interzone/72

£2.50

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

June 1993

New stories by
Stephen Baxter
Eric Brown
Jennifer Swift
and others

Non-fiction:
Harry Harrison
J. G. Ballard

72
9 770264 359107

When Britannia Ruled the Stars!

Take your seats for another space spectacular from Dr Colin Greenland, esteemed author of *Take Back Plenty*, winner of the BSFA Award, the Eastercon Readers' Award and the Arthur C. Clarke Award...

In *Harm's Way*, he takes us into the dark heart of a romantic era that never was, when Britannia ruled the stars. Filled with extravagant Dickensian characters and weird, exotic locations, *Harm's Way* is a Victorian coming of age story, in space!

Available at £14.99 net hardback and £8.99 net trade paperback

Competition!

Win £100's-worth of HarperCollins sf and fantasy books. 50 runners-up will get a free copy of *Take Back Plenty* plus one other paperback of their choice from the HarperCollins sf and fantasy list.

Questions

1. In *Harm's Way*, on which world do Angels live?
2. Name two of Jupiter's moons
3. What is the name of the heroine of *Take Back Plenty*?
4. In *Take Back Plenty*, the heroine's spaceship is called the Alice Liddell. Who was Alice Liddell?

Answers please to Victoria Singer, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 77-85 Fulham Palace Road, London W6 8JB, including your address and a telephone number we can contact you on. Closing date is 30th June 1993.

HarperCollins*Publishers*

Editor & Publisher
David Pringle
Deputy Editor
Lee Montgomerie
Assistant Editors
Paul Annis, Andrew Tidmarsh, Matthew Dickens, Andy Robertson
Consultant Editor
Simon Ounsley
Advisory Editors
John Clute, Malcolm Edwards, Judith Hanna
Typesetting & Paste-up
Bryan Williamson
Subscriptions Secretary
Ann Pringle
Circulation Advisers
The Unlimited Dream Company

Address: 217 Preston Drove, Brighton BN1 6FL, United Kingdom. All subscriptions, back-issue orders, general correspondence, books for review, and enquiries about advertising should be sent to this address.

Subscriptions: £28 for one year (12 issues) in the UK. Cheques or postal orders should be crossed and made payable to *Interzone*. Overseas subscriptions are £34, payable by International Money Order. Payments may also be made by Access or Visa card (also MasterCard or Eurocard): please send your cardholder's name, initials and address written in block letters, with card number, card expiry date and signature. (Note: overseas payments will be charged at the £ sterling rate.) Alternatively, U.S. subscribers may pay by dollar check – $52 by Air Saver (accelerated surface mail). Lifetime subscriptions: £280 (UK); £340 (overseas); $520 (U.S. accelerated surface).

Back-issues are available at £2.50 each in the UK (£2.80 each overseas), postage included. (US dollar price: $5 surface mail.) All issues are still in print *except* numbers 1, 5, 6, 7, 17, 22 and 23. Order them from address above.

Submissions: stories, in the 2,000-6,000 word range, should be sent singly and each one *must* be accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope of adequate size. Persons overseas please send a disposable manuscript (marked as such) and two International Reply Coupons. *We are unable to reply to writers who do not send return postage.* No responsibility can be accepted for loss or damage to unsolicited material, howsoever caused. Submissions should be sent to *either* of the following addresses: *Lee Montgomerie*, 53 Riviera Gardens, Leeds LS7 3DW *David Pringle*, 217 Preston Drove, Brighton BN1 6FL

interzone

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

No 72 **June 1993**

CONTENTS

Fiction

Features

Cover by David O'Connor for Colin Greenland's *Harm's Way* (courtesy of HarperCollins)

Published monthly.

