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Contributors: Good articles are always wanted. All MSS must be typed double spaced on one side of the paper. Maximum preferred length is 3500 words; exceptions can and will be made. A preliminary letter is useful but not essential. Unsolicited MSS cannot be returned without an SAE. Please note that there is no payment for publication. Members who wish to review books must first write to the Editors.

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A Number of Articles in this issue of Vector have a religious theme. As an Unbeliever, I have often been surprised to note that so many of my favourite SF and Fantasy stories have been written by people of strong religious beliefs and Christians at that. Why? For a start the capacity for believing the incredible must be a help to a writer of the fantastic, additionally the ceremonial and complicated history of most of the great religions have probably given rise to a great many plot ideas and decorations. As to why Christians write fantasies? I can only guess that it is the sterility and dryness of the modern churches that sends them into the realms of fantasy for relief.

I have often been fascinated by the way religion and the religious have been portrayed in SF—particularly by those themselves of a religious turn of mind. Garry Kilworth stated in Vector 154 that "the people in the book must have a religion of some kind", and this sentiment would appear to be true for many other writers with religious beliefs. Yet as sophisticated people with often complex beliefs themselves, they often seem to have real problems in conceiving of other sophisticated complex religions. Too often their invention seems to come down to a couple of chaps in hooded robes wielding a butchers knife— or if a more sinister effect is required the priest will be a woman.

It's hard sometimes to see why grown adults accept the tenets of many real world religions—so it's perhaps unsurprising that fictional religions are often so hard to swallow.

For me the most successful working into fiction of religion is where the author allows her beliefs to percolate out and inform her writing, rather than either directly using a religious theme, or using allegory consciously to sugar-coat the message. As Ursula Le Guion said in 'Myth and Archetype in Science Fiction' 1976 "For an example of the use in science fiction of a living religious mythos one may turn to the work of Cordwainer Smith, whose Christian beliefs are evident, I think, all through his work. Whether or not one is a Christian one may admire wholeheartedly the strength and passion given the words by the author's living belief." Gene Wolfe is another writer of whom this is true, and Steven Palmer's article dredges up some interesting references. By the way, for those of you without a fat dictionary— The Parousia is apparently the Second Coming....

I'm hoping that I will have irritated enough people by now to ensure a full postbag containing heaps of letters and contributions! And if that doesn't work maybe you'll be inspired by one of the wonderful articles herein...

By Catie Cary
In The Clique
From Maureen Speller

I hate to say this, but the contents of Vector are becoming predictable in the extreme. Another Mary Gentle Piece, another Colin Greenland piece. I suspect, in part, this is something to do with a paucity of other material from the likes of the ordinary member (yes, I hang my head), but also I think it is something you are going to have to start actively working to counter. Vector articles are beginning to look cosy and cliquey. I'm not interested, and I'm part of the clique. Of course it could be because I'm part of the clique, I don't know, but it struck me, looking at the books on the cover, that it was a pity we weren't reading about Misha and Pat Murphy rather than Colin. I've nothing against reading about Colin and I understand that it's good to be aware of our own SF writers, but I'm not so convinced they can sustain the whole magazine throughout the year.

I'm not sure what to suggest to counteract the tendency, indeed I feel a bit mean and unsportive in pointing it out at all, and I shall certainly be doing my bit in the next few months to try and contribute something a little different. I'm starting to bring SF, scenery, and self into my self-imposed reading tasks, so I will see what I can do. It would after all, be sensible to be writing literary articles for Vector rather than burying them in Apas and then complaining because no-one reads them. But it had to be noted that Vector is going through a quiet patch.

Maureen Speller
Folkestone

We understand that Colin Greenland loved the last issue. We'd appreciate comments and contributions from other ordinary members. CC

Reviewing...
From Ken Lake

Oh dear, what makes James McLean imagine that any "balanced" view of any book is possible? If I review a book that thrills me, I want to tell you all how much I enjoyed it; if a book strikes me as appalling, I believe it's my job to warn you against it. In all such statements - that is to say, in every review in every medium - the words "I believe" are implicit in the reviewer's words, for what he is giving you is his personal view. How could he do otherwise?

For a perfect lesson on book reviewing, turn to Private Eye #770 (21 June 1991) where "Bookworm" deals exuberantly with the crass stupidity of David Eddings' Seeress Of Keil. While joyously demolishing the whole juvenile text, he points out clearly that:

"Eddings writes for the people who find Tolkien too taxing. If he has taken any pains, it is to make his style half-wit-friendly...How do you explain the popularity of a book such as this? It's certainly not because It's a good read: It's a dreadful read. It's one of the worst reads that you could find...You don't need to do it coherently, tastefully, sensibly. Eddings does it on as low a level as you'll meet...His success is built on his readers' emotional and intellectual deprivation, but who cares?"

Now I happen to approve of this demolition job. But suppose the book had been sent for review to one of the intellectually deprived who enjoy Eddings' writings? The review would have been precisely opposite to this one - and since it honestly reflected the writer's views, would have been equally valid so long as he was able to define his terms and support his argument coherently.

Of course I beg to review books I know I'll enjoy. Of course I have returned some books because I believe my views are so biased I cannot provide a fair idea of their content and style to others who may approve of the textual sub-message which so upsets me. To demand that I give equal weight and balance to reviewing books by a racist, a chauvinist, a futurist, a scientist, an established author, a newcomer with friends in high places but no style, a plagiarist, an innovator, an idiot and an occasional genius is to indicate a total lack of comprehension of how the human mind works and the function of reviews.

To summarise: while both can mislead, two names should set the tone for your reception of any review. First the author's name - you already have your own prejudices about this, so it matters to you; secondly the reviewer's name so that you can say Oh, I usually agree with his views or "Chris, this man always writes crap!"
The place: A small room in the Cairn Hotel, Harrogate.
The time: Late afternoon, Saturday, May 4th 1991. Mexico IV.

Steve Baxter: Keith, let's begin by talking about how you started writing.

Keith Brooke: Well, I started indirectly by writing songs for a rock group, which didn't work out. Then I moved into photography, which didn't work out. Then I moved into art, which didn't work out. So I was stuck with writing.

SB: At what kind of age was that?

KB: I started reading again when I was about seventeen and I started to think that perhaps I could do things a bit better, or at least differently. So I started writing ideas down in a notebook. I had this vague idea that writers didn't succeed until their mid-twenties so why bother starting before then? My first story was when I was at university - in 1986 - and I made my first professional sale to Interzone in 1988.

SB: What are your influences, would you say?

KB: Everything's been influenced by people like Lucius Shepard, the cyberpunks, although I wouldn't describe my stuff as cyberpunk. My favourite science fiction book is Robert Silverberg's Dying Inside. I think the most important influence on my ideas comes from other writers: people like Ian McEwan, Graham Greene, Scott Fitzgerald. How about you: when did you start?

SB: When I was at school.

KB: A long time ago.

SB: Yes, a long time ago, in a city far away. There was a teacher who gave me quite a lot of advice on putting manuscripts together and submitting them.

KB: So you were actually starting professionally from an early age.

SB: In a way, yes. The first submission I made was to Harry Harrison around 1976 or 1975. So off it went and back it came to the anthology series folded. I tried it at Ken Bulmer's New Writings in SF, but that had folded. The next few years were like that. I kept on writing the stuff, but I didn't have the nerve to send it to America.

KB: Were you aware of the American magazines?

SB: Oh yes, but it was such a hurdle to jump. I mean you saw all the great names in them, the Heinleins, the Pohl... There seemed to be no British magazine at the time either. So it took about four years to start getting rejection slips, as opposed to "Sorry we've folded". But I kept on writing: I worked hard through my university days, but I started to get a bit discouraged. I felt that I was never going to break through, but I was still kind of impelled to keep going. I kept working at a low level until 1986 when I made my first sale to Interzone.

KB: I think on that story, at the end, you said that would have been your four hundred and somethingth rejection slip if it hadn't sold. Was that true?

SB: That was a joke. I counted it up: I had about 50 stories, all with one or two rejection slips - quite a selection. But once I'd made that first breakthrough it started to get easier. It also gave me the incentive to start trying out the small press magazines like Dream. It appears and you get the readers' reactions. You get a bit more encouragement. And also there's the anthologies. Our careers have almost been in parallel.

KB: Sort of, but they contrast too. You were working for ten years before you broke through. I'd been trying for two. The sort of things we write are quite different too.

SB: Yes. My influences aren't so much the current stuff. I do read the current stuff but I tend to evaluate it more, it doesn't go straight into the subconscious quite so easily. I'm analysing the way the fiction works, and also the ideas. It's all the stuff from the past: James Blish, Bradbury - that was what I was reading as a kid. But as far as the actual writing goes I started studying short story writing: how do you write a short story, no matter what the genre?

KB: God knows.

SB: So I started reading people like Hemingway. He invented a lot of the techniques we use now. But then you can't read Hemingway without getting soaked between the eyes.

KB: What's your scientific background?

SB: Well, I did science "A" levels, a maths degree, all that, and that was a big help because it overlapped with a lot of the theoretical physics: quantum mechanics, relativity. That's a big help now, because I can read quite heavy stuff, I can go beyond pop science and read the technical articles, at least to get a flavour of what's happening. The closer you get to the source the better you do. Then I went to Southampton University to do a PhD in Acoustics. That taught me how to research - how to use a library, how to follow threads. It's all useful in the writing process. Where do you get your ideas from?

KB: Whenever somebody discovers that you're a science fiction writer, they always ask, "Oh, where do you get your ideas?" and I hate being asked it. But then... it's the question that fascinates me about other writers. Some of the ideas just come out of the blue, like a story called 'Passion Play' which was in Other Eden 3, that just occurred to me one day, almost completely. I had the setting and the characters, most of the plot. I thought about it for a couple of days and then I sat down and wrote it, and I don't think I changed it much at all. There are other sort of nuts and bolts ways of getting ideas. Like I read an article in a recent New Scientist which set me thinking and since then I've written a first draft of a short story which came directly from that. What about your stories? They feature huge ideas, like the Raft, and the huge cube - I can't remember the name of the story.


KB: And 'The Jonah Man'. As Eric said, the ideas are cosmic in scale yet you manage to write a story about them. I actually wrote a...
...it's an up-beat book because people struggling against awesome forces do succeed in the end.

Stephen Baxter

story inspired by that attitude in your writing, but I don't think I succeeded - the idea wasn't big enough.

SB: Which one was that?

KB: It hasn't appeared yet, it'll be in Aboriginal some time.

SB: Well, I get criticised, people say the ideas I use are too big for short stories. That's proved by a couple of them busting out to be novels, like Raft, which is appearing in July from Grafton, £13.95. It's essentially the idea in the short story, with more extrapolation, more detail. The plot elements are similar, but it's seventy thousand words, instead of five. The editors said that it was still rushed in places. I do tend to get these big ideas and try to shoehorn them into a short story.

KB: Would you say you were a novelist rather than a short story writer?

SB: Yes, I think so. I do seem to be more comfortable with handling characters and stuff at that length. The short story's a different art-form really. I wish I could do better; there's nothing better than a good short story, it's a perfect jewel. Like some of Eric's stories, the one in Other Edeus 3, what was that?

Eric Brown, at last: 'Disciples of Apollo'. I wrote that very quickly, the plot came almost complete.

KB: Most unlike you.

SB: As a short story that's... well I won't say it or he'll get a big head. It's pretty good anyway.

KB: I know what you mean. You can read a short story and you can't see any way to improve it. Unlike virtually all novels.

SB: If we're talking about where ideas come from, I think partly the reason my stories turn out the way they do is because of the way I work up the ideas. I don't think I've ever had the experience of a complete thing popping into my head, I always start with something, some seed. It's usually some bit of science. In 'Traces', for example, the key science in there was the archaeological image extractor. So then I thought well, what can you do with that? So I have them going to a comet to get ancient images of the birth of the solar system. So the science is wrong, but the idea's there, and then there's the fiction side of it, there's got to be some kind of human conflict based on the scientific premise - it's causing somebody a problem - and then, ideally, the resolution should tie in with the science.

