' which asks whether a Messiah born into a world of mass communication would not 'ripen angry'.

Sex? Carol Emshwiller's 'Sex and/or Mr Morrison' is a truly original use of sexual imagery in a study of 'the alien', and Theodore Sturgeon's 'If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your Sister?' is, despite its joky title, effectively provoking. De-

lany's brilliant story shows one of the few examples of a new sexual variation. But the 'dangerous' sexual element to Anderson's 'Eutopia' is a superficial element to provide the reason for a conflict in a rather good examination of the nature of Utopias, while Henry Slesar's 'Ersatz' is just a dramatisation of a crude and offensive dirty joke.

Other writers preferred to take on SF's role as questioner of social mores. Pohl provided a sadly apposite parable about xenophobia while Sladek showed a society dependant on machines for happiness at the expense of feelings or creativity - not an original theme but a powerful and witty version. Other possible subjects are (with hindsight?) surprisingly conspicuous by their absence. Dick's story is

the token 'drug' story (though Dick, or at least the Dick who is a character in RADIO FREE ALB-EMUTH was to deny the suggestion that it was written on acid). Political dissent is virtually absent. Given the political ferment in '60s America, this seems odd. Dick seems obliged to apologise for his premise of an Iron Curtain victory in World War Three, while Vietnam is mentioned once, almost in passing, when introducing Spinrad's 'Carcinoma Angels'. Perhaps political dissent was the real 'dangerous vision'? Anyone can write dirty. But to ATTACK CAPITALISM? in a SCIENCE FICTION STORY?

In retrospect, Sonja Dorman's feminist parable, 'Go, Go, Go, Said the Bird' is one of the most interesting stories of the anthology, signposting future concerns of the genre.

Looking back, then, at DV, it's fascinating to see the hype at work. But the fact remains - despite at least two stories which should never have been allowed near the book and a slew of mediocrities, it's worn extremely well. Proof of that being that I've not even mentioned many stories - by Aldiss, Ballard, Laumer, Bloch, Ellison himself - that I enjoyed re-reading, while in some cases I've not stressed how good some of the stories I have mentioned are. Gollancz have done well by reprinting DV, even if the practice of using back-cover endorsements from authors featured in the anthology is a bit dubious.

If DV was about stories which would have difficulty getting published, Dozois' BEST NEW SCIENCE FICTION is a reprint anthology of stories which have been published - for the most part, in mainstream SF outlets. (By far the highest proportion - 11 out of 27 - from IASFM, by the way. Who edits IASFM? ... Well, well.) It's a more parochial collection, with the vast majority of writers American and the one story which saw print in a UK magazine (Gibson's 'Winter Market', INTERZONE 15, Spr. '86) getting a US credit. It shows a more open attitude to unconventional themes and stances than was evident 20 years ago - Shepard's 'R & R' shows the USA's 'next war' in Central America in fine-focus detail - an excellent story - and the sexual aspects of 'Surviving' (by Judith Moffett) might well have put editors off a couple of decades ago - and this, to some extent, answers some of the questions I began with. The standard of writing and imagination is in many cases higher than in DV - I'm less sure about the standard of creativity.

The main difference in approach that the two anthologies take is probably that the energy of Ellison's 'New Wave' has been regrouped and invested with a new stance and title. Cyberpunk is in strong evidence here - Gibson's story, Cadigan's 'Pretty Boy Cross-over', Williams' 'Video Star', Kelly's 'The Prisoner of Chillon', although Bruce Sterling's 'The Beautiful and the Sublime' is in lighter vein, in a future different from the usual cyberpunk scene. The problem is that we're faced with such similarities of vision and approach that after a while it all begins to look identical. Even though you enjoy each individual story, something is lost.

Some stories are hardly evidence (I hope) of the best SF writing. Many of them are Fantasy rather than SF. The SF element of John Kessel's 'The Pure Product' actually makes it a weaker story. I haven't the faintest idea what Neal Barrett jr's 'Sallie C.' is about, but like Howard Waldrop's 'Fair Game' it seems to belong to that often irritating sub-genre which incorporates 'iconic' figures from history or popular culture. And yes, I identified with Lewis Shiner's 'Jeff Beck'. But 'best'?

There are, though, interesting resonances with DV. Edward James points out (PI 61) that the SF content of Connie Willis's 'Chance' is 'nil', and 'Chance' is but one of several stories which have a tone which sits oddly in an

SF magazine (though this may be the fault of the SF magazines and their readers: 'Chance' is a good story.) Perhaps that's the answer to my question about speculative fiction - it's alive and well and living in Asimov's! An interesting thought.

There are some very good stories here, make no mistake, and a good wide range. Greg Bear's 'Tangents' speculates about the Fourth Dimension, Tanith Lee's 'Into Gold' is a historical (Dark Ages) fantasy which connects with a larger body of legend, Harry Turtlelove's 'And So To Bed' gives us Samuel Pepys writing 'On the Origin of Species' in an alternate London. And I repeat: The Williams, the Gibson, the Cadogan, the Sheppard, the Sterling, the Kelly... all for £5! However, there's a sense - not so much of sameness but that a disparate bunch of writers are writing

today's thing - throughout the book. If you're sympathetic to it, then fine. It is, though, a contrast to DV's deliberately eclectic approach. I enjoyed very many of the stories very much indeed, but even when I was reading a 'good' story I wondered if it was the best of the year. Didn't Ian Watson have several stories in IASFM in 1986?

In their different ways, both books are ones I'd give to someone wanting to know what SF is about. Dozois' survey of the year in the SF world is excellent and useful. But, despite its gushing and its missing the target and its flaws, DV is the more adventurous. And considering it is twenty years old, that's not a bad achievement.

# R E V I E W S

Jane Yolen - - - - - TALES OF WONDER  
(Futura/Orbit, 1987. 275pp. £2.95)

(Reviewed by David V Barrett)

This is a book of beauty and pain, a book of fables that grow from life-experience, that take a love or a loss and weave a tale around it so that the reader can share the joy or heartbreak of the characters and recognise in it their own.

Some are retellings of old stories from a different angle: the flight of Icarus, the great silkie of Sule Skerry, the origins of Arthur's Guinevere, "The Gwynhfar", the white one: "like a great white slug, she never did learn speech or to hold her bowels." Others are Yolen's own, including "In the Hall of Grief" and "Cards of Grief", that make of mourning an art form.

In her introduction Yolen writes of the creation of a story:

"For any storyteller there are two starting places for a tale. One is physical, touchable, knowable and immediate. The other lies deep in the hidden recesses of the heart... The Japanese have a word for it: *saku-taku-no-ki*. *Saku* -- the special sound a mother hen makes tapping on the egg with her beak. *Taku* -- the sound the chick makes tapping from within. *No-ki* -- the moment when the tappings come together... The egg cracks open. New life emerges. In just that way a story begins, with the physical tapping on the outside and the answering emotion tapping from within."

It's that sort of touch which makes this collection speak to the writer as well as the reader -- but I am still not sure whether Yolen's introduction exemplifies extreme arrogance or humility:

"Outside my own family and friends, it is not the 'I' who matters but the tales told on the page. If they can then leap from the page onto the lips of a dedicated oral teller and live on, kept alive by the folk process of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, that is glory indeed."

Yes, a good tale-teller is part of the oral tradition, but to anticipate such immortality is somewhat dubious. There's no doubt that these are excellent tales -- I heartily recommend the book, particularly for reading in front of the fire on a cold winter's night -- but few if any of them linger still in my mind three months after reading them -- and that is the only true test of a timeless fable.

Lisa Tuttle - - - A SPACESHIP BUILT OF STONE  
(The Women's Press, 1987. 192pp. £4.50)

(Reviewed by David V Barrett)

I nearly cried during the first story, "No Regrets"; its unhappiness touched several very personal, deeply buried memories. The pain's still there: we only kid ourselves when we think it's gone away, time's the great healer, we get over it. It hasn't, it isn't, we don't.

Ten stories, and each one reaches inside, finds something in you that it recognises, and meshes with it: sad, bitter, tragic, sexually disturbing, haunting, worrying, frightening, emotionally harrowing, lonely, nightmare. A one or two word response to each story; but many apply to several.

In "No Regrets", Miranda returns to her old college 14 years on, and meets her old lover -- and his wife and child. They play the What if/If only game: What if we'd had a child/If only I'd not walked out... and Miranda begins to see and hear a child in her (formerly their) home...