ISSN 0264-3596
Printed by KP Litho Ltd, Brighton

Trade distribution through Diamond Magazine Distribution Ltd., Unit 1, Burgess Rd., Ivyhouse Lane, Hastings, E. Sussex TN35 4NR (tel. 0424 430422)

Bookshop distribution through Central Books, 99 Wallis Rd., London E9 5LN (tel. 081 896 4854)

U.S. and Canadian distribution through Worldwide Magazine Distributors Ltd., Unit 14 – 225 Bysham Park Drive, Woodstock, Ontario N4T 1P1, Canada (tel. 519 539 0200) – both trade and individual queries welcomed.

Arts Council Funded

Interface

David Pringle

We reported on *Interzone*'s 1992 readers' story-poll results in our last issue. As I stated there, 74 ballots were received before the deadline, a sufficient number to give a valid result. As usual, we subtracted all negative mentions from positive ones to arrive at the following scores. To save space, and embarrassment for those who came at the bottom of the various heaps, we give the results here only for those artists and non-fiction contributors who scored three or more points.

Art & Non-Fiction Poll Results

Artists – Covers:

1)	Mark Harrison (#65)	26
2)	Jim Burns (#66)	19
3)	SMS (#58)	17
4)	David Hardy (#63)	15
5=)	Peter Gudynas (#64)	10
5=)	Tony Roberts (#62)	10
7)	Tony Roberts (#61)	6
8)	Jason Hurst (#56)	3

The remaining four covers received fewer than three points. Our congratulations to **Mark Harrison** for topping the cover-artists' poll for the first time (he came second to Geoff Taylor last year, and second to Ian Miller in the previous year).

Artists – Interiors:

1)	Martin McKenna	28
2)	SMS	22
3)	Freddie Baer	18
4=)	Kevin Cullen	17
4=)	Jason Hurst	17
6)	Gerry Grace	13
7)	Iain Byers	11
8)	Tony Roberts	6
9)	Ian Miller	5
10)	Russell Morgan	3

The remaining seven artists received fewer than three points. Our congratulations to **Martin McKenna** for winning the illustrators' poll for the second year in a row.

Non-Fiction

1)	David Langford: Ansible Link	28
2)	Nick Lowe: Film Reviews	21
3)	Book reviews in general	18
4=)	Douglas Adams interview (Stan Nicholls)	13
4=)	Brian Stableford: British SF Magazines	13
6)	Interaction: Readers' Letters	12
7=)	Wendy Bradley: TV Reviews	11
7=)	John Clute: Book Reviews	11
7=)	David Langford: Wisdom of the Ancients	11
10)	Storm Constantine interview (Stan Nicholls)	10
11=)	Colin Greenland interview (Stan Nicholls)	8
11=)	Interface: Editorial & News	8
11=)	Dan Simmons interview (Stan Nicholls)	8
14=)	Books Received	7
14=)	Interviews in general	7
14=)	Garry Kilworth interview (Gwyneth Jones)	7
14=)	Robert Sheckley interview (Stan Nicholls)	7
18=)	Mike Ashley: *Interzone*: A Bridge So Far	6
18=)	Wendy Bradley: Book Reviews	6
18=)	Michael Swanwick interview (Stan Nicholls)	6
21=)	Neil Jones: C.J. Cherryh Bibliography	5
21=)	Paul McAuley: Book Reviews	5
21=)	Lawrence Sutin interview (Andrew Tidmarsh)	5
21=)	Andrew Tidmarsh: R.A. Lafferty Bibliography	5
25=)	British magazine reviews (Duffield, etc.)	4
25=)	Mary Gentle: Book Reviews	4
25=)	Chris Gilmore: Book Reviews	4
25=)	Neil McAleer interview (Liz Holliday)	4
25=)	Paul Park interview (Nick Griffiths)	4
25=)	Reviews of science books	4
25=)	Andrew Tidmarsh: Barry Malzberg Bibliography	4
32=)	Margaret Atwood interview (Andrew Tidmarsh)	3
32=)	Terry Brooks interview (Stan Nicholls)	3
32=)	Stephen Donaldson interview (Stan Nicholls)	3
32=)	Christopher Fowler interview (Dave Hughes)	3
32=)	Stan Lee interview (Steve Green)	3
32=)	Andy Robertson: Book Reviews	3

The remaining non-fiction items received fewer than three points. Our congratulations to **David Langford** for soaring straight to the top of the non-fiction poll with his "Ansible Link" column. **Nick Lowe** also deserves commendation for coming a consistent second several years in a row.