That's the target. But because I work like that the ideas tend to go off in their own direction. Even in 'Traces', a slight little story, you have the collapse of a major religion and you have the discovery of a race that was destroyed by a supernova.

KB: All in one short story.

SB: Yes, about four thousand words. The short version of 'Raft' is another example: you have an alternate universe and a complete rites of passage story for the protagonist in which he saves the human race. The ideas tend to be too big for a short story; I don't know when to stop.

KB: How do you work? Do you write a draft and then revise it or do you write and revise as you go along? Because you can't understand these people who do that, revising all the way through, and they don't even know where they're going until the end.

SB: I write a draft first, then revise it. I did try with Raft - available from Grafton, £13.95 -

KB: In July, was that?

SB: Yes, July.

KB: With Raft I did revise each chapter as I wrote it, to try and make it easier for myself. With the second novel I worked differently, I consciously went straight through the first draft, trying to get a more uniform flow, more coherence. I think the actual labour was about the same.

KB: How long did they take you? I mean, you've got a full-time job as well, yet you're incredibly prolific.

SB: I wouldn't say that. I aim for about 100,000 words a year, which is a novel plus little bits.

KB: But there are professional - I mean full-time - writers who don't manage that.

SB: Well I think I'm quite efficient. Raft took about four months, I work a couple of hours a night and I'll take the odd chunk out of my holiday from work. I've learned to be efficient: if I ever gave up my day job I might lose the discipline, there'd be so much time not to write. What about you?

KB: As I say, I can't imagine any other way of doing it. I have to sit down and write a draft. As fast as I can. For a novel that'd be maybe three thousand words a day, every day. You can forget about the whole thing for several months, and then I come back and I probably spend twice as long revising.

SB: And so there are elements of Raft.

KB: I don't like to make big structural changes. I used to think that was lazy writing until it occurred to me that I've actually done all the hard thinking about the structure of the book and the shape of the plot before I sit down and write it, so any revisions to the structure come before I've actually written the thing - they're revisions in a way.

SB: The second draft revisions tend to be minor.

KB: I mean, I might re-write a scene or cut paragraphs or switch them around, but it's usually just slightly re-ordering sentences and paragraphs, making sure they say what I want them to say.

SB: Have you ever tried to work differently: set of a novel? What happens?

KB: Never with a short story. I've always got to know where it starts, where it finishes... and what happens in between.

With the novels, with Expatria and Keepers of the Peace, I've known the shape of the book and where it's going, and roughly where the major turning points are, but the biggest fun I had was in letting the characters do what they want, letting them come to life, letting the scenes take over. I loved doing it but I don't think I'll always work like that.

SB: The first one is called Expatria.

KB: And the second one is Expatria Incorporated.

SB: Expatria is July 1991.

KB: £13.95, I think.

SB: From Gollancz.

KB: Yes, Well, basically the whole Expatria thing works out as a big novel in two volumes - the two first ones - that's based really on its own - you don't need to have read the first - and the first volume is a complete novel, but there's the background plot of the overall project which is left unresolved.

It's about a colony planet that's lost contact with Earth, and the rest of human civilisation - that's the right word - the colony has rejected technology. When the original colonists came in their generation ships they had become a people of the interior. The planetary surface was an alien environment to them, so they had a conflict over whether they should land or just stay at home in their nice cosy arks. They landed, and for generations there was a backlash against the technophiles who had wanted to stay in orbit. The first novel is about the rediscovery of science and knowledge, generations later - not the millennia it says on the jacket - in a kind of similar cults and factions and a set of very conservative tendencies that don't want change.

SB: It sounds like there are vaguely similar elements in Keepers of the Peace.

KB: It's about the dehumanisation of a soldier and his gradual re-emergence, the disintegration of the soldier. There's a sort of parallel with Expatria: social processes grinding out humanity in Keepers of the Peace, social processes grinding out creativity in Expatria.

SB: I've never looked at it like that. There might be a similar structure, but they're totally different in tone and in mood.

Keepers of the Peace is a fairly hard-edged political thriller.


KB: And desolate.

SB: Angry. Whereas Expatria is quite upbeat, positive. And fun. It's meant to be a pacifist adventure novel - the people who succeed in the end aren't the ones who resort to violent means - but I don't think I quite succeeded in that, certainly not in the second book. In that way it had a political edge but it was very much in the...
background and I don't expect people to pick up on it. Whereas most of the comments about Keepers of the Peace have been about the politics of it, the anti-militarist nature of it.

SB: Well it very clearly is anti-militarist isn't it. Specifically about the dehumanising experience.

KB: It's anti-militarist, but it's also anti-large-scale-organizations. Part of the inspiration was Northern Ireland and Afghanistan, but a large part of it came from science fiction. I think up raising large companies. Whether they want it or not they become indoctrinated into the mindset of their employers - to me that's dehumanising.

SB: Have you read Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card?

KB: Only the novelette.

SB: There's quite an interesting contrast there. There's this boy who's dehumanised and made into a military machine, but the premise of the book is very different. In that book there was no alien force which is going to wipe out humanity and only the boy can save them: it has to be done.

SB: It's a totally opposing world-view. The idea that there's always someone out there we have to defend ourselves against. I mean, although Keepers of the Peace is a totally gloomy book, it puts across the idea that we don't always have to fight: surely we've grown up enough to talk about things. Look at Eastern Europe. The revolutions - compared to historical revolutions - were peaceful.

SB: Maybe we're moving towards a more mature society. But that's still to spread to the rest of the world. I'm not just thinking about Iraq - there's the famine situation, made dozens of times worse by civil wars and governments that spend money on arms.

KB: And also by the intervention of First World powers that don't think. There's an implaceable alien force which is going to wipe out humanity and only the boy can save them: it has to be done.

SB: Ask me about Raft.


SB: It's actually cheaper than yours.

KB: Only four pence, come on. How manyersons have you written before Raft?

SB: One, some years ago. A first draft. But it was hopeless. While I was writing it I knew it was failing, but I kept going to see if I could get to the end. That was vaguely similar to Earth by David Brin. A mini black hole hits the Earth and starts destroying it from the inside.

SB: Another small idea from Steve Baxter.

KB: But that was novel-sized, not Raft which is appearing in July, is very different. It's hard sf, set in an alternate universe in which gravity is a billion times as strong as here. Humans get into this universe through a warp in space and they find themselves in a nebula orbiting a black hole, surviving in what's basically a zero gravity environment. But there are complications, for instance the human body itself exerts a gravitational pull.

SB: What effect does that have on human relationships? Like do they have to think about the sex side of things?

SB: They can, but they just, sort of, stick together. It's quite appealing really, isn't it? They stick together with the force of about half a gee. There is that metaphorical side to it: the lead character's very attracted to a woman and the gravitational pull feels different to anyone else's. The essentials of the story are that the nebula is failing and the hero, a young boy, has to find a way to escape on an odyssey through a series of strange situations, strange variants of human society, strange varieties of native flora and fauna, trying to find a way out. Which he succeeds in doing in the end.

KB: You've given it away.

SB: It comes back to what you said earlier: it's upbeat because people are struggling against awesome forces do succeed in the end.

KB: What are your plans? What are you working on next year?

SB: Well, I've just turned in my second novel to Grafton, which is an alternate Victorian piece.

SB: Do you ever study these "How to" handbooks?

SB: I get through dozens of "How to write" books, but all they show you in the end is how to write short stories, because I'm not confident about the way I'm doing it. I want to sit down and work out what I'm going to do and then do it. It'll be a big psychological step for me; I hope it'll be a definite leap in the quality of what I'm doing. I often seem to have trouble moving from the concept of a story, the initial spark, and developing that into a plot, a structure.

SB: Do you ever study these "How to..."

SB: I think it's quite appealing really, isn't it?

KB: I've written full-time for four years and I don't want to do anything else. I don't want to get a proper job, basically.

SB: You're perhaps that's what it is. I'm going to write full-time for as long as I can afford to. Admittedly you can only turn out one novel a year, but if you can do that and make some kind of living out of it and it takes you perhaps six months when you add it all up, then you've got six months to do other things. That's quite appealing to me.

KB: But that's true of the business side takes up more of your time? Here we are spending a weekend at a convention, and an interview can take half a day. Do you other things like signitings, it all takes time.

KB: Dealing with rejection slips and sending the stories out elsewhere. That takes a hell of a lot of time.

SB: Well, you must. I wouldn't know.

SB: Perhaps we'd better end there.

KB: Keith Brooke, thank you very much.

KB: Stephen Baxter, thanks.

"It's meant to be a pacifist adventure novel - the people who succeed in the end aren't the ones who resort to violent means"  - Keith Brooke
Mihailo Remec was born in Ptuj, in Slovenia, in 1928. During the German occupation in the Second World War, he was deported to Serbia, one of the southern Yugoslav republics, and in 1949 he moved to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, where he lives and works today. He is a journalist by profession, but has been writing fiction for many years. He began writing poems and short fiction immediately after the war, and by 1955 had already published a collection of fairy-tales. His first novel Solstic (Soencl-obrat) was published in 1969.

Only his second play, The Happy Dragons (Srecln zmaj), 1963) can be considered as a forerunner of his SF work. Technically it is not SF, but its inclination towards SF can hardly be overlooked. The title is a tribute to the crew of the sailboat of the same name which, in the late 1950s, sailed to the site of an atomic testing ground, and thus demonstrated against nuclear warfare. The play is a warning against the inhumanity of science, technological civilization and the implacable indifference of governments to the fate of human beings. The fate of the fisherman, exposed to the effects of the nuclear experiment and ill with radiation sickness, symbolizes the fate of all humanity fallen prey to the dehumanizing effects of scientific progress. Just as this group of fishermen is trapped within a circle made by a local shaman that they must not cross, so humanity is entrapped by the mechanistic progress of technological civilization, causing horrible devastation on all levels of existence. The circle, then, clearly represents the fence which must not be crossed, but, whereas for one person it may be at the door of his own house, for others it may be placed as far away as at the threshold of the stars. This theme recurs again and again, in different variations, in all the author's works. His chief concern is the examination of boundaries that hold back the human spirit, how to escape these walls of our own making, and what happens to human beings in the process. If the shaman's circle holds captive the irradiated fishermen, only a group of human beings, then the cave, in his first SF novel of the same name, is a parable for the entrapment of the whole human race.

In the play The Happy Dragons, Remec described the negative aspect of science and its possible future impact on the fate of humanity, reflecting the progress of civilization with man's search for happiness and the meaning of existence, and so produced the seed from which all his SF novels and stories have sprung. The first work of Mihailo Remec which can be considered as SF is his novel The Cave (Vodilina, 1976) which, although written in 1972, failed to find a publisher for six whole years. The novel is constructed from three narratives which take place in different space-time continua, with chapters alternating between a prehistoric tale, a tale about the world of today, and the last tale which presents a world of the distant future. The narratives are interwoven with basic human traits and aspirations, and the work as a whole forms a kind of SF vision that forms a framework through which the significance and correlation of human rational and emotional progress in the past and the future can be seen in a new light and more fully understood. The basic theme of the book is the search for the true meaning of human existence, which is symbolized by the search for love and emotional fulfillment. Human history, according to Remec, is the quest of the protagonists, and the object of their quest remains beyond their reach.

