

PAPERBACK INFERNO

Feb./March 1988

70

The Review of paperback SF



★ PAPERBACK INFERNO ★

Issue 70, February/March 1988.
A publication of the British Science Fiction
Association, edited by Andy Sawyer.

ISSN 0260-0595.

Contents copyright (c) BSFA Ltd. 1988.
Individual copyrights are the property of the
authors and artists.

Editorial Address:

1, The Flaxyard
Woodfall Lane
Little Neston
South Wirral
Cheshire L64 4BT
(Tel. 051-336-3355)

Printed by PDC Copyprint, 11 Jeffries Passage,
Guildford, Surrey GU1 4AF.

Production Assistant: Phil Nichols.

Membership of the BSFA costs £10 per year and
is available from JOANNE RAINES: 33, Thornville
Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS26 8EW.

All opinions in this magazine are the views of
the individual contributors and must not be
taken to represent the views of the editor or
the BSFA except where explicitly stated.

CONTENTS

Editorial (Paperback Purgatory)	p.2
CLOSER ENCOUNTERS:	p.3
Dick's THE PRESERVING MACHINE	
Bishop's ANCIENT OF DAYS	
Pohl's CHERNOBYL	
Headline Books	
REVIEWS	p.5
'UPON THE RACK IN PRINT'	p.13
Magazine reviews by Edward James, Andy Mills and Richmond Hunt.	
REVIEWERS THIS ISSUE: Colin Bird, Terry Broome Alan Fraser, Ron Gemmell, Mary Gentle, L.J. Hurst, Edward James, Helen McNabb, Kev McVeigh Nicholas Mahoney, Nik Morton, Phil Nichols, Andy Sawyer, Steven Tew.	

ARTWORK:-

Ian Brooks (Cover)
Steve Bruce (p. 3, p. 9, p. 13)
Keith Brooke (p. 16)

Paperback Purgatory

Two years ago (was it two years ago?) I looked
at Alex Hamilton's annual survey of paperback
fastsellers in The Guardian and concluded that
it wasn't very encouraging for SF. Using the
most elastic definition of SF I could think of
- including Fantasy, TV/Film tie-ins and Fight-
ing Fantasy gamebooks, we had 19 titles in the
top 100. This year - a year which has seen not
a few reorganisations among SF-publishing im-
prints and which has been described as some-
thing of a boom year for SF - I could only id-
entify eight. Two horror titles (James Her-
bert's THE MAGIC COTTAGE and Stephen King's IT.

are in the top 20, with gross sales (home and
export) of 579, 367 and 523, 679 respectively,
while the first 'true' SF is Isaac Asimov's
FOUNDATION AND EARTH, at 43rd position with
sales of 177, 927. (Asimov's ROBOTS OF DAWN, in-
cidentally, appeared in the list two years ago
in 52nd position.) In fact, the only other SF
is Carl Sagan's CONTACT, in 67th place. (For
the record, the other titles are THE BACHMAN
BOOKS by Stephen King, GUARDIANS OF THE WEST
by David Eddings, MIRROR OF HER DREAMS by
Stephen Donaldson and Raymond Feist's DARKNESS
AT SETHANON, my comments on which should be
elsewhere in this issue. No Fighting Fantasy
titles to bring up the numbers this year!)

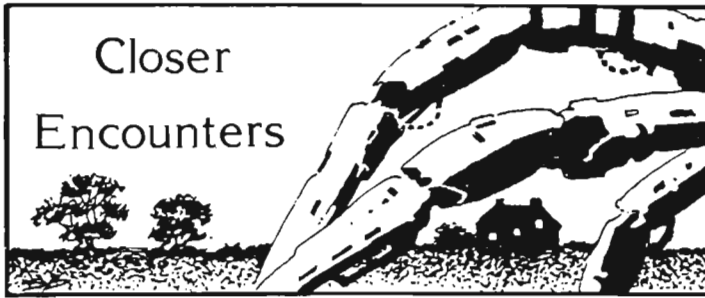
Track down my review of SETHANON; read it:
you'll find that that opinion is par for the
course when it comes to these books. Mary
Gentle thought that GUARDIANS 'seems to have
all the flaws of the first series and none of
its virtues' (PI 69); John Newsinger thought
FOUNDATION AND EARTH was 'a terrible book'
(PI 68). Is this a matter of bloody critics
being out of touch with the mass readership
again? Well, according to Hamilton's survey,
the mass readership doesn't seem to read SF.
Terry Broome hit the nail on the head with
his perceptive comments on Sagan's CONTACT
(PI 67): '...many of the trappings of a first
novel, a best-seller and a book written by a
scientist for a general, non-SF oriented read-
ership. SF fans will find it a big tease,
which fails to deliver. People who read best-
selling fiction may be more easily pleased.'
Those SF titles which break through to mass
appeal will be those most like the big-but-
superficial **blockbusters** which make up such a
large proportion of the fastest-selling books
of the year. They will not necessarily be rep-
resentative of SF as it really is, or of SF at
its best. They will, in fact, more probably be
fantasy or horror.

Is this a good or a bad thing? Bad, obvi-
ously in that it misrepresents SF and under-
pays good writers, but SF writers aren't the
only writers who achieve too few sales and in
any case you must, as Hamilton always does,
distinguish between the 'fastseller' and the
'bestseller'; a book which sells steadily over
a longer period than a year might do better
than the annual what-shall-we-get-as-a-Christ-
mas present-for-Dad? offering. The saddest
aspect for me is that star thriller writers
like John Le Carre or Robert Ludlum are gripp-
ing reads; many of the 'top Chart' really are
of the 'good if you like that sort of thing'
variety. But we can all name a dozen different
SF writers even of that status who don't
enjoy their success.

Ah well - perhaps next year!

IN THIS ISSUE:- Alan Fraser continues the
discussion on Philip K. Dick begun by L.J.
Hurst in PI 69, while another 'Closer Encount-
er is with Fredeick Pohl's CHERNOBYL (a re-
view of which should also be in VECTOR).
er is with Frederick Pohl's CHERNOBYL. Why -
given that a review should also be appearing
in VECTOR - have I chosen this, which isn't
actually SF? Partly because it is by Pohl, but
mainly because it's a scenario which has been
written by SF writers before - Heinlein's
'Blow-ups Happen' is dated 1940! - and is
suddenly now no longer SF. Perhaps this an-
swers the question implicit in the main part
of the editorial. SF doesn't seem of mass ap-
peal compared to other fictional material...but
by god, it's all around us in REAL LIFE and
sometimes twice as strange and scary as it
could ever be in books.

One of the best things I got for Christ-
mas was DISTANT MUSIC - 'poems and parodies of
science fiction and fantasy' by K.V. Bailey,
whose reviews have often appeared in PI. In-
cluded here are some of the deliciously witty



Philip K. Dick - - - - -THE PRESERVING MACHINE
(Grafton, 1987, 414pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Alan Fraser)

Philip K. Dick (1928-1982) was a prolific author of novels, but wrote comparatively few short stories. It is therefore very welcome that Grafton have republished this collection, originally issued in 1969 in the USA, and 1971 here (in paperback by Grafton's predecessor Panther). The fifteen stories, including two novellas, date from 1952 to 1966, and several appeared first in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. (Dick's work would not have suited *Astounding/Analog*)

One quote given on the inside cover of the book is from Michael Moorcock, and in my opinion sums Dick up completely.

'Dick quietly produced serious fiction in a popular form, and there can be no greater praise.'

Coincidentally, I have on my bookshelf another collection of Dick's stories, *A HANDFUL OF DARKNESS* (also from Panther, 1966), one story from which, 'Upon The Dull Earth' (from *Beyond*, 1954), is also included here. The very same quote from Moorcock is on the cover, although the tense was 'Dick is producing', as he was then still alive. BSFA members will be interested to learn that the quotation was originally from Vector, of course.

Moorcock, writing in 1966, committed the common sin of accepting the assumption that SF is not a 'serious' form of literature, whilst recognising that Dick's skill transcended the boundaries that artificially divide SF from mainstream or serious literature. Today, novelists recognised as serious have discovered the literary use of the time-warp, for example; two Booker Prize finalists, Peter Ackroyd with *CHATERTON*, and Penelope Lively's winning *MOON ANGEL*, use this device. Iain Banks, author of the brilliant *WASP FACTORY*, and one of Britain's most highly respected young novelists, has also written SF, and not lost reputation because of it.

At a time when SF and serious fiction had a real 'Iron Curtain' between them, Dick used his skills to produce compelling work with believable characters and intricate plots in many of which the nature of the reality they perceive is challenged. Much of his work has a deep and dark humour, and this combination has caused both Harlan Ellison and Brian Aldiss to describe him as the Pirandello of SF. Like

Pirandello, Dick's abiding preoccupation has been with the impossibility of any absolute objective reality, and the relative nature of personality. Two stories in this collection, 'War Veteran' and 'We Can Remember It For You Wholesale' typify this theme in Dick's work. In 'War Veteran' a confused old tramp in New York is a veteran of a war that won't happen for another fifty years. He thinks he's on an artificial satellite between Uranus and

Neptune and remembers that the real Earth has been destroyed. In the delicious 'We Can Remember...' a company specialises in giving you false, but apparently real, memories of having fulfilled your deepest fantasies. How do they cope with a man whose secret wish turns out to be a real real memory that he's been brainwashed into forgetting?

Another story concerns a former Terran agent who had to undergo major shape metamorphosis in order to spy on a race of amoeboid aliens. Unfortunately, he keeps lapsing involuntarily into a large amoeba at inconvenient moments. Mind you, he could be an alien who keeps reverting back to his original form, of course....

One or two of the stories misfire, but the overall quality of the collection is too high for much criticism. I had feared that Dick really needed the space of a novel to develop his characters and intricate plots. Also, these stories come from the earlier part of his writing life, and must have been constrained by the requirements of the magazines in which they were published. However, I need not have worried. They show Dick could use his ability to tell an intriguing and often exciting tale on the smaller scale, without sacrificing his aims of investigating his pet themes and exercising the reader's mind.

One question remains: given Dick's underlying serious intentions, should he have presented his work in a more respectable, and therefore respected, form? My own view is that Dick chose a school of writing in which he was able to use his abilities to the full, not only to provoke the imagination of the reader, but also to entertain. 'Serious' fiction's loss was SF's gain.

