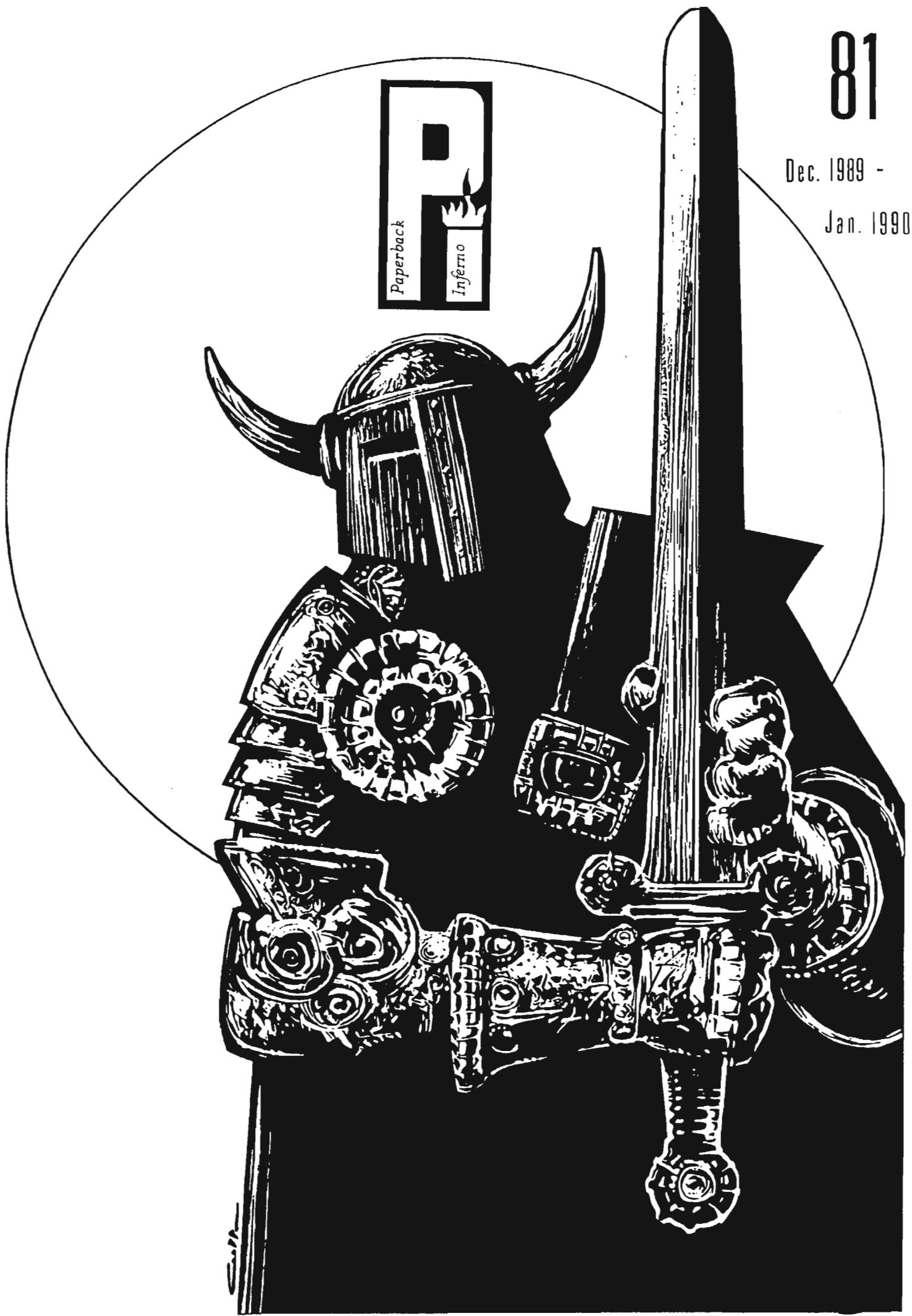


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ARTWORK: Kevin A. Cullen: Cover; p.6  
Colin Davies: PI logo  
Steve Bruce: p.4; p.12

Contributions of cover art and interior art are especially welcome. Please contact the editorial address.

Erratum: Fred Saberhagen's novels are of course about the Berserkers (p.12). Apologies

This magazine could not have been put together without R.E.M. ('Document' and 'Green').

## Paperback Purgatory

Well, it's that time of year again, when the Winter Solstice looms, we all start drawing up lists of presents to give and receive and even the most curmudgeonly of us mutter things about 'peace and goodwill' as we curse the mounting curves of red ink on our bank statements. Given that the last two 'Purgatories' have stomped, and stomped pretty heavily, it behoves us now to tread softly and daintily among the flowers of literature before us - even (whisper it!) to scatter praise. As seems to have become a custom, we may even glance with approval at a recent hardback or two, in case you're feeling particularly generous towards your loved ones.

Twice recently I've received copies of books compared to WAR AND PEACE. Locust described Tad Williams' THE DRAGONBONE CHAIR (Legend, 1989, 654pp, £14.95) as 'the fantasy equivalent of WAR AND PEACE', while David Wingrove's CHUNG KUO series will, when complete, be 'four times the length of WAR AND PEACE' (accompanying publicity). Such comparison is a bit unfair to books and authors, I'd say. Both THE DRAGONBONE CHAIR and the first volume of CHUNG KUO (THE MIDDLE KINGDOM) (NEL, 1989, 501pp, £7.95 trade paperback, £13.95 hardback) have flaws which make comparison with Tolstoy ludicrous - both books are tangential to Paperback Inferno's primary concern so bear with me if this isn't a proper no-holds-barred, tear-it-to-shreds review - even though they're both books which

make me impatient for the next volume. I mention THE DRAGONBONE CHAIR, despite the hardness of its covers, because I have spent much time and paper over the past few months condemning the Fantasy Trilogy and now find myself turning the pages of one out of enthusiasm rather than duty.

Williams has supplied his readers with maps. He has a youthful hero called Simon (rule 1: give your heroes slightly wet English names so readers can identify . . .). He has an elvish race and a halfling race and names and languages based on (but subtly different from) languages spoken on this earth. There are magic bloody SWORDS! Yet what leaps off the page is something far beyond this apparent LAZY WRITERS' GUIDE TO SELLING LOTS OF BOOKS TO GAMERS because Williams has first-rate storytelling gifts and I was gripped by his characters and setting. The way Simon grows during the novel, the vivid detail of the world of Osten Ard, the diminutive ice-troll Binabik and the eldritch Sithi - I can't see that any of this is new, but it is masterfully carried out. Unlike most of his companions in the game, Tad Williams has developed the virtues of pace and rhythm as well as invention. This is a traditional 'damn good yarn' - and welcome.

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM is available in trade paperback, which makes it technically proper for me to discuss it even though you will have read about it in Vector. It's a seriously ambitious work which attempts to describe the complicated social patterns of an Earth two centuries hence dominated by the Chinese. How far this succeeds is a matter of question. I couldn't help feeling that there is much of

the 18th-19th Century China (viewed through Western eyes) in the book: I recognise little of the (very unrepresentative, I'm sure) modern China I have seen from living in Hong Kong and meeting Chinese immigrants in the UK. This is not to say Wingrove's wrong - there is one episode in the book I dismissed as wholly incredible only to see the present Chinese government try (possibly successfully) something similar after the Tian'anmen Square massacre. I didn't get the same feel of a society superficially stable but shivering under a thousand precursors of dramatic change as I do from WAR AND PEACE: except for one or two moments usually involving the Clay - that level below the lowest level of the omnipresent City, where outcasts and descendants of outcasts live debased lives in the wreckage of an advanced society - where the 'future history' suddenly becomes extrapolation. Parts of THE MIDDLE KINGDOM are introductory to more dramatic moments in future volumes: parts are conventional SF: parts are chilling and real.

But what about WAR AND PEACE? Well, bear in mind that it's not these authors who have hinted at comparisons. But the use of Tolstoy's novel as a touchstone by publicity people or reviewers did get me thinking about the nature of what we might call 'literary genius' in our field. It's not often that real ecstasy appears as a response to any sort of book, but one in our field about which a comparison to WAR AND PEACE might not come amiss is Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast trilogy (TITUS GROAN, GORMENGHAST and TITUS ALONE) recently reprinted by Mandarin (506pp, £3.99: 511pp, £3.99: 263pp, £3.50).

This is one of those few books you can use the word 'unique' about. It's English literature at one of its peaks: 'English' in its concern with class, ritual, fear of change and nonsense - especially gloriously nonsense; that melancholy nonsense which goes deeper than the apparently rational. It has about as much relationship to genre fantasy or SF as does WAR AND PEACE to a Barbara Cartland novel. It's comic, grotesque, melodramatic and tragic: on the one level filled with cartoon characters like Doctor Prunesquallor and his eternal old-maid sister Irma, on another full of real flesh-and-blood people like - well, like the Doctor and his sister. There are no doubt allegorical elements in the struggle between the forces of eternal conservatism and decay (the Castle and its Family and servants) and the forces of change, lust for power and ambition (the brilliant, amoral Steerpike) but between these poles stands Titus, 77th Earl, with his struggle against the murderously manipulative Steerpike and his haunting by the idea of 'this other kind of world which was able to exist without Gormenghast'.

In TITUS ALONE, a darker vision accumulates. The comic grotesqueness of the earlier books becomes anguished nihilism as we see Titus lost in that 'other world' partly similar (with its exaggerated characters) to his own, partly a technological 'advanced' world in which Steerpike may have been happy but in which the timeless ritual of a Gormenghast is meaningless.

Put this on your present list. I'd call it a classic, if I wasn't afraid of frightening you off. It's a pity, though, that more emphasis hasn't been given to Peake's illustrations and that some editorial hand hasn't settled the question of Prunesquallor's first name ('Bernard' TG pp 462-476, otherwise 'Alfred').

But Peake is a writer of the '40s and '50s. What is there today which suggests that imaginative literature is alive and well? The investigative reader naturally turns to a 'Best Of . . . ' anthology.

The third Gardner Dozois anthology (BEST NEW SF 3) (Robinson, 1989, 596pp, £6.99) runs to 28 stories, including two from Brian Stableford, which span a considerable range. I only discovered Howard Waldrop this year, and

his 'Do Ya, Do Ya Wanna Dance', about a High School Reunion hop and rock'n'roll which really does change the world, is typical - for this man, the word 'quirky' was invented. More rock references in Lewis Shiner's 'Love In Vain' - to, subliminally, the Rolling Stones' Let It Bleed album on which that song appears. The story focuses on exactly that frightening obsession with sex and death as does the record. A serial killer provides one of the key images, but Robert Johnson's chilling blues, and the last line as the narrator's friend lusts after a female rock guitarist on TV, provide others. In contrast, humour - if of the sardonic rather than belly-laugh variety - comes from Ellen Gunn's 'Stable Strategies For Middle Management' and Kim Newman's 'Famous Monsters' (from Interzone 23).