In the tale set in ancient prehistory, human beings are dominated by unarticulated instincts that prevent emotional fulfillment. Remec emphasizes their hopeless attempts to transcend instinctive behaviour by the power of reason and emotional contents. In the second narrative, the author grapples with ethical components of our own times: prolonging the destruction of our world to obtain basic ethical values which occurs in a single night when the protagonist joins a Doomsday group. People are transformed into absurd caricatures, the world is meaninglessness, human relationships to nothing, and so depriving themselves of basic human values and any deeper meaning of life. The main protagonist leaves the scene of the destruction, but his loneliness, alienation, disillusionment and the world he is surrounded by, which is like being in a tunnel connecting all man's past and future failings. This tunnel symbolizes his search for a meaningful future.

In the tale set in the future, the biomechanoid cannot attain the true meaning of human existence because he is not able to use his intelligence. His longings, he cannot experience emotions, love lies beyond his understanding. Although his knowledge is practically infinite, he is bereft of fundamental human characteristics. The supreme mind of the future dominates and serves only to satisfy the organic needs of the human body while technological progress, which somewhere and somewhere took the wrong turn, has again reduced mankind to instinctive behaviour and entrapped it in a cave. Man, once again enclosed within walls of his own making, is emotionally inarticulate and unfulfilled. He is doomed to an eternal quest. The cave encompasses all his past and future endeavors. The cycle is complete.

The main protagonists of all three narratives are haunted by strange memories from the past and the future. This is one of the basic connective elements interlaced throughout the novel and, producing sophisticated associative leaps across space and time, it forms the SF framework uniting all three narratives. By a bizarre peculiarity, the protagonists somehow remember unknown words, concepts
unfamiliar and meaningless to them. The protagonist in the prehistoric tale has future memories of the sea he has not yet seen, and carves a canoe for a purpose unknown to him, while his tribe waits in anticipation of whether the sun will rise at all.

Memory of the future is substituted by premonitory memory of the past in the third tale, when the biomechanoid from the future is haunted by unsettling images from the past. In all times and places, Man searches to avoid a state of oneness, to join the aspirations of body and soul. The hero is Man in search of his origin and purpose for existence, but his longing for love, which is the meaning of his contact to all human strivings, is doomed. The cave is the symbol of his entrapment, be it in the past, present or future. The schematic triptych of the novel can be recognized further, by analysing the linguistic characteristics of the individual narratives. Remec uses language as a means of alienating imaginary worlds from objective reality. This is one of the hallmarks of an author's typical stylistic specialties, and rests on the fact that language reflects the mechanisms of the mind. Therefore it can be considered as a reflection of the evolution of the human mind and historical processes behind the history of civilization, and can serve as an indicator of the evolution of the human mind. When depicting the world of today, Remec uses realistic language, which reflects our own speech. The prehistoric section of the novel is archaic in style, the language crude and incapable of expressing symbolic imagery, which the hero overcome unfamiliar thematic concepts and ideas that differ from his own experience. These literary devices break the ordinary optics of the reader, so that he is easily carried into the alien Remec's world and can experience the work of art to its full.

The Cave can by no means be called a successful novel. It was scathingly noted by the critics, and practically overlooked by the SF readership. It is among the least known of Remec's works and was only slightly listed in SF bibliographies. In fact, it was omitted from even so recent a bibliography of Slovene SF as the one published in Sljus in 1986, so that the author himself had to make an addendum in a later issue. The few reviewers that did note the book failed to grasp the significance of the SF elements interlaced throughout the novel, thus reducing its SF content to the final narrative. Those who recognized it as a complex work, with narratives affecting and complementing each other, forming an SF framework and producing a new visionary quality, were exceptional. Let us mention one such rare insight when one critic, recognizing the author's intentions, wrote: "... the meaning of the search for human identity lies in the relationship between human beings."

Another critic, recognizing the SF framework of the novel and the hero to be Man in search of his identity, focussed on the cave symbol and viewed it "... as a fauteal cage, which brings pleasure and disappointment, stimulation and resignation, life and death."

Furthermore, it is very illustrative, that with such statements as "... probably the most important part of the novel is to be found on the lexical level", linguistic characteristics - the instrument which should be considered as only one of the elements forming the work of art and making the imaginary worlds as real as possible - are hailed here as the most important part of the novel. Certainly there is no denying that Remec's use of linguistic alienation made it possible for his fiction to project itself visibly, resulting in better understanding of the novel, but if some critics consider the lexical level to be its most important part, when it should function as only one of the integral parts of the novel, then clearly the novel is failing to communicate. Works that fail so much in conveying their message to critics cannot fare well with readers either. As a matter of fact, it is not at all surprising that The Cave failed to be properly reviewed. The author was not even known as an SF writer, and the book was not labelled as such. The reviews were misleading; no wonder, then, that Remec decided to subtitle his next SF novel, Recognition, "a science fiction novel", in order that it would find the readership it was written for.

Careful analysis reveals some interesting facts. The construction of the novel is obvious, but too artificial. The transitions from one narrative to another are abrupt and demand very close attention. Sometimes it is hard, if not simply impossible, to follow the metaphorical meanings of characters intertwined throughout the novel. While the novel is very interesting in its ethical, psychological and philosophical speculations, expressed through different computations, which also draw inspiration from De Certeau, the role of the human mind and the future is somewhat impaired. The novel is not convincing in its artistic integrity, and fails in its basic function - communication with the reader. So The Cave is by all criteria a very demanding read, presenting a problem of artistic enjoyment to even the most serious reader. It must be admitted, however, that the author carefully examines the human search for self, which is identified with cultural, rational and emotional parameters in all three narratives. Also, the answer for the authentic state of human existence is clearly presented as love between man and woman, even though it remains unattainable. The thesis of the novel, and the run of events, then, are well envisioned, but the actual writing leaves the reader rather short of artistic enjoyment of the literary work. It may be said that perhaps The Cave sets too high a standard for both for the writer and the reader, and that the author is "... in the prime of his career, and thus fails to establish basic communication with the reader."

And so, while the novel is a failure as a work of art, the themes Remec introduces in this first SF novel persist and evolve in all his later works. The struggle of human beings for humanity and emotional realization is present especially in Recognition, a brilliant though flawed dystopian work, and in Izgornj magrac, vision of the far future when humanity struggles to find a new planet to live on. In both these and some other shorter works, the character of the hero and the fear of technological enslavement form the basis of the narrative. Love, as the most important human force, is more or less emphasized in all his work, but especially in Mana, a tale of alien visitation, and to some degree an autobiographical work, and in The Hunter, a tale of psychic domination and emotional vampirism.

Unchaste Daughter is a brilliant short novel, an ecological horror story with an extraordinary portrait of the relationship between a father and his two daughters, which also draws inspiration from The Cave, this early work of Yugoslavia's foremost SF author.

So, while The Cave is not important as a work of art, its analysis casts meaningful light on the later works which it inspired. We must also bear in mind that "A critic cannot know which work is original and which derivative", and through his ignorance of the historical conditions, he would constantly blunder in his understanding of specific works of art. In this light The Cave must be viewed through the whole literary canon of Miha Remec, since only in its light can it be properly evaluated.

Bibliography and Notes

1 Yugoslavia is a socialist federal republic consisting of six socialist republics: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia and Slovenia. The Macedonian language is used in Macedonia, the Slovene language in Slovenia, while in all other republics the Serbo-Croatian language is spoken.
2 Sljus 106, June 1985
3 Sljus 124, 1986
4 Sljus 126, 1986
6 Drago Bajt: Ljudje, zvezde, svetovi, vesolja (Mladinska knjiga 1982), page 295
The dictionary goes on to note that the name may be derived not from a founder called Severus but from the austerity of the typical Severian's life (i.e. from the Latin *serius*.)

There are also hints in Father Inire's effusive letter to Severian at the close of volume four. Father Inire refers to Severian the Autarch as Surya, the Indian god of the sun, Helios, the charioteer who pulled the sun on its course, and Hyperion, the father of Helios. Severian's nature is also revealed at the end of the fever dream in the lazaret, golden rays pouring from him as he stands with the Cumaean and Master Malmbus, light which falls on all the Earth and gives it new life.

There is also a "missing" name in the holy trinity; we hear of the Increator (Holy Ghost) and the Panacore, but never of any son. The Conciliator, supposedly the greatest of good men, must be this figure.

During his wanderings across Urth, various mystical events occur around Severian. The most remarkable is the appearance of blood on his forehead when, in the House Absolute, he looks into the mirror-leaved book bound in manskin. It seems that Severian has experienced a book bound metaphorically with his own death; he blurs out that he saw his own dead face in the leather. The eclipse carved in the cabinet door that holds this book refers to this death, the hiding of the sun, and Severian's blood is then that produced by the Crown of Thorns.

Earlier, when drinking with Jonas, water becomes wine. When he drinks with Doncas, as she is about to leave him, wine becomes water. He carries a sword with a blunt end on his travels - a cross.

Two of Severian's personal symbols, acquired when a child in the Necropolis, are significant. The ship refers to his voyage to Yesod, but the other two may have religious implications. The fountain, although it seems to correspond to that laid in the House Absolute, is also an ancient symbol of life (sometimes depicted as a waterfall), while the rose is a symbol of Christ dating from the Middle Ages.

Wolfe, then, wrote a Parousia in which Severian was either Christ or a figure of Christ (there may be in him echoes of the Greek god Apollo, the god of the sun). But if Severian is Christ there are other figures to account for, most importantly the Antichrist (the Beast) and the False Prophet. It would seem that Baldanders is the former and Dr Talos the latter.

Baldanders, who experiments on the world and spends the proceeds on himself, is an ideal Antichrist, for, despite his brutal nonchalance, he embodies an aversion to humanity, understated, but an aversion nonetheless. He is a direct opposite to Severian. The pair duel at the end of book three, as was foreseen in an underwater dream of Severian. Baldanders is the narcissistic boy for whom the world and all its inhabitants are merely constructions of his own imagination, lacking reality, while Severian is the man fully connected with people and the world, who does not need to place himself at the centre of the universe to live sanely. Baldanders is his own greatest work, and his only work; but Baldanders has nothingness within him, destroys himself and finds, while Severian epitomises all humanity.

Dr Talos seems to be the False Prophet. It is interesting that several times Severian is reminded of a stuffed fox when Dr Talos' face appears; if the letters F-O-X are taken according to Cabala traditions they make 61524, i.e. 666, the Number of the Beast. This is perhaps the means by which Dr Talos is marked in Severian's imagination. Meanwhile, Dr Talos' main task seems to be wandering the Urth performing his ignoble play, that he is a misfitting of the people about the Conciliator. For example, at the very end of the play it is Baldanders who breaks his own bonds to achieve freedom.

As for the Devil, he is trickier to pin down. According to the Book of Revelations, Satan manifests as a dragon. I wonder if Erebos is the Devil? Or perhaps Abaia, the father-husband of the undines? Erebos' minions are Severian's enemies, though in Greek mythology Erebos is a region, bordered through by the dead on the way to Hades. The Book of Revelations suggests that the Parousia will occur at a time of great strife, and indeed the Ascians (Asians? Americans?) are in conflict with the Autarch's forces throughout the main part of the work. Xanthoderm means yellow-skin.

The Claw itself is steeped in the Roman Catholic tradition. Severian refers to the blue shell as a pyx when he finds the Claw wedged between rocks. A pyx is the box or container in which the consecrated host, the Eucharist, is kept, and it can also mean the container in which supplies of waters for the Eucharist are kept. Meanwhile, the Pelerines wear scarlet in the Catholic tradition ("Pelerine" derives from the Latin for pilgrim). Angels and archangels make appearances, too. Hierodules (holy slaves) are angels, and hieroglyphs are archangelic. The hierodules wear angelic white. Of the latter class, there are two explicitly referred to, Gabriel and Tzaddik, perhaps paralleling the two angelic figures referred to in the Bible, Gabriel and Michael. Tzaddik appears extensively in the final volume showing his shape-changing ability, while in the fourth book there is another Tzaddik's brother and an angel who clearly has the same transforming ability.

