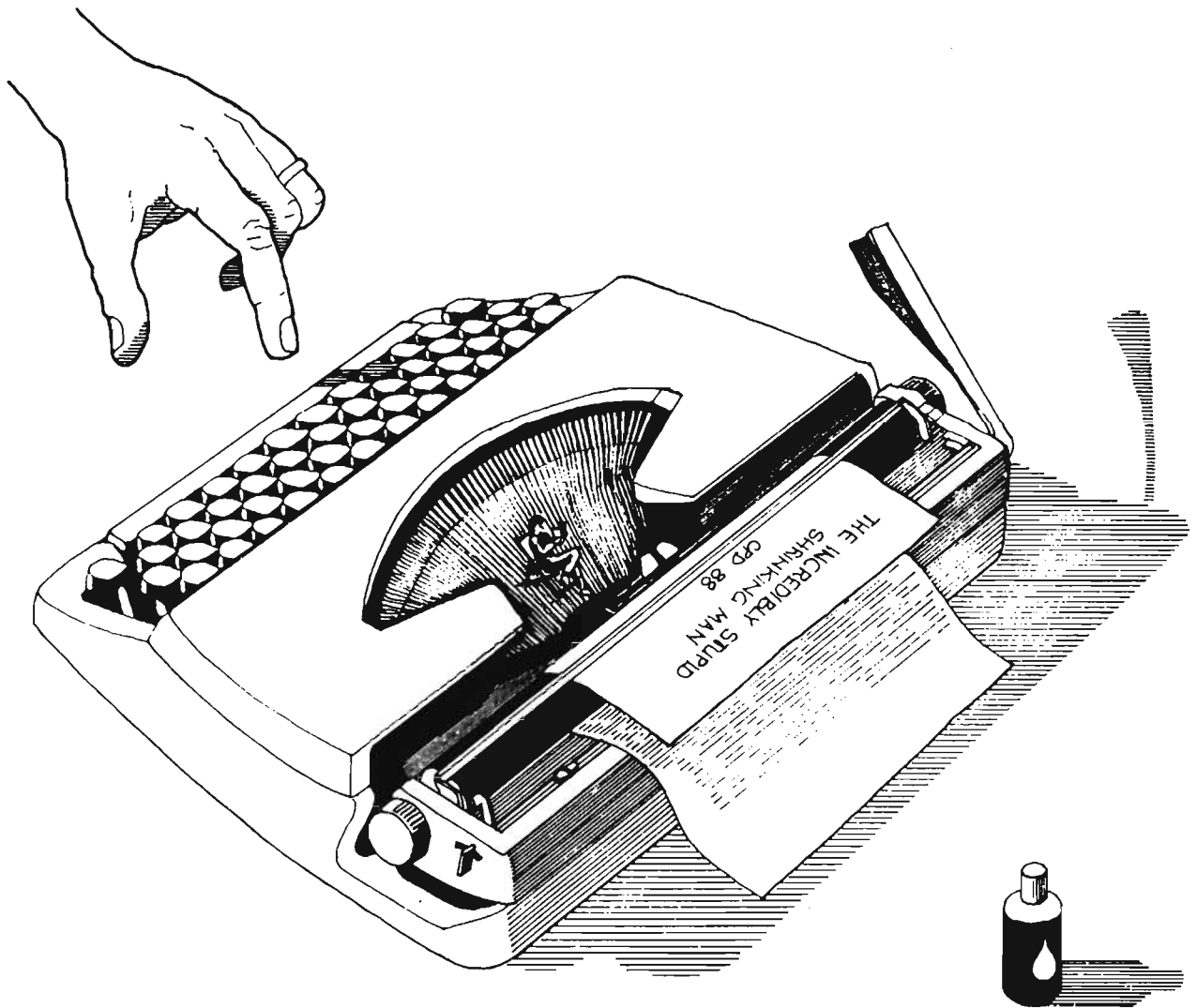




October/ November 1988

The Review of paperback SF



A British Science Fiction Association magazine 50p.



Issue 74, October/November 1988.
A production of the British Science Fiction
Association, edited by Andy Sawyer.

ISSN 0260-0595.

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Printed by PDC Copyprint, 11 Jeffries Passage,
Guildford, Surrey GU14AF.

Production Assistant: Phil Nichols.

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

All opinions in this magazine are the views of
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ARTWORK: Cover and PI logo by Colin P. Davies

S T O P P R E S S

Because of the postal strike various parts of
this issue have not reached me. In particular,
you'll notice a truncated magazine review
section (no Analog/Asimov's reviews) and no
response from Malcolm Edwards to Ken Lake's
critical overview last issue. I'm holding over
all comment on this topic until PI75. In place
of these sections, I've included a consider-
able number of reviews and 'capsules' I'd oth-
erwise have scheduled for the next PI, or
passed on to other reviewers, or both. Because
of my own schedule (already disrupted by hol-
iday) I've had to put this issue together with
little time to assess how long the strike will
last, but it will probably mean a difference
to the balance I'd planned for PI 75. (cont. p.15)

Paperback Purgatory

When Piers Anthony's BEING A GREEN MOTHER
(Grafton) arrived for review my children
(aged 12 and 10) grabbed it - I don't know
why, review books come and go and only occas-
ionally does one fire any interest - and I
didn't see it for a couple of weeks, during
which my inquiries about 'Are you actually
enjoying it?' met with enthusiastic responses.
Rosamund liked the idea of the rock group
travelling in the enchanted fish which swall-
owed Jonah, and the way the book had Death,
Nature, Satan etc. as characters.

I have to admit that I don't like this
series and have kept with it only because of
the faint hope that each succeeding volume
might be the key which makes sense of the
whole. It seems to be an exercise in allegory
by a writer whose prolific inventiveness
overweighs any actual logic in his stories:
the easy pun wins over the considered plot or
developed character every time. But, as
Harriet said to me. 'I think it's really
better for children than adults.' From the
word-play to the magical/symbolic characters
to the coy giggles whenever Anthony treats
sexual matters, these are clearly books for
the immature which (perhaps the last charact-
eristic is an exception?) doesn't necessarily
make them BAD books. Anthony, indeed, is
clear that he is writing for a young audience
and he is dealing with complex issues in a
simplified way which could be accessible to
that audience. He's to be praised for doing
so. My own reservations come partly from
the feeling that I don't think he's doing
this particularly well (he's popular; my
kids enjoy him but Care Bear cartoons and
Australian soaps are popular in this house-
hold too), partly from the feeling that the
Incarnations of Immortality series demands
far less from the sympathy of the reader
than, say the Margaret Mahy books reviewed
last issue, or books by Diana Wynne Jones,
whose HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE is reviewed in
this.

Does it really matter that Grafton have
published BEING A GREEN MOTHER and other
Anthony novels as part of an 'adult' line
rather than as a 'children's' or 'teenage'
imprint, as (see my review last issue) Pen-
guin publish the equally juvenile 'Dragon-
lance' books? Not a lot, except that in the
'Space Tyrant' series, for example, Anthony
can get away with quite a lot of soft porn.
I'd just argue two points, which are: first,
that criticising Piers Anthony for shoddy
writing is one thing (for a work of 'imagin-
ation', GREEN MOTHER is curiously flat: he
can't even be bothered to give any of the
above-mentioned rock group names, for god's
sake!) but slamming him for not writing a
deep and mature novel is to miss the point
of what he's trying to do. After all, the
concepts he's dealing with are extraordi-
narily difficult. And second, there are writers
who possess a freshness of imagination which
makes considerations of whether they are
writing for a 'young' or 'mature' audience
irrelevant. And some of these are published
as 'children's' writers.

To say more is to labour the point and to
re-erect barriers which are often not very
helpful. Perhaps the most rewarding distinc-
tion is between books which amuse but which
you eventually grow out of and books which
offer something for all. The tragedy of the
SF/Fantasy genres is that many of their fans
confuse the two categories but their triumph
is that they do offer strategies for growth.
Between typing the last two sentences I over-
heard Rosamund enthusiastically telling two
friends about the Incarnations series. What
would really be worrying would be my equally
enthusiastically recommending them to you...



Diana Wynne Jones - - - - HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE
(Methuen Teens, 1988, 212pp, £1.95)

(Reviewed by Jessica Yates)

HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE is another of Wynne Jones' triumphs, a romance featuring a splendid, attractive and intelligent heroine. The land of Ingary (a variety of Fairyland) contains witches, wizards, and ordinary folk without magic powers. Sophie, the eldest of three sisters, sets out to seek her fortune, but has already had the great misfortune to be turned into an old woman by the Witch of the Waste. In this disguise, she is also unable to explain that she has been enchanted.

The gossip goes that Wizard Howl devours the hearts and souls of young girls, so Sophie thinks that she is safe to seek a night's lodging in his sinister Moving Castle. She finds that the fire on his hearth is alive, and inhabited by a fire demon, bound there by a contract. The demon promises to take off her spell of old age, if she can break its contract and free it - but she must guess how to break the contract, for herself. Having decided to stay in the castle until she can find that out, she seeks the post of housekeeper to the wizard, and a love-hate relationship develops between the apparently aged grandmother and the attractive young wizard. (His penchant for the hearts of young girls is only metaphorical!)

The plot unfolds with plenty of exciting twists. The Witch of the Waste has also cursed Howl, and he will eventually have to meet her in mortal combat. Her devilish plan is really unexpected when the author reveals it. Of course we are all hoping that Sophie will get her youth back again, and that Howl will be permanently smitten by her beauty when he sees her as she really is - knowing already that she is somewhat in love with him. And then, there's the possibility that Sophie too has magic powers...

The cover portrays the castle - dramatic but rather gloomy, considering the humour of the book. And sadly the text has been photo-reduced from the hardback instead of being reset. This means that, like FIRE AND HEMLOCK, Wynne Jones' masterpiece (also in Methuen Teens), it has been reduced twice, once from US hardback to British hardback, and once from hardback to paperback. It is still readable, but one wouldn't encourage taking this edition on a coach journey! The theory is that teenage readers won't pay more than £1.95 for their own books; one has to balance this against readers (and librarians) rejecting these books for their small print. What of the preferences of Wynne Jones' adult readers? Rather a trade paperback at £3.95 incorporating the better hardback covers, wouldn't you say? The publishers may be contacted at Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road, London SW3 6RB, and do need reminding of this author's strong following of adult readers.