As Brian Aldiss said (in *BILLION YEAR SPREE*) - 'Dick never faileth.' This book may not be the best of his work, nor even a complete collection of his best shorter work, but it is a tremendous introduction to a writer who outclassed most of his generation, and whose work is still relevant today. Buy it.

Michael Bishop - - - - - ANCIENT OF DAYS
(Paladin, 1987, 386pp, £4.95)

(Reviewed by Mary Gentle)

Michael Bishop's *ANCIENT OF DAYS* is a witty, well written, painful, speculative novel; that makes an immediate emotional and intellectual connection with the reader. It has a simple SF what-if premise: what if there were, still living, a descendant of humanity's ancestral race, *homo habilis*? A human coelacanth, four and a half feet tall, ape-like, black, with a cranial capacity just over 800 cubic centimetres. The question is, is it human? The next question is, what is human?

'Adam' appears, on the run, in Beluah Fork, Georgia; is rescued (or is it taken into servitude, Civil Rights groups protest) by the painter RuthClaire. The novel is about his effect on present-day Americans: RuthClaire, her ex-husband Paul Loyd - the narrator, and not as unpleasant as he at first seems - the writer Caroline; the anthropologists Brian Nollinger (believer) and A.P. Blair (sceptic); and the TV evangelist 'Happy' McElroy; the Klanners, civil rights action groups, and various bigots...

The first part, 'Her Habiline Husband', is Swiftian, satiric. If ur-man exists, is he human in terms of, say, intelligence? RuthClaire has taught Adam sign-language, but chimpanzees can sign. Is Adam an 'inferior'

man? The Klan coin a mew racially derogatory term: *hibber*. Would you want a *habiline* to marry your daughter?

And as well as satire at the expense of the Moral Majority, the evangelist anti-evolutionaries, there is satire directed against what may be less of a soft target: the liberal humanist. Perhaps because 'ancestral man' is a Darwinian concept, we expect Adam to be a secular humanist. But as Paul Loyd discovers, when Adam can read, he reads theological literature, trying to work out whether he is man or beast, whether or not he has a soul, and if so, what kind of soul.

With the other parts of the novel, 'His Heroic Heart' and 'Heritor's Home', that follow the kidnapping of Adam's son, the story becomes deeper and more brutal, depicting the evil and cruelty that are the result of human folly, rather than that folly alone. If Adam loves, responds, hurts like a human, then he is some kind of human - but what does that make us? Paul follows Adam and RuthClaire to a Haitian island, on a trail that explores questions ordinary people ask: what is beast, what is man, what is god?

The strengths of *ANCIENT OF DAYS* are not only philosophical; the novel has strong characters, and a grasp of present-day Third World politics, and Adam himself: an articulate Caliban.

So far as I can see, this is a good sf novel. It is interesting to note, however, that Paladin is marketing it with the following cover-blurb from *Publisher's Weekly*:

'It works as well as it does because the quality and tone of the novel are mainstream rather than SF.'

Only inside the front cover does it say that this is Michael Bishop's tenth sf novel. And is there a qualitative difference? I'd say no. Michael Bishop has written a number of good novels, under whatever designation they're published - and this is certainly one of them.

Frederick Pohl - - - - - CHERNOBYL
(Bantam, 1987, 358pp, £4.95)

(Reviewed by Alan Fraser)

The first point to be made about this book is that it is, as is made clear on the front cover, a novel, and not a work of nonfiction. Rather than writing an exact reconstruction, Pohl has taken the facts about the explosion of Reactor No. 4 of the Chernobyl Power Station in the Ukraine on 26th April, 1986, and written the story from the points of view of fictional characters involved in the disaster. Some of the actions of his principal characters were actually carried out at the time, though not by the people in the book. Any real persons mentioned do not appear on-stage in the novel.

The novel tells a chilling story of what can go wrong when bureaucrats and politicians force technologists to work under unreasonable constraints or when output is put before safety, but it is by no means an anti-technology or anti-nuclear polemic. Pohl has seen his duty as being to tell the truth without bias, and the book is stronger for it. There's no comfort for Americans who might say that the Russian graphite reactors, like Chernobyl's, are inherently unsafe, and it couldn't happen in the West. As Pohl points out, Three Mile Island was only saved from being an external disaster of similar magnitude by good luck rather than good management.

Pohl has based his chronology on the 'unprecedentedly candid and complete' Soviet report on the accident submitted to the International Atomic Energy Authority in September 1986. He also spent much time in Russia interviewing scores of people about the disaster, a project only made possible by the policy of 'glasnost'. Before Gorbachev, such openness would have been impossible. (Pohl cites the nuclear accident at Kyshtym in Siberia in 1958, which turned hundreds of square miles into a radioactive waste, but which has never been officially admitted by the Russians.) In contrast, Mrs Luba Kobalevska was allowed to publish an article for *Literaturna Ukraina* in March, 1986, the month before the accident, sharply criticising the Chernobyl reactors for poor design, bad workmanship, unsafe materials, poor training, and ill discipline amongst the workforce there. Silkwood showed us that some of these are not exclusively Soviet shortcomings, of course. The deadening Russian industrial system vividly described in this book may destroy initiative and discourage personal responsibility, but our mania for cost-cutting leads to the same end result.

Pohl has made his account as factually accurate as possible, while at the same time using the medium of fiction to create characters with whom we can identify, some of whom meet agonising deaths. With them we can experience the frustration, the horror, the cowardice, but also the bravery and self-sacrifice of those days in April, 1986. The lesson to be learned is that any technological enterprise must give quality and safety the highest priority, and that any compromise with these, for whatever reason, is a certain recipe for disaster.

The book is well paced and keeps the reader's interest throughout, even though there are perhaps too many major characters. The obligatory technical explanations are clear and always pertinent to the events. The novel is perhaps lighter in treatment than some may feel is appropriate for such a serious subject, but I felt the occasional humorous event or joke added to the point of the book rather than detracted from it.

Although I thought that Pohl's being known as an SF author might prevent *CHERNOBYL* from having as wide an audience as it deserves, I read in *Matrix 72* that the book is being turned into one of those American TV mini-series, so it appears to have attracted some media attention. It remains to be seen whether Hollywood's treatment will be true to the spirit of Pohl's book, so I recommend that you read the original first.

HEADLINE NEWS!

During a year in which new publishing ventures appeared and internal reorganisations meant new imprints appearing and disappearing within established firms, Headline Books appeared with a publicity sheet entitled 'Headline News' (yes, they thought of it first!) and a list of books aimed firmly at the best-seller charts. 'The first new hard-back/mass-market paperback house to be launched for a decade' (as Headline described themselves) issued their first books in June of last year.

Their SF and fantasy list - chosen by Jo Fletcher, to whom I owe most of this information - aims at a good across-the-board selection of 'quality' and 'commercial' writers,

but with no lessening of standards - they insist - in the 'commercial' branch. Books of interest include Terry Bisson's TALKING MAN, Dan Simmonds 1986 World Fantasy Award winner SONG OF KALI, Peter Beagle's THE FOLK OF THE AIR, Michael Bishop's WHO MADE STEVIE CRYE? and Ian Watson's controversial THE POWER, an intriguing fusion of horror and 'nuclear holocaust' fiction which has puzzled not a few confirmed Watson fans.

It may be my taste, it may be Jo Fletcher's, or it may be the state of current writing in the respective genres, but the strengths of the Headline list seem to lie towards the fantasy rather than the SF pole. There are, however, plans to produce books from new young writers - mostly American but some British - which may remedy this. Meanwhile December saw Charles Sheffield's BETWEEN THE STROKES OF NIGHT and another Sheffield (NIMROD HUNT) is planned for later in the year. Future plans? - 'To go from strength to strength.' Naturally, there will be an Asimov/Greenberg/Waugh anthology (ENCOUNTER) and we will also see Marion Zimmer Bradley's 3-volume 'SWORDS & SORCERESS' collections. One writer we are urged to watch out for is Craig Shaw Gardner, whose first book MALADY OF MAGICKS (June) will prise him to 'take over from Terry Pratchett'. Later on in the year (August) Headline will be having a special SF/Fantasy promotion.

January's books - which will be reviewed in the near future - are Tony Richards' first novel, HARVEST BRIDE, Stephen Leigh's BONES OF GOD, Pat Murphy's FALLING WOMEN and Simon Hawke's THE PIMPERNEL PLOT, vol. 3 in the 'Time Wars' series which has not had much critical acclaim but which appears to be very popular among the buying public - again a preponderance of fantasy or 'soft' SF but a wide spectrum of subject. Is there a particularly 'Headline' book? Probably not - the group's commitment to the mass market means a commitment to good books that will sell rather than specialisation and I haven't found any major similarities among Headline's books so far, other than what I've already suggested. But most Headline books seem to have a touch of the unusual, ranging from Bradley Denton's WRACK AND ROLL - apocalyptic heavy-metal writing 'with all the volume controls turned up LOUD' (Paul J. MacAuley, PI 68) - to Stephen Leigh's 'thoughtful and thought-provoking' if occasionally clichéd BONES OF GOD (Sue Thomason in PI 64, writing about the Avon edition.) And at times - as with Michael Bishop's WHO MADE STEVIE CRYE? and Peter Beagle's THE FOLK OF THE AIR they are publishing books which stand out from the average by any standards. I'm looking forward to the August promotion with interest.

Meanwhile, Bisson's TALKING MAN is reviewed below, and other Headline books are reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

R E V I E W S

Terry Bisson - - - - - TALKING MAN
(Headline, 1987, 192pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Steven Tew)

Talking Man is a wizard from the end of time, but, fortunately for those of us tired of the mediocrity of the fantasy market, he is no Tolkienesque figure, but an interesting character drawn with a sense of mystery which has none of the cardboard cut-out undertones of the usual carbon-copy Gandalf. Living among mortals he runs a repair garage in Kentucky while his mortal daughter, Crystal, tends her tobacco patch. William Williams becomes involved with them when Talking Man fixes his windscreen by magic. Talking Man has been safeguarding a substance called the unbeen, which was created by Dgene, his lover/sister/other from the end of time. The world is Talking Man's dream, and the unbeen, if turned loose, will destroy that dream. Williams arrives just as Dgene catches up with Talking Man. With Crystal as his companion he sets off to follow the two of them as one pursues the other from the border of Mexico to the North Pole. As the chase ensues the world undertakes changes which affect everything from ice and snow to buildings of pure white stone.

