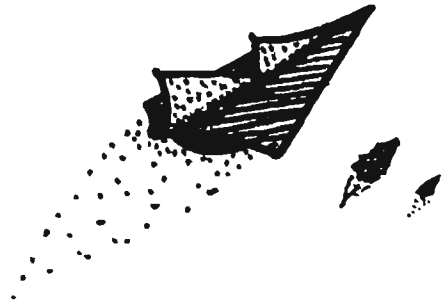
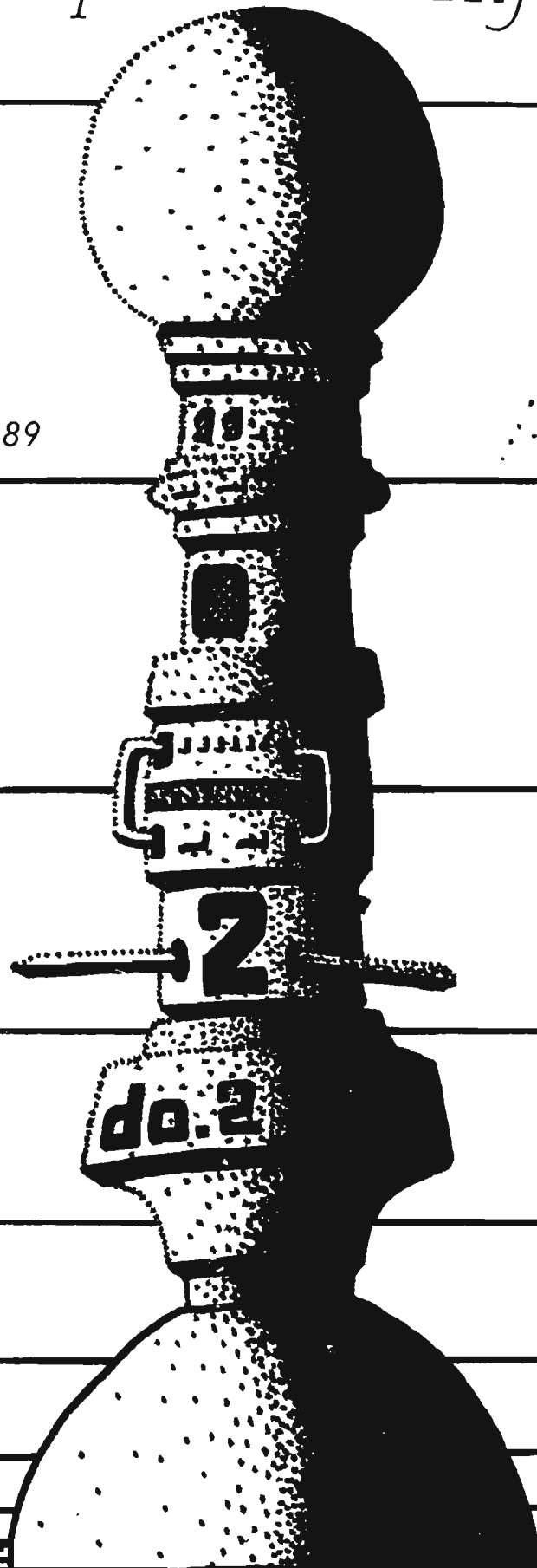


Paperback Inferno 76



Feb - March 1989



Sean Fried BT

The Review of paperback SF
A British Science Fiction Association magazine 50p.



Paperback Purgatory

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(£4.00 for 4 issues). Reprinted by
permission. This story solves one of
the great mysteries of my child-
hood...)

As you may know (unless PI is the first thing
you read when the BSFA mailing arrives) the
Arthur C. Clarke Award shortlist has been
announced.

The Award (sponsored by Arthur C. Clarke
and chosen by a panel from the BSFA, the
Science Fiction Foundation, and the Internat-
ional Science Policy Foundation) offers £1000
for the best new SF novel published in the UK.
The 1988 shortlist consists of:

Michael Bishop - - PHILIP K. DICK IS DEAD,
ALAS (Grafton)
Richard Grant - - RUMOURS OF SPRING (Bantam)
Gwyneth Jones - - KAIROS (Unwin Hyman)
Rachel Poilack - - UNQUENCHABLE FIRE (Century)
Lucius Shepard - - LIFE DURING WARTIME
(Grafton)
Brian Stableford - - THE EMPIRE OF FEAR (Simon
& Schuster)
Ian Watson - - WHORES OF BABYLON (Grafton)

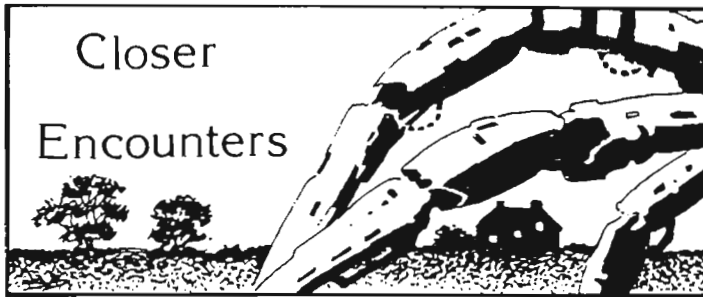
The award will be given at a special presentat-
ion at the Groucho Club, 45 Dean Street, London
at 7.00 p.m. on 15th MARCH, 1989, to which all
members of the press, the SF community, authors
and publishers are cordially invited (6.00 to
8.30 p.m.).

As a juror for the Award, my opinions con-
cerning the shortlist can now remain my own
until the jury meets. Only the offer of
very large cheques or the presence of heavy
weights near my broken toe (just don't ask,
OK?) will tempt me to make public comments...
But this doesn't stop the PI readership from
commenting, and I hope you will. I'm in the
middle of polling regular PI reviewers to see
which book, in their opinion, should carry off
the award, and hope to run the results of this
poll next issue. However, I very much want PI
readers to take part in this as well. So if
you feel that any of these books are likely
winners, list them in order of preference and
send the list to me. To make it more interest-
ing, and allow for all the usual controversy
which awards generate, you can 'write in' a
choice of your own, should you so desire.

We'll then see what the PI readers' 'tip
for the top' is. PI 77 will have to go to
press before the 15th March (although you'll
read it afterwards) so I should be able to
write up your comments and calculate the most
favoured book with no knowledge of what will
actually win. Remember, I'm seeking opinions
rather than a forecast (although I do appreci-
ate that it would be hard enough for many
people to get hold of all of the books on the
shortlist, let alone the 80 - 90 that were
actually submitted for the award), and if you
have any comments about the nature of this
shortlist, the award, or awards in general,
I'd be pleased to have them. But please, by
the end of February. As a small incentive,
there will be a prize (nature of which is not
decided) for the person whose sense of taste
in literature is so wonderfully developed
that they identify the same winner and runners
up as the panel of jurors. If there's more
than one of you, the proverbial hat will make
the final decision.

Which leaves me just enough space to sort
out some of the gremlins which hit the last
issue. Somehow, the bibliographical details
of Marion Zimmer Bradley's LYTHONDE were miss-
ed out of Helen McNabb's review. My fault:
they are: (Sphere, 1988, 238pp, £2.99). There
were one or two comments regarding the oddish
layout of the 'Closer Encounters' section. I
had intended the column last issue not only
to carry on the Gollancz discussion with Mal-
colm Edwards' reply to Ken Lake but also to
cover some of the better books of recent

((Cont. p. 5))



Funny Fantasy for Mid-Atlanteans

Terry Pratchett - - MORT (Corgi, 1988, 272pp, £2.99)

Craig Shaw Gardner - - A MULTITUDE OF MONSTERS (Headline, 1988, 202pp, £2.50)

James P. Blaylock - - THE DIGGING LEVIATHAN (Grafton, 1988, 336pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Alan Fraser)

It all depends on which side of the Atlantic you were brought up: either you go down to the pub for a few pints of bitter, and finish off with a Prawn Vindaloo, or you call at the hamburger joint for a chilli-dog after a visit to the drive-in in your '57 Chevy. Over here we get exceedingly irritated at things like Craig Shaw Gardner describing Brownies (the creatures of Faerie, not the fledgling Girl Guides), as 'a tad tetchy'. Over there, however, they'd be totally mystified when Terry Pratchett had Death (yes, the Grim Reaper himself) cry 'I could MURDER a curry!'

In Pratchett's fourth Discworld novel, gangling and awkward young Mort is chosen as an apprentice by Death, learning how to wield the scythe, and usher sould to the next world. After falling in love with a sorrowing young princess while attending to the death of her father, Mort is appalled to find his job a week later is to go for her as she is to be assassinated. Needless to say, he saves the girl's life, and thereby causes the entire fabric of Reality to come unravelled. Jon Wallace, reviewing the next Discworld hardback novel SOURCERY in *Vector* 147, said he thought that novel had a serious core, and so does this. Pratchett proves here also that he knows one of the best ways to make people laugh at the right places in a book, is to know when not to make them laugh in the other places. I recommend this book, and see that the 6th Discworld novel WYRD SISTERS was published in hardback in November 1988, so Discworld fans have another two paperback treats in store. I just hope Terry doesn't overdo it and have us wishing he'd quit while he was ahead...

The trouble for me with A MULTITUDE OF MONSTERS was that I read it straight after MORT. It isn't that bad, but Gardner just isn't in the same class as Pratchett. The sequel to A MALADY OF MAGICKS, this book continues the story of the woeful wizard Ebenezum and his unfortunate apprentice Wuntvor, as they try to reach the fabled city of Vushta, in order to find a cure for the spell cast on Ebenezum by the demon Guxx Unfufadoo. Unfortunately, their quest is hampered by the members of the newly-formed Association for the Advancement of Mythical and Imaginary Beasts and Creatures, who are organising industrial action in order to further their cause for better recognition for rocs, gryphons, hippogriffs and manticores, et al. As an often accurate skit on those interminable American fantasy trilogies, Gardner's book certainly

has something to recommend it, even though the aim of his humour doesn't have the devastating accuracy of Pratchett's.