Rudy Rucker - - - - - WETWARE
(Avon, 1988, 183pp, \$2.95)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

There has been a lot of huffing and puffing, recently, on what 'cyberpunk' is, or - more to the point, perhaps - what it is not. Reminds me of those now-quaint New Wave versus Old Guard squabbles of the late sixties/early seventies (ah - nostalgia!). Anyway, I'm inclined to agree with John Owen (Letters, Vector 143, p.7) that '...there ain't nothing new under the sun; nearly all of it (including cyberpunk) evolves out of something else'.

WETWARE is 'the sensational sequel to SOFTWARE, from the cyberpunk master!' claims the blurb-to-end-all-blurbs, before going on to synopsise the plot: 'The mindblowing revolt of the robots!' 'Right on, man!' No - 'Right off!' (or words to that effect) would be a much more appropriate response.

Rudy Rucker is a 'founding father' of cyberpunk, and SOFTWARE (Ace Books, 1982) staked out some of its most fertile territory. John Newsinger, reviewing SOFTWARE in PI 71 called it a 'slight, lightweight, mildly amusing piece of fun that is quickly forgotten' - but what's wrong with that? Like the once equally dismissed NEXT OF KIN (by Eric Frank Russell), I feel sure that SOFTWARE will eventually be regarded as a classic of humorous sf, with or without the 'cyberpunk' tag.

But then, as John so rightly points out, 'opinions differ'.

WETWARE takes the robot-human conflict one crucial stage further, because the 'boppers', safely ensconced in their underground lunar Nest, have found a way of infusing DNA-based wetware (folks like us) with their own software codes, thereby producing the first 'meatbot'. The process is facilitated by the synthetic drug known as 'merge', which users - wither singly or collectively - take to melt their bodies into an organic puddle; after a while, you can't tell merge from matter.

But Rucker has thoughtfully provided us with a schematic breakdown of this spiffing wheeze (any un-Gentle readers can sneak a peek at pages 145-6).

Cobb Anderson, 'creator of the boppers', died in the year 2020 (killed, rather, and dissected by his own frankensteins), but he is recalled to life - of a kind - ten years later. Nevertheless, the main narrative threads in WETWARE are woven around such characters as Stahn Mooney, the hapless private investigator, Della Taze, a molecular geneticist deported to Einstein (the human-inhabited lunar colony) in 2025, and Berenice, the petaflop bopper who - But find that out for yourselves, if you haven't guessed it already.

WETWARE is not without its (Bob) Shavian 'wee thinky bits', but they are - happily - few and far between. Those people who deprecate hilarity on such subjects as artificial intelligence and cybernetic organisms should look the other way, preferably at the nearest issue of Scientific American. Rucker's science is serious enough, most of the time, but his attitude towards it is light-hearted, all of the time.

I contend that WETWARE is an even better novel than SOFTWARE; more finely textured, better characterized, and making great play with ideas that were merely hinted at in its predecessor. The good humour is just as evident, however, and it acts as an antidote to the more po-faced examples of cyberpunkery. Perhaps, for his next trick Rucker will write a fuller account of the sub-lunar bopper Nest - entitled UNDERWARE.

Mary Gentle - - ANCIENT LIGHT (Legend, 1988,
732pp, £3.99)

A HAWK IN SILVER (Beaver, 1988
192pp, £1.99)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

Excuse my litcrit jargon, but it does seem to me that the most accurate review of ANCIENT LIGHT's Gollancz hardback edition was Paul McAuley's in *Interzone* 23, where he describes how Mary Gentle 'pitilessly deconstructs her fantasy'. ANCIENT LIGHT is a novel to be read very much in the light of its predecessor: yes, I know that's true of all sequels, but the sequel to GOLDEN WITCHBREED is a novel which is more than just further explorations of the territory - geographical or metaphysical - of the world of Orthe.

Admittedly, this sometimes make the novel difficult to read if all you're looking for is 'more of the same'. ANCIENT LIGHT takes up the story of Orthe some years after the events of GOLDEN WITCHBREED. Christie is back on the planet, trying to mediate between various factions after rumours of working Golden artifacts have reached Earth. But this is not quite the Christie we knew from GW. A breakdown - partly a disastrous love-affair, partly reaction to the hypno-tapes she took for her previous visit - is still having its effect, it seems in flashes and blockages of memory. The pivotal events in the Brown Tower of Kasabaarde take on a new significance. Just exactly how accurate are Christie's recollections of what happened?

Nor is this the Orthe Christie knew. The political situation has changed, partly due to Company intervention, partly due to conflict between the Telestres and the dirt-poor and dying Desert Coast. Christie's brief is to find a way out of an increasingly unstable situation made more complicated by the presence of an Intervention Force to dampen on-planet conflict, and the rejection by many Ortheans (including, painfully, her former companion Blaize) of her 'damage limitation' style of diplomacy.

Focussing on some of the implications of GOLDEN WITCHBREED, ANCIENT LIGHT's clash of cultures clearly suggests conflicts all too familiar on this planet. One chapter is even called 'The Last Nineteenth-Century War'. On originally reading the novel, I was struck by parallels with what was currently happening in Sri Lanka... but I'm sure you can provide your own sub-texts. Solutions, or potential solutions, constantly appear on the horizon. But although the plot follows the pattern of such novels in which apparent reversal is followed by triumph, this is very much where the 'pitiless deconstruction' lies. Our (and Christie's) expectations of a solution are constantly raised, and as constantly dashed. Further, the very narrative of the story is suspect, gradually unravelled until it tangles in a collision of false expectations: ours, Christies, ours again.

As you might expect, there's an ultimate weapon which, once used, will bring irreversible doom, and a conclusion to which the novel inexorably leads, but here again the author provides complicated twists - or deconstruction. The 'Ancient Light' may or may not exist, may or may not be in the hands of the enemy, may or may not even work and the conclusion - well by then the reader and the narrator are fighting so strongly against the logic of events that the final, magnificently realised scene brought tears to my eyes. There's a very strong Jacobean atmosphere about the conspiracies of Hal, or the Hexenmeister (and Blaize, especially is a class-

ic disaffected courtier at times) but, like the Jacobean plays, ANCIENT LIGHT dramatises a moral map upon which the compass is spinning ineffectually in all directions. Faced with the impersonal Machiavellianism of massive social forces (the Company, the Telestres, the Tribes: the individual Ortheans with their inherited race-memories) conspiracy has its limits. Caught in the middle, Christie can't cope. Her memory-visions - memories of alien lives which could never have been hers, phrases which she can't even transliterate, are kaleidoscopic, sharp and clear but fragmented and liable to fall into a completely different pattern. But perhaps Mary Gentle's most impressive achievement is the way she enables Christie to still remain Christie. Even when she doesn't know what the hell is going on and the reader isn't much wiser, there's an attractive toughness about her and her relationship with Orthe which streams you through the book.

GOLDEN WITCHBREED proved Mary Gentle to be a writer who wrote well within the rules of honest, intelligent-with-a-touch-of-vision conventional SF. ANCIENT LIGHT is very much a process of breaking these rules as she continues the saga but probes more deeply beneath the masks and surfaces of her original characters and images. It's not without its dangers - there are descriptive passages which constantly remind us that the Ortheans are six-fingered and multi-nippled, or which use Orthean language to the point of excess, which are either very subtle deconstruction of genre SF or just too long. Or, both. But it's good, very good, to have a sequel which drives you back to the original and is more than a serial, which gives you a different view and which amplifies rather than carries on.

It's interesting to see that this kind of confronting the reader with their own preconceptions of what this sort of book ought to read like was a feature of Mary Gentle's first novel, the almost legendary A HAWK IN SILVER. It's a Garneresque fantasy concerning two schoolgirls who become involved in a conflict between two Faerie races, and a good fantasy too, but it stands out of the mass of such because unlike the vast majority it has much to say about the characters' everyday lives. In fact, HAWK offers a bleak view of Holly and Chris's school life with its frustrations and petty bullyings, but it's perhaps this strong but realistic picture of school life - so rare in such fiction - which is the book's outstanding feature, despite the problems this creates for librarians trying to 'classify' the book by age group. By the end of the story, Holly and Christie have learned a considerable amount about themselves, and about war and conflict. But they still have to return to school, and these problems, ironically, are less tractable. Can even a glimpse of Faerie help you deal with ordinary human viciousness? A welcome revival and one which confirms its author as a writer worth seeking out.

And maybe this is the point. I mean, yes, 'pitiless deconstruction' and yes, 'confronting readers with their own expectations' but could it be just a matter of skillful and original writing?





William Gibson - - - - - - - - - -BURNING CHROME
(Grafton, 1988, 220pp, £2.95)

Walter Jon Williams - - - - - - - - - -HARDWIRED
(Orbit, 1988, 228pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Maureen Porter)

You don't hear so much about cyberpunk these days. It's lost impetus as the literary style of the eighties, particularly now that any Tom, Dick or Harry can be described as 'in the tradition of William Gibson' just so long as they spray around a few brand names, and feed in enough hi-tech references. Much as the punk music of the seventies dropped away, so cyberpunk is officially dead, according to Bruce Sterling, high priest of the cult image. But is it? Did it ever really exist? Punk music wasn't really new, more a much needed referral back to the basics of skiffle, and whilst it didn't survive, it influenced a whole new generation of musicians. In the same way, cyberpunk was not so much a new literary movement as a re-assessment of images in the works of such authors as Bester and Brunner. It flared briefly, died away, but its distinguishing marks crop up time and again in the hi-tech SF currently so much in fashion.