Bisson's tale of an ordinary mortal caught up in saving the known Universe from destruction puts a rather jaded fantasy concept in a refreshing context. The American landscape is depicted with a vivid realism which would not be out of place in a travelogue which, at the same time, carries a convincing hint of the Strange. The sense of mystery is quietly built up as the landscape changes until we are being driven through a fantasy world which is accepted with little effort in suspending disbelief. In less than 200 pages, Bisson achieves more than most fantasy writers achieve in over 1000 pages - with apparent ease, he creates a fantasy world as real as our own.

John Banville - - - - - BIRCHWOOD
(Paladin, 1987, 175pp, £3.50)

- - - - - DOCTOR COPERNICUS
(Paladin, 1987, 255pp, £3.95)

- - - - - MEFISTO
(Paladin, 1987, 234pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

Those who like the baroque/symbolic end of the mainstream spectrum might appreciate these novels by one of Ireland's currently hot writers. BIRCHWOOD is a gothic parody set in 19th-century Ireland: a macabre family history involving a long-lost twin sister whose identity turns out to be surprisingly close to home. DOCTOR COPERNICUS is a fictionalised biography of the monk whose sun-centred cosmology lay the foundations of modern astronomy; a novel, also about science and certainty, themes developed further in the aptly titled MEFISTO, officially part of the 'science' tetralogy with DOCTOR COPERNICUS (along with KEPLER and THE NEWTON LETTER), but which also reflects the themes, structures (and characters?) of BIRCHWOOD. The conclusion of MEFISTO takes these themes close to - if not over - the borders of symbolic realism into another territory entirely if the narrator's final paragraphs are as I read them; if not, the whole is still worth reading for Banville's tremendous writing. His ability to be at once linguistically eloquent (and elegant) and sparingly allusive is astonishing. Parts of MEFISTO could actually be an SF novel about discovering the underlying nature of reality through mathematics and computers: all the more effective because the stresses and emphasis are not those of genre SF, which gives a wonderfully dislocating effect if you're reading it with SF in mind.

Peter S. Beagle - - - - -THE FOLK OF THE AIR
(Headline, 1987, 330pp, £4.95)

(Reviewed by Mary Gentle)

Much of THE FOLK OF THE AIR is beautiful, and moving, and magical. But it remains, for me, a puzzling novel.

THE FOLK OF THE AIR is about disguises: people and things are not what they seem. Farrell, the protagonist, lute-player and ex-Californian student, is neither guileless nor a harmless wanderer. His old friend Ben Kassoy is not a lecturer at the university, but is Egil Eyvindsson, Viking of the ninth century. People who sell fast food, drive buses, or go to High School, are not mundane people; they seek their escape in being Lord and Ladies in the League for Archaic Pleasures. And the League is not a collection of present-day Californians who dress up as characters from High Fantasy, Tolkien and Cabell and the rabble that follows after; they are - sometimes - truly Magic witches and familiars and warriors.

Underneath this is the converse theme: that people's real nature doesn't change. Farrell will always be an emotional cocktease (as one of the other characters puts it); his ex-girlfriend Julie will never have a boyfriend around for longer than a fortnight; Ben's lover, Athanasia Sioris, old enough to be his mother, will always be Sia -

But Sia is old enough to be all of our mothers. Besides witches and time-travel and possession, this book has goddesses. Capricious, kind, cruel and a-human, as goddesses are.

There seems, in the novel as well as the characters in the novel, to be a disapproval of the young (the villain and villainess both appear as teenagers), coupled with an approval for adults who behave like children: dressing up, playing castles. 'Aiffe', the schoolgirl Rosanna Berry, is both a witch and a power-mad fifteen year old.

'I never wanted power as badly as I wanted it at 15,' Farrell says, accurately. Power unrestrained by maturity is dangerous. But the immortal malignancy, Nicholas Bonner, also chooses, for reasons that aren't quite clear, to manifest as a teenager. What is disturbing here is how little the bad guys actually do, and how brutally they are swept aside. But perhaps that is in the nature of goddesses.

In the Beagle canon, this is closer to 'Lila the Werewolf', an early story with Farrell as hero; and the autobiographical I SEE BY MY OUTFIT. It doesn't have the mordant humour of A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE, or the compassion towards evildoers of THE LAST UNICORN.

'Farrell could not find any faces in that first wonder of brightness and velvet, cloaks and gold and brocade - only the beautiful clothes glittering in a great circle, moving as though they were inhabited...by marshlights and the wind. The folk of the air, he thought.'

The folk of the air traditionally deceive: I'm still not certain what's really behind the glitter.

Alexei Panshin - - - - -RITE OF PASSAGE
(Methuen, 1987, 254pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Steven Tew)

Panshin's RITE OF PASSAGE is an excellent riposte to those detractors of science fiction

who claim that the genre is shallow, technology-orientated garbage with no concern for character or issues of wider concern. The excellence of the riposte lies in the fact that no-one can deny that it's SF (as they do with NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR and the like), and no-one can deny that, beyond its SF adventure plot, lie other levels of concern.

RITE OF PASSAGE is set in a future where Earth has been destroyed by the strangulation of over-population and war. Humanity survives as colonists on backward worlds, and in spaceships constructed out of asteroids. The spaceship societies trade snippets of knowledge with the colonists for raw materials. The people on board live comfortable lives where greed and hostility have been eliminated by the availability of everything - food, housing, luxury goods - to everyone. But this equitable balance has been brought about by rigid population control and the ruthless practice of dropping its fourteen year olds in the wilds of hostile colony worlds to test their survival ability.

In the telling of Mia Haverov's Trial, Panshin uses the plot as a vehicle to trace Mia's development from a child with a narrow outlook on life, very much bound by the enclosed world of the ship, to an adult who is able to question her complacent existence and take account of things beyond her Self. On another level, is Panshin's wider analysis of society and ethics, and investigation into standards of conduct and the way Man treats Man.

The publisher, however, not only seems to be marketing the book as pure SF adventure (and why not?), but has chosen to ignore the fact that the heroine is black-haired and dark-skinned, and have illustrated the cover with a fair-skinned blonde instead! Odd, that.

Terry Pratchett - - - - -EQUAL RITES
(Corgi, 1987, 205pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

On the Discworld, wizardry is the prerogative of the eighth son of eighth sons. But when a wizard passes on his staff to an eighth son who is actually an eighth daughter, things get complicated, because everyone knows that females can't be wizards. It's self-evident that women can only be witches - though of course there's nothing wrong with being a witch: it's a very honourable and worthwhile career, for a woman.

Unfortunately, young Eskarina doesn't actually agree with all this, and with the indomitable Granny Weatherwax she sets off for Unseen University at Ankh-Morpork to learn how to be a wizard. And the pompous mages who hold and use power there never quite know what hits them.

The title's neat pun sets the scene for this third Discworld novel, and if you've a weakness for Pratchett's plausible constructions then you're in there enjoying his crazy logic from the word go. True, the end fizzles out between a spot of universe-saving from the Things from the Dungeon Dimensions, Romance coming to Granny's door, and the sugar-liberating activities of some ants, but by then you've probably been giggling too frequently to notice. I'm also not sure I could take the pace of working in one of Discworld's libraries, and I rather suspect Mr Pratchett really ought to be reported to the Library Association for lack of due respect for my beleaguered profession. Don't tell, though - I enjoy his books too much!

Robert Silverberg - - - - -SECOND TRIP
(Avon, 1987, 192pp, \$2.95)

(Reviewed by Nik Morton)

This is a reprint of the 1972 version: though 15 years old, the story is as fresh as today. Silverberg thrusts the reader straight into the mind-world of Paul Macy who is a rehabilitated Nat Hamlin. Rehabilitation entails a brainwash, followed by an immersion in a false personality. But, fresh out of rehab, he encounters Hamlin's old girlfriend, and a small piece of Hamlin awakens in his mind and grows to threatening proportions.

A Jekyll and Hyde tale, delving into the psyche of a disgusting violent sculptor and a manufactured personality. There are the literary, scientific and artistic allusions we've come to expect from the eclectic Silverberg, garnished with philosophy. His metaphors are always apt, description is pitched just right: brief, but enough to show, not to tell.

'She had a parched, ravaged look, though, as if fevers of the soul had been consuming her substance. Her eyes, though large and bloodshot, never were still. Always a birdlike flickering from place to place.'

This is Lissa, a drop-out psychic, who proves both friend and foe in Macy's battle with his other self, Hamlin.

A psychological thriller in a believable near-future setting, concerning real characters, real emotions, and realistically portrayed situations. This is vintage Silverberg.

Frank & Brian Herbert - - - - -MAN OF TWO WORLDS
(Futura, 1986, 397pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Helen McNabb)

According to the front cover *The Times* said this book was a 'gulping good read'. I cannot agree. I found it very slow going and finished it only out of a sense of duty, but am unable to decide quite why it was such hard work.

The Dreens are a race who can 'idmage' (turn their thoughts into reality). Earth and humankind are the product of an aberrant Dreen, the rest of whom are so horrified by the violence of this particular creation that they build a special ship to exterminate it. On board is a young Dreen, Ryll, who, after a crash, merges with the body of a man who is heir to one of Earth's most powerful men, thus Ryll can observe all the many machinations. The story switches from Earth to Dreenor, moves to Venus, with a great deal of activity. The plotting is fair enough, the character thin, the writing adequate but it failed to capture my imagination. I found it dull, but even so if you like Herbert and this kind of busy story you may enjoy this.

Guy Gavriel Kay - - - - - WANDERING FIRE
(Unwin, 1987, 298pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Nik Morton)

This is Book Two of the 'Fionavar Tapestry' trilogy; the first book, *THE SUMMER TREE*, has been reissued with a complementary cover design, very becomingly.

With comments garnered such as 'One of the very best fantasies since Tolkien' (Andre Norton), 'best so far of those fantasies that are unabashedly Tolkienesque' (*IASFM*), and

'might well have created the major fantasy work of the 80s' (Charles de Lint), it would surely be heresy not to like this book. I've never thought of myself as a heretic....it'll take some getting used to, I suppose.

