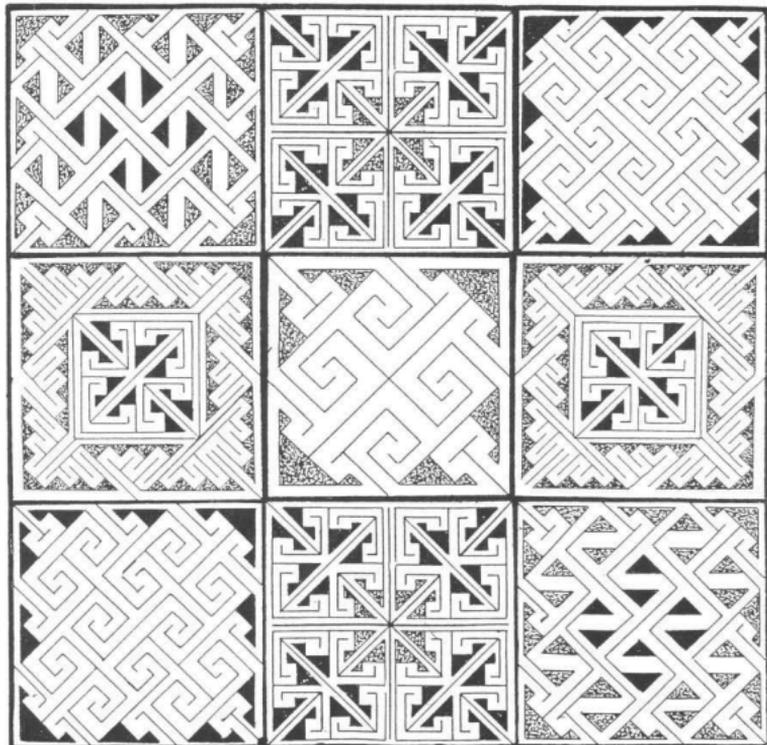


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The Critical Journal of the BSFA



Contents

- 3 **Front Line Dispatches**
Readers' Letters
- 6 **First Impressions**
Reviews edited by Catie Cary
- 15 **Paperback Graffiti**
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Contributions: Good articles are always wanted. All MSS should be typed doubles spaced on one side of the page. Submissions may also be accepted as ASCII text files on IBM, Atari ST or Mac 3.5" discs.

Maximum preferred length is 5000 words; exceptions can and will be made. A preliminary letter is advisable 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 should first write to the appropriate editor.

Artists: Cover art, illustrations and fillers are always welcome.

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Nuts & Bolts

The Invisible Hand just jabbed its finger on the fast forward button of my life. Again. I'm in the middle of changing my work location from Derby to St Albans (or possibly Hemel Hemstead — does it matter?) starting tomorrow morning. Which is soon. Did I mention this was at short notice? Of course.

This means that you have in your hands an emergency Vector. Basically just letters and reviews. And you should be thankful. Because I haven't even finished packing yet. I've got to get up and go in six hours time, so I probably won't find any time for sleep tonight. Again. Long term things should be easier because this is closer to base. Meanwhile I'm getting nervous about making promises — and pretty tired. But it should be a bumper issue next time with all the material I've hoarded. This includes the long-promised graham Joyce interview, the Reviewers' Poll of the best of the year in 1993, and a cornucopia of articles. Barbed Wire Kisses is not being hoarded by me, but rested by Maureen who tells me she needs to 'regroup' — which sounds alarming. However I'm sure the result will be wonderful when it comes back next issue. I'll leave you with a preview listing of the top five reviewers' choice novels from 1994.

- 1 **Vurt** Jeff Noon
(Ringpull)
- 2 **Snow Crash** Neal Stephenson
(Roc)
- 3 **The Iron Dragon's Daughter**
Michael Swanwick (Millennium)
- 4 **Green Mars** Kim Stanley Robinson
(Harpercollins)
- 5 **The Hollowing** Robert Holdstock
(HarperCollins)

Details follow next issue!

Catie

P.S Cover Art

by Claire Willoughby

Remember

Check the address label on your ailing to see if you need to renew your subscription.

Front Line Dispatches

Readers Letters

KneeJerk

From Dr John Gribbin, Newhaven

It is always interesting to see the knee-jerk reaction provoked in certain quarters by the word "sociobiology". It is even more entertaining when the knee-jerker proceeds to shoot himself in the foot. If Steve Palmer had actually read the third of our book, **Being Human**, that he objects to so strongly, he would have found that we make exactly the same point that he does in the review. The main thrust of our argument is, indeed, that intelligence/consciousness enables humans to overcome our genetic inheritance, where appropriate. Our argument is that the value of sociobiology lies in understanding what the genetic inheritance is, in order to be in a better position to use our intelligence. If, for example, we have a genetic pre-disposition to be afraid of foreigners, this is not an excuse to justify war, but identifies an area in which education can be used to overcome those innate fears. And if Steve really thinks that "human beings long ago transcended their biologically, or genetically rooted behaviour" he should take another look at what has been happening in former Yugoslavia.

Oh, and by the way, in case those of your readers who know us are still having hysterics at the notion of us as capitalists, the quote "We act out of self-interest," was, in the great tradition of reviews, taken out of context, and there is no full stop at that point. The full sentence is "We act out of self-interest, but in most cases this is enlightened self-interest." The whole point of the paragraph that passage comes from is to explicitly deny that we act solely out of self-interest.

Readers might like to ponder whether it is more likely that our clarity and skill as expositors, so highly praised by Steve, suddenly fails us after six chapters, or that he put his blinkers on when he arrived at chapter seven. It is impossible to take responsibility for our behaviour without coming to terms with

what we are, difficult and painful though it may be for some people to accept that human beings are not so special as they would like to believe

Special Talents

From Steve Palmer, Toddington

I think it is a bit excessive to say that science fiction is now best with women. Perhaps it would be better to say that women have at last taken their rightful place as writers of excellent fiction. There are some terrific women SF writers: Mary Gentle, Gwyneth Jones, Ursula LeGuin, Anne Gay; but there are also some excellent men SF writers; for example Gene Wolfe, Brian Aldiss, William Gibson, Jack Vance. Women as a group don't now hold the torch for SF, instead they and men are equally as good (or as bad: there are female Nivens, though, interestingly, there seems to be no female Fanthorpe equivalent - could it be that men have a special talent for anorak-wearing, train spotting, sheer ridiculous naftness?)

I think the interesting leap taken sideways by J G Ballard is very much still with us. I would place alongside him other crab-impersonating authors such as Christopher Priest, and perhaps in a slightly different mode, David Zindell and Brian Stableford. The effect of the liberal sixties will be with us perpetually; that lesson can never be unlearned or destroyed, thank goodness. Because of it we can read Geoff Ryman and Tanith Lee.

On a related topic, isn't it interesting to see how gender difference can still be exploited, while a similar racial difference, if trumpeted would be condemned instantly. Thus Chris Evans' mildly amusing show 'Don't Forget Your Toothbrush' finds quite acceptable the men and women in the audience being exhorted to say 'goodbye' separately in stereotyped low and high voices (Radio 1 DJ Steve Wright used to do a similar thing),

whereas if he asked the whites and the blacks to say 'goodbye' separately, perhaps in English and mock-Jamaican patois, there would be instant uproar and his show would go down the tubes. We still have an awfully long way to go before gender difference can be seen in its true light which is of slight importance compared to the vastly more important fact that we are all members of the same human species.

Looking Good

From Norman Beswick, Church Stretton

I'm sure you were proud of **Vector 177**, which looked superb and had plenty of interest in the contents. Proof-reading was less effective -- some sentences beginning with lower case letters, and the odd spelling "reknowned" in Steve Palmer's piece. Your readers will forgive these, and I hope the flu has quite gone away. You deserve to get your production Editor to keep up the high standard you've set.

As for your challenge quotation from Emma Tennant:

I always distrust grandiose statements like "the great days of SF are over". The genre seems to me to be as healthily exciting as it was when I first began reading **Astounding** in the early '40s, and has broadened and developed very considerably. Sure, the contribution of women writers has been increasingly fruitful: a genre boasting such current writers as Judith Moffett, Sheri Tepper, Gwyneth Jones, C J Cherryh, Suzette H Elgin, Mary Gentle, Storm Constantine, Melissa Scott, Suzy McKee Charnas and (a notable new entrant) Helen Collins, has a lot to be proud of, and they all push the genre in creatively different directions.

Moreover, the menfolk are no actual slouches either. I pick out at random; Greg bear, Orson Scott Card, Stephen Baxter, William Gibson, Paul McAuley, Dan Simmons, Paul Park, Charles Sheffield, David Zindell, Ian Watson and Gene Wolfe. Both lists stand well up to comparison with earlier generations and indeed surpass them.

More exciting still, science itself is developing rich new fields for fictional and imaginative exploration, and some of the authors in my list seem to me to be more up-to-date with the science of our day than the so-called "golden age" were with theirs.

There; I've said the easy bit. I look forward to other letter writers giving further insights.

New World Story

From Jack Deighton, Kircaldy, Fife

At last a reason to write to you! And not because (as I suggested at Mexican in Scarborough) you've slagged off a story of mine in print. You haven't. But...

Relax. I won't quibble with Ian Sales's review of 'This is the Road' in **New Worlds 3**. It's a reviewer's job to give an opinion -- though I take heart from the fact that he said "if there are weak stories..." (My emphasis). Where I differ from him is in his implied criticism of the book as containing too many of the same names as before, being doom-laden and something of an **Interzone** clone.

The first might be due to there being only a

small pool of writing talent to draw from, but in any case, David Garnett can only accept what he receives (unless he were to write the whole thing himself -- which he doesn't). He is a damned good editor though; he helped my story in **New Worlds 2** to be a hundred times better than what I originally sent him and my writing has -- believe it or not -- tightened up considerably as a result of that experience). If it happens that the same people keep submitting... For instance, I was more likely to turn to David with a new story rather than to places which have only rejected previous efforts.

Ian complains the book abounds with futility and despair. I think this is simply a reflection of the times. (Consider 'Horse Meat' -- admittedly an **Interzone** offering.) I would like to write uplifting, life-affirming SF but sometimes the story just doesn't come out that way, the idea *demand*s it doesn't. Having said that, it could be argued that 'This is the Road' ends hopefully. (It might be forlorn, but it's still hope.)

As for **Interzone**, it has been setting the climate for British SF for so long now, is it surprising that similar types of story get written? Given that it's your market, not to mention your main short story influence for so many years, how can you help being affected by it?

Still, I don't think the criticism holds. There is a distinctive feel to a **New Worlds** that is different from **Interzone**'s. This probably boils down to editorial presence and preference. David Garnett took a chance on me, for example. With his retirement, **Interzone** -- give or take an intermittent **REM** or **The Lyre** -- is all we've got. Considering that I've not (yet) cracked **Interzone** where do I turn? You may not be getting any more letters from me!

Making Whoopee

From Philip Muldooney, Plymouth

An absence of letters indeed: Perhaps it has something to do with tight deadlines or



something. It does take a little while to inwardly cogitate and digest the contents of **Vector**. To get a letter back within a week is quite hard going.

Whoopie! My favourite pastime is back! Hunt the obscure, out-of-print book, given the rave review. The haunting of second hand bookshops by unrequited fans is here again! There does seem to be a certain nostalgia creeping back into British SF magazines. What with **Interzone** full of refugee articles from the doomed **Millemium** (??? Maybe **Mililon**? CC). On obscure notes on Victorian/Edwardian writers; now an article on GK Chesterton nonetheless. Has this anything to do with the coming turn of the century? The review and interview with an Australian authoress published only in Australia is a little frustrating. I dearly love Steve Jeffery's parting sally. "Definitely recommended, if you can find a copy". Indeed if only one could... To put the icing finally on the cake, we have a review

from Ben Jeapes, of an obscure bit of Cardian religious propaganda, that the Card completist that he is, even he had failed to get his hands on for a long time! So which Forbidden Planet do you find your books?

Is it an indication of what is going on within the publishing field, that in Paperback Graffiti, on loose definitions, of the 30 or so books reviewed, 24 are in the Horror/ Fantasy/ Sword&Sorcery area, and only 6 or 7 within the SF area. Moreover, of those few, 2 are **Star Trek** books and another the **Alien** omnibus. Given that paperback graffiti is a reasonable snapshot of the paperbacks that have been published over the past few months, that is a very dire indication of how SF in general is doing in the market place. Or are there other factors skewing the view?

I like the differing layout that you have adopted within the First Impressions reviews. It makes for interesting contrasts, and does indeed break up the monolithic columns quite nicely. The longer reviews are able to deal with the more interesting books with the space that they deserve. Of course, who decide on the "interesting" books is a salient point. (I do CC).

I get the feeling that **Barbed Wire Kisses** needs to be revamped slightly. The original idea was excellent, in that there is nobody reviewing the magazines. However, maybe because Maureen is doing too much of it herself, the whole thing is just becoming too wordy. The two page review of indifferent stories from **Amazing** is a case in point. Trouble is, there is not a lot original to say on meidocrity and Maureen is sure taking a long time to say it. Paul Kincaid spends another long time whetting one's appetite for the critical magazines, and then gives no bibliography, or any idea of how to get the magazines. It is to assume too much, that every reader is deeply into the critical fanzine field, and will know where to get them.

Political Correctness is a beastie of many different hues, some of which are somewhat disturbing. The tabloids get the intermittent belly-laughs with the ham-handed euphemising language that comes as part of the baggage. The local Plymouth Council was

Vector

Production Editor

still required:

contact me

at the address on the
inside page

fairly typical of the ilk, when the word 'manage' and 'manager' were declared verboten on council documents. Never mind, that the Latin derivation of the word has nothing to do with gender. The terms for race are such a scattering of eggshells, that one needs a dictionary of acceptable racial terms to be sure of not offending. 'Black' is now verging on an insult, how long will it be before the present PC term 'Afro-Caribbean' follows it?

The original motives behind PC were -- as they usually are -- of the highest. The endemic racism and anti-feminism within society has had to be challenged by the strongest methods. Trouble is, it has been corrupted into the "if you're not for us you're against us" syndrome, and minor deviations from the strictures of correctness bring dire consequences. It has become partially transformed into a hydra-headed monster, where the truly liberal tendencies within its tenets, have started to become tablets of stone. Beware, when the rebels do conquer the citadel! The victims become just another variant of oppressor.

One gets this vague feeling about SF within the intelligentsia. Because of its history and the strong libertarian and masculine tendencies that there have been within it, it is just not quite acceptable. Mind you, given that, SF has always been on the outside looking in, perhaps that is not a bad idea.

I got this feeling from the quote at the end of your editorial. The reinterpretation of SF from the politically correct line! All that nasty masculine technology has gone the way of the world and the truth is now dawning. Ursula LeGuin -- she did her best work twenty years ago. Margaret Atwood and Marge Piercy? Hardly leading lights of the genre, more PC acceptable visitors who wave their just-visiting-jail-cards only too clearly! What about all those brilliant women who have enlarged and enriched the SF genre with a brilliant handling of SF tropes: Connie Willis, Pat Murphy, Pat Cadigan, Nancy Kress, CJ Cherryh, Sheri Tepper, Kate Wilhelm, Lois McMaster Bujold... You could go on with a very long list indeed. Is it just that handling SF from within you are not PC?

On the other hand, it was not too long ago that Raocoon Sheldon felt that she had to use the masculine James Tiptree to handle the themes that she used within the SF field.

The classic reprint was a good idea, especially one with the quality of Nick Lowe's effort, which was still very funny. Perhaps it is also an indication that a certain ring of the changes in format might be a good idea. The classic reprint only got in because a slipped disc... It would have been much the same formulation as before. With the editorship of **Matrix** changing, the time might have come to look at the relationship between the two magazines. For instance, a regular film column might not go amiss in **Vector**, the film reviews are always seemingly a little haphazard in **Matrix**. Would Paperback Graffiti go better in **Matrix**, perhaps as an overall realignment of the book coverage within the two magazines. Certainly the coverage between **Matrix** and **Vector** has become a little standardised, maybe there is room for some change.

Fabulation, Magic Realism, Speculative Fiction, Science Fiction, the names and labels

seem to come and go over the years, but we still do not seem to be able to get rid of that old umbrella term of Science Fiction. Hugo has a lot to answer for...

Thanks again for an interesting read, more power to your word processor.

Notices

From Ringpull Press

Ringpull Press, the first British mass-market publishing company ever to have been set up outside London, is looking for new science fiction/ horror/ fantasy writing. We hope to launch our new list at Intersection, the 1995 World Con in Glasgow.

I have just returned from the Souwester EasterCon and was amazed at the positive reaction from fans of Jeff Noon's **Vurt**. It seems that fans are crying out for new and exciting British science fiction and reading through some of the fanzines, it is obvious that the talent is there and our job is to provide the link between the two. Already we have been sent fantasy, graphic novels, horror, cyberpunk, and multi-media novels -- the possibilities are infinite.