Unfortunately, no one told the publishers about this, resulting in the absurd situation of every vaguely computer-influenced novel being hailed as the latest cyberpunk masterpiece. Consequently, HARDWIRED is promoted as 'in the tradition of William Gibson' when it owes far more to Roger Zelazny's DAMNATION ALLEY, as the actual dedication acknowledges. Although hi-tech plays an undoubted part in this fast paced adventure story of illegal cross-border operations in a balkanised America, this is not cyberpunk. Many of the familiar images are there - the hi-tech tinkering with the human body, the drug-based culture, the corporate wars, but painted on a broad scale. The insertion into the text of the ad slogans and newspaper headlines which the protagonists see around them is a neat trick, but on the whole, effect is secondary to action, as is characterisation, and plotting, to some degree. It's untidy, confusing but with good moments, and should appeal to anyone who felt, as I did, that Zelazny didn't tell the full story.

Gibson himself has an unenviable position as guru of cyberpunk, which his latest novel, MONA LISA OVERDRIVE will do nothing to dispel. BURNING CHROME will probably disappoint anyone wanting more NEUROMANCER, should prove an eye-opener for anyone interested in seeing him tackle the short story form. To my mind, Gibson's strength lies in these detailed vignettes of life in the Sprawl, where the need to colour in the background is mercifully restricted. The stories concentrate on characters and action, societal depiction fed only where necessary. The title story and 'Winter Market' are the most overtly hi-tech, the former containing the only coherent explanation of the Matrix I've ever seen, but Gibson also turns in a delightful story about alternative futures, and collaborates with Michael Swanwick and John Shirley, to produce work which strays well beyond hi-tech boundaries. His collaboration with Sterling is, alas, less successful, being redolent with Sterling's preoccupation with a superficial variety of multicultural SF, and a couple of Gibson's own mood pieces are weaker than one might expect, but on the whole, this is an interesting collection, well worth reading.

Leslie Gadallah - - - - - - - - - - CAT'S PAWN
(Del Rey, 1987, 262pp, \$2.95)

(Reviewed by Ken Lake)

At first sight this is a traditional hard-core SF tale. There is a not-too-bright but likeable hero way out of his depth in skulduggery; the standard tart-with-a-heart-of-gold, even less bright and totally malleable by her crooked boss, the human number-one baddie of the plot; the bright and most likeable alien whose culture still hides a hideous secret...you might be excused for saying 'ho-hum', and passing on.

If you did, you would miss a well crafted, intelligently thought-out background, set in the framework of a regrettably-just-about-believable future earth society with eugenics laws and strictly controlled childbirth - which turns out to be the mirror-image of the alien dilemma. Of course this is interstellar derring-do, but the characters do have some depth and their motivation is both understandable and something with which we can empathise.

For me, the real surprise came after the novel, when on page 263 the author's identity and background are revealed. I'm glad I didn't know this before I started to read, as it might have coloured my perceptions; the fact is that Leslie Gadallah is a popular-science writer and technical editor, this is her very first foray into fiction, and yes, I did say her. She lives with her family and pets on a small farm in Canada, and nothing in the book startled me so much as these revelations. I'd like to meet Ms Gadallah; she's promising and unusual. Try her.

Keith Roberts - - - - - - - - - - PAVANE
(Penguin, 1988, 240pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by Alan Fraser)

Before I read PAVANE I regarded Philip K. Dick's THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE and Ward Moore's BRING THE JUBILEE as the finest alternative-history novels, but this book then became my favourite, and remains so. Like other books by Roberts such as THE CHALK GIANTS or KITEWORLD, PAVANE is a cycle of short stories with a common background, presented in a chronological sequence to create a novel. This Penguin edition, first published in 1984, contains one story, 'The White Boat', not included in the original 1968 edition.

The events in PAVANE take place from 1968 onwards, in an England where the Spanish Armada defeated the English in 1588, and where the Church of Rome reigns supreme. This England is politically subservient and technologically restricted, with the internal combustion engine and electricity banned by the Papal Bull.

Michael Moorcock described PAVANE as 'tracing the growth of England from a semi-barbaric feudalism to independence and responsibility'; the book gives us episodes along this route of change, leading to a society both more advanced and more responsible than ours today. The Coda at the end also holds a surprise, explaining the symbol that appears on each chapter-heading, and challenging the reader's concept of PAVANE as an alternative-history novel.

Less obviously a child of the Sixties than some other New Wave books, PAVANE should still appeal strongly to many readers today, for its humanity, and for its topical treatment of issues that are as relevant now as they were in 1966. It is a book to own, to love, and to share, especially with those who 'don't like SF'. And, after enjoying PAVANE, please try THE CHALK GIANTS.

R E V I E W S

Marjorie Bradley Kellogg
& William B. Rossow - - THE WAVE AND THE FLAME
(VGSF, 1988, 362pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Alan Fraser)

THE WAVE AND THE FLAME is the first book of a two-volume set called *Lear's Daughters*. The concluding volume, *REIGN OF FIRE*, came out in hardback in March, and will be available in paperback in November.

The FTL ship *Hawking* is on a joint scientific/mineral prospecting survey by the United Worlds government and the private company Complex. A research party lands on the planet Fiix, where they discover the Sawls, a peaceful and seemingly primitive people who live in a warren of caves set in a high cliff. The planet seems ideal for mining development if economically large mineral deposits are found, the only drawback being the inexplicably violent and unpredictable weather changes, which play a very large role in the subsequent story.

The Terrans split quickly into two camps - scientists and prospectors. The prospectors find extensive lithium deposits, while the scientists discover that the Sawls are not the primitives they seem, but the custodians and selective users of a culture and technology much older, and in many ways more sophisticated, than Earth's. A flood damages the Lander and puts the communications equipment out of action. The race is then on for the science team to re-establish contact with the *Hawking*, and register the Sawls as an advanced race and thus entitled to sovereignty over their own planet, before Complex can register its lucrative mineral strike.

THE WAVE AND THE FLAME is a good example of Eighties hard SF, covering familiar ground perhaps, but with mainly well done characterisation, up-to-date scientific input, and modern outlooks on sexual/racial roles/relationships and environmental issues, with a similar flavour to works by authors such as David Brin.

The book ends at the start of a major plot development, with the most interesting issues still left largely unresolved. Having finished it, I went down to my local library to reserve *REIGN OF FIRE* because I want to continue reading the story!

Joe Haldeman - - - - - ALL MY SINS REMEMBERED
(Avon, 1988, 221pp, \$2.95)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

The fair Ophelia. - Nymph. in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.
[Hamlet, Act 3 Scene 1, lines 88-89]

Otto McGavin is no 'fair Ophelia', and he probably thinks that an 'orison' is some kind of orange-coloured bison, but - My God! - how all his 'sins' are 'remember'd'. McGavin is a Prime Operator (one of twelve, apparently) in the peacekeeping, i.e. dirty tricks, agency of the Confederacion, a totalitarian empire-in-all-but-name. The plot - story sequence, rather - of this above-average patchwork novel takes our Hero(?) from his recruitment at the age of twenty-two to his 'early retirement' at forty-five.

ALL MY SINS REMEMBERED (St Martin's Press, 1977) does for the CIA what *THE FOREVER WAR* did for the US Marine Corps - in other words, it's a condemnation (long overdue, in my

opinion) of the 'covert operations' sf sub-genre. It may be a dirty job, but somebody does not have to do it, and the ends do not justify the means. The 'Anglo-Buddhist' Otto McGavin finally emerges as a sympathetic victim-turned-hunter-turned-victim figure, because - throughout the novel - he is much more sinned against than sinning.

(By the way, Michael Whelan's cover catches the mood of the book in a starkly symbolic tableau. Guess where my 1978 Futura edition is going... Thud!)

Cordwainer Smith - - - - THE REDISCOVERY OF MAN
(VGSF, 1988, 377pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Ken Lake)

I'm sticking my neck out here and recommending this as absolutely essential reading for every SF fan. Unless, of course, you have read *THE BEST OF CORDWAINER SMITH*, identical to this book right down to the 'Timeline' that sets these stories into the Smith oeuvre, and the 1975 introduction by John J. Pierce - not to mention the blurb referring to the 'author of the cult classic *NORSTRILIA*', identical to that of the Ballantine (US) edition. This one is of course better bound, but has an inferior John Avon cover, and from the pioneer 'Scanners Live In Vain' of 1950 to 'Under Old Earth' that dates from 1966, all twelve constituent stories are classics.

Whisper 'The Ballad Of Lost C'Mell' to any informed fan and you'll see that distant light shine in their eyes; talk of 'The Dead Lady Of Clown Town' and you can watch them recall the convoluted, hieratic, Sino-American unwinding of another tragic tale from the late Dr Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger, talespinner supreme of the latter days of Man (including Cat, Dog, Bull and other Men refused that appellation by the power of the Instrumentality).

All I can regret in this renamed edition is (a) the omission of three Chinese characters from the title page - Smith's Chinese given name Lin Bah Loh, or Forest of Incandescent Bliss, as godson of Sun Yat-Sen, founder of the Chinese Republic and obviously a lifelong influence upon him and his literary style, and (b) the meaningless title change, introduced presumably solely to disguise the fact that it's a collection of short stories.

If you do not own this, buy it now and rejoice in possessing one of our genre's greatest works.

Harry Harrison - - - - - THE STAINLESS STEEL
RAT GETS DRAFTED
(Bantam, 1988, 256pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Colin Bird)

This is an early adventure of that loveable rogue 'slippery' Jim diGriz in which he becomes Private Rat. After escaping from prison diGriz seeks revenge for the murder of his mentor The Bishop. He steals somebody's identity only to find himself drafted into the army. After a few abortive attempts at espionage Private Rat finds himself part of an invasion force the leader of which turns out to be General Zennor, the very man responsible for the Bishop's death and for the Rat's incarceration. The invasion proceeds and the target is a planet populated by peaceful humans with no army or police force. Our hero sets aside his personal task and attempts to

derail General Zennor's plans before blood is shed.