Finally, THE DIGGING LEVIATHAN by Californian writer James P. Blaylock is a horse of a different colour entirely. Although classed as 'Fiction/Fantasy' by Grafton, LEVIATHAN is in reality more of a mainstream novel. The reader is invited by the publisher to compare it with Ray Bradbury; Blaylock shares with Bradbury the ability to create the fantasy and magic purely in the imaginations of the characters, as Bradbury does in DANDELION WINE. However, the book of which LEVIATHAN reminds me most is that other West Coast classic of warped reality, ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST, by Ken Kesey. With both of those books LEVIATHAN shares strong characterisation and a marvellous sense of atmosphere and place, brought about by close attention to background details. Like Kesey, Blaylock recounts the most outrageous events in a matter-of-fact manner, because he assumes the perspectives of his characters, rather than that of a 'normal' person.

LEVIATHAN is a book of tribute to those SF and Fantasy authors who first fired our imaginations and 'sense of wonder'. A group of Southern Californians, instead of constructing computers in their garages like other wholesome young suntanned Americans, spend their lives reading books by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jules Verne, and H.P. Lovecraft, and dreaming of reaching the centre of the hollow earth. Like Abner Perry in ERB's AT THE EARTH'S CORE and subsequent Pellucidar novels, they build a mechanical mole, calling it the 'Digging Leviathan'.

I started reading this novel at a fast pace, expecting the heroes to be in Pellucidar by the start of Chapter 2. I soon stopped and started again, realising that here was not a book about actually going to the Centre of the Earth at all. Instead it is a surrealistic tale of the antics of a group of young and not-so-young eccentrics who are destined to try a myriad of wilder and wilder schemes, to the dismay of their families, the Los Angeles Police, Fire, and Sewage Departments, and to the amusement of the local press. Blaylock's book is a well-written and often hilarious novel with fantasy overtones, a tremendous collection of well-rounded characters, and some extremely pungent observations about modern Californian life. Highly recommended, but not to fans of your usual 'funny fantasy'.

Two anthologies...

Christopher Evans & Robert Holdstock (eds.)
- - OTHER EDENS II (Unwin, 1988, 269pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by K.V. Bailey)

Professedly eclectic rather than thematic, it's so good that each story demands a 'capsule'. Myth, planetary perspectives, traumatic time-travels, psychp-fantasies: all are there.

Myth: Gwyneth Jones and Anne Gay, with respectively sea-monster and dragon at bay, blend myth and realism. The former comingles Grail and Undine motifs (with traces of Coleridge and of Ovid), Anne Gay's St. George is an elderly Irish nun on pilgrimage. Mythic archetypes emerge to destabilise Tanith Lee's soulless machine/slave symbiosis.

Planetary perspectives: Brian Aldiss's glossary of over 100 Solar English equivalents (Zenish and/or aphoristic) to Myrmian lingopost (language-cum-posture) gives access to both reflection and laughter; Michael Moorcock's 'Mars' has the flavour of an 'eighties mutation of vintage Bradbury; Ian Macdonald's gravitationally uppish planet of the Tlanton liturgy is contained by uncert-

ain psycho-physical boundaries; while, en route for Mars, Kim Stanley Robinson's games players are ironically 'Remaking History'.

On time-travel frontiers Garry Kilworth stalemates his protagonists within an ingenious Pelopponesian scenario; Michael Cobley flexi-waltzes through alternative Glasgows; Josephine Paxton, leaving an Edenic planet, goes time-jumping by acupuncture from nauseating abattoir to symbolic chanel house. Horror also spans time in Ian Watson's 'The Resurrection Man', a jaunty colloquial style at first moderating then cunningly intensifying the grand guignol.

Psycho-fantasies various: Colin Greenland contributes an atmospheric belle-dame-sans-merci idyll/anti-idyll; texts, maps, memories and obsessions are joined in collage-like yet fluid juxtapositionings in M. John Harrison's 'The Gift'; the imagery of Graham Charnock's 'She Shall Have Music' is multi-sensually arcane; it is surrealistically so in John Clute's beautifully baroque (and novel-heralding) episode 'Eden Sounding'. Mirroring human alienation are the vicissitudes of Scott Bradfield's valiant Thurberesque mutt 'Dazzle' - structurally not too remote from his earlier and grimmer fable 'The Dream of The Wolf'.

Sixteen stories range the gamut of tastes. Not one falls flat. May such Edens flourish perennially.

David S. Garnett (Ed.) - - THE ORBIT SCIENCE FICTION YEAR BOOK: I (Orbit, 1988, 336pp, £4.99)

(Reviewed by K.V. Bailey)

The fictional content falls roughly into two categories, each of which contains some stories predominantly of SF, some predominantly of fantasy. In one category are those with a firm story-line and fairly unambiguous characterisations, tensions and denouements. Such are two sensitive variations on the basic theme of child-animal empathy: Jonathan Carroll's 'Friend's Best Man' and that out-and-out winner, Fat Murphy's 'Rachel In Love'. In this category also belong Dan Simmons's gruelling 'E-Ticket to Namland', Lisa Tuttle's poignant bi/trans-sexual fantasy 'The Wound', and Kate Wilhelm's 'Forever Yours, Anna', which gives a highly inventive twist to the time-travel paradox.

'Lapidary Nights' (a personal favourite), by Marta Randall, while conforming to the above 'story' criteria, is also transitional to the second category: fictions and meta-fictions whose emotive and conceptual impacts are primarily achieved through games played with words, images, impressions, sometimes chaotic or kaleidoscopic, sometimes aordered into anomalous patterns. In these respects they are as much akin to poetry as to fiction. Both 'Lapidary Nights' and Lucius Shepard's 'The Sun Spider' are cosmically exotic, organically alchemical; but the effect of the latter stems chiefly from minglings of consciousness, and from the distillations of myth, psychology and science in its interpolated fictive quotes.

Continual shifts of perspective and/or modes of communication are characteristics of Paul di Filippo's 'Agents' and of Howard Waldrop's 'Jetboy' story, 'Thirty Minutes Over Broadway', with its factual extravaganza of an Appendix. Felix C. Gotschalk's 'Menage a Super-Trois' is a cyber-erotic cocktail. Richard Kadrey's 'Goodbye Houston Street, Goodbye' and Garry Kilworth's 'Murderers Walk' are, respectively, macro- and micro-cosmic doom journeys. The Editor contributes a state of the art conspectus and appraisal; Brian Aldiss a major-name, minor-name comparative study; and John Clute a virtuoso critical piece on the novels of 1987. A Year Book of contrasts, achievements and great expectations; and a very welcome one.

...and a tribute.

Clifford D. Simak - - - - - CITY
(Methuen, 1988, 255pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

Anyone who has never read CITY is just playing at being a science fiction fan. And anyone who has read CITY but doesn't like it is... entitled to his/her/its opinion. (N.B. This edition contains the trenchant short story, 'Epilog', which Simak wrote for THE JOHN W. CAMPBELL MEMORIAL ANTHOLOGY, published in 1973. Simak held an ambivalent attitude towards the piece (see Author's Note, pp. 240-1), and I, for one, believe that he'd gone an epilog too far.)

I return to this inimitable book every now and again, especially when I'm fed up with reading - or, worse still, reviewing - some militaristic muck about yet more microcephalic, musclebound mercenaries. 'There will (always) be war', the army/navy/air force/militia can do no wrong, kick-ass authority figures (be-a-good-boy-Johnny-or-just-wait-until-your-father-gets-home) - stuff like that. The stories that make up CITY were...

'...written in a revulsion against mass killing and as a protest against war...also as a sort of wish fulfilment... It was filled with the gentleness and the kindness and the courage that I thought were needed in the world... I made the dogs and robots the kind of people I would like to live with. And the vital point is this: That they must be dogs or robots, because people were not that kind of folks...'

[Simak, quoted in Locus, July 1988]

I like to think that Clifford D. Simak was 'that kind of folks'. The world in general, and the sf world in particular, seems to be a more, well, mechanistic place without him. Not that Simak was against technology; he merely distrusted our preoccupation with machines, and their 'brutalising' effect upon society is a major theme running throughout CITY. And if all that seems to lack critical objectivity...

'People have pointed out evidences of personal feeling in my notices', George Bernard Shaw wrote in 1890, 'as if they were accusing me of a misdemeanour, not knowing that a criticism written without personal feeling is not worth reading. It is the capacity for making good or bad art a personal matter that makes man a critic.'

((Cont. from p. 2))

months in case you wanted to drop some hints about Christmas presents. Unfortunately, I seem to have forgotten to tell you. Even more unfortunately, Mary couldn't find a copy of Brian Aldiss's MALACCIA TAPESTRY anywhere, so obviously it didn't work very well.

Stop Press: after moaning about the cost of the trade paperback editions of Tanith Lee's books reviewed herein I'm pleased to note that as of 26th January they are available from Unwin: £2.95 each. The reduced typeface for the ordinary paperback editions makes - in the case of THE BOOK OF THE DAMNED at least - for difficult reading, but do put up with it. The books are worth it.

Contributions of artwork for FI are particularly welcome. Please contact the editorial address.