(David Pringle)

Interaction

Dear Editors:

I was very interested to read some protests from male readers concerning the story "Horse Meat," as, until the April issue, the letters you published were largely from indignant women – which tended, I thought, to slot the story rather too neatly into that dubious "oh-my-god, female indignation" category. In this department, "Horse Meat" by no means sets a precedent: I seem to remember a similar frisson of offended opinion from men when you published "The Bacchae" a lively and sinister story by Elizabeth Hand.

Personally, I'd guess that no one (with the exception of the odd sicko, perhaps) managed to read Brian Aldiss's story without being, in one degree or another, unsettled by it – which was its purpose, surely? If so, it did the job admirably and therein lies the problem. We all read fiction for varied reasons, don't we? And if we're not grown-up enough to take it when the power of somebody's prose closes like a fist around our sensibilities, we can always stop reading the thing, can't we? Nobody *has* to pursue a story to the bitter end if they don't want to cope with the imagery it provides for them.

As for censorship, I'd be grateful if you didn't exercise your minds and your editorial policy too strenuously over this. I would rather risk losing my lunch from time to time than be confined to an *Interzone* full of safe, life-affirming, coy and unchallenging tales of the pink candyfloss and day-glo bunny variety.

And no, I didn't like "Horse Meat" very much because the chilling viciousness was undermined by an altogether daft ending that creaked laboriously in an effort to add incest to insult, injury and imminent execution. On grounds of quality, I can see reasons for not using it. If, however, you begin to disqualify well-written stories on the strength of their power to offend – well, that really *is* nasty.

Anne Acaster
Maidstone

Dear Editors:
No! Please do not try to work out where the limits of decorum should lie, and if you *have* an "overall policy" on the acceptable, then ditch it. Terms like "decorum" and "offence" do not belong in *Interzone*. Their use is needlessly insulting to the people who make your letters page interesting with their input on certain editorial decisions. I don't think any of your readers are "afraid" of "dangerous" material – and "dangerous" seems to me as dubious a term as "decorum" in this context. The real situation has different parameters, nothing to do with courage or cowardice.

There is some highly cool bad taste around today. There is also a lot of meretricious bullshit, posing as cool bad taste. The editors' job is to distinguish between the two, and catch the bullshit before it hits the page. It is not always easy. Mistakes have been made. Maybe it was a mistake to print Aldiss's "Horse Meat." Having read the story and followed the correspondence, I'd say it probably was: but no one's perfect. These things happen, however sincere everybody's intentions. Did I say the problem had nothing to do with courage? I was wrong. The editors have to have the courage to make mistakes, and accept they'll always be to blame. Your job's hard enough as it is, and you're doing fine. *Please* don't make an issue out of this "taste" thing, and don't pin yourselves down with any kind of censorship policy.
Gwyneth Jones
Brighton

Dear Editors:
I'm glad you asked for more on the Aldiss issue and *Interzone* policy. Okay, here's my opinion... I'm deeply touched, moved almost to gentle weeping, by the sensitivity of your more vociferous readers. They were shocked and horrified by a tale in which a woman was raped by a horse. (Are these readers by any chance nuns or novice priests?) First of all, I think that the reaction to the story shows clearly what a damn good writer can do with a mediocre plot. Though if Brian Aldiss really did intend a deeper meaning it was so obscure as to be irrelevant.