A fairly straightforward plot leavened by mock heroics and self-deprecatory wisecracks. The narrative is lightweight but pacy, with the exception of the central section in which the eponymous hero is captured and then escapes one time too many. The humour is skilfully deployed and Harrison creates a nice parodic atmosphere.

I was disappointed by the failure of the climax to match the gentle invention of the preceding chapters, being somewhat *Deus ex Machina*, but this failed to spoil my enjoyment. The book has some dull patches but I recommend it to anyone who likes a change from the usual solemn space-opera on offer.

L. Sprague de Camp &
Fletcher Pratt - - - - -THE INTREPID ENCHANTER
(Sphere, 1988, 498pp, £4.50)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

This is an omnibus edition of the five Harold Shea stories. They have been available at different times in smaller combinations but this brings them all together for the first time. The first three stories were written in the early '40s and the others more than ten years later but they merge remarkably well.

Harold Shea is an insignificant American academic who discovers that he can travel to alternate worlds through the use of pure logic. These worlds are those of ancient myth and legend, but only those where magic has a part to play. For Shea has read *THE GOLDEN BOUGH* and the other works of eminent anthropologists and knows that to primitive people the rules of magic are as fixed as those of science in this realm of thought. So Shea enters his alternate worlds by reciting lines of pure logic - 'If P equals not Q, Q implies not P, which is equivalent to saying either P or Q...' and then finds magic works by known rules - the rules of Similarity and of Contagion. In other words, like all the best fantasy, *THE INTREPID ENCHANTER* is based in an extremely strong reality.

Once in these worlds Shea and his colleagues participate in comic/heroic deeds of dubious chivalry, using their magic as well as their other abilities - Shea would come to several sticky ends if he weren't a college fencing champion.

These books have obviously had a wide influence - you'll see it in Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories, in Christopher Stasheff's Warlock books, and, especially in the comic use of mad warlocks, in Terry Pratchett's Discworld. To any reader of those, you should try this volume. To anyone who wants reasonably literate reading I say the same. 'The Castle of Iron' I thought the best, but I know some people disagree with me.

Sphere Books apparently is owned by Penguin Books now. This book has been well produced and edited. I found the bibliographic information and Catherine Crook de Camp's Foreword very interesting.

This is how it should be done.

Barbara Hambly - - - - -THE SILICON MAGE
(Unwin, 1988, 340pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Sue Thomason)

THE SILICON MAGE is the second, and final section of the story begun in *THE SILENT TOWER*. Although I much admire Hambly as a fantasy writer, and although I greatly enjoyed *THE SILENT TOWER*, I have to admit that *THE SILICON MAGE* seemed to me to fall victim to a

malaise described within its pages. Somehow, despite all the rushing around, all the world-saving and romancing that the characters got up to, the book lacked zest and sparkle. It was predictable. Hambly has always followed the stock fantasy conventions fairly closely, while bringing a freshness to her characters, and scattering the familiar fantasy terrain with fragments of genuine insight and/or originality. I didn't find that in this book.

Plot summary: Suraklin the Dark Mage covets immortality. Using a blend of magic and technology from several worlds, he is planning to transfer his personality to a computer powered by the *joie de vivre* of at least two worlds. This may well end up destroying the Universe; it will certainly destroy 'life as we know it' on our world and Suraklin's homeworld. Joanna, an American programmer, and Antryg Windrose, an elderly mad wizard, are his only opponents. Will they manage to find and destroy the Silicon Mage in time? I'll give you three guesses.

I doubt very much whether this book would stand alone; it depends very heavily on knowledge of *THE SILENT TOWER*. Other books by Hambly have featured odd but workable mixtures of science and magic; *THE SILICON MAGE* seems to me an odd and unworkable mixture. I was disappointed by the book.

C.J. Cherryh - - - - -VISIBLE LIGHT
(Methuen, 1988, 348pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Laurence Scotford)

I must confess that I have very mixed feelings about this anthology of six stories, and although Ms Cherryh weaves herself an elaborate protection against critics in her introduction, I am going to ignore it and attempt to explain why this book neither fails nor succeeds.

The first problem is indeed with the introductions to the stories. In these Ms Cherryh establishes an ongoing dialogue between the reader and herself, supposedly set on board an interstellar craft. Although many relevant points concerning the art of writing are made, I always felt that the artificial scenario got in the way. I longed instead for a more detailed background to the stories themselves. All the same, this is a forgivable fault since it is the stories themselves, and not the decoration which are of most interest to the reader.

The pieces come from a variety of sources ranging from fantasy convention programmes, through fiction magazines, to role playing game zines. And their style and subject matter are as diverse as their origins.

The strongest and longest piece in the book is 'Companions'. This concerns the endeavours of a stranded spaceman to cope with loneliness and the inability of machines (even intelligent ones) to become a substitute for human company. The characterisation is excellent and there are some nice touches, including one moment in which the ship's artificial intelligence ponders the 'Chicken and Egg' problem.

'The Brothers', a new story, also shines because of its believable characters and their sensitive portrayal. Indeed these two stories justify the rest of the volume.

Ms Cherryh's shorter stories, 'Cassandra', 'Threads of Time', and 'The Lost Tower', all suffer from being a little too whimsical and insubstantial, and the remaining piece 'A Thief in Korianth', is an uninspiring fantasy.

Despite everything the volume as a whole gives an interesting and varied image of Ms Cherryh's work and I can recommend it to established fans or those looking for an introduction to this author.

Clare Bell - - RATHA'S CREATURE and CLAN
GROUND. (Both Grafton, 1988,
252pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by John Newsinger)

Animal books are a staple of children's literature but have never really succeeded with adult readers. There are, of course a few notable exceptions and to this list we must now add Clare Bell's two Ratha books.

These are the story of a clan of intelligent sociable cats that have the power of speech and lived settled lives as herders, and of the rise to clan leadership of the female Ratha.

In the first, and better, of the two novels, Ratha brings fire, her 'creature' to the clan and saves it from destruction at the claws of the 'unnamed', the wild cats. The second sees fire becoming a threat to the clan with the firekeepers overthrowing Ratha and attempting to establish a barbaric fire-worshipping theocracy.

Both books take a while to get into. This is probably just a question of a little time being necessary to suspend disbelief and take seriously something that seems inherently implausible. After that initial effort, however, they are remarkably successful in what they attempt to do. Bell manages to portray the existence of life as a cat in a way that eventually convinces.

The character of Ratha is well enough drawn to engage the reader's concern. There are times when her predicament, the choices she has to make, give her a tragic status. Nothing is without its cost, every achievement involves a loss of some kind.

Both novels deal very seriously with the development of clan society and the problems that it faces. Bell manages to stimulate and maintain an interest in what is going to happen to the clan, how it will resolve its problems, and how far it will progress towards civilisation.

Jeffrey Carver - - THE RAPTURE EFFECT (Orbit,
1988, 371pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by Charles Stross)

'An epic of dance, music, and interstellar war!' blats the cover, to which I can add little. True, this book was entertaining enough, but the gaps in it are big enough to get lost in. The plot is simplistic; aliens and humans experience first contact in deep space, but the human drones have been incorrectly programmed and a war results. The war is fought entirely by robot on the human side, controlled by a central AI on Earth. It's also fought in secret, and the controlling AI - being unique - is maintained by the McConwell Company, which appears to be the only multinational left on Earth. An unlikely bunch of Company employees - a public relations executive and a sculptor among others - log on to the computer for a heavy session of graphic design and in so doing upset the entire applet and bring ravaging alien battlefleets down on their collective neck.

So there is justice! I hear you exclaim. Truth be told, I found the conceptual premises on which this novel was based just a little juvenile for my taste. Space opera is all very well, but this book qualifies for the dubious title of space rock opera; a palimpsest of a genre which at its best can be stunning and at its worst can be dreadful. It's readable stuff, indeed quite enjoyable... but it left me feeling as if I'd just eaten a high-speed burger when I was expecting a five-course meal. On the other hand, if you're not hungry, suck it and see...

C.J. Cherryh - - THE TREE OF SWORDS AND
JEWELS (VGSF, 1988, 254pp,
£2.95)

(Reviewed by Ian Sales)

I had somewhat mixed feelings on being asked to review this book: I like C.J. Cherryh, but I dislike Celtic mythology. And unfortunately THE TREE OF SWORDS AND JEWELS both confirmed my antipathy and lived up to expectations.

Cherryh's prose is, as ever, stylish and evocative. The 'olde worlde' style syntax sustains the mood but does detract from the story's readability a little. The Celtic names are annoying: you are either continually referring to the back to see how they should be pronounced, or they are forever tripping you up as your brain stumbles over them. Plotwise, THE TREE... is a direct sequel to THE DREAMSTONE. There is a prologue explaining what happened in the prequel but I found it confusing. The story revolves around the last of the Doaine Sidhe, Arafel, and her meddling in the world of Men as she helps some and causes jealousies, irrational fears of 'Eald', and several why-oh-why-must-things-be-as-they-are by the hero.

I found the book difficult to read, and gained little satisfaction from having finished it. This I felt to be a great pity: I am a fan of Cherryh. Buy another Cherryh novel instead.

Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle and Steven
Barnes - - THE LEGACY OF HEOROT (Sphere, 1988,
400pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Ian Sales)

Do not be fooled by the title - although the reference to the *saga* of Beowulf may lead you to expect a fantasy (Heorot is the name of the hall of the King of the Danes), this novel actually reads like THE THING meets ALIENS on FORBIDDEN PLANET.

The book chronicles the first eighteen months of Earth's first interstellar colony on Tau Ceti four, detailing their attempts to carve out their own niche in the local ecology. At first, Avalon, as they've named the world, seems a near-paradise; the only native fauna are the fish-like 'samlon' and flying 'pterodons', both harmless. However, on the first anniversary of the colony's founding an alien monster attacks the settlers, wreaking havoc and carnage. The rest of the story follows the colonists' war against the monsters.