R E V I E W S

Phillip Mann - - - - -THE EYE OF THE QUEEN
(Grafton, 1988, 264pp, £2.95)

- - - - -MASTER OF PAXWAX
(Grafton, 1988, 381pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Paul Kincaid)

The alien is the archetypal image of science fiction. From FRANKENSTEIN to THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, and on through countless other books, the odd creature has represented alienation, a personification of all manner of phobias, and a political allegory used to examine things like McCarthyism. They are humans in funny costumes that serve as pegs for a host of other concerns. The end result of which is that the alien as such does not get much of a look in. Put a man in a gorilla suit with a diving helmet on his head and that's enough to represent some incredible horror from the other end of the universe. It doesn't tell us much about the alien, and it tells us next to nothing about humans.

Which is what makes Phillip Mann's work so fresh and so exciting. He has taken care to present aliens that are alien in culture and intellect as well as in appearance. And it is this carefully realised alienness that allows him to look obliquely and revealingly at the nature of humanity.

His first novel, THE EYE OF THE QUEEN, is ideally structured for such a purpose. Earth is visited by the inestimably superior Pe-Ellians, who request that Dr Magnus Thorndyke, ageing founder of the Contact Linguistics Institute, return with them for the purpose of mutual study. Thorndyke does return, and the book takes the form of his diaries, with a commentary by his younger colleague Thomas Mnaba. The mixture of the personal and the detached that this allows serves the book well, because the slow revelation of the alien culture really spotlights flaws and features of the characters of the humans. It is an intellectually stimulating novel, if not exactly a fast moving adventure. And though Mann doesn't sufficiently differentiate the voices of the different narrators, and does have a weakness for bad poetry which punctuates both these novels, he does tell the story well in a crisp, sharp and involving manner.

This is even better in the second book, MASTER OF PAXWAX, which is actually an action-packed Galactic Empire story of intrigue, betrayal and war. In the Great Push, humanity swept through the galaxy, destroying alien civilisations, and establishing a far-flung human empire controlled by eleven great families. Now each of these families is degenerating, developing alien characteristics, but they seem secure. Until Paul becomes Master of Paxwax, the fifth family, and deliberately goes against the formal code by marrying outside the families. This is the excuse for a war that is really the first stage in the overthrow of human domination plotted by the remnants of the alien races.

Mann displays an impressive grasp of the scope of his adventure, and the action comes thick and fast enough to satisfy any fan of space opera. But again he uses the vivid and splendidly different aliens (and the growing alienness of the humans) to cast some interesting sidelights on humanity. There is thought behind the bloodshed, and the result is a book that is satisfying on many levels.

Be warned, however: MASTER OF PAXWAX is only the first part of a two-volume work, though it does stand more or less on its own. The full scale of Mann's enterprise, however, can only be seen in the far bleaker second

volume, THE FALL OF THE FAMILIES, which does not stand alone. The strange and fascinating creatures that populate these books have given me pause, and shown me a lot of how Phillip Mann regards his fellow man. There's hope, but I don't think he likes us all that much.

Joe Haldeman - - - - - TOOL OF THE TRADE
(Orbit, 1988, 261pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Nicholas Mahoney)

First of all, this book is only peripherally science fiction. The tool of the trade is certainly the type of thing you would expect a science fiction writer to think of; it is not, however, the kind of idea you expect to linchpin an entire science fiction novel. I'm not going to tell you what this tool is but I will tell you that it is one of the most preposterously unlikely devices I have ever heard of. The device would not look incongruous in a James Bond story and thus gives an air of fantasy to the proceedings. Our main viewpoint character is a KGB agent, undercover in the States, who is living a relatively normal life until he is accidentally found out. He is then faced with a nasty decision and a dilemma. Does he, or does he not, use the tool of the trade to carve out another alternative? Can he risk the CIA or KGB finding out about the tool? From here on the tension mounts. The diametrically opposed forces of the KGB and CIA bearing down on our wily protagonist has a clichéd feel to it. This, I think, was inevitable. However, you can never say: 'Nope, sorry that's impossible.' Haldeman has obviously done his homework.

This is a smoothly written contemporary and near future thriller with serious intentions that become abundantly clear at the climax. The finale as a formula for world peace bears some thinking about. It might even work.

Tanith Lee - - - - - THE BOOK OF THE DAMNED
(Unwin, 1988, 229pp, £6.95)

- - - - - THE BOOK OF THE BEAST
(Unwin, 1988, 196pp, £6.95)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

These books are subtitled 'The Secret Books Of Paradys', Paradys being a city located somewhere between Harrison's Viriconium and Cabell's Poictesme, a city of dark pasts and decadent inhabitants. In the first volume, macabre fantasy and androgeny fuse in three long tales which are reminiscent of Poe's lush Gothickry (though not, despite the blurb, Lovecraft's). The atmosphere is medieval, especially in 'Malice In Saffron' with its shadow of the plague; even though 'Empires Of Azure' is more 19th-century, with references to telephones and trains, and the city here is 'Paradis', there are connections with the past, from the use of the name 'St James' here and in the first story, 'Stained With Crimson' to the legends about the city's founding given in the succeeding volume.

THE BOOK OF THE BEAST, though it shares the predecessor's tripartite structure (well illustrated in the triptych-like covers), is essentially one long story, the survival of a djinn-like spirit through generations; the havoc it wreaks in Paradys, its introduction to the city by a Roman centurion, and the way it is defeated by a scholarly Jew. An important part of the tale is the bitter love-

story of Helise, forced into what can only appear to be a loveless marriage, and the tragic price that is paid when love is allowed free rein.

Here, Tanith Lee seems to be exploring the shadowy, perverse regions of 'dark fantasy' rather than more conventional horror or 'Sword & Sorcery'. The sexual overtones are overt, men and women disguising cross-sexually, virtually becoming the other. Is this the so-called 'gay content' US bookstores allegedly refused to stock Lee for? It is as inoffensive as it is vibrantly part of the atmosphere of these disturbing stories which, however, despite their attractive design in trade paperback format will scarcely find a mass market at £14 the pair. A pity: they are excellent tales in a genre so often filled these days with slush.

Brian Aldiss with
David Wingrove - - - - - TRILLION YEAR SPREE: THE
HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION
(Paladin, 1988, 688pp, £6.95)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

TRILLION YEAR SPREE is an updated, extended and slightly rewritten version of Aldiss' 1973 BILLION YEAR SPREE. By being larger it has more room for the sort of things which spoiled the earlier book, and it seems to contain some of the errors which were there in 1973.

The main failure of the book must be that while it alleges to be criticism it has few critical standards. For instance, the first three chapters are not in chronological order because the book insists that SF owes all its origins to Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN and begins by examining that, then goes on to Poe and then back to look at possible precursors. The first chapter uses a deep-ish critical standard to look at Mary Shelley's life and its relationship to her work, but that just disappears as the book goes on.

Similarly, in their first chapter the authors give their definition of SF:

Science fiction is the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mould.

However, as the book goes on the idea of critical standards just disappears, and the last chapter on writers of the last decade is just a mish-mash. Even early on, for instance, in the chapter on Wells, the role of the Gothic is absent - the section on DR MOREAU is mainly a retelling of the story and not a discussion of the development of Gothic. This continues so that it is still missing in the much later paragraph on George R.R. Martin's FEVRE DREAM.

The authors also refrain from making judgements about the quality of an author's work. Take this discussion of Arthur C. Clarke's work: 'Clarke's writing has progressed considerably since novels like A FALL OF MOONDUST (1961). There the characters were embarrassingly wooden... By the time of IMPERIAL EARTH (1975) Clarke had made an effort to rectify this weakness'. That an author has only 'made an effort' in fourteen years, and is not said to have succeeded suggests a remarkable benefit of the doubt about his abilities and results.

This is a disappointing book, not a good history and fundamentally flawed in its claim to critical independence. It is, even worse, inconsistent and has not learned from the books it claims to discuss. On page 550 there is this paragraph:

Why should women need a language of their own? Why is the language we have insufficient for their needs? In posing and answering these questions Elgin's novel [NATIVE TONGUE] is significant, for in its deliberately exaggerated fashion, it makes us feel how cruel the masculinity of language is.

Now re-read the definition of SF quoted above which is reprinted unamended from 1973. The authors say one thing and write another. They have not seen how cruel language is.

Neil Barron's ANATOMY OF WONDER is now available in its third edition, and although I haven't seen it I would recommend it, unseen, to anyone who was considering buying a history of SF. That's my response to TRILLION YEAR SPREE, I'm afraid.

Larry Niven - - - - - THE SMOKE RING
(Futura, 1987, 362pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by John Newsinger)

This is the sequel to THE INTEGRAL TREES and carries forward the story of the inhabitants of Citizen Tree. They despatch an expedition to the Admiralty, a more advanced community situated in the Clump and open up new prospects for themselves as part of a larger human family. The young Rather Citizen begins to emerge as a central character, changing before our very eyes into a typical Nivenesque hero of whom we shall undoubtedly hear more. The Citizens also change their uneasy relationship with Kendy, the computer personality that still controls the old mothership, Discipline.

Niven is, as one would expect, routinely successful in establishing the credibility of his inspired Smoke Ring system, although life for his adapted humans does appear much too safe and easy for a frontier existence. Still this is not meant to be one of his 'realistic' tales, red in tooth and gore, but is instead a comparatively harmless adventure story told with a light good humoured touch. Essentially what we are being given is a mythic benign account of the origins of the good old US of A but set in an eccentric environment. The novel is slow starting but eventually picks up enough pace to maintain interest. Nothing to either rave...or complain about!

Bob Shaw - - - - - SHIP OF STRANGERS
(VGSF, 1988, 234pp, £2.99)

(Reviewed by Phil Nichols)

This is a 1978 fix-up detailing the adventures of the Cartographical Survey as it routinely charts planet after planet at the surface of the Bubble of expanding humanity. It's also a very old-fashioned book, which is to say the various adventures - and the manner of their telling - would not have seemed particularly out of place in a 1940 Astounding Stories. Their 'there must be a logical solution to this predicament' plots remind me very much of the early Asimov.