But, why should a woman raped by a horse cause such an indignant fuss? Remember that if a woman was raped by a man these same people probably wouldn't bat an eyelid. So the indignity of these readers certainly isn't a moral one. You can't blame the poor old horse. It's horrible if a horse rapes a woman (if such is possible), but it's wrong and unacceptable if a man rapes a woman.

So, it seems to me that the objections of those who found the Aldiss tale offensive are not morally grounded. What they're really saying is that the horror element in the story was a bit too strong for their stomachs – which no doubt digest more easily the metal of space craft and mined asteroid rock. So that's all, *Interzone*; you sickened a bunch of weak-stomached readers, that's all.

Now, where should the limits be drawn? you ask. Well, it would be nice to say that there shouldn't be limits, but that would be irresponsible. I think the concept of obscenity is fairly subjective. The obscenity in the Aldiss tale was permissible by the context, thus, it wasn't pornographic. Since I can't imagine *IZ* ever publishing pornography I don't think this is an issue here. What I'm saying is that just about anything is justifiable depending on the context; though, to stress my subjectivity claim, Mary Whitehouse wouldn't accept this (neither would Cliff Richard probably).

I suggest that the line has to be drawn bearing political considerations in mind. For instance, should IZ ever start to show an editorial bias towards political shades of opinion that would incite social tension, eg, racial disharmony, etc, then I certainly wouldn't touch the magazine with a ten-foot pole.

There's a lot of talk about being "politically correct" these days. I think I know what that means – though so much depends on your definition of correct. *Interzone* has been accused of being "establishment," but I think the people who make this accusation only mean that it is established, since "establishment" has more to do with bureaucracy than political parties.

Hell, IZ can and should be as challenging and dangerous as it likes; the more provocative the better. The only lines worth drawing are those which omit pornography (of all kinds) which is not justified by the context, and lines which omit "wrong" politics.
David Logan
Newtownabbey
Northern Ireland

Dear Editors:
Two small points for your amusement and possible edification:

In your February issue, you speculate on the meaning of the letters "PJF" attached to the name of fantasy writer Steven Brust. (This was in the teeny weeny print of the "Books Received" column.) It has nothing to do with Philip José Farmer: rather, it indicates Brust's membership of the Pre-Joycean Fellowship, a loose association of writers who believe that fiction went steeply downhill after and because of the work of James Joyce, and who are therefore dedicated to turning the clock back on the English novel. *(Ironically, Philip José Farmer, who I assumed had ownership of the initials "PJF," is a keen Joycean; his novella "Riders of the Purple Wage," as I recall, makes several nods towards* Finnegans Wake; *so presumably one writer who would steer well clear of said Fellowship is Mr P.J.F. himself – Editor.)*

In your March issue, David Langford quotes Henry Beard's *Me transmitte sursum, Caledoni!* As near as I can manage, this means *Transmit me up! Scotsmen*... (trails off into unfinished sentence). Although I hesitate to correct Mr Langford, a man who knows that the plural of *deus ex machina* is *di ex machinis*, I think he meant *Me fulge sursum, Caledonule!* (literally, *Flash me on high, O little Scottish man!).*
Jonathan Coxhead
Cambridge

Dear Editors:
I always enjoy *Interzone*, but I had to write and tell you how wonderful the two stories by Nicola Griffith and Molly Brown were in the April issue (no. 70). Molly Brown, of course, is always outstanding and is destined to become one of our finest writers; and Nicola Griffith was a real find.

Both stories were electric – believable characters, whole new worlds for a backdrop defined in a few sentences, and also extraordinarily *erotic* – and there's nothing wrong with that!
Andrew G. Stephenson
Newhaven, East Sussex

Oberleutnant Hermann Göring emerged from the muggy warmth of the tent into bright, clear Polar air. To get the blood flowing he stamped his feet and wrapped his arms around his torso; the leather of his flying suit creaked reassuringly around him, and under his feet sandy frost-rime crunched over an underlying hard surface. The Antarctic summer sun hung to the north, separated by about a quarter of the blue sky from the horizon; and the land was a tabletop of wedding-cake white.