LEGACY OF HEOROT, as you would expect from these writers, is competently written and flows along nicely with only the odd overly-slow passage. However, the stunning revelation you'd been lead to expect through the first half of the book turns out to be a bit of an anti-climax. The plot is based around a biological puzzle, and without giving anything away, I could say that anyone familiar with some of the more gruesome habits of Earth's animal kingdom might be able to solve it sooner. It only takes so long in the novel because quite a few of the characters have suffered slight brain damage from the experimental cryosleep (this is called 'Hibernation Instability: a nice touch but I'm not entirely convinced it wasn't used as a device to justify dragging the story out that bit more.)

LEGACY OF HEOROT appears to be an SF fast-seller - in the vein of Frank Herbert's WHITE PLAGUE, Carl Sagan's CONTACT, Niven and Pournelle's OATH OF FEALTY - a sort of hard SF soap opera, i.e. American worldview stretched to include another world/empire/alien race/etc., science and technology extrapolated to umpteen decimal places, a varied cast of pro-

science rational-thinking characters, lots of action, and 'real' emotions. It's gripping and very real, but just never gets past the monster-bashing stage, and in that respect is a bit of a disappointment.

Do not be too surprised if they make a movie of this book.

R.A. MacAvoy - - THE GREY HORSE (Bantam, 1988, 247pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Charles Stross)

THE GREY HORSE is as finely carved an artifact as I have come to expect from MacAvoy. While I confess to being less than enamoured of Celtic mythological sagas and names which remain unpronounceable no matter how many times I read them, I was captivated by this book.

There is a richness and density to the characterisation that is rare in fantasy, and the setting is intriguing enough to hold the interest. Against a background of 19th-century Eire is set the tale of one Ruari MacEibhir, a half-human half-elven man who enters the life of a small town to woo his future wife. The details of daily life in this time and place have been meticulously researched, but the reader is neither bludgeoned with background nor swamped with schmaltz; the book lives in a fine balance between everyday grind and a strangely haunting magical surrealism.

I have no desire to cover the petty minutiae of the plot here, because plot is not at the essence of this book, unlike so much fantasy and SF today. I will, however, say that it is internally consistent and has an almost tragic inevitability about it. Some people will hate this novel because of its subject matter, or the idiosyncratic style of the author; but I can strongly recommend it as being a superb example of one of the most gifted fantasy authors in circulation today.

Isaac Asimov, Charles G. Waugh & Martin Greenberg - - INTERGALACTIC EMPIRES: SUPERMEN (both Robinson Publishing, 1988, 303pp/350pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Laurence Scotford)

Amid the unrelenting barrage of personal and 'Best of...' anthologies it is nice to see Robinson publishing producing these thematic collections.

EMPIRES is divided into three sections: 'Cycles'; 'Governance' and 'Concerns', each of which covers three stories. Each section has a short introduction which explains that particular theme and goes on to give a few words of background to the stories. There is also a main introduction: 'Empires' by Isaac Asimov, although unfortunately he has not been able to resist the temptation to use this as a plug for his 'Foundation' series (even going as far as to claim that this was a basis for STAR WARS!)

All of the stories are 'Golden Age', ranging from 1945 through to 1963. The standard of the stories is as wide ranging as their publication dates - a couple of them I found downright tedious. The other criticism I have of this collection is that in some of the stories the idea of the Galactic Empire is used as a background rather than being important to the main theme. Ironically the main offender is Cordwainer Smith's 'A Planet Named Shayol' although this is the strongest story in the volume.

The idea behind the second volume is the 'Superman', not, as Asimov says in his entertaining introduction, the strong, brave but

stupid guy from Action Comics, but an evolutionary product with better brains as well.

The stories range from 1948 (A.E. Van Vogt's 'Resurrection' through to 1969, and in some cases they show their age. For instance I was in stitches when I came across this pathetically cliched passage in Poul Anderson's 'Un-man': 'Treat 'em rough and tell 'em nothing, and they'll come running. These modern women aren't as emancipated as they think.

Fortunately that does not set the tone for the whole volume, and by and large these stories are better than those in INTERGALACTIC EMPIRES. The best of the bunch are Damon Knight's 'What Rough Beast', which could have been written last week rather than 1959, and Gordon R. Dickson's excellent 'In the Bone'. In conclusion, not a bad sampler for science fiction from this period.

Isaac Asimov, Charles G. Waugh, & Martin H. Greenberg - - MAMMOTH BOOK OF CLASSIC SCIENCE FICTION SHORT NOVELS OF THE 1930s (Robinson Publishing, 1988, 572pp, £4.95)

Robert Silverberg & Martin H. Greenberg - - MAMMOTH BOOK OF FANTASY ALL-TIME GREATS (Robinson Publishing, 1988, 431pp, £4.95)

(reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

The 'Mammoth' books have so far been more interesting than most anthologies, and it's judging by the standards of previous Robinson Publishing collections that the '1930s' collection is a disappointment. Quantity-wise, with ten stories including Lovecraft's 'Shadow out of Time' and Campbell's 'Who Goes There?' it's good value, but very little is really 'classic' status. Cornell Woolrich's 'Jane Brown's Body' is a tedious thriller, and although Stanley G. Weinbaum's 'Dawn of Flame' is full of lovely pulpish passions it is hardly first-rate. De Camp's 'Divide and Rule' is already available in Robinson's COSMIC KNIGHTS anthology. Only Jack Williamson's horror story 'Wolves of Darkness' and the contributions from Leinster and E.F. Russell in collaboration with L. T. Johnson (it says here: isn't that L. J?) are above average. The only essential stories are readily available elsewhere.

The 'fantasy' book is compiled according to different criteria, being a 'best of...' collection according to ballots cast at the 81 and 82 World Fantasycons. It contains 22 stories from Poe's 'Masque of the Red Death' to Le Guin's 'The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas'. Everyone will have their own opinions about what should have been included or left out: I suspect that there was a need to keep some authors present and others not overrepresented, but that's not to sneer at the difficulty in compiling such a collection. Is 'The Sword of Welleran' actually Dunsany's finest story? Is 'The Silken Swift' really Sturgeon's best fantasy? Is Moorcock best represented by 'Kings in Darkness'? But the book's definitely a good introduction to fantasy, with various aspects of the genre highlighted. It's good to read A. Merritt's uncharacteristically poignant 'The Women of the Wood' and CL Moore's 'Black God's Kiss' - darker, more erotic, finer than virtually anything in the BRADLEY SWORD AND SORCERESS collection despite its Ideologically Unsound ending, and the Le Guin story (but also Lovecraft's 'The Silver Key') provide thought provoking meditations on the how and why fantasy affects us.

Stuart Gordon - - - - - ARCHON: THE FIRST BOOK
OF THE WATCHERS
(Orbit, 1988, 384pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Lynne Bispham)

Chrissa Joyce dreams of a Burning Man who warns her of the Enemy that seeks her father, Sam. Sam Joyce is obsessed with an emerald ring found by his great-grandfather in mysterious and horrible circumstances. Wearing the ring, Sam experiences terrifying visions of a Red Woman, raven-haired and covered in blood, and the Shift, a cataclysm that will destroy the Earth in fire and flood. In an atmosphere of mounting terror, the Red Woman, the Enemy, is revealed as one of the Nephilim, the rebel angels as described in the apocryphal 'Book of Enoch'. And the Burning Man, Chrissa discovers, is a thirteenth century Cathar, burnt alive by the Church for his 'heretical' beliefs. As the novel moves from 1980s London to pre-history and thirteenth century France, it becomes apparent that the struggle between the Nephilim and the Elohim, the Shining Ones of the apocrypha, is taking place outside time and in all times. Chrissa's Burning Man hears her calling to him, even as she hears him calling to her. She and her father must look to the past if they are to avert the coming catastrophe.

There is some powerful writing in this book. The Joyces' north London home provides a mundane background against which the horror of Sam's nightmare visions is all the more vivid. Gordon draws on mythology and history to great effect, and creates a chilling atmosphere of impending disaster, as his characters try desperately to make sense of the Enemy's assault on their minds before time runs out. The first volume in *The Watchers* trilogy, ARCHON is an impressive and original novel, and I look forward to the succeeding volumes.

Michael Reaves & Steve Perry - - - - - -DOME
(VGSF, 1988, 274pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Ken Lake)

So this is cyberpunk? In twenty-nine pages I was introduced to far too many characters. One has gills, another is plumbed into the world's computer systems and indeed artificial intelligences; one is in charge of a vast underwater city, another is an ex-convent high-class whore. One pumps iron and talks black slang, another kibitzes on death and sex by tapping the world's spy satellites. Meanwhile I was briefed on world power politics and saw a city hit by a tsunami caused by a Vietnamese underwater H-bomb test.

I read those 29 pages three times, and was still confused. Can't the authors for God's sake slow down? Taut writing indeed, firm plotting, strong characters - fine, but this is sensory overload!

Not to mention the technological terminology - maybe some of it is current among computer buffs, but to me most was gibberish. And the jargon - 'copy this', 'bigfuka pahu', a weird mix of computerese and Polynesian dialects. And the Third World War - which starts out as a neat pun because it's the Third World countries that are threatening it, but goes on to become Armageddon in a rather nasty way.

From the same editorial team that produces the 'VGSF Classics', this one will never be a classic, but it's a tightly plotted and excellently visualised novel with plenty of hard technology, hard sex, hard characterisation and considerable vision. Tipped for a stressful evening's entertainment.

Kate Wilhelm - - - - - -HUYSMAN'S PETS
(Legend, 1988, 247pp, £2.99)

(Reviewed by Brian Magorrian)

The blurb calls this book a 'brilliant sf thriller'. Unfortunately, it's none of these. HUYSMAN'S PETS is one of those books that you could spend hours over debating whether or not it is sf. Some of the normal trappings are there as the plot concerns the uncovering of an evil scientist experimenting on ESP between twins, but the book is written in a very mainstream style. The original work on ESP was done by Huysman, published, and then ridiculed by the scientific community. Huysman having died, his widow asks biographer Drew Lancaster to investigate Huysman's career, with a view to exonerating his theories. However, in the course of his investigation Drew discovers that Huysman's work has been carried on, by that evil scientist mentioned earlier, and that terrible tests are in store for Huysman's Pets...