It is also possible that Wolfe worked the Wandering Jew into his book, although this figure is an invention of later centuries and does not appear in the Bible. According to legend, the Wandering Jew haunted Christ as he dragged his cross to Golgotha. Christ responded, saying he would wander the Earth until the time of the Second Coming.
Could Hethor correspond to this figure?

Then there is the problem of Mary. Wolfe intentionally presents an enigma here; there are various candidates for Severian's true mother, but is it correct to assume that there was one mother? There are two Severians. Using the scene at the end of the fourth book at the Inn of Lost Loves, it seems that Dorcas is related to Severian because of the facial likeness - perhaps the mother of the first Severian. However, she cannot be the mother of the 'second' Severian, the carrier of the Claws; that title goes to Cyria, a.k.a. Catherine, who recognised Severian even though his mask was on, then tried to cover her tracks. Incidentally, "Catherine" means "pure", which could be translated as "Virgin".

A curious parallel occurs when the Cumaean is considered. This figure seems to echo the sibyls of Roman times, for like them the Cumaean is a prophetess, a seer. But there is a further point, since the Cumaean is "sleekly reptilian" when seen by Severian from his extended temporal perspective; that is, serpentine. In the days before Judaism and Christianity had destroyed the ancient matriarchal religion, that of the Goddess, the snake was the symbol of female potency, wisdom, and prophetic ability. Even today, "pythoness" means prophetess. So it is perhaps significant that the acolyte Merryn refers to the Cumaean as "Mother".

Perhaps other readers could enlighten us further. There are many things I still don't follow. For example, who is Hethor? Do the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse make any appearances? Does Severian commit unknowing incest? What is the relevance of undine Juturna to Lake Diuturna (same pronunciation, different spelling)? Why does the mandragora in spirits refer to Severian as "brother" when he explores the Autarch's rooms?

The most puzzling enigma for me is the status of Father Inire. The name Inire is perhaps related to INRI, King of the Jews, but are we to make anything of that?
Memories of a Time Not Here

By Andy Sawyer

When you’re the son of one of SF’s most celebrated authors you can either look for a steady job in the insurance trade or write your own science fiction without worrying too much about people comparing you with your father, Brian Herbert, son of Frank “Dune” Herbert, tried the one and is now immersed in the other, with several novels to his credit (including Man of Two Worlds, a father-son collaboration).

His first books were slim volumes of humour based on his sixteen years in insurance; then a novel, Sydney’s Comet, which was soon followed up by The Garbage Chronicles. In 1984, on publication of Sudanna, Sudanna, he became a full-time writer. Man of Two Worlds and a collection of Dune quotations, The Notebooks of Frank Herbert’s Dune followed, but he returned to his “own” writing with Prisoners of Arion. More “family” collaborations are in the pipeline, with an edition of Frank Herbert’s poems, The Songs of Muad’Dib and another SF novel.

If you’re a Frank Herbert enthusiast, you’ll already know that despite this, Sudanna, Sudanna picks up pace and ends very well, while there’s a strong Dickian surreal poignancy in his holocops with their greed for “big offices”, knowing that they are themselves artificial but striving for immutable memories of domestic stability. The Race for God lasts this haunting edge to the metaphysics, but also ends much more powerfully than it started. Its characters may be two-dimensional, but they still act out the ever-present questions of personal responsibility and the nature of evil.

How far, though, does Herbert believe that a novel of entertainment can affect people’s attitudes, particularly with regard to something as ingrained and subjective as religious views? “An entertaining novel with a moral message, such as mine, can change people’s attitudes, but I don’t harbour any visions of a widespread change. I see my message as a small salvo in a very large war, as a voice of reason, perhaps, that will be heard by some in the midst of the emotional, discordant, clamour. People believe the most entrenched, narrow-minded views on religion will probably never pick up my book, of course, because they aren’t able to think independently. They don’t read novels on moral questions, only good, following rules and procedures and belief systems that have been laid out for them by others.” So there’s little hope of effecting a lasting change? “People are influenced in surprising ways, and can be made to change their minds very quickly. If enough people speak as I am speaking, about religious tolerance and the need to open systems that we thought were so firmly entrenched will come undone. They will change. Nothing about the course of human events is set in concrete.”

The Race for God ends with a heavenly host of unresolved questions, both concerning the mechanics of the plot and the higher problems which inspire it. Is God, for instance, only a local deity, and why has the killing machine Jin regenerated to go looking for a showdown which never actually takes place? What is the conclusion? “I’m still formulating my beliefs about God. I don’t profess for a moment to have all the answers about such important matters. This I know for certain — there is a force of goodness out there, all across this planet and perhaps far out into the universe, and maybe even into adjacent and alternate universes. This force of goodness may be a separate force, a separate entity from Man, or it may be within all of us, permeating every fibre of our being. The God I have suggested in The Race for God is Deity, and Deity is a force which wants to be different from God to make people think and wonder: Could there be several universes with a God for each? Could our God be ailing or under attack from Jin? Or is this book explaining why suffering continues on our planet?”

And the hints of a sequel? “In a sense, Jin represents the capacity of bad things to regenerate themselves. Look at the monster in the movie Alien that even when dealt a mortal blow and appearing to be dead, came back to life for an instant before dying. So what if Jin is still moving at the end of the novel? I’m afraid you want everything tied
into near packages. Life is not like that. When a person comes to the end of his journey there are all sorts of loose ends. In my opinion, stories should reflect life.

Of course the seeds of a sequel are present, but the fate of Jan and Avery is not a core thread of a new story. I leave questions at the end of The Race for God, however, not because I think they are inherently unresolved, as I told you, I do not claim to have all the answers.

But isn't there an ambiguity there? If we're talking about "local gods", then God may not really be God in the first place. Is there a message, then, that we must act as if there is no God (if there is) or as if there is (if there isn't)? Herbert tends to agree. "I believe very strongly that people need to be responsible for their own actions, that they should not wallow in self pity, blaming their actions or predicaments on others. This is a great danger in human nature - blaming others, not facing responsibility, not facing up to situations on your own. If God is all-powerful, free us from free will, so we can make us strong. He doesn't want mankind to be weak. He wants us to stand on our own two feet, to quote one of the better cliches."

While admirable on the surface, this veers close upon a total sidestep of the related problems of suffering and evil. There's a scene where the repulsive executioner Gudan is tried by his peers, but the ship's passengers find it difficult to agree on a criterion with which to judge him. Is murder his crime, or violating the dead? How far is he responsible for his actions? And what should society's reaction be? Death, by one criminal code or another? Yet there are codes which would call the taking of a criminal's life a greater evil or more pointless than the original transgression.

"I don't think it matters whether or not Gudan is 'pure evil'. I placed him in the story as a bone of contention between the various religions - as a person whose fate they would mull over according to their varying beliefs. The point is to process comparing beliefs, discussing beliefs and trying to understand one another. The situation on the ship is a metaphor for how we relate and interact. Gudan is 'pull evil'. I placed him in the astronomical office of this planet, and this gives some of us a feeling of awe, of the impact of the universe. If this is true, I don't think we need to feel at all helpless about our situations. That we should act on our own actions on our own responsibility. As writers, though, the son barely touches the highly detailed individual world-building of the father. Is he conscious of an influence? If one exists, it's technical rather than stylistic or - despite the shared religious viewpoint - thematic:

"From the standpoint of the nuts and bolts of writing, Dad taught me a great deal. Many of my novels use epigrams, removing the necessity of fitting such information into dialogue or narrative, where it can frequently get into the way of the plot. It is a technique of reducing verbosity, of presenting information with the smallest possible amount of words. Dad had a page of notes that he'd put it in each of his books, but he always said he was an entertainer first - that the messages had to be woven into the yarn in non-obtrusive ways. I've attempted to follow that important advice."

And in doing so we have a genuine science fiction dynasty. What's it like being part of one?

"The dynasty question is interesting, but I must say I've never thought of myself as part of one. Perhaps it's because I consciously write in a different style from that of my father. He had a sense of humour which I never had. I think it's a sign of the only thing I am so scholarly in his eyes was being funny. I didn't begin writing, however, until I was nearly thirty. Rather a late start, perhaps, but I had no idea it was a profession I might like to follow. When I finally decided to write, Dad was very generous with his time - and very proud of me when my stories began selling. But if I thought about questions of dynasty or if I tried to think of myself as a writer, I would surely come to a grinning halt at my word processor. No, I just thought of things like that. I just write what flows from my mind through my fingers to the keyboard, whatever I feel like writing."

But it must be irritating to have reviewers and interviewers always mentioning your father's work. Wouldn't Brian like to junk the "Son of..." tag altogether?

"Some critics tend to compare my writings with those of my father instead of comparing me with larger bodies of literature - and in this sense a number of the comparisons are unfair, and occasionally invidious. It's difficult being compared with one of the greatest science fiction writers in history, but I don't dwell on this at all. I know that I'm a good writer in my own right and that I've paid my dues in the profession with hard work and perseverance. Eventually you accept it as a challenge, as an opportunity to improve your own abilities. Would I prefer to junk the 'Son of...' tag? Certainly not! If I dwelled upon that, I would soon find myself in a rubber room. If I said to myself each day, 'I've got to get rid of that tag, I've got to prove to these so-and-sos that I can write better than Frank Herbert - that Frank Herbert was the historical perspective of the Father of... and only secondarily wrote Dune', where would that get me? Nowhere. It would be an unnecessary burden on my shoulders, a load I don't need to bear. If people want to call me 'Son of Frank Herbert' or even 'Son of Dune' why, that's fine by me. Just so long as they don't call me SOB."

In fact, Brian Herbert is doing his best to keep the memories of his father's greatest creations alive. Frank Herbert has scarcely reached the status of J.R.R. Tolkien when it comes to having work edited by a son, but there have been offshoots of Dune and there will be more. For instance, The Songs of Muad'Dib: "a collection of poems from the works of my father, many of which are found in the Dune series. Hence the title, based upon references found in Dune. He also wrote a number of unpublished poems. Many people don't realise it, but Dad often wrote passages in poetry first and then expanded them, fleshed them out into prose in his novels. This is why many of his descriptive passages are so beautiful. The book will be published in late 1991 or early 1992."

With seven novels published and more to come, Brian Herbert offers himself now an established SF writer; one perhaps not of the first rank ('message' still tends to overshadow entertainment in The Race for God) but one whose novels offer rewards beneath the surface. In many ways, this is one of the great values of SF, and it does not seem totally cynical to point out that SF's great appeal is to its "cultural quotient" - the fact that big ideas and the eternal verities are struggled under pure pulp veneers. Brian Herbert is a science fiction writer of entertaining fictions on his own terms. Is he "sure" he doesn't mind the "Son of..." label?

"You can call me anything you like as long as you don't call me late for dinner..."
More Tales from the Forbidden Planet
Roz Kaveney (ed.)
Titan, 1990, 268pp, £13.95

"Never judge a book by its blurb" is probably sound advice. This collection warns the reader, "Prepare yourself for a journey into the mists of magic and madness." But the blurb warning isn't really necessary. Most of the stories in the collection manage an excursion to a popular resort, but not a journey to anywhere new. Roz Kaveney, the editor, also advertises the collection as a "cross-over" between genres, and here the book is more successful. SF, horror and fantasy are presented in pictures and words by illustrators and writers from novel and comic traditions. All that the contributors have in common is that they've all had signings at Forbidden Planet shops.

Illustrations are an uncommon pleasure outside comics and children's books. I enjoyed all of these, my favorite being Rian Hughes' picture for 'Ellipses' as it was as much a statement of the theme of the story as the words were.

Among the stories, Terry Pratchett's 'Hollywood Chickens' tells a familiar tale amusingly; Rachel Pollack's 'The Woman Who Didn't Come Back' begins powerfully but dwindle disappointingly; 'Weep Songs' by RM Laming is a tightly focused, tense little story. Colin Greenland's 'Best Friends' evokes a delicate mood of poignant loss and confusion. While 'Dining Out' by John Sladek mixes a sharp eye and ear for humorous detail with unexpected horror.