Ringpull have no formulae or author guidelines as such; our publishing criteria is simple -- we publish what excites us. If a book makes us stay up all night to read it, unwilling even to answer the phone, and then rave endlessly about it to the distraction of our family, friends and pets, then we publish.

If writers wish to submit their work for consideration we prefer to receive the first two chapters initially along with a synopsis and return postage. Please send all work to:

Kirsty Watt, Ringpull Press Ltd,
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Letters deadline

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First Impressions

Reviews of Hardback & Paperback Originals

Edited by Catie Cary

Isaac Asimov
The Complete Stories, Volume Two
Harper Collins, 1994, 550pp, £16.99
 Reviewed by Cherith Baldrey.

This book is the second volume of short stories in what will eventually be a series representing the whole of Asimov's fiction, and covers over thirty years of Asimov's writing, from 1941-1976. The first volume in this series reproduced three complete collections; the rationale behind the present selection is less obvious, assembling material from several earlier sources, in particular **Buy Jupiter**, **Asimov's Mysteries**, and **The Bicentennial Man**. The choice does not seem to be governed by the date of first publication, or by the theme, there are one or two oddities, such as printing **Anniversary** without its earlier and to some extent explanatory twin **Marooned off Vesta**, or in offering some of the later post-robotic robot stories without, as yet, any of the earlier ones. The only information given is the date of copyright. Since most of these stories appeared originally in magazines, and their publishing history must be by now extremely complex, I would have appreciated some indication of where the stories come from and why these particular stories have been placed together.

This may seem to be unnecessary carping, because surely most readers are familiar with Asimov's output anyway, and none of this material is new. But there are new readers, particularly as Asimov appeals to young people making their first forays into adult science fiction. To place, without comment or explanation, the early and rather clumsy **The Hazing** in the same volume as the relatively late **Bicentennial Man** — a story which was one of Asimov's own personal favourites — is unhelpful to say the least, both to the reader and to Asimov's position in the SF canon. Asimov is not perhaps a writer whose work will be the province of scholars — though I bet

there's someone out there beavering away on a thesis — but I think he deserves some attempt on the part of his editors to place his work in context.

So what is here? Some of the most intriguing stories are the clutch from **Asimov's Mysteries**, in which he attempts to marry the genre of SF with the classic detective story. In the original collection, Asimov ponders on the difficulty of combining the whodunit's concept of fair play with the conventions of SF and concludes that it is possible to do so if the futuristic concepts are presented clearly to the reader. The results are demonstrated in the three Wendell Urth stories (the fourth, **The Dying Night** appeared in Vol 1), notable for the creation of an eccentric amateur 'tec, and in the sardonic **Obituary**. There is also the one short story that Asimov wrote about Elijah Baley and R. Daneel Olivaw, another SF mystery. Asimov was fascinated by the conventions of the detective story, and wrote one pure, non-SF, example of the genre, **Authorised Murder**. Some of his later mystery writing — the **Black Widowers** stories, for example — rely to much on puns and word-play, but these earlier stories have more substance.

This is an attractive book which should win Asimov some new fans as well as giving established readers a chance to find material otherwise out of print.

Ben Bova
Death Dream
NEL, 646pp, 1994, £5.99
 Reviewed by Alan Johnson

Death Dream is Ben Bova's latest blockbuster: backed up London underground advertising and a fat page count, it is aimed squarely at the impulse buyer, outward bound on a long flight or train journey, and looking for a page turner. If this is your intention, then this may be suitable, but if you are looking for cutting edge SF, you will be sadly

disappointed. Ray Bradbury's quotation on the front cover "I believe that the science fiction author who will have the greatest effect on the world is Ben Bova", has a distinctly hollow ring.

Death Dreams is a hi-tech thriller, in which combat aviation and the educational and entertainment applications of Virtual Reality are examined, along with the obligatory peek at cybersex, in a rollercoaster of conspiracy, betrayal and murder. The main thread of the story involves Jace Lowery, the archetypal techno-nerd programmer, who is the brains behind various VR applications, and Dan Santorini, steady family man, who complements the wayward genius, enabling the creative insights of Jace to be realised. Santorini is recruited by ParaReality, after Jace had left the project that they were working on, improving the realism of combat flight simulators, to assist on a project to produce a Virtual Reality theme park. The company's aim is to produce a range of virtual experiences intended to rival DisneyWorld. The stakes are high, with the promise of potential billions in revenue and patents. In addition, ParaReality's computers are linked to a local school which acts as a test bed for educational applications of VR, another possible goldmine.

When a pilot dies in Santorini and Lowery's simulator, and Santorini's daughter has a nightmarish experience in a VR 'game', it becomes apparent that all is not well in the Virtual Wonderland. Add to this industrial espionage, government conspiracy, and several psychotic individuals, and you have a cross between **Lawnmower Man**, and **Wild Pains**. So far, so good you may feel, and if one was looking for a script for a more accessible **Wild Pains**, this might be acceptable, and indeed the story is written and paced as if it was intended as a screenplay, but it is seriously flawed at several levels. Firstly, the characters are well detailed, with thumbnail sketches throughout the text, but they are so extreme as to become mere parodies. The description of Jace as a product of the video-game generation, producing a sociopathic obsessive, is such a cliché as to be laughable. The company chairman with (virtual) paedophile tendencies, and the ultra-macho Air Force Lt Colonel, tend to reinforce rather than dispel a feeling of cartoon cut-outs being moved around on a game board, rather than a story unfolding. Secondly, the whole premise of the book, that of a lone individual being able to single handedly develop and perfect the technology described, is not only unrealistic, it stretches the suspension of disbelief to breaking point. The plot rattles along at a fair pace, with layers upon layers of plot unfolding towards the inevitable confrontation, and the obligatory happy ending, but it left this reader with the feeling of déjà vu.

Bova obviously has set out to explore the myriad possibilities that Virtual Reality may offer in the near future, but seems to have little real concept of the way that it will be implemented and used, he has chosen to stress the tabloid newspaper view of VR rather than a more reasoned exploration of the theme. Whereas last year saw a crop of Martian novels (including one from Bova), I'll

predict now that more VR based novels will follow this, but hopefully few will be as disappointing.

Pat Cadigan Fools

Harper Collins, 1994, 299pp, £4.99
Reviewed by Paul Kincaid

What is it that makes us who we are? Does memory define identity? If so, what if the memories are false, or are imposed from outside?

This breakdown of identity in a post-modern world has been one of the key, if under-stated themes of cyberpunk. Time and again designer drugs and plug-in memories distort our impression of a consistent human identity. Pat Cadigan is the writer who has played most consistently with this enhanced schizophrenia, and in **Fools** she takes it to its logical extreme. For in this novel even the characters have lost track of who they are, and the disorienting quest which provides the focus is not a search to understand one's world but to understand one's self.

Marva is an actress, Marcelline is a memory junkie, Marya is an undercover cop. They all occupy the same body, mostly unaware of each other, and so many memories have been jacked into the one person that it is impossible to tell which if any of the personalities is "real". But as the character tries to sort through who she is, Marva remembers a murder, Marcelline is pursued by assassins, and Marya is isolated not knowing who to trust.

It is a gripping drama, because each character must fight for survival within the one body, not knowing who she is fighting but devoutly certain that she is the only real person. And this struggle reflects the wider disintegration of identity in the seamy world that Marva/marcelline/Marya inhabits. For here memories are taken like drugs, and supplied by an underworld of mind-pirates and brainsuckers. Everybody is multiple, nobody is the same. The whole world has become an asylum for the schizophrenic and the brain-damaged, and where identity is so malleable, what of truth, what of reality?

Everything is relative, everything is uncertain, and if observation itself changes the thing observed, what happens if the observer changes also? As changes in typeface signal sudden shifts from Marva to Marcelline to Marva, so we must begin again trying to make sense of this world from another perspective. Perhaps it is impossible to make the world coherent and sensible.

On one level this is an excellent thriller: fast-paced, unrelenting, dispensing paranoia and mystification like confetti. On another level it is a witty and stylish romp through a world gone mad. But underneath it all it is a challenging and disturbing account of what it is to lose track of who we are. Identity is the last commodity, this is how it might be bought and sold.

Tony Daniel Warpath

Millennium, 1993, pp.295, £14.99
Reviewed by Maureen Speller

In June 1991, **Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine** published a story by Tony Daniel, 'Candle', which struck me as exceptional. Its premise, that somehow Mississippian Indians had found the secret of space travel centuries before the white man, through the use of mysterious entities called chocalacas carried in a special clay called Loosa, appealed to my sense of the perverse. Who could resist the thought of space travel by canoe, and the expressions on the white settlers' faces when they once again discovered that the Indians had got there first? The other half of the premise was that people would also be transmitted over vast distances, copied as algorithms which would then be reconstituted. The narrator of 'Candle' was just such an entity: Will James, small town newspaper editor and observer of life on Candle, as well as friend to its Wanderer, the Indian Thomas Fall.

I remember thinking at the time that there was material here for a novel and Tony Daniel did not disappoint me, at least not insofar as he expanded the novella into a novel, **Warpath**. However, something went wrong in the process and the richness and variety of the novella has not transmitted itself to the novel, which remains puzzlingly flaccid, somehow lacking in substance. The story is strong enough. As was hinted in the novella, a way had been found of duplicating and trapping the chocalaca entities who guide and protect the Indians in the space voyages, and a copy of Raej, the entity accompanying Thomas Fall, has been stolen. Thomas and Will travel in pursuit of Corazon, the thief, who is at the heart of a massive conspiracy to appropriate the supplies of Loosa clay for the Clerisy, the vast clerical organisation which jockeys for power in the universe alongside the manufacturing combines like Westpac.

The action, though, is very jerky, with a clear break between the original novella and the rest of the story, which itself fractures when Thomas and Will return briefly to Earth. There are moments when the story flags completely and Daniel can almost be seen to cast around for a new direction. This creates unwarrantable interludes in what ought to be a much faster-moving drama. Yet there are undeniably poignant moments, when Candle is almost destroyed in the battle between Indians and settlers; when Will finally loses contact with his Earth love, Sarah, who had arrived on Candle as a weather-controlling algorithm. Tony Daniel has all the right bits but somehow they just haven't been fitted together properly, much as sometimes happens to the algorithm personalities. There is much in this novel to commend but the reader will have to be patient with the flaws. In the meantime, I keenly await Daniel's next work.

Barbara Erskine
Midnight is a Lonely place
HarperCollins, 1994, 429pp, £14.99
Reviewed by Tanya Brown

Somewhere on the desolate Essex coast a grave has lain, forgotten, for centuries. Now the rising sea, together with the unprofessional ministrations of troubled teenager Alison, is uncovering the grave's secrets — and awakening those who wish those secrets to remain hidden.

Meanwhile, best-selling biographer Kate Kennedy (a woman so uncertain of her own identity that she frequently addresses herself in the third person) has fled from a doomed love affair to the imagined solitude of north-east Essex. But there is something nasty on the beach, and in the woods, and in the cottage where she is vainly attempting to complete her biography of Lord Byron. Together with assorted natives and yokels, she is drawn into a tangled web of romance and deceit.

Barbara Erskine has found a lucrative theme — the eternal triangle echoing through time — and she's more than willing to come up with another variation. **Midnight is a Lonely Place** has the ingredients of a true Gothic romance — the windswept setting, the ancient feud, the power of evil and the love which is stronger than death. Erskine's evocation of the past may well be historically accurate — it's really too intimate and personal for one to be able to argue with it — and the plot builds subtly to a mildly chilly denouement. There are some interesting, if undeveloped, thoughts on existence and motivation after death. But the characters, present and past, are two-dimensional, and it's difficult to care whether the forces of evil win or not — although one cannot help but admire the ingenuity of a ghost who can cut off Kate's phone line immediately after her paranoid phone conversations with her estranged lover or her sister, who is (conveniently) a Jungian psychologist.

If the novel has a specific fault, it is that there are simply too many words. In lieu of characterisation, we are shown the minutiae of each person's existence; from the process of making a maggot-free cup of chocolate, to Alison's taste in Music To Excavate By. Perhaps because the characters have little inner life, their actions often appear illogical. This edition also bears the signs of desultory proof-reading: I object to having to work the grammar out for myself, even if that's more challenging than the plot. Despite the faults, though, it's a gripping read; Erskine's suspenseful style keeps the reader hooked right to the end, a talent which should be applauded. Just don't go looking for hidden depths.

Anne Gay
The Brooch Of Azure Midnight
Orbit, 1993, pp.455, £5.99

Anne Gay
Dancing On The Volcano
Orbit, 1993, pp.410, £15.99
 Reviewed by Maureen Speller

Probably the strangest puzzle about **The Brooch of Azure Midnight** is its very title. What does it mean? To judge from the chapter headings, the brooch is the novel itself, the different elements forming part of the whole, but only meeting in the clasp itself, the final section of the novel which ties everything together and pins it into place. Exuberant reviewers are fond of describing books as 'jewels'; this book really is intended as ornament as well as entertainment.

Does this literary conceit relate in any way to the substance of the novel. This is a more difficult question, one I'm not sure I can answer for you. My own feeling is, not directly, but the novel shifts and slides like a three-dimensional puzzle and perhaps the pieces will fall a different way in another reading.

At the heart of the puzzle are Jezrael and Chesarynth Brown, sisters but each of a very different nature. Chesarynth is a scholar who suffers desperately in the corrupt university system on Mars while her sister struggles to cope with a job that demands quantity rather than quality, while fulfilling her dream to be a laser dancer. When the leader of a troupe rejects her audition she sets off after Ches, only to find that she has disappeared. Neither of them realises that they are being manipulated by Karel Tjerssen, youngest member of the family which controls the use of spiderglass, a fabulous substance, hard as steel, soft as silk and almost indestructible. In his battle against the corrupt elements within the Combine, Karel has organised the lives and careers of the sisters to his own end but now they are aware that someone is manipulating them.

The story is densely plotted and, it has to be admitted, sometimes confusing in the first instance, although the section titles do provide clues as to where in the action we are. The reader must be quick-witted to slot together first time. Nevertheless, once the order is clear, the story is a satisfying tale with space opera sensibilities but a sharp eye for a tight plot. The flow of words is sometimes daunting, on occasion almost overpowering, so intense is Gay's desire to tell her story.

By comparison, **Dancing on the Volcano** is much leaner, almost terse in its use of language. Again, the theme, common to all three of Gay's books, concerns the wather and the watched, and she returns to a theme of her first novel, **Mindsail**, the totalitarian, conformist society. Here, we see Irona, a warden for the Synod which now rules Britain, who watches the world, seeking out and destroying rebels through a sophisticated network of electronic eyes and weapons. Yet Irona has her weakness, Twiss, a young man whom she allows to disobey the rules and whom she protects from capture. When her disobedience is discovered, they are sent, with other colonists, to the distant world of Harith, only to find themselves at the mercy of the

planetary authorities, who will not permit them food or shelter. Undaunted, the rebels dig in and fight back.

At this point, the story becomes curiously familiar to anyone who knows their Arthurian legends and, as inevitably as Arthur and Guinevere build their enchanted kingdom, only to watch it fall apart because there is no love between them and no further challenges for their people, so Twiss and Irona build their world and watch it crumble. The flourish in the face of adversity, create a strong and stable society on Harith but then, when there is nothing left to fight for, the society disintegrates. Having discovered that something in the planet's atmosphere has also made them immune to illness, the colonists court disaster by dancing on the thin skin of the volcano, the only thrill left to them.

Of the two books, I prefer **Dancing on the Volcano** for its evocation of an underdog society which succeeds against all the odds but which, unlike so many genre novels, does not offer a happy ending as the palliative solution. Instead, we see human nature as it so often is in reality, motivated by constant threat, dwindling away in the face of perfection.

Kathe Koja
Bad Brains
Millennium, 1993, 367pp, £4.99
 Reviewed by Andrew Seaman

Austen Green's life is in tatters, estranged from his wife, Emily, and his career as a painter stalled by artist's block things seem incapable of getting any worse. Until, that is, he takes a tumble in the parking lot of a store and suffers a severe injury to his head. Hospitalised, his seemingly routine recovery is marred by a series of fit-induced visions of increasing severity. His epilepsy controlled by medication he is released from hospital ostensibly a cured man, but the visions persist. Disowned by the medical profession as his concern becomes an obsession he finally embarks on a quest across America, culminating in a tragic denouement which provides an answer of sorts to the mystery of his illness.

This bald synopsis does little justice to the elegant and eloquently terrifying tale of existential horror that Koja weaves around Austen's misfortune. Although a kind of supernatural rationale for the events of the novel is finally offered, the novel is far more satisfyingly real as an all-too plausible chronicle of one man's descent into madness. As in her equally excellent novel, **Skin**, any nominal genre elements are firmly subordinate to the horror inherent in everyday existence — the nightmare of Austen's incapacitation and inequities of the American health-care system, the failure of his relationships with both his mother and Emily and his ultimate betrayal of all those who try to help him.