The book seems to be built on coincidences, some rather tenuous, which would take too long to describe in detail. One example: Drew's ex-wife happens to work for a senator who's got the details of covert funding for Huysman's experiments in his records.

Wilhelm's clear, solid style managed to overcome the flaws, making it, for me, an interesting book, if not a thriller. Perhaps it's because I'm a sucker for happy endings, but I did enjoy HUYSMAN'S PETS!

Octavia Butler - - - - - -DAWN: EXOGENESIS 1
(Gollancz, 1988, 264pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Colin Bird)

When Lilith awakes to find herself in a strange white room she realises that she is under observation. Her last conscious memories are of a nuclear war that had all but wiped out the human race. She is a prisoner, but who are her captors?

Soon Lilith realises that she is no longer on Earth and that a race of aliens has hijacked her and the other human survivors and stored them in stasis. As she begins to understand what has happened she is told that the alien Oankali wish to repopulate the Earth. The payment for their assistance will be complete genetic fusion between the two species.

Lilith begins to explore the organic ship in which she is effectively a prisoner. She learns about the aliens by living with Nikanj, an immature Oankali, whom she eventually helps to attain sexual maturity. Lilith cooperates in awakening a group of humans and becomes a mother figure for them by teaching them of the Oankali, but soon petty squabbling begins to threaten their chances of forming an effective colonisation unit. The book ends with Lilith still unable to fathom the alien's motivation and their chances on Earth uncertain.

There is some clumsiness in the interplay between the revived group of humans due to the hoary old cliché about isolated groups forming a microcosm of society. Apart from this I am impressed by Butler's fluid style and her control of the narrative. She has created a consistent and believable race of aliens. Despite the many opportunities she resists the temptation to allow her characters to wallow in their emotions; instead we learn their feelings by their reactions to what goes on around them. This results in a lucid and fresh approach to the standard 'first contact' story. I look forward to the next book.

Marion Zimmer Bradley - - - -THE RUINS OF ISIS
(Legend, 1988, 298pp, £2.99)

- - FALCONS OF NARABEDLA
(Legend, 1988, 150pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Brian Magorrian)

Both of these books bear the usual marks of a MZB book, in that the civilizations and attitudes depicted display a blend of the modern and archaic. In THE RUINS OF ISIS, a husband and wife team land on the matriarchal planet of Isis to perform a study of some ancient ruins and, covertly, gather information on the society of Isis. Quite a lot of the book is spent relating the problems that Cendri has with her husband Dal. On Isis, and I quote, *men are regarded as dangerous animals or, at best, as sexual playthings.* This is a problem for Dal, since he comes from a society where women are nominally equal, but where pressures combine to make them anything but. Does this sound familiar? A good book, although I found Dal stubborn beyond credulity at times.

In FALCONS OF NARABEDLA Mike Kenscott, radio engineer in a government laboratory is transported into the far future, and into the body of another man, by a glorified electric shock! In this new world of castles and towers Kenscott becomes the evil Adric, and some of the time becomes himself. I must admit that I can't remember much more than that of the plot - I read this book waiting for it to begin. It never did for me.

In conclusion: if you've never read MZB(!) then THE RUINS OF ISIS is an excellent introduction. If you have, then RUINS is up to MZB's usual standards, but don't bother with FALCONS OF NARABEDLA.

Poul & Karen Anderson - - - -THE KING OF YS 1:
ROMA MATER
(Grafton, 1988, 493pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by Terry Broome)

Gratillonius, prefect for Rome of the American city, Ys, is manipulated into the throne. In making his nine queens call on their god to destroy King Niall's army as it passes through America, he causes Niall to curse Ys:

'May the sea that you call yourself the queen of rob your King of what he loves the most, and may what he loves afterwards turn on him and rend him. May your sea then take yourself back to it...and...may I be he who brings this doom upon you.'

[p.287]

The Andersons have done their research (six maps and fifty-two pages of notes), but it gets in the way, bringing the story to a near standstill. It's stodgy in other ways: a mistimed cuckoo and a lesbian affair between two queens might once have been something to worry about, but this isn't shared with us. As a result these scenes are too weighty with their own self-conscious, but misplaced Significance.

Reading the blurbs, one expects an action-packed adventure, and most of the book concerns Gratillonius' bedding of his wives. But don't expect any cheap titillation. Instead, we're given roughly two hundred pages of sexual and religious politics, interspersed with historical details, two fights and the early forecast death of Gratillonius' true-love.

It is competently written, but like many fantasies dull and depressingly fatalistic.

Buy Poul Anderson's BRAINWAVE instead - after all, we know what's going to happen later in this series anyway, don't we?

Isaac Asimov - - - - - - - - - -ROBOT DREAMS
(Gollancz, 1988, 349pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

This is a short story collection with illustrations. The title story is a new account of one of Susan Calvin's exploits, and some of the other stories have never been collected in book form before, but over half of the stories in here come from collections first published in the '50s. What it is not is a collection of Asimov's robot stories. Thematically this book seems to include most of Asimov's interests, although none of the Foundation stories are here. In a sense it's just a good collection of Golden Age SF but that leads me to wonder who its intended audience may be: the number of Asimov completists must be very small and other fans will be put off by the re-packaging of previously available material. So, perhaps, the illustrations are meant to attract non-SF readers.

Each story starts with a running variation of a collapsed humanoid robot, and some contain a whole page illustration of a scene from the story. The illustrator, Ralph McQuarrie, was involved in the design of Star Wars, and the robots are very similar to those of Star Wars, but when he comes on to other areas - like equine extraterrestrials or Neanderthals - he goes twee. As both of those stories have dark sides it tends to weaken their effect. Fortunately, not every story has an illustration with it.

Apart from the title story (how do you think Susan Calvin reacts to a robot who dreams?) this collection includes 'Little Lost Robot', 'The Last Question' and 'The Martian Way'.

A lot of Asimov's alternate presents and most of his futures are, when you think of it, pretty unpleasant. His worlds tend to be overcrowded, run by inhumane bureaucrats, controlled by large but crude computers; his frontiers are harsh and restricting, and even after the frontiers have been opened the life on the new worlds is no better than on the old. How many people will stop and think about the implications of his work after reading this book, or noticing the clash between the illustrations and the text, I don't know. But I would hope that some would. Perhaps someone could decide if Asimov is a futuromane or a futurophobe.

Jack Williamson - - - - - - - - - -FIRECHILD
(Methuen, 1988, 377pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by John Newsinger)

A horrific accident at a genetic research centre results in the death of the city of Enfield and its inhabitants. Out of the wreckage emerges a new life form, Alphamega, created by one of the deceased scientists, a life form possessed of miraculous powers for good. Both the Russian and American Governments fear that this creature holds the key to a new genetic superweapon and are determined to hunt it down and destroy it. For Williamson, the murderous ruthlessness of the KGB is easily matched by that of the American Task Force set up to handle the crisis. The novel provides a frightening study of the powerful and their works.

Into this heartless world is born Meg, the product of genetic experiment, a superbeing with the fragile body of a child. She survives through an almost magical ability to inspire love in those whose hearts have not grown hard beyond recall... until at last she is ready to transform into something altogether different.

Williamson has written a marvellous novel, a fairy tale for the 1980s, equipped with the pace and excitement of a thriller. He uses the theme of genetic research with all of its ethical problems to produce a compelling moral fable for our times. The book dramatically shows the danger that our civilisation is in, threatened with total destruction by the very people who claim to be defending it. He offers a miraculous rescue, a purging of misery, despair and hatred from the human condition. Meg's final transformation is beautifully realised and wholly satisfying. Ah! If only.....

This is a work of the highest order. Williamson has produced a classic, a fine entertainment that is also a humanist statement. The fact that his hopes require the form of a fairy tale shows how far reality is from the dream, how close to critical we still are.

Incidentally, don't be put off by the disgraceful nymette on the cover. This I strongly suspect will drive away precisely those readers who will find the book most enjoyable, who would recommend it to others.

C.J. Cherryh - - - - - HESTIA
(Gollancz, 1988, 217pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Lynne Bispham)

One of the strengths of C.J. Cherryh's fiction is her outstanding ability to create complex characters with very real anxieties and failings. In this book, the main character is engineer Sam Merrit, who finds himself caught between the needs of the human colonists of the planet Hestia and the rights of an alien species.

The colonists have asked for aid from Earth in controlling the river which threatens their existence, but when Merrit arrives on Hestia in response to this plea he finds the colony in a state of collapse. Reluctantly, Merrit decides to leave Hestia, but the colonists prevent him, and force him to build a dam which will save their farmlands from flood. To Merrit's dismay, the dam will also destroy the lands of Hestia's indigenous sentient species.

C.J. Cherryh conveys the ambivalent relationship between Merrit and the colonists with great subtlety. Merrit does want to help the colonists, but he is disgusted by their indifference to the fate of the native sentients, whom they regard as animals. His insistence that these creatures think and feel, and his relationship with one of them, Sazhje, only increases the colonists' hostility towards him. The clash between human and alien is not treated with the sense of outrage that is often found in other books with similar themes, but it is understatement that makes C.J. Cherryh's writing so effective. Her depictions of the human characters, Sazhje's people, primitive, often savage, and 'just about human', and the planet itself with its rain and mud, river and forests and ragged mountains, all combine to make HESTIA a highly readable novel.

Gregory Benford - - - - - GREAT SKY RIVER
(VGSF, 1988, 326pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Ken Lake)

This overlong, confusing and basically pretty silly book is the first part of yet another resistable trilogy, I'm afraid.

One would imagine that an author of Benford's experience would have some feel for logical language, yet his mechanicals, whose brains contain not only an individual human's mind but also the injected minds of many now-

dead companions back over the ages, use a bastardised terminology in which the greatest importance lies in the ability to distinguish immediately, in times of danger, between 'Heysay', 'yeasay', 'naysay' and 'ayesay'.