Change, physical or psychological, is a major theme of many of the stories. In "The Hollow Man" a young woman has her suicided husband revived -- to find that he has absolutely no emotions, feelings or desires. In "The Cure" people are cured of language, willingly becoming dumb. In "Wives", Earth men treat the natives of another world as male-chauvinist-ideal wives, while in "The Other Kind" a human being on another planet feels no identity with other humans and wants to change into a native. "Mrs T", like Lisa Tuttle's "The Wound" in OTHER EDENS, is about changing sex.

The title story is a disturbing, almost paranoid glimpse at how aliens may be invading Earth even now, without our realising it. "The Bone Flute" is a beautiful, musical story, whose haunting quality, like that of many of the other stories, lingers long after its end.

"The Family Monkey" is an ambitious tale, the longest in the book, which spans several generations of a family and the alien who, alone of his species, lives with them, and is torn between taking on aspects of humanity or being himself: "To grow closer to one of them was to risk becoming too human, to risk losing what he really was. He would not be human, then, but only a freak."

Being a freak is being something differ-

ent, set apart from everyone else. As "The Birds of the Moon" says, "Each lives alone, and although groups may cluster together, may roost all together on one wall, each bird knows itself to be forever alone." This is the pain in A SPACESHIP BUILT OF STONE: the ultimate aloneness of every person, be they character, writer or reader.

This is very firmly an SF collection, but Lisa Tuttle has used the skills she has learnt through horror writing to create these psychologically disturbing stories. Like listening to a Leonard Cohen album, you've got to be in the right mood for it, and not try to rush it; but the emotional depth, the emotional harrowing and the emotional reward make it at times a sublime experience.

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Len Deighton - - - - - SS-GB  
(Triad Grafton, 1987, 402pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Ken Lake)

No way is this SF. It is, instead, a painstaking evocation of one small aspect of life in Britain in the 1940s - a Britain that, by a sheer fluke, we were never unlucky enough to experience.

After the speedy invasion and collapse of Britain - with one of the book's few false notes, Churchill's request for a ceasefire, when the old fox would have fought to the end - Detective Superintendent Douglas Archer finds himself at Scotland Yard working for the occupying power. From there on it's intrigue, murder, politics and doublecross all the way, with collaborators of every shade masquerading as honest men and true on both sides.

The style is sparse, allusive, taut and well suited to the subject; the reminders of those bygone days come almost as a shock - no biro, dead flies in abundance, the stinking filth of London's fogs, all add verisimilitude to the squalor of Occupied Britain. What does not convince is the characterisation - no-one would run the risk of arrest and death for the sake of a joking 'free speech' or from a refusal to face facts, for example.

But I recall a police officer in 1942 who was full of admiration for the 'New Germany' with its regimented life and its visionary propaganda - and most of us learned German as our second or third language at school all through the war years.

The basic plot concerns attempts to spring the King from the Tower; the Queen and Princesses are in New Zealand, and of course the abdicated former King Edward VIII is in the Bahamas with Wallis Simpson. And that's where the whole story lost my belief: in such circumstances, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor would have rallied the Commonwealth and enlisted American support, and the captive King would have lost all interest for the politicians and combatants alike.

Now there's an alternate history I would like to see written!

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Marvin Kaye & Parke Godwin - - - - - WINTERMIND  
(Orbit, 1987, 297pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

Sequel to THE MASTERS OF SOLITUDE, WINTERMIND covers the time up to the transition as City, centre of Technology/Knowledge, opens up to the pastoral paganism of Coven and the deepwoods. Although we are witnessing what is essentially a healing after generations of apartness, there are those who find it difficult to adjust, notably Shalane, wife of Arin, the Shando leader, who longs for her role of priestess and feels alienated by her

daughter Mady's obvious preference for City ways. And, of course, there are bandits and killers, such as Santee.

From the Fleeters - fishing folk on the coast - comes the legend of the Wintermind, and this becomes more than a story as Corian - in whom City and Coven attitudes seem to be taking deepest roots - seeks for the truth behind an ancient madness which has become a real threat. WINTERMIND suffers a bit from being obviously second part in a trilogy (Singer, who played such an important part in the previous book, is only briefly referred to here, but in contexts which suggest that a search for him is on the cards next time round) and the subtext of American Pastoralism is as near as dammit on the surface. However, it's still a very readable book, offering a well constructed and detailed future, with enough left blank or ambiguous to keep us waiting for the third (but, I hope, final) instalment.

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Joanna Russ - - - - - WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO...  
(The Women's Press, 1987, 170pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by David V Barrett)

I really disliked this book: the characters, none of them, including the narrator, at all real; the plot, such as it is; the style of writing, untidy and unhelpful.

Five women and three men crash on a planet. There are plans for a breeding programme for survival; the narrator doesn't like the idea. One of the men dies from angina. By half way through the book the narrator has killed all the others, not really for any good reason except spite, as her conscience admits to her later. The rest of the book she pisses in a stream, philosophises, reminisces, and has hallucinatory conversations with her victims and people from her past. Then she kills herself. She reckons the others were trying to stop her killing herself (she'd told them she wanted to die), so she kills them to stop them stopping her. She outlives all of them; maybe that's supposed to be ironic.

This strikes me as one of the most pointless books I've ever read. I'm told it was written as a feminist reply to a Poul Anderson story; fine, but it should be able to stand on its own, which it doesn't, and I certainly don't see anything in the slightest feminist about it, just some very unpleasant characters in a very unpleasant story. "There was a sort of cushiony, dreadful mess of arguing and pullings-apart and past lives all over the floor" (p152). Quite. Crap. Avoid.

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Gene Wolfe - - - - - SOLDIER OF THE MIST  
(Orbit, 1987, 335pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by David V Barrett)

SOLDIER OF THE MIST falls on the borderline between historical novel and fantasy. The Foreword sets the scene: a papyrus scroll found in the basement of the British Museum contains in archaic Latin the daily journal of one Latro, "a word that may mean brigand, guerilla, hired man, bodyguard or pawn", on his travels in 5th century BC Greece.

The journal is Latro's memory; each day he has no knowledge of who or where he is, who his companions are, or what his actions in the immediate past have been. He is encouraged to write down each day's happenings so that the following morning he can read his life.

The fantasy element comes from Latro's other peculiarity: he can see, talk to, even

make love with, the gods and goddesses which populate Greek myth.

The daily loss of memory is an interesting literary device (and also a traumatic reality for about 200 people in the UK alone). Wolfe uses it well, but there are always difficulties when a book has an unreliable narrator, and these are compounded by the wealth of confusing detail of Ancient Greece, which Wolfe fails to make as accessible as, say, Mary Renault does.

Not an easy book to read, and I wonder whether Wolfe's pursuit of a personal fascination with an idea and a period gets in the way of his penning a readable and understandable story. SOLDIER OF THE MIST is the first in a series; whether they will continue the unfinished story of Latro or explore other areas of the past I don't know, but I hope they're easier to read than this one.

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Roger Zelazny - - BLOOD OF AMBER (Avon, 1987, 215pp, \$3.50/Sphere, £2.75)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

'I am Merlin the pent, son of Corwin the lost, and my dream of light has been turned against me. I stalk the prison like my own ghost. I cannot let it end this way. Perhaps the next tunnel, or the next...'

So ended TRUMPS OF DOOM (1985), the sixth book of the 'Amber' series or the first book of the second 'Amber' series, depending upon how you look at it.

BLOOD OF AMBER opens with Our Hero (Merle Corey/Merlin of Amber/Corwin's kid) finding light at the end of one particular tunnel, and - after many misadventures - he finds himself in yet another fraught situation. This volume is something of a 'time waster', because few (if any) conclusions are reached; too many of its closely printed pages are given over to either the recapitulation of previous events or 'groundwork laying' for future happenings.

Once again, Merlin is bent on survival, vengeance, and power-for-its-own-sake - just like every other 'noble' in the Shadow worlds. There are a lot of fight scenes, so well/over described as to justify a title change to BLOODBATH OF AMBER. But I offer, in mitigation, the following paragraph, which, to me, sums up the whole cockeyed 'philosophy' behind the 'Amber' series:

'The four of us strode back toward Harbour Street. Interested bystanders got out of our way quickly. Someone was probably already robbing the dead behind us. Things fall apart; the center cannot hold. But what the hell, it's home.' (p.76)

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Robin McKinley - - IMAGINARY LANDS (Orbit, 1987, 246pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by John Newsinger)

Not everyone is a devotee of the short story. Personally, I seldom, if ever, finish a collection. What of IMAGINARY LANDS, then?