I found Book One slow, plodding, and this is no different. I'm reviewing *THE ENCHANTMENTS OF FLESH AND SPIRIT: THE FIRST BOOK OF WRAETHU* by Storm Constantine, and her first person narrative reminds me of Mary Stewart's Arthurian works, and her descriptions come alive; there is magic in her words. Sadly, *THE WANDERING FIRE* is terribly flat. Mr Kay tries hard, very hard, and he feels for his characters, but it all seems so precious, an over-striving for effect -

...she had needed to know the other place, the next one, the last. The place of summoning.

And then, on a night in April, she did. [p. 26]

If that isn't clear enough, then try these two samples:

Paul was beginning to understand something, though not yet something else. [p. 274]

In a way it hadn't been much at all, and in another way it was everything. [p. 284]

There is a tendency, as quoted above, to strive for the mystical; I find it absurd:

There came a scream that was not a scream, from a throat human and yet not. [p. 74]

His choice of words is verging on the absurd too:

Paul was silent, his face clenched and rigid. [p. 126]

I've heard of clenched fists, but faces? And there is a liking for stating the obvious too often: "'She tried to kill me as well...and failed'" [p. 98]. Note those suspenseful dots! Perhaps the listeners could have guessed the speaker was not killed?

For me, the most eloquent pieces concern Jennifer, reincarnation(?) of Guenivere, and Arthur Pendragon, seemingly cursed through eternity never to rest. (The end-piece involving Jennifer's rape was the only piece that seemed to come alive in Book One). But what does this say of Mr Kay? That he couldn't create characters I could feel anything for, so he tacked on Guenivere and Arthur to his own, tapping into an old fascination with the Matter of Britain?

Of course this is a subjective view, and if you want to try the trilogy, go ahead: I fear you will either love it or hate it. You know where I stand.

Judith Tarr - - - - -THE GOLDEN HORN
(Corgi, 1987, 272pp, £2.75)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

Vivid and unusual fantasy set against the sack of Constantinople by forces of the 4th Crusade in 1203/4 - but not exactly in the world we know for Alf and Thea, the two main characters, are elf-kind, with powers of telepathy, healing and shape-shifting.

The previous volume, *THE ISLE OF GLASS*, explained how Alf was raised in a monastery and ended up on a pilgrimage of penance to

Jerusalem. THE GOLDEN HORN sees Alf taken in by a noble Byzantine family, and soon the great events which come into play outside the walls of Constantinople threaten Alf and his friends.

Judith Tarr blends exoticism of setting with clear analysis and sympathetic characters, particularly Alf, struggling to comprehend his own nature. She treats both the wider historical context and the personal and spiritual conflicts with empathy and occasional delicacy, but never feyness: there is a feeling of tough authenticity about them. Most enjoyable, both as a 'historical' and a 'fantasy'.

Clifford Simak - - - - - -OUT OF THEIR MINDS
(Methuen, 1987, 175pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Helen McNabb)

This is not one of Simak's best works. That is not to say it is a bad book, it isn't, but neither is it particularly unusual, different or exciting. The hero, Horton Smith, returns to the small backwoods town (typical Simak) where he grew up, to holiday and write a book. On the way his car is run off the road by a dinosaur (triceratops to be exact), he passes the night with some fictional characters and awakens in a cave full of snakes. Puzzled and disturbed he continues to the town where a letter which contains the notes of a friend who recently died await him. The notes explain the friend's belief that the beings of human imaginations have a real existence, in a world only partially connected with our own. Given this truth the beings - we see an imp, Satan, a sea monster, wolves and Brer Rabbit among others - try to destroy him, then to use him, and threaten the woman he has met, and the world, our world, in the process.

The story is only superficially worked out, and Smith's many escapes stretched my credulity too far. It is something of a pot-boiler, but even so it is a pot-boiler written with fluency and ease, even if not much deep thought. OK if you really like Simak, but otherwise don't bother hunting for it.

Harry Harrison - - - - - -WINTER IN EDEN
(Grafton, 1987, 486pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Phil Nichols)

If I were to tell you about the interspecies rivalry of the Tanu and the Yilane, I doubt that you would understand me. Were I to do it at vast length, you might grasp what I was getting at, provided that I did it well. That is precisely what Harry Harrison tries to do in WINTER IN EDEN, but, sad to relate, I understood barely a word.

I fully confess to being the worst person to review this book, as I have an instant word-blindness when it comes to exotic (especially made-up) words being slipped, supposedly unnoticed, into familiar English. It first struck me down when, at a tender age, I was forced to read Kipling's KIM, for which a glossary is essential. In the present case, it led me to skimming, my eye scanning page after page as meaning simply refused to emerge from the words before me. Slithy toves and borogoves I can handle, but Inkhalmnets, uruketos, ustuzou and ikkergaks I can well live without.

Those more willing to persevere will, no doubt, find the 50-page appendix a great help, but when the ideas - invented flora, fauna, language and civilisation - get in the way of the story they should support, as they do for me here, no amount of detailed explanation can justify it.

Dan Simmons - - SONG OF KALI (Headline, 1987,
311pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Terry Broome)

Hired by 'Harpers' to interview a famous Indian poet long thought dead, Robert Luczak travels to Calcutta with his wife and child. Once there, he meets someone who claims the Kapalikas - the servants of Kali, the Indian goddess of pain - have resurrected the corpse of the poet. Indeed, the poet's latest epic - untypical of his work - is a paean to the Gods' war against the demon Mahishasura and Kali, into which situation she was brought into existence from Durga, the goddess of war in Indian mythology. Luczak is inevitably drawn further and further into Kali's world of pain and death.

This is a superbly written, gripping, stylish and mythic horror-fantasy. Simmons infuses it with a realism that is frighteningly disturbing. Unlike Watson's THE POWER, the violence and horror is not gratuitous and arises naturally from a rational plot. Calcutta is vividly and convincingly portrayed as a gloomy, grotesque and claustrophobic place, with an underlying atmosphere of suppressed malice. KALI succeeds in its evocative depiction of a culture quite unlike our own, where BRIDGE OF BIRDS by Barry Hughart (another World Fantasy Award winner I reviewed in PI 63 failed.

Dan Simmons' final message seems to be that the song of life does not have to be one of pain, destruction and death, but of love. However, for the most part, he does not infuse the book with this feeling, which makes it fairly depressing reading. The book ends on what came across as a false or forlorn hope. This may have been deliberate, to make readers consider alternatives to pain and destruction in this, the real world, or it may have been Simmons' untiring optimism. Highly recommended.

Charles L. Grant (Ed.) - SHADOWS II (Headline,
1987, 223pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Colin Bird)

This collection of varied horror tales was first published in the States in 1978 so it can hardly claim to be representative of the latest developments in the genre. It is a fairly entertaining set of 13 stories concentrating on the big names like Ramsey Campbell, Stephen King and Robert Bloch. The style of horror ranges from Campbell's web of subtle unease woven in 'The Little Voice' to the gruesome shock effect of 'Butcher's Thumb' by William John Watkins.

Some of these stories are as close to fantasy as they are to horror; for example, John Crowley's intelligent piece 'Where Spirits Gat Them Home'. Several SF writers are also caught moonlighting in a foreign (if allied) genre; Michael Bishop, R.A. Lafferty and Thomas Monteleone. None of them show a particularly impressive grasp of the craft, they are attracted to the elegance of the supernatural and consequently ignore the primal dread that should be invoked.

Stephen King inevitably supplies the concluding story, a deceptively simple tale of psychosis called 'Nona'. King ascribes his anti-hero's madness to an unhappy childhood, hardly an original notion, but the killer conjures up an illusory accomplice to observe his grisly deeds. This allows King to view the events through the kind of fractured logic that a schizophrenic would adhere to.

King and Campbell are the saviours of this rather too comfortable collection which provides diluted entertainment.

Greg Bear - - EON (Legend,
1987, 504pp,
£4.95)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

'Legend' is the new SF imprint from Arrow Books, and EON is the first in the series. The cover bears the words 'The greatest science fiction novel of our time', and an illustration which is slightly inaccurate. The quote is totally inaccurate.

At the end of the 20th century a converted asteroid has gone into orbit around Earth. The Americans have managed to keep the Soviets out and the Chinese under restraint so they can keep to themselves the fact that the Stone is hollow, contains deserted cities, and has come from Earth's future, with a passageway in it leading millions of miles to no-one knows where. Earth has already had one nuclear war but another is likely. For a week or two Earth experiences alternate histories (where a nuclear war starts in the Stone's records of the period and does not in reality) and then the Earth is exterminated, leaving only a few moonbases and satellites, and the Americans and Soviet Spetznaz invaders to live on in the Stone. All this has happened by about p. 200, but the story and the reader's interest has begun to flag by about p. 70. After interminable battles in which the Soviet troops are driven on by their unbendingly bigoted political officers, it is revealed that the Stone still has residents who have become disembodied: themselves divided into factions intent on provoking fights with the others.

EON contains references to a lot - advanced maths, architecture, esoteric physics - yet for a work so concerned with extra dimensions the characters are wooden and the plotting rotten and padded. The book implicitly refers to others, most notably RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA, while the last chapter (a surprising little lick) takes us into the worlds of H. Beam Piper's paratime. However, most disquieting is the book's attitudes to science and politics.

In the Acknowledgement, Bear lists the Citizens' Advisory Council on National Space Policy ('Citizen' here means member of a small US right-wing pressure group). An account of the CACNSP by Gregory Benford, 'Dancing With The Straw-Man' can be found in FAR FRONTIERS vol V, Spring 1986. It details how the group, of whom Benford was one, in the early '80s produced the idea of SDI and sold it to the White House - 'Here was the President, using phrases and ideas that first surfaced in casual swimming-pool talk less than a year before ... But with a sinking feeling I heard Reagan envision a total defence of our population.' It goes on to describe how Arthur C. Clarke, who was opposed to the pollution of space by weapons but whose early astronautics work could be used in SDI, was attacked by the group - 'Heinlein attacked as soon as Clarke settled into Larry Niven's living room... Foreigners on our soil should step softly in discussions of our policies, Heinlein said. Clarke was guilty of "British arrogance".'

EON shares every fault in these people's thinking and it demonstrates how a work of fiction can be ruined by its underlying phil-



osophy. When you think that Arrow published the paperback edition of THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN, you have to wonder what's gone wrong so quickly that they should choose this as their lead title, and call it 'good' let alone 'the greatest'. EON was a great disappointment to me.