This last fuel depot was less than two hundred kilometres from the South Pole. Less than two degrees of latitude from the floor of the world; less than an hour's flight, Göring thought, from his destiny. He peered into the south, savouring the crispness of the frozen air as it misted before his mouth... And there, like a single ray of light passing from some Earth-bound star into the huge sky, was the Axis itself; Göring tilted his head back, following the clear line into Heaven.

He surveyed the little fuel depot. The crude tent in which he'd shared a night with the four English who manned this station was a patch of mud-colour, jarring against the pristine white of the ice. And – ah – there was his Fokker, emerged from the shelter the English had erected for it. Emptied fuel cans and discarded canvas tarpaulins lay piled around the machine. Göring let his eyes rest on the triplane's round, elegant form, relishing its vivid red paintwork. From the air, he thought, the plane must look like a splash of blood, a wound in the icy carcass of this desolate land, alive with the bloody shade which had struck terror into the heart of every Allied airman who had risen to face the Jagdstaffeln in the war.

His goggles and facemask in hand, Göring walked the few metres of uneven, snow-strewn ice to his plane. His arthritis – which had driven him from the trenches, and which had almost precluded his admission to the Air Service – was his constant companion still, now sending needles of pain through his legs and feet. Hermann Göring was not designed for the cold, he reflected ruefully.

Two of the doltish Englishmen, bundled up in their furs, were clearing the short strip they'd laid in the

NO LONGER TOUCH THE EARTH

Stephen Baxter

Illustrations by Gerry Grace

ice for him. A third – Collishaw? – was working on the Fokker. And the fourth, Davies, the most senior of them, waited for Göring in the long, striped shadow of the Fokker's triple wings. Davies was about forty, Göring supposed – a good decade and a half older than himself – but he had nevertheless seen combat in the war which had ended a couple of years earlier. The burly man walked with a pronounced limp, though Göring had not heard him complain about the problem; and the German speculated that Davies had taken a lump of shrapnel home with him from the trenches. The other English – younger, brasher – were fools. It had been a long night for Göring with these English and their schoolboy humour, their tea and their "hooch"; but he had found a grudging respect for Davies.

Davies smiled through his mask of beard. "Well, Herr Oberleutnant. Are you fit and rested for your great challenge?"

"Indeed," Göring said. "And in not many hours I will return in my trusty scout, and you shall be the first to hear of my adventures."

"But take a care, Leutnant."

Göring, wincing, turned; they had been joined by the mechanic, Collishaw. Foul breath misted before the man's round, foolish face as he stomped feet clad in sealskin fur.

"Oberleutnant," Göring corrected him mildly.

Collishaw, no older than Göring, grinned impudently. "The Pole is an unforgiving place. It did for our chap Scott, don't forget, despite all his experience and preparations."

"I know of your 'chap Scott'," Göring said, letting irritation leak into his voice. In fact, he was retracing Scott's fateful route, from the shadow of the astonishing thirty-metre-high cliffs of ice that marked the edge of the Great Ice Barrier, and then across a frozen sea to the mighty limbs of the Beardsmore Glacier.

Collishaw nodded. "You visited the cairn, of course."

Göring hesitated. He had had little choice; for the Englishmen of the Royal Geographic Society who had sponsored this expedition had, naturally, established the first of Göring's refuelling stops not a hundred

metres from the place from which Scott and his companions, at last, had not had the strength to rise. Göring had walked out, alone, to visit the pile of grubby snow, the sad cross of skis which marked that pathetic end, and he had paid his own silent respects to the brave Captain R.F. Scott.

But now he yawned, hoping to irritate the smug English. "There was not time, Herr Collishaw. Perhaps another occasion..."

"It's not a damn Bavarian beauty spot, man." As Göring had hoped, Collishaw's grin was replaced with a glaring frown. "Look around you. See the unevenness of the ground? That's what we call sastrugi – frozen waves of ice. Damn near impossible to drag a sledge across, with dogs or without 'em. It's what did for Scott and his chums."