Not only did I actually finish this collection but I also regretted coming to the end. Of course, the collection is uneven. I found James Blaylock's and Patricia McKillip's contributions disappointing and was particularly unhappy with Michael de Larrabeiti's rather slight effort, although only because he is a children's writer for whom I have the utmost admiration. All the other stories are excellent, a number of them really memorable.

Peter Dickinson's story 'Flight', written as a pseudo-historical account of the White

Rock tribe and their role in Obango history is a marvellous exercise, successfully adapting the essay form as a vehicle for fantasy. The story leaves a real sense of loss, that a people so interesting, so stubbornly self-sufficient and independent should be so callously dispensed with and remain forever unknowable. How many people have suffered this fate in the modern world?

Robert Westall's story 'The Big Rock Candy Mountain' is much slighter in theme (and why one wonders would anyone want to save the Tsar from assassination?) but it is made more memorable by the quality of his writing, by his evocation of a lopsided Northwich and of the timeless salt-encrusted town beneath the ground.

Joan Vinge's 'Tam Lin' and Robin McKinley's 'The Stone Fey' are fairy stories that explore the process of disenchantment, the need to escape from the magical into the mundane for safety's sake. They both successfully realise the sense of loss that this escape inevitably involves.

Jane Yolen's superb 'Evian Steel' gives the Arthurian legend a powerful female dimension that leaves this reader longing for more. Lastly P.C. Hodgell provides a somewhat familiar story of an isolated keep on the frontier of a feudal world under threat from some Dark enemy. The desperate hunt through the shadowed corridors for the changer is most enjoyable.

All the stories are richly textured and successfully evoke a sense of place and of difference that makes the collection a literary experience likely to be remembered long after the details of the stories themselves have faded. I still have a problem however: I am left wishing that the stories I enjoyed most were more substantial, that they were books.

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William Gibson - - COUNT ZERO (Grafton, 1987, 335pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Maureen Porter)

If we didn't know what cyberpunk was before we read NEUROMANCER, well we certainly knew afterwards. Apart from achieving the impossible by making computer hacking seem interesting to the curious bystander, Gibson also gained the rare distinction of creating a believable computer-based society, not so far in our own future. He gave it colour and texture, atmosphere and depth - you could almost smell the refuse in the streets. It worked, and yet the images were much the same as you find in any modern deprived area; the street argot comes from our own past, not from any imagined future. Gibson effectively pulled a very fast con trick, we fell for it and it worked. NEUROMANCER rightly deserved the honours heaped upon it.

And then the tricky bit - how do you follow NEUROMANCER? You follow it with COUNT ZERO, capitalising on your readers' growing familiarity with the Sprawl and cyberspace. You set up an intricately plotted story with several intertwining threads, which eventually manage to meet in the same place in some sort of conclusion. On one hand, an industrial espionage expert arranges a scientist's defection from one industrial combine to another, whilst elsewhere a budding computer jockey is saved from a nasty fate by some unknown power when trying out a new programme, and a girl is looking for the creator of some extraordinary objets d'art. Quite how they all come together is something I leave to you to find out, but I promise that the stories are knit more closely than first impression might lead you to suppose. COUNT ZERO is a very fast-moving SF thriller, extremely well plotten, extremely well written. If you want a second NEUROMANCER, tough luck, but if you want something equally compelling, equally satisfying, look no further.



Richard Matheson - - I AM LEGEND (Robinson Publishing, 1987, 151pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

I AM LEGEND is one of Robinson Publishing's new 'Dark Fantasy' series but it is probably as much SF as fantasy. It is 'paranoid SF' but it is more than just 50s paranoid anti-communism. Robert Neville's struggles against the vampires is given an underlying scientific thesis essential to the plot (as Kingsley Amis points out in NEW MAPS OF HELL).

Neville's world after a nuclear war is subjected to a new plague, more devastating than anything known before. The plague drives the dead to return to life to drink blood and destroy. So far as Neville knows he is the last man on earth. He survives by barricading himself in at night and going out during the day to stake the corpses in the supermarket freezer cabinets and cupboards that they have chosen for their rest. In his spare time Neville attempts to research the origin and pathology of the disease that causes the vampirism and identifies its aetiology. Then, in the last third of the novel, when hope of finding other survivors rises to let them use his discoveries, a weakness in his knowledge of bacteriology compromises his efforts. The vampires are of two types, Neville has found out, those who become vampires after death, like his wife Virginia, and those stricken but retaining their faculties as vampires. The latter group begin to take control of the world as the novel ends.

I AM LEGEND is a work of quality, although I felt that some areas were left unclear (like the difference between the types of vampires), but one can see why J.G. Ballard cites Matheson as an influence in passages such as 'For some reason, his brain hadn't weakened like the others'. It could be, Neville often theorised, that Ben Cortman was born to be dead', and this introduction to the psychology of vampire and vampire hunter: 'He took the woman from her bed, pretending not to notice the questions posed in his mind: Why do you always experiment on women? He didn't care to admit that the inference had any validity.'

The cover design is unusually good. It describes the book as a 'cult novel' but classic is probably a better description.

David Brin - - THE RIVER OF TIME (Bantam, 1987, 295pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Paul Kincaid)

This collection of stories covers the whole of David Brin's surprisingly short career, from his second published work 'Just a Hint' (1980) to pieces not previously printed. One of these, 'Senses Three and Six', actually predates his first novel, SUNDIVER, at least in its early drafts, though it is easily the most assured and effective story in the book. In many ways it is archetypal Brin. Memory, the past, the tricks of time, play a frequent part in his work, whether jokily in the title story or 'Toujours Voir', evocatively in 'A Stage of Memory' or 'Lungfish', or in the form of revenant mythological figures in 'The Loom of Thessaly' or 'Thor Meets Captain America'. At the same time that mood, the sense of a dying fall, is something he strives for time and again. Yet nowhere is it as successful as in 'Senses Three and Six' for several reasons. In this story the mood, ideas and drama are all subsumed within a powerfully drawn central character, it gives the story a unity others lack and, frankly, Brin isn't usually all that good at creating characters or describing a vivid setting. Brin also seems to

lack a sense of the right length for his stories; both 'The Loom of Thessaly' and 'A Stage of Memory', excellent in other respects, were stretched beyond their natural limits. But both the major strength, and the major weakness in this collection lies in the fact that Brin sees science fiction in its traditional colours, as the literature of ideas. The ideas are brilliant: vivid, exciting and fresh. I was especially caught up in his space adventures, 'The Crystal Spheres' and 'Lungfish'. Yet the ideas take precedence over all, including such literary elements as plot and character. All too often he has to take time out to explain what is happening, and how things have got to where they are. He also feels the need, in this collection, to add further explanations in short afterwords. One can't help feeling that the ideas have taken over, at the expense of what could have been some very good short stories.

Lucius Shepard - - GREEN EYES (Grafton, 1987, 332pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Tom A. Jones)

If you've not read GREEN EYES then put down this review, go out and buy it right now. This is one of those books which deserves all the praise and prizes it's won. GREEN EYES combines elements of hard and soft SF with fantasy to produce something which transcends these limits.

Here we have corpses reanimated by injections of viruses from Louisiana graveyards, but they're not reborn as their previous selves. Who are they? The reborn are marked by luminous green eyes, they develop strange powers but like fireflies they dazzle for only a short time before burning out.

Harrison is one of the reborn but he refuses to accept his lot and escapes the laboratory to live in the swamps and try to discover the meaning of his new existence. But then he starts to experience another world, a strange, horrific fantasy world. Overlaying this we have the thread of Voodoo, often more implicitly than explicitly. After all, are the reborn not zombies? Finally the threads are joined together in a conflict which crosses these planes of experience.

As well as an enthralling plot this book has skillful characterisation and atmosphere. You can smell those bayous. What more can I say? This is what a book should be.

Shirley Jackson - - THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE (Robinson Publishing, 1987, 246pp, £2.95)

WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE CASTLE (Robinson Publishing, 1987, 190pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Mark Valentine)

THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE is one of the few successful novels of the supernatural, rare in a field where the short story is the favoured form. It has justifiably acquired a reputation as one of the classic haunted house stories. Yet it has not always been readily available despite being an enthusiastic browser, I don't recall having seen a copy until now. So the publishers deserve credit for producing a paperback edition that will enable many more readers to savour the subtle, insidious narrative skills of Shirley Jackson's best-known work.