Steven Gould's high-rise quest 'Peaches For Mad Molly' is also in David Garnett's ORBIT SCIENCE FICTION YEARBOOK which, as someone else is reviewing it - I'll only mention to say that an almost entirely different selection has come up with an equally strong anthology. Perhaps that's the point. It's a veritable cliché that the short story is alive and well and living in the SF ghetto. It's an equally hoary one that SF's strengths lie in the shorter form rather than in the novel, and turning back to the Dozois, we have Walter Jon Williams' 'Surfacing', an exploration of inter-species communication on an alien world which I enjoyed more than any of his novels, and Brian Stableford's 'The Man Who Loved The Vampire Lady', which stands complete even though it is now the first part of his novel THE EMPIRE OF FEAR.

The fact that I haven't yet mentioned Lucius Shepard, Robert Silverberg, Michael Swanwick and Connie Willis, for example, suggests more about the space I have remaining than any idea that their stories are not worth mentioning - but I will squeeze in a final remark about Harry Turtledove's 'The Last Article' - an allohistorical look at the Nazi conquest of India and the non-violent resistance to the new Imperial masters led by Mahatma Gandhi. Ask yourself - what do you really think would have happened?

Give this to someone who wants to know what SF is all about in the 1980s. Then buy a copy for yourself.

Then buy a copy of Mary Gentle's new collection SCHOLARS AND SOLDIERS (Macdonald, 1989, 192pp, £11.95) if you want to know what SF will be all about in the '90s. The two new long stories - 'Beggars In Velvet' and 'The Knot Garden' - look to 17th-century hermeticism for a vision which is tough and inventive. Anyone who cites LOVE AND ROCKETS and Ben Jonson in her acknowledgements must be essential reading.

And finally - if you're still looking for presents - there's always the Tolkien Calendar for 1990. A Tolkien Calendar is almost as much an institution as a volume of his SILMARILLION drafts and this time a Canadian artist has provided the pictures. I tend to prefer Tolkien's own illustrations - however sketchy - to those of other interpreters: nevertheless, Naismith has done a creditable job. (Published by Unwin, £6.95.)

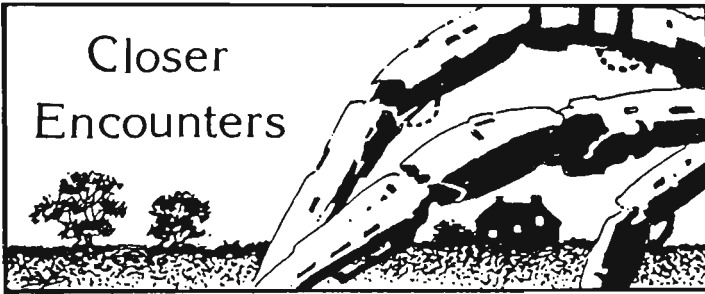
All interesting stuff, worth investigating, I promise. I'd buy you the lot if I could afford it. As I can't - well, season's greetings, and see you next year.

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STOP PRESS 1

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Arriving too late for review this issue (but see PI 82) was FANTASY TALES 3 (99p or £4 for 4 issues from Robinson Publishing, 11 Shepherd House, Shepherd St.; London W1Y7LD) containing an excellent heroic fantasy tale from Ramsey Campbell; yes, I said "heroic fantasy".



## Closer Encounters

Brian W. Aldiss - - - - - CRACKEN AT CRITICAL:  
A NOVEL IN THREE ACTS  
(NEL, 1989, 200pp, £2.99)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

CRACKEN AT CRITICAL (Kerosina, 1987) has been published in the USA (Franklin Watts, 1987; St Martin's Press, 1988) under the more meaningful(?) /meaningless(?) title of THE YEAR BEFORE YESTERDAY. Aldiss has constructed this 'novel in three acts' by intermingling two substantially rewritten Maybe-Myths (in which '... many unlikely things are supposed to have happened in the past or the future', pp. 12-13), from his literary boyhood, with an irritatingly good-bad frame story.

'The Mannerheim Symphony' (frame story) operates in a convincingly tacky world of if, where Churchill was assassinated before the Second World War (during a visit to Finland), the Nazis won... you-know-what, and the Scandinavian countries maintain good-ish relations with Germany, playing off the neo-Huns against those rascally Slavs. A Finnish Composer With No Name finds a murdered girl, Carol-Ann Crutchley Cracken, lying outside his house, and - while waiting for the police to arrive - he reads one of the two paperbacks she'd kept in her knapsack...

\* \* \*

... which turns out to be 'The Impossible Smile', by Jael Cracken, ... published... in 1995, although the action was set... fifty years before that, in 1945' (p. 13). Cracken is (or was?) a well regarded author of Maybe-Myths, especially in America; his *Cyphers Of The Bulldog Planet* had won him the prestigious Frederik Award (decided upon by a straw Pohl?). Here, however, 'The Impossible Smile' appeared in *Science Fantasy*, May-June 1965, as by 'Jael Cracken' = Brian W. Aldiss.

TIS bears a passable resemblance to the Nazis-rule-so-tough-tittie frame story, except for the mid-tech British Republics Sector moon base and the wunderkind British Radiotronic Computer (Berk!) - set in an alternative 1949(!!!). A vein of necessary-to-the-plot sadism runs through this technoporn nightmare; the hero, Wyvern, suffers more traumas than Brak the Barbarian on a bad day. All things considered, then, TIS reads like a collaboration between Eric Frank Russell, George Orwell, and William Gibson.

Doubleplusgood.

\* \* \*

'The Mannerheim Symphony (II)' introduces us to Mr X's buxom wife, Sinnakka, who sees fit to enact a Lady Macbeth-type nude scene in front of Captain Hakkennon, the policeman who is (for reasons best known to Aldiss and, possibly, Dr Anthony Clare) possessed by the spirits of a reindeer. *Harumph*. At the local nick, our composer-turned-murder-suspect reads the second Maybe-Myth...

\* \* \*

... *Equator*, also(?) by Jael Cracken ('An egregious novel of exile - Harry Harrison', claims the putative blurb). *EQUATOR* was Aldiss' first sf novel (*New Worlds*, September-October 1958), published by Ace books in 1959 under the less literary but more

descriptive title, *VANGUARD FROM ALPHA*.

The ~~Nazis~~ Rosks are immigrants from Alpha Centauri: '... vaguely Malayan-looking humanoids, who by threats and diplomacy have managed to get themselves allotted a district in Sumatra, and another on the Moon...' (Damon Knight, *IN SEARCH OF WONDER*, pp.242-4). Perhaps E/VFA 'inspired' *Alien Nation*? Anyway... Knight, after picking out E/VFA's many faults, came to this prophetic conclusion: 'If [Aldiss] ever does a novel with his right hand, it will be something worth waiting for' (p. 244).

\* \* \*

CRACKEN AT CRITICAL is almost, but not quite, one of Aldiss' 'right-handed' novels; nor is it really a novel, despite the often inspired tinkering. The rewritten TIS and E/VFA are each, in their own cockeyed ways, 'sense of wonder' sf at its very best; especially TIS, which deserves to be better known. 'The Mannerheim Symphony' starts off well enough, as a mildly interesting who-dunnit, but eventually bogs down in philosophical maunderings. (I'd actually written 'pseudo-philosophical maunderings', but the reindeer-Moon-sexual pleasure bit in TMS(III) made me marvel at BWA's ingenuity and/or cheek).

Despite the subtitle, CRACKEN AT CRITICAL has no effective 'third act'; it just goes through the motions of providing a somnambulist denouement, like some awful murder-most-foul play in a 'Charles Paris' novel (by Simon Brett, if you haven't already had the pleasure). But, to me, it's an intriguing *jeu d'esprit* on the evergreen alternative worlds theme (I prefer not to use that nonsensical Americanism, alternate worlds), while simultaneously proving that Aldiss has been a fine writer since, well, the year before yesterday.

(Query. The dedication reads: '... to the spirit of Hugo Gernsback'. Considering the Maybe-Myths involved, shouldn't this honour have gone to John Carnell, that quint-essentially British editor of *New Worlds*, *Science Fantasy*, and *Science Fiction Adventures*?)

Ursula K. Le Guin - - - - - THE LANGUAGE OF NIGHT  
(Women's Press, 1989, 210pp, £5.95)

(Reviewed by K.V. Bailey)

This is the first British appearance of a collection of essays, Introductions and speeches, all but one written in the '70s. It is ten years since its US publication. Over the decade Ursula Le Guin's feminism has defined itself more firmly, and in this new edition she has made a number of revisions, gender-grammatical and other, with preliminary and foot-noted indications. There is a 1989 Le Guin Preface in which she trenchantly criticises those literary arbiters whom she dubs 'Canoneers' - but also has a go at the ghetto-happy.

Susan Wood who edited the collection made the good decision to arrange the essays thematically rather than chronologically, thus grouping separately the psychologically oriented and critical essays (particularly interesting for insights into those archetypes common to fantasy and sf); Le Guin's Introductions to her own writings and tributes to those of others; and a number of summarising, and often polemical, occasional pieces and speeches. The editorial Introductions to each of the five groupings are useful bibliographically, and invaluable historically and interpretatively. As pointed out in the General Introduction, many essays do naturally overlap and complement one another.

Twenty-three such essays cannot fail to produce some repetition. Does one weary of reiterated views? Does the recurrence of passionate argument diminish its force? The

answers in this case are, not really: because passion here always has reason for its ally; because Le Guin's stylistic sensitivity to readerships and audiences comes across so engagingly; and because the issues on which she touches are still vigorously alive. Moreover her glosses and revisions are spurs to further thought, particularly in the area of inter-relationships between feminism, politics, and science fiction; and in that defined by her assessment of the function of science fiction in what she terms 'the open universe'. It is a collection that is essential - and enjoyable - reading for all admirers - and critics - of Le Guin; and for all (perhaps by definition the same all) for whom the nature and potential of sf are of importance.