Bickering and killing make up the bulk of the text, but when the story broadens out to what the hard-cover blurb referred to as 'exploring...the centre of the galaxy where (as recent scientific investigation has revealed, it says here) an immense black hole is gradually drawing tens of thousands of suns into itself', the mind simply boggles and gives up.

Benford is, we're told, an 'internationally respected scientist'; on the basis of this book I wish he'd stay in his speciality, but what really infuriates me is that so far as I can see Victor Gollancz Ltd's editorial people are determined not to tell anyone that their purchase is the just the open-ended first part of a trilogy of which the remainder is not yet available. To my way of thinking, that's sharp practice.

Isaac Asimov - - - - - THE BEST SCIENCE-FICTION
OF ISAAC ASIMOV
(Grafton, 1988, 320pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Terry Broome)

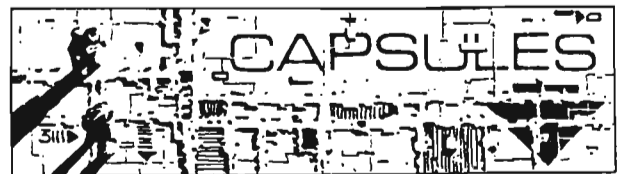
Twenty-one of the twenty-six stories and two verses in this collection were written in the 1950s, a decade Asimov must believe was his most creatively self-rewarding.

A number of these stories are certainly good and some are even excellent. Take, for examples, 'All The Troubles Of The World', the first of six Multivac stories, this one about a super-computer (Multivac) which gains sentience and devious, suicidal tendencies through its knowledge of humanity; 'The Dead Past', about humanity's arguably morbid interest with the past - a racial obsession which goes beyond simple sentimentality; and 'It's Such A Beautiful Day', about a boy who discovers a larger world beyond the over-protective cocoonery of his mother.

There are also, unfortunately, six unfunny jokes and two self-egoising verses (amounting to eighteen pages) and his infamous self-conceitedness reflected in a four page introduction and story notes. This quote from 'The Foundation Of Science-Fiction Success' (page 121) might encourage would-be writers, who can't tell one end of a pencil from the other, to send their stuff to Grafton - who knows, but if they are famous they might even get published:

If you ask me to shine in the science-fiction line as a pro of luster bright,
I say practice up the lingo of the sciences, by jingo (never mind if not quite right).

Parenthetically, he took the words right out of my mouth.



Lynn Abbey - - UNICORN AND DRAGON (Headline,
1988, 230pp, £2.99)

Historical fantasy concerning two sisters in

pre-Conquest England. Atmospheric illustrations would be better at twice the size; the story lacks the grip of either historical or fantasy modes at their best. (Andy Sawyer)

Piers Anthony - - BEING A GREEN MOTHER (Grafton, 1988, 399pp, £3.50)

Fifth volume of 'Incarnations of Immortality' telling of Orb's quest to find the legendary Llano, the song which controls all things, accompanied by a rock group and a succubus, and her eventual Incarnation as Gaea, the embodiment of Nature. Connects with previous volumes, but I still have the greatest difficulty in understanding what it's all about. See, however, my editorial for further comment. (Andy Sawyer)

Piers Anthony - - GHOST (Grafton, 1988, 285pp, £2.95)

Sound, even first-class ideas (the first two chapters showing an energy-starved future are particularly good, and the spacetime-travelling expedition confusing but imaginative) mixed with some drab writing which alternates between lecture and very soft porn. (Andy Sawyer)

Isaac Asimov - - SPACE RANGER; PIRATES OF THE ASTEROIDS (Lightning, 1988, 144pp, £1.95 each)

A new children's SF imprint from Hodder is introduced with the reissue of the first two of Asimov's early '50s 'Lucky Starr' novels. Competent juvenile space-opera. (Andy Sawyer)

Peter S. Beagle - - THE FOLK OF THE AIR (Headline, 1988, 330pp, £2.99)

Mass-market edition of one of the first (and best) Headline books, originally a trade paperback; see PI 70 for a fuller review by Mary Gentle. Beagle is a light, sometimes dazzling writer with that touch of mordant introspection which makes such writing great. FOLK is about magic and illusion and fantasy breaking into reality among contemporary role-players; many reviewers found it puzzling, perhaps not one of Beagle's best. I'm happy to accept the glitter, but I also think it has a lot to suggest about what lies behind fantasy, play, and beribboned anachronism. (Andy Sawyer)

Marion Zimmer Bradley - - SWORD & SORCERESS 2 (Headline, 1988, 287pp, £2.99)

Most of these stories have 'female' rather than 'feminist' heroes and, frankly, there are few really memorable pieces here. S&S fans will be pleased, and some of the tales have humorous twists but there are no true beacons of excellence to offer new directions for the genre. The African setting of Charles R. Saunders' 'Shimenege's Mask', however, demands further exploration and more stories. (Andy Sawyer)

Lois McMaster Bujold - - SHARDS OF HONOUR (Headline, 1988, 313pp, £2.99)

Readable space opera about a Survey Captain caught up in a personal and political tangle of love and war. Well-pictured world, especially at the beginning, when Cordelia and Vorkosigan meet. (Andy Sawyer)

Christine Brooke-Rose - - XORANDOR (Avon, 1988, 211pp, £2.95)

Post-structuralist computerspeak SF narrative

whose Paladin edition last year was greeted with enthusiasm by Englit reviewers and was reviewed in PI 67 by Dave Langford: 'a thoroughly researched, cleverly written and intellectually titillating fake.' Worth a look if you find computer jargon amusing and enjoy writers who play about with 'narrative stances'. Fun! (Andy Sawyer)

Hugh Cook - - THE WALRUS AND THE WARWOLF (Corgi, 1988, 779pp, £3.95)

Having been bored rigid by previous 'Chronicles of an Age of Darkness', imagine my surprise when I found that Hugh Cook here shows a nice line in smutty slapstick and low humour. This picaresque epic fantasy gives us the adventures of Drake Douay - runaway apprentice, pirate, and all-round degenerate - and how he finds his True Love. Written like Terry Pratchett with added sleaze, it's far too long (and p. 779 isn't even the end) but it's about time someone brought some really bad taste into this kind of story. (Andy Sawyer)

August Derleth - - THE MASK OF CTHULHU / THE TRAIL OF CTHULHU (Grafton, 1988; 204pp, 206pp; £2.50, £2.95)

Derleth's reworkings of Lovecraft's 'Cthulhu Mythos' suffer to some extent from over-reliance on the same structure - particularly in TRAIL which is referred to as a novel but which really is a sequence of five linked stories in which a researcher and his assistants try to close the doors by which the eponymous creature may return. The repetition of much of essentially the same material may have been necessary in magazine publication over ten years, but not so here. Still these stories are well worth revisiting for their recreation of the initial macabre attractiveness of Lovecraft's originals. I recommend 'The Return of Hastur' and 'The Whippoorwills in the Hills' in MASK.

George Alec Effinger - - THE BIRD OF TIME (N.E.L., 1988, 176pp, £2.50)

As a concept, time travel offers scope for a superbly funny novel: this is not it. The 176pp tell of Our Hero who majored in doughnuts, his Heroine (can you believe Pamela?) and the archetypal Sergeant Brannick; they play a series of sophomoric jokes on themselves and on anyone stupid to pay £2.50 to do more than enjoy the cover, claiming 'the breathlessly awaited sequel to THE NICK OF TIME'. I'm sorry: after this, I could do with a good laugh. (Ken Lake)

Ru Emerson - - TO THE HAUNTED MOUNTAINS (Headline, 1988, 314pp, £2.99)

Epic fantasy in which swordswoman Ylia, sole survivor of the royal family of Nedao, leads a small band through physical and magical danger. Nice linking commentary by her cat-companion, Nisana, but this is positively the last time I see the 'great tradition of LOTR' blurb without screaming very loudly. (Andy Sawyer)

Dennis Etchison - - THE DARK COUNTRY (Futura, 1988, 193pp, £2.95)

Superior collection of 'horror' stories which, despite the unimaginative cover, the marketing people's need to define by genre and sometimes the subject matter are rather explorations of a darker alienation, with affinities to Ray Bradbury to whom the book is in fact dedicated. Many tales, like the title story, need a second or third read, but well repay the extra attention. (Andy Sawyer)

Alan Dean Foster - - THE DELUGE DRIVERS (NEL, 1988, 311pp, £2.95)

Sequel to ICERIGGER and MISSION TO MOULOKIN, set like them on the iceworld of Tran-ky-ky, which appears to be undergoing an unexpected rise in temperature. Enjoyable adventure SF in an interesting world. (Andy Sawyer)

John Gilbert - - AIKI (Grafton, 1988, 317pp, £2.95)

Martial arts thriller focussing upon gladiatorial games in a near-future New York. (Andy Sawyer)

Craig Shaw Gardner - - A MALADY OF MAGICKS (Headline, 1988, 235pp, £2.99)

The story opens with the sorcerer's apprentice, Wuntfor, saving his master Ebenzum from an assassination attempt by accidentally invoking a rain of butterflies, followed by dead fish. The unwary might be convinced by the artwork to take this from the shelf in mistake for a Pratchett. One glance at the words will tell the unwary the error of their ways. There ought to be a law against derivative junk like this. As they used to say in 'Mission Impossible': destroy before reading. (Martyn Taylor)

Richard Grant - - RUMOURS OF SPRING (Bantam, 1988, 458pp, £3.50)

Phil Nichols wrote a long review of the US edition (RUMORS OF SPRING) in conjunction with Rupert Sheldrake's A NEW SCIENCE OF LIFE. (PI 66) Grant seems to have based his novel on Sheldrake's ideas of 'morphic resonance': it is the fundamental idea of the book, and there is also a character called 'Sheldrake'. This all may be mystical hogwash, but it's a fascinating idea to think about, and Grant's forst, the result of an experiment in morphogenetic field control, is at the centre of an excellent if patchy novel. Another touchstone of the book is the equally pastoral/mystical A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, which Grant uses as John Crowley used Lewis Carroll's SYLVIE AND BRUNO in LITTLE, BIG. (Indeed, the beginning, especially, of RUMOURS reminded me strongly of LITTLE, BIG; perhaps the influence is more direct.)