A number of the stories in the collection read like excerpt chapters from novels, thus losing much of the tightness which characterises the short story. Mary Gentle's 'Honeydead', Graham Gorman's 'Webs' and Larry Niven's 'The Portrait of Darynane the King' all fall into this category. But the one story that really does take you on the promised journey is John Clute's 'Death of a Sacred Monster'. This is a story with its own power which has the logic which characterises the inexpressible and wondrous world of Papa Bear and family. When you finish the story, you're left with the conviction that the novel is running out way of control. If you loved the other six volumes, then clearly you will disregard my comments. For anyone less familiar with the work of Piers Anthony, I can only urge you to consider expenditure of money and time on some of his earlier novels, perhaps the "Battle Circle" series, or "Chthon", which some have been justly praised. Phaze Doubt is the work of a talent in decline, and as such is a pathetic love story.

Maureen Speller

Thomas the Rhymer
Ellen Kushner

"Phaze Doubt" is a minor work of art. It borrows from the well-worn tradition of sources included folk ballads and dangerous faerie liaisons but the book is so well written that it is a not quite a work of art. The humour is not workshopped; it's worked, and the author has the patience to let the human elements of the story - the rough, hard, bright life of Meg and Gavin, the two old crochets who "adopt" Thomas, and Elspeth, his eventual wife - the somewhat world of faerie, created from intelligent, unpredictable hurricane - and the human court of Kings which Thomas prosper in as a courtly lover, a harper, and later a prophet. The characterization is superb and apparently effortless. These are not characters from a ballad - the emotions of the protagonists are vivid, painful and real - the cultural jet-lag experienced by Thomas when he returns from his time in paradise is particularly clever. There is a refreshing touch of feminism in the part of the story told by Elspeth which dissolves the usual trite and stereotyped pastoral idylls and encourages too many fantasy novels. But Ms Kushner understands the machinations, sexuality and ambitions of men as well as women. There is also no evidence that the story, set in the England-Scotland border country in the Middle Ages, is written by an American media person.

The language is rich yet crisply economical, and reminds me of Ursula Le Guin in good form. The author has the no-too-common gift of knowing when to stop. The dialogue is realistic, consistent and intelligent; it contains subtle twists of implied meaning understandable only in the frame made by the four parts of the story, told by Gavin, Thomas, Meg and Elspeth respectively. I think the real achievement of the novel, and the reason why I will call it a work of art, is that, even though it's a wonderful fantasy story and excellent exercise for the imagination, it is not just that. It is also a comment on the effects of innocence and experience on ageing, desire, creativity, kindness and cruelty.

Finding it difficult to come up with anything negative about Ms Kushner's novel, but I would say that someone capable of a such a seamless piece of work also capable of an independent synthesis of the gendarmes derived from the fantasy/ballads/wandering bard novel; I think she is capable of creating highly original work, and...
The Worthing Saga  
Orson Scott Card  

Maps in a Mirror  
Orson Scott Card  

Anyone expecting The Worthing Saga to be about children's adventure stories will be disappointed. The Worthing of the title is a planet. Described on the back cover as "A collection of ingenious, powerful stories", at least half the book consists of a novel, The Worthing Chronicle. Nearly all the stories are fantasies showing the influence of Zenna Henderson, involving "a miraculous and telepathic stranger" who "walks on water" and the like. In his Introduction, Card says that he has left out collection some of his stories which were "purely mechanical and soulless", for which one must be grateful, but it still seems other preferences of him to conclude: "Now I offer them to you in the hope that you will find them powerful and true.

Maps in a Mirror is much more interesting. Not only does it contain 46 stories dating from 1977 to 1989 but the stories appear in five "beauties", each time exploring the realm of "Other Names of Things" such as "Hooman" and "Fables and Fantasies", and each of the "books" has both an Introduction and Afterword, Card saying something about the genesis of every single story and about Card's personal history as a writer. Some of the revelations are more interesting than the stories. For instance, the one (p.138) that: "Shakespeare and Joseph Smith... more than any others, formed the way I think." Or the Introduction of Michael Palin muttering, "Say no more!") Card, of course, is a Mormon. He is also a playwright, poet, reviewer and undoubtedly powerful. His virtues of having science fiction "thrust upon" him and of having no great interest in science. And it shows. His stories tend to be of the gruesome sort. They are written with such breezy enthusiasm and are such an easy read that it would seem strenuous to notice their flaws and be disdained afterwards, but one often finds them. They are shallow and display the verbosity of a writer conscious of being paid by the word. They are, if anything, more far from what he wants to say. His style is intelligent but not elegant. His content is strong in emotion but weak in both science and sense. Like so many newish science fiction writers, Card stands on the shoulders of giants but sees very little further than they saw, if that. Nevertheless, as the blurb says, Maps in a Mirror is "an important collection by an important author" and good value for the money.

Jim England

Divergence  
Charles Sheffield  

Divergence is, the cover tells us, "Book Two of the Extraordinary" and a sequel to the Summertime (published in 1990). Not having read Summertime, I turned (of course) to Vector, where the blurb, which concludes, "...ultimately a less novel than a puzzle embellished with cardboard action", I was disappointed. The "puzzle" at the heart of Divergence and, I presume, of Summertime too... is the search for the legendary beings known as the Legends. Little is known about the Legends, we are told, except that they inhabited the "Heritage Universe" many centuries ago, and that the construction of many strange technologies-advanced devices. Divergence is set at a time when a "psychic" from the alternate world of Starlance has appeared to have become extinct, many of their constructions remain. The mission for our intrepid heroes is to collect these artifacts so that the universe can accept it, to find out more about these legendary beings and their toys.

I have agreed with Ken Lake's comments (directed, of course, at Book 1 of this series): characterisation is not the strongest feature of this work. In general, it's difficult to distinguish the members of the cast, and the chief bad-guy proves to be something of a stock "lovable rogue". Even the alien races feel contrived. However, we have three races - human, Cercopian and the terrible Zardula - competing for the title "Race of the Universe" (or whatever), the carrot being that members of the victorious team will be allowed to try and solve the "Great Problem" (in effect, the meaning of Life). The problem for the reader is that all three races seem to think in very much the same (that is, human) way, and are distinguishable only by the number of legs they happen to have, etc. Thus it doesn't really seem to matter who wins, and this renders the competition between the "different races essentially futile.

On the whole, this book has far too much science for my liking. Divergence is in no danger of winning the Booker Prize. That being said - as far as I can tell, this reviewer's own and Sheffield's does have some interesting ideas. I kept turning the pages, not just for the purposes of writing this review, but because I wanted to find out where things stood in the end.

Michael J. Pont.

Stalin's Teardrops  
Ian Watson  

This is a book about Watson's stories published over the last few years in a variety of British and American publications. Consequently, they are extremely varied both in style and subject matter. Several of these stories could be classified as horror, there is little that could be called science fiction, the best are the apocalyptic or science fantasy.

All of the stories are beautifully crafted. Many are complex and layered with meanings that will take more than one reading to point of the way of what he wants to say. His style is intelligent but not elegant. His content is strong in emotion but weak in both science and sense. Like so many newish science fiction writers, Card stands on the shoulders of giants but sees very little further than they saw, if that. Nevertheless, as the blurb says, Maps in a Mirror is "an important collection by an important author" and good value for the money.

Jim England

The UF0 Encyclopedia  
John Spencer  
Headline, 1991, 340pp, £16.95

To the making of UFO books there is no end, and here's yet another. I wonder who its intended readers are, and how useful it will be to them, since the arrangement of the text does not involve the seeker after information well. The individual entries are short and give no references to other places the topic can be followed. As for accuracy, I admit, if I don't know the answer, it is difficult to say whether or not. However, I do not read High Fantasy by choice, and this did not persuade me to make an exception.

Valerie Housden
and 'Fireball XLS.' The last of these prompts the comment that 'the interplay of science fiction and UFO reports is more complex than has ever been acknowledged so far, and this fascinates me about UFOs is the intensity of belief they inspire, even though, for instance, abduction reports may have more to do with the mind of the supposed abductee than with inquisitive extraterrestrials, and 'men in black' and alien abductions. Since TV shows and movies are merely a special subset of the American fondness for conspiracy theories. I was a little disappointed to find that Donald A. Wollheim, the editor of the collection, hopes we will understand that UFO reports are part common merely to assemble and repeat the information on offer, without bringing to any critical faculty. I make it for very a scarily scissor-and-paste flavoured book, definitely one for the none too serious browser, and not, I feel, a very successful one.

Darroll Pardoe

The King of the Hill
Paul J McAuley


Before Eric Brown, Interzone's great new hope. Since then McAuley has produced two highly praised hard SF novels, shared the Philip K Dick Award, and been nominated for the prestigious Hugo. This first collection is more than just the opportunity to catch those stories you may have missed. It is a demonstration of the writer's development, of course, and it is an example of the quality of writing the short fiction is capable of.

The Crystal Palace
Phyllis Eisenstein


This is the sequel to Sorcerer's Son. It continues the story of Cray Osmoor, the sorcerer of Castle Spinweh.

Once again we meet familiar faces: Cray's mother, her own son, his friend, Feldar Sepsin, and the Fire demon Girdurn. There are several new characters: Aliza, sorcerer of the Crystal Palace; her grandfather, Everand, and the Ice demon, Reganiel. Forced to study Ice sorcery from the age of five by her tyrannical grandfather, Aliza is forced to become a demon to ensure that she causes no problems and faces no distractions. Aliza's life is radically changed by the attentions of Cray. The latter has seen her in a magical mirror which supposedly displays one's heart's desire, and he is determined to make her at the very least his friend.

But, as previous books show, the path of true love is never smooth, and Cray must overcome many obstacles, not least of which is Aliza's total lack of emotions, in his quest.

The Crystal Palace continues to use ideas from its progenitor, the major one being the existence of the realm of Ice, Air and Water where the demons live. Unfortunately, this time the plot is thinner and the use of the realms and demonology more perfunctory. The major part of the book involves the palace of the title, essentially a sterile and static environment. It reminds me of the novel Solitude. For me, the book only really comes alive when the plot meanders back to Cray's surroundings in the Crystal Palace

Eisenstein's style is very readable. Her descriptive powers are vivid - her depiction of ice, crystal, demon and form is more than adequate. The characters are well portrayed, in particular the demon, Reganiel, with all his complexity and contradictions. However, Cray rather too good to be true, and Aliza's emotional numbness becomes tiring after a while.

This book suffers from comparison with its predecessor. Sorcerer's Son had such a complex plot and original fantasy concepts. The Crystal Palace is hamstrung by its successors, but it is, like its heroine, emotionally sterile - in spite of its author's valiant efforts.

Barham Davies

Scare Care
Graham Masterton (Ed.)

Grafton, 1991, 496pp, £4.99

Charity collections are always a bitch to review: if you really don't like what you offer you feel like a heel for being negative, and depriving a good cause of funds, and if you genuinely think it's an outstanding piece of work you look as though sentiment has clouded your judgement.

Fortunately Scare Care falls neatly between these two. It's a very, very thick anthology, weighing in at almost exactly a hundred pages to the pound, and virtually every single contributor, writer or editor of macabre fiction appears in its pages.

Moreover, a surprising number of newcomers are to be found among the contributor, including speculative fiction, young adult, gothic and romance authors. It's a noying, vivid anthology, and a welcome bonus.

Most of the stories are original, written especially for the collection, although a handful of reprints also appear: James Herbert contributes a vignette from the Rats trilogy, Roald Dahl, the author of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and Jack London the author of White Fang, and Masterton modestly uses a pseudonym on one of his old Twilight Zone pieces. Quality is variable: few are outstanding, a few dire, and the vast majority simply workmanlike. Given the sheer size of this collection, everyone will find far more to amuse and entertain than they do dislike in it, which helps them to keep their backs and Scare Care be excellent value for money.