The plot may seem of a rather venerable vintage. Four people gather in a desolate mansion to see if they can obtain convincing evidence to account for its shadowy reputation.



They are a professor, two young women with experience of the paranormal, and a youth who is the heir to the house. The novel gains from a careful accumulation of unease, beginning with half-glimpsed movements and a sense of visual dislocation because of the curious geometry of the place, and developing into irrational eruptions of poltergeist phenomena. Yet it never falls into the tempting trap of affectionate parody which vitiates many modern ghost stories. The traditional formula is revived by the freshness and irony of the writing, and the ambiguities which arise because of the uncertain psychological state of one of the participants.

It is also to the publishers' credit that they have not confined their efforts to renew interest in the author to her one acknowledged classic, but have also brought out the lesser-known *WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE CASTLE*. Here, two sisters and their uncle live an eccentric, enclosed existence in their run-down big house, sustained by their own private rites, macabre imagination and surreal logic. The strange richness of their life is contrasted with the crass materialism of a visiting cousin and the crudity and viciousness of their hostile, small town neighbours. Those who appreciate fantastic literature where the dividing line between the rational and irrational is blurred and we sometimes seem to be seeing both at work at once, will find this short novel a fine example.

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Melisa Michaels - - *SKIRMISH* (Livewire, 1987, 230pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

Livewire is The Women's Press' new teenage imprint, and *SKIRMISH* is its first SF title, featuring Melacha Rendell aka 'Skyrider', hot-shot shuttle jockey who *exists* on the fringes of legality until her services are needed to rescue a crippled space liner falling towards the sun. Blackmailing - sorry, 'negotiating' - the Company into giving her her own ship, she sets off with co-pilot Jamin and a six-year-old stowaway. As if this isn't complication enough, Jamin is genetically adapted to free-fall and can't live in gravity: Collis, his son, is unable to survive in free-fall. And the mission itself, it seems, is only part of a tangled political conflict between Earth and Colonies.

Melissa Michaels is a writer new to me, and parts of this book - particularly references to Melach's past - make me suspect that it's part of a series, or at least there are others set in the same universe. It moves along at a cracking pace in which Melacha's cynical first-person narrative is matched only by her skill in dodging rocks in the asteroid belt in pace and verve. *SKIRMISH* is a good action-adventure SF yarn in which action is counterpointed by a secondary conflict and both characters and the wider setting are well-described. Coming across like a mixture of *STAR WARS* and cyberpunk, it's a good addition to the 'Livewire' series - a brave one even since SF is very much a minority interest among teenage girls (though perhaps less of a minority than you'd think.) I'd like to see more from this writer - publishers of teenage fiction lists please note!

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Ramsey Campbell - - *DARK FEASTS* (Robinson Publishing, 1987, 339pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

Subtitled 'The World of Ramsey Campbell', this is a collection of 30 stories, all of which have seen publication before (some recently: 'The Room in the Castle', 'Cold Print' and 'The Voice of the Beach' are in fact available in *COLD PRINT* (Grafton), reviewed in PI 67 and 'Boiled

Alive' was in *INTERZONE* 18) but which together make a stunning collection for those new to the author, or who have not been able to track down the various magazines and anthologies in which the stories first appeared. Many of the tales, such as 'The Brood' and 'The Depths' make the real Merseyside region a modern equivalent of Lovecraft's doom-haunted New England, painted in colours which are Campbell's own.

Horror is often at its best when the supernatural intrusion mirrors a psychological conflict depicted in the detail of the setting. Here we have the mixture of sexual excitement and guilt in a young boy staying with an attractive aunt ('The Fit'), protective parents ('The Chimney'), perhaps 'The Depths' which asks questions about the reading and writing of horror material. But Campbell also brings a sense of humour to his work which isn't, perhaps apparent at first reading because it's a macabre, unsettling (though never sadistic) humour. Titles like 'Horror House of Blood' and 'Boiled Alive' are deliberately over the top, while 'Seeing the World' is a neat commentary on that dreadful experience, the neighbours' holiday slides. 'Out of Copyright' is a sardonic revenge-tale featuring an unscrupulous anthropologist and also a horror story in which the horror quite literally arises out of the writing. The ending of 'Call First' provokes a chuckle as much as a shiver.

'If I'm lead to believe that my field can't achieve something,' writes Campbell, 'I'll give it a try.' *DARK FEASTS* shows what flexibility the modern tale of terror still has in the hands of a writer who is not prepared to accept the limitations of the mode.

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Christopher Evans & Robert Holdstock (eds.)

- - *OTHER EDENS* (Unwin, 1987, 237pp, £2.95)

(reviewed by Paul Kincaid)

Anyone struggling to define the distinctive quality of British science fiction could do worse than start here. This collection contains the work of fourteen writers (including one expatriate American, Lisa Tuttle) and they are about as varied a representation of British science fiction as one could hope to find. You don't really expect much of a common thread to link the work of Tanith Lee, M. John Harrison, Keith Roberts and David Langford, for instance. But one mood does run right the way through this anthology, and it can be summed up as elegaic. There is a sadness for things lost, for things that might be lost, for how things might have been, represented as strongly in David Garnett's story of a husband finding his wife slightly changed, as it is in M. John Harrison's account of a woman going through her dead brother's effects. The stories are firmly rooted in the present and the past; even those set in the future, like R.M. Lamming's 'Sanctity', hark back to the here and now. And they are certainly inward turning rather than outward looking. Only Brian Aldiss makes much of overtly science-fictional devices, and his tale of life on a remote colony world uses Einsteinian time-dilation effects as a way of pointing up a story about boredom and wanderlust. Others, such as Robert Holdstock and Keith Roberts, fix their stories within an English landscape that acquires mythic proportions though normal fantasy elements only have an incidental part to play. As for the writing, that is as varied as the authors, from Tanith Lee's crisp storytelling to M. John Harrison's rich, intense prose. Some, such as Graham Charnock's 'Fullwood's Web' read as if they could have been written half a century ago; others, such as Garry Kilworth's mysterious 'Triptych', take advantage of the literary experimentalism that came late to science fiction with the new wave of the '60s;

but all put character and emotion ahead of the science fictional devices that are employed to highlight this. OTHER EDENS is a fine showcase for British science fiction, and it is reassuring to learn that it is to be the first of a regular series.

Robert Sheckley - - JOURNEY BEYOND TOMORROW  
(Gollancz Classic, 1987,  
189pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Ken Lake)

Originally published in F&SF, expanded for book publication in 1964, JOURNEY OF JOENES appeared in the US as JOURNEY BEYOND TOMORROW, the title now chosen by Gollancz for this 15th and most welcome addition to their Classic SF B-format series.

Written when Sheckley was in his early thirties, this is an angry young man's book. A Pilgrim's Progress through 21st-century America as reported by 25th-century Polynesian tusitalas, the book bears all the usual Sheckley hallmarks; our hero is a man of studied innocence and lives through his many and amazing experiences physically unharmed but emotionally matured and ultimately made cynical.

But it's all a satire on the America in which Sheckley found himself living, and he lashes out in turn at the police, democracy, science, medicine, humanism, justice, freedom, religion, psychiatry, universities, politics, sociology... if your chosen bete noire is not here, never fear, it will crop up later in the book.

Much of Joenes' story is hilarious, but there's a bitter edge to every tale and, as so often the case with Sheckley, overkill ultimately brings desensitisation and destroys the very real points he is making. However, despite the varied 'voices' of the Polynesian tale-tellers, there is a dramatic unity to the story which makes it an unforgettable experience - perhaps the more so in retrospect for those of us who first read it when the Aunt Sallies he so vigorously attacks were new, fresh targets for our wrath. Now, after the two 'Gates' and the frightfulness of Khomeini's Iran, all this seems distant and forced. Yet we can still feel for poor confused Joenes in his first verbal contact with a New Yorker:

'Sir,' Joenes said, 'could you spare a moment of your valuable time and tell a stranger something about the great and purposeful vitality I see all around me?'

The man said, 'Whatsamatter, you some kind of nut?' And he hurried off.

And at that basic level, Joenes still lives for the reader of the troubled eighties.