Conferred a visionary status by his illness Austen is ultimately unable or unwilling to relinquish it. Again, as in **Skin** (and, for that matter, her first novel **The Cipher**), Koja is exploring the sometimes perilously thin line between creativity and madness, addressing the question of just how far people are prepared to go in pursuit of their dreams and

obsessions, freed from the constraints of conventional morality by the circumstances of his illness Austen, like Bibi the dancer in **Skin**, attempts to transcend the mundane in the secret hope that in his visions lie the answer to all his problems. In doing so he places himself beyond any hope of the redemption that Koja seems to hint lies in the friendship and humanity of the people who accompany him on his quest. The poetic intensity of Koja's prose makes Austen's compact with madness seem almost seductive, lending the entire novel an unsettling hallucinatory power and clarity akin to a vivid recollection of a fever dream, but we are left in no doubt about the terrible price to be paid for such glimpses into the psychological abyss. In a field notorious for its conservatism Koja is one of the few writers exploring the frontiers of human experience with such genuine insight and imagination and we should all be applauding her efforts to breathe new life into a largely unadventurous genre.



Kathe Koja
Skin
Millennium, 1993, 309pp, £4.99
 Reviewed by Tanya Brown

Skin is set on the margins of an undefined society. There is no music, no literature; only the relentless beat of the dancer's drums and the sick journalism of reviews and interviews concerning the protagonists. There is no distinguishing feature in the dirty post-industrial city where Tess raids scrapyards for her sculpture, and Bibi slides through the clubs and bars like a knife through flesh, drinking ice water.

At the outset of the novel, Tess is drifting. Her scrap-metal sculptures have not won critical acclaim, but that doesn't concern her. She is searching for movement, a way to capture the fluidity of molten metal. Into her life stalks Bibi, dancer and kinetic artist; the force of will behind *tanzplagen* (torture dance) group, the 'fiercely feminist' Surgeons of the Demolition. Tess is drawn into the group, her sculptures (violent and feminine: madame lazarus, Dolores Regina, Sister Jane) given movement to join the dance. At first Tess is

appalled when Bibi comes away bleeding from each show, her wounds self-inflicted on the sharp edges of the tress's sculptures; but there is a synergy, a mutual inspiration, between them, and the blood becomes somehow irrelevant.

Then a Surgeons show goes wrong, and Tess and Bibi are plunged into a more human, claustrophobic void in which neither is capable of conscious creativity. Bibi, unable to perform, makes her own body an infinitely personal work of art, with piercing and scarification. Tess watches; repelled by and drawn to what she cannot understand, while her sculptures rust in the rain and she becomes muse and mentor to a trio of younger artists.

To them, and between them, comes Michael; beautiful and gentle, helping each woman to overcome her crisis of confidence, her loss of direction. But perhaps Michael is not as detached as he seems. Without artistic talent himself, he is a self-appointed catalyst, helping others to express their art. He encourages Tess to let her sculpture evolve to its extreme. When she will not accept his guidance he turns his attention to Bibi, who wants to perform her body art on other bodies; she thinks her artistic vision gives her the right. Tess thinks that's fascism. abandoned by Bibi, and repulsed by the growing perversity of Bibi's ideas, Tess is still fascinated — and inspired — by the sheer power of the other woman's obsession.

Skin is not a horror novel in the traditional sense, despite the comparisons with Lovecraft and Poe which adorn the cover. There is blood and cruelty, but Kojak's tense poetic prose skins over it, rather than lingering on every anatomical detail. The blood is not important; what matters is the art, what provokes it, and what happens when it becomes too close. Not an easy read, but perversely beautiful.

Thomas Ligotti

Noctuary

Robinson, 1994, 194 pages, £14.99

Reviewed by Steve Jeffery

Thomas Ligotti is hailed as a new master of the horror genre, a voice that is at once startling and original and at the same time firmly embedded in the tradition of Poe and Lovecraft.

Noctuary is Ligotti's third collection, following his small press debut, **Songs for a Dead Dreamer** (Silver Scarab Press, 1985) and **Grimscribe** (Carroll and Graf, 1991). Ellen Datlow, in her **Year's Best Fantasy and Horror** introductions to his earlier stories, describes his style as "baroque and complicated", a description that applies equally well to the stories here.

There is a concern, recurrent in these stories, of the shifting and breakdown of surfaces to hint at or reveal glimpses of darker shadows beneath: "an awkward or expert fussing with the facades of objects" ('The Spectral Estate'). His protagonists inhabit a crumbling arch-gothic of dark empty estates and mansions, unlit alleys in the deserted parts of town, shrouded in dank mist and writing formless shadows. Invariably, they are victims, haunted loners who move in a twilight world between the seen and the unseen, and who know both too much and too

little to ensure their own safety.

Here too, in many of the stories in **Noctuary**, another of Ligotti's preoccupations shows through. That of masks, and dolls and puppetry; of things that look out behind these inhuman faces and jerk the strings in a mocking semblance of life.

To a large extent then, your enthusiasm for **Noctuary**, and for Ligotti's work in general, will depend on your sympathy for what might best be termed 'traditional' horror, the gothic darkness and ancient nameless evil of Lovecraft and Poe. Ligotti himself makes no secret of his forebears; one of his earliest stories, 'The Last Feast of Harlequin' (F&SF 1990) is both dedicated to the memory of H P Lovecraft and a tribute to 'The Conqueror Worm'.

Ligotti alludes to this himself in his foreword, 'In The Night, In The Dark: A Note on the Appreciation of Weird Fiction', when he speaks of an "optimal receptiveness...if such a story is read at the proper time and under the proper circumstances".

Perhaps these stories are best read while alone, in a slightly unsettled frame of mind, with the lights low and the house making strange noises in the night.

It is not a condition always granted to a reviewer with a deadline, however, and taken together many of these stories blur into a sameness, a repetition of mood and plot, that inures rather than unsettles. Bored, even, as the limited range of Ligotti's imagination of dark horrors becomes almost trite: "a sham of menace that has no life and deceives no one" ('New Faces in the City').

Matters are not helped either by Ligotti's deliberately archaic, mannered style, that can descend, too frequently, to such appallingly clunky constructions as "He said he had brought his son to the right place, but he had in fact brought him to a place that was entirely wrong for the being that he was." ('The Tsalal').

If I was kind, I might suspect this of being a parody; a pastiche of Lovecraft as written by Hemingway. Frankly, it is tedious, and as the longest story here it breaks the back of the book.

Noctuary is, in fact, oddly constructed. It is divided into three sections: 'Studies in Shadow', 'Discourses on Blackness' and 'Notebook Of The Night', which more or less set the theme of the contents.

While 'The Tsalal' runs to some 33 pages, 'Notebook Of The Night' contains 19 vignettes, only one, 'The Spectral Estate', above three pages in length. The shortness of these sketches precludes any real development of plot or story.

The more successful stories lie somewhere between these two extremes. Where characters can be introduced and allowed some illusion of independence before the puppet strings are violently tugged back to consign them to an inevitable fate of madness or death.

Anne McCaffrey

Lyon's Pride

Bantam Press 1994, 316pp, £14.99

Reviewed by Vikki Lee

Lyon's Pride is the fourth volume in 'The

Tower And The Hive' series and follows on from **Damia's Children**. The galaxy is threatened by a race of insectoid aliens and humans have joined forces with the Mrdini, a race that has fought the 'hivers' for centuries, to try and discover where they come from and possibly to communicate with them in order to show them the error of their 'colonising' ways.

Damia's children, Laria, Thian, Zara and Rojer overcome all obstacles by using their 'Talents' of telepathy, empathy and teleportation, the hivers continue to elude and little more is learnt about them than has already been learnt in the previous three books, and the Mrdini have firmly established themselves as little more important or useful than 'pets'.

Having read a great deal of Anne McCaffrey's numerous novels over the years, and generally enjoyed them, this series is a major disappointment. The Mrdini, for some reason, all have names without vowels (maybe this was explained in an earlier book in the series?) and I found names like Pirtgltm and Gktmglt not only impossible, but downright distracting. I spent half of the time treating the names as acronyms and inventing things like 'Giant Kipper Teams Make Gigantic Loads Not Tenable' in order to keep my flagging interest up. It would appear that the typesetter of this book also had trouble with these names judging by the number of times they were mis-spelt throughout.

I don't know how many books this series will eventually run to, but at the current ratio of 'events' per book, it looks as if it might be several more novels yet. It's a shame really, because I was originally interested enough in the hivers to want to find out more about them - I've totally lost interest!

Anne McCaffrey

& Jody Lynne Nye

Treaty Planet

Orbit, 1994, 441pp, £16.99

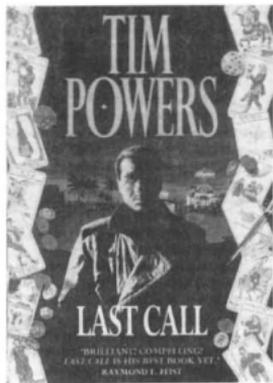
Reviewed by Lynne Bispham

Treaty Planet is the third novel set on the planet Doona where both human and alien, cat-like Hrubran colonists live in peaceful co-existence.

Todd Reeve, who played a central role in the events depicted in **Decision At Doona** and **Crisis on Dona**, and is now co-leader of the colony, finds himself arguing against the majority of colonists who want to build a free trade and space port on Doona — Todd feels this would invalidate the original **Decision** that the planet should remain uncommercialised. Before Todd and the Hrubran Hrress's twenty-seven-year-long friendship is ruined by their disparate views on the spaceport, negotiations are interrupted by the arrival in orbit around Doona of an immense spaceship. The inhabitants of the ship prove to be the massive, bear-like Gringg, a peaceful race, anxious for trade, cultural exchange and the chance to go swimming. Todd and Hrress's friendship is repaired by the need to establish communications with the newcomers, but whilst Todd, Hrress and most of the colonists are thrilled by this contact with a third sentient race, others see the Gringg as a threat. The military, both human and Hrubran, have classified information which they interpret as

evidence of the Gringg's hostile nature. Political ambition, plain greed and a meandering plot could well wreck Todd and Hrriss's diplomacy.

By now, the main characters that appear in this series of novels are well-established and, as new characters from Earth and Hrruba are introduced, there is less emphasis on Todd and Hrriss's friendship and, thankfully considerably less of the mawkish sentimentality that ran through *Crisis*. **Treaty Planet** is, however, about as far away from the cutting edge of SF today as you can get. A scenario which sets independent, right-thinking individuals who hold out the hand of friendship to aliens against in flexible bureaucrats and military who, desperate to follow "standard procedure", would rather shoot first and ask questions later, is hardly unknown in this genre or others. Basically the novel is a throwback to the days when SF characters wore "wrist chronometers" and aliens had odd names, superior technology and were unable to master English syntax. Ground-breaking stuff it ain't, but if the other Doona novels enjoy this, sort of SF, then you will most likely enjoy this, because it is more of the same.



**Tim Powers
Last Call**

Harper Collins, 1993, 638pp, £4.99
Reviewed by Norman Beswick

Professional poker players tend to be superstitious. Playing cards remind us of fortune-tellers, and the Tarot pack. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* includes the Fisher King, and Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyant, with her "wicked pack" of Tarot cards advising, "Fear death by water". Take all these elements and more, stir vigorously, and set your story in and around contemporary Las Vegas and the adjacent desert lands. If you are Tim Powers, the result is *Last Call*, and very impressive it is.

The story is packed with characters and you may even find it helpful to keep an indexed list, to help you sort your way through the densely complex plot. Basically we are following the trail of Scott Crane, one-eyed poker-player; his neighbour Mavranos, who

has terminal cancer and lives on six-packs; his foster-father Ozzie, who fostered small children after detecting their need by magical means; and Diana, also fostered by Ozzie, with whom Scott is very close.

Strange things happen around Crane: for instance, he is frequently visited (in the most matter-of-fact way possible) by the ghost of his former wife Susan, who even phones him up and takes him driving in her car. Ozzie has taught him to judge, by the direction of smoke rising above a poker table, which way the patterns of magic are shifting. He is inveigled into an occult version of the poker game called Assumption and slowly becomes involved in what turns out to be the struggle to overcome the current Fisher King, and be his successor.

All of these secret, magical events take place in a crumilly realistic Nevada, in motels, gambling clubs, desert wastes and modern highways traversed by the most ordinary American cars, vans and trailers. The people we meet may often seem mildly eccentric, quoting poetry to each other and sometimes shifting to different bodies, but like people in Tom Lehner's song, they're "just plain folks".

This formula, the slow emergence of the extraordinary out of rather drab "reality", is of course Tim Powers' well-tested procedure. By the time we reach the climatic chapters, we are prepared to accept wonders we would never have believed at the novel's beginning. We even accept (and it's a preposterous thought) that these are the people who would normally become symbolic figures like Fisher Kings and Queens.

The style is flat, matter-of-fact: the characters, no matter how unusual, are portrayed without excitement or build-up: which almost kids us that the dingy magic beginning to emerge is not that remarkable after all. There are chases, escapes, kidnappings, threats, killings, crucial games and encounters won by a hairsbreadth, but the author allows them to speak for themselves without overwriting. At the close, the winners are grumpily relieved rather than triumphant; we have reached a catharsis in keeping with the shabby, marginal existence they most of them lead.

The result is in its way, a tour-de-force and a remarkable example of the author's craft. One extraordinary sequence, where Crane is driven out into the desert by the ghost of first-wife Susan, who is either skeleton or fully fleshed according to how much beer Crane has drunk, attains a macabre power all of its own.

My only regret — perhaps because I was reading to meet a deadline — was the book's length. This is not for dipping into in between feeding the baby and putting on the washing, and ideally needs to read in sustained chunks at closely spaced intervals. And then, as I shall now, you'll want to go back over it again. What a blessed relief from routine sword-and-sorcery!

**Whitley Streiber
The Forbidden Zone
NEL, 1994, 309pp, £15.99
Reviewed by Martin Brice**

'Chi Chi' may not mean much in this country, but in Vietnam and America it has the same connotations of military horror and heroism as *verdun*, *Passchendaele* and *'Stalingrad'* have for French, British and German readers.

The tunnels of Chi Chi in Vietnam formed an underground stronghold with its own ammunition dumps (two or three clips of bullets or a grenade here and there), hospitals (equipment improvised from Coca Cola cans), and foodstocks (an occasional bag of mildewed, weevil-ridden rice). From these tunnels, handfuls of men, women and children emerged to prey upon the masses of men and materiel above. The Americans retaliated by dropping explosives down the ventilation shafts, pouring in flaming petrol, and pumping exhaust fumes through the system. When all else failed, lonely GIs had to crawl through the stygian, shoulder-wide warren in search of the invisible enemy, never knowing when he might meet him - or her - or put his hand on some excrement-poisoned punji-stake, or push his face into a basket of venomous insects. That is the background to this novel.

As a young girl, Loi had lived, fought and survived in the tunnels of Chi Chi. She is now the pregnant second wife of Brian Kelly, a university physicist who once worked on a secret government project, their neighbourhood policeman is Bob West who won the Congressional Medal of Honor in Vietnam.

One of the main themes of this book is whether the mutual respect of the two opposing Vietnam veterans, will be sundered by the terrible events which commence when a prehistoric mound starts emitting a woman's screams. From then on, the story hammers the reader with horror and hope denied. What are all these seductive but death-dealing happenings? Are they exaggerated but natural phenomena? Are they mental images created by long buried memories? Is the elusive Judge Broeck organising an erotic coven? Have Brian Kelly's experiments unlocked a time-gate summoning Lori's dormant demons? If so, do they desire Loi's unborn child? Can Evil ever be defeated? On a different level, is the novel an allegorical portrait of the claustrophobia of small-town life threatening to overwhelm and destroy Elien Maas, the big city journalist?

But for me, if it is meant to be allegory, then it is an allegorical picture of the real and imaginary horrors of Chi Chi, its very name conjuring up *Chthulhu*, the Old Ones of Evil, described by H.P. Lovecraft to whom this book was dedicated.