What lifts it into the essential purchase category is the fact that the third-party and writers represented herein donated their contribution for nothing; all fees and royalties earned by this book go to the Scare Care Trust, a charity set up to help abused children. How can you possibly pass up the chance to do good by self-indulgence? Don't try. Buy this book.

Alex Stewart

Elven Star
Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman


Elven Star continues the Death Gate Cycle begun in Dragon Wing. Having departed Arianan, Haspo and his dog arrive on the planet Pryan. This three-dimensional world is composed of trees so vast that their canopy is solid enough to support all life - except the Dwarves who choose to dwell on the blackened-out actual surface of Pryan.

The main characters are a Chekhovian family of Elves and Elves who make and use genuinely guided weapons; they ask what the target is and you tell them - it's as simple as that.

Puithan Quindiniar is the sales representative who gets mixed up in the double-crossing adventures of Roland and Rega - brother and sister. The Dwarves are definately smaller in stature, but I could not see any difference in their human look. The Humans and Elves despise each other - and later fall in love. Enter the Tytans, ultimate destruction on two legs. The wanderers return to the Quindiniar mansion just ahead of the destroyers. Their warnings go unheeded; the family is so obsessed with their accountancy, scientific experiments, and wedding plans, that they take no notice of the Tytans, even though the house is being smashed around them. The survivors' take-off in Harpo's dragon-ship is one of the most dramatic pieces of writing I've read for some time.

Martin Brice

Pegasus in Flight
Anne McCaffrey


This sequel to To Ride Pegasus (1973) has as its protagonist the daughter of its hero, Dafydly ap Owen, whose name is consistently spelt wrongly all through both books) and takes us into the 21st century where Talented parapsychics abound, working for mankind in a society which is fighting against the unpopularity and seeking to build a 'springboard to the stars' space station that will carry the surplus population to planets of other suns.

Jerhatan, spanning the Jersey Palisades and Greenwich Village, New York, is a line of 30 storeys high, packed with people evading the contraception laws, speaking hundreds of languages and standards of speech. On their underwater habitat. On Manhattan Island are great complex cones, hives and platforms with monolar cars on tracks, and the glass wall that divides the dust-wraper shows that the artist never bothered to open the book and read the scene the author so carefully described.

A benevolent autocracy is faced with child slavery, prostitution and the sale of children as organs. Many of the autocrats are involved in these activities, and McCaffrey might have written a tart, gripping thriller out of these ingredients. Instead, she relies on stupidity - the stupidity of a major character,
Exalted Engineer Barchenka, who is incapable of listening to anything she does not want to hear, totally lacking in the simplest tact and politeness, deficient in common sense, and so unable to generate loyalty among her employees to herself or to the project of building the space station that in any reasonable universe she would not keep her job long enough to attempt revolution unless she needs to help her achieve the deadline she is already failing to meet. And that deadline for completion is another stupidly created like: Barchenka seeks to make McCaffrey's plot easier but managing instead to make it ever less convincing.

At this point the Dragonrider — or so I thought till I noticed the introductory quotation: "They have been at a great feast of languishing and eating, a strange one. Now this has nothing to do with the plot, so I tracked it down to Love's Labour's Lost where it is associated with "O! They are eaten, for thou art... easier swallowed than a fly-drágon." And I thought: Oh my God, she thinks she's dug out a Shakespearean dragon — for in fact a fly-dragon is a game where people catch raisins from burning bread and swallow them for, by transference, it is the raisins themselves. And there I leave the confused McCaffrey, with a slightly bashed and not a little brawn, set out to solve the mystery of the eight bird cages, the plotting of the corrupt mandarins, and the secrets of the elephants. Along the way they join forces with the amazing puppet master, Yen Shih, and his beautiful magician-daughter Yin Lan.

If you like plenty of local colour, gentle wit and humour, with shades of pathos and wonder, seasoned with riddles within riddles, then this is the book for you. It reminded me of a cross between Conan Doyle's The Dancing Men, van Gerwen's Pirate Thieves, and a hint of Robinson's Fu Manchu, yet original for all that. Though not a student of ancient China, I found the detail, the historical touches, the characters and belief systems used, the superstitions, and the mysteriousness — above all, the mysteriousness of the people — all rang very true. There is little slapstick; it's more a restrained, "civilised" — all non-Chinese are barbarians — humour, with wit, though disposing of an unwanted corpse comes pretty close to knockabout laughter.

Poetry, wisdom, and adventure, secret passages, coves, sinister villains, they're all here. Apart from the conventional elements, such as a hideous vampire ghoul eating people, and other sundry agents of the ancient gods, in the end there is the novel's real strength — a good historical detective story: with these elements, however, it's better, much better. If you buy this book, you get a good introduction to a rising talent.

Covers hardly ever get a mention: this one is beautifully designed, children who are containing mood, mystery and the feel of ancient China, with obvious signs that he had read the book.

Ken Lake

Jurassic Park
Michael Crichton

By the author of The Andromeda Strain, this is part eco-thriller, part fictionalised, speculative and at points polemical, documentary. To take the second aspect first, it unambiguously sets out the dangers of uncontrolled genetic engineering; and a popular outline of chaos theory is neatly illustrated. Both issues are pertinent to the plot, which concerns the project of an ethically dubious consortium to reconstitute from "resurrected" DNA a variety of saurians, to be contained in a zoo-cum-theme park, then rear in a cove, on a tropical island. The technology is such that everything should go right: the "chaos" factor, which only the project's consultant mathematician understands and takes seriously, ensures that everything goes wrong.

The novel's thriller/horror component involves endless (sometimes literal) cliff-hanging, computer woes, and grisly slaughter of security, breaking down the, dinosaurs. T. Rex in the lead, go on the rampage. In fact, the accumulation increases, and sometimes slightly tediously, even though Earth itself is threatened, and paradoxically in the light of story-telling "rules" the dinosaurs are info-lump on such topics as saurian metabolism and the policies of research that bring relief and sustain interest in the doings of a somewhat stereotypical complement of scientists and cut-purposes, many of whom (the least likeable) meet unpleasant ends while the goodies (and two precocious kids) come through unscathed, more or less.

K V Bailey

Eight Skilled Gentlemen
Barry Hughart

A third outing for a pair of Chinese sleuths first encountered in Bridge of Birds and The Story of the Frog. In any kind of olagogy, the book comprises a part of an ongoing series of fantastic adventures in China's past (somewhat AD 640). Master Li Kao, an ancient yet surprisingly sprightly seer, yet again accompanied by his chronicling friend. Of considerable brawn and not a little brain, set out to solve the two more series of fantastic adventures in China's past (somewhat AD 640). Master Li Kao, an ancient yet surprisingly sprightly seer, yet again accompanied by his chronicling friend. Of considerable brawn and not a little brain, set out to solve the
and has won many literary awards for both fantasy and science fiction; Farris was the inspiration for writers such as Stephen King.

The last of S.F. Simons book, in which a bunch of eleven-year-olds reminiscent of William Brown's gang, except for their all-American-ness, who get caught up in a broadband event associated with a sinister Old Central School, whose principal cannot speak correct English and whose boys' restroom is wrongly marked boy's. All of them hate school and some, at times, spit, drive cars, carry guns and prove capable of having sex. Simons obviously has memories of an idyllic, rustic boyhood.

The plotting is masterful but there is nothing switching between so many viewpoints. Roy of the inimitable staying that the reader can easily forget what predicament a given character was last left in, with consequent loss of interest. The book is overlong and has so little to offer apart from its excellent filmable quality that slow readers would be well-advised to wait for the film to be made. (Mistake spotted: "some obtruse reason", p6. When Simons likes a word, e.g. "scabrous", he is inclined to repeat it.)

Frieze is much the same kind of filmable potboiler. Well-written, much description of caves and countryside in Tennessee (cf. Illinois), gruesome. The kids are older, and when they encounter horrors they vomit (ad nauseum).

One cannot help but wonder what image of the USA is conveyed to the outside world by such books, but they are undoubtedly "commercial".

Jim England

The Voice of the Night

Dean A Koontz

Headline, 1991, £14.95

Collin Jacobs was new in town and had no friends. But then he met Roy Borden. Roy got him into the school football team, takes him to a secret spot on a hill overlooking an open-air cinema showing adult movies. Collin is grateful that a stranger should be so friendly. But Roy does not do anything without a reason. He needs Collin's help.

In juvenile ignorance they become "blood-brothers" and Roy hints at an exciting plan, but refuses to say much. What he does tell Collin, is that his divorced mother is doing with her gentleman friend. In his naivety Collin refuses to believe this news, nor does he understand Roy's fascination with the macabre. They visit a deserted house in which an horrific multiple murder-suicide was committed some years before.

After testing Collin's friendship and loyalty, suggesting he block a railway line that would cause a derailment, his ideas become more and more ludicrous; each one would involve people being hurt or killed. Gradually, one sees what Roy has in mind and gains a measure of the plan involves the rape and murder of his own mother.

Tom between his loyalty to his only friend and fear for his mother, Collin tries to thwart Roy's plans and finds that it's his own life that is in danger. He tries to get help, but no-one believes him.

They say the cruellest animal is a human. Her intellect allows her to think with a method that involves a sense of mystery to the proceedings. This suspenseful story, with a gruesome twist, is one book you won't want to put down.

The only real criticism against this book is, maybe, the name Borden being given to the villain of the story. Otherwise it is a powerful told tale, written some years ago and republished in March.

Martin Webb

Hyperion

Dan Simmons

Headline, 1990, 502pp, £4.99 pb

These are not the smallest books, either in page-count or in promotion. Indeed, Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion have gathered such a fearsome reputation that any attempt to review them at this time is inevitably going to be contaminated by the fallout from a barrage of criticism. There's rumoured to be a third book in the offing, possibly making a trilogy of books in which case well say I. There's little doubt inn mind that Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion mean something, and will continue to be remembered among SF readers for some time - the only question is where.

Space open for starters. The first book, Hyperion, opens on board a vast treeship that is taking the last party of pilgrims to the Shrike, an indestructible icon of death that wanders the galaxy as an autonomous, self-seeking object. The second book, The Fall of Hyperion, is the final in two ways: firstly, the Hegemony of Man is preparing for the terminal war with the Ousters; secondly, the Shrike takes the lives of all who participate in such a pilgrimage save one, whose guilt seems granted.

Hyperion is, pure and simple, structured along the lines of the Pilgrim's Progress. Along the valley of the TimeTombs, the pilgrims tell one another their reasons for taking such desperate action. Simmons has a predilection for the lyrical and the mystical, as befits a Catholic Priest, the Soldier, the Captain (of the tree-ship), the Poet, the Wandering Jew and his baby daughter (who are all different versions of the same character), and the Private Eye. (Quite how the latter is integrated into the novel is one of the weakest points, making a trilogy of books in which case well say I. There's little doubt inn mind that Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion mean something, and will continue to be remembered among SF readers for some time - the only question is where.

Alarums and excursions ensue the Ousters fleet makes its way in-system and the pilgrims near their destination. Meanwhile, with the curious twist of background-foreground so common to the best of space opera, we learn that the Hegemony and its surrounding Techno-Core of AI's is less than the all-beneficent interstellar polity that initially appears to be.

The Fall of Hyperion vastly different novel, yet nominally satisfying for all that. Simmons takes the material introduced in the first book and twists it through another dimension. As the classic plot structure for a newer,more risky style of interpoint viewpoints on The End of Civilisation As We Know It. He also manages to drag in multiple instanations of the poet Keats, not to mention a bizarre epistemology in which gods battle for domination of the birth cosmos, and in which the Shrike, with its terrible tree of thorns (upon which its victims are impaled, screaming, for eternity) is finally confronted.