Orson Scott Card - - - - - SEVENTH SON  
(Legend, 1989, 316pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

SEVENTH SON (Tor, 1987) is the first instalment of a six-volume serial entitled The Tales Of Alvin Maker, concerning - to state the obvious - the seventh son of a seventh son. But nothing else is obvious about this masterly evocation of an alternative-history North America, set in the early nineteenth century. It's a place where '... Tom Jefferson's White rebels [are fighting] to keep their country independent from the King and the Cavaliers' (p. 112), and folk magic works, arguably because of critical mass: '... everybody who had any gifts for the hidden arts got shipped off to the American colonies' (p. 119).

Alvin Miller (the boy's family name) carries self-preservation to the nth degree; see, especially, the chapters headed 'Ridge-beam', 'Millstone', and 'Surgery'). He is also a Maker, as the character named Taleswapper explains: '... you aren't at peace until you put something together' (p.172). And, as Taleswapper goes on to point out, he's a mostly unwitting combatant in '... the great war between the Unmaker and everything else' (p. 174). And - it is suggested that Alvin will become a psychic 'Johnny Applesseed', spreading Good and/or Evil (nothing is obvious - remember?) across the entire continent.

But SEVENTH SON is far from being a one-character novel. Apart from Alvin Miller/Maker, there are the other members of his family (each one neatly delineated), the above-mentioned Taleswapper, the Reverend Philadelphia Thrower (who does the Right Things for the Wrong Reasons - or is it vice versa?), and Armor-of-God Weaver (a well-meaning man driven to spiteful actions by all-too-human pique). Above all, the Visitor and the Shining One; they might - or might not - be one and the same person/thing. No one is obvious.

Somebody on the *Chicago Sun-Times* hailed SEVENTH SON as 'The most important work of American fantasy since Stephen Donaldson's Thomas Covenant trilogy', which - at one fell swoop - overpraises Donaldson and does Card a grave injustice. Faren Miller (in *Locus*, May 1987) has been much more perceptive: '[Card] achieves the near-miracle of bringing something new to fantasy'. I don't usually like trilogies, and this goes double for double trilogies, a la D-----n, but I'm looking forward to RED PROPHET (Tor, 1988), the next Tale Of Alvin Maker. And, probably, the one after that, and the one...

Scott Bradfield - - -THE SECRET LIFE OF HOUSES  
(Unwin Hyman, 1989, 166pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Alan Fraser)

Scott Bradfield is an American who was born

and raised in California, but now lives and writes in London. This book is a collection of stories written between 1983 and 1988, several of which appeared first in *Interzone*.

Bradfield writes stories set in modern California with an exile's detachment, just as Joyce needed distance from Dublin to create *Bloodsday*. He takes us into the minds of people who find it difficult to live easily in a society where the names of everything have Capital Letters, and where everyone else goes to Self-Actualization Workshops to find fulfilment. Just as James P. Blaylock shows the physical underside of modern Los Angeles, namely the sewer system, in *THE DIGGING LEVIATHAN*, Bradfield shows us the spiritual underside of the city through the minds of his characters.

Bradfield's characters find Southern California a rootless, materialistic place, and much of what happens to them stems from this desire to find roots in a society where nearly everyone is an immigrant in one way or another. In 'The Dream Of The Wolf', a new slant on the werewolf myth, Larry Chambers dreams of being an Alaskan tundra wolf night after night until the dreams become more real than his daytime life. In 'Unmistakably The Finest', lonely Sandra Mitchelson joins the Worldwide Church of Prosperity, knowing she can buy guaranteed happiness there. Dolores Starr in 'The Darling' lives a normal life apart from a tendency to murder people now and then, but she appears to end up living happily ever after by marrying her prison psychologist.

Although much of what Bradfield writes cannot be called SF in the strictest terms, his work will be of interest to PI readers because of the surreal elements in his stories, and the way in which he uses SF and fantasy elements within the imaginations of his characters. Anyway, how can anyone not enjoy a writer who uses Ken Dodd's favourite word 'discombobulated' seriously in the first paragraph of a story? ('The Flash! Kid'.)

James Morrow - -THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS  
(Legend, 1989, 319pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by John Newsinger)

James Morrow's acclaimed end-of-the-world novel, a story told by Nostradamus and illustrated by Da Vinci, is very much a tract for our times. A gullible population is sold the scopas suit as a sure way of surviving nuclear war, and George Paxton, tombstone-engraver and Unitarian, is desperate to get one for his young daughter. He eventually succeeds, but only on condition that he acknowledges his personal complicity in the arms race. On his way home, the world is destroyed by a nuclear exchange. Poor George survives only to find himself put on trial, on trial before the unborn generations for the crime that has prevented their existence. His fellow defendants are the men actually responsible for US defence policy; George carries the guilt of all those ordinary people who did nothing to try and stop their madness.

THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS is a tremendous novel, a horrifying satirical fairy story, written with great wit, imagination and controlled outrage. Morrow effectively and uncompromisingly portrays the horrors of nuclear war and then chronicles the extinction of all life in its aftermath. This is done by means of a succession of images of great power: 'The third degree burn victims lay on their sides, backs, and stomachs, quivering piles of excruciation, daring not to move, naked beyond flesh. A cyclone made of screams moved across the land...'

The trial, however, is not presented as a foregone conclusion. Both the defence and the prosecution present their case. The argument is put forward that nuclear weapons have

prevented war, that nuclear deterrence works. Inevitably, and quite correctly, the conclusion is that the arms race is a nuclear war waiting to happen, that humanity is playing Russian roulette but with missiles instead of bullets. The prosecution case is in

the end irresistible as it indicts a 'world where peril is called security, destruction is called strategy, offense is called defence, enlightened self-interest is called appeasement, and machines of chaos and ecological horror are called weapons'.



# R E V I E W S

James P. Blaylock - - - - - LAND OF DREAMS  
(Grafton, 1989, 264pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by K.V. Bailey)

Mrs Langley is a sort of ghost to be encountered in the attic of a small orphanage populated by two good children and one bad one, all ruled over by the abominable Miss Flees. Another orphan, Jack, fostered elsewhere, is one of the good gang. The 'quest' is for (or of?) Jack's supposedly dead father and murdered mother whose precise bio-psychic status is always anomalous and whose appearances are tied in with the processes of 'going across' between serial worlds which, Mrs Langley reveals, 'are moving along in a time not ours'. This 'going across' seems to be accomplishable at every twelve year 'Solstice' - something vaguely defined, but marked by phenomena of giantism, dwarfism, monstrosity etc. The setting is a small coastal town in California and a visiting carnival (=fair) which, its rides and fun-houses themselves of anomalous temporal status, provides often violent access to past and future - to the 'land of dreams' - a dimension remaining somewhat chimerical to the end, though the reality and durability of human memories and affections are finally affirmed.

A complex book. Apparently inconsequential incidents pile up knockabout-wise to the point of imaginative overload. They wear you out. I account this a weakness: though the relentless and chaotic succession is tempered by Blaylock's skill in interfusing experience of a captivating environment - 'the smell of tar and salt spray and drying kelp'. His Jonathan Bing novels, entertainments less sophisticated than this one, create a more satisfying secondary world (however California-tinted) of fantasy, possessing a self-consistent ecology in which elves and trolls find acceptable place. In the primary this-world landscape of LAND OF DREAMS events are grotesquely at sixes and sevens. Nevertheless, if you can hold on to Mrs Langley's metaphysic of thousands of time-spaced worlds in one, you are well prepared for anything to happen - and it will.

Anita Mason - - - - - THE WAR AGAINST CHAOS  
(Abacus, 1988, 252pp, £4.50)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

THE WAR AGAINST CHAOS is fought in a world that many people will find familiar. It may be that some people will find that they have

always lived there, vicariously if not really. Those readers will find this story of an unhappy man, working for a monolithic company which also rules the country, who is driven to rebel and is helped by the inhabitants of a subterranean resistance, something they recognise in their own life. Some will think of it as the reality they know, others will think of it as an allegory of life.

I think the problem facing a mainstream novelist who wants to approach a subject like this is that he or she doesn't have enough knowledge of SF and hence does not know what has already been written. (Maureen Duffy's GOR SAGA, turned into First Born on tv, is another example.) John Hare, the hero of WAR, is in a position no different to Winston Smith - a man separated from his wife, living in grotty digs, and driven to rebel by the truth he learns at work. And the whole of this novel is set against the same background of decay as NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR. And a lot else of John Hare's world has already been written about. The first paragraph takes you straight into The Horribles and later on you might think you were reading a novelisation of the film Brazil.

It is the revelation of the last chapters that takes this book out of that world and into another. It is there that the emptiness of this dystopia lies, and the last chapters provide this book with its justification. I never felt that I recognised the significance of the title, though.

Anna Lewins - - - - - DREAM FOR DANGER  
(Magnet, 1989, 140pp, £1.99)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

Iced-up street, bisected by an irregular 'canal', frozen cars like glacier-trapped, mechanical dinosaurs. Tall buildings (offices? apartments?), icicles hanging from balconies and other projections, lightless windows. Three figures (girl, boy, dog) crossing a narrow footbridge, in the middle distance. St Paul's Cathedral on the horizon, dome cracked, entire structure dilapidated. Black birds, vaguely menacing, circling overhead. And, curtaining the deep purple (dawn? dusk?) sky, auroral lights - also 'vaguely menacing'.

Bill Gregory's cover painting is so pertinently detailed that it would put many a Pre-Raphaelite work to shame. The writer herself has stated that this (her first) book was inspired by an image she had of an empty city and a cathedral covered in ice: 'Once

that was in my mind, I wanted to know what could have caused such a thing. I wanted to write a different sort of fantasy adventure, a rather frightening one, making our own world become something weird and wonderful' (publicity material).

However, Anna Lewins has not given this potent image full justice, having opted for an arch, jokey style ('I... wanted to make people laugh') that cancels out her more gritty intention ('I didn't want anything soft...'). Which doesn't stop DREAM FOR DANGER from being a better-than-average juvenile novel, a credit to the better-than-average Magnet line. Most of the funny bits are funny; most of the action bits are... actionful. And adults might well give it a try, especially if Terry Wogan is hosting the Lawley show.

Alan Dean Foster - - - -TO THE VANISHING POINT  
(Sphere, 1989, 310pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Craig Marnock)

I hadn't previously read any of Foster's original work, and his film novelisations gave me little idea of what to expect from this novel. I was pleasantly surprised to discover a fairly enjoyable if undemanding book.

The Sonderberg family, en route to Las Vegas over the desert, pick up a mysterious young woman hitch-hiking to the 'Vanishing Point', and pretty soon strange things start happening to them, like accidental detours to Hell. The woman tells them that the fabric of reality is unravelling, and the Sonderbergs must help her to reach the Spinner at the Vanishing Point, to soothe it with her song.