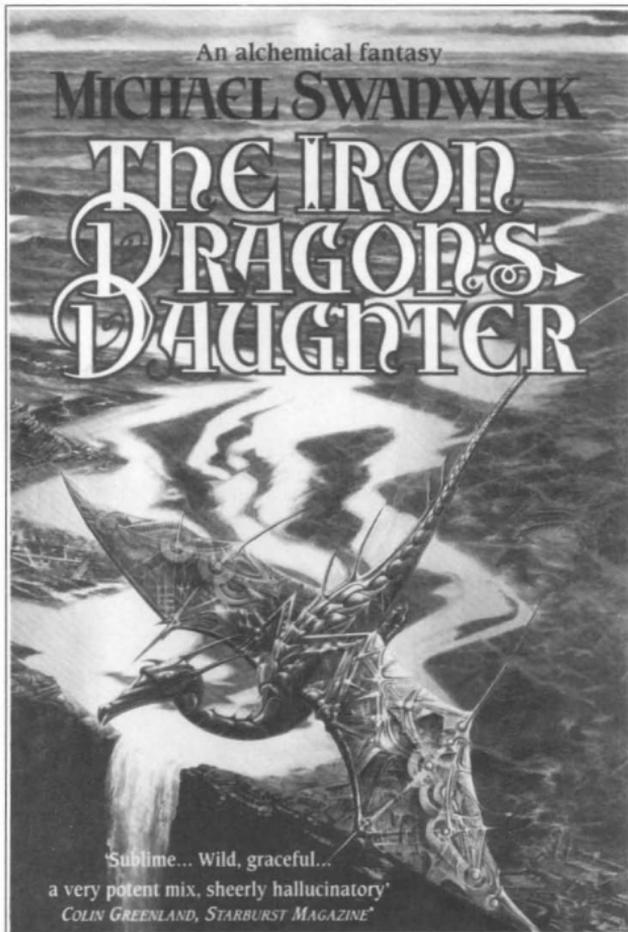
Michael Swanwick
The Iron Dragon's Daughter
Millennium, 1993, 343pp, £8.99
 Reviewed by Dave Langford

When John Crowley's *Little, Big* appeared in 1981, it carried (and has carried ever since) a commendation from Ursula Le Guin: 'a book that all by itself calls for a redefinition of fantasy.' This begs the question, of course ... can we have a redefinition when definition has always been elusive? It may be less so when John Clute has finished weaving the hypertextual Net To Catch Fantasy that will structure the coming Clute/Grant **Fantasy Encyclopedia**. For now let's say that, like *Little, Big* yet far removed from it, **The Iron Dragon's Daughter** gives one hell of a jolt to received ideas of what is possible in fantasy.

Swanwick's otherworld setting is simultaneously magical and steampunk-like, a dreamland ravaged by Industrial Revolution. Its opening sequence in the vast factory where iron dragons (cybermagical war machines) are made *seems* to cue a standard picaresque: when Jane the indentured changeling has flown an iron dragon to safety, she and it will have adventures at all the interesting places on the map, right?

In fact the dragon Melanchthon recedes for a time into the background, and Jane's story weaves on through a series of surprises. School life with a class of weirdly assorted nonhumans alternates with shoplifting down at the local mall, with fantasy and realism brutally interwoven. The child-catcher sent to retrieve Jane for the factory engages in a battle of electronic weaponry and countermeasures with the dragon, under the guise of a riddle game. A friend chosen for a year of bliss followed by glorious burning in a wicker cage is of course constantly appearing on TV (and hides a dirty little secret which in our own world, the other side of Dream Gate, could only be allegorical). The school principal's basilik provides one memorably nasty bit of description. In the next sequence at university, Jane's initiation into how alchemy really works — not to mention the real difference between exoteric and esoteric — has a bizarre ring of conviction. (Not to mention humour. I loved the passage where Jane and another female student discuss the essential giving of a name to their, ahem, found of sexual power: 'Siege Perilous', for example, or 'The Ineluctable Cavern of Despair'.) Swanwick's invention never flags, and there are plenty more ingenious set-pieces, outlined with hallucinated intensity.

Besides illuminations there are mysteries, lines of perplexity which all lead to Spiral Castle: not a castle but a singularity, a beginning and ending place, a multidimensional manifold supporting or enclosing the universe. One withered and blasted explorer lectures to the University about his disastrous expedition through Hell Gate also to Spiral Castle, with slides ... this is called the Deep Grammar lecture. Through tangles of space, time and reincarnation, people may have many simultaneous avatars, and in each section of the book Jane's life becomes tortuously entangled with a different boy/man who is always the same and always doomed. Other



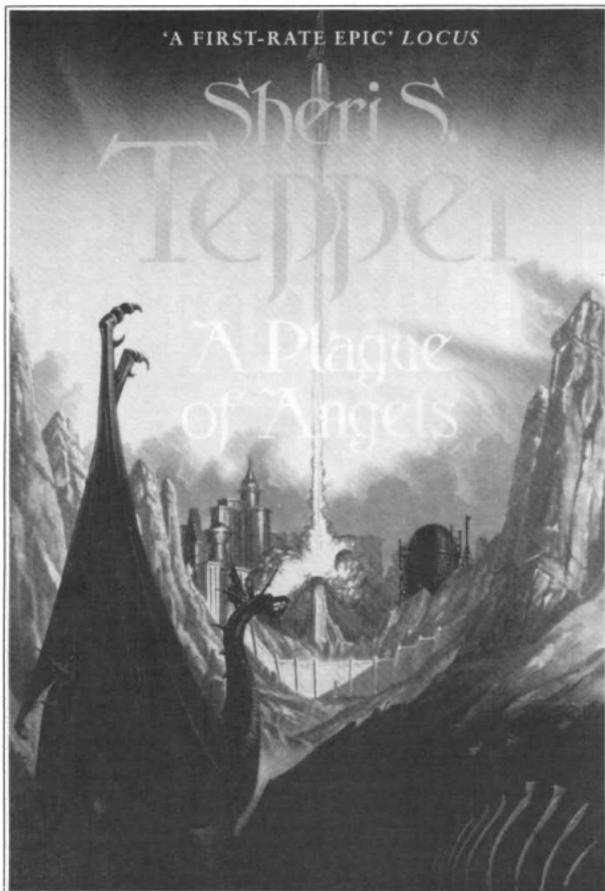
characters recur: one senile and ineffectual-seeming elf (elves are the upper class as always, and total bastards) keeps reappearing as something greater, while each new glimpse of Melanchthon shows him more powerful, ambitious and insane. The iron dragon manipulates Jane mercilessly; no longer a nice girl, she herself has become a dab hand at sexual manipulation and exploitation; the dragon (not her own) compels it.

In the end, the metaphysical connections with our own reality seem almost clear. The *awen*, the trance of inspiration, offers Dream-Gate visions and glossolalia from our world, its commercials, political slogans, historic phrases: 'one small step for man' ... there is an element of jokiness here and in some of the allusions to mythagos, Friar Bacon's Brazen Head, *Little, Big*, 1066 and All That, even one dread Lovecraftian tome. Swanwick oversteps just once, with a magic Word of Power which sacrifices everything for the

insider's giggle on realizing its syllables are acronyms — SF Writers of America Young-Auld Special Interest Group — oh, come off it!

Penultimately we follow Jane and Melanchthon through Hell Gate into chaos on an impossible mission of destruction, edge-of-the-seat pursuit and black betrayal. The conclusion takes us satisfyingly beyond Spiral Castle and an encounter with its Goddess. It ought to be read.

Indeed the whole of **The Iron Dragon's Daughter** should be read. It's garish, quirky and new. It will have imitators. Come back in a dozen years and we'll discuss whether it's lasted as well as *Little, Big* can be seen to have lasted today. Swanwick's chances look pretty good to me.



Sherri Tepper
A Plague of Angels

Bantam 1993, 423 pages, \$21.95
Reviewed by Steve Jeffery

About halfway down page 10, Sherri Tepper looks up from the page at her audience and places **A Plague of Angels** firmly into the real tradition of storytelling:

"Somewhere, of course, there had to be a Wicked Witch."

True storytelling rests on a game of collusion between storyteller and audience, a delicate balance between the familiar and the unexpected, where characters and situations can be both real and symbolic. The storyteller is allowed, even encouraged, to improvise (this is the area of her skill, after all), but not to break the trust and betray the story being told.

It starts on familiar ground. Abasio, a farmer's son, escapes to make his way to the

city, Fantis. On the way he encounters the old man taking a small girl child to the Archetypal Village, to be their Orphan. Later he gets a lift from a truck driver who is stopped and questioned by two mysterious and threatening walkers in black, demanding if anyone has seen a young girl child. Just inside the gates they see another procession, a tearful young Princess in crystal slippers being taken in a fairy tale carriage to another Archetypal Village. Which is the point at which Tepper introduces us to her Wicked Witch.

The Witch is Quince Ellel, head of clan Ellel, and controller of the inhuman walkers, and she is searching for a very particular child, one who will act as a human guidance system for the rebuilt last space shuttle.

Abasio joins a gang, the Purples, and gets caught up in their politics, intrigues and constant wars against the other Colours in the city, rising to a position of trust. But the chief's son is impotent, and the gang needs an heir.

When his virgin bride is kidnapped and tortured by the Greens, Abasio's rescue of Elick-Ann becomes a political embarrassment.

Meanwhile, Orphan is growing too old to be an Archetypal waif for much longer. Oracle urges her to leave the Village before the arrival of her replacement, who comes under an escort of Ellel's walkers.

Here, the storyteller's trust slips slightly, as we are asked to accept that Ellel's army of walkers can cross and recross the land for over a dozen years searching for a lone, fostered girl, and never make the obvious connection with an Orphan child growing up in one of the Archetypal Villages.

Orphan and Abasio are now both on the run, and their paths, of course, cross. They travel south as brother and sister across the border to the city of Artemisia.

Somewhere on the way they pick up Coyote, a talking animal, who seems to come from Oracle's legends of Coyote, Bear and Changing Woman.

So it's not a great surprise (except to the Artemisians) when Tepper introduces Bear to the plot. Or the fact that Oracle's last reading for Orphan, about her origin, is couched as a riddle, as seven questions to be asked. These are elements of traditional fairy tales or fantasies.

What is slightly more disconcerting in this setting is Ellel's army of rapidly malfunctioning robotic walkers, the rebuilding of the last space shuttle and Ellel's plan to use it to regain the high tech weaponry supposedly still in orbit in an abandoned space station.

Fantasy and science fiction mix, too, with goblins, ogres, enhanced animals and gene spliced gryphons prowling the land around cities that are riddled with the AIDS-like IDD1 plague, the mysterious Edges whose sheer walls are guarded by automatic laser cannon, and the legends of a vast Diaspora of most of humanity to the stars.

This fairy tale world has been, it seems, quite deliberately constructed at some point.

In the best fantasy tradition there is a capture (Abasio), a rescue, another capture (Orphan) and a siege, a reunion and preparations for a Final Battle. Which is where Tepper takes the tale and deftly twists it.

These things happen, but the outcome is not what we have been led to expect.

The solution behind Orphan's seven questions carries as much a message as Tepper's deliberate use and mixing of genre elements. With this end moral, reminiscent of the earlier **The Gate to Women's Country**, that men will always try to prove themselves as men, but women are equally culpable for their fostering and encouragement, Tepper maybe slips the storyteller's trust again in her desire to make a point.

A questionable point perhaps, but it doesn't detract too much from **A Plague of Angels** working on a number of levels, across fantasy, science fiction, fairy tale and fable, while asking questions about how they work, as stories, symbols and archetypes.

It may not always answer those questions, but **A Plague of Angels** stands as one of the most intriguing works of fantasy I have read for some time.

Freda Warrington
Sorrow's Light

Pan, 1993, pp.256, £8.99

Reviewed by Maureen Speller

Iolithe leads a simple life in Torlossen, as do all its inhabitants. Life is circumscribed by the presence of the Unseen in the Stolen Land, which divides Torlossen from its mother-kingdom and affects every aspect of its frugal economy. Summoned to witness the marriage of her cousin, Prince Tykavn, Iolithe unexpectedly finds herself nominated as a replacement bride when the Lady Antrid is murdered by the Unseen. Marriage to the Prince, much as she has always liked him, is not a success. In our world he would be described as a compulsive-obsessive, driven to repeat, over and over, the rituals surrounding the worship of Ama, in the belief that only through total perfection can he save the kingdom. Although Iolithe can see that this obsession is killing him, no-one shares her concern. Impulsively, she leaves the city to seek help from Tykavn's parents in Onafross, determining to cross the Stolen Land.

Her journey to Onafross and her subsequent return to Torlossen can best be described as a re-enactment of the myth of Ama, which informs every aspect of daily life. Ama's first consort was Sudema, the Evening Star, cast aside in favour of a more compliant wife because she would not be subservient to her husband. Like Sudema, Iolithe will not accept Ama's word without questioning the religion which has dominated Torlossen for centuries, outlawing the Unseen for no other crime than that they disagreed with disciples. Any resemblances to Christianity are not, I suspect, a coincidence.

Warrington's novel is deceptive. The conventional trappings of the fantasy novel conceal a powerful argument against an unquestioning acceptance of one faith above another and well illustrates the terrible lengths to which people will go to preserve a questionable status quo. Undeniably, there are occasional longueurs in the story-telling, especially in the lengthy sequence when Iolithe runs the hills as a deer for a season, but mostly Warrington keeps the story moving at a steady pace, capturing Iolithe's rising panic as she realises that no-one will accept her worries about Tykavn or her discoveries about the Unseen. The resolution, again unexpected and flouting the usual rules of fantasy, is extremely satisfying.

Ian Watson

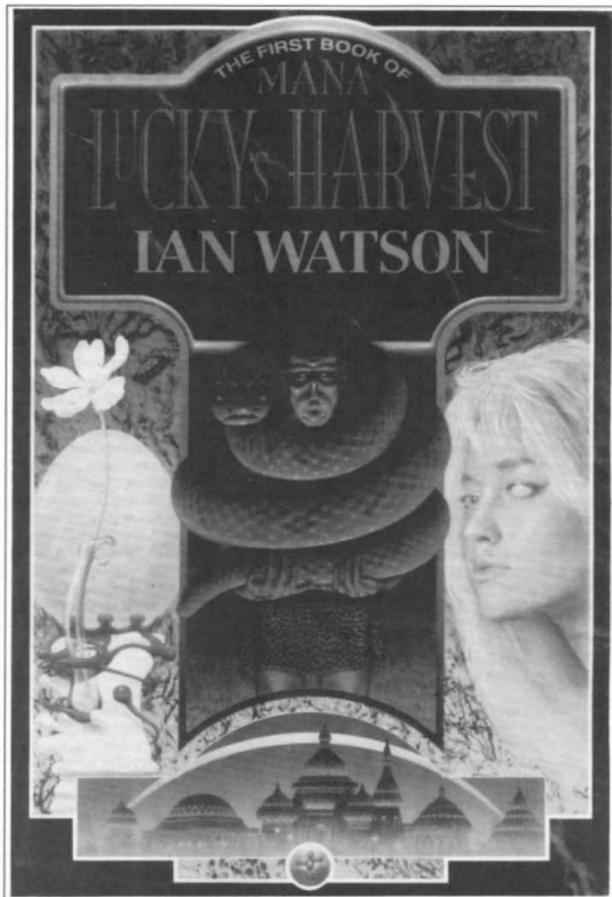
Lucky's Harvest:

The First Book of Mana

Gollancz, 1993, 537pp £15.99

Reviewed by KV Bailey

On page 395 there is a descriptive passage which is the subject of Jim Burns's jacket painting. A humanoid Jattahat servant has hoisted its serpentine Isi master to lie in coils about his body as though it were a great brass musical instrument. The Jattahat provides the speaking voice of the telepathic Isi creature. These bizarre symbols have been brought to the planet Kaleva. So, earlier, have humans, transported there through Mana-space. The



secret of this access was discovered by Lucky, a mining girl who first entered the Ukko asteroid — a rock "like an ear with great cavities and chambers and tubes and labyrinths", tunnels which contained ancient Isi skeletons. In all of this, communication, story-telling appears germane to the novel, as indeed it is to Finland's epic poem the *Kalevala* which here continually haunts and stimulates Ian Watson's imagination. Not that there are one to one correspondences, but varieties of shamanism permeate both poem and novel; they have in common character-names such as Sariola and Osmo; messenger birds, the cuckoos, fly through each; and, more than that, access to Kaleva is only given by the Ukko after Lucky tells it tales of a country she a space-dweller, only knows from holograms of landscapes — and these landscapes are those of the *Kalevala*, of "trees and lakes and rivers and fjords and islands and of ice and day-long wintry dark and night-time summer sun". the Ukko will

then take her (and earth colonists) to a world "sufficiently like that", whether it exists in the same galaxy or universe or not.

Lucky's Harvest (a harvest of long-life bestowing daughters born to Lucky, who becomes Lucky Sariola, Queen of Kaleva) is a work which like the *Kalevala*, achieves a unity despite being compounded of many diverse incidents and elements. There are in both works weddings and fights and lavishly described feasts; there is the magic of metal-smiths: there are metamorphoses and mutations. Communicating animals occur in each; so does a brother-sister motif. A difference is that in the Finnish folk epic the quest for the magical artefact, wamp, clearly unifies, whereas amid the novel's smelter of happenings, in which are mixed the primitive and the technologically advanced, the mythic and the science fictional, it is harder always to realise that all that is so seemingly contingent is moved and finds a unity in "mana". Perhaps the nature of this energising essence is best

expressed in the priest Serlachius's blessing: "Mana be with those who bespeak events into existence and with those who massage the muscles of the world."