Shaw gives us a view of the 23rd century in which most of the exploring is done by men; many characters smoke cigarettes; the heroes most look forward to drinking lager, watching football, and going home for Christmas. Apart from the setting, nothing differs from the present day. The attitude of the characters toward the female sex is also curiously 20th-century. But this vision is so doggedly mundane that I can't help feeling it's entirely deliberate.

The plots themselves involve time travel, alien contact, even a spaceship that shrinks

down to nothing - and beyond! Shaw also 'throws away' a few marvellous ideas, my favourite being the a creature whose blood stays put while its body circulates...

Not the kind of book to change your life, but of its type a clearly written, brisk read.

Barry B. Longyear - - - - - SEA OF GLASS
(Legend, 1988, 375pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Craig Marnock)

In the near future when over-population threatens the world, Thomas Windom is an illegal child. When he is discovered his parents are electrocuted, and he is sent to a work-camp. Brutalised by life in the camp, he attempts to escape into a world where everyone is watched.

The key notion in this book is projection: the alteration of factors to achieve the required result - population control, in this case. The nations of the Compact are controlled by the Department of Projections, and its computer MAC III, which actually makes the projections. The accuracy of the projections is proportional to the amount of data known; hence the constant surveillance.

As well as being its key notion, projection is also the novel's key liability, especially in the case of the Wardate. This is when the war must happen, to ensure humanity's survival. The current Wardate heads each chapter, but it is not justified until it's too late to redeem itself. Projection itself is never satisfactorily rationalised, a terminal defect for a novel about the consequences of projection on one man's life.

The book follows Thomas' viewpoint and understanding, and this gets it off to a bad start from which it never really recovers, due to the lack of explication, and textual conflict between the supposed child's viewpoint and the adult perceptions of the author. Longyear writes well, showing a deft hand with tension, but that is not enough to paper over the cracks in the narrative.

A flawed book, then, but perhaps the more interesting for that.

Michael Crichton - - - - -THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN
(Pan, 1988, 295pp, £3.50)

- - - - -SPHERE
(Pan, 1988, 385pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Kev McVeigh)

Two very similar books almost twenty years apart. THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN is a classic, exciting, hard sf-thriller in which an alien virus destroys a small mid-western town and a team of experts are sent into the area to save the world, or at least America. By interspersing straight narrative and readable technical reports the tension is very skilfully developed so that even though we know that the heroes will succeed, we keep reading. The science is convincing to me and is not narrated in the Clarke-style of having a stupid (female) character who needs to have everything explained.

Unfortunately the characters aren't the most three-dimensional I've read, though they aren't the worst by far, but I found that the tension was enough to hold me to this book.

SPHERE, however, kept me reading because I couldn't guess the ending. It is still obvious that the hero will win, but as various characters are set up to save the day but fail, doubts gather. The characters are generally stronger than in the earlier book, but the plot allows a neat get-out when this fails.

An alien spaceship over three hundred years old is found deep in the pacific and a team of military and scientific staff go down

to investigate. A storm leaves them isolated for several days, and what they find is very strange. Is it an alien ship? Or from our future? What was its mission? And what is the strange sphere they discover?

The sphere becomes a threat, of course, as it seems to manipulate various members of the team and sends strange messages to the ship's computer terminals.

How this problem is resolved is riveting until the last page where the final solution is a cheat, but never mind.

Michael Crichton is a master of suspense, but his characters still revert to stereotype at times of crisis. If you can submerge this beneath the tension and excitement these are two very worthwhile novels.

Ken Grimwood - - REPLAY (Grafton, 1988, 366pp,
£2.99)

(Reviewed by Nicholas Mahoney)

How can I capture the magic of reading this book? Well, I was intrigued by the first page and a bit: Jeff Winston (age 42, 18th October 1988) is listening to his wife on the phone. 'We must - ' she says. Winston slumps forward and dies of a heart attack. We must what? The next thing he knows he is eighteen again, with a growing sense of deja vu back in his college room. All his memories are intact... From here on in the possibilities are endless.

I must pause to thank Rog Peyton for the eye-catching plaudits in the Andromeda catalogue, for this is one book inhabiting the general fiction shelves it would be a tragedy to miss.

Grimwood has found a super angle for an examination of the human condition and made good use of it. He never gets too cute with the idea. The story flows like a barrel over Niagara Falls and it keeps on getting better. But how will it end? I kept asking myself. It was one of those rare books that, having started it, you actively loathe every minute you spend away from it, until the reluctance to let it end sets in. And what of the end? What about it? It is bitter-sweet. To say more would be criminal. Finishing those last few pages, I was letting go of a universe I didn't want to leave. Never have I craved more for a sequel but... no, there is no way of recapturing the experience of reading this book for the first time. Pity.

Spedding - - THE ROAD AND THE HILLS (Unwin,
1988, 431pp, £3.95)

A CLOUD OVER WATER (Unwin, 1988,
348pp, £3.95)

THE STREETS OF THE CITY (Unwin,
1988, 338pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

I really shouldn't make disparaging remarks about fantasy trilogies. On the face of it, this sequence is dubious. Anything dedicated to the memory of Alexander the Great and whose main characters are called Ailixond and Aleizon Ailix Ayndra has to be suspect, particularly when the author drops her forename and the bloody map doesn't even have half the locations on it.

Yet once over these hurdles, there's a story far beyond the gushy romanticism I'd suspected. Spedding writes, in fact, in a curiously objective style, a little old-fashioned (rather than mannerly archaic) and her background is excellent. The parallels with Alexander the Great are obvious, but they are not the only factors in the book.

Aleizon Ailix Ayndra joins the army of King Ailixond, who is carving out a new Emp-

ire, as a humble soldier; is soon revealed to be a woman, and by a mixture of force of personality and cunning strategy intrigues her way to his side and a complex relationship with him. On his death, she is poised for great power. The second volume sees a rival becoming Regent, and as the Empire collapses into squabbling factions, Aynadra is almost swept back to square one. The third volume continues straight on from the second and shows Aynadra overcoming adversity and reaching, not only Regency, but Kingship. In slightly more than a manner of speaking, she becomes Ailixond...

She is an enigmatic character: driven, cynical, ambitious, resilient, but the author gives away very little concerning her interior motives. Only by her actions can her desires and goals be guessed at, and information is revealed sparingly, almost grudgingly. It's not until right at the end of ROAD that we start to know much about the heroine's past, but there's enough of a dramatic spell about her to keep us hooked.

Perhaps this isn't much more than the old story about the girl who dresses in soldier's clothes and Makes Good, and certainly the cliffhanging ending to CLOUD almost sent me back to square one (what with the larger type in the latter volume I wonder if the natural length of this series wasn't two rather than three books). But it is more, and that difference is all-important. Spedding knows her stuff, can create character and weave plot-line, and does so in a manner which suggests a healthy disregard for the power-fantasy which infuses so much of the genre. Further, Spedding avoids the pat, predictable ending (at least in so far as, although you can tell how Aynadra will end up, her fate is driven by character rather than author-imposed cliché). In not letting us see quite how and why Aynadra inspires such love and loyalty, Spedding makes us wonder about the mystery of heroism and charisma. Are they mercenary, even tragic states?

The overall title of the trilogy is A WALK IN THE DARK: I'm not sure why but if it is meant to suggest a sense of following one's fate even though not knowing where that leads then it is appropriate. In the dark, you may end up on top of a mountain - or stumble over the edge of a precipice. There's plenty to savour even when you've finished the sequence: this is a broad, colourful, sweeping historical fantasy which will keep you locked in its world for a good long time.

Kathryn Cramer & David G. Hartwell (eds.) - - CHRISTMAS GHOSTS (Robinson, 1988, £5.95, 284pp)

(Reviewed by Rosemary Pardoe)

This collection of seventeen reprint ghost stories, all set in the Christmas season, contains an interesting balance of the uncommon and the familiar, the humorous and the serious. It was originally published last year in the USA and, although the majority of the tales are English, several American examples are included. Unfortunately, these are in general (with the exception of John Kendrick Bangs' contribution) the weakest in the anthology, being variously insipid, preachy and pompous.

Among the best of the stories are F. Anstey's very amusing 'The Curse of the Catafaliques', Ramsey Campbell's popular 'Calling Card' (a wicked black joke), A.N.L. Munby's 'A Christmas Game', and Sir Andrew Caldecott's 'Christmas Reunion' (based on an idea by M.R. James). Best of all, though already familiar to most readers, is Marjorie Bowen's 'The Crown Derby Plate', possibly the most atmospheric evocation ever of the Essex Marshes (Garry Kilworth's WITCHWATER COUNTRY notwithstanding).

CHRISTMAS GHOSTS is a good, solid collection, which would make a useful addition to the library of anyone fairly new to the ghost story field. I cannot quite fathom why the editors chose to begin the book with the weakest tale, nor why they could not be bothered to compile an introduction of decent length. Biographical background on the authors, some of whom are quite obscure, is notable only by its absence. Surely I am not the only nosy soul who finds that knowledge of writers enhances enjoyment of their stories?

August Derleth (ed.) - - TALES OF THE CTHULHU MYTHOS (Grafton, 1988, 508pp, £3.99)

Ramsey Campbell (ed.) - - NEW TALES OF THE CTHULHU MYTHOS (Grafton, 1988, 335pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

The call of Cthulhu extends beyond H.P. Lovecraft's original tales. Why? Partly because Lovecraft hit on a good formula, superficially easy to imitate, partly because of the mixture of playfulness and paranoia with which he invested his stories, encouraging his fellow Weird Tales writers to contribute to the Mythos while his stories stimulated unease from their (exaggerated?) misanthropy to their repetitive use of language (read 'incantatory rhythms', if you like).