The result is a colourful and often effective phantasmogoria which makes for entertaining reading. My primary complaint is that it suffers from a certain blandness which robs the novel of the depths it might have had. This is particularly apparent in the mythical element of the story which - despite use of the Navajo mythos - is rather, well, 'un-mythical'. This is most clearly shown by the climax which, although suitably climactic, is also rather ludicrous.

Even if the book is ultimately a shallow one, then it does at least succeed on the level of an effective story.

Gordon R. Dickson - - - - -THE CHANTRY GUILD  
(Sphere, 1989, 428pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Eric Brown)

Despite its length, THE CHANTRY GUILD does not hold up as an individual novel, but as a continuing chunk of the ongoing Dorsai saga. Dickson attempts to acquaint the new reader with the scheme of things with tedious expository lumps of What Has Gone Before, and with characters talking at each other at interminable length. He fails to successfully integrate this background into the main action of the story for the simple reason that there is more background in this book than story. Which is understandable. The background, built up over the course of six books, is impressive. Humanity has evolved into four main types: the exotics, the Dorsai, the Friendlies, and the Others. These latter, led by the evil Bleys Ahrens, are in conflict with the triad. The novel opens with the Earth under threat from Bleys Ahrens' massed forces.

The minimal story involves Hal Wayne's attempts to attain the Creative Universe - a Zen-like cosmic awareness - which, it is suggested, will help lead humanity to some higher state of evolution. The token action sequence on the planet Kultis, which is handled ineptly and with little sense of conviction, as if the author could not care less

about the physical dimension of the story, points up the problems with the book: Dickson seems preoccupied with the future-historical perspectives of his vision to the detriment of plot, drama, tension and characterisation - the standard elements, after all, of the novel.

The book is badly written. The prose is clumsy and repetitive, the pacing slow. The novel overstays its welcome by about two hundred pages. And, at the end of the whole turgid saga, we find we have not arrived at the end. In the grand old tradition of hackwork, Dickson has left room for another multi-hundred page blockbuster.

Dean R. Koontz, Edward Bryant  
& Robert R. McCammon - - - - - NIGHT FEARS  
(Headline, 1989, 308pp, £5.99)

(Reviewed by Craig Marnock)

This is, I think, a re-issue of a horror collection originally published by Dark Harvest, an American small press. While this no doubt explains the Clive Barker introduction and the seven illustrations, the fact that it is being put out by a major publisher does not explain the high price for what is just a standard B-format paperback, and not one of the pseudo-hardback anti-mugger size that have been proliferating recently.

The book itself is a fairly decent little anthology of modern horror, covering a good amount of ground. If there is really only one story that stands out (Bryant's 'The Baku'), then at least none of the others are particularly bad. While some of them do - perhaps inevitably - share common themes, they are all at least competently executed and all enjoyable.

If this was a mass-market paperback at £2.95 or £3.50 then I think I'd probably have given it the thumb-up. At six quid, however, I think you'd really have to be a Barker completist to buy it.

Parke Godwin - - - - -WAITING FOR THE GALACTIC BUS  
(Bantam, 1989, 256pp, £2.99)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

In their books on how to write science fiction Christopher Evans and Brian Stableford warn against writing 'shaggy god' stories - they've all had their ideas used up years ago. Parke Godwin's just had one published.

Missing the spaceship home, two alien superbeings pass the time by advancing the evolution of some hominids on an unknown planet. A few aeons later and the apes have developed into Americans.

The cover then says 'Enter Charity Stovall, the nice young woman from Nowhere, USA, and Roy Stride, the minor league fascist from the Tabernacle of the Born Again Saviour (formerly LaMode Dress Shop). Charity loves Roy, but if they marry they will give birth to a child who spells doom for the human' something. At that point someone's glued a sticker on the back cover that says 'A paperback original'. Unfortunately, this blurb does not seem to match the contents of the book.

Certainly, just after their relationship is consummated, Roy and Charity are whipped off to a heaven/hell/limbo where they learn their true natures but somewhere or other I seem to have missed the detail about the offspring.

WAITING FOR THE GALACTIC BUS is a book in which I found it easy to miss things. Part of it is clearly satire on American redneckism, part of it is Gor, part of it is deep psychology, and the parts don't make a whole. The struggles of an ingenue are really the subject for a light novel. Parke Godwin chose the wrong form for whatever he wanted to say.

Greg Bear - - THE FORGE OF GOD (Legend, 1989, 474pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Chris C. Bailey)

Greg Bear portrays yet another example of the well worn theme dealing with the "end of the world crisis". It is a rather long novel, which is consistent with most of Bear's works of late, although the story itself has a varied and lively plot, which keeps you on your toes and doesn't let your attention waver very far. THE FORGE OF GOD reminds me of Gregory Benford's and William Rotsler's joint disaster novel SHIVA DESCENDING, in that both sets of characters find themselves having to deal with certain extinction if they don't do this or that to try to save themselves. In SHIVA DESCENDING it was a very large meteor that had to be deflected from impacting with Earth, by using a 400 megaton warhead, but in THE FORGE OF GOD we are shown the virtually total destruction of our fair green Earth, for Earth has been the victim of robotic invaders. These invaders have, whilst keeping governments distracted with promises of exotic technology, surreptitiously burrowed far beneath the Earth's crust, in order to plant huge hydrogen bombs along the world's deep ocean ridges. Bear's description of Earth's (poignant) death throes, as the bombs explode, leave absolutely nothing to the imagination. His story telling is second to none in SF and THE FORGE OF GOD certainly deserves to be made a classic.

Grant Naylor - - RED DWARF (Penguin, 1989, 298pp, £3.99)

Michael Williams - - WEASEL'S LUCK (Penguin, 1989, 347pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Andy Sawyer)

By law of averages it had to happen. RED DWARF is the book of the TV series which had rather fewer good jokes in than I remembered but is more amusing than not. Lister and Rimmer - not forgetting the Cat - are good, wildly wacky characters in a gripping situation (despite the fact that the humour really rises out of good old-fashioned stereotypes, and I'm not referring to the fact that the Cat is played as a Black hipster!) The problem is that the situation doesn't really develop and the funniest part of the book is probably the first 70 pages. Rob Grant and Doug Naylor are no serious rivals to Douglas Adams. However, you can't put a Liverpool scally, a keen but clueless hologram of a dead man and an evolved cat three million years in the future in a clapped-out starship without something happening and by current standards of Penguin SF (see PI 79's editorial) this isn't bad at all.

Even the latest 'Dragonlance Heroes' book starts off quite amusingly. Michael Williams has created a good comic figure in the rascal Galen - I see I commended Williams' contribution to KENDER, GULLY DWARVES AND GNOMES in PI73. Krynn remains as boring as ever, but it's good to know someone in the world has the right heroic values - i.e. greed, cowardice and an eye for disruption. Pity Galen reforms in the end, though.

David Eddings - - KING OF THE MURGOS (Corgi, 1989, 444pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Jessica Yates)

Garion and his companions are travelling in search of his baby son, abducted by an evil being known as Zandramas. Their journey revisits several countries we already know from The Belgariad - the underground Ulgo-land, the Roman-style Tolmedran Empire, and

the exotic swamp-land of Nyissa ruled by the serpent-queen Salmisra. Pause for a typical laid-back Eddings-ism:

"...there came from the throne room a sudden shrill scream of horror, dying hideously into a gurgling, strangled squeal. 'I think that the position of Chief Eunuch just became vacant,' Issus observed drily."

The quest proceeds to new territories, to Cthol Murgos, ruled by the King of the Murgos who turns out not to be a baddy after all. Garion decides to help him fight the invasion of Zakath, Emperor of Mallorea. The rest of the company realise too late that Zakath is pursuing them as well.

Looking at previous reviews of The Mallorean (GUARDIANS OF THE WEST, Vector 140; P.I. 69; KING OF THE MURGOS, Vector 144) I feel impelled to defend Eddings against substantial critical attack. He is accused of sexism: I don't agree. The feminine banter noted by the PI reviewer seems to me a surface activity masking deep feelings and these characters also undergo dangerous deeds. Motherly Polgara, in KING OF THE MURGOS, has to fight a sorceress and call up a god to defeat a demon. Velvet-Liselle, in GUARDIANS OF THE WEST, gets herself crucified (without nails, presumably) in order to infiltrate an enemy city, collects the information and escapes by the sewage outlet. Certainly she has her eyes on Silk, but she wouldn't have any chance with him unless she acquitted herself as a professional spy as well as a lover.

As for the accusation of decorous violence: Eddings doesn't usually give us gory details in the style of James Herbert, as befits a writer aiming at a universal audience including young readers; even so, he tells us about war's realities, e.g. the scene where the companions discover a farmstead which has been sacked by raiders who impaled its inhabitants. Garion takes a graphic revenge on the raiders.

The adjectives "brainless", "colourless", "empty and interminable" and "boring" sum up the Vector reviewer's opinion of The Mallorean so far. Personally, I respond with pleasure to Eddings' laconic dialogue and ironical view of fantasy, and (pace the Vector reviewer) his concern for his characters. Eddings' people seem to me essentially modern in their desire for power and love, and it is fascinating to watch them interact in a medieval fantasy world. N.B. The numerous misprints which littered the hardback have been corrected along with the resetting for the mass-market paperback.

Katherine Kerr - - DARKSPELL (Grafton, 1989, 476pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Nik Morton)

This, the second volume in the Deverry series features Nevyn the near-immortal, seemingly forever cursed to search through time for his lost love. The characters from the first book appear again, particularly the brave fighting girl, Jill, daughter of the Silver Dagger and her banished husband Rhodry. There is a danger that the reader may cease to be concerned for the characters - the reincarnations of earlier folk, from 643, 696 or even 773; because we know that whatever happens to them in these past times, their souls will be re-implanted in the characters of the current storyline. Having said that, Kerr manages to avoid these dangers by the sheer force of her storytelling skills.

The plot-lines are involved. Suffice to say that the Lady Gweniver, a sword-wielding disciple of Our Lady of Darkness is at once a powerful and poignant creation. This segment takes place in 773 and involves unrequited love, honour, lust, surprising courage, a tragic battle and suicide: the balance between the dark side of her nature, influenced by the death-threatening Goddess and her white



loving nature is struck just right.

In the current time-frame, the search for the black magician who escaped at the end of the first book continues. Here, we also encounter the unsavoury suborning of a prince, suffering homosexual rape - all the more repugnant perhaps because the events are not graphically described. And of course hovering over them all is the mysterious force, the dweomer, shaping and destroying lives, saving kingdoms and causing tragedies. Heroes in this series don't always triumph; some meet their ends bravely and others ignominiously. This is the stuff of legends, with no precious prose nor flowery writing in sight.