That phrase "bespeak into existence" is symptomatic, the pleasures of **Lucky's Harvest** stem very much from Ian Watson's story-telling virtuosity. Though inter-related and caught up into the unity, there are episodes which have their own completeness and distinctive style — such as the tale, traditional and lyrical, of Eyeno's eyes. This was extracted for publication in **Interzone 75**. Similarly "complete" is the erotic half-romantic, half-classical story of the seduction of Lucky's daughter, Jatta. A further pleasure is Ian Watson's interspersed verse, spoken or sung by his characters. It does not ape that of the **Kalevala**, but at times it captures something of its mood, even when the favoured form is nearer to pop lyric.

How to place **Lucky's Harvest** in the context of Watson's output? Emblematic Lucky herself is less a Watson "heroine" than are some of her harvest. There are motifs that remind of **The Book of the River** sequence. It is a narrative as turning and branching as the Ukko caverns, which are its ultimate source — just as the cave of the black current was a source in the earlier work. Mana flows. In fact at one point Osmo sees himself as "master of the current of mana nad it, in turn, of him", the novel is often science-fictionally evocative, the asteroidal caves, the Isi remnants there with their trading potential, the very luck of Lucky, all these must surely stir Heechee memories. Demon Jack, Jatta's child, Lucky's grandson

("I'm wild because I was formed and born in the woods"), is archetypal — as is Julian May's similarly birthed Jack the Bodiless. We seem here to be happily into a genre-specific postmodernism, multi-layered through folk-tale, fairy -tale, pastoral, unrealistic anthropology, evolutionary fantasy, sapce opera — the lot.

**F Paul Wilson
Sister Night**

NEL, 1993, pp.315, £15.99

Reviewed by Maureen Speller

I often marvel at the patness of the fictional world. Problems are always resolved, one way or another. Unorthodox procedures are positively encouraged. It is taken as given that people connected with a mystery will try to solve it themselves rather than leaving matters to the appropriate authority. How unlike the loose ends of real life. Of course, this fictional neatness is intended to compensate for that, to fulfil our craving for order in the chaos. We accept its unreality even as we wish that life were really like that.

In forgiving stories for their improbable neatness, do we overlook other, less acceptable ideas. I can accept, for instance, that Kara Wade wishes to solve the mystery of her sister's death in a fall from a twelve-storey window, and to find out why Kelly led a double life as a whore. I can believe that she would enlist the help of her former lover, a New York policeman. I can even tolerate the fact that she will, in desperation, do some extremely foolish things in her search for an

answer.

What I can't accept is the way in which Wilson seems unable to allow her to fight her own battles. She is always, inevitably, beholden to men to rescue her, although she has usually coped well on her own beforehand and is clearly a strong and capable woman. It is ironic that she is as much a victim of those who support her as of the man who uses her as he used Kelly. Neither can I accept the enthusiasm with which Wilson describes Kara's humiliation by her attacker. We shouldn't be shielded from the unpleasantness of all but Wilson always seems to linger at the scene just a moment longer than is strictly necessary, as though operating on the principle that more is always better. In this case, it is literally so for Kara and Kelly are identical twins and the mysterious protagonist has stalked Kara precisely because of that resemblance. This, of course, provides Wilson with the opportunity to recapitulate Kelly's experiences in great detail. Critics advocate that authors show rather than tell but in this case brief descriptions would often have sufficed.

The blurb accompanying this novel describes it as Wilson's most erotic book. 'Erotic' implies pleasure but I found this book deeply disturbing in its assumptions about a woman's fictional role, and unpleasantly voyeuristic. The author invited me to collude but I was obliged to decline.

Paperback *Graffiti*

Edited by Stephen Payne

Signposts

Nancy Collins
Wild Blood

Strongly written, with attention-grabbing characters and a triple speed plot, *Wild Blood* has the impact of a sledgehammer on a skull. Not subtle, but very effective.
John D. Owen

D. G. Compton
Nomansland

An absorbing read, then, full of incident and with characters you care about.
Norman Beswick

Tony Daniel
Warpath

The novel is absorbing, intelligent and, above all, an imaginative feast. This is a high calibre debut novel, Daniel is a science fiction author to watch.
Chris Hart

Graham Joyce
House of Lost Dreams

House of Lost Dreams is a page-turner of the first order. Graham Joyce vividly brings to life the Greek island, and his rich observations extend to the principal characters too... a marvellous book. Highly recommended.
Andy Mills

Reviews

Michelle Abbott (Ed)
Out Of This World

Anchor Books, 1993, 175pp, £10.99
Reviewed by K. V. Bailey

An editor's Foreword says it contains "poetical musings" about science fiction film and tv programmes, and poems which "delve deeply into the infinities of the unknown". Both are attempted, but much is doggerel. Doggerel can be entertaining and some of this has the appeal of the naive. It is hard to resist verses that start: 'I still love you Captain Kirk / Even though / You're bursting through your shirt' (E. Thorpe). Many poems have the stamp of the juvenile; some are explicitly so labelled; others are by confessed or unmistakable trekkies. There are cries of nostalgia: 'I remember the Hartnell years', starts a piece by Kenneth Mood. Accomplished poets — Steve Bowkett, Steve Sneyd — shine out unexpectedly. For the former 'Blake's Mission' is "A game of stepping stones": Sneyd shapes a poignant irony around the sofa refuge syndrome. For the rest, there's some unsophisticated moralising, plenty of simple fun, conventional rhyming, puns, fantasies, variations on sundry media themes. "Bodkily kissing where no man has kissed before", writes G. Jeffrey; Lillian Parker has a crack at *Star Trek's* split infinitive. The "infinities of the unknown" get less of a showing; but here, to end with, are lines from 'Silence' by Amy Rodulfo. They typify the ability of "naive" poetry sometimes to transform bathos into pleasing effect.

*The moon has no sound,
No life,
No undergrowth dense,
No thud or pound,
Not even a sound!*

A seemingly clumsy redundancy almost comically redeems the verse!

Brian Aldiss
Greybeard

Roc, 1994, 207pp, £4.99
Reviewed by Chris Amies

Aldiss in sombre mood, this is a variation on the pastoral post-holocaust story that typified the **New Worlds** generation. Civilisation has fallen apart and no more children are being born. Society has degenerated into armed camps and **Greybeard** takes on the task of finding any surviving children at all. This was no doubt more groundbreaking when it first appeared, but time has inured us to these themes and Aldiss has done much more innovative work since 1964 when **Greybeard** first appeared. The back cover bears a quote from PD James whose **The Children of Men** dealt with a similar premise last year; SF is pushing its tropes out into the mainstream and watching as they vanish downstream, never to be quite the same again. Not even the post-disaster pastoral elegy is the same again; for all that sub-genre looks to the past, it's rare that it works when no longer fresh. As a corrective to the Heinleinian grotesques that reappeared violated worlds in the SF of the '60s, **Greybeard** and its like were probably a good thing. As a coda to a world groaning under the weight of potential environmental catastrophes now, it's less so. Aldiss is still coming up with the goods and it may be a better idea to read what he's done recently.

Marion Zimmer Bradley
The Firebrand

Penguin, 3/2/94, 559pp, £5.99
Reviewed by Mat Coward

Bradley retells the legend of the fall of Troy — starting with Zeus mating with Leda and ending with the fate of the Prophessess Cassandra — from her familiar perspective as a California feminist.

As with her massive, and massively imagined Arthurian novel, **The Mists of Avalon**, Bradley's revisionist creed is "women first"; or rather "women at the centre". Even those of us whose politics don't coincide with that of the author's can see that this is a good gimmick, and in **Mists** it produced one of the most exciting, intelligent Camelotian tales ever published.

To my disappointment, this book didn't grab me to anything like the same degree. I found **Firebrand** to have all the faults of the earlier work — poor writing, and above all prolixity — without any of its virtues. **Mists** convinced the reader not only that the story of the women of the round table deserved to be heard, but it was essential to hear it in order to properly understand any other versions of the Arthurian myths.

Here, we have much the same plot — new, patriarchal gods rising to dominance over the Mother Earth — but it all seems rather dull. Partly, I acknowledge, because Troy doesn't interest me (and perhaps most other contemporary anglophiles?) as much as post-Roman Britain does. But I'm pretty sure that another, bigger reason, unfortunately, is that this book just isn't anywhere near as good.

Adrian Cole
Blood Red Angel

Avonova, 1993, 377pp, \$4.99

Reviewed by Paul Kincaid

This is a frustrating book. There are moments when Cole produces a stunning visual image, and others when any sense of what this world is like disappears completely. There are strong characters who touch us just enough to want to know what happens to them, then you find them all following a preset script and any interest in them dissipates.

There is a complex plot with enough twists and turns to make the adjective "byzantine" seem inadequately straight forward, yet here are long stretches where you want to yell "get on with it", overly familiar tricks which make you sigh "not that old chestnut again", and dei ex machina which stretch credibility way beyond breaking point.

It is a world of darkness, a perpetual twilight imposed by the "Lightbenders". Below these near-godlike beings is an elaborate hierarchy of Elevates, Providers, Skryers, Angels and on down to the bottom rung, the fodda, who become food for their rulers. A curious "overlap" allows people to be kidnapped from other worlds and brought to this dim world as fodda. Until one of these "externals", a fighter from a Celtic-like world, escapes. He becomes the catalyst which sparks off revolt, not realising that everything is being manipulated by a discontented Elevate who lots to go against the established order and re-establish light in the world.

Add to this stew a renegade Angel who has been blinded yet who is still virtually unbeatable as a warrior, Skryers with strange mental powers, and a beautiful girl who can walk through the worldtree which reaches right through the heart of the immense city of Thousandreach, and you have all the ingredients of a thrilling adventure. Unfortunately, by the end, the whole thing just feels limp.

Nancy Collins
Wild Blood

NEL, 9/12/93, 232 pp, 4.99

Reviewed by John D. Owen

A new name to me, tackling an old subject with some originality and verve. The subject is the werewolf, and Collins strikes fast with the very first page, latching onto the reader's throat and not letting go until 232 pages later.

The hero of the story, college boy Skinner Cade, has been having terrible dreams, getting his own back on his enemies in terrible fashion. When his mother dies, Skinner discovers that he was adopted, and sets out to find his true parents, the journey taking him west, to an encounter with a strange Indian medicine woman, a fight in a bar, and a term in the county jail. There he is attacked by two convicts, and is as astonished as his attackers to find himself changing into a wolfman, with disastrously bloody consequences for the convicts.

Escaping from the prison, Skinner falls in with a werewolf pack passing themselves off as a punk group (how appropriate!), who are heading for the Howl, a gathering of werewolves for mating purposes, the only problem being, there is only one female to be fought

over. Skinner's journey of discovery runs wild from then on, leading to a meeting with the native American Indian coyotors, were-coyotes, and age-old enemies of the werewolf pack. Among the coyotore. Skinner discovers his true parents, and the history of the werewolf in America.

Strongly written, with attention-grabbing characters and a triple speed plot, **Wild Blood** has the impact of a sledgehammer on a skull (and all the better for being relatively short). Not subtle, but very effective.

D. G. Compton
Nomansland

Gollancz, 17/2/94, 286pp, 4.99

Reviewed by Norman Beswick

This is a thriller, weaving a tensely complex story around an SF premise. We are forty years into the Attrition, a period of plague when no more male babies are born and world society faces the prospect of an eventual all-female population, reproducing itself at clinics with sperm from doggedly maintained sperm banks. Wars have ceased (of course?), but male gangs roam the streets, harassing lone women. Stories abound amongst males that there are no male babies because the women are killing them. Male bureaucrats and politicians seek desperately to hold on to male power. And so on.

Researcher Dr Harriet Ryder-Kahn believes she has discovered the antidote, but finds unexpected opposition from (it seems) government and police. She has an immensely supportive journalist-husband (over forty, of course), but a brutally anti-female brother. When she tries to circumvent orders forbidding her to publish her research results, she finds herself enmeshed in a terrifying sequence of events that often had me sitting on the edge of my chair shouting at the baddies.

An absorbing read, then, full of incident and with characters you care about. Whether, and how far, it is an insightful contribution to our understanding of gender politics is another matter, but you can make your own mind up about that.

Tony Daniel
Warpath

Millennium, 2/94, 295pp, £4.99

Reviewed by Chris Hart

This is a quietly spoken novel that sparkles.

The success of this novel is built on uneasy ground. The central premise is that in the 1200's there was a mass exodus of Mississippian Indians to the planet Candle. What's more, they paddled from Earth to the stars in wooden canoes. The narrator is Will James, who died on Earth in 2101 and has been living on Candle for thirty five years, transmitted from his home planet, five hundred light years away.

Sounds ludicrous, but it isn't. Daniel manages to tell this tale with such self assured confidence, and imaginative vision that it is impossible to dismiss out of hand. The Westpac are settlers who, after years of co-operation with the native Indians are encroaching on their land rights. They require the clay deposits used by the Indians within their culture for the development of their

information networks. James is a journalist in the thick of the conflict, through him we are encouraged to reflect upon the ethical issues concerning the exploitation of indigenous people and the technologisation of nature. There are several interesting subplots based around the central conflict which develop the world-view of the narrator. The novel is absorbing, intelligent and, above all, an imaginative feast. This is a high calibre debut. Daniel is a science fiction author to watch.

W. Michael Gear
& Kathleen O'Neal Gear
People of The Wolf

Pan, 28/1/94, 435pp, £4.99

Reviewed by Sally Ann Melia

This book is a saga of prehistoric tribes battling their way across the ice-flows of the Bering States and down into a wonderful new land of plenty. Living in a glacier dominated world, several tribes fight amongst themselves for the limited game. Then one tribesman discovers an ice-tunnel created by a river. His vision of a better life splits the tribe and so begins a recite of infighting, rivalry, jealousy and death.

This book comes heavily laden with the qualifications and research papers written by its authors—both professors in prehistory and life long anthropologists. Also the authors want to make it clear that these early people are the ancestors of the North American Indian tribes. The tales are steeped in what the authors, latter-day Anglo-Saxon Americans both, guess was a primeval version of American-Indian religion. All very worthy stuff, but I honestly felt that the authors needed to lighten up to give themselves, the characters, and the readers, a break.

This last applies particularly to the storyline. **People of The Wolf** is a tale bleak beyond belief. Where tribesmen are not dying from starvation, they suffer dreadful arthritis, toothache, childbirth, all in subzero conditions and damp tents. If such harsh living conditions were not enough, the tribesmen interact like the cast of *Dynasty* and *Dallas*. Bickering, jealous, outright deception and murder is all too common. Unlike *Dynasty*, they have neither oil, nor money to fight over. Instead they prize fertile (i.e. busty) women and power. So we stoop into the great horrors of rape, brutal restriction and vicious subjection.

The thing is, this could have been a heroic, exciting story of a small tribe united in an unending fight for survival and on the brink of a lifesaving discovery. The heroes are but a short walk through an icy hell onto the vast plains of paradise. This book is none of those things, though it hints at all of them. The savagery and harsh lives make this book as cold and hard as the ice-flows the tribes have to survive. It might just be me. Many people will probably like this book, but I found the whole thing a difficult uphill read.

Sheila Giluly
The Emperor of Earth-Above
Headline, 13/1/94, 314pp, £4.99

Reviewed by Colin Bird

I can't add much to Steve Palmer's review from **Vector** 176. At least in paperback this

book, subtitled **The Third Book of the Painter**, is less of a waste of money than the hardback. Sheila Gilluly is a reasonably talented storyteller and the fantasy elements are well integrated into her rather lacklustre plot.

You have to wait until the final confrontation between Aengus and the evil Emperor of Earth-Above for some excitement. The rest of the book features some interesting magic and a bit of piracy in a Polynesian style setting. For fans of the author only.

Peter Haining (Ed)
Great Irish Stories of the Supernatural

Pan, 8/10/93, 378pp, £5.99
Reviewed by Maureen Speller

Ireland is more richly endowed with supernatural beings than perhaps any other country, and much more richly endowed with storytellers. The first of the great modern ghost story writers was an Irishman, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, who transformed the old-fashioned gothic novels, with their preposterous villains, ghosts and spooky castles, into the stories of psychological horror with which we are more familiar. It's sad, therefore, that Peter Haining chose one of Le Fanu's weaker stories, 'The Spectral Lovers', redolent with those gothic trappings he sought to eschew. By contrast, Bram Stoker, best known for **Dracula**, is well represented by 'The Judge's House', a masterly, though much-anthologuesed story of horror and malevolence. Similarly, Elizabeth Bowen's 'Hand in glove', a tragicomic tale of genteel poverty and retribution from beyond the grave, and Charlotte Riddell's 'Herford O'Donnell's Warning' show supernatural writing at its best, as does George Moore's less well known 'A Play-House in the Waste'. More recently, William Trevor's 'Autumn Sunshine' shows that the ghost story form is far from dead.

Although the bulk of Haining's selection is drawn from ghost stories, he also includes tales about dealings with fairies and leprechauns which enables him to include more familiar names, such as Yeats, James Joyce, J. M. Synge, Lord Dunsany and James Stephens. However, for my money, the outstanding story of this sort is Catherine Brophy's chilling 'The Science of Mirrors' which demonstrates amply that there is still a place for Faery in the modern world.