Where Simmons is going to go from here is anybody's guess. What I can say is that he's recaptured our interest and we're going to be kept waiting for the third book. If he's going to come up with something spectacularly good, then let's just say that this is what space opera trilogies ought to be like, and leave it at that. Highly recommended.

Charles Stross

Eternal Light

Paul J McAuley


In 1921 Ludwig Wittgenstein published an aphorism for the young Ludwig who is under the title Tractatus Logico-

Philosophicus. Beginning with a tiny core of empirical certainty ('The world is all that is the case'), his quest ended amid the uncertainty of metaphysics it seems he famously dismissed: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.'

Wittgenstein's quest is one that a surprising number of hard SFwriters have followed, with one significant difference: where they could not speak, there remains the suspicion that it is those authors who are most at home amid thecel equations of mathematics, the language games that only pursue this course into the transcendent. It is as if, having mapped the algebraic topography of that transcendent, they have then tried to find areas that cannot be mapped. The standard bearers of science deny its awesome rationality by pointing to a higher level of humanity which approaches godhood. Bob Shaw went that way in The Palace of Eternity, Greg Bear did so in Eon, Arthur C Clarke did so most famously in 2001, A Space Odyssey. Now Paul McAuley treads the same path.

This is caped to his first novel, Four Hundred Billion Stars, a fact which is rubbered home by fairly regular repetition of scenes and elements from that book. Given the extraordinary amount of technical data which McAuley confidently expects us to absorb, this failure of nerve or lack of trust in his readership is matched by the lack of a sense of how the equation is, to say the least, unfortunate. For ten years after her unique encounter with the alien Alea, Energy, the warrior priest Suzy Falcon, Dorothy Yoshida has been held a virtual prisoner by the Navy. But now she's on the loose again. With the help of the near-irrelevant (super-rich), an equally venerable artist, Robot, who has given over half his brain to an artificial intelligence and a dead pilot Suzy Falcon, Dorothy sets off to investigate a planet which is approaching the solar system at an astonishingly high speed and is doing so for millenia. Orbiting the planet they discover a moon ridden with wormholes which eventually lead them to the centre of the galaxy - and a different dimension.

This is a novel absolutely stuffed with drama. There are also serious conflicts between religious fanatics and gung-ho military men, desperate missions, daring escapades, last-minute escapes, cliffhangers. If you are not griped, I despair of you. But it is also a novel which is bloated with its own ambition. It reaches climax after climax, then goes on as McAuley wrenches another twist from the tale.

If it is all ambiguous about the book, that is because I am. It is a book riddled with faults, but that is because it is so massively ambitious a work. We don't often get ambition like this in space opera, and it is perhaps inevitable that in a work on such a scale some shots should fall short of the target. He is still trying to do things with the genre that I haven't seen in far too many years. And he succeeds far better than anyone might have expected. I still have a strange feeling that the universe is big enough; we don't try to try to smuggle in metaphysics as just another branch of physics. But if it is to be done, let it be in as whole-hearted and full-blooded a manner as it is in this novel. One only left to wonder: where next. The rest is silence.

Paul Kincaid

Reaper Man

Terry Pratchett


Terry Pratchett is nothing if not alarming and unpredictable. Who else could have expected that the rib-licking slappocket of the early Discworld books would have come in luscious prose into something suspiciously like fine writing? OK, there have been some minor stumbles along the way, but Reacks is good best (we don't mean that it is The Colour of
**Reaper Man**, for all its humour, is a thoughtful book, and says more about the meaning of life than many a serious tome on the subject.

But don't run away with the idea that Pratchett has HOUND SERIOUSLY become a deathophile, and there is no immediate replacement around to take over his job, Ankh-Morpork begins to show signs of life, even underdung, giving rise to ample scope for the usual mayhem, and providing the basis for one particularly exciting sequence: the expression "esprit de corpse" that provided the foundation for the book, with everything else being a setting for it. I can offer no higher praise than to tell you that I had already bought the book, for real money, before being asked to review it. But I'm almost more intrigued to find out where Terry Pratchett goes from here. Sure, he can keep writing Discworld books until the sand in his own timer runs out. But I wouldn't half like to see him tackling something completely different, dare I say it, not even in the SF genre, of course, he'd write more stories like this one as well!

**John Gribbin**

**Otherside**

J Michael Straczynski

Headline, 1991, 310pp, £14.95

Two more additions to Headline's growing list of hardback horror novels, although only Straczynski's Otherside really deserves the genre label. This is the one about the nerdy kid who gets possessed by supernatural forces and starts off the highschool bullies. Odd to find this so far from its natural habitat in direct-to-video land, and it comes as little surprise to find the jacket bio mentioning the author's career as a screenwriter. What fits this above the mundane is an evocative and economical prose style, and a rare depth and subtlety of characterisation. I'll be looking out for Straczynski's future work with interest, in the hope that he'll find material more worthy of his obvious talent.

**Strangers**

Dean R Koontz

Headline, 1986, 537pp, £14.95

Two more additions to Headline's growing list of hardback horror novels, although only Straczynski's Otherside really deserves the genre label. This is the one about the nerdy kid who gets possessed by supernatural forces and starts off the highschool bullies. Odd to find this so far from its natural habitat in direct-to-video land, and it comes as little surprise to find the jacket bio mentioning the author's career as a screenwriter. What fits this above the mundane is an evocative and economical prose style, and a rare depth and subtlety of characterisation. I'll be looking out for Straczynski's future work with interest, in the hope that he'll find material more worthy of his obvious talent.

**John Gribbin**

**Orion in the Dying Time**

Ben Bova

Methuen, 1990, 536pp, £14.99

Entities called the "Creatures" (who are mainly the gods of classical antiquity) have created Orion to do their bidding throughout the "Cosmic Era." In this enticing adventure he does victorious battle with Set, an evil dino-lord. In so doing, he ties up several of the plot threads of the history so far, and this is a particularly good example of Bova's ability to bring characters and ideas back together.

**Alex Stewart**

**Dread Tales**

David Gemmell


I really tried, honestly, I read the whole thing consecutively. Every sword thrust in a belly, every head slashed off a neck, every blade cleaving through a skull. It only seems right that a book like this should be a standard-setter in a genre that requires constant innovation. I suspect that it is a writer of Gemmell's calibre who can tell us in an almost literal sense "swords into ploughshares" and still be read. At the beginning of chapter two, Orion further informs us: "I have always been able to control at will all the functions of my body..." I suspect that this is one superhuman I shall avoid in future, lest I lose control of mine.

**Michael Fearn**

**Moondance**

SP Somtow


Moondance comes adorned with praise from Robert Bloch, Dean Koontz, Dan Simmons and others. Somtow is a name that's likely to be big one of the most amusing, and the book is a significant addition to the horror genre. Certainly there would be no problem with this if it were the reviewer's choice, but this is a wriggler-breaker? What about the story itself? Does this novel stand out from the rest of the pile?

The book tells of the migration of European werewolves led by Baron von Wolling (honest!) to the American West in the 1880s and of their war with a tribe of Red Indian werewolves. The European packs are vicious predators, prey to the lycanthrope. The book is a far-traveling, far-flung epic and has failed in the attempt. The book is far too long, much of it self-indulging, a problem of the book's author's reader's patience. He has tried to pack an enormous amount of material into the story hours, and a number of scenes are not as effective as they might have been, the addition of a number of the story's characters.

**John Newsinger**

**The Asimov Chronicles**

Isaac Asimov


The Asimov Chronicles has missed a golden opportunity to present a critical retrospective of the author's work. It could have been a major event, with supporting essays and notes, and in addition manages to short-change us on the promised fifty stories (one for every year of the author's writing career, 1939 - 1988), because two 'T-formation' and 'Bill and I', are articles.

The collection contains at least eleven Robot stories, one with Baley and Olywaw and several with Susan Calvin, including the very first, 'Robbie' (as 'Strange Playellow'). There is also one from the Foundation universe and seven from the Multivac series, including a poor crossover Robot story, 'That Thou Are Mindful of Him'. There are four non-SF Black Widowers stories and three Azael tales. One of the latter, the unfortunately titled 'I Love Little Pussy', contains no more than a few lines.

The stories which have stood up best and still grip are: 'Evidence' (1946); 'Little Lost Robot' (1947); 'Sally' (1953). The closest of any to having teeth; the overly sentimental 'The Ugly Little Boy' (aka 'The Last Born', 1958). The Key, a 1961 story, is the only tale that would not have been out of place in a Russian SF collection; 'Feminine Intuition' (1969); and 'The Bicentennial'
The Edge of Vengeance
Jenny Jones
Headline, 1991, 305pp, £14.95

This sequel to Fly by Night returns us to the world of Choralond and the character of Eleanor Knight. We resume our acquaintance with Lord Sun, Sun-Prince of the Sailor Goddess and Matthias and Lukas, the Marling brothers. There are also several new characters, among them Sererhun Marya of the Eslorn; Elown Mitteles, a renegade mage of Shelt; and Felicia Westray, the Duke of Elidia’s daughter. Once again, as in the first book, love and war are pitted against each other, with a monstrous plant called the Desert Rose, to regain his former patron’s favour. Rather incident prone, our heroine! Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the City of Shelt is being taken over by Ladon the sea dragon. Felicia, Lukas, Sererhun and Elown become involved in a plot to overthrow the Sea Lords of Shelt, twelvemight magics, who are in league with the dragon. As you may have gathered, this book is brimful of plot, some of it a continuation of themes begun in the previous volume, and some of it brand new. The conflict between the Sun God and Moon Goddess, and the impact on their worshippers, The Edge of Vengeance is more concerned with the plans of lesser characters and monsters.

Characterization varies from reasonable to good - there are some blacks and whites but also shades of grey. The Deserl Rose is menacingly yet somehow tragic, and Phinian Blythe is pathetic, using the word’s original meaning. The style is bold and encourages rapid page-turning of the thirty-three chapters. There is a glossary at the front, perhaps an attempt to help those who haven’t read Book I. I would not recommend anyone to read this without having read the previous volume.

Note to the publisher - the proof reader must have been having an off day. There are several mistakes in my hardback copy. I enjoyed this book; it is a rattling good read. However, it is insidious that this is referred to as the second volume in a ‘sequence’.

Barbara Davies

Chernevog
C.J. Cherryh
Methuen, 1993, 328pp, £14.99

The Ruby Knight
David Eldings
Grafton, 1990, 347pp, £8.99

Both these authors churn out their work as if beavering on a production line, but of the two Cherryh’s novel is far more rewarding, and is the better of the two. The Ruby Knight, however, is the better of the two, and is more rewarding. The plot is complex, and involves a number of different threads, all of which are interwoven in a satisfying manner. The characters are well drawn, and the setting is suitably exotic. The Ruby Knight is a sequel to the previous book, and continues the story of the Ruby Knight, the eponymous character of the novel. The Ruby Knight is a powerful sorceress, and is the only hope for the city of Shelt, which is under threat from the forces of darkness.

The Ruby Knight is a complex novel, and is well worth reading. It is a pleasure to read, and is a good example of the kind of fantasy that is available today. The Ruby Knight is a book that is sure to please fans of the genre, and is a great addition to any fantasy collection.
The Lords of the Stoney Mountains

Antony Swithen


These two books are completely different. The Lords of the Stoney Mountains is second in The Perilous Quest for Lyonesse series. It continues the adventures of the Maplegrowers, four men and a woman, who has found himself on the mid-Atlantic island-continent of Rockall. In company with Princess Valeria (one of the leading figures of the real land), he is involved in the politics of the various states while still seeking his father and brother in the fabulous land of Lyonesse where they have drowned in the Battle of Spurswallow. There are many details of Rockall flora and fauna, including the seaduck, it not only serves as intelligent steed, but its twin antelope-horns make a natural catapult launcher for various deadly missiles. These animals are features on the cover, which also shows the fort in the foreground. The fortress is surrounded by certain circular stronghold complexes in southern Russia/northern Mesopotamia.