Claudia J. Edwards - - TAMING THE FOREST KING
(Headline, 1987, 215pp,
£2.50)

(Reviewed by Colin Bird)

A colonel of light cavalry is despatched to a distant province to reassert the king's authority, finding a welter of intrigue amongst the diplomacy and sword-play. The emphasis is on romantic interplay as the Colonel's second in command and the deposed local monarch vie for her affections. Ms Edwards shows a sure touch with her clipped prose and the book has a great deal more pace than you would expect. Unfortunately we get the usual romantic clichés like 'drowning in the blue-gray sea of his eyes'. Low on fantasy, high on slush, but entertaining.

James White - - SECTOR GENERAL (Orbit, 1987,
196pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Terry Broome)

There can't be many BSFA members who haven't heard of James White and his rather amusing, puzzling Sector General stories, all of which

concern the treatment, in an intergalactic hospital, of various exotic aliens.

This short collection contains four stories, including 'Accident', which tells how Sector General was established by two war-heroes attendant at a spaceport disaster, and the longest and last story, 'Combined Operation', about a space rescue that at first seems quite simple but escalates in complexity as it progresses.

The intervening stories are 'Survivor', about the advantages and disadvantages of being empathic, and 'Investigation', where the problem at first appears to be a number of starving casualties, all of whom seem to be recent multiple-amputees.

The delight of these stories comes with trying to anticipate the characters' conclusions from the given facts and their course of action, and to read on fascinatedly as White gives his answers.

The stories are light, space-operatic, have the flavour of medical mysteries, but are not quite detective stories as there are no crimes committed here (Dr Conway, the chief character in three of the stories, is no intergalactic Quincy). They are also well-written. So I recommend you to throw away your Doc Smith's and stock up with some Doc Conway's instead!

Michael Moorcock - - THE SWORDS OF CORUM
(Grafton, 1987, 509pp,
£3.95)

(Reviewed by Ron Gemmell)

Omnibus edition of three of the 'Books of Corum', namely THE KNIGHT OF THE SWORDS, THE QUEEN OF THE SWORDS and THE KING OF THE SWORDS which were first published back in 1972/3 and believe me they're showing their age.

The barbarian men (here known for some reason as Mabden) are busily setting about taking over the world, dealing out the usual atrocities of rape, torture and murder wherever they go. Their favourite victims are the Vadhagh - an ancient race who used to be quite warlike but have long since not felt the need for practise, nor for that matter to concern themselves with the affairs of the new race; Mabden.

Prince Corum of the Vadhagh leaves on a journey one fine day to re-open communication with the neighbouring Vadhagh castles - nobody seems to be talking these days. When he reaches the first castle the reason becomes obvious.

This is not a particularly well-written work, neither is it particularly imaginative. For instance, early into the book Corum finds himself cruelly maimed, losing a hand and an eye. He gains strange and powerful replacements relatively shortly afterwards - throughout the remaining 400 pages they are as useful to him as an ever-increasing force of U.S. Cavalry; always arriving at the eleventh hour and for the most part always more than a match for the enemy.

There's got to be better things to spend £3.95 on.

Michael Moorcock - - THE CHRONICLES OF CORUM
(Grafton, 1987, 454pp,
£3.50)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

The second Corum trilogy (THE BULL AND THE SPEAR, THE OAK AND THE RAM, THE SWORD AND THE STALLION) in which Moorcock adds Celtic symbols to his own mythological creation, making

the books richer than the first trilogy - a rare occurrence. Moorcock's placing of moral questions firmly in the collective heart of humanity has always appealed to me, and is expressed here by - among other things - Corum's reluctance to take on the role of a god, or even a demigod, and his almost tragic fate. But the books are seriously flawed by what can often be slapdash writing, and by this time the Eternal Champion cycle got bogged down in its own self-referential complexity. There's still a firmness of moral clarity in Moorcock that most fantasy writers lack, however, but this book is for fans with gaps in their collection rather than for those who aren't really familiar with Moorcock's work.

Gordon R. Dickson - - THE FOREVER MAN (Sphere,
1987, 375pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Kev McVeigh)

Gordon R. Dickson has been one of those writers whose books I've often looked at in the shops when lost for something to buy. I always thought 'I'll have to read one of his sometime.' Well now I have. I'm still ambivalent.

This isn't a bad book at all, but it is far from being great. As a result of events during Earth's war against the Laagi (who attacked us first, of course), pilot Jim Wander and psychologist Mary Gallagher learn how to put their minds into inanimate objects, specifically their spaceship And Friend. This means they can go on missions too dangerous for physical bodies, and spy on the Laagi. In fact they are sent on a secret (even to Jim) trip beyond Laagi territory to investigate both Laagi and rumours of 'Paradise'. They find it, watch the Laagi, escape easily and come back with a plan for peace; then after fighting all through the book Jim and Mary fall in love. (Brash pilot melts icy scientist's heart on lasy page shock!)

As adventure it's light, occasional fun for a boring evening. As anything else? I wonder if it was because I was reviewing rather than (just) reading that little flaws, silly things, kept niggling at me. Why do the aliens have a silly name like Laagi, if we've had no contact to learn who/what they are? Why should small geographical states matter on an Earth that controls half a galaxy? Was the race of mind-people just a lazy way to end the book? They are a nice idea, but not really relevant otherwise.

Maybe I'll read another Gordon Dickson book sometime, if I've nothing better waiting.

K.W. Jeter - - THE GLASS HAMMER (Grafton,
1987, 238pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

This is a book about the power of television to affect society and individuals. The Glass Hammer of the title must refer to the impact of the crystal screen. Large parts of it are written as a shooting script:

'VIDEO: CUT to INTERIOR: a dark cramped space, the LA glare spilling down a wooden stairway from above. PULL BACK as SCHULYER and WYRE descend'

I could learn a lot about writing my own first script from this book. I could learn a lot about writing a novel based on my reading this novel. I could learn to avoid everything it does.

It fails because of its pretensions - at the same time it is a novel about the damage

done by the media, about religious revival, about life after the next nuclear (star) war, and it is a chase story. Colin Wilson in one of his early novels has a character he says is like Aleister Crowley when the character clearly is Crowley. Similarly THE GLASS HAMMER has an early reference to the film VANISHING POINT, but this book's chase, with its driver and Amf computer aid are only Dean Jagger and the black radio DJ recast, not new.

The story is not told sequentially but it is something like this - the US has split into civilisations on either coast after devastating war, and most people in North America rely for support on the Church. Schuyler is excommunicated and starts to make a living racing across the desert with bootleg computer chips, shot at by leftover star wars satellites. Television broadcasts make him a hero in the slums of South America. He becomes a God to the new peons and his son a likely new Messiah. A breed of chaste nuns opposed to the Messiah's re-appearance, since they do not want him to die again, struggle against Schuyler but they have nothing to worry about as the novel ends. Which conclusion feels rather as if the author's tape had run out.

THE GLASS HAMMER fails, finally, because of its overload. Its style and its story are too much for the book to carry (it does not have the page and burns out). The Messiah in the slums particularly misfires. Why they should come to believe in him is never explained

Graham Dunstan Martin - - - - - THE DREAM WALL
(Unwin, 1987, 231 pp, £2.95)

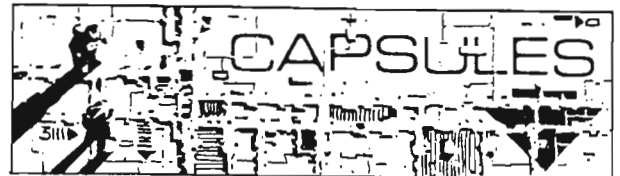
(Reviewed by Edward James)

There is something paralysing about being faced with a novel whose blurb quotes a Professor Edward James of *Paperback Inferno* trumpeting at length the virtues of the author's previous novel (*Time-Slip*). And it did take me very much longer to find the virtues of this one. On the surface it is an absurdly overdrawn and implausible story of a twenty-second century Britain which has succumbed to an IRA invasion and a subsequent Marxist Revolution. The ruling class all have names like Clegg-Molotov or Potter-Krasnowsky, and live lives of uncomradely and hypocritical luxury; the days of the week are now Stalinday, Leninday, Marxday, Engelsday, Althusserday, Freedday, Sartreday; British placenames have become Glasgorky, Engelsburgh, Tashkent; the great political prison, known popularly as the Web, but officially called the Beatrice and Sidney Webb Prison, stands where the British Museum once stood (before the Revolution of 2009), its entrance at Guy Burgess Street or Anthony Blunt Square; one's neighbours are regularly hauled in here in the early hours of the morning by the sinister People's Friends. You get the picture; it is a *Daily Express* parody of what the Soviet Union is like (before *perestroika*, at least), transferred to Great Britain. It was actually published around the time of the General Election (my paralysis lasted a long time), and is a clear warning about the dangers of voting Labour.

The plot concentrates on John and Sue, two ordinary Brits trying to survive in 2116-17, and on the Glorious Leader Clegg-Molotov. Accidental involvement in a strike in Scotland causes John to end up in prison, and then in a concentration camp where a nutty linguist is attempting to bring about the great communist future by forbidding the use of all pronouns except 'We', while Sue goes to a hospital where an equally nutty scientist has developed a technique of blocking out dreaming (a subversive activity) and thus destroying consciousness and will. The narrative is contained in chapters called 'Events'; interspersed with these are 'Dreams', dreams in which John and Sue live their lives on the eve of the Revolution in 2009. The last 'Event' is the launching of satellites, on

the two hundredth centenary of the October Revolution, to send out the electronic impulses which will eliminate dreaming throughout the world.

I have to reveal the real ending, because otherwise reasoned comment will hardly be possible. It was only inattentive reading (and annoyance at the implausibility of the Events) that prevented me from predicting the end much earlier: it emerges clearly in the final 'Dream' that the Dreams are in fact the Events - the Events of 2116-17 are dreamed by John and Sue in 2007. Relieved of the task of trying to see this prediction of a Soviet Britain as a serious one, one can begin to appreciate Martin's "wry sense of the ridiculous", which I discerned in *Time-Slip*. There is useful satire buried among the none-too-convincing future horrors, such as his digs at modern respected (but nutty) linguistic theorists. In retrospect, having discovered the ending, one sees the intelligence of the construction and of the novel's play with alternate history. It is not in the same league with Orwell, but it is certainly a novel to be taken seriously. It does also show the ephemerality of sf futures: the Revolution of 2009 never comes about, partly because of what John and Sue do, but largely because of the election in November 2007, which brings the Alliance to power...