Davies said mildly, "But the Oberleutnant will be far above our sastrugi, Phillip."

"True." Now Collishaw grinned again; his beard and hair were so blonde, his eyes bluer than Göring's own, that he could almost have been a Prussian, the aviator thought. But not in the foolishness of his manner, of course. "Tell me, *Ober*leutnant. Did you fly with Richthofen himself?" Collishaw gestured towards the Fokker. "I see you've borrowed his taste in paintwork."

Göring drew himself to his full height and turned to Davies. "Am I required to converse with this ignorant young man in compensation for my fuel?"

Davies said, "Phillip, the Oberleutnant took command of Rittmeister von Richthofen's Jagdgeschwader – the famous 'Flying Circus' – after the death of Der Rote Kampfflieger himself." Davies' German pronunciation was woman-soft, thought Göring, but passable. Davies smiled at him. "In fact, Herr Oberleutnant, your triplane is the same model in which von Richthofen met his death."

"The DR I, yes," Göring said, somewhat mollified.

"So you see, Phillip," Davies went on, "if anyone is capable of completing this astonishing flight, it is surely the Oberleutnant."

Collishaw nodded, but insolence lingered in his voice. "So you used to fly with the Red Baron. Now you're off to fly with the angels, eh, Göring?"

The man's tone was like sandpaper over raw flesh to Göring. After the sorry end of the war the ex-Officers had been regarded by some Germans as responsible for that conflict's disastrous conclusion. Göring himself had been forced to face down a "Soviet" of drunken Communists in Darmstadt – he, Hermann Göring, holder of the Orden Pour le Merite, the "Blue Max" itself! And it had not been the violence but the *disrespect* of those dark days which Göring had been – was still – unable to accept. Now he heard echoes of that insolence in the tones of this Collishaw: overlaid, of course, with the smug contempt of the victorious for the vanquished.

Göring said, "Perhaps, my friend, you are of that superstitious rabble who believes that man is not fit to challenge the Heavens. You are a follower of that ancient Hebrew, Maimonides, who believed that humans are one with the Earth and the things which crawl over it; perhaps you believe that some mysterious Nemesis will strike me down as I sail through the skies around the Axis." As indeed had predicted Göring's own godfather, the dreary Epenstein, the Oberleutnant reflected.

Collishaw looked baffled. "Maimon... who?"

Davies laughed. "Herr Oberleutnant, cosmology has been the fashionable subject for a decade, ever since Scott's astonishing discovery. And even the shallowest circles have buzzed with the names of long-dead philosophers, monks and clerics. But I doubt very much if a debate on Maimonides with our young friend here is going to bear you much fruit." He looked thoughtful. "Of course, the resolution of the puzzle to which you allude is of great interest, even beyond the human fascination of the feat you are going to attempt. Is the Universe, the layered sky above the Earth, an artefact which we can touch, handle – perhaps, one day, manipulate – as Eudoxus and Aristotle believed? Or are there some things forever beyond our reach? The Rabbi Ben Sira said, 'What the Lord keeps secret is no concern of yours...'" He studied Göring. "I suspect you yourself are an Aristotelian, Herr Oberleutnant. Or you would surely not be attempting this feat."

"Indeed." Göring smiled. "Let me counter your antique Jew with the words of Ptolemy, who said: 'I know that I am mortal, a creature of a day; but when I search with my mind into the multitudinous revolving spirals of the stars, my feet no longer touch the Earth, but beside Zeus himself I take my fill of ambrosia...' Well, Herr Davies, perhaps before this day is over we shall know one way or the other."

Davies nodded, his brown eyes thoughtful; but Göring noticed that the burly Englishman had drawn away from him a little, apparently flinching at Göring's dismissal of Ben Sira. Davies said with mild reproof, "I'm not certain that a man's race is a valid test of his philosophy, Herr Oberleutnant. Still, I find I envy you your adventure."