The reprint of Derleth's collection is built around Lovecraft's 'The Call of Cthulhu' which acts as an introduction to other exercises in the Mythos by friends, associates and disciples from Robert E. Howard and Clark Ashton Smith to Ramsey Campbell and Colin Wilson (whose 'Return of the Lloigor' is a fascinatingly ambiguous response to Lovecraftian horror). Also included is the 'dialogue' between the young Robert Bloch and Lovecraft in three linked stories.

Most stories - Campbell's 'Cold Print' and James Wade's interesting and original dolphin tale, 'The Deep Ones' are perhaps exceptions - stick fairly closely to the structure of the Mythos story and many are available in other collections. Still, a must for the fan and not to be sneered at by the uncommitted horror reader.

Even more so is Campbell's collection, which tries to eschew pastiche and the kind of story which merely added a new deity to the pantheon or depicted yet another attempt by the Old Ones to 'break through'. There are certainly some excellent stories here: Stephen King's 'Crouch End', T.E.D. Klein's 'Black Man With A Horn', Campbell's own 'The Faces at Pine Dunes', but I have a perverse feeling that the most effective story is Basil Copper's 'Shaft No. 247'. Without mentioning a single 'Mythos' name and at first sight a plain science-fictional tale out of place in this collection it, more than any other, fulfills Campbell's criterion for a successful Mythos story: 'to suggest something larger and more terrible than was ever stated'.

Pamela Sargent - - THE SHORE OF WOMEN (Pan, 1988, 456pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Lynne Bispham)

This book is all that is good about good SF: it creates an entirely convincing future, it is strong on plot and character, and yet it also manages to be thought-provoking and intelligent.

Centuries have passed since the Earth was devastated by weapons controlled by men. It is women who have re-discovered science and technology, and have built themselves cities from which males are excluded - never again will men be permitted to develop the weapons

of nuclear war. In the all-male, primitive tribal society outside the cities only the strongest survive. Men hunt and fight, and worship at the shrines of the Lady, the Earth Goddess. In these shrines, women use sophisticated technology to manipulate man's minds, all the while despising the savage males who are incapable of finer human feeling, and whose only use is to propagate the species. The reader is left in no doubt as to the brutality of the men's lives, although the violence is never gratuitous. The morality and wisdom of preserving civilisation for woman only by condemning men to savagery is challenged when Birana, a woman exiled from her city and expected to die in the brutal world outside, survives and forms a relationship with Arvil, a male nomadic hunter, showing that some men at least are capable of more than violence and destruction.

The book has three narrators; Birana, Arvil, and Laissa, a city woman, all of whose distinct 'voices' make them sympathetic and very real. It focusses on the relationship between Arvil and Birana, but it is more than just an adventure or love story. It is a thoughtful book whose characters have to deal with situations for which there are no simplistic solutions. Read and enjoy.

Robert Aickman - - COLD HAND IN MINE (Robinson, 1988, 252pp, £3.50)
THE MODEL (Robinson, 1988, 138pp, £2.95)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

When the Robinson 'Dark Fantasy' series was launched the question a lot of people asked was 'Will there be any Robert Aickman?' Well, here are two representative selections; a collection of 'eight strange stories' and a short novel which apparently has not been published before in the UK.

Aickman, who dies in 1981, is probably best known to the 'general reader' as editor of the annual 'Fontana Book of Great Ghost Stories', but if ever a label fitted a writer, the term 'Dark Fantasy' is one which aptly sums up the tone of his own stories. Haunting rather than terrifying, they are full of the kind of throwaway images in which you finish a sentence and are half-way into the next before it dawns on you that something most peculiar has happened. Aickman's elegantly uncanny prose hints at explanations most horror writers would bludgeon you over the head with; he remains, though, allusive and elusive, using familiar themes but approaching them from a most oblique angle. 'The Swords', for example, is obviously a tale of sexual cruelty. But who or what is this girl whose hand is bloodlessly pulled off in a bedroom tussle with the narrator? The obvious explanation remains unmentioned: the story becomes colder, more literally unnatural. Or why was Viktor, in 'Niemandswasser', 'sometimes dressed as a girl'? Sometimes, too, Aickman takes conventional themes and turns them on their head to create more powerful, unsettling shivers, as in the vampire story 'Pages From A Young Girl's Journal', or 'The Hospice', which uses the stock situation of being stranded for a night in a sinister house, but in which the macabre business of the place, we infer, goes on around, and not including, the visitor.

THE MODEL is even stranger. In this oblique fable, hovering on the borders of fantasy and symbolism, we see Elena, who leaves home to follow her dreams of becoming a ballerina, and the history and legends of Czarist Russia combine and scatter across the story like snowflakes in a landscape embodied in glass. Aickman delicately slips the half-logical connections and images of dream into his narrative: the landscape changes shape as

the flurrying snowflakes settle and are disturbed again. Aickman's effortless virtuosity should earn him a place on anyone's bookshelf.

Louise Cooper - - NEMESIS (Unwin, 1988, 246pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Sue Thomason)

NEMESIS is the first of a series of eight fantasies about the Princess Anghara of the Southern Isles. A month before her wedding, Anghara enters the forbidden Tower of Regrets, inadvertently releasing a plague of 'demons' whose first act is to massacre her family and friends. Anghara tries to kill herself, but the Earth-Goddess will not accept her death. Her task is to kill the seven demons she has loosed before they destroy humankind (one per book for the next seven books, one assumes). Anghara takes the name of Indigo (the colour of death and mourning in her culture, also the colour of her eyes) and sets off on her quest, hunted and thwarted by her Nemesis, a silver-eyed child who embodies Indigo's own destructive nature, and whom she hates.

This is a very competently written book, showing a skilful hand at archetype-blending. The Tower of Regrets, for example, is Ark of refuge, Dark Tower of Doom, and Pandora's Box by turns. Like many recent fantasies, NEMESIS has an eco-pagan ethical/magical basis, a strong woman protagonist, and enough depth to signal quite clearly that Indigo's quest is (primarily?) the quest for self-knowledge. It's not 'great literature'; but it does have something real to say, and says it clearly.

Gwyneth Jones - - THE HIDDEN ONES (Women's Press, 1988, 151pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Sue Thomason)

Issued under the WP's *Livewire* (i.e. 'teen reading' imprint, this short novel successfully blurs the boundaries between science fiction, dark fantasy and the 'novel of gritty realism'. Adele's background and home life provide what her social worker might call 'an interesting case study'. Most people see her as a black leather jacket and punk haircut; a 'hard case', a 'bad lot', Trouble. Adele is also a poltergeist focus. Rejected and discarded by parents, teachers, et.al., she lives in revolt against all authority, and in terror that her only value is as a freak, an experimental subject. Sent to live with her father and his new wife, she rediscovers her childhood affinity with the landscape of Castledene, a local beauty spot. She enters into a relationship of mutual aid and betrayal with Dr. Allardyce, a mad/sane scientist/witch, and becomes involved in an attempt to thwart plans to 'develop' Castledene.

This is a strong, subtle book, full of complex clarity, with no unnecessary explanations and no talking down, a book that respects both its subject matter and its intended readership. Highly recommended.

Brian Aldiss (ed.) - - GALACTIC EMPIRES (Legend, 1988, 649pp, £4.99)

(Reviewed by Martyn Taylor)

A dinosaur looms out of the mists of time, a misleadingly titled collection of stories from between 1941 and 1975 arranged and introduced as lovingly as ever by Brian Aldiss. The gang is almost all here - Clarke, Anderson, Van Vogt, Asimov, Simak (but not Heinlein or Aldiss himself) - and mostly they are in typical form. Turning these pages is like excavating that mythical 'Golden Age' - page

60 brings us blood and guts megalomania from Poul Anderson, from which we turn the pages to find the original 'Foundation' story: page 248 takes us into an education from Clifford Simak and then straight into one of James White's equally didactic but far more subtly so Sector General tales. Not that it is just our great names who entertain. Alfred Coppel and Alex Apostolides spin a chillingly moral caution. Non-genre representation comes from John D. MacDonald, a 'rattling good yarn' from that incorrigible purveyor of such stories. Finally, in such a short review, there is the quintessence of two authors. 'Concealment' is Van Vogt at his most Van Vogtian - he cannot write to save his life and the twist in the tail is telegraphed, but somehow it doesn't seem to matter. Like the bee, he shouldn't fly but he does. Then there is 'Beep' by James Blish. If this is not in your collection (and why not?) then alone it is worth the fiver, and everything else is a bonus.

Buy this with your own money.

Christopher Hinz - - - - -LIEGE-KILLER
(Methuen, 1988, 458pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Nicholas Mahoney)

It is 2307 A.D. Earth has been uninhabitable since 2097 A.D., the Apocalypse. ecosystem breakdown. Humanity lives in a great number of cylindrical colonies. Population circa 1000M. A deadly Paratwa assassin has returned to wreak havoc among the colonies. Political squabbles frustrate matters. The arrival of a single assassin might not sound too serious but believe me it's pretty drastic. The plot thickens, unfolds slowly. I enjoy particularly some of the subtle digs at the present day, the pages begin to run out. 10-1 on we have a sequel in the offing.

According to the recent Locus poll this is the fourth best first novel of 1987. However, it won't necessarily meet cultivated British tastes as it's an intricately plotted adventure with all the typical imperfections. It took about 130 pages to get going. After that the hours passed painlessly - for the most part. My main complaint is that the book is too long. For this I blame the endless internal monologues perpetrated by all the characters. The book doesn't flow from beginning to end at the right pace. Despite the length there isn't adequate description, excepting the violent bits where there is too much. The characters are all old friends: the ethical politico, the right hand man who's a stumbling block, the efficient hunters, the cunning, elusive, unrepentant enemy, victims - helpless and fanged.