Piers Anthony - - RINGS OF ICE (Avon, 1987,
191pp, £3.50)

Reissue of 1974 disaster novel featuring six individuals after a space project goes wrong causing massive floods and irreversible climatic changes, drowning most of the earth. Dispensable. (Andy Sawyer)

Piers Anthony - - SHADE OF THE TREE (Grafton,
1987, 352pp, £2.95)

After his wife's murder Joshua Pinson is left a Florida house by his uncle, so he brings his children there to recover from the trauma. But the huge ancient tree which overshadows the house has an eerie reputation. Not particularly original, but a good suspense/horror read and a welcome change of style for the author. (Andy Sawyer)

Isaac Asimov - - PEBBLE IN THE SKY (Grafton,
1987, 226pp, £2.95)

Reprint of Asimov's first (1950) novel, with Earth as pariah-planet in Galactic Empire. Long-term fans will need no introduction: newer SF readers may find here the reason for the harsh criticism of more recent books. Slimmer, tauter than the second-wave FOUNDATION books, PEBBLE's naiveties are frequently structural strengths. See, for example, the Rome/Israel parallels between Empire and Earth made more real and a touch ironic by using a 20th-century American-immigrant Jew as a viewpoint character. This leads to a real plot, covering Imperialism, rebellion, racial bigotry and Love Crossing Boundaries, as opposed to characters bumbling about on a quest for as long as the author can spin the story out. (Andy Sawyer)

Steven Bauer - - STEVEN SPIELBERG'S AMAZING
STORIES vol. 2 (Futura, 1987, 225pp, £2.50)

More adaptations of stories from Spielberg's

TV series: mostly based upon cliches of 'cinema-TV/comics' 'Golden Age'. (Andy Sawyer)

Elizabeth H. Boyer - - THE TROLL'S GRINDSTONE
(Corgi, 1987, 393pp, £2.95)

Another 'World of the Alfar' novel in which an evil sorcerer is battled by a young human disguised as his former henchman and betrayer. A good plot and potentially a good magical world to set it in but it never comes to life because the characters are neither heroic, nasty comic or tragic enough. A bland mediocrity settles over all. (Andy Sawyer)

F.M. Busby - - REBEL'S QUEST (Orbit, 1987, 243pp, £2.50)

Sequel to STAR REBEL and indirectly to ZELDA M'TANA. Bran Tregare seems to get laid more than he advances his Plan to wipe out the UET hegemony, but this is still one of the better space opera series around, with a good strong central character and a well-conceived background. Let's hope the next volume doesn't mark time so blatantly. (Andy Sawyer)

Hugh Cook - - THE WOMEN AND THE WARLORDS
(Corgi, 1987, 429pp, £2.95)

Vol. 3 of 'Chronicles of an Age of Darkness' - a fantasy series with little in the way of style or originality and a really dull cast in a duller world. (Andy Sawyer)

Ian Dennis - - BAGDAD (Unwin, 1987, 210pp, £2.95)

Arabian-Nights story full of conspiracy, colour, 'tales-within-tales' and a shimmeringly confusing plot involving the revolutionary Ripe Fruit Party who wish to evoke 'That which is within' and murder the Caliph. More than a pastiche, this is a most readable and refreshingly different tale which appears to be built around the conflict between moderation and ecstasy. Occasionally - as in the almost self-contained tale of 'The Moderate Man' in chapter 2, it reaches delightful heights. (Andy Sawyer)

John Farris - - NIGHTFALL (N.E.L., 1987, 311pp, £2.95)

Insane killer awakens from catatonic trance to hunt down his wife and child. Nothing of the fantastic or supernatural in this book (Farris has written some excellent horror fantasy) but it might be of interest because of the author. (Andy Sawyer)

Raymond E. Feist - - A DARKNESS AT SETHANON
(Grafton, 1987, 527pp, £3.50)

Sequel to MAGICIAN and SILVERTHORN; conceived and told well enough to be amusing to those unaware of or not bothered about the essentially second-hand nature of the language and imagery. (Another 'rival to Tolkien'.) Full of names rather than personalities. (Andy Sawyer)

Esther Friesner - - NEW YORK BY KNIGHT (Headline, 1987, 252pp, £2.95)

A knight tracking a dragon through the dimensions comes to the final confrontation in modern New York. Reads suspiciously like a novelisation of a not-very-good film, down to the street-wise urchin who becomes the knight's squire. (Andy Sawyer)

Ron Goulart - - THE CURSE OF THE OBELISK
(Avon, 1987, 139pp, £2.95)

In a late 19th-century Europe which really

ought to have existed, detective Harry Challenge and reporter Jennie Barr investigate the secret of a cursed Egyptian obelisk being sought by a Satanist and an arms dealer. Amusing fantasy thriller which devotees of Conan Doyle and George Lucas films should lap up. (Andy Sawyer)

Leslie Halliwell - - RETURN TO SHANGRI-LA
(Grafton, 1987, 304pp, £2.95)

A small band of explorers track down Shangri-La, inspired by James Hilton's LOST HORIZONS. Shangri-La is an upper-class Englishman's wish fulfillment - hippy mysticism with crumpets - and Halliwell's main character, a reactionary old buffer called Brent welcomes this aspect but provides pointers to the pointlessness of the quest. Subject and author (of the well-known 'Film Guides') rather than it being in itself a good novel make this something of interest. (Andy Sawyer)

Simon Hawke - - THE TIMEKEEPER CONSPIRACY
(Headline, 1987, 215pp, £2.50)

The 'Time Wars' are fought this time in 17th-century France, with D'Artagnan and the three musketeers playing important roles as a gang of intertemporal terrorists seek to disrupt the timestream. Unconvincing thriller, with the action interrupted by unfunny pantomime routines. (Andy Sawyer)

Shaun Hutson - - RELICS (Star, 1987, 269pp, £2.95)

Celtic ritual and modern black magic are linked in this gore-and-guts horror tale. Thoroughly professional and quite revolting. (Andy Sawyer)

Patricia Kennealy - - THE THRONE OF SCONE
(Grafton, 1987, 479pp, £3.50)

Vol. 2 of The Keltiad, Kennealy's transposition of Celtic civilisation to deep space. The occasional grace where the author forgets what rudimentary SF concepts she started with makes the whole concept even sadder. (Andy Sawyer)

Bernard King - - TIME-FIGHTERS (Sphere, 1987, 254pp, £3.50)

Sequel to THE DESTROYING ANGEL and middle volume in the 'Chronicles of the Keeper trilogy'. A Lovecraftian saga involving immortals and a conspiracy directed by the transhuman forces of Thule, which seem to revolve around an ancient talisman. It's a strange mix of invention and cliché: King does not make the 'Thule' idea either clear or ambiguous enough to satisfy the reader, and what is actually happening seems pretty much your standard 'invasion from the Dungeon Dimensions' motif, yet it's clear from the Faustian references that he is trying something quite ambitious. (Andy Sawyer)

Phillip Knightley - - THE SECOND OLDEST PROFESSION (Pan, 1987, 436pp, £3.50)

A useful read alongside SPYCATCHER, but this history of the 'Intelligence' industry sits beside accounts of early SF when it describes the boost to spy fever given by the 'future war' stories of William Le Queux. Worth reading for its own sake, but may also cause you to look at the near-SF cold war thriller with a more cynical eye. (Andy Sawyer)

Stephen Leigh - - THE CRYSTAL MEMORY (Avon, 1987, 245pp, £3.50)

A space opera/mystery that tries only feebly to raise itself above its most hackneyed elements. Unfortunately, there is simply too

much hogwash to plough through and the central character becomes increasingly unlikeable. A moderate read with a few nice touches but the writer could probably do much better. (Nicholas Mahoney)

Richard Lupoff - - LOVECRAFT'S BOOK (Grafton, 1987, 287pp, £2.95)

Interesting faction melodrama in which H.P. Lovecraft is approached by Unsavory Elements to write in support of the fascist cause. A major novel could be written about Lovecraft and his circle: this isn't actually it, but fans will enjoy this obviously well-researched recreation of a slice of the writer's life and times. Robert E. Howard comes across as a complete loony, but the fascinating and aggravating complexities of Lovecraft himself make this something more than a fannish tribute. (Andy Sawyer)

Andre Norton - - IRON CAGE (Puffin, 1987, 288pp, £2.50)

Norton's 1974 novel shows us Jony, having escaped with his mother from the alien Big Ones' laboratory, drawing on his memories of having been an experimental animal when the large, gentle beings who took them in are themselves treated as specimens by human colonists. Good introduction to ethical issues, as in much of this writer's SF for the young. (Andy Sawyer)

Luke Rhinehart - - ADVENTURES OF WIM (Grafton, 1987, 409pp, £3.95)

Occasionally hilarious tale (by the author of THE DICE MAN) of Wim, a midget from the Montauk Indian tribe, and his search for ultimate truth. Better for the way it tells the story, perhaps, than what it actually says. (Andy Sawyer)

Jennifer Roberson - - THE SONG OF HOMANA (Corgi, 1987, 347pp, £2.95)

Book 2 of 'Chronicles of the Cheysuli' - another series featuring Celtic names, a map, a magical race (of shapechangers) and a dispossessed Prince. Well enough conceived and executed, but the power behind the tale needs a more original setting to do it justice. (Andy Sawyer)

A.N. Roquelaire - - THE CLAIMING OF SLEEPING BEAUTY (Futura, 1987, 253pp, £2.50)

Erotic fantasy exploring what happened after Sleeping Beauty woke up. Nearer to THE STORY OF O than the 'Gor' books in that all the S & M stuff is done with a certain Continental elegance. Ah, but does that make it any more interesting/acceptable, you ask? (Andy Sawyer)

Peter Tremayne - - TROLLNIGHT (Sphere, 1987, 248pp, £2.75)

Black magic mystery centred around an archaeological dig in Norway. Who killed Ann Stevens? And are the locals right when they fear that the trolls have been disturbed? Tremayne's stock plotting gives a slightly old-fashioned air to his books, but he avoids the concentration upon the nastier side of horror which more modern trends revel in, telling a story without turning the stomach. (Andy Sawyer)

Robert E. Vardeman - - THE JADE DEMONS QUARTET (N.E.L., 1987, £4.95)