"Well, I don't," Collishaw said brashly. "Flying to the Pole in that crate? Good luck to you, man; but, good God, what a crazy stunt!"

Göring glared. "I do not perform 'stunts'."

Collishaw grinned. "And what if you get the same sort of nasty shock as did poor old Scott? All the way to the Pole, only to find a Norwegian flag waiting for him!"

"Your prattling irritates me, Herr Collishaw," Göring said evenly.

"Amundsen beat Scott because he took a shorter route," Collishaw went on, ignoring him. "He travelled from the Bay of Whales, from the other extreme of the Ice Barrier. And that's the route those Americans have plotted, isn't it? Will you feel as miffed as poor old Scott if you get to the Axis, only to find some grinning Yank perched on the top?" He laughed. "What a sight that would be!"

Göring strove to keep his face empty. This dolt was not worth the expenditure of his energy, he decided coldly; and, as he had learned to do throughout his unruly, violent life, he put away the anger which burned inside him. He turned to Davies. "I believe I am ready to fly."

The Fokker triplane had been adapted for its jaunt into Antarctic skies. Göring had studied the modifications in the Oberursel rotary engine and in the layout of fuel and other lines, all designed to combat the cold by crowding the fragile elements of the plane around its warm heart. And a

canvas frame with glass windows had been erected around the cockpit, its seams sealed with grease to keep the Polar air away from the pilot.

Of course, the twin Spandau guns had been removed.

So there were plenty of unfamiliar aspects to this odd flight; even the thick woollen mask around Göring's lower face, beneath his goggles, felt rough and strange. But when the Oberursel roared to life, turning with the propellor – and the prop blew a tiny storm of ice-sand over the watching Englishmen – and when Göring let out the throttle and the Fokker bounced across the short strip smoothed out of the sastrugi – then, with relish, he felt in his belly the Fokker's powerful surge from the frozen ground, and he was as at home as if he had been returned to the skies of France.

The Fokker rose like a stone cast into a huge bowl of sky. The Englishmen's little fuel camp turned into a scrap of muddy cloth and disturbed snow, lost in the ice; and Göring was cloaked in the silence of the air. As he rose he seemed to sail above his petty irritation with the doltish Englishman, Collishaw. The irony was that, in common with most of his fellows in the Air Service, Göring had evolved a great deal of respect for his English foes. The typical Englishman in the air showed pluck and daring, although rather prone to stunting. The same could be said for your average American. The Frenchman, on the other hand, was sneaky, cunning, and lacking in tenacious endurance, although a dangerous opponent when the Gallic blood was enraged. Göring recalled von Richthofen likening the French to carbonated water – for a moment there would be an awful lot of spirit which would suddenly go flat.

But the English flyers were almost like Germans, and so Göring had not been averse to accept the startling invitation – made in a dubious spirit of post-war reconciliation – to join this English expedition to the Axis... But his essential respect for the English made the insolence of the likes of Collishaw even harder to take.

He tried to put all of that out of his mind, now, and to turn his thoughts to the task which awaited him today. He took the Fokker through a few turns, testing out the elevators and rudder. The English had kept the triplane stored under canvas through the sunlit "night" of the Antarctic summer, warming her with blubber stoves; the simple measures seemed to have worked, for although the external thermometer showed an astonishingly low temperature all the control lines were free and the engine's note was smooth and steady. The smell of oil and fuel in the enclosed cabin was warm and reassuring, and the triplane handled as well as he had known her.

He climbed easily to a thousand metres, dipped his wings once in salute to the waving English – ants, now, on a frozen map – and turned the Fokker to the South...

And there, like a guiding beacon before him, was a translucent stripe down the sky. His heart already pounding, Göring centred the nose of the triplane on that near-invisible line and pushed at the throttle. Soon he hurtled across the ice at more than a hundred and fifty kilometres per hour. In sixty minutes he would reach the Pole; and already a sense of mystery, of wonder at what he was attempting, stirred within him.