For the most part I was entertained but not inspired.

Richard Burns - - - - -TROUBADOUR
(Unwin, 1988, 250pp, £3.95)

(Reviewed by Terry Broome)

The Brotherhood have, without the Emperor's knowledge, declared alcohol and entertainment illegal. They no longer respect him because he refuses to perform the Rite of Endyear (a ritual self-mutilation in which the rightful ruler hopes to be healed by the ghost of a warrior ancestor, Akhran the Golden). When the Emperor finds out he goes insane. A civil war ensues, with the fun-loving Royalists on the one side and the puritan Brotherhood on the other. Streetpoet sets out for Northreach in search of Lara, who has not wed after all and who may be the only one to bring the Emperor back to his senses.

The focus in this volume is centred more clearly on Streetpoet than in KHALINDAINE, the style is more consistent, avoiding the main fault of the first volume - a dreary middle section - and it has a keener, but less

intrusive sense for the satirical: 'There is no need to describe the parting of Lara and Talen: it was a cliched scene and they spoke in cliches, and believed every word they said' (page 236).

There is still plenty of room for improvement, TROUBADOUR - while clearly being the work of an intelligent writer and one who can lend his fantasy worlds a depth lacking in the fantasies of other writers - still provides little more than an undemanding adventure. Burns has the talent to tackle something much more substantial. Perhaps these books will earn him the freedom he needs to create such a novel.

Lyndan Darby - - - - - BLOODSEED
(Unwin, 1988, 262pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by John Newsinger)

At first sight the second volume of 'The Eye of Time' trilogy seems to have all the faults of the first: a juvenile plot, cardboard characters, ponderous prose and an irritating use of archaic speech. As far as plot goes, Eider, now installed as rightful King of Rhye, is the object of a fiendish plot on the part of the surviving Dark Lords. They plan to destroy him by means of a seduction, making use of the Bloodseed, an evil incarnation that takes the form of a masked actor. This mysterious figure becomes an obsession with Eider, while all the time...well that would be telling.

What seems to be a rather average fantasy novel is somewhat redeemed however by the repressed sexuality with which Lyndan Darby manages to charge the story. In fact, the book, whether intentionally or not, turns out to be a quite interesting homoerotic fable. For example, when the masked actor ravishes the Triad, draining its power:

Hot breath oozed from the mouth-slit...The Great Sword pulsed anew... Ruthra stiffened and taking his stance anew he enveloped the cabinet with his pulsing limbs, spirals of heat seeping from the mouth-slit as the final act of his destruction began...With the thrill of victory Ruthra's body relaxed...

Phew! I can't wait to read the final volume.

James H. Schmitz - - - - THE WITCHES OF KARRES
(VGSF, 1988, 286pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Dave Langford)

Genuinely light-hearted 'adventure' SF is rare stuff: challenged for examples, the average fan might after some head-scratching suggest Eric Frank Russell and, er, Eric Frank Russell...

James Schmitz tried his hand at this tiny subgenre and did it well enough to catch Terry Carr's eye and make it into the first series of Ace SF Specials. In some ways THE WITCHES OF KARRES (1966) is atypical for Schmitz: his usual female lead character is fragmented into a trio of admittedly show-stealing young witches, and the Analog-spawned obsession with mighty psi powers as arbitrary plot devices is - well, not quite parodied but certainly not taken seriously, with a semi-omnipotent psionic 'vatch' helping to achieve the most ludicrously melodramatic and/or convenient transitions. If the vatch isn't handy, you can be sure the straight-man hero will suffer equally improbable larcenies and plot-turns thanks to witchy travel modes more appalling than British rail, like the Sheewash Drive and the Egger Route. However, note that Schmitz's galactic piracy and warfare are more restrained than Doc Smith's. The book features only two manoeuvrable planets.

James Tiptree, Jr - - - - - THE STARRY RIFT
(Sphere, 1988, 250pp, £2.99)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

The late 'James Tiptree, Jr' (real name, Alice B. Sheldon - as if you didn't know) wrote several classic short stories, including 'Love Is The Plan, The Plan Is Death' (1973) and 'Houston, Houston, Do You Read?' (1976). But she never quite made it as a novelist. UP THE WALLS OF THE WORLD (1978) and BRIGHTNESS FALLS FROM THE AIR (1985) remind me of the ill-fated character in Ray Bradbury's 'Skeleton' - all flesh and no bones.

THE STARRY RIFT (Tor Books, 1986) is, however, a particularly well structured fix-up novel, composed of three novelettes sharing the same background and interconnected by a cheeky, but effective, framing device (alien students of Human history are consulting an ultra-helpful librarian). It is set either in or near the Great North Rift, '...a stray chunk of the same gradients that create the Galactic arms with their intervening gaps' (p. 10).

I'm out of sympathy with the first segment, 'The Only Neat Thing To Do', mainly because it features the kind of kittenish heroine who gives child murder a good name (PODFAYNE OF MARS crossed with ANNE OF GREEN GABLES). 'Good Night, Sweethearts' is much, much better; a partially amnesiac interstellar salvage operator named Raven meets his improbably well preserved ex-girlfriend in the Rift, along with her youthful grandclone(?!). Then space pirates turn up to make life even more difficult for him (some days it just isn't worth getting out of coldsleep...). The final segment, 'Collision', is just as good, only different. Navigator Torrane, of the good ship Rift-Runner One, encounters an alien culture from the Other Side, precipitating events that lead to a fuller understanding of the Rift itself.

THE STARRY RIFT is space opera with a difference: the difference being that it's written by James Tiptree, Jr. I'd like to describe the book as E.E. 'Doc' Smith with balls, but that might raise more questions than it answers. (Don't be put off by the peculiar second person style: it seems to be the most natural thing in the world, after a while).



Lloyd Alexander - - THE CHRONICLES OF PRYDAIN
(THE BOOK OF THREE, THE BLACK CAULDRON,
THE CASTLE OF LLYR, TARAN WANDERER, THE
HIGH KING) (Lions, 1988; 156pp, 157pp,
160pp, 187 pp, 223pp respectively, all
£1.95)

Good news - these five fantasies have now shed their Disney film tie-in jackets and have five new cover illustrations from the pen of Patrick Lynch (who also illustrated Garner's BAG OF MOONSHINE). Full of Celtic magic, these pictures should bring new friends to Prydain, and are respectable enough for adult shelves, though you also have the choice of the omnibus 2-volume trade paperback edition. (Jessica Yates)

Poul & Karen Anderson - - GALLICENAE (Grafton, 1988, 429pp, £3.99)

Vol. 2 of the 'King of Ys' historical fantasy. Celts fans should enjoy this, but it does fall between several sets of stools, with only touches of the supernatural to deem it fantasy and (with detailed notes and glossaries) being almost as much textbook of Dark Ages history as novel. The Andersons' chirpy cockney lower ranks are cringeworthy, but the half-tragic picture of the Mithraist hero in a Christian-dominated Roman Empire is effective. A mixed sprawl. (Andy Sawyer)

Isaac Asimov - - THE BIG SUN OF MERCURY
(Lightning, 1988, 143pp, £1.99)

A 'Lucky Starr' juvenile. Long conversations not only carry the plot, but are loaded with science which a note says has been proved wrong since. The publishers have not corrected the American spelling. (L.J. Hurst)

Margaret Bingley - - AFTER ALICE DIED (Grafton, 1988, 234pp, £2.95)

Erotic horror in which newly-wed Allan is seduced by a beautiful but evil ghost who later reincarnates as his daughter. (Andy Sawyer)

James Blish - - SPOCK MUST DIE (Corgi, 1988, 118pp, £1.50)

A Star Trek novel. Mr Scott's modification of the transporter results in a duplication of Spock. Captain Kirk must decide which Spock is the original while simultaneously saving the Federation from the Klingons. Written in the spirit of (and assumes the reader is familiar with) the TV series. (Lynne Bispham)

Stephen Bowkett - - GAMEPLAYERS (Pan Piper, 1988, £1.99)

John is part of a fantasy role-playing game group at school, and finds their shared world a useful escape, particularly as his parents are on the verge of separation. But is he too involved with his character 'Jon Wildblood'? Certainly Jeff, the game's 'Routemaster', is taking it all far too seriously and seems to be willing to do almost anything to win.

Bowkett avoids the 'characters taking on lives of their own' cliché of such stories by making this a very good slice of teenage life from the view of people who happen to be game addicts. An imaginative novel from a writer to keep an eye on. (Andy Sawyer)

William C. Dietz - - WAR WORLD (N.E.L., 1988, 247pp, £2.99)

Sam McCade shoots and shouts his way across the galaxy in 'the greatest manhunt of all time'. Given that, and a modicum of violence, this book is a passable read. Definitely action-packed! (Brian Magorrian)

Claudia Edwards - - BRIGHT AND SHINING TIGER
(Headline, 1988, 218pp, £2.99)

A catalogue of clichés cannot mask the basic ineptness of this nonsensical He-Man and She-Ra-style adventure, in which the upper-class heroine wields magic, the lower-class hero is a macho animal, and horses are phallic symbols. (Terry Broome)

Rose Estes - - THE PRICE OF POWER (Penguin, 1988, 316pp, £3.99)

Second volume of the adventures of Mika, one of the highly macho Wolf-nomads, who uses a magic gem to increase his spell-casting powers - becoming less masculine, more feminine each time he uses it. Not quite as interesting as it sounds... but mildly amusing. (Andy Sawyer)

Kenneth C. Flint - - THE DARK DRUID (Bantam, 1988, 326pp, £3.50)

Celtic fantasy in which the warrior hero

Finn MacCumhal searches Ireland for his wife, who has been stolen by the Dark Druid, and becomes involved in a war amongst the Sidhe. A better book than most offerings from this particular sub-genre, and can be read as a complete novel in its own right, even though it is Book Seven (!) of the Sidhe Legends. (Lynne Bispham)