M. John Harrison - - A STORM OF WINGS (Unwin,  
1987, 189pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Martyn Taylor)

Viriconium, he said portentuously and pretentiously, is like life, never quite the same when looked at again. The Viriconium of THE PASTEL CITY was a mythic place, home of a great queen, the arts, mighty warriors and the backdrop to a pared down sword and sorcery war written by someone who doesn't loftily dismiss the 'mainstream', who is just simply a bloody good writer, whatever the genre restrictions against which he kicks. Viriconium in A STORM OF WINGS is a tired, run-down, real city smelling of cabbages in post fin-de-siecle mood. The surrounding lands are grey, tired, miasmic, the people listless and given to madness. It is the Time of the Locust, and just who and why the locust is the theme of the book.

The story is a picaresque quest with a difference. The grail is a poisoned chalice, the questors a murderer, a madwoman, an old - a very old - 'wizard' and a Reborn Man with an identity crisis. Their guide is the ghost of an antique aviator, who remains all too alive. Along with the quest we are given the poignant revelation of the invasion of Earth by possibly the most remarkable, unwilling and unsuccessful invaders ever to cross mandibles with the human race.

THE PASTEL CITY is essentially an airy book, suggesting the reader use their own imagination to flesh out and colour the elegant skeleton of a story. A STORM OF WINGS is just as inviting to a thinking reader but the references, allusions and philosophical thrust are of such a density and intensity that this is a book which has to be read in the way the classics of literature have to be read - slowly, with thought, with relish. To use the 'train book' reference, you would need to ride the Trans-Siberian to read this one on a train journey. Whatever, my conclusion - as it is with anything written by M. John Harrison - is to recommend you read it. You will be rewarded.

Yevgeny Zamyatin - - WE (Avon, 1987, 232pp,  
£3.95)

(Reviewed by Sue Thomason)

This edition of WE is a paperback reprint of Mirra Ginsburg's translation. WE, composed in 1920 - 21 but never (yet) published within the Soviet Union, is among the best SF novels ever written, an outstanding achievement which remains biting, many-levelled, fresh and attention-grabbing, unlike many of our dated (some would say 'outdated') classics. It is the fore-runner, standing at the source of a great stream of anti-Utopian and dystopian novels, from 1984 and BRAVE NEW WORLD to ESCAPE PLANS.

WE is the diary of D-503, a 'number' in an absolute state of the future. Equality has been achieved at the expense of individuality and freedom. D-503's diary is written in his Personal Hour, the only segment of his day which is not precisely regulated, the only time when his actions may differ from the actions of the masses of 'numbers' around him. D-503 is an exceptional number (if such a thing is possible), the builder of the INTEGRAL, an interstellar vessel. And D-503 is also atavistic, possessing such primitive traits as hairy hands, imagination, and the ability to rebel. He is torn out of his 'model citizen' persona by the conflict between his love for O-90 and his passion for the rebel I-330 (both emotions of course being anachronistic). He is eventually picked up by the Guardians, undergoes a new operation designed to exorcise the imagination, and at the end of the novel is more than ever a 'model citizen'. Emotionless and unable to understand his former behaviour, he betrays his lover to the Guardians without a second thought, and watches her interrogation and torture as an interesting experiment. (His diary follows the format of lab notes throughout).

Despite the obvious echoes of 1984 in this plot summary, WE is a hopeful book. The One State is a walled city, and outside its Green Wall life goes on in the old wild, unregulated way. O-90, whose own rebellion takes the form of an unregulated pregnancy, escapes from the One State carrying D-503's child.

WE is not a simple book. The strength of its forward momentum comes not so much from the plot as from the succession of a series of powerful and repeating images; mathematics as ethic, numbers, order, clarity, glass. The writing style (at least in this translation) is compressed and urgent. It's an essential book. Read it.

Barbara Hambly - - THE WITCHES OF WENSHAR  
(Unwin, 1987, 339pp,  
£2.95)

THE SILENT TOWER (Unwin,  
1987, 349pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Sue Thomason)

Barbara Hambly is a GOOD pulp fantasy writer. Her work is brisk and stylish, and she writes with accurate perception, with deep compassion and without sentimentality. She takes standard fantasy themes and settings and puts real people into them.

THE WITCHES OF WENSHAR is a follow-on to THE LADIES OF MANDRIGYN, and recounts a misadventure of Sun Wolf, ageing mercenary and fledgeling wizard, in his search for a mage who can teach him how to use his newly-acquired power. He is accompanied by his lover and erstwhile second-in-command, Star Hawk. They unwittingly uncover a very nasty combination of political intrigue and misuse of magical power, and attempt, if not to put things right, then at least to stop them going any further wrong. This book is a tragedy founded on psychological truth.

THE SILENT TOWER is the first of a new series, but readers of the Darwath trilogy will recognise a number of familiar characters and situations under different names. This time the ageing maverick wizard is called Antryg, the young intellectual from 'our world' who falls for him is called Joanna, and the morally ambivalent warrior is Caris. The 'other world' that needs saving is on the brink of an industrial revolution, but its spiritual integrity is threatened by an unholy blending of magic and technology, mediated through a computer.

I intend no disparagement to Hambly in calling her a formula writer. It is obvious that her work consistently calls on a set of powerful patterns; patterns that need to be worked out again and again. She treats the archetypes with respect and understanding; In-gold Inglorion and Antryg Windrose are both very obviously embodiments of the Wise Old Man - but although they are 'souls in the same series', they are unique individuals, not fuzzy carbon copies. The women Gil and Joanna both embody the Virgin; like Athene they are scholars and warriors, partners of the Wise Old Man.

I like the humour in the books. I like feeling that Hambly cares enough to get things right. I like the fact that the books read easily, have no literary pretensions, but do have depth for those who can be bothered to look for it. I LIKE these books. For me they are definitely better-than-average fantasy, and I highly recommend them.

David Eddings - - GUARDIANS OF THE WEST: Book one of 'The Malloreon'.  
(Corgi, 1987, 429pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Mary Gentle)

Unfortunately (as I quite enjoyed 'The Belgariad') this sequel seems to have all the flaws of the first series and none of its virtues. The Light-vs-Dark plot and the scenery are still straight out of Tolkien. The plot (kidnapped child) is telegraphed so early that there's no real excuse for it taking so long to materialise. And the cast, and their offspring, form a mutual admiration society, which is surprising, considering how much time they spend acting like petulant 5 year olds or patronising each other.

GUARDIANS OF THE WEST appears caught in a 1950s time-warp, full of sexism. Our hero

Garion's protector, Polgara, an infinitely wise old sorceress, spends her time telling him to wrap up warm (he must be in his mid-20s by now), and to make up with little wife so they can have a male heir to the throne. The woman-warrior spends her time wanting to be sold to another owner, and the only time her knife is used is when someone takes it when she wasn't looking. A queen and attendant ladies drool over male babies. And we never see the one female spy spying, only making eyes at another of our heroes.

In this kind of sexism the males are equally badly treated, either as macho heroes or boys that will be boys. They fight a war in which thousands of spear-carriers die, but ever so decorously - no piles of spilled entrails here. And they face pussycat dangers. The forces of evil are not remotely intelligent.

This is the kind of genre fantasy that gets the reader cheering on the Dark Lord. The smart money, however, and the next four novels, will be on Garion and his pals.

Alasdair Gray - - LANARK (Paladin, 1987, 560pp,  
£4.95)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

Reprint of the 1981 novel which caused tremendous excitement for its epic qualities. 'A daft Divine Comedy' (Gray's words) which has been compared to an enormous number of works of visionary art, LANARK is in part a semi-autobiographical novel about Duncan Thaw, an uncompromising Glasgow artist, in part a kind of surreal Book of the Dead set in a weird after-life experienced by Lanark, Thaw's alter-ego.

These latter scenes (Books 1 and 4) offer a distorting mirror both to the real world and to the Glasgow scenes of Books 2 and 3. Time and space are twisted. Strange diseases afflict the characters: Thaw's schizoid inability to form and cope with relationships becomes Lanark's 'dragonhide', a hardening of the skin into a literal armour. Reality within and without the book becomes questionable: in an 'epilogue' four chapters before the end, Lanark meets the author and quarrels with him about the book's premises and conclusion - a device which seems horribly trite when told but which manages to encapsulate the mixture of pain and terror and ironic comedy which fills the book. This exchange is embedded within an index of plagiarisms 'which will save research workers years of toil.' Some of these references are to chapters which aren't in my copy of the book, but then again, according to the publishing history inside, LANARK was published by Panther in 1982 and reprinted 1992: research workers will have years of fun! But more so will you, the readers for pleasure and emotion and connection: LANARK is a work of genius which will stay with you for a long, long time.