The Revenge of the Rose

Michael Moorcock


Yes, this is an Elric novel. True, there's another quest (followed by later Elric novels) in which this gives the novel its title, but Elric is on the stylish cover (by Robert Gould) and it's all about Elric's doppelganger, Shador. There's an ironic difference, between Elric as viewpoint character and Elric as a novelistic persona. Elric is a dreamer who can see a dream he had being when it has previously aslept. They learn to imagine how the dream will end, but not how it will begin. And when the story awakens, repeating a dream aslept and awake until in the end they cannot tell whether what is happening them and around them is real or dream or imagination.

I found The Revenge of the Rose fascinating read in both senses of the word. I wanted to know what story ended up, thus anything else is mainly fitted, partly because Moorcock is a supplier writer than in the old days, reading an Elric story. It's a fair copy. There's a sense that Moorcock producing another Elric's like Pete Townsend reforming The Who again, but in this case, the story's not so much about producing a favourable brand name. Knowing the original stories helps to get the full flavour of what's happening here, but not the feeling, "This is happening."

The Revenge of the Rose may lack some of the early romanticism and energy, but it certainly possesses the ironic-bourgeois tone of, say, Gloriana. Once more, Elric is helped and hindered by various wildly imaginative and strangely named characters that attract buyers. The titteringly camp Aroich to the multiverse-travelling Philt family and the noble-shape-shifter Elric. And the Rose herself, and three, and even Elric himself, are both subjects and objects of quests.

What made Elric different to most other sword-and-sorcery heroes is that right from the start Moorcock was exploring family and sibling relationships. Instead of psychic angst, it's not social angst as the doom-ridden Prince sees his interior conflict, with a background of his family's social struggle. So, Elric and his this-time companion the coxcomb-poet Wealdcrake, obsessive quoter of his own words in these days, has the trial of his father's soul along mobile villages powered by the muscles of an oppressed lower class and magical spirits. It's the slow, deliberate, superior voices of their superior "congratulate themselves on their urbanity, their humanity, their kindness and their graceful manners, while the dead stagger under their feet." What makes the Gloriana acts as Chorus as well as Companion, interpreting to Elric the meaning of social structures as Elric undercuts his career in time-honoured fashion.

I was ever the only way to ask for each guess which society we can read into the Gypsy nation with its conservatism and blind worship of progress. As ever, Moorcock says, "a society dedicated solely to the preservation of her past, soon has only her past to sell."

Crude allegory? But then so was the earlier epic where Elric slew and betrayed his Black Blade acting as a kind of shorthand for humanity's reliance on ambiguous and additive solutions. Those to whom Moorcock's brand of sword and sorcery is an untried dish would be unwise to experiment with The Revenge of the Rose. Those who are hopelessly timeless in the sixties or who have put all that kid's stuff behind them will both find much to dissect. But Moorcock is still writing popular fiction with a radical tinge, and if that pleases you then you'll find this wearied but unbowed episode worth your while.

Andy Sawyer

Young Bleys

Gordon R. Dickson

Tor, 1991, 465pp, £19.95

This book is part of Dickson's Childe Cycle. I have nothing against them but I do feel that this book to tell a story which is within itself interesting. Frankly this book just seemed to introduce characters, set up a situation and place the two main characters, Bleys and his brother Dahn, in a predicament ready for the next book: nothing interesting really happened.

When I started to read this I thought it was going to be a "rite of passage" novel. Here was Bleys, a young boy, no father and a mother who was self-centred and just used Bleys as something to show off. Bleys being an exceptional young boy with the ability to manipulate people, to speed read, to remember and assimilate everything, and so on. The book starts with Bleys manipulating his mother so that she will send him to live with his uncle Henry MacLean, a farmer on the planet Association. Bleys thus goes from a high tech indolent society to a low tech farm in a deeply religious planet. Everything is set up for the rite of passage story but that doesn't happen.

The scene changes to an older Bleys who leaves the farm to live with and work for his older brother Dahn. Dahn is also talented and lives by offering advice and information and he has established a networks on several planets to run such schemes there. Dahn sees this as an end in itself but Bleys sees it as the means to a much greater destiny.

This is a male dominated book, a few female scenes as passing reference to the Bleys members of the networks and a wrestling teacher, none of them get very much space in the book. This is explained away by saying Bleys has chosen to avoid close human relationships, particularly with women, which seems just a bit too pat.

Basically we see Bleys learning things, by formal teaching, by reading, by experiencing things. Only in the last few chapters does he actually become a full adult: Evidently that is just talking, the physical action is little and the one killing isn't very dramatic. You may have guessed by now that I found this a disappointingly thin and uneventful page turner. Maybe this if this had the hundred one page turner first part of a novel it would have been ok, but the 465 page book it couldn't hold my attention.

Tom A. Jones
Particles

Short Reviews by Chris Amies

This is the result of much reading and not a little looking at the reviews people have already written. Books included here may be those Vector has already reviewed, reprints, paperbacks, or titles not strictly within the Vector remit.

Antichrist; imagine The Omen rewritten into the Just William series, if you will. All good fun, spoiled only by asides designed to "explain" British cultural tropes to a supposed American readership. If you want to imagine the future, imagine a boy and his dog and his friends.

Greely's Cove - John Gldeon [Headline, 1991, 422pp, £4.99 pb]. The showdown between good and evil in a small American town. Now where have we heard that before? This is, in its defence, a whole lot better than the general slew (hut) of post-Lovecraftian neo-Stephen-King stuff.


Phases of Gravity - Dan Simmons [Headline, 1990, 344pp, £4.50 pb]. Reviewed by Paul Brazier in V158. Non-genre space novel: what happens to a man when he's been to the moon and still doesn't know himself? Thus begins the astronaut's voyage of self-discovery. Truly the right stuff.


Secret Harmonies - Paul J McAuley [Orbit, 1989, 333pp, £3.99 pb]. Reviewed by Paul Brazier in V156. Hard SF and beyond; the tale of an insurrection on a colony world, a transposition of Australia to outer space (consider the reasons for the original White settlement of Australia, and the troubled relation with the mother country), inscrutable aliens lapsed into their Dreamtime, and talking dogs. This is the new British SF. Let it unfurl.

The Servants of Twilight - Dean R Koontz [Headline, 1991, 499pp, £4.99 pb]. They think Joe's the Antichrist. This starts a reign of terror that leads to a cross-country chase. More police thriller than horror (as it's sold), and good solid stuff at that.

The Sky Lords - John Brosnan [St Martin's Press, 1991, 318pp, $18.95]. Reviewed by Chris Barter in V147. "Centuries in the future, after the world has been devastated by the Gene Wars, the scattered remnants of human civilization struggle against both the spreading biological blight on the ground and the great airships that dominate the skies."


The Stand - Stephen King [NEL, 1991, 1421pp, £6.99 pb]. Reviewed by Jon Wallace in V157. This is the full text of King's mammoth story of post-plague America. Possibly his best book, and certainly his most popular. What are the chances of a movie adaptation?


Tigana - Guy Gavriel Kay [Penguin, 1990, 688pp, £4.99 pb]. Reviewed by Martin Taylor in V161. Intelligent fantasy with less of the good/evil split we're used to, more psychic-predicts-murder tale. Surely unpronounceable titles are a poor idea?


The Tower of Fear - Glen Cook [Grafton, 1991, 375pp, £3.99 pb]. It's a shame historical novels don't sell, and authors have to make them over into fantasy. This is a byantine tale of the Middle East in the last year of the moslem empire, and not only it isn't, if you follow me. Damascus becomes Qushmarrah, the Romans become Herodians, and so on. Plus magic, of course.

Twilight Eyes - Dean R Koontz [Headline, 1987, 478pp, £14.95]. In which there are goblins amongst us, in human form, and just a few people can tell they are real. The end of this predicts a sequel, but it isn't The Servants of Twilight.

The Vision - Dean R Koontz [Headline, 1988, 270pp, £13.95]. Yet another Koontz reprint, this one revolving around the psychic-predicts-murders tale.
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PHILIP K DICK CELEBRATION - A WORLD FIRST

19-20 October 1991

Two PKD enthusiasts, community worker Jeff Merrifield and actor John Joyce, are currently putting together a celebratory weekend around the life and work of Philip K Dick. This is to take place at Epping Forest College in Loughton, Essex, over the weekend of 19-20 October 1991. The initial response to the idea has been incredible and the program is growing daily.

Already committed are Ken Campbell, who will be delivering the opening address and presenting some enlightening personal insights; Dr Ernesto Spinelli, who will shed some light on the phenomenological nature of Dick's work; the writer John Constable, who will be using "A Scanner Darkly" to focus on drug uses and abuses; Brian Stableford and Maxim Jakubowski, who will lead a discussion on the mainstream novels; Philip Strick, who will look at Dick's growing influence on the cinema; Geoff Ryman will be talking about the challenge of adapting "The Transmigrations of Timothy Archer" for the stage with a reading; Neil Ferguson will form part of a panel on the significance of revelatory experience; Lawrence Sutin, who has two books about Philip K Dick imminently ready for release will be coming over specially for the Celebration weekend; and Brian Aldiss is cooking up "something special".

There will be a number of theatrical elements to the weekend. John Dowie will be performing his celebrated one man play based on Dick's writings, "Take them to the garden" and John Joyce will perform his much acclaimed version of the famous "Metz Speech". John is also working on a new piece "What is human?" that draws on PKD's writings around the human/android theme with follow-up panel discussion. Actress Suzan Crawley is working on a featured piece based around the way females are presented in Dick's work. And Dick's contention that the future lies positively with the young people is reflected by way of two youth theatre groups working on short stories that will be presented in play form during the weekend.

There are a number of people who have expressed a strong desire to contribute to the weekend and are currently trying to reorganise their timetables to this end: highly likely are Norman Spinrad, Fay Weldon and Jack Cohen. Spinrad particularly has indicated his intention to be present and making a significant contribution, if he can be back from a Russian commitment in time.

On the certainty stakes, guest of honour Paul Williams will be present. Paul is the literary executor of the PKD estate and both knew and has written extensively about Philip K Dick. For many years, probably more now than he cares to remember, Paul has administered the Philip K Dick Society and Newsletter. However he has expressed a desire that from August 1992 he would like some other person or organisation to take over the baton. This weekend will see the first major gathering of the membership of the PKDS and the future will certainly be on the agenda - in fact anybody with ideas for the continuation of the society and the newsletter after August 1992 should get in touch with the organisers of the Celebration so that their views can be reflected and considered.

There will be all sorts of fringe spin-offs to the weekend - a PKD community mural painting, sales of books and other valuable Dickian advertising matter and exhibitions of art works (Grafton cover art and a display of pages from the famous R Crumb comic of the 1974 revelatory experiences). There will also be an opportunity to listen to music inspired by the works of Philip K Dick.

The main purpose of the weekend is in getting people together to meet and talk about Philip K Dick. That's where you come in. Some of the best speakers available have been lined up, but it cannot be done without all you Philip K Dick fans out there.

Registration fee for the weekend Celebration is £13.50. There is a limit of 300 places of which 100 are being set aside for members of the PKD Society. To make sure of your place send your name, address and £13.50 off to the address below, but do it quickly - interest is growing. Accommodation is being arranged through the Fortes chain of hotels and Post Houses, of which there are several within reasonable distance of the college. Bed and Breakfast in en suite rooms will be about £30 to £50 per night, depending on whether you want single rooms or will share in a twin. This includes bussing and the organisers will make the arrangements for you. You will get a detailed information pack back with your registration documents.

Applications to CONNECTIONS, EPPING FOREST COLLEGE, BORDERS LANE, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, IG10 3SA, UK.