This is a thoroughly enjoyable anthology, filled with many small pleasures and an excellent introduction to the supernatural in the written literature of a nation that loves to tell stories.

Joe Haldeman
Worlds Enough and Time
NEL, 9/12/93, 332pp, £4.99
Reviewed by John D. Owen

Joe Haldeman's **Worlds Enough and Time** is the third volume in a trilogy that Haldeman started writing back in 1981, and only finished in 1992. The vein running through all three volumes is the central character, Marianne O'Hara, and the stories are told both from her point of view, and that of her computer alter ego, Prime (essentially O'Hara's downloaded mind).

Worlds Enough and Time takes the story of the Earth's orbiting colonies to the stars, as they take out insurance against a repetition of the Armageddon that destroyed Earth (and many colonies), by building a travelling space colony, which sets out on the long journey to Epsilon Eridani. O'Hara is a central figure in the ship's organisation, and she (or Prime) recounts most of the salient points of the voyage and subsequent settlement.

Interesting though the detailing of Haldeman's story is, it remains episodic, with characters very much in the Heinlein mode: wordy, over-bright and flat. And, to my mind, he blows the whole trilogy with a deus-ex-machina ending, where 'natives' of the Epsilon Eridani system turn out to be all-powerful creatures with power over space and time, who are won over from destroying all humans by O'Hara's selflessness. Aw shucks, Joe, ya blew it!

Graham Joyce
House of Lost Dreams
Headline, 13/1/94, 402pp, £4.99
Reviewed by Andy Mills

Kim and Mike have escaped from the rat-race and found a haven on the Greek island of Mavros. It seems the ideal place to drop out, particularly as the couple find their primitive house by the sea. They do wonder at the sign on the gate which proclaims the property to be the Haus der Verlorenen Traume, but no-one will tell them why it is so-called. And then strange events befall them. Idle thoughts come true and visions are seen — is the myth of Orpheus involved? Who was the metal-shod Saint Mikalis? Why is Mike viciously attacked? Who is the figure on the promontory? And what happened to Eva, the German woman who lived in the house many years ago?

House of Lost Dreams is a page-turner of the first order. Graham Joyce vividly brings to life the Greek island, and his rich observations extend to the principal characters too. When Kim and Mike's idyll is invaded by two old friends, with disastrous results, the breakdown of their relationship is traced with precision and power. And as for the mysteries alluded to earlier, we get ambiguous answers to some, but not all, as Joyce follows the maxim of one of his Greek characters and doesn't try to tell the whole story. This merely adds to the delight of a marvellous book. Highly recommended.

Marvin Kaye (Ed)
A Classic Collection of Haunting Ghost Stories
Little, Brown, 14/10/93, 381pp, £15.99
Reviewed by Martin Brice

Six of these forty-one short stories were written — and two translated — especially for this anthology. The other pieces are reprints, their authors including E. F. Benson, Ambrose Bierce, Algernon Blackwood, Charles Dickens, Guy de Maupassant and H. G. Wells. There are also two poems, but I found these the weakest pages. All the rest have the power to chill — and not always at the end.

The locations are world-wide and all periods. My favourite is 'Legal Rites' by Isaac

Asimov and Frederick Pohl, a 1950 American courtroom drama. I also like the seaside bungalow 'Minuke' (if 'like' be the correct word) by Nigel (Quatermass) Kneale. 'Smead' — hide and seek in an old dark house by A. M. Burrage is terrifying, while 'Jane' by Barbara Gallow, 'Doorslammer' by Donald A. Wolheim and the anonymous 'Parlor-Car Ghost' are set in more prosaic circumstances and have an eerie wistfulness about them. The fact that as many as twenty-four are written in the first person suggest that this form gives an extra edge to scary writing.

The volume seems to have its own 'ghost'. The Introduction mentions certain appendices listing further reading and various haunted locations which can be visited. But as these all referred to American books and sites back in 1980/81 when this anthology was first printed in the USA, they have evidently been omitted from this British edition or, at least, I think they have been. I cannot see anything to explain their absence. So perhaps one night, flicking through the book, out of the corner of my eyes, I'll glimpse those phantom pages.

Dean Koontz
Dragon Tears
Headline, 9/12/93, 503pp, 5.99
Reviewed by Lynne Bispham

On the evidence of this thoroughly unpleasant book, the multitudes who have made Dean Koontz best-selling author are avid readers of what have to be the most emetic descriptive passages in horror fiction. The plot concerns the efforts of Harry Lyons to kill Ticktock, a psychotic youth with paranormal powers, before Ticktock kills him. In the course of events, revolting image is piled on revolting image until the reader can hardly bear to read on: 'enlarged pores the size of match heads, packed with filth' or 'faces instantly erupted in masses of oozing pustules; bleeding lesions split their skin' are just two examples.

In addition to the aforementioned delights, Harry's partner keeps a list of horrific crimes — reproduced here for the readers' edification — while one of Ticktock's minor perversities is to keep the eyes of his victims in jars of formaldehyde, taking them out to roll them on his body. Not even the presence of a cute dog, surely a distant relation of Lassie, can relieve the sheer nastiness of this book. Horror, or any fiction, would be dull indeed if it was never shocking or challenging, but in these pages the imagery of disease and corruption is so all pervasive that the reader's considered and thoughtful response to **Dragon's Tears** can only be 'yuk'.

Anne McCaffrey
Damia's Children
Corgi, 3/2/94, 335pp, £4.99
Reviewed by Martin Brice

This novel continues the family history known as **The Chronicle of The Talents**. Jeff Raven and his wife Angharad Gwyn-Raven (**The Rowan** of the first volume) have special telepathic and telekinetic 'talents', enabling them to communicate with other people and beings, and to move objects small and great without mechanical or other visible means.

Their daughter (**Damia** of the second book's title) has inherited these Talents and (with her Mate **Afra Raven-Lyon**) has passed them on to her children, **Laria**, **Thian**, **Rojer**, **Kaltia**, **Morag**, **Ewain** and **Petra**. They live on **Iota Aurigae**, a mining planet, in alliance with the **Mrdini**, whose homeworld is **Clarf**.

The **Dini** are one-eyed, furred and web-footed. Their speech is vowel-less, but they also communicate telepathically through dreams. **Damia's** children have a very close relationship with these aliens, because they have been brought up with young **Mrdini**.

The theme of the novel is the campaign against the insect-like **Hivers**, who are trying to conquer the **Galaxy**. However, there is also a lot of information about **Mrdini** and **Hiver** biology and culture, and about the techniques and mental effort to shift spaceships across universes by telepathic means alone.

Graham Masterton The Sleepless

W Heinemann, 29/11/93, 474pp, £15.99

Reviewed by Stephen
& Amanda Palmer

This 24th novel by Graham Masterton begins with John O'Brien, about to be inaugurated Supreme Court Judge, embarking with his wife **Eve** and his daughter **Cissy** upon a helicopter flight. But the helicopter crashes and a thin, dark man with pale skin and sunglasses arrives, cuts the survivors out, but massacres them all, apart from **Cissy**, with his cutting equipment.

We then meet the main character of the novel, **Michael**, a retired crash investigator. **Michael** investigates the crash, and other incidents in which massacres have taken place; and, after some time, he realises that there are connections. Strange men with pale skin and sunglasses (the **Sleepless** of the title) appear; victims have adrenaline removed from their bodies by means of tubes; and so on.

At length, having discovered that his main opponent is **Mr Hilary**, one of the **Sleepless**, **Michael** and a disabled woman friend decide to pursue him by means of dream; a medium in which **Michael's** friend can walk. At length they locate **Mr Hilary** in his house on a beach, where they pursue him through mid-air until... well we won't spoil the ending for you. (The pair discover that the likes of **Mr Hilary** have been around since before the **Christ**.)

This novel is an easy read. It is not badly written; there is a good sense of suspense and fewer clichés than usual in this genre of fiction. There is quite a 'vampirish' feel to it, owing to the continuation of the **Sleepless** over aeons of time.

Good for horror readers, but perhaps not one to buy in hardback; wait for the paperback edition.

Dwina Murphy-Gibb Cormac: The Seers

Pan, 28/1/94, 328pp, £4.99

Cormac: The Kingmaking

Pan, 28/1/94, 275pp, £9.99

Reviewed by Cherith Baldry

The story of **Cormac: The Seers** is the birth and babyhood of **Cormac mac Airt**, destined to be high King of Ireland; **Cormac: The**

Kingmaking continues with an account of **Cormac's** childhood and youth until the time he takes up kingship. A third volume, to complete the trilogy, is still to come.

In **The Seers** emphasis is laid on the prophecies of future greatness which surround the child, but as **Cormac** is still very young, the reader's attention is focused on the mother **Grainne**, a strong and individual woman, and on **Cromlach**, the druid who takes a large part of the responsibility for the future of the child. Since **Cormac's** father, **Art the Lonely**, was killed in battle before **Cormac's** birth, and a usurper has taken his place, **Grainne** has many dangers to face, both before and after the baby is born.

As we might expect in this type of fantasy, **Cormac's** kingliness is apparent from a very early age, and **The Kingmaking** takes up the theme of his training under the authority of the warrior **Goll mac Morna**. The book also deals with **Grainne** in the way such a woman adjusts to being no longer the centre of her son's life. Towards the end of the story, indications point forward very clearly to the themes of the final volume.

Dwina Murphy-Gibb is very much at home in legendary Ireland, and the amount of authentic detail which the books offer is their great strength. The characters come over as real personalities of an heroic age, rather than twentieth century people in heroic dress. The background against which the stories take place is convincingly portrayed — at least for a reader like myself who has a certain amount of familiarity with Celtic legend, but no claim to scholarship. Both books offer a guide to the pronunciation and meaning of words in the Irish language, particularly names, which is helpful for readers who are unfamiliar with them.

The style can sometimes be an uneasy mixture between the heroic and the more colloquial; I found the speaking voices of the characters, their speech rhythms, to be unconvincing. The writer often goes into greater detail than is necessary to tell us the thoughts going through a character's mind, and here the story sags; she could trust her readers to be a bit more intelligent. It's probably no more than personal perversity, and not fair criticism, to say that I was more interested in some of the minor characters, notably **Art the Lonely** in the first book and the poet **Caolithe** in the second, than in the ones who hold the centre stage.

Irish fantasy at present seems to be a sub-genre in itself, and these books form a worthy addition to it. Anyone who loves Irish legend will want to read them, but I don't think they have quite the power to catch the imagination of someone coming to this sort of literature for the first time.

John Peel Star Trek TNG:

Here There Be Dragons

Titan, 9/12/93, 275pp, £3.99

Reviewed by Paul Kincaid

It doesn't really matter what I say here, this book will sell well. There are enough fans of **Star Trek: The Next Generation** out there to pick up any book set within this familiar universe. But will this book win any new fans

for the series? I doubt it. Does this book serve the addicts well? Emphatically not.

John Peel is anxious to set this book squarely within the established conventions, so he sets out to convince us that this is **Captain Jean-Luc Picard** and crew as we know them from the TV. So we get lots of familiar ties, but we learn nothing about any of the crew that we couldn't have discovered from an avid viewing of the series. This is retreading familiar ground, but **Peel** doesn't stretch as much as a little too towards anything that is new. Do the addicts really want nothing more than to see puppets perform the same mannerisms and utter the same well-worn phrases time and again? Do they not want to learn a little more about what makes **Ryker** or **Data** or whoever tick?

As for the plot, it is even more familiar than the characters. We have a world still locked in the middle ages — except here there really are dragon-like monsters. We have interstellar baddies exploiting it for their own end. We have a suggestion of some mysterious greater power. And we have the crew of the **Enterprise** in fancy dress battling power-hungry dukes, awesome wizards and man-eating dragons. Since **Peel** manages to deflate every incident just as it is on the point of becoming exciting, this can hardly be said to be a thrilling read.

At one point he devotes a chapter telling us repeatedly (every significant point is repeated several times, just in case we miss it) that being torn apart by a tachyon beam is the worst imaginable death, excruciating, agonising — only to comment in passing that it would all be over in less than 30 seconds. Somehow none of this holds together.

Steve Perry Aliens: Earth Hive

Millennium, 16/12/93, 278pp, £4.99

Reviewed by Chris Amies

This is the first **Aliens** novel: not novellisations of the films, but books using the **Aliens** concept as a starting-point. **Aliens: Earth Hive** mixes space-marine guns-ho with global conspiracy and a world-wide bad dreaming which is a result of the aliens' cold gaze fixed upon this **Peoria Earth**. **Earth** wants to bring back some aliens to use as weapons, but the two survivors of the **Alien** massacre at **Rim** know this is a deeply bad idea. So they fetch up on a bug hunt where they face not only the insectoid horrors on their home planet but also a detachment from **Military Intelligence** which **Perry**, like **Groucho**, describes as a contradiction in terms. It'd be easy to fill page after page with decapitations and chest-burstings, but this isn't just blow-em-away skiffy. It isn't favourable to the **Marines** or the **US** establishment at all, nor about the crawling horror (exterminate the brutes!) that other, bigger races have tried with and failed. It's a long time since the **'Nostromo'** hauled its cargo of fossil fuels across the galaxy and once again meddling humankind is swaggering into the heart of darkness. Serve them right if it bites.

Steve Perry
Aliens: Nightmare Asylum
Millennium, 2/94, 277pp, 3.99
 Reviewed by Chris Hart

Millennium's new series of 'original' novels are billed as "The All New Adventures of The Greatest-ever science fiction terror", but it does not take long before you begin to realise that this is a montage of set pieces from the films strung together in a new, and uninteresting, scenario. The Company is plotting to train a crack squad of Aliens to re-take Earth from the hordes of Aliens that invaded in the first book of the series — The expression "fight fire with fire" is used a little too often. There is a lot of fun to be gained by trying to spot the set-piece and pin it to the film its from. It opens with clam-like sleeping chambers opening; there is dream sequence designed to pull the rug from beneath us; and, my favourite, a scene where the resourceful, female protagonist strips down to her panties and vest. Rendering the monster into words is difficult as our experience has always been visual and the result has diminished the effect of the creature. Perry struggles to find suitable similes, for example, images such as: "its head was shaped like a mutated banana" will make you cringe — and it won't be in terror.

Frederik Pohl
Mining The Oort
HarperCollins, 15/11/93, 279pp, £4.99
 Reviewed by Ian Sales

Mars is being terraformed. This is an expensive process, the planet is in hock up to its ice caps and only able to purchase the items it needs through selling futures on the anticipated agricultural output once the terraforming has been completed. Dekker DeWoe is a Martian and when he grows up he wants to follow in his estranged father's footsteps and become an Oort miner. These miners are responsible for harnessing and sending cemetery bodies to Mars, where their impact delivers the water needed to terraform the Red Planet. However, in order to become an Oort miner, Dekker must first travel to Earth and enter the academy.

In Nairobi, Dekker meets his father, who had never returned to Mars because of a severe injury, and attends prep school to cram for the Oort entrance exam. Since his father manages to get Dekker a copy of this exam, he passes with flying colours and some slight guilt at the cheat.

Dekker then moves to the Oort academy at Denver. It takes several years to qualify and Dekker succeeds by working hard. He is by no means first in his year, though he seems surprised that those who beat him did it easily (of course, they're all cheating as well).

A handful of pro-Mars people are pushing these students through before the project is cancelled, aiming to get them assigned to Co-Mars Two, one of the stations responsible for controlling the passages of the harnessed comets to Mars. The cheating students are part of a plot to threaten Earth with a comet unless the project is maintained. Whilst agreeing with their aims, Dekker disagrees with their methods (especially since they have every intention of carrying out the

bombardment — destroying Japan is a good idea, after all...).

Dekker is naive. He believes the Mars project is a Good Thing, so he can't understand why people would want to stop it; he's also important because his mother is a Martian senator. The villains in this book are the financiers (especially the Japanese) who want to withdraw the money they've invested.

Mining The Oort is a quick read. The prose is workmanlike, but the background is interesting. Unfortunately, it all reads as though it were rushed. At one point, Dekker is tied up and manages to get his hands from behind his back to his front where he starts sawing away at his bonds. Two pages later, Dekker manages to get his hands from his back to his front, where... You get the picture. There's also a nasty streak on anti-Japanese in this book.

There are better books around. I wouldn't waste your money on this book unless (a) you're a Pohl completist or (b) you want every book set in or around Mars (and believe me, that includes some real crap).

Lucius Shepard
The Golden
Millennium, 3/294, 216pp, 5.99
 Reviewed by Colin Bird

Just what we need, another vampire novel. Since Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* the vampire tale seems to have grown in popularity. Now writers and film-makers are returning to Bram Stoker's original novel for inspiration.

We are back in 186-, at a gathering of all the clans of the Family, awaiting a ceremony called the Decanting. At this charming event a carefully bred victim, the eponymous Golden, will provide a delicious blood feast for the gathering. But she is dispatched prior to the event and neophyte vampire Beheim is brought in to find the murderer.