Jack Vance - - THE BRAVE FREE MEN (VGSF, 1987,  
224pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Ken Lake)

Subtitled 'Book Two of the fabulous Durdane trilogy' on the cover, this part at least has a conclusive ending, unlike THE FACELESS MAN (also known as THE ANOME) which formed the first layer of this triple-decker.

Vance's invented civilisation is a static, stultified one with the usual pleasures one finds in such societies - a heightened sensitivity coupled to an inability to innovate. The course of the tale hinges directly upon these two aspects of the world, with our hero - transformed early on from an itinerant musician to the hidden ruler of the country - driven to strange actions in his attempts to harness the

people to fight the dreaded roguskh01.

Yet the action does not overstep the bounds of politeness; Vance maintains an urbane, civilised tone throughout and even his denouement unfolds in measured strophes. This gives a curiously relaxed and enjoyable tone to the whole book, a tone heightened by Vance's skilful description of the society's gentle pleasures. A sample? I direct you to pages 88/92 where you will enjoy a banquet accompanied by a musical recital - and as both a musician and a cook I can commend the resulting scene to any reader - I only wish I could have been there in person!

To be honest, I am quite eagerly awaiting the chance to re-read THE ASUTRA, the final part of this tale. Yes, it's another wise choice for the VGSF series.

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Andre Norton - - YEAR OF THE UNICORN (VGSF, 1987, 221pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

The foundling Gillan - faced with the alternative of spending the rest of her life in an Abbey - takes the place of one of the promised 13 maidens sent to be brides of the wereriders. The sorcerous Riders now search for their way home through the dimensions, but Gillan has her own witchery and is in danger from the conflicts between the Riders themselves.

The first part of the book suffers (as does the 'Witch World' series as a whole) from a certain amount of tushery and takes time to settle, but there are a few powerful moments in the second half - in particular Gillan escapes from the raiding Hounds of Alizon and her realisation that a 'fetch' or doppleganger of her has been created to take her place with the Riders. From then, Gillan and Herrel the Were-Rider travel through mazes of illusion to find their destiny together. An imaginative fantasy.

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Ian Watson - - THE POWER (Headline, 1987, 232pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Terry Broome)

Jeni, a teacher at a comprehensive school and a member of CND who lives near an American nuclear base, somehow releases the evil power of a Diaboli. Nuclear war wipes everyone out, bar six people and a dog, preserved alive by the Diaboli. It then resurrects the dead, turns back time, and constructs its reign of terror by, for example, pulling a boy's bowels through his anus and knotting them around his neck, and forcing Jeni into a necrophiliac rape (which she learns to enjoy in the persona of a witch).

The six survivors organise events for the undead, providing moments of macabre humour: 'Stout Mrs Boxall had already lost a thumb, which stuck to the cheese when she threw it.' (p. 150) But if this is satire it falls horribly flat.

There is the usual, interminable horror-writer obsession with shit, vomit, maggots and rotting flesh, which makes up about eighty tedious pages. There is even what at first appears to be a virgin birth of an evil arm (which escapes down the toilet). The time paradox this involves makes complete nonsense of everything, except as a deus-ex-machina.

This is not a well-written, scary novel, it is a patchily written, sick and unoriginal one. I must admit I don't like most horror stories, which I find repetitive and predictable, but even by horror-writing standards, this is way over the top.

Simon Hawke - - - - - THE IVANHOE GAMBIT  
(TIME WARS Book One)  
(Headline, 1987, 209pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Ken Lake)

I read the first three books of this series when they appeared in the United States, and thoroughly enjoyed the first; the second I enjoyed, and by the third it was becoming a bit routine.

What we get is a well thought out Temporal Army routine, some interesting characters, and a well researched historical ambience - in this case twelfth-century England.

There is derring-do galore, with well described tourneys, and adequately bloody internecine conflict between the Goodies and the renegade Baddies who are trying to change history - in this case by murdering Richard Coeur de Lion and masquerading as the King.

We get a healthy slab of feminist propaganda with a transvestite Saxon woman posing as a knight, and we get a neat resolution with a tag-line that lines us up for Book Two.

Don't imagine there is anything deep in this - the heroics quite dwarf the temporal science, and we learn virtually nothing of the future time from which the temporal soldiers come, save that every one of their battles is clocked up by referees who use the carefully adjusted figures to declare one nation or another 'victor' in the realtime conflicts which are thus played out in 'minus time' and, in theory at least, according to certain carefully explained rules.

In fact, the only real argument I have with the whole series is this basic assumption that mankind is by nature aggressive to the point of killing, and that rather than solve questions by rational discussion future man will still take to arms - as if might ever made right, a fallacy that lies behind all the outpourings of modern American war fiction.

For a light-hearted essay into historical romance (here we have Robin Hood, Maid Marion, Scott's Ivanhoe and Rebecca for a start) crossed with a believable time-travel gimmick, heavily spiced with death and mayhem, Simon Hawke's book is more than adequate; from a moral viewpoint I find it quite disgraceful.

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Arthur C. Clarke - - THE SONGS OF DISTANT EARTH  
(Grafton, 1987, 231pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Steven Tew)

Clarke's optimistic belief in the scientific progress of mankind is well known, and it was his ability to convey his enthusiasm that made me devour his books as a young SF reader. It is a tribute to his writing skills that I can read THE SONGS OF DISTANT EARTH without feeling (as with Asimov, Heinlein et al) that he can now only rework his old themes and cash in on his name.

At a time when 'traditional SF' seems to be equated with spaceships zipping across the galaxy as though they were InterCity 125s, Clarke makes a great point of not violating known scientific principles. These constraints add much to the central drama of the novel - without them, there would be no story to tell. Based on a 20 year old story of the same name, it tells the story of a giant spaceship carrying one million refugees on a 500 year journey away from the destroyed solar system as it stops at the idyllic Earth-colonised Thalassa. The speculative content is wide ranging, covering the theory of the quantum drive (which taps the fundamental energies of the Universe), the problems of inter-stellar

communication, the preservation of human knowledge, the nature of politics and religion, evolution...etc. You could be excused for thinking that his treatment of these subjects is somewhat naive, but the enthusiasm and clarity of Clarke's writing more than makes up for this, and is balanced by his portrayal of the less savoury aspects of politics and leadership (the ship's captain, for example, is prepared to use torture and execution to maintain discipline). Interlaced with this is the doomed love story of the ship's engineer and a Thalassan. This, and indeed all the characters in the book, is treated with a sensitivity rare in hard SF, and shows Clarke to be an accomplished writer of mature Trad SF.



Piers Anthony - - STATESMAN (Grafton, 1987, 365pp, £2.95)

Vol. 5 of 'Bio of a Space Tyrant', the SF current affairs epic, in which Hope Hubris organises Mankind's break from the Solar System and gets laid a lot. Even the hero's death can't stop another installment, it seems... Amusing and ridiculous by turns: international politics without the scary bits, but not as exciting. (Andy Sawyer)

Dennis Barker - - WINSTON THREE THREE THREE (Grafton, 1987, 267pp, £2.95)

The UK is the 'jewel in the crown' of the (non-communist) Russian Empire in 2089. The psychopathic would-be survivor Winston Three Three Three finds himself between the Occupying Russians and the British Liberation Front, on the search for the legendary leader Winston One. The ironic glances at imperialism (echoes of India and Ireland in the Russian response to the problems of Empire) are perhaps the best feature. (Andy Sawyer)

Louise Cooper - - MIRAGE (Unwin, 1987, 343pp, £2.95)

MIRAGE contains a good picture of Kyre, brought into being by a sorceress, grappling with the mystery of his identity and origins; and of decaying Haven, threatened by a race from undersea. Less happy is the way the narrative trundles along predictable paths when the focus is off Kyre, but a strong developing theme (the healing of estranged relationships, personal and racial) stiffens the stock fantasy of much of the story. (Andy Sawyer)

Kenneth C. Flint - - CHALLENGE OF THE CLANS (Bantam, 1987, 328pp, £2.95)

Continuation of the 'Sidhe Legends' with the story of Finn MacCumhal. Adequate retelling making a good tale of the rise to rightful position of the dispossessed Finn, but mostly lacking inspiration in the supernatural intrusions, which really ought to be the best part. (Andy Sawyer)