The third book is already available as a large format paperback. It would be prudent to read that as soon as you've finished this one, for Kerr's storytelling is worth the expense.

A.A. Attanasio - - RADIX (Grafton, 1989, 467pp, £4.99)

(Reviewed by Jon Wallace)

RADIX is set in the 34th century, generations after the Earth entered a beam of radiant energy from a distant black hole. This beam, the Line, altered the planet and its people, forever. When the novel opens, we meet Sumner Kagan, a frightened, dangerous adolescent in a squalid, almost cyberpunk city. As the story unfolds we leave this and are shown a variety of fantasy-like worlds and characters as Kagan grows and gradually realises his potential and his destiny. RADIX is a large book, densely written and filled with a blend of science and mysticism which is occasionally an uneasy mix, but one which is usually carefully done and fascinating. This is not an easy read, and not one to suit everyone's taste, but ultimately worth following to its end.

Bob Shaw - - THE WOODEN SPACESHIPS (Orbit, 1989, 294pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Helen McNabb)

One of the problems of books in series - whether they be trilogies, quartets, quintets or umpteentets - is that when they are read with a gap of months, or even years, between volumes the continuity of plot and character is lost (or at any rate attenuated). I enjoyed THE RAGGED ASTRONAUTS, vol. 1 in this trilogy, and remembered the broad outlines of it when I began THE WOODEN SPACESHIPS but the detail had gone. The essential information is in any event repeated in THE WOODEN SPACESHIPS so that it can be read without needing to have read the first book. However, I can't help wishing that I'd read them closer together, and I'll doubtless wish it again when vol. 3 comes out. There is a strong argument for saving up trilogies etc. and reading them consecutively.

As for THE WOODEN SPACESHIPS, it is as inventive and as imaginative as one would expect from Bob Shaw. The refugees from the world Land have arrived and settled sparsely on the new world of Overland. Life seems successful and prosperous until an invasion from Land seems imminent. The novel follows two main plot strands - the major one, with Toller Maraquine a major character from the first book, and deals with his tactics in combatting the threat of invasion. The second, following Bartan Drumme, seems at first hardly relevant to the main plot, but there are more kinds of invasion than by airship, as Bartan and eventually the others find out.

The plotting interweaves the strands successfully and completely making a unity which is generally very satisfying. The ideas are original and clever, the book eminently read-

able. On the negative side I found the book less substantial and less complex than THE RAGGED ASTRONAUTS and the characterisation less deep and less successful, but even so it is one well worth reading.

Michael Blumlein - - THE MOVEMENT OF MOUNTAINS (NEL, 1989, 188pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by Colin Bird)

Anyone with a fascination for veneral diseases and science fiction (and who hasn't?) will be pleased with this peculiar first novel from Blumlein. The author is a doctor and he uses his background to provide a convincing rationale behind this genetic engineering yarn in which a sexually transmitted virus becomes a liberating force.

The story begins on Earth as Doctor Jules Ebert attempts to treat an increasing number of victims of the mysterious Barea Disease. His lover accepts a job on Eridis attempting to synthesise Mutacillin, a living antibiotic, found only on that planet. The revolutionary drug is mined by genetically engineered "beasts of burden" called Domers, who have been designed with powerful limbs, cold-resistant bodies, and submissive mentalities. Doctor Ebert arrives on Eridis and accepts the task of treating the colonists, but he gradually becomes more obsessed with the grotesque Domers. He begins to feel they are more human than they seem and when Barea Disease spreads to Eridis the nature of the virus provides a catalyst for a revolutionary change in the Domers.

Blumlein plays out his medical ethics across an interplanetary scale to halting effect at times when discussion holds up plot elucidation. The central section on Eridis has a dislocating effect on the narrative and much of the story remains a mystery until the coda back on Earth. The book is loosely in the form of a journal but this effect is largely redundant. The novel's strengths are its realistic medical details and their believable effect on the machinations in which the characters are involved. Doctor Ebert is a nicely portrayed figure who is confronted with the book's moral dilemmas and the plight of the Domers, engineered to be too human, is hauntingly evoked.

Ian Williams - - THE LIES THAT BIND (Furnell, 1989, 254pp, £2.50)

(Reviewed by L.J. Hurst)

This is set in an unusual boarding school - there is no uniform and a lot of sexual experimentation while graduation leads to plum government posts, though some progress to the insane asylum. There are no fees but there are exceptional selection criteria; there is no hint of a national curriculum but excellent facilities. The government runs the secret Britannia School for the Gifted to train children with paranormal skills.

Only at the school are the kids able to come out about their abilities; they are mostly social misfits because of the strains this has caused, if they don't have problems anyway.

The ultimate governors of the school are the Ministry of Defense who want to develop their psi-warriors and bind them to the state. Hero, John Claremont's doubts as he learns the full reach of his psi-power means that he ends by rejecting the demands of the school, and some of its sinister staff.

THE LIES THAT BIND is published by MacDonald Children's Books the inside cover tells me but I did not realise that I was reading a juvenile until I saw that detail. There must be other books dealing with the

conflicting demands of morality and the Establishment but this rite-of-passage novel deals with those conflicts well. I enjoyed it

Marc Olden - - POE MUST DIE (Futura, 1989, 316pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Steven Tew)

POE MUST DIE, set in London and New York in 1848, concerns the quest of the bloodthirsty and sadistic black magician, Jonathon, for the legendary Throne of Solomon, which offers eternal life and power over the King of Demons, Asmodeus. James Figg, champion boxer and self defence coach to the rich and famous (historical figures to a man), pursues him to New York to avenge his wife's murder. He carries with him an introduction from Charles Dickens to Edgar Allen Poe who, coincidentally, is a vital link in Jonathon's quest for the throne - which is why he "must die".

I'm still not quite sure what to make of this book, uncertain of whether to be repelled or fascinated by its obsession with Evil. Certainly, its descriptions of violence, and and appalling poverty and the slums of London and New York contrasted with the decadent complacency of the rich, are vivid and impassioned. However, I balk at its uncritical depiction of Poe's (and Figg's) racist and pro-slavery views, the book's apparent lack of moral evaluation and death. The biographical details are quite interesting, but the book is certainly very badly written, with appalling bad and laboured exposition and extremely irritating and repetitive prose.

Christopher Fowler - - ROOFWORLD (Arrow, 1989, 396pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Jon Wallace)

London, late 20th century. Robert Linden, a researcher, is trying to find Charlotte Endsleigh, the author of a novel that he feels would make a good screenplay. He finds that she has been killed by burglars, and that her landlady, Rose Leonard, who is trying to make it as a freelance photographer, has taken some strange photographs on the rooftops of London. Endsleigh's daughter has gone missing, both from home and from her more recent position as the second in command of Roofworld. These events catapult Rose and Robert into an alternative London set amongst its complicated rooftops, where a society has flourished for decades unnoticed by the 'insects' in the streets below, a society which is threatened by the rise of Chymes, a ruthless killer who binds his followers to him with unlimited drugs and sex.

Christopher Fowler's characters are mostly well-drawn and sympathetic. His Roofworld, on the other hand, is a cypher. We are told that it has existed for a long time through rites and ritual and that it is in crisis, but the details of the Roofworld itself are vague and sketchy. Also, Robert and Rose find it difficult to find out anything about Roofworld until suddenly the leader, Zalian, decides to tell them everything. These flaws apart, this is a tense and well-written thriller, complete with suitably cliff-hanging ending and mysteriously disappearing villain.

Charles Sheffield - - - - - TRADER'S WORLD (NEL, 1989, 279pp, £2.99)

(Reviewed by Graham Andrews)

'History does not end with the present; it extends on, changing without limit, into eternity. The diff-

erence is only that the historian does not accompany it there; his journey, however tempting the prospect, must end with the present. But not entirely. For as there is much of the past that is in the present, so also there is much of the present that will be in the future, including a little that is yet to be evident.'

The above quotation comes from Galbraith's A HISTORY OF ECONOMICS: THE PAST AS THE PRESENT, but - for the purposes of this review - I'd like to replace 'historian' with 'science fiction writer'. Future histories, describing new (or modified) political-economic systems lie at the heart of sf: H.G. Wells, Heinlein, Reynolds, William Gibson, etc., etc. These systems are often wildly implausible, a la Farmer's 'Haijac Union' (see THE LOVERS and/or THE DAY OF TIMESTOP). But then, how many writers forecast the European Community . . . ?

TRADER'S WORLD concerns Earth-after-the-Heavenly-Cloud-has-hit-it, saddled with a political-economic system that makes Trumpton look like the City of London (or should that be the other way round?). There are places like the Great Republic (Yankees - who else?), the Community (Europe from Iceland to Turkey), the Lostlands (Hivers; what's left of the Commies, and serve them jolly well right), and the Chipponese (would I lie to you?) Moon Base. The world is held together by the Traders, heinleins who act as honest brokers between these disparate factions, while representing the Wave of the Future (or so we're led to believe).

As for the characters . . . Lyle Monróe Connery is the archetypal Competent Man (enough said). Mike Asparian is a Hiver orphan who is 'adopted' by the Traders and becomes a . . . Trader. The omnipresent Trader computer is called Daddy-O (eat your heart out, Jack Kerouac). Oh, and there's Jack 'Lover-boy' Lester, the disembodied Trader-in-a-bottle who, apparently, represents Sheffield's idea of a lovable rogue: 'Her name is Little Suzie . . . if you'll go there and take a wallow, then . . . tell me all about it, I'll pay you

out of my pension' (p.63). All things considered, 'they'd steal the eyes out of your head and come back for the eyelashes (old Ulster saying).

Even if I believed, or forced myself to believe, that We Could Get There From Here, the novel (story sequence, rather) is so plodding that it never really gets out of first gear. The expression 'fake fossil' springs, unbidden, into my mind; make of it what you will. And I can't get too worked up about the prospect of Dan Quayle-type 'secret masters' running the world for its own - supposed - good. As George Orwell (almost) said: 'If you want a picture of the future, imagine a bootee pressing on a human face - forever.'

Jack Vance - - - - - DURDANE (VGSF, 1989, 206+224+187pp, £3.99)

- - - - - BIG PLANET (VGSF, 1989, 218pp, £3.50)

(Reviewed by Ken Lake)

A fifty-page novelette may be a pearl beyond price, a 1200-page blockbuster no more than dross: why, then, do we count the pages? Why indeed do we even number them, when Gollancz can be so uncaring as to reprint three parts of a trilogy within a single cover and not bother to change the old pagination?