Harry Harrison - - THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT'S REVENGE (Bantam, 1988, 196pp, £2.99)

Reprinted umpteen times, this 1970 installment of the diGriz story has all the usual fun and games, leaving me wondering how any fan can dislike this joyous series. This time we have liberated Amazons giving backing to the lovely but vicious Angelina, but really it's The Rat all the way. Perhaps the latest books are a bit OTT - this second book still carries conviction, and will keep you laughing all the way. (Ken Lake)

Stuart Kinder - - THE CANNIBAL (Grafton, 1988, 171pp, £2.50)

Screamingly OTT novel with a recipe for human brains in breadcrumbs among other nasties. (Andy Sawyer)

Glen A. Larson & Robert Thurston - - THE TOMBS OF KOBOL (Titan, 1988, 215pp, £2.95)

Spin-off book based on an episode from the TV series of a certain 'Star Wars' bandwaggoning film... (Andy Sawyer)

Louise Lawrence - - MOONWIND (Lions, 1987, 154pp, £1.95); THE WARRIORS OF TAAN (Lions 1988, £2.25)

MOONWIND examines human nature and society through adolescent yearning as well as science fiction (perhaps the two are closer than we might think). A non-material girl from a spacefaring race is trapped on the moon: Welsh Gareth is trapped too, to a drab life in a small post-industrial country when the time comes to return from the moonbase to which his imagination has won him a visit. One of this author's best. WARRIORS OF TAAN shows conflict between natives and Outworlders in a setting reminiscent of some of Andre Norton's SF/Fantasy, although Lawrence uses her theme to explore feminist alternatives in a way Norton rarely does. (Andy Sawyer)

Graham Masterton - - MIRROR (Sphere, 1988, 345pp, £3.50)

A Hollywood scriptwriter's obsession with a murdered child-star of the '30s and the true story behind Lewis Carroll's THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS make an intriguing and creepy horror novel, despite the conventional Satanism towards the end. (Andy Sawyer)

Michael Moorcock - - COUNT BRASS/THE CHAMPION OF GARATHORM/THE QUEST FOR TANELORN (Grafton, 1988; 150pp, 126pp, 144pp; £2.50 each)

Reprint of the 'Chronicles of Castle Brass', follow-up to the 'Runestaff' trilogy. Various strands of the 'Eternal Champion' sequence come together in this excellent moral tale, first published 1973 - 5, as Dorian Hawkmoon seeks the last remnants of the Dark Empire of Granbretan and a world free of external, imposed authority. Romance in the fullest, freest sense of the word. (Andy Sawyer)

Douglas Niles - - BLACK WIZARDS (Penguin, 1988, 347pp, £3.99)

Role-playing-game fantasy from TSR. Book two of the 'Moonshae trilogy' - don't race for the other volumes. (Andy Sawyer)

Graham Oakley - - HENRY'S QUEST (Picturemac, 1988, 32pp, £2.50)

Ostensibly for children, and in a rectangular

picture-book form which implies a readership aged 4 - 8, it should be snatched away and offered to anyone who appreciated Briggs' WHEN THE WIND BLOWS. This one has a happy ending, though. In the future after 20th-century civilisation has collapsed owing to the exhaustion of energy sources, a young man goes on a quest for the magic substance PETROL. He journeys through the ruins of our cities - lots of visual jokes here - to find a neo-Roman set-up whose emperor draws his inspiration from Nero, Hitler and Al Capone. Avoiding temptation Henry returns to his neo-medieval homeland. With its ironical text it would make a good present for intelligent 10-plus children, and I recommend it to the teachers and librarians among you. (Jessica Yates)

Paul Preuss - - MAELSTROM (Avon, 1988, 284pp, £3.95)

Another 'Arthur C. Clarke's Venus Prime' novel in which the Clarkeian input (the short story 'Maelstrom II' so hovers head and shoulders over the rather messy thriller-novel (fusing inscribed artifacts on Mars and Venus, drug smuggling, and an Illuminati-type secret society) which surrounds it that you have to question the whole nature of the enterprise. (Andy Sawyer)

Jennifer Roberson - - TRACK OF THE WHITE WOLF (Corgi, 1988, 408pp, £3.99)

Vol. 4 of the 'Chronicles of the Cheysuli' series. Dynastic and racial rivalry between the shapechanging Cheysuli and the Homonan, with Prince Niall the focus between the two. Shelf-filler fantasy. (Andy Sawyer)

Fred Saberhagen - - WOUNDHEALER'S STORY (Orbit, 1988, 281pp, £3.50)

Beginning of the follow-up to the 'Swords' series; a fantasy saga following the destinies of interestingly symbolic blades. It is, however, inferior to the author's better-known SF such as the 'Berserker' novels. (Andy Sawyer)

Susan Schwartz - - ARABESQUES (Pan, 1988, 324pp, £3.99)

UK edition of the excellent 'Arabian Nights' anthology, featuring top fantasy writers, the US Avon Books edition of which was reviewed in P1 74 and Vector 146. (Andy Sawyer)

James Silke - - DEATH DEALER *1: PRISONER OF THE HORNED HELMET (Grafton, 1988, 303pp, £2.99)

Howardian sword-and-sorcery based upon the Frank Frazetta illustrations which adorn the cover. (Andy Sawyer)

SULLIVAN, T. (ed.) - - TROPICAL CHILLS (Avon, 1988, 258pp, £3.95)

14 tales of horror with a tropical setting, with good stories from Brian Aldiss, Ian Watson, and Gene Wolfe, among other top writers. However the failure of many 'theme' anthologies is to keep the theme in the background rather than exploring it, and here the linking 'angle' is perhaps too amorphous to make you appreciate the book as a whole. (Andy Sawyer)

Sheri S. Tepper - - JINIAN STAR-EYE (Corgi, 1988, 239pp, £2.99)

Where they haven't purely ripped them off, many fantasies have commented on the gaming craze by incorporating its conventions as part of their backgrounds (usually by having gamers enter a world where their creations are real). Tepper's 'True Game' books, of which this conclusion to the 'Jinian' trilogy is one, make this comment arise naturally out of an unusual science-fantasy world. Enjoyable, despite some mechanical plotting. (Andy Sawyer)

J.R.R. Tolkien - - THE SHAPING OF MIDDLE-EARTH (Unwin, 1988, 380pp, £4.95)

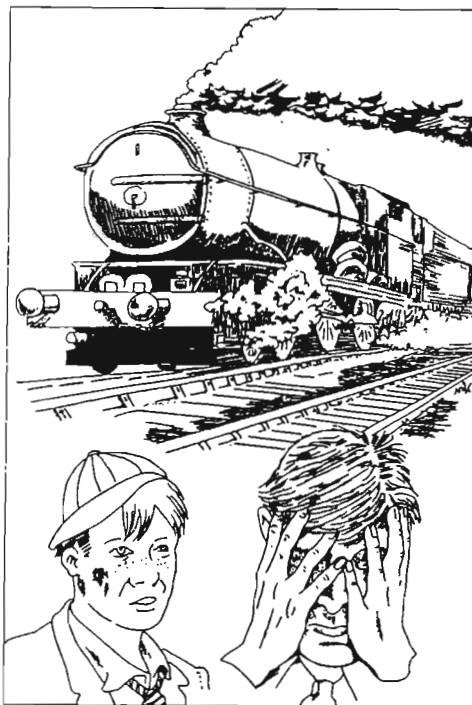
The 'History of Middle-Earth' (this is the fourth volume) must be one of the most comprehensive examples of how a work of fiction comes into being. Here we have the earliest sketches of THE SILMARILLION, the 'Ambarkanta', a draft detailing the cosmology of Tolkien's world, and various chronological 'Annals', including translations into Anglo-Saxon. As always, Christopher Tolkien has charted the variant texts and their relationships with each other and the 'official', published worlds of THE SILMARILLION and LOTR. I shudder to think of the tedious academic theses this revival of incomplete draftings might spawn; at the same time I do find the exercise fascinating both as a literary/scholarly endeavour and in its biographical implications. (Andy Sawyer)

Angus Wells - - WRATH OF ASHAR (Sphere, 1988, 360pp, £3.99)

First in another epic fantasy trilogy involving a supernaturally-spawned warrior-leader and the young champion whose coming is foretold. One more book recommended for avid readers of the genre but which won't keep others going for more than a few chapters. (Andy Sawyer)

Paul Edwin Zimmer & Jon DeCles - - BLOOD OF THE COLYN MUIR (Avon, 1988, 245pp, £3.50)

Yet another heroic fantasy involving a magic sword. (Andy Sawyer)



"Upon the rack in print"

INTERZONE 27 (Jan./Feb. 1989)

(Reviewed by Andy Mills)

IZ 27 has a well above average crop of fiction, a delightful mixture of styles and moods. In 'Tommy Atkins' barrington J. Bailey asks what would happen if the First world War were not to end and if the patriotic/jingoistic attitudes which prevailed in 1914 were to persist through a state of permanent war. Depressing and chilling, with more than a nod towards 1984, this mood is offset by humorous pieces by Bob Shaw ('To the Letter') and John Brosnan ('An Eye in Paradise'). Brosnan's is rather slight, if still entertaining, but Shaw gives us a highly amusing and traditional pact-with-the-devil tale. On the evidence of 'Driving Through Korea' Ian Lee may well be a name to look out for. Lee uses difficult techniques with seeming ease, telling - with a strong authorial voice - an alien-in-disguise story which maintains tension without feeling menacing. Stories which deal with dreams, I find, often don't work for the reader. Not so with 'Before I Wake' by Kim Stanley Robinson, which does succeed in describing a state where dreaming and wakefulness are indistinguishable. The final fiction offering is 'Soft Clocks' by Yoshio Aramaki. A passing acquaintance with the works of Salvador Dali would help in appreciating this interesting, surreal story. Unfortunately, the non-fiction this issue suffers with comparison to the fiction. Ballard's ten best SF films gives potted descriptions of the same (nothing new here) while the profile of Brian Stableford isn't; instead, it's a review of his fiction, particularly THE EMPIRE OF FEAR. Pity - I would have liked to have learned more about the man himself. There's an interview with Kathy Acker (of whom I have never heard, I'm afraid to say) and an article by Charles Platt goes to extremes in declaring fantasy to be dangerous escapism. But the fiction does make this a most promising start to '89 for INTERZONE.