Far-future epic fantasy collected into one hefty volume. She-warrior Kesira, plus talking bird and man-wolf, challenges the Jade Demons. Lots of reading but little to remember after you've read it. (Andy Sawyer)

Robert E. Vardeman - - A PLAGUE IN PARADISE (Avon, 1987, 169pp, £2.95)

Third of the 'Masters of Space' series, in which Barton Kinsolving combats plans to let a DNA-unravelling virus loose on the galaxy's aliens. (Andy Sawyer)

Joel L. Whitton & Joe Fisher - - LIFE BETWEEN LIFE (Grafton, 1987, 265pp, £2.95)

Investigation of reincarnation using hypnotherapy. Uneasy balance between 'mystical' and 'scientific' approach. (Andy Sawyer)

Roger Zelazny - - THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH (Avon, 1987, 252pp, £3.50)

Fifteen stories from Zelazny's most inventive, mid-sixties period, including the award winning title story and my personal favourite, 'A Rose For Ecclesiastes'. His coruscating prose and titanic imagination make re-reading these stories a pleasure. Some of them seem dated but many have a timeless quality and a few are as beautiful and haunting as anything produced in the genre. (Colin Bird)

"Upon the rack in print"

ANALOG and ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE, MID-DECEMBER 1987 to FEBRUARY 1988

Reviewed by Edward James

If you are someone with a nostalgic yearning for sf which explores the problems of living in space, the consequences of technological developments upon human beings, the possibilities for human evolution, and which ends with the triumph of good old-fashioned virtues like progress, humanity and love, then the four-part serial which began in the December issue of *Analog* and finished in February is probably for you. It is Lois McMaster Bujold's *Falling Free*. I don't think it is really giving away anything to say that it is about the fate of the thousand bioengineered "quaddies" - humans bred for life in space, with the ability to resist space-sickness, bone decay etc, and with no legs, just four arms. The plaque on the wall of the manager's office in the space Habitat where this experiment was carried out - reading "On the sixth day God saw He couldn't do it all, so He created engineers" - may serve as the motto for the story: engineers are the heroes, militarists and bureaucrats the enemy - construction v. destruction. The characters are not especially well-rounded, the plot creaky in places, but the moral issues are given a good airing, and the story leaves you with a good taste in the mouth. It's interesting to see a woman writer tackle this kind of sf, and, indeed, for a woman writer to get such prominence in *Analog* at all.

Apart from the Bujold serial, the Mid-December *Analog* featured two novelettes, "Last Favor", by Harry Turtledove, in which an Earth survey ship interferes disastrously in an apparent case of racial oppression on an alien planet (competent but unexciting) and "Captives of the Slavestone" by Ian Stewart (the only British writer apart from Gribbin to contribute regularly to *Analog*). Stewart's story was a follow-up to "Displaced Person", back in May - a welcome survival of the good old biological puzzle story. Given the hypothesis of a plant which incorporates a matter transmitter, how would an intelligent species (and the good old Earth survey team) exploit it? Ingenious light-weight fun. In addition there are two articles, a rather out-of-place one (by Sprague de Camp) on the special effects used by Douglas Fairbanks Sr, notably in "The Thief of Baghdad", and one on space-age weaponry by Arthur C. Clarke (for further particulars see the special Arthur C. Clarke issue of *Foundation* (no. 41), just published), and two shorts:

Gregory Kusnick's "Chrysalis", which read too much like a fragment of a much longer account of a sub-FTL star flight, and D.C.Poyer's "The Report of the All-Union Committee on Recent Rumors Concerning the Moldavian SSR", the cleverest twist I've seen on the old vampire theme (whoops, I've given it away!) for a long time.

The January 1988 *Analog* also had two longish articles, though very interesting ones: an attack on the Big Bang consensus by Paul S. Wesson, and a sadly intriguing account of the crisis that led to H. Beam Piper's suicide, by John F. Carr. The stories were somewhat lifeless, however; a routine human-interfering-with-aliens novelette, "Strangers", from Poul Anderson; a parallel-world story, "The Worlds I Used to Know", from Rick Shelley (which had its high spots, but they weren't sustained), and Alice Laurance's "User Friendly" - which at least was an unpretentious short, about the trials of a computerised house when it (he?) suddenly acquired consciousness and emotions. The best thing in the February *Analog* was probably the last episode of the Bujold serial. It also contained a further instalment of the long-running (since February 1984) series by J. Brian Clarke, about the growing collaboration between alien Phiuli and the humans; interesting only for those who follow the series. Steven Gould offered an implausible tale of the folk who live slung on ropes between sky-scrapers (Ian Watson did it much better with "The People on the Precipice"); the veteran *Astounding* writer Christopher Anvil had a veteran *Astounding* tale about a strange miraculous gadget whose workings no one can understand (Campbell, where are you?). The most entertaining stories were the two brief idea-stories: in Rick Cook's "Dreamers" a female space freak bored out of her mind by the "geeky social misfits" at an sf con, meets a man who claims to be a historian from a space habitat in the future (the corny idea redeemed by the nice punchline), while Arlan Andrews's "Present Worth" has a time-traveller coming from the US in the middle of World War II, who draws very wrong conclusions about what he sees in the US of the 1980s: Nissan and Volkswagen cars, a Mitsubishi tractor, Hitachi electrics.

The Mid-December *Asimov's* finished with the climax of the serialisation of Ellison's *I, Robot* screenplay, which I enthused about last time. The final episode convinced me that if this was ever filmed it would rank among the best sf films ever. A prediction unlikely ever to be tested, sadly. We also had two novelettes: the cover story "He-We-Await" (should be "He-Whom-We-Await", surely?) by Howard Waldrop, where the mind of an evil pharaoh is reawakened in a young boy of our times. Better than it sounds, but only marginally. And "Stovelighter", by Steven Popkes, the old tale of the girl at the port, whose romance is going to be cut off by the departure of her engineer-lover. The port is a space-port, of course, the ship a space-ship with some fancy gadgetry and a bastard of a captain. Very much better than it sounds, actually; an effective piece of emotion-tugging. There were three shorts: a piece of Azazel froth from *Asimov* called "Galatea"; "King of the Cyber Rifles" (how was it no-one thought of that title before?), by George Alec Effinger, set in his Moslem future, with a well-armed "cyber rifleman" guarding the Khyber against the Mohâjêrân; and "Hyperzoo" by Ian Watson, where a few very nasty and bewildering hyperspace animals are kept in a zoo, until... What with his nasty *The Power* and a few recent horror shorts it's a wonder Watson is getting any sleep at night these days. Perhaps he isn't?

In my last magazine review I remarked that very few people do a high-tech far future tale as well as Silverberg does. Modify that to read "few people do a far future tale as well as Silverberg does". His novella "At Winter's End" in the January *Asimov's* is decidedly low-tech: a small human colony doggedly hanging on in a cave "cocoon" during a comet-induced Long Winter - on a world in which several non-human races have come to sapience and died off. The story is

about the disruption of their tiny static civilisation by the signs which seem to herald the end of Winter. Strangeness is piled on strangeness with a vivacity that recalls Aldiss's "Hothouse" stories - except that the climate is different. (The analogy may be more than accidental; Silverberg is a great admirer of "Hothouse", as his critical anthology *Worlds of Wonder* or his article in *Foundation* 38 shows). In addition there is Pat Cadigan's "My Brother's Keeper" where a self-styled stuck-up college kid goes home to find her junkie brother, and discovers something very strange as well (alien? supernatural? - it is not explained). The contemporary background is sketched in beautifully, but perhaps at too great a length; though this does mean that the shocker, when it eventually arrives, is all the more effective. The other novelette is Michael Bishop's "The Calling of Paisley Coldpony", finely written, as one might expect, but suffused with that woolly mysticism about North American Indians which has become unfortunately so common with North American writers. Much better were the three short stories. Richard Paul Russo (not Richard A. Russo, who has become Richard Cornell to avoid the confusion) offers the moving "Listen To My Heartbeat", which deals with the emotional mess left behind by a girl who has an operation to make her into a cyborg star pilot. Connie Willis has one of her funnier (and more bitter?) stories in "Ado", where minority interest pressure groups have effectively censored most of English literature. Hamlet had no chance:

The National Cutlery Council objects to the depiction of swords as a deadly weapon. 'Swords don't kill people. People kill people'. The Copenhagen Chamber of Commerce objects to the line 'Something rotten in the state of Denmark'. Students against Suicide, the International Federation of Florists and the Red Cross object to Ophelia's suicide.

And a student demands equal time to be given to the Baconian theory in lectures on Shakespeare... The third short is a collaboration between Terence M. Green and Andrew Weiner, "Twenty-Two Steps to the Apocalypse", a thoroughly Watsonian piece of subdued dementia - in which God is discovered to be a giant slug on Pluto. And the lengthy review article by Spinrad is worth reading, as ever; the most detailed analysis of the Orson Scott Card Hugo winners I have seen, comparing it with other power fantasies in sf (including, of course, *The Iron Dream*).

The February *Asimov's* leads with a short story which leaves me speechless (believe it or not): O, Niemand's "Put Your Hands Together". Niemand ("Zero Nobody") is the pseudonym of a major author who has been writing sf stories in the styles of the great Americans. And this is in the style of Flannery O'Connor, of whom, I am ashamed to say, I have read not a word. I enjoyed this tale of an alien Christian preacher and the hypocritical and xenophobic Christian women it unmasks - but I haven't any idea how clever it was as a pastiche/tribute. The one novella in this issue was Harry Turtledove's "Trapping Run", one of the most effective of his long-running alternative history series, in which pioneers colonise a North America inhabited not by Indians but by a sentient race of apes - the sims. Here the human protagonist is accepted by a tribe of sims - and by a female sim. There is also Bruce McAllister's psionic war story, "Songs from a Far Country", largely inexplicable to those who missed his "Dream Baby" in October; Neal Barrett's "Ginny Sweethip's Flying Circus", an enjoyable squib about travelling folk in a high-tec but energy-short future; Alexander Jablovkov's chilling "Deathbinder", where a doctor who, inevitably, comes into contact with the recently dead, has to copy with the unpleasant business of laying ghosts. And finally, a welcome appearance for Gwyneth Jones, in "The Eastern Succession", where a male observer tries to approach the matriarchs of a future South East Asia which will be familiar to those who know her splendid *Divine Endurance*: here is the same heady exotic brew - an oriental Theakston's Old Peculiar. It may not be to your taste, but if it is, savour it.