Take it a bit further: how can they sell 617 pages of text for £3.99 when they need to ask £3.50 for a mere 218? Wondrous are the mysteries of the publishers, but presumably they cleaned up enough on their initial

printing of the three separately priced volumes to be able to run off this tatty amalgam at virtually no cost. The miscot cover beholds Vance's initial, the wishy-washy artwork tells you nothing of the delightful and complex world that Vance brings for your delectation, the spine will soon crack under the pressure of the contents, and if you enjoy Vance - as I do - you will have all three books (THE FACELESS MAN, THE BRAVE FREE MEN, THE ASUTRA) already.

DURDANE takes you into a world where everyone wears a torc which can be exploded at an instant's notice by The Faceless Man (or whoever is acting in his name, of course), where an invasion of soul-less creatures is destroying the fabric of society, where superb musicians play and their music is described so skilfully you can hear it and enjoy it as you read, where rococo palace manipulation is uncovered and where of course good ultimately prevails and evil gets its long overdue come-uppance.

It's a morality tale, presented in Vance's best pseudo-scientific manner with footnotes galore, yet real people suffer real problems, real pleasures and very real confusions. Each of the constituent books makes a damn good read: I still find it hard to grasp how anyone could wish to OD on all three in one flimsy binding. That's why BIG PLANET is more my cup of tea for a quick thrill.

This is Vance's revised 1978 version; my own 1977 Coronet edition has again a far superior cover design, for it's upon the swinging ropes of the monolines that the real action of this story hangs, while the Gollanz artwork fails to convey the meaning of 'big planet' at all.

This is pure Adventure Quest country; a party of Earth people facing unimaginable odds trekking 40000 miles to reach Earth Enclave on the vast planet on which they have crashed, pledged too to overthrow its tyrant rulers and bring democracy to the troubled globe. No learned footnotes here - dive in, take a deep breath and follow Vance's characters as they learn their own shortcomings and the holes in their own understanding of what they face.

I don't pretend to grasp the reason for Vance's tinkering with the original 1951 text, but I can assure you that this sort of basic SF is timeless. If, heaven forfend, you are too sophisticated to enjoy such simple pleasures, then go back to DURDANE and dive into something a lot deeper, more studied and certainly more intellectually fulfilling. But do take a day or two off between each of those separately numbered parts: you'll appreciate them all the more for having had the chance to digest each in turn.

Meanwhile, can't someone find a good cover artist for Gollanz - one who can abstract the true feel of the book, its ambience, its action and its level of readership appeal? They must be sacrificing sales galore by this half-hearted approach to design.

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James P. Hogan - THE GENTLE GIANTS OF GANYMEDE  
(Grafton, 1989, 269pp, £2.99)

(Reviewed by Steven J. Blyth)

The storyline of this second volume of Hogan's The Giants trilogy is, in comparison to the first, a big improvement. This is mainly due to the return of the Giants of Ganymede after an absence of some twenty-five million years. Mankind and these eight-foot tall giants get along amiably and another series of discoveries about the history of our solar system and the origins of mankind are made.

GENTLE GIANTS begins with the central characters discussing what they found out in the previous novel. This, of course, is supposed to serve as a resume for those readers who haven't read the first book (INHERIT THE STARS) and also for those who

have read it but need their memories jogging. However, the characters' conversation is, at times, confusing and a little unbelievable because they're telling each other things that they surely already know. This resume of the complex first novel is GENTLE GIANTS' biggest fault and is the sort of thing that might deter a reader from continuing. I feel that a simple, straightforward summary would have worked better.

For the most part, GENTLE GIANTS is superior to its predecessor. The events in the novel are far more interesting and so are the scientific revelations. There's even a dash of humour as the aliens and humans interact with each other.

On the other hand, the book does suffer from some of the same problems that were present in INHERIT THE STARS. The most prominent of these is the colourless, two-dimensional characters and their tedious, long-winded theorising. Getting rid of bad points such as this would greatly improve Hogan's work.

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Anne McCaffrey - - - - - DRAGONSDAWN  
(Bantam, 1989, 386pp, £6.95)

- - - - - THE CARRADYNE TOUCH  
(Futura, 1989, 416pp, £3.99)

(Reviewed by Terry Broome)

Another volume in the Pern saga, DRAGONSDAWN is set early in its history, with the arrival of the colonists on Pern escaping from the war-torn environments of their home planets, their discovery of fire-lizards which they genetically engineer into dragons and their first encounters with Thread. The story is crammed with betrayals, romances and tragedies, spices occasionally blunted by clumsy prose and the characters' sometimes flimsy motivations. Some of the loose ends were resolved in previous volumes set later in Pern's history, but others beg tidying up.

Fire-lizards appear to be crosses between kittens, homing pigeons and lizards, but McCaffrey was inspired by horses for her portrayal of dragons. She lives near Dragonhold stables in County Wicklow, Eire, and Dragonhold's horses have competed in flat races and National Hunts. Her equestrian interests have led to a work of general fiction, THE CARRADYNE TOUCH, about a County Wicklow horse-breeding family, centring around horse-obsessed Catriona, a talented show-jumping adolescent.

Both novels are melodramatic, but surprisingly enjoyable despite their faults. THE CARRADYNE TOUCH is typical McCaffrey. Tragedy and dirty-business come thick and fast, but romantic interests and an underlying optimism make the novel curiously light and unrealistic. Catriona's fanatically religious mother's addiction to tranquillisers, hatred of horses and sexual frigidity would deeply distress most children in her position, but she hardly seems touched. Crisis follows crisis right to the very end.

It's clear where the dragons' abilities and personalities come from, but because the horses are passive characters, it's harder to share the same delight in them. THE CARRADYNE TOUCH is a better book than DRAGONSDAWN, and you don't have to be fond of horses to enjoy it, though I suspect a tolerance for melodrama would be an advantage.

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STOP PRESS 2

Also too late for review this issue (but see PI 82) was the latest of PI/Vector contributor K.V. Bailey's collections of his highly accomplished SF poetry, THE SKY GIANTS: a fusion of Grail-quest and SF epic in a highly individual and accurate style. (£1.50 from Triffid Books, Val de Mer, Alderney, Channel Islands.)

Fred Saberhagen -- **BESERKER'S PLANET**  
(Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1989, 233 pp., £3.50)

Reviewed by Laurence Scotford

Fred Saberhagen's Beserker books have been around for quite some time now. All of them deal with the seemingly endless struggle for superiority between Man and the artificial, but intelligent and self-replicating Beserkers.

Some critics have gone as far as making the claim that, in the Beserker series, Saberhagen has constructed an analogy for man's inner struggle between good and evil, with the men in the stories representing the essentially good side while the Beserkers are an incarnation of all that is evil in men.

Although I would hesitate to place too much emphasis on this apparent parallel, the Beserkers, a little like nuclear weapons, are creations so powerful and potentially destructive that the harm they do continues to have effect long after the demise of their creators. In this much they represent the potential that intelligent races have, not only for self-destruction, but also the obliteration of other life.

This particular book is set long after the Beserker hordes have been driven from the populated galaxies. A bored playboy runs a hunting expedition to Hunter's planet, location of the Beserker defeat. There, he and his party of friends discover the planet in the grip of a menacing religion. It soon becomes apparent that the god is a lone beserker that has somehow survived and continued to function with the aid of devoted priests and is now planning to use its minions to bring about the destruction of the whole human race.

Ironically it is the fanaticism of the Beserker and its followers that ultimately provides an opportunity for its destruction. But leaving analogies and underlying themes behind, this makes just as good a read as the other Beserker books, especially if you can ignore the rather stereotyped characters.

Vonda N. McIntyre -- **DREAMSNAKE**  
(Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1989, 313 pp. £3.50)

Reviewed by Laurence Scotford

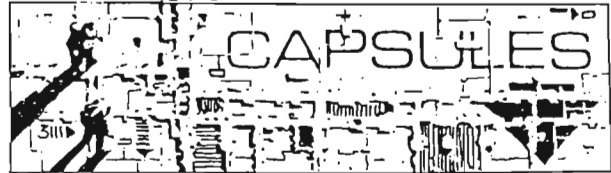
**Dreamsnake** is number 33 in the VGSF Classics series, and like most of the earlier books in this imprint, it is a welcome republication. The book is set in that well-worn SF scenario: the post-holocaust world. But this is really only an adjunct to the main themes of the book.

The heroine is a healer called Snake, one of a group of wanderers specially trained to use snakes to manufacture and administer healing serums. The dreamsnake of the title is a rare reptile that eases the suffering of those beyond help. Early on in the book it is killed by the family of an ill boy who fear its presence. Without it Snake can no longer continue her work effectively, so when she subsequently loses a patient that the dreamsnake could have helped she determines to discover for herself the source of the snakes.

I don't want to give away any more of the plot because part of the charm of this novel is the relating of the discoveries that Snake makes during the latter half of the novel. The whole is beautifully written. It is certainly not a novel

that you will want to rush, but rather savour the well-rounded characters and elegantly structured plot that are so sadly lacking in many similar works.

This is a book that is as full of surprises as it is beauty. If you don't already have it on your bookshelf then I strongly recommend that you add it soon.