CONTACT

GOLLANZ CLASSICS - AFTERWORD BY KEN LAKE

I'm grateful to Malcolm Edwards for his comments, though to be fair I did telephone his office four times, and the home address I contacted is the one given me by his office. If they don't pass on messages or update personal data, this is hardly my fault - especially as the lady to whom I spoke at the private address clearly told me 'He left here half an hour ago.'

The interesting parts of Malcolm's comments are the gaps - where he makes no comment at all. Basically he doesn't attempt to explain the gross imbalance of authors so far, the use of sheer bad cover artwork when so much that is good is readily available, and such stupidities as not bothering to read inappropriate notes carried forward from earlier editions, and amend them to make sense.

I express no thanks to Chris Bailey for his views, and I imagine Malcolm Edwards will find them little more welcome than I do, since they can be summarised as 'fans are stupid, they don't expect good print or good artwork, they're grateful for anything you throw to them so forget about profit and taste and just chuck slop in their direction - anything as long as it's cheap.' As for Chris' 'anal fixation' crack - aren't we all getting pretty tired of this pseudoanalytical jargon?

I agree with Editor Andy Sawyer and with Malcolm Edwards: profit does matter - without it, Gollanz would be a couple of fen producing crudzines on a Gestetner. And I do believe that most publishers employ mostly people without any concept of the art of good publishing, which allies profitability with care, common sense, and good taste. I do regret the passing of the style of the first 20 classics - but I regret much more the sheer sloppiness that has produced the following VGSF volumes.

Come on, now, Malcolm: as I said before, you can do better! And we deserve it.

ANALOG, MID-DECEMBER 1988, and ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE, DECEMBER 1988 to FEBRUARY 1989

Reviewed by Edward James

Only one ANALOG to review this time, and four ASIMOV'S's: such are the vagaries of the postal system. The Mid-December ANALOG, 1988's thirteenth issue, was on the whole fairly light-hearted and somewhat light-weight, but a reasonable accompaniment to the Christmas pud. It led with "Guz's Place", by Timothy Perper and Martha Cornog — a rarity, a story about that most literarily underrated human activity: eating. And also, in good ANALOG tradition, a detective, court-case story of sorts, with more than a tang of Simak. Who is the chef in the new restaurant in a small American town? Where do his (her?) exotic sauce bottles with the strange writing on them come from? Noone who has spent more than a year reading sf will have difficulty guessing, but it's neatly done. Also concerned with eating was Stephen L. Burns's "Pleased to Meat You", in which an unlikely couple manage to sell a new artificially created meat (flavoured of what?) to a large company. Added to these main dishes was an appetizer from Charles Sheffield called "Space Opera" (if you are going to stage an opera involving the Charge of the Light brigade, don't do it in freefall); and Kevin Robinson's story about trolls in urban America. The only bitter taste came from W.T.Quick, in "Social Contract", an effective story set in a future fragmented government-less United States, in which social justice has to be maintained by somewhat dubious means. All in all a good issue by ANALOG's standards, but still nothing like the high quality of recent ASIMOV'S.

In December ASIMOV'S led with Michael Swanwick's "A Midwinter's Tale", a haunting tale-within-a-tale involving the complex relationship between human colonists and the wolf-like sapient aliens of the colony planet. Equally haunting, in a very different way, was Cherry Wilder's excellent "The House on Cemetery Street". Set in Germany in the post-war period, the characters are not only haunted by the memories of the past, but also by its revenants: a sophisticated, chilling ghost story, but also a skillful evocation of a vanished almost alien world. Orson Scott Card writes the only story set in his alternate nineteenth-century America that I have found readable — and, in this case, very readable: I must go back and try the others again. "Dowser" tells of Alvin in his youth, apprenticed to an unsympathetic smith, who uses his psychic powers to score one over the local water-diviner: an object lesson in how to

provide a fairly simple tale with resonances and ideas that move the reader. (Sometimes I find Card's ability to manipulate the reader's — this reader's — emotions really rather disturbing.) Finally, also worth mentioning, a well-researched story about San Francisco's next big earthquake, Lisa Mason's "Deus Ex Machina", and R.V.Branham's moving story of a near-future bag-lady, "Lady with Teddy Bear".

The Mid-December ASIMOV'S — a full issue, with four novelettes, five shorts and an excellent article by Norman Spinrad on "The Graphic Novel" — brought us the inevitable Christmas story: a lighthearted but good Asimov called "Christmas without Rodney", with the usual Asimovian unpleasant children and gentlerpersonly robots. Kim Stanley Robinson, in the novelette "The Lunatics", shows us that even when he takes a fairly lunatic plot that would not have been out of place in a '30s magazine (dwarf-like slave miners forced to work the mines of the Moon for the benefit of the Earth, and turning to revolt), he can bring magic and mystery and, even, suspension of disbelief. The latter was never quite achieved for me in the hectic story by newcomer Kathe Koja, "Distances", in which cyberpunk meets NASA; lots of fire and imagination but, for me, little import. But Harlan Ellison's novelette "The Function of Dream Sleep" was a very powerful story, about coping with the death of friends (see Ellison's Angry Candy volume for how close to home this is). Who can resist reading on when a story begins "McGrath awoke suddenly, just in time to see s huge mouth filled with small, sharp teeth closing in his side"? Dreams play a central role in another disturbing novelette, "Lizaveta", by

Gregory Frost, a dark story set in Moscow's pre-Red Red Light District, beginning in drink, and ending in pogrom. It is a relief that there is some good, lightweight fiction in this issue too, notably Avram Davidson's "One Morning with Samuel, Dorothy and William", in which the exciseman bursts into Dove Cottage to bust Samuel for possession of opium. But clearly the most interesting of the short stories was Ian Watson's "Joan's World" — also with its arresting opening line: "On my fourteenth birthday my parents gave me the planet Earth as a present. They couldn't afford a regular gift." No, noy an implausible space opera, as one might expect from that, but a magical story in which make-believe becomes real, and Joan becomes the centre of a powerful cult. All in all, an excellent issue, well worth buying.

The January ASIMOV'S has Steven Popkes's novella "The Egg" as the cover story. A young boy and a large gentle alien investigate together the meanings of love, and family; not over-sentimental, and effectively told. Liked the aliens, too. "The Ring of Memory" was another of Alexander Jablovkov's entertaining and fairly cliché-free time-travel stories (like "Many Mansions", back in May), as we follow Hugh Solomon, s Full Historian from Time Center, as he zips between 1349 CE, 2097, 1902, 1930 and 949. Megan Lindholm's "Silver Lady and the Fortish Man" looks wryly at the appearance of a wizard in the life of a bored sales-assistant "in a Sears in a sub-standard suburban mall". Quite fun, and all so authentic sounding that one wonders whether this evolved from a fantasy Ms Lindholm had while working as a bored sales-person in... The shorts this issue include a hard-boiled Martian exploration story from Gregory Benford; "Iridescence", a nicely written and imaginative story by Dean Whitlock of a human's involvement in incomprehensible inter-alien conflict; and "Departures", by Harry Turtledove, in which we go back to the Jonbar point in his alternate Byzantine history series, to see how a wandering Arab merchant in the early seventh century, called Mouamet, becomes a Christian monk and holy man (rather than the founder of Islam). Yes, it could have happened, and the sf field's only professional Byzantine historian tells us how.

And finally, just through the post two days ago, the February issue. The first story is one of the longest novellas published in ASIMOV'S, and one that will live long in the memory: Judith Moffett's "Tiny Tango". The first sf story I have seen to deal openly, and with the same disturbing honesty and clarity that can be found in Moffett's novel PENNTERRA, with the problem of what is in store for sufferers of AIDS in an early twenty-first century that still has not found the cure. There's rather too much else crammed in the margins or good measure — a nuclear disaster and the arrival of aliens — but it is still a very impressive story. Watch out for anything else she writes. Charles Sheffield's "Destroyer of Worlds" was much more contrived, but well contrived. A simple detective case — "find my husband" — turns into the question of finding out what those fanatical space nuts are doing over in the Rockies, which turns, perfectly logically, into saving the world: a time-honoured sfnal pastime, but none the less awesome for that. George Alec Effinger offers "Everything but Honor", the umpteenth sf variant on the ideas of travelling back to the 1860s and changing the course of human (ie. American) history; but it was an interesting twist on the theme, and the sombre ending, if predictable (in hindsight, that is, like most things), was powerfully done. Lisa Mason traces the history of "The Oniomancer", a young street-wise girl (with a surprising streak of believable naivety) with a gift for finding precious things: the ending is delightfully ambiguous. And the whole story very different in tone from her "Deus Ex Machina" (see above): I suspect this newish writer, like Judith Moffett, has a lot to offer us yet. Finally, a couple of good shorts with nasty twists in the tale: Steven Uttley's story of a husband's determination to bring his wife back to health, "My Wife", and a not-implausible tale of a jape on a space station that goes wrong, Allen M. Steele's "Free Beer and the William Casey Society". Another good issue. Can ASIMOV'S, under Gardner Dozois, keep it up through '89?

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