INTERZONE 22, Winter 1987

(Reviewed by Andy Mills)

IZ22 kicks off with the results of a story popularity poll. It's always gratifying to have one's opinions endorsed in whatever fashion, so it's good to see that many of my personal favourites are highly placed in the poll. Having thus been reminded that there has been a number of excellent short stories appearing in the magazine over the last year or so, IZ22's contents do come as a disappointment. Perhaps it is merely because I'm approaching the stories towards the end of a wearying year, but I thought the best parts of this issue are the interviews. K.W. Jeter vents his spleen on cyberpunk (contrast his views with, say, John Shirley in IZ17) whilst J.G. Ballard brings his unique viewpoint to bear on a variety of topics (and it's a pleasure to read an Interzone interview which is of a decent length).

Possibly the best of the fiction is Christopher Burns' 'Among the Wounded', which has itself more than a touch of Ballard, not so much in the prose style as in the economy of narrative. Lisa Tuttle, in 'Memories of the Body', shifts from a well used sf theme - android bodies being used by people to exorcise their violent impulses - to a favourite one of hers, that of the domination of one person over another. Other well trod paths are those taken by David S. Garnett ('The Only One') and Eric Brown ('The Girl Who Died for Art and Lived'). Brown's workmanlike story is about the artist's search for the ultimate; neither Garnett's mock-Victorian prose nor his characters are convincing and the ending, once signalled, is clichéd. 'The Boys' by Charles Stross promises more than it delivers, with the climax of this cyberpunk piece getting bogged down in exposition. As to Cherry Wilder's 'The Decline of Sunshine'; well, it's either confused or textured, take your pick. I'll admit to being confused. This one could repay a re-reading, I feel.

What else? SMS contributes a literate comic-strip, very James Blish in subject matter. Noticeable by its absence is Nick Lowe's film review column, rightly praised by a correspondent in this very issue. Dropped through lack of space, it appears.... all I shall say is that my priorities would have been different.

FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION - October 1987

(Reviewed by Richmond Hunt)

In October the editor traditionally puts together a stronger bunch of stories for the anniversary issue. Or perhaps we should just say he includes stories by the more famous. The anniversary issue is not always as good as it pretends to be from a list of contributors. This time around the issue rates 'fair', raised to 'good' by John Kessel's 'Judgement Call' and finishing up 'excellent' with the inclusion of 'The Tiger Sweater', Keith Roberts' new Kaeti story.

Kaeti is one of the handful of SFictional characters who have been wrought so clearly, so strongly by their creators that they become real people. In fact Kaeti's characteristics and nuances are so finely detailed and so carefully communicated that she is more real than some people I've met. Using Kaeti, Kerri and the rest of his stable of itinerant dramatis personae, Keith Roberts has produced a brilliant series of stories over the past six years.

In 'The Tiger Sweater, Kaeti lives with Tina and works for Kerri on a provincial newspaper. Things do not remain 'normal' for very long as Kaeti comes into possession of/is possessed by the mysteriously empowered sweater. Buy this magazine, read this story - if you never even skim the rest of the contents you'll will have had your money's worth.

Keith Roberts' story has rightly been left as the last piece and high note of the issue, but 'Judgement Call' which starts the volume would in other circumstances be the leading contribution. A swollen-headed all-American basketball player decides he has so much skill that luck is of no consequence. Confrontation and (perhaps) judgement are inevitable when Lady Luck decides to take a hand: hell hath no fury like a woman scorned! An unusual tale which I highly recommend.

The cover story is 'The Maid on the Shore' by Delia Sherman, a standard F&SFesque folk-tale retold. These crop up occasionally in the magazine and are entertaining if not overwritten, overlong or overfrequent. This example is well-constructed and, even if the characters are a little wooden, is a promising first sale (as far as I can establish) from Ms Sherman. No plot summaries for this type of story; like the original folk songs/tales they all concern love, sex, death and magic in shifting proportions.

The other 'big' names in this issue are Kate Wilhelm, Lisa Tuttle, Avram Davidson and Ed Bryant, all of whom contribute stories with one or more deficiencies. In the case of Wilhelm's 'The Disassembler' the characters are just too shallow and lifeless. Perhaps this is to be expected when portraying unexceptional people but it doesn't engender much reader sympathy with Joey Doyle, the man who in this story has pretensions above his meagre IQ but somehow manages to invent a very nasty toy. 'The Colonisation of Edward Beal' by Lisa Tuttle is itchy horror without much horror, and with fairly colourless (!) ich too. Tuttle's horror stories are just too low key. As Rosemary Pardoe (reviewing some of the same in Vector 140) rightly observes; they hardly disturb at all. 'Drummer's star' by Bryant is OK but lifeless and doesn't really develop its single premise. It concerns a rock band's stand-in musician who, you guessed it, is out of this world.

Lastly, Davidson contributes 'Mountaineers are always Free', a characteristically odd vignette. Davidson can write with great style, or then again take vicious liberties with his prose, but either way you know he's chosen just the right words for the maximum impact. Or has he? It beats me how the title goes with the story in this case!

The issue also contains a review of 'The Witches of Eastwick' in Harlan Ellison's regular film column. It seems he liked it and is encouraging us all to see the film ourselves. I mention this because, as you may have guessed, it's not too easy to earn Ellison's commendation. The last film he really recommended was released in 1977.

SF-based parodies of nursery rhyme which marked the previous collection, BROOMSTICK - DRIVE, but there are also more serious, speculative poems such as 'On being invited to be born on Planet Earth' and homages to, amongst others, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Frank Herbert, J.G. Ballard, Ursula Le Guin, Olaf Stapledon, and Brian Aldiss. I particularly liked the Stapledonian visions of the final section, 'Eternities and Time-wrack'. Throughout, Stella Hender's excellent illustrations capture the spirit of the poems. If you're interested in SF poetry, I recommend this: £2.00 inclusive of p & p, from Triffid Books, Val de Mer, Alderney, Channel Islands.

INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

ANTHONY, P.	RINGS OF ICE (Avon)	p.11
ANTHONY, P.	SHADE OF THE TREEE (Grafton)	p.11
ASIMOV, I.	PEBBLE IN THE SKY (Grafton)	p.11
BAILEY, K.V.	DISTANT MUSIC (Triffid Books)	p.2
BANVILLE, J.	BIRCHWOOD (Paladin)	p.5
BANVILLE, J.	DOCTOR COPERNICUS (Paladin)	p.5
BANVILLE, J.	MEFISTO (Paladin)	p.5
BAUER, S.	STEVEN SPIELBERG'S AMAZING STORIES vol. 2 (Futura)	p.11
BEAGLE, P. S.	THE FOLK OF THE AIR (Headline)	p.6
BEAR, G.	EON (Legend)	p.9
BISHOP, M.	ANCIENT OF DAYS (Paladin)	p.3
BISSON, T.	TALKING MAN (Headline)	p.5
BOYER, E.H.	THE TROLL'S GRINDSTONE (Corgi)	p.12
BUSBY, F.M.	REBEL'S QUEST (Orbit)	p.12
COOK, H.	THE WOMEN & THE WARLORDS (Corgi)	p.12
DENNIS, I.	BAGDAD (Unwin)	p.12
DICK, P.K.	THE PRESERVING MACHINE (Grafton)	p.3
DICKSON, G.R.	THE FOREVER MAN (Sphere)	p.10
EDWARDS, C.J.	TAMING THE FOREST KING (Headline)	p.9
FARRIS, J.	NIGHTFALL (N.E.L.)	p.12
FEIST, R.E.	A DARKNESS AT SETHANON (Grafton)	p.12
FRIESNER, E.	NEW YORK BY KNIGHT (Headline)	p.12
GOULART, R.	THE CURSE OF THE OBELISK (Avon)	p.12
GRANT, C.L. (ed.)	SHADOWS 2 (Headline)	p.8
HARRISON, H.	WINTER IN EDEN (Grafton)	p.8
HAWKE, S.	THE TIMEKEEPER CONSPIRACY (Headline)	p.12
HERBERT, F. & B.	MAN OF TWO WORLDS (Orbit)	p.7
HUTSON, S.	RELICS (Star)	p.12
JETER, K.W.	THE GLASS HAMMER (Grafton)	p.10
KAY, G.G.	WANDERING FIRE (Unwin)	p.7
KENNEALY, P.	THE THRONE OF SCONE (Grafton)	p.12
KING, B.	TIME-FIGHTERS (Sphere)	p.12
KNIGHTLEY, P.	THE SECOND OLDEST PROFESSION (Pan)	p.12
LEIGH, S.	THE CRYSTAL MEMORY (Avon)	p.12
LUPOFF, R.	LOVECRAFT'S BOOK (Grafton)	p.13
MOORCOCK, M.	THE CHRONICLES OF CORUM (Grafton)	p.10
MOORCOCK, M.	THE SWORDS OF CORUM (Grafton)	p.10
NORTON, A.	THE IRON CAGE (Puffin)	p.13
PANSHIN, A.	RITE OF PASSAGE (Methuen)	p.6
POHL, F.	CHERNOBYL (Bantam)	p.4
PRATCHETT, T.	EQUAL RITES (Corgi)	p.6
RHINEHART, L.	ADVENTURES OF WIM (Grafton)	p.13
ROBERSON, J.	THE SONG OF HOMANA (Corgi)	p.13
ROQUELAURE, A.N	THE CLAIMING OF SLEEPING BEAUTY (Futura)	p.13
SILVERBERG, R.	SECOND TRIP (Avon)	p.7
SIMAK, C.	OUT OF THEIR MINDS (Methuen)	p.8
SIMMONS, D.	SONG OF KALI (Headline)	p.8
TARR, J.	THE GOLDEN HORN (Corgi)	p.7
TREMAYNE, P.	TROLLNIGHT (Sphere)	p.13
VARDEMAN, R.E.	THE JADE DEMONS QUARTET (N.E.L.)	p.13
VARDEMAN, R.E.	A PLAGUE IN PARADISE (Avon)	p.13
WHITE, J.	SECTOR GENERAL (Orbit)	p.9
WHITTON, J.L./FISHER, J.	LIFE BETWEEN LIFE (Grafton)	p.13
ZELAZNY, R.	THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH (Avon)	p.13