Piers Anthony -- **HEAVEN CENT** (NEL, 1989, 324pp, £6.95)

Trade paperback edition of 11th Xanth story: an allegorical tale of a 9 year old boy's quest for the secret of Babies and Sex OR yet another pun-filled tour round Xanth. Kids who have just discovered How It's Done will enjoy the book tremendously. (Andy Sawyer)

Isaac Asimov, Martin H. Greenberg, & Charles G. Waugh (Eds.) -- **DEVILS** (Robinson, 1989, 351pp, £3.99)

**DEVILS** is another volume in the Isaac Asimov's Magical World of Fantasy series from Robinson Publishing. Like its predecessors it is a reprint volume, this time with the theme of Old Nick himself. The copyright dates range from 1936 to 1987. These are not horror stories, no EXORCIST or OMEN stuff in these pages, these are by-and-large your standard pact-with-the-devil stories, cosy tales where the clever human manages to get the better of the naive Devil, interspersed with tongue-in-cheek stuff like Brian Cleeve's 'The Devil in Exile' about how he copes (or not) with modern life. These are tales to reassure you that if there is a Devil, then he's stupid. (Jon Wallace)

Louise Cooper -- **NOCTURNE** (Unwin, 1989, 291pp, £3.50)

Indigo meets her fourth adventure: a sleeping sickness which leaves victims like zombies, an eerie night which covers the land, and the intrusion of a plane where physical laws aren't quite the same. Carefully worked-out fantasy exploring different sorts of moral archetype, though its emblematic qualities are stronger than its narrative drive. (Andy Sawyer)

Catherine Lucy Czerkawska -- **SHADOW OF THE STONE** (Drew Swallow, 1989, 145pp, £2.25)

A troubled teenager, Liz Finlay, is either a schizophrenic with a split personality, or a victim of possession by a witch who was burned at the stake in 1662. A visiting American yachtsman is the catalyst in a drama that encompasses a difficult family background and a child's transition into a sexually-aware adult. Based on a haunting television serial for teenagers, this is a subtle, ambiguous and heartfelt story which really deserves the attention of a discerning adult readership. (Terry Broome)

R.A. Forde -- **WISE-WOMAN** (NEL, 1989, 352pp, £3.99)

Well-researched novel with a rich historical, religious, social and political background re-

volving around the foundation and destruction of the legendary city of Ys, but like Karen and Poul Anderson's own dissimilar tale of Ys, unexcitingly told, with poor characterisation and many stock scenes and plots, including the obligatory rape (this time at the very beginning). The background is the furniture in a genre that is increasingly a game of musical chairs. (Terry Broome)

Craig Shaw Gardener - - SLAVES OF THE VOLCANO GOD (Headline, 1989, 249pp, £2.99)

SLAVES OF THE VOLCANO GOD has all the trappings of yet another Fantasy plot. There is far too much Fantasy being pumped out of late and I would like to see more hard-core SF published. I had a hard time reading this novel. (Chris C. Bailey)

Joyce Ballou Gregorian - - CASTLEDOWN (Orbit, 1989, 330pp, £4.99)

Sequel to THE BROKEN CITADEL, in which Sybil returns to her alternate world of Tredana eight years on to find romantic entanglements, kidnap, war, and an ex-fiance from college. Standard fantasy, but told well and with some interesting characters. I wonder if the hints at the end about irreversible technological/military change cause by Sybil's 20th-century presence and knowledge will be followed up in vol. 3? (Andy Sawyer)

James Herbert - - HAUNTED (NEL, 1989, 224pp, £3.50)

Psychic investigator David Ash goes ghost-hunting at a country house, Edbrook. There are ghosts - ah yes, but which are the ghosts and why? Ash's own past is an important a source for haunting as the scene of his investigations.

Herbert is the subtlest and most lyrical of what used to be called the 'nasty' sub-genre and this is far removed from THE RATS; an interesting, spectrally chilling story. (Andy Sawyer)

Douglas Hill - - DAY OF THE STARWIND (Piper, 1989, 124pp, £2.25)/PLANET OF THE WARLORD (Piper, 1989, 127pp, £2.25)

Reprint of the 3rd and 4th of the 'Last Legionary quartet; will Keill Randor save the galaxy? Action-adventure SF with good fighting against evil in a manner pitched just right for its youthful audience and (to be honest) a bit of fun for us geriatrics too. (Andy Sawyer)

Kazuya Kudo & Ryoichi Ikegami - - MAI THE PSYCHIC GIRL (Titan, 288pp, £7.95)

I'm fascinated by this translation of one of the most popular Japanese series, the story of a girl with psychic powers who is pursued by a secret "Wisdom Alliance". Comic-books are much more part of "accepted" Japanese culture than is the case here, but it would be unwise to make any cultural generalisations from this. It's an action-adventure story, often very American in tone (partly the translation, but many of the characters look more American than Japanese, or is that my own stereotypes showing?) but with touches of Eastern mysticism and martial-arts philosophy (ditto). However, it's expensive for what it is, unless you're really interested in Japanese comic art. (Andy Sawyer)

Richard La Plante - - TEGNE, WARLORD OF ZENDOW (Sphere, 1989, 354pp, £3.50)

Mass-market edition of martial-arts fantasy first reviewed in PI 77. Its oriental-philosophical slant is interesting, but does it really give it the dash of originality or depth the genre needs? (Andy Sawyer)

Tanith Lee - - PRINCE ON A WHITE HORSE (Beaver, 1989, 157pp, £1.99)

He knows that he is a prince, and he's riding a white horse, but beyond that he has no idea. The most recent of Tanith Lee's clutch of teenage novels, this story has a darker edge but is nonetheless still delightfully entertaining. (Maureen Porter)

Brian Lumley - - HERO OF DREAMS (Headline, 1989, 242pp, £2.99)

Many writers (including Lumley himself) have revisited Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos, but few have returned to his earlier Dunsanian 'Dream-world' stories for inspiration. That Lumley has, is a wonderful idea marred, however, by the fact that he has also returned to the 'other' Weird Tales format of fairly mindless adventure. The two Dreamers who combat night-gaunts and worse in a quest to find three wands and save the universe from Dread Thingy Who Lies Dreaming are from the Indiana Jones school of adventure rather than Lovecraft's more neurotic wellsprings. Lovecraftians will have fun picking up the references, but we have a competent fantasy adventure rather than something more. (Andy Sawyer)

Brian Lumley - - THE SOURCE (Grafton, 1989, 528pp, £4.50)

Conclusion of the Necroscope trilogy, in which a secret agent and a man who can contact the dead cross into a world which is the source of monstrous vampires. In itself a good mixture of horror and thriller, the 'necroscope' element makes it special but also adds a faint tinge of uncertainty, as if Lumley was stuck with this brilliant idea but didn't want to explore the metaphysical implications, choosing the "thriller" rather than the "ideative" level to tell his story on. (Andy Sawyer)

Graham Dunstan Martin - - CATCHFIRE (Drew Swallow, 1989, 182pp, £2.25)

In order to save a dying kingdom, Ewan and Catchfire must brave underground tunnels, ride a dragon, visit the land of the dead and defeat the evil wizard Hoodwill. This sequel to the author's previous children's fantasy, GIFTWISH is, like it, conventional in form but readable and thought-provoking in practice. It follows Tolkien not only in imagery but in distilling a deep knowledge of legend and linguistics into an attractive simplicity. Recommended. (Andy Sawyer)

Jerry Pournelle & Roland Green - - STORMS OF VICTORY (Orbit, 1989, 359pp, £3.50)

This is the third in the appalling Janissaries series. Pournelle successfully maintains the incredibly low standard of the previous two volumes. Will this militaristic tosh never end? (John Newsinger)

Margaret Shennan - - THE DEVIL'S DIAGONAL (Drew Swallow, 1989, 124pp, £2.25)

Confusing, routine tale for children of a battle between Druids and clack witches for control of the Diagonals (magical flight-paths over Cumbria), involving stolen radioactive fuel-rods from Sellafield. A number of people are murdered and at the end one of the chief characters turns to evil, but the two boy protagonists are little affected. If Shennan had taken more care over the descriptions and characterisation, this would have been an enjoyable adventure story, but she's tried to squeeze too much in with the result that it appears rushed. (Terry Broome)

Brad Strickland - - MOON DREAMS (Headline, 1989, 288pp, £3.50)

Well-meaning New York advertising executive

"finds himself catapulted into another world. A world where magic works, where fantasy is reality". He finds that product-selling jingles make real good spells, enchants himself a mighty sword by naming it NEW AND IMPROVED, and proceeds to save the Universe by smashing some mirrors. Real good fun. Try it! You'll love it! (Sue Thomason)

Whitley Strieber - - TRANSFORMATION (Arrow, 1989, 256pp, £3.99)

Sequel to COMMUNION, this continued personal account argues that flying saucers are but one aspect of The Visitors, owl-eyed beings who have intermittently communicated with us for centuries. They knock on walls in the night, put drops on his tongue during a scheduled airline flight, and warn him not to eat sweets. The high-tension prose is confusing, the action thin and bizarre, but in the end he reaches personal tranquility. So that's all right, then. (Norman Beswick)

Keith Taylor - - BARD (Headline, 1989, 292pp, £3.50)

The engaging adventures of Felimid mac Fal, a stock Irish bard full of picaresque blarney (or whatever the genre Whimsical Celtic Fantasy equivalent of chutzpah is). A cheerfully roll-licking fix-up, marred only by the complete lack of overall structure or plot. (Sue Thomason)

Peter Tremayne - - RAVENMOON (Mandarin, 1989, 256pp, £3.50)

Novelisation of THE EXPULSION OF THE DESI, a 9th century Irish epic which has never been available in full English translation. To me it reads curiously flat and dull, disenchanting; the magical braided chains of ritual adjectives replaced by the mundanity of everyday English prose. (Sue Thomason)

Margaret Weiss & Tracy Hickman - - TRIUMPH OF THE DARKSWORD (Bantam, 1989, 350pp, £3.50)

The at times intriguing Darksword trilogy is brought to a close with an invasion from a technologically advanced realm from beyond the Borders and the enigmatic Simkin playing his usual both sides against the middle. What's best here are the implications of what is left out; odd but true. (Andy Sawyer)

T.M. Wright - - THE ISLAND (Gollancz, 1989, 278pp, £3.50)

Impressionistic horror about lakeside hauntings and personal isolation. It takes time to get used to Wright's use of flashbacks (the dumb choice of typeface doesn't help, giving the look that pages randomly appear in two different type sizes) but he has a surreal imagination and a great gift for characterisation. He has ghosts which chill and the kind of ghosts which are around us all the time and a most unusual lead character whose dislocated speech is perhaps part of a series of oblique experiences and perceptions and images throughout the book. Having set this up, Wright doesn't quite carry this through, but THE ISLAND is more than "just another" horror novel. (Andy Sawyer)

William F. Wu - - CYBORG: ISAAC ASIMOV'S ROBOT CITY BOOK THREE (Orbit, 1989, 169pp, £2.99)

It is tempting to condemn this as worthless hackwork. I think this would be to miss the point. This is juvenile literature commercially targetted at a young teenage market. As such it lacks anything likely to hold the attention of serious readers of SF. A more serious criticism is the cynical use of Asimov's name to exploit the reading (and buying) public. (Neale Vickery)

## "Upon the rack in print"

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE and ANALOG, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 1989

Reviewed by Edward James

In my last review of these magazines, I expressed some scepticism about how the *Analog* serial, *Sparrowhawk*, by Thomas A. Easton, was going to turn out in parts 2 and 3 (November and December). The future world is not too different from ours, except that it relies heavily, above all for transport, on genetically altered animals -- roaches, tortoises, sparrowhawks. I still can't decide how much of it was tongue in cheek, since the science seemed to me ludicrously implausible, but, on the assumption that it was, it was amusing enough, I suppose. It's a detective story, in which the cop (in his sparrowhawk "plane") tries to find out the perpetrator of a series of puzzling crimes (including programming a genetically-altered bittern into an assassin, and sending it against the cop's lover). The plot began interestingly, and the puzzles were well set out. But as a detective story it was flawed. We learn who the criminal was half-way through part 2; part 3 tied up the ends in a pretty routine way. Don't bother to buy it when it comes out in paperback.