Graham Marks & Christopher Maynard - - THE 1ST GREAT KIDS ACTIVITY CATALOGUE (Pan, 1987, 192pp, £4.95)

As it says - things to do/buy/see when birthdays/Christmas/holidays come about and there's an up-to-14 year old in mind. Recommends a

goodish selection of roleplaying games and a few SF titles (Douglas Hill's 'Colsec' series, most notably) but of more general than specialist interest. (Andy Sawyer)

J.R.R. Tolkien - - THE LAYS OF BELERIAND (Unwin, 1987, 393pp, £3.50)

Third volume of 'The History of Middle-Earth', edited by Christopher Tolkien, containing the alliterative poem 'Lay of the Children of Hurin' and the 'Lay of Leithian' with, as usual, an extensive scholarly apparatus including C.S. Lewis's critique of part of the latter poem. Will probably be bought by fans of this kind of resurrection of drafts and rewritings and largely ignored by others who aren't interested in the Tolkien Industry, which is to some extent a great pity because the 'Lay of Leithian' contains some of Tolkien's best verse, far superior to the 'high style' of the prose versions of the same story found in THE SILMARILLION ch. 19 and the second BOOK OF LOST TALES. (Andy Sawyer)

((Cont. p. 16))

## "Upon the rack in print"...

FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION August/September 1987.

(Reviewed by Richmond Hunt)

I should start my appearance on these pages by proclaiming exactly what I consider makes a good SF /Fantasy story. It is not necessarily a startling new idea; rather it is a strong plot with a definite, even if temporary resolution and the ability to evoke interesting characters which are the hallmarks of the most successful stories. No doubt it is because of these preferences that I enjoy F&SF over many other magazines.

After several months when the magazine seemed dominated by whimsies, unmemorable and 'slight' stories, the August issue showed a welcome upturn in overall quality.

Of the novelettes, 'Return from Rainbow Bridge' by Kim Stanley Robinson is probably the best. It concerns a wilderness trek by a teenager, his two brothers and their American Indian guide, who displays some unusual abilities. Growing up and discovering the reality of the world around you is a common theme, as is encounters with ethnic magic, but here the two are woven anew into an entertaining and thought-provoking tale. I confess I didn't warm to the story immediately but the careful atmosphere and the believability draw you in.

'Going to Meet the Alien' by Andrew Weiner, and 'The Gallery of Masks' by David Busby are the other two long works in this issue. The first, by a writer who mainly appears in IASFM and can be very entertaining, is an odd story of contact with aliens. Some authors show us how much scope there is for misunderstanding an alien race then allow their heroes to sort it all out in the end. Weiner's emissaries, on the other hand, get it all wrong then have to give up: they are not allowed to rectify humanity's errors. This is all very realistic but leaves the reader dissatisfied at the end: then again, aliens should be perplexing, and I especially liked the wry contrast in the reactions of the serious scientists and those of the religious faithful.

Davis Busby's novelette is set in Mandaggorria, a city reminiscent of Viriconium or an

Urth metropolis. These associations are evoked by names, places and events but Busby's city does not really take on the same sort of solid form. Where the urban landscapes of Harrison and Wolfe assert themselves on a story Manda-gorria is a limp backdrop. It has potential though, and I hope Busby writes some more tales from the city. The present offering is a well written, if telegraphed, whodunnit. Why are well known, even respectable citizens committing blatant crimes in front of so many witnesses? The answer is fantastic, in the full sense of the word, but the title and the first scene give too much away.

Of the shorter stories, Michael Armstrong's 'The Verts Get a Nuke' is the best. It concerns the peculiar contract struck between the Verts, post-holocaust hippies/punks, and a group of airborne traders. The item changing hands is, of course, a nuclear bomb, and the Verts get what they want without actually getting what they hoped for. The twist is grotesque yet brilliant and should be imposed on our military leaders. Parts of the story are slightly confusing; it is a freestanding section of a novel AFTER THE ZAP, and the main characters refer to earlier events. Nevertheless, the story intrigues me enough to persuade me to read the whole novel.

Alan Dean Foster's 'Norg Gieoble Gop' (I could have sworn that sort of title became passe in the '60s) shows the dangers of over-optimism when working on a truly alien language, and 'Celebrating' by Barry Malzberg, plays out one small drama in a world coming to terms with mass levitation. Both are interesting but these authors have written better before and are likely to write better in the future. Finally, 'Family Dentistry' by Donald Burleson and 'Play Dead' by Chet Williamson are horror(ish) stories. The first is without atmosphere and will only appeal to those who already have a morbid fear of dentists; the second is more carefully written but doesn't really go anywhere.

The three novelettes in the September issue left me wondering how easy it is any more to tell the original from the derivative. When is a writer truly innovative and when is he/she consciously or unconsciously traversing the same territory as other authors? 'Shiva, Shiva' by Ronald Anthony Cross is set in a post-technological caste-ridden society. Brahmins rule from their garden enclave, Tecks work in their city. Warriors and lower classes muddle through in the Outer Circle of future La. Already we have echoes of Zelazny and Delany, shades of cyberpunk in the high-tech barbarism of the warrior gangs, and the ubiquitous future-West-Coast setting. Cross claims to be '... a genuine outsider', not identifying with new wave or cyberpunk, so is he really an innovative writer?

On the evidence of this story the answer is no, on the evidence of his early works in New Worlds (Quarterly) he definitely rode the new wave along with everyone else. And yet, and yet... this is an interesting tale. There are original touches and the sense of speed, of flight, of frantic movement are brilliantly evoked. Blackie, the 'Shiva', the destroyer and creator of the title ricochets from place to place showing us his world. Cross could have taken a lot more time to explore it, but he has been laudably concise and paced the story well.

Then we have 'A Legend of Fair Women' by John Morressy. Terry Pratchett has done very well recently with his Discworld novels: irreverent and comic fantasies based to some extent on the absurdities and idiosyncracies of fantasy RPGs. But Morrisey started the same thing in 1981 with his tales of the wizard Conhoon, the wizard Redrigern (and his 'frog'

princess) and now introduces Tristaver; a wizard of presence, of authority, with impeccable dress sense, towering ego, and minimal power. How Tristaver is inveigled into joining a woman warrior on a perilous quest to prove her bravery and strength, and how he muddles through despite his meagre spells, and with his honour intact, is a hilarious tale. I don't wish to imply that Pratchett is cribbing from Morressy; the former uses a broader humour, and although they till the same field we could say they have started in different corners, but to my mind the latter is funnier and, sadly less well known. I was glad to hear that some of Morressy's stories are shortly to be collected in book form.

The third novelette is 'The Gods Arrive' by Edward Shaver, a well written and engaging mystery. My only quibble here is the seemingly unnecessary sub-plot concerning US-Soviet ideological antagonism. The main strand does require two factions arguing over the fate of the crew of the newly returned Mars mission, kept in isolation from a subtly and mysteriously altered Earth, but why should it be the old enemies again? Who knows how international relations would stand after some sort of global (non-nuclear) catastrophe? Despite its flaws 'The Gods Arrive' is still intriguing; three times I thought I had the mystery cracked - each time I was wrong. Give it a try.

Elsewhere in this issue we have 'Waswolf', by Edward Wellen, a neat piece on a hitherto overlooked problem for long-term lycanthropes. Definitely original, if short. 'Lumisland', the cover story by Mary Caraker concerns Finns and folklore on a (very) colourful planet somewhere across the colonised galaxy. Caraker specialises in creating alien peoples and places, and here shows that there is plenty enough friction and misunderstanding between human racial groups without introducing truly alien fauna. Richard Mueller contributes 'Bless This Ship', a rare blend of fantasy and modern war story, which starts intriguingly but the two sections - the father's adventure in mythology and the son's naval experiences do not mesh well. Finally we have 'The Armless Conductor' by Gene O'Neill set in yet another post-technological Californian backwater. Karsh, the conductor of the title, though initially still a trapper/trader, spends two-thirds of the tale wandering around his market-town showing us how much like a Middle Eastern bazaar or old-time fair the world has become. I presume O'Neill is working so carefully on his construct to make it ready for further use, but plot is needed to fill the best descriptive clothing.

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ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE and ANALOG,  
September to December 1987

Reviewed by Edward James

Apologies first of all for missing the last issue of *Paperback Inferno* and for the consequent length of this review. The end of August was a mad rush, which involved getting in the typescript of a book to the publisher; getting to the Worldcon; and getting ready for a holiday in Sweden. Anyway, I'm sure only Andy and my two fans noticed I wasn't there. Here are the eight issues that have piled up in the meantime...