Phil wrote 'an impressive, thoughtful novel, whose richness is surpassed only by its moments of beauty (though)...uneven... and overlong.' Good to see it available for a British market. (Andy Sawyer)

Simon Hawke - - THE ZENDA VENDETTA (Headline, 1988, 206pp, £2.99)

Fourth in the 'Time Wars' series in which the Time Commandoes find themselves in the plot of another historical novel, this time THE PRISONER OF ZENDA. The focus is on the swash-buckling rather than the temporal paradoxes. (Andy Sawyer)

James Kahn - - TIMEFALL (Grafton, 1988, 300pp, £3.50)

The tradition of expeditions to South American jungles in search of the source of a strange object collides with more modern 'time-warp' adventures in a story in which people don't 'speak' but 'phonate' (p.249). (Andy Sawyer)

Brian Lumley - - NECROSCOPE II: WAMPYRI! (Grafton, 1988, 495, £3.50)

A heady, occasionally gruesome but always page-turning, mix of life-after-death, vampirism, and espionage featuring a hero who spends most of his time out of his body, and

collaboration between two teams of East/West psychic agents against a particularly nasty kind of vampire. (Andy Sawyer)

Ann Maxwell - - DANCER'S LUCK (Orbit, 1988, 171pp, £2.50)

Sequel to FIRE DANCER, in which Rheba begins the repatriation of a shipload of slaves. If True SF means names like M/dur, Fssa, Kirtn and F'lTiri, this is the Real Stuff. Tantalising glimpses of imagination slip through as hints of a far-future universe. (Andy Sawyer)

M.E. Morris - - ALPHA BUG (Grafton, 1988, 315pp, £2.95)

Hi-tech thriller involving a mission to obtain photographs of a Russian space-plane. Despite scenes in space, many (including the author) would claim that the technological feasibility of the devices herein makes this book not SF but a contemporary action novel. (Andy Sawyer)

Tamora Pierce - - ALANNA: THE FIRST ADVENTURE /IN THE HAND OF THE GODDESS (Beaver, 1988, 241pp/232pp, £2.50)

After several re-readings I still find these books charming, although the author's Americanisms are anachronistic in this medieval fantasy world, and there is too much wish-fulfilment in her heroine's successful career for the series to be reckoned among the great feminist fantasies being published today.

Alanna, a Lord's daughter, changes places with her twin brother Thom: he to study sorcery, she to take up his place at court as a page training for knighthood. Disguised as a boy she keeps her secret from nearly everyone until she is made knight, though Prince Jonathan finds out, and they become lovers (yes, they are supposed to be 'children's books'!)

The third, but not the final episode, THE WOMAN WHO RIDES LIKE A MAN, though published in the USA in 1986, will not come out here in hardback (OUP) until spring 1989, so poor has been the reception of the first two books, so perhaps these striking new paperback editions will increase their sales. For addicts of high fantasy, and as birthday presents for younger relatives. (Jessica Yates)

Susan Schwartz (ed.) - - ARABESQUES (Avon, 1988, 258pp, £3.50)

'Arabian Nights' stories tend to be an acquired taste but this collection has contributions from enough top names (Gene Wolfe, Tanith Lee, Jane Yolen, Larry Niven, Judith Tarr, Harry Turtledove) to make it worth looking for. Although Tanith Lee's 'Foolish, Wicked, Clever and Kind' has the authentic ring of folk-tale, by and large the most memorable tales are those which rely on humour - 'An Eye For The Ladies' by Esther Freisner - or more conventional fantasy techniques. A good collection for fans of the genre, but followers of the contributors in their more 'usual' modes should find it rewarding. (Andy Sawyer)

Guy N. Smith - - FIEND (Sphere, 1988, 311pp, £2.99)

The reanimated corpse of a Soviet leader is about to restore an ancient tyranny. Could this be the glastnost backlash? (Andy Sawyer)

Tim Sullivan - - DESTINY'S END (Avon, 1988, 307pp, £3.95)

The fairy-tale prophecy of a ruler's death at the hands of his grandson, and how the attempt to avoid it only fulfils it, which begins this story only points out the lack of imagination

when the author is left to his own devices. Apocalyptic SF which whimpers rather than resounds. (Andy Sawyer)

Sheri S. Tepper - - DERVISH DAUGHTER (Corgi, 1988, 221pp, £2.75)

Second volume of the 'Jinian' trilogy, itself a sequel to THE TRUE GAME, etc. Further facets of the strange and imaginative world inhabited by the wizard Jinian are explored in this interesting science fantasy which, however, needs a knowledge of previous books to follow the plot. It's probably worth buying them. (Andy Sawyer)

John Tigges - - AS EVIL DOES (Star, 1988, 254pp, £2.99)

A Satan-worshipping motorcycle gang rape and kill two girls, and the brother of one, guided by the spirit of their dead leader, tracks them down. Interesting slant on possession. (Andy Sawyer)

Richard Turner & William Osborne - - 1998 (Sphere, 1988, 197pp, £2.99)

Based on a radio series, this is a comic swipe at Britain in 1988. By 1998, the Environment (England) is peopled by drunken journalists, 'lifestylists', depressed teachers and PR men. Our unlikely hero must save the nation (and Tabifa Minx, the nations number-one pin-up) from the AmJap Corporation's bid for world domination. Mildly amusing, but I'd hesitate to describe it as SF despite such trappings as 'user-friendly' over-talkative household appliances. (Lynne Bispham)

Harry Turtledove - - THE LEGION OF VIDESSOS (Legend, 1988, 413pp, £3.99)

Third in the 'Videssos Cycle' (What happened to no. 2?) about a Roman legion transported to another world. The only main difference is the occasional magic-working - for much of the book the characters could be among the steppe-dwellers of their own world. Obviously designed to go on and on, and the cover seems to illustrate a different episode entirely. When Turtledove forgets the deliberate trailing of loose ends and gets down to the story, it's occasionally gripping, but unless you're a fan of the author, seek outhis allohistorical 'Byzantium' stories instead. (Andy Sawyer)

Jack Vance - - THE FACE (Grafton, 1988, 271pp, £2.95)

Fourth 'Demon Prince' novel with Gerson in search of the decadent trickster Lens Larque, and Vance on top form with his unique mixture of decorative digression and ironic humour. (Andy Sawyer)

Lawrence Watt-Evans - - WITH A SINGLE SPELL (Grafton, 1988, 305pp, £2.99)

Apprentice wizard Tobas is left after the death of his master with knowledge of just one spell. How can he achieve his lifelong aim of being lazy, worthless and rich? His amusing adventures (set in the same world as THE MISENCHANTED SWORD some centuries later) are told with verve, like early De Camp or Vance. Fun. (Andy Sawyer)

Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman - - LOVE AND WAR (Penguin, 1988, 365pp, £3.95)

More 'Dragonlance' stories, of interest only to those who've waded through the previous series. (Andy Sawyer)

((cont. from p. 2))

Meanwhile, apologies for the somewhat 'jigsaw' nature of this issue (as instanced by these sentences!)

Students of the art of British Management will notice that postal rates went up earlier this week...

"Upon the rack in print"

INTERZONE 25 (September/October 1988)

(Reviewed by Andy Mills)

At last - the first bimonthly INTERZONE! The magazine has come a goodly way since its inception in 1982. The first issue featured established authors only, had a two-tone cover and no interior illustrations, was 31 pages long, and had eight - count'em! - editors working collectively. Six years on there's a healthy mixture of well-known, up-and-coming and new writers, the magazine has two-tone printing inside (just!) and eye-catching covers, the page-count has more than doubled whilst the collective editorship has reduced itself to one - David Pringle. Pringle presides over a current issue comprised of the by-now familiar (and successful) ingredients: half a dozen short stories, author interview, book and film reviews, a couple of articles and a brief letters column.

The short stories this issue can be summarised as being entertaining while not being outstanding. Some old SF themes are reprised here. Paul Preuss ('The Long Fall Home', actually a chapter from a forthcoming novel) drops on us the Will-the-hero-Survive-the-Disaster-in-Space? scenario, Christopher Burns's 'Babel' tells us that After-the-Holocaust-Mankind-Will-be-Reduced-to-Scrabbling-in-the-Ashes-of-Civilisation, and David Langford's 'Blit' brings up to date for the computer age the even older theme of That-Which-is-Too-Terrible-to-Behold. In fact, all three are very readable, especially the Preuss story, which works well as a short story on its own; the Burns piece does tend to the opaque, however.

Ian Watson's 'Lost Bodies' defies categorisation, being a curious amalgam of 'dinkie' wife-swapping, clumsy social satire and SF/horror, a mixture which hangs together uneasily. 'Our Lady of Springtime' by Peter T. Garratt is a strong, atmospheric story somewhat reminiscent of Keith Roberts. If I could accept the final twist in the tale this would certainly have been the best of the bunch. Finally, as far as the fiction goes, Nicola Griffith throws some delightful concepts at the reader in 'Mirrors and Burnstone', but the resolution of her debut story is too pat, too naive. There again, anyone who considers that Hull is 'the cultural and spiritual centre of the universe' is either very naive or - more likely - possesses a healthy sense of humour. As does Terry Pratchett, demonstrated in an excellent interview with Paul Kincaid. Does Terry fancy writing serious SF? 'Working out all that orbital mechanics stuff? No bloody fear.'

The other non-fiction items include Thomas Disch's debunk of COMMUNION by Whitley Streiber (the Adamski of the '80s?) and a hard-hitting piece by Charles Platt on censorship, Clause 28 included, a topic of great import to us all, as Platt brings home. All in all, a most enjoyable read, and a good start to bimonthly status for IZ.

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