The November *Analog* also had "Flaw on Serendip", another in the series from J. Brian Clarke about the humans, the Phiuli, and the mysterious interstellar transport system left by a vanished, or at least invisible, race. More intriguing than some of the recent installments, partly because we seem to be getting nearer that invisible master race: that, perhaps, is going to be the big revelation at the end of the series (it must be trilogy length by now). The other novelette was also a continuation: Timothy Zahn's "The Hand that Rocks the Casket, which carries on the Soulfinder series that began in January. Soulfinder is the company which developed and markets a machine that captures and stores the "soul" on the point of death -- and can reinstall it, in the original body or in someone else's. This episode was about the misuse of the device by a South American dictator. Some good logical extrapolation, and a competent and suitably tense plot but all, if you'll pardon the expression, a bit soulless. The real talent in this issue lies in the three short stories. Kip D. Cassino (who?) supplies "Tipover", a gloriously over-the-top satire of a world in which people are controlled by personal computers to ensure that they never eat anything which might be carcinogenic. Greg Egan's "Beyond the Whistle Test" (it carefully explains that there was an old British TV show called "The Old Grey Whistle Test" named after this way of assessing the hit potential of a tune) looks at the chilling possibility that a computer might be able to devise advertising jingles that are so unforgettable that they virtually bring the brain to a standstill. And finally, a fun story about a vet, by Amy Bechtel (a vet), who has to devise a cure for an ailing sea-monster, hitherto unknown to science. Tells you a bit about veterinary science too, so if you ever happen to meet a sea-monster...

The novella in the December *Analog* is W.R. Thompson's "Maverick", concerning a crisis in relations between humans and an alien race on the planet Kya, and how it was resolved by the maverick tactics of one Nancy O'Donoghue, the UN representative. As a study of interpersonal relations and management styles it was interesting enough; the sfnal details appeared too often to be a thin veneer in which the author was not really interested, in order to make a story about the here-and-now acceptable to *Analog*. The cover novelette is Stephen L. Burns's "The Nearly Infinite Possibilities of Junk", featuring the ultimate self-taught

engineer, Vance Hartman, and his asteroid junkyard, fighting off the big multinational with its nasty lawyers. Campbell would have loved it (as he would Warren Salomon's guest editorial, arguing that the apparent absence of alien races in our galaxy is because only Earthmen have been clever enough to invent capitalism), and it served to pass an idle half-hour. There was a short story by L. Jackson Gardner, "Moonshine Memories", about an old man musing by the ruins of a rocket factory near New Orleans over the sad fate of the American space programme. The best story in an otherwise not very distinguished issue was by Amy Bechtel again (the vet): "The Happy Dead", set in a hospital and arguing persuasively for euthanasia.

Megan Lindholm is the author of *The Reindeer People* ("If you liked *The Clan of the Cave Bear* then..."), so it wasn't with great enthusiasm that I opened up the November Asimov's with its cover story by Lindholm called "A Touch of Lavender". I had forgotten that I had rather liked her "Silver Lady and the Fortyish Man" back in the January Asimov's. But "A Touch of Lavender" was exceptional, and exceptionally good sf. It is the story of the relationship (love? addiction?) between a slum-dwelling woman and an alien, whose race exude a drug-like substance which is highly pleasurable but dangerous and addictive to humans. The story is told by the tough-minded young son of the woman. It is simply and powerfully told; a memorable story which will surely get some award nominations next year. Allen M. Steele's "Ride to Live, Live to Ride" is a more than competent adventure story about a rescue on a space station, with characters better developed than in the average novelette of space

adventure. Ronald Anthony Cross's "The Front Page" is an amusing little tale about a rural newspaper man working for a sensationalist tabloid faced with stories that no-one will believe: vampires, little green men. Walter Jon Williams's "No Spot of Ground" is a well-developed story, with plenty of local colour, based on rather a silly alternative world hypothesis: that there was a General E.A.Poe (with his two pet ravens) who fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War. As a teenager I could probably have drawn out all the Stonewall Jackson or Jeb Stuart campaigns from memory; now it doesn't mean much to me, and no doubt current Civil War buffs would have more fun with this than I did. Nevertheless, there is a good bunch of stories here. Which leaves two that I cannot really make up my mind about, by the Big Names in this issue. Both of them, apparently, muscling in (a little belatedly) on cyberpunk themes and ideas, and neither, at first sight, with much sense or conviction. Orson Scott Card's "Dogwalker" is a rather nasty little story about nasty people involved in computer-crime and double-cross in a world in which one punishment for crime was the replacement of part of the brain by a computer and, as the narrator so delicately puts it, goo. The details of the crime should appeal to hackers; but the story left an unpleasant taste in my mouth, at least. Robert Silverberg's "Chip Runner" improved on second reading, however (helped by the fact that he writes so much better than Card), even though the basic idea -- a young computer fanatic starving himself in a belief that, if only he was thin enough, he could get down among the electrons inside the chips -- is pretty silly. The story is told by his psychiatrist -- who also, of course, thinks it pretty silly. See it as an allegory of anorexia, see it as a fable of computer addiction, see it simply as the account of a neurotic; whichever, it's a beautifully written and affecting story.

Asimov's in December begins with the inevitable Christmas story: "Tracks" by Jack McDevitt. Not bad, either; luckily the Christmas element is largely peripheral, providing some usefully homely atmosphere to a story about the archaeological discovery on a far-off planet of an event in the death-throes of a civilisation. Judith Moffett continues her interesting career with the novella "Remembrance of Things Future", in which a university lecturer and one of her students gain an eerie glimpse of aliens and a time-travelling future. She writes with great assurance; even when revisiting old sf clichés she offers conviction. Which is rather more than can be said of Gregory Frost's "Divertimento", a potentially interesting story of a world in which inexplicable

time-fissures allow an entrepreneur to exploit the recurrent apparitions of Mozart in the present, but spoilt totally for me by Frost's persistent use of the word "clavichord" for what is obviously a harpsichord (since when was a clavichord "incredibly piercing"?). Poor research; poor copy-editing. Nor did Gene Wolfe's little Irish ghost story "How the Bishop Sailed to Inniskeen" ring at all true to me. But the three last stories in the issue, together with Moffett, make this a memorable one. There is R. Garcia y Robertson's "The Wagon God's Wife", an effective and thoughtful historical fantasy in which a Christian Viking, subject of Olaf Tryggvason, meets the old gods. Karen Joy Fowler's "Duplicity" is a sinister and nasty little story about two young women captured in the Brazilian jungle, apparently by aliens. And, finally, the third in Kim Stanley Robinson's stories about Kathmandu. "Escape from Kathmandu" and "Mother Goddess of the World" were both nominated for awards; this one, "The True Nature of Shangri-La", is more of the same; humorous, atmospheric, ultimately somewhat empty, perhaps, but certainly highly readable. The three Stan Robinson stories, together with a fourth, are going to be published as a book: *Escape from Kathmandu*.

INTERZONE 32 (November/December 1989)

(Reviewed by Andy Mills)

This time around neither the fiction nor the articles are particularly outstanding but there is still plenty to enjoy. Barrington Bayley's "The Death of Arlett", set an indeterminate number of years in the future in a country faced with the threat of annihilation, is let down both by the extremity of its basic concept -- that a whole nation be held legally responsible for crimes its subjects commit against other nations -- and by its expositional forays. A pity, because Bayley's creation of atmosphere is powerful indeed. Also flawed yet still entertaining are Nicholas Royle's "The Sculptor's Mind" and Lee Montgomerie's "The New Jerusalem PLC". Both authors wear their hearts rather too obviously on their sleeves with these political satires; nevertheless, their very topicality scores. Montgomerie's is akin to *ABANDONATI* but from the point of view of those saved; Royle (like Alexi Sayle on TV recently) tackles the PM's predilection for visiting disaster victims.

Also bang up to date is "Green and Pleasant Land" by David Redd; I have to confess it makes a pleasant change to find the Greens treated as anything but heroes (though hark back to Keith Brooke's Green terrorists in *IZ 30*). An ecologically unsound search for Purity... Ian McDonald supplies the most poetic piece (if one ignores its expository passages) with "Listen", in which the phoenix of a new humanity rises from the ashes of a spectacular plague. David Calder's "Mosquito" is the magazine's lead tale but is also, I'm afraid, the least successful, due to over-exposition (again!) and a distinct lack of tension which even the elaborate language and quirky storyline cannot counter.

Charles Platt declines to turn to a new topic in his column. Instead, we have the curious sight of Darrell Schweitzer replying to Platt's column replying to Schweitzer's letter on Platt's previous column plus an editorial plus a loc -- all on the same subject, the U.S. mid-list. Brian Stableford on Stephen Donaldson concentrates, not surprisingly, on the *Chronicles* and there's an amiable interview with Michael Coney. Of course there's also the usual reviews etc.; *IZ* is threatening to go monthly, which would certainly increase its value as a genre news magazine. It's also interesting to consider whether, as with some of this issue's offerings, this would encourage more topical fiction.

Stephen Gallagher - - - - -OKTOBER  
(NEL, 1989, 256pp, £2.99)

(Reviewed by Colin Bird)

The 'frightening power' mentioned on the misleading horror-style cover takes a back seat in this thriller with SF elements. Gallagher's plot goes location hopping through Europe in a series of chases in search of a confrontation between a powerful Swiss drug company and its unwilling human test subject.

The trouble begins when Jim Harper has a skiing accident near a secret chemical research station, improbably positioned on the edge of a glacier. He is used as a guinea-pig for a new drug called EPL, an illegal stimulant which has resulted in coma for all previous recipients. When Harper survives the

dose the company, Risinger-Genoud, want to know why and put him under surveillance. When Harper rumbles that he's been receiving non-prescription drugs and feels distinctly the worse for wear, he hits the road and the company heavies give chase. During increasingly realistic nightmares he realises EPL has given him the ability to enter the collective unconscious. He turns this power against the company to expose the true nature of the drug.

The pseudo-Jungian effects of EPL are passed over, probably wisely, in favour of a bristling plot and well researched story. A few lapses in logic concerning the machiavellian actions of Risinger-Genoud are jarring but the corruption inherent in such a large corporation is all too believable.

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