To start, as usual, with *Asimov's*. September gave us "Carthage City", another of Orson Scott Card's alternative history nineteenth-century America stories, about the merits of which I am unaccountably



blind. But the other novella, Silverberg's "The Secret Sharer", was one of the best I have read this year. No-one does a high-tech far future better than Silverberg (viz. "Sailing to Byzantium"), and here he handles the space opera fittings (including a superb space-ship) with great dexterity, and great novelty. (Who else would think of the logic of having the youngest member of the crew as the captain?) Other stories were well worth reading too: Tom Maddox's tale of future hackery, "Spirit of the Night"; Brad Ferguson's "The World next Door", where a world destroyed in the holocaust which followed the Cuba crisis meets our own world in dreams and then in reality; Nancy Kress's "Glass", of the fragility of the precognitive's sanity; and finally Andrew Weiner's "The Alien in the Lake", a nicely matter-of-fact story of an alien entranced by the seedy life of backwoods America.

October's cover-story was Kim Stanley Robinson's sequel to "Escape from Kathmandu": a climb up "Mother Goddess of the World" (Everest). Well told, and great fun, but I can't help preferring "Green Mars". There's another story about 'Nam, but a powerful one, by Bruce McAllister, called "Dream Baby", in which tension and pressure induce ESP powers in the participants in the war. Bruce Sterling's "The Little Magic Shop" is a far cry from c\*\*\*\*p\*\*k - a nice new twist on the old tale of the Elixir of Life, told with great gusto. Ian Watson's "The Moon and Michelangelo" is another old tale, a scientific survey team trying to understand an enigmatic alien ecology. But this hoary theme from 1950's *Astoundings* is here transformed, into a compelling narrative with a startling twist at the end. This and Silverberg's "The Secret Sharer" were to my mind the best stories in these eight issues.

November's *Asimov's* features a three-part serial unusually beginning with several pages of introductions by Asimov and Harlan Ellison. It's a historical curiosity, much talked about but finally here for us to read: the script Ellison wrote ten years ago for *I, Robot*, a movie, which, of course, never appeared. Asimov rewritten by Ellison is itself mind-boggling enough, and how the finished product is quite intriguing. The story of Susan Calvin is told in a number of flashbacks, taking place in a future world far more visually exciting than anything Asimov himself has been capable of. I haven't seen the final instalment yet, but from the first two episodes I can thoroughly recommend it - as a fast-paced and imaginative interpretation of wellknown stories, and as a piece of sf history. There is also Susan Palwick's "Ever After" - a grim grafting of vampires and magic onto a familiar story: Cinderella will never be the same again. Dean Whitlock's "Roadkill" is a rather effectively eerie tale, set in a future in which hunting has been banned and fur from wild animals can only be obtained by hitting them "accidentally" on the road. My favourite short fiction from the issue was the Dutch-Canadian Charles de Lint's "Uncle Dobbin's Parrot Fair": some memorable characters, and a delightfully surrealist study of fantasies which become reality.

It seems odd reviewing a Christmas issue of a magazine, full of Christmas stories, on October 10th, but there we are. The cover story is one of them, "To Hell with the Stars" by Jack McDevitt, celebrating the way in which sf stirs the imagination and ambitions of the young: a boy reads a copy of a thousand-year-old sf book (edited by Asimov and Greenberg) and begins to wonder why man never reached the stars. It is realistic - and rare enough - for sf writers to think of the impact of sf upon the future, but it is perhaps all rather too self-congratulatory. Connie Willis offers "Winter's Tale", in which dies a certain well-known citizen of Stratford - or is he? Methinks it hath overmuch of cutesy period dialogue to be really successful. Ben Bova's "Silent Night" has a young woman single-handedly staving off a Christmas Eve invasion of Eritrea: a piece of Clarkeian wishful thinking about a future International Peacekeeping Force. But the general feeling of Christmas wellbeing is quite

happily dispelled by Lucius Shepard's "Shades", a ghost story for our times, where the ghost is that of a US soldier, returning to haunt communist Vietnam and to bring back memories to his old buddy: easily the most effective story in the issue.

What of *Analog*? In the September issue there was yet another example of an sf reader in the future, but this time reeking somewhat of an acknowledgement within the story of a plot twist taken from someone else: the story is Harry Turtledove's "6+", a rather lengthy story of a human survey team taking part in an alien war, in which the solution is suggested by Heinlein's "The Man Who Sold the Moon". (Those with elephantine memories will recall the role that Heinlein's "6+" played.) I enjoyed Timothy Zahn's "Banshee", in which banshees are explained as time-travellers, and yet another twist is given to the time paradox screw; and two of the shorts - W.T.Quick's "Flashbattles", about a President's aversion therapy training, and "Epiphany" by Arlan Andrews, where an alien carpenter learns something from a Christian preacher: that religion produces acceptable conclusions from flawed theorems.

October led with the first of a two-part serial, Michael F.Flynn, *In the Country of the Blind*. It was Flynn's "Eifelheim", an unexpected Hugo nominee (it came fourth in the novella category), which showed that historical research can actually be as exciting as a detective story - indeed, is a detective story - and here he takes that idea again (in a totally different setting). A competent heroine (a black real estate dealer) stumbles across a secret society which, since the mid nineteenth century, has been calculating which way history was going, and manipulating it accordingly. The heroine, of course, has to be eliminated. A neat plot, but somewhat crudely and hastily told; it suggests that "Eifelheim" was not a flash in the pan, however, and that Flynn is worth watching. Otherwise the October stories were unexceptional, except for a neat little lecture-as-story from Joe Fischetti, "The I of the Beholder", about the nature of truth, and the short "Catalyst" from Rick Cook, about the world-changing potential of computer games. The November issue had what is now rather a rarity: a cover-story written around a cover. The cover was an eye-catching painting by Todd Hamilton of a furred alien head, with a sleeping human baby held in one claw. The story was by one of the more interesting new hard science writers, Michael P. Kube-McDowell, called "Nanny" - a readable story, with a moral sting in the tail. I also rather enjoyed Jerry Oltion's "Neither Rain nor Sleet nor Weiridness", a twist on the tale of the house that disappeared (which goes back at least as far as Wells). (Postmen have been getting a good press in sf, with David Brin apparently being feted by the Association of US Postmen, or whatever. What about garbage men?)

Finally, the December issue of *Analog*. A new serial started, which I shall review next time: Lois McMaster Bujold's *Falling Free*. There is an unshamed *Challenger* spin-off: J.B.Cather's "Pulsebeat", where the unmanned shuttle *Christa McAuliffe* gets into trouble, and they have to send a manned mission up again: "We need to start sending humans up here to claim our destiny in space before we destroy ourselves on earth". There's also a Ballard story - the first I've ever seen in *Analog*. It's William Ballard's "Retrograde Action", where a twenty-first century time-traveller tries to persuade Chess Grand Master Lasker to use new gambits to beat Capablanca in the great 1921 championship. (The illustration shows a chess-set that I myself own, but that no self-respecting grand master would be seen dead using for real play.) The best story - and one of the best in the year for *Analog* - was Pat Ford's "The Gift", which attempts that most difficult thing, the plausible portrayal of genius and creativity, here in the world of theoretical physicists, and weaves it into a moving story of the relationship between a discredited physicist and a teenage high-flier. And, thank Kriss Kringle, not a Ch\*\*\*\*\*'s story in sight.



Elizabeth Scarborough - - BRONWYN'S BANE  
(Bantam, 1987, 286pp, £2.95)

Elizabeth Scarborough has a talent for the comic scenes which arise from 'adult fairy tales' - as in this instance of a Princess incapable of telling the truth because of a curse - but this is only realised in scenes rather than throughout the book, which as a whole is less than memorable. (Andy Sawyer)

Lawrence Watt-Evans - - THE BOOK OF SILENCE  
(Grafton, 1987, 399pp, £3.50)

Garth the Overman vows vengeance on the followers of Aghad - but can he stop himself from being a tool of the Forgotten King and bringing about Armageddon? The saga is brought to a close. Best part of the book is the almost entirely separate dragon-hunting episode of the first four chapters: other than that, only stone-hard sword-and-sorcery fans need apply. (Andy Sawyer)

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### CHUCK BODGER of the 22nd Century by Broke