The detective story is used by Shepard as an excuse to explore the power struggles between the vampires within the huge, impossibly architecture of Castle Banat. The architecture is more impressive than the intrigue, with giant wheels and staircases perched on towering cliffs. The castle is based on designs Shepard found in a Piranesi book and he clearly has a lot of fun realising them.

The story also features long (too long) descriptions of sex which bog down the narrative between wild flights of invention. Shepard is never quite in control of the book but it is the product of a fecund talent and well worth reading.

Bruce Sterling
The Hacker Crackdown
Penguin, 1/94, 328pp, £6.99
 Reviewed by Julie Atkin

Subtitled "Law and disorder on the electronic frontier", Sterling's non-fiction cyberspace story is an interesting, at times gripping, account of the world of 'phone phreakers' and computer hackers, culminating in the nation-wide American crackdown of 1990.

The book comprises four parts. 'Crashing the system' details the history of telephony, from Alexander Graham Bell onwards, and

explains the US system of telephone companies — the telcos — ending in the January 1990 breakdown of the phone service, accidentally caused by a software upgrade, but originally thought by telco paranoia to be the result of hacker intervention.

"The digital underground" introduces the hackers, and their forerunners, the phone phreakers, who acquire free telephone service. Their adversaries are described in "Law and order" which details the raids of the Secret Service, and the methods used to track down both real and imagined hackers, including the well-publicised raid on Steve Jackson Games. In the final section, Sterling describes the organisations which sprang up on the civil liberties side of the argument.

Sterling is at home in the world of cyberspace, from his background as a cyberspace author. He is at ease with his material and passes on to the reader his interest and enthusiasm, presenting what could have been over-technical, in an extremely readable manner. I found the first half of the book almost unputdownable, but thought that it then lost some of its impetus — though none of its interest.

Gerald Suster
The Devil's Maze
Roc, 24/2/94, 258pp, £4.99
 Reviewed by Andy Mills

A most curious novel. Marketed by Roc as horror, it's more a strange mystery tale. Or rather, tales, for the story is interspersed with shorts by the mad Septimus Keen ... The year is 1897. Charles Renshawe, gentleman, and Lady Clarissa Mountford, widowed heiress, have hedonistic private lives which would be the envy of a present-day Tony MP. They dabble in the occult but they're the good guys, opposing the evil Dr Lipsius and his associates. Charles and Clarissa become entrapped in a web of intrigue, seeking a Young Lady with Flaming Red Hair and meeting Lipsius's band in a number of disguises. The latter introduce the pair to the writings of the aforementioned Keen, whose weird stories interrupt the main narrative. The ending of the book, appropriately, contains a wealth of twists.

The Devil's Maze is, as I've said, an oddity. Written as a tribute to Arthur Machen and his amateur sleuths Dyson and Phillips, who too listened to macabre tales, this reprint novel is certainly tricky — put it down and you'll find it difficult to pick up the threads. It does lurch from pastiche to parody, and the tales of 'Septimus Keen' may not be for the most part be noteworthy, but I have to say I found Suster's book to be a thoroughly enjoyable read.

George Turner
The Destiny Makers
Avon, 11/93, 321pp, £4.99
 Reviewed by Joseph Nicholas

Like much classic English literature, Turner's novels are concerned with morals and ethics: the differences not just between the social rights and wrongs we learn as children, but also between philosophical and legal right and wrongs. Such a theme might be thought

old fashioned for SF; but Turner recasts the questions by linking them to biology, in particular the debates around the emerging techniques of genetic manipulation. To what extent should science and society interfere with human reproduction, to "improve" the species, and how should the exercise of genetic knowledge be constrained?

From *Beloved Son* onwards, these questions have been foregrounded against an increasingly bleaker view of the future. In *The Destiny Makers*, the Earth's population stands at twelve billion, divided — in the Melbourne of 2069 — into the Miners, who rule, and the Wardies, who get by, all pushing at the envelope of environmental sustainability. The question of a cull is in the air: engineering a sudden reduction in the population to give the overstressed Earth a chance to regain equilibrium. But who chooses who dies and on what criteria? Here, it's the white English-speaking nations who contemplate a cull, and to avoid a (possibly nuclear) war, want to execute it in a way which won't be obvious to everyone else.

Unfortunately, the plot, while satisfyingly complex, doesn't quite match these ambitions. Little guys get caught up in the affairs of their rulers is a staple of fiction, particularly science fiction, but it's implausible that, with the proposed cull resting on the casting vote, the premier of the state of Victoria should turn for advice to an ordinary policeman. Nor is it credible that in an overcrowded world the English-speaking nations would retain their existing democratic forms; more autocratic regimes would be required to cope with the pressures, even in Australia. And for all the secrecy with which Turner's characters disguise their actions, they spend a lot of time making mobile phone calls.

In the end, Turner slightly contradicts his own title by suggesting that we can't rely on our leaders to make decisions for us, and that we must expect to select our destinies ourselves. Quite so!

Paul J. Willis

The Stolen River

Avon Books, 12/93, 190pp, \$4.50
Reviewed by John D. Owen

A slight fantasy, only enlivened by the fact that it is at least dragonless, and contains a few non-clichéd elements to the plot. For a start, there are few fantasy novels that start off based around a geological survey team at work on an Alpine glacier. Three characters from the team are translated into an alternative fantasy world living alongside our own, where they are forced to go on a journey downriver, guided by a pair of old men, a small waterbird and three mysterious sisters.

The author is quite accomplished in describing the geology, and probably likes white water rafting too, since such passages work well. Unfortunately, the fantasy elements are a little too wreathed in mist (tending towards fog), with little explanation given along the way for the various escapades that befall the adventurers. The characters they meet have an Arthurian feel, but operate in a Rider Haggardish environment. The tests are all physical rather than mental, and seem too easily overcome. The mood is well-

maintained, but the overall effect is of something that hasn't gelled into significance. The book has one good point: at 190 pages, it's quickly done with (and as quickly forgotten, unfortunately).

Jonathon Wylie Echoes of Flame

Corgi, 20/1/94, 432pp, £4.99
Reviewed by Lynne Bispham

In *Echoes of Flame*, Book two in the *Island and Empire* trilogy, the inhabitants of the island of Zalya, having overthrown the occupying forces of the Xantic Empire, now face the threat of screamers — monsters from the sea — and fear reprisals from the Imperial Fleet. A message from the mysterious Alasia causes Dordas, a leader of the revolt, and several other islanders to journey to Xantium, the Imperial capital. There, the Empress Ifryn grows ever more fearful, as the ambitious and evil Chancellor Verkho increasingly dominates the Emperor. Sagar, a hostage from Zalya, is released by the Swordsman, and finds himself drawn into the latter's plans to kill Verkho. And Verkho himself seeks ever greater power through sorcery.

These many different strands of plot are skilfully handled to maximise suspense and are brought together in Xantium to make a very readable fantasy. Magical telepathy, ghosts who watch the living, a magic talisman and the reawakening of ancient gods provide a rich background to a fast-paced narrative. Fantasy fans will find much to enjoy in this sword-and-sorcery type adventure which avoids the worst clichés of the genre.

Margaret Weiss & Tracy Hickman Dragonance Legends:

Time of the Twins War of the Twins Test of the twins

Penguin, 4/11/93, 909pp, 12.99
Reviewed by Sally Ann Melia

This is a compilation of three books in one volume. To be specific it's books 4, 5, 6 of the ongoing series of *Dragonance* fantasy novels. It's titled 'Collector's Edition'. This reflects this fantasy series cult status and 4 million+ readers. *Dragonance* has spawned computer games, role-playing games, metal figurines, T-shirts and much else. All based on an original novel by Margaret Weiss and Tracy Hickman. This is not that novel.

Undoubtedly Part 1 of the *Dragonance* series must have been pretty hot... Parts 4, 5, 6 are very jaded pieces of writing. The authors are clearly running out of ideas. The bulk of the words seem to be rerenderings of adventures that happened in the previous novels. There's scant characterisation, bogus descriptions, and a style that's making wading through knee-deep mud a pleasurable activity by comparison.

So if you know the Margaret Weiss, Tracy Hickman *Dragonance* series and you are a fan, go for it and good luck! Anybody else: don't touch this thing with a barge pole. The cover's naff. The story's boring. It's almost impossible to read. It's expensive.

There! Don't let anyone say I pull my punches!

Roger Zelazny & Robert Sheckley
Bring Me The Head of
Prince Charming
Pan, 11/2/94, 279pp, £4.99
Reviewed by Andy Sawyer

This mildly amusing tale of a contest between Heaven and Hell and the cunning scheme of a demon to create a Prince Charming and a Sleeping Beauty out of whatever odds and sods of body parts he can come up with, is probably unfairly judged against Pratchett and Gaiman's *Good Omens*. But that's what happens when you make jokes about bureaucracy and demons to the point where an ineffectual angel enters the scene.

Zelazny and Sheckley are professional enough to ensure that they are not wasting the reader's time and there are some fine grotesque gags in the early stages when Azzie Elbub is constructing his characters. However, when you consider what this pair have done separately, *Prince Charming* is substandard. There is evidence of Zelazny's imagination and Sheckley's sardonic humour, but this seems to have been as written-to-order as any sharecrop for all the originality it has. The best joke — about Charming having a coward's legs — was done with more style by Spike Milligan in *Puckoon*. *Prince Charming* is playing safe for the funny-fantasy market, I suspect. It's good to see anything with Sheckley's name on it now-adays, but it would have been heartening to have something that could be recommended as worth reading.

Moorcock

Michael Moorcock The New Nature of The Catastrophe

Millennium, 1993, 436pp, 14.99
Reviewed by Graham Andrews

Contents of jiffy bag... Michael Moorcock's *The New Nature of The Catastrophe*: ninth volume of the multiversal 'Eternal Champion' tale / saga / what-you-will. For the record, it's actually edited by Langdon Jones and MM. *The (old) Nature*... came from Hutchinson & Co in 1971.

"Please can you review... in about 500 words (it's a big book)" wrote Stephen Payne, who probably moonlights as a warm-up man for Alexei Sayle. BIG 436 PAGES — DON'T TAKE LESS! (Adapted from an old comic-book slogan). Packed with 41 items (stories, poetry, comic-strips, lists, you-name-it) by names like Brian W. Aldiss, John Brunner, Mal Dean, — not to mention Moorcock / 'James Colvin'.

Catastrophe is a reviewer's nightmare come true. I, for one, have neither the time nor the inclination to write 41 mini-reviews. For that same old record, the original volume only contained 18 items. Easy option: chunter aimlessly until the 500th word. But (voice of conscience) that would be accepting a free book under false pretences. I've decided on the brisk overview approach.

The Eternal Champion is — just that. Elic

of Melnibon / Dorian Hawkmoon / every other Moorcock hero. It's as though Superman turned out to be the entire Justice League of America. This time, EC flitters about as Jerry Cornelius:

(a) "...superhero, ex-clergyman, ex-politician, physicist, spy and card-carrying satyr on a rampage through the wells and crevices of time... an antic, vibra-gun toting womanizer of the highest order" (**The Washington Post**).

(b) "A modern myth character living in a fantasy world — a new messiah who doesn't let himself be ruled by inevitability" (**New Scientist**).

Jerry Cornelius entered public life in **The Final Programme (New Worlds 1965-66 / Avon 1968)**; still one of my favourite Moorcock novels, and I don't care who knows it. The 1973 film version (American title: **The Last Days of Man on Earth**) has become a cult classic, among cult classicists.

Moorcock made the demented JC a 'mind-blown Spirit of the Age' — as some equally mind-blown blurbster once put it. Fellow New Wavers quickly got in on the act: Jerry Cornelius (TM?) became what might well / ill have been the first shared-world / open-universe franchise. Character development grew apace: Jerry's psychotic brother, Frank; Miss Brunner; Pershon Beesley; Shaky Mo Collier; a Y Benson; the evil Captain Maxwell (extravagant fiction today — cold hard fact tomorrow).

Cutting several long stories short, the refurbished **Catastrophe** provides a good — if bitty — introduction to the mad, mad world of Jerry Cornelius & Co. Therefore "...jump in and strike out for the nearest raft. From the diving board, it may all appear strange and futuristic. But deep down below, even Homer and Edmund Spencer (sic) would feel at home" (Alan Brien **Sunday Times**).

I've never tried reading on a diving board, nor would I presume to speak for such fine literary gentlemen. Nevertheless, my nominations for the best items in **Catastrophe** are: 1. 'The Dodgem Division' (Moorcock); 2. 'The Last Hurrah of The Golden Horde' (Sprinrad); 3. 'The Firmament Theorem' (Aldiss). I actively disliked the comic strips — give me Carmine Infantino over Mal Dean any day of the week (hear, hear — SP).

For "best" read 'favourite': **Catastrophe** is a dip-into book that won't please / displease everybody in the same places....

**Michael Moorcock
Legends From the End of Time
Millennium, 1993, 232pp, £10.99
Reviewed by L. J. Hurst**

These legends are five stories; four from **New Worlds Quarterly** published in 1976, and the last written as the text of a Dragon's Dream illustrated novel from 1981. I was grabbing **NWQ** at the time in the hope of finding rare Ballard and being regularly frustrated. These stories, now collected as Volume 11 of **The Tale of The Eternal Champion**, did not stay in my mind.

They are not legends in the sense of being the mythology of the people living at the End of Time, just extra stories to supplement the novels collected as **Dancers At The End of**

Time, though the last of them, 'Eric At The End of Time', helps braid the tapestry of Moorcock's different worlds by bringing the Eternal Champion into the period.

The end of centuries tend to show dissolution and the end of the last century had a name given to it, 'fin de siècle', to make that clear. The main theme, of course, was decadence and if you wanted to extrapolate from the end of the century to the End of Time, then decadence, like entropy, would tend to increase. What makes the decadence of the End of Time worse is the simultaneous ignorance and power of those living in those days. So the stories have titles taken from the Decadence Poets, 'Pales Roses', 'White Stars', 'Ancient Shadows' and 'Constant Fire', but the characters have given themselves names such as Duke of Queens, Werther De Goethe, Margrave of Wolverhampton and Iron Orchid; the only limitation to their omnipotence being an inability to go back through time; yet they know almost nothing, so that to use their powers leads to the creation of continents and historical re-creations, ignorant of their failings: 'a toy fish-tank (capable of fring real fish)' is one of their re-creations.

The End of Time is a time without conscience seen from the position of those in power; any time traveller who arrives at this terminus finds himself or herself both trapped in time and trapped in a menagerie. Compared on the blurb to "P G Wodehouse, H G Wells, and Aubrey Beardsley", I find these creations very difficult to resolve with Moorcock's liberalism. Other readers may find their way to a solution, but I found them vaguely distasteful.

**Michael Moorcock
The Prince with The Silver Hand
Millennium, 1993, 361pp, £10.99
Reviewed by Sue Thomason**

This 'C' format paperback contains a trilogy of short novels about Prince Corum. **The Bull and The Spear**, **The Oak and The Ram** and **The Sword and The Stallion**, first published in 1973, 1973 and 1974 respectively. They are closely linked, forming a continuous narrative, and are part of the much larger set of linked works, **The Tale of The Eternal Champion**, which Millennium are issuing in a 14 volume omnibus edition.

Corum, Prince of an ancient non-human race (viewed by humans as faeries or demigods) is an avatar of the Eternal Champion. He is pledged to fight for the cause of Law against the forces of Chaos — those which attack reason, logic and justice. After the death of his human wife, Corum is willingly summoned from his own time and plane of reality, to aid the descendants of his wife's people in their struggle against the godlike beings from another plane, who have turned most their own world into a frozen waste.

The emotional tone of the book is bleak; the icy landscape setting reflecting the major themes of death, betrayal and personal acceptance of a predetermined fate — a fate shared by everyone mortal, for whom life is ultimately a no-win scenario. Corum is doomed, from before his acceptance of the commitment to fight the Fhoi Myore. As an upholder of Law, he is against divine

intervention in mortal affairs — miracles break "natural law". But because he is inhuman, with non-human powers, he is seen as a demigod by the mortals he aids, in a world where belief certainly shapes, and possible creates, reality. By obeying his 'prime directive', Corum becomes what he must destroy.

The other main theme I see in the sequence is that of identity. Corum, whose character is rather two dimensional, has a whole collection of doubles or twins. There is Prince Gaylor, pledged to Dark and Chaos as Corum is pledged to Law. There is a doppelganger, created by a wizard who obtains Corum's Name-Robe. And there is the dead hero Cremm, possibly the true avatar of the Eternal Champion on this plane, upon whose mound Corum first appears, and where he receives his Champion's sword.

I would sum up the sequence of three stories as well and fluently written, slow-moving in terms of plot events, dealing with two dimensional archetypes rather than well-rounded characters. The sequence is a young man's hero tale of war and death, unremittingly bleak in tone.

**Michael Moorcock
Earl Aubec
Millennium, 1993, 591pp, 10.99
Reviewed by Andrew Seaman**

Millennium's plan to reissue all of Michael Moorcock's **Eternal Champion** cycle in revised and uniform editions continues apace. **Earl Aubec**, which gathers together a varied, if not entirely cohesive, selection of fiction spanning all of Moorcock's writing career, is the thirteenth volume in the series and, curiously as it may seem to speak ill of such a worthy enterprise, the choice of some of the stories contained within does strike the reader as something of an exercise in barrel-scraping. As a showcase for the development of Moorcock's career this collection cannot be faulted, but in spite of the inclusion of legitimate Eternal Champion stories like 'Earl Aubec', 'Jesting with Chaos' and 'To Rescue Tanelorn...' the publisher's attempt to shoehorn all of the material within these six hundred pages into the cycle is a trifle dishonest.

As far as the quality of the fiction is concerned, Moorcock admits in a candid introduction that many of the stories contained in the collection were written for quick money, to order, or even to fit an existing cover illustration. In places this shows. For (your) money you get a fair amount of the workmanlike early efforts, variations on standard 1950's 'twist in the tale' SF plots, in pieces like 'Going Home', 'Consuming passion' and 'Environment Problem'. However, the early (1958) novel length allegorical tales, 'The Golden Barge' and 'The Greater Conqueror', Moorcock's historical fantasia involving Alexander the Great, show the author beginning to develop his own distinctive style and starting to explore themes he would later expand upon. Tallow, the malcontent anti-hero of 'The Golden Barge', foreshadows his later creation, Eric, and the plot itself touches upon the idea of the battle between the forces of Law and Chaos that was later incorporated into the Eternal Champion saga.



Moving forward in time, Moorcock's role in the New Wave of the sixties SF and the rock and drug culture of that era is well-represented by stories like 'Deep Fix', 'A Dead Singer', 'The Real Life Mr Newman' and 'Islands' with their themes of altered perceptions and alternative realities. It is here that the theme of duality, earlier embodied in the struggle between Law and Chaos, becomes explicit with Moorcock showing a fascination with ideas of a appearance and reality, sanity and madness, the individual versus society and the internal and external mental world; while stories like 'The Time Dwellers' and 'Waiting for the end of time...' display a distinctive 'cosmic' vision. This burgeoning richness of themes finds its expression most fully in his mature work, disappointingly ill-represented in this collection. 'Hanging the Fool' is a late addition to his Von Bek series involving the tarot and cosmopolitan intrigues in Inter-war Europe, while 'Casablanca' from the 'Some Reminiscences of The Third World War' sequence draws heavily on Moorcock's own experience of travel and foreign culture (here North African). In 'Mars' the author revisits the mythical Red Planet of Burroughs and Bradbury and, in doing so, anticipates work like Greenland's **Take Back Plenty**.

Though this collection serves as an excellent introduction to the breadth of Moorcock's work, it is aimed more at the completist than the casual reader, and even then with some reservations, particularly concerning the price and, for example, the annoying absence of exact information about when and where the pieces were first published.

Michael Moorcock Stormbringer

Millennium, 1993, 658pp, £10.99
Reviewed by Max Sexton

Stormbringer is an omnibus edition of the second half of stories in the Elic saga. The stories are arranged chronologically and chart Elic's quarrel with the wizard Theleb K'aarna to his own demise in the novel **Stormbringer**. Most of the stories were written in the early sixties for the magazine **Science Fantasy**, the companion magazine **New Worlds**, and

consequently, the stories are short with only two being of novel length. The exceptions are **Stormbringer** and **The Revenge of The Rose**, a recent addition to the Elic series.

Elic, the doomed albino prince of Melniboné, has all the characteristics of romantic drama and high tragedy; the theme of fate is explored in doomed love, inescapable suffering and human, or should that be, Melniboné weakness, to produce a minor classic in its genre. I believe that Moorcock is on record for saying that he wrote **Stormbringer** in eighteen hours. Wherever the truth lies, the goading on of events in the story, and its breathless flow give it a frisson. The hurried descriptions and fast action make you feel that you are actually being pulled along by the albino Prince towards his nemesis, but are similarly compelled not to resist fate but to let go and be swept along by events to embrace it. I first read **Stormbringer** ten years ago and despite my changing tastes in literature, it was a very welcome return.

The other stories, of which **The Sleeping Sorceress** and **The Stealer of Souls** are the best examples, are too short to create the sweeping backdrop of events and characters that romantic fiction requires in order to thrive. Nevertheless, they are good examples of the genre and Moorcock's writing, although only ever workmanlike, are skilful enough to take the reader along. These two stories chart Elic's quarrel with Theleb K'aarna.

The odd man out is **The Revenge of The Rose**. It was written some thirty years after the first Elic story and stylistically, of course, is markedly different from those earlier stories, including **Stormbringer**. The writing is maturer and is influenced by and reflects Moorcock's present interests in Elizabethan literature. There are, for instance, asides; an unusual device in a novel and which maybe serves to critically position the reader on the narrative. The introduction of humour and countless pithy lines are another stylistic break from Moorcock's earlier storytelling.

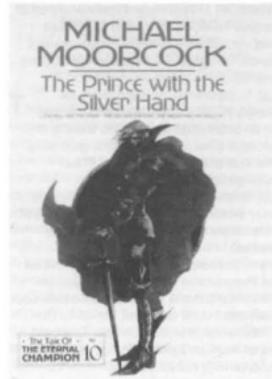
These stylistic changes have led in the past to the creation of characters like Von Bek, but are misplaced with Elic, who is too complete in the character of the tragic victim who suffers the wiles of the blind force of nature. This Elic is the Elic of old age; no longer charged by youthful dynamism: be it said, romantic fiction is the fiction of youth or the young at heart. It rarely works from an author who has melted into a thoughtful being.

Michael Moorcock The Wrecks of Time

Roc, 1994, 192pp, £4.99
Reviewed by Norman Beswick

Appearing serially in **New Worlds** as by James Colvin, this was first published in book form in 1971 by Arrow Books as **The Ritual of Infinity**. Now Roc include it in their programme of Moorcock reissues: which gives a useful opportunity to re-appraise the early SF of a hugely prolific writer whose work covers a wide range of genres.

The Wrecks of Time is certainly SF, although, as in so much Moorcock, it focuses on a central world-saving figure: in this case Professor Faustalf (Falstaff plus Faust), a



larger than life goodie with agreeable habits, qualities and quails. A whole series of parallel Earths in adjacent realities are under threat from the mysterious D-squads who create Unstable Matter Situations. Faustalf heads the organisation to save them.

The result is a fast moving story almost entirely without characterisation and leading to a sensenawanda conclusion: very much an adolescent's daydream fantasy of How I Saved The Worlds. In less skilled hands it would be discardable rubbish, but although I can't imagine rereading this for another twenty years, one has to admire the sheer panache of the story's execution, as well as the pacifist scruples of its otherwise heroic main character.

Michael Moorcock The Cornelius Quartet

Phoenix House, 1993, 854pp, £14.99
Reviewed by Martyn Taylor

1994 is the year of the Moorcock. Everything is being reissued in spanning new editions, some which thoroughly deserve it (**Gloriana**, **The Warhound and The World's Pain**) and some which don't. **The Cornelius Quartet** comprises the four Jerry Cornelius novels in a handsome volume at a remarkably reasonable price.

Which ends my praise for this book.

Even from an era of anti-heroes, Jerry Cornelius is not an attractive character — rich, spoiled, incorrigibly brattish. As for his antagonists, they are just as comic cut real as he is, only slightly more nasty. They slaughter without the angst he feels. Surely a reader is meant to feel some empathy for some characters! Not a single one made me shed a tear as they met their grisly end.

The style grated too. Yes, I know Moorcock was one of the leaders of the New Wave who just loved a stylistic challenge, but that doesn't mean I have to pretend bad writing is good just because it is 'experimental'. Long passages of banal, undifferentiated dialogue do not interest me. Neither does the end of civilisation backdrop to an interminable party (as in **The Final Programme**) strike me as being adventurous writing, rather it is cowardly. I also have great difficulty taking a writer

seriously as a stylist who believes that 'lighted' is a synonym for 'illuminated' — at least in English.

Reading this volume was very hard work. I didn't enjoy it at all and am frankly quite glad I missed the books first time around. It reminds me of watching a contemporary edition of **Top of the Pops** on UK Gold — cringe, hide and wonder whatever happened to taste. On a radio show recently, Moorcock claimed to have written some of his works not in three weeks, but in three days. It shows.

If you are a Moorcock enthusiast you'll welcome the reissue. If you are simply curious about the titan, you would be better advised to search out the volumes mentioned above, or perhaps the Byzantium sequence or **Mother London**.

Judge Dredd

Garth Ennis, John Smith
& Sean Phillips, John Burns
Judge Dredd:
Tales of The Damned
Mandarin, 28/10/93, 5.99
Reviewed by Martin Brice

This book comprises three graphic short stories, reproduced from **2000AD** and **Judge Dredd: The Magazine**.

The Marshal is the sole survivor of a brotherhood founded by the legendary Lone Ranger and Tonto, but now exterminated by unauthorised chemical experiments.

In 'Brief Encounter', Devin Waugh (Papal envoy, freelance exorcist and vampire) is held at Customs while en-route to a cat breeders show.

Karl 'Raider' is an ex-Judge turned vigilante.

All three meet Judge Dredd, one of the merciless and arbitrary law dispensers of Mega-City one.

The artwork is superb: dazzling colours; dizzy perspectives; figures off-balance; the phonetic rendering of inimitable sounds; all speed, action movement. There's also dark humour; look at the names on the Judges Badges.

Nevertheless, this is not a book for light reading. It's not so much the violence itself; it is the attitude of the Judges. Only they have a right to live; everyone else exists at their whim.

Treat this as escapist fantasy. Admire and marvel at the graphics. But don't try to analyse the characters nor try to find parallels with present-day society; it's too depressing.

John Wagner, Colin MacNeill
& Peter Doherty
Judge Dredd: Mechanismo
Mandarin, 28/10/93, 112pp, £7.99
Reviewed by Julie Atkin

One third of the Judge force was wiped out in the previous series, so in order to keep up the numbers on Mega-City One's mean streets, ten robot Judges are developed with programming based on Dredd's personality, which gives them "a certain arrogance — a

natural air of command... mechanismo." They perform well initially, with computer-enhanced abilities enabling them to outperform their human counterparts. Predictably, however, problems arise, causing innocents' deaths.

The robots are shut down, but one is accidentally reactivated and escapes, causing further mayhem. Basically **Robocop** meets **Westworld** with a nod to **Short Circuit**, the main influence is acknowledged by the introduction, then more subtly with a character residing in (**Robocop** star) Peter Weller Lowrise. Warner originally wrote this story for **Judge Dredd: The Magazine** in two parts to accommodate MacNeill and Doherty's different styles. This works well, with the transition between the two artists relatively seamless.

Not a bad story on the whole, although hardly original, with a couple of good jokes, but probably only for die-hard Judge Dredd fans. And the less said about the supposedly-humorous short story which ends the book, the better.

Life Change

Back in **Vector #175**, Sue Thomason reviewed **Always Coming Home** by Ursula Le Guin. In the course of the review, she commented, "Always Coming Home is a book which has (I hope) opened up my thinking, changed my life." Since this is the only review I have ever received in which the reviewer has so boldly stated that the novel in question has had such a life-changing effect, I asked Sue to expand on the statement... (SP)

Always Coming Home and my changing life By Sue Thomason

I think it was changing anyway. No, I know so, for everything changes that is or has been alive; processes of growth, transformation and decay affect our bodies, our perceptions and emotions and ideas. So **Always Coming Home** may have been a seed, taking root and growing in my muddy mind. Or it may have provided me with a pattern for something I'd already glimpsed dimly. Below I note some ideas, feelings and life patterns that this book changed for me.

Feelings about childlessness. I followed the divining ritual in 'Towards an Archaeology of The Future', took my sister's baby in the arms of imagination and envisioned myself standing quietly in a suburban wasteland. I was hoping for a glimpse of the people we might become if we find out how to live in peace with ourselves and our world. I saw old ruins, dandelions splitting tarmac, blunt and clouded broken glass, snarls of cable half-buried in leaves. I saw birch and willow, the early coloniser trees, with alder and hazel and thorn. I saw flicks of motion, small birds in the bushes, and I heard their silence, the wind's silence. There were no people. I thought, "if there are to be future people, they will need space. Le Guin had to kill off us, or our descendants, to give them space; I'm saving

her the trouble. My death will make room for them, they won't be crowded or warred against by my children's children." I'm not at all saying that I haven't borne children through noble altruism; rather because of selfishness and circumstance. But I felt reassured to discover that the childless are not cut off from the stream of life, or from the future.

Always Coming Home also helped me discover my religious capacity, rooted in the capacity for awe and wonder that many people find awakened by SF. And (I can only express this clumsily) it has to do with integrating my capacity for inner, imaginative experience of "the real world". I have been shocked to discover how I have devalued my experience of the real world, deliberately "switched off" my involvement, disregarded my perceptions. I'm now discovering ways of revaluing my environment and experience, through ritual, music, story and poetry, celebration and practical action. I am slowly beginning to rediscover that the air is precious, that water is precious, that the grass on the front lawn is complex, mysterious and holy. That it is still alive, to be treated with care and respect.

Further to this, I've discovered Permaculture. If I had to describe the permaculture philosophy in one sentence, it would be "a collection of techniques for intense, sustainable interactions between humans and the ecosystems they inhabit." A recipe book, not for the Good Life, but for a collection of different good lives. Diversity is good, any monoculture is potentially prone to catastrophic failure. Use what you've got.

Always Coming Home is clearly a permaculture book.

It has helped me to reaffirm my commitment to small community life. I always wondered if my attraction to small communities followed from my discovery of my non-wonderfulness; by the standards of the Big World Out There I'm not particularly talented, bright, successful, etc. But our news suggests that there is something about cities (maybe not all cities, but certainly our cities) that is inimical to community, that breeds violence and fear and treats living beings as things. By Kesh standards I still have my head on backwards, but I'm kind of craning over my shoulder to glimpse the City as Shadow, and the health / wholeness / holiness of living with a bunch of people that it's harder to lie to or play roles for, because they see you all the time.

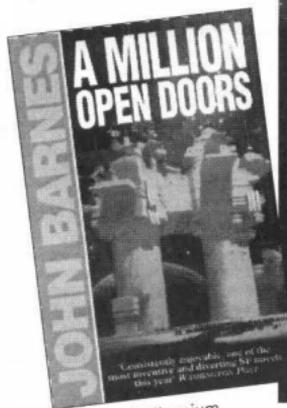


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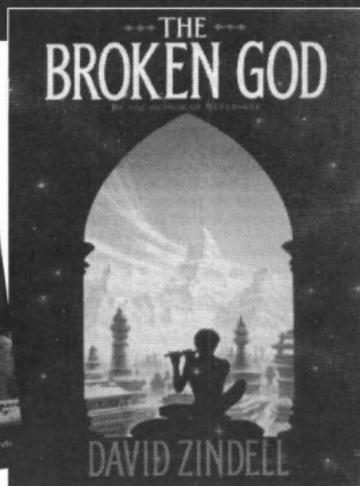
Arthur C Clarke

AWARD

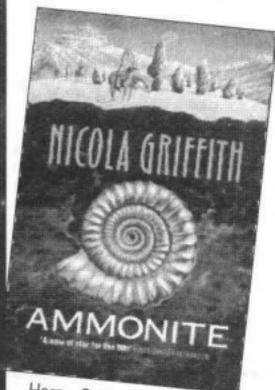
Shortlist for the best SF novel published in the UK



Millennium



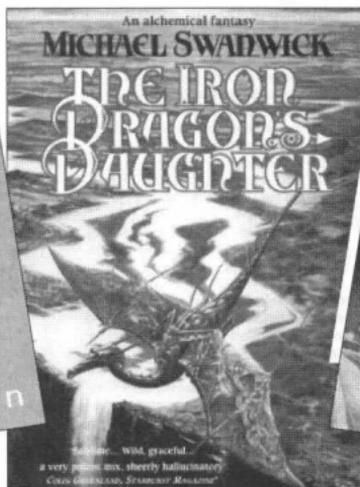
HarperCollinsPublishers



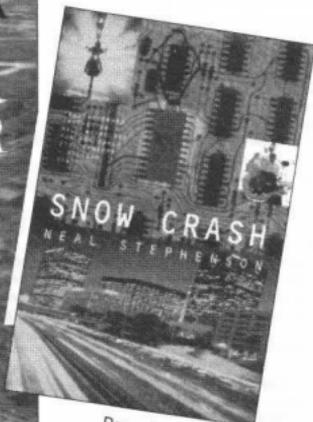
HarperCollinsPublishers



Ringpull



Millennium



Penguin

The winner will be announced on April 20th