When Göring was a boy he had been taken to Berlin by his Jewish godfather Epenstein – leaving his mother and father in Epenstein's castle-home in Veldenstein. And young Hermann had been glad of an opportunity to get the hated Epenstein away from his parents for a while, for even at an early age he had become aware of the filthy demands Epenstein made on his mother as compensation for accommodating the little family... and he had become helplessly sickened by the steady humiliation of his father.

But all of his troubles had been forgotten when Epenstein had taken Hermann to see the famous Orrery in the capital's greatest museum.

The Orrery, a clockwork model of the whole Universe, was a glass onion taller than three men; in the staring eyes of eight-year-old Hermann it had seemed as large as the Universe itself.

The guide – tall, sombre, smelling of tobacco and musty antiquity – told them how centuries of close observation had confirmed the essential correctness of the ancients' ideas about the structure of the Universe. As Aristotle had imagined with startling prescience four centuries before Christ, the Earth was a ball, floating in a pool of air at the stationary centre of the Cosmos. And now Hermann had studied a painted, football-sized Earth fixed at the centre of the Orrery. The planets and stars, the Sun and the Moon, were affixed to a series of concentric, crystalline spheres which cloaked the Earth. Each planet required a nest of no less than *four* of the spheres to carry it on its meanderings through the sky. The planet was fixed to a point on the Equator of a sphere, and that sphere turned about its axis. But the ends of this axis were let into the inner surface of a larger sphere which rotated about a *different* axis, carrying the first sphere along with it... and so on. And the nests, of course, were mechanically connected to each other by smaller "neutralizing" spheres which sat between successive nests and turned in the opposite direction to the working spheres. And as the young Hermann had looked into the misty heart of the Orrery he had been able to make out, like crystal ghosts, the fifty-five clustered spheres described by the guide, and the clockwork engines within them.

The celestial globes were constructed of fine wire and immense carefully-shaped glass panes, and connected by stubby axes of crystal. The effect was something like a huge complex greenhouse. The planets were fist-sized wooden blocks fixed to their respective globe-nests and painted brightly in their characteristic colours – Mars a vivid blood-red, Venus a beguiling yellow, and so on. The stars were modelled by a thousand tiny diamonds fixed to the outermost sphere – actually, the adult Göring reflected, those "diamonds" were probably no more than fragments of glass – while the Sun was a ball filled with electric light, so huge that Hermann felt convinced it gave off heat as well as radiance.

And the model wasn't just a pretty ornament; to Hermann's delight, and with a slow, subdued whir of fifty-five clockwork motors, the huge spheres sailed steadily around the Earth, reproducing the motions of a year in half an hour. The guide had explained to the nodding Epenstein how the complex, layered motion of the many spheres produced such oddities

as the retrograde motion of the planets, and Hermann had watched painted Mars turn back on itself in the crystalline sky.

Forever after, Göring recalled now with a rueful smile under his woollen mask, he had pictured his world in terms of that beautiful model; in his mind Aristotle's "Unmoved Movers," the agents who patiently turned the globes of the Cosmos, were still constructed of some magical celestial clockwork.

But as he had grown older Göring had become aware of the metaphysical debates which raged still among philosophers. What if Aristotle's vision of all those spheres and axles were simply a mathematical model? – what if in fact the stars and planets were floating freely in space, guided along their invisible tracks by some unknowable force? Or, as Aristotle himself had believed, could the crystal spheres actually *exist*, physically?

When Peary reached the North Pole in 1909 without finding any evidence of an axle through the world, the debate had seemed to be resolved against the Aristotelians. But then had come Amundsen and Scott, and their astonishing discovery in the South...

So the spheres, it seemed, were real. But still the philosophers could not agree about the place of man in the Universe. Some clung to the view propounded by twelfth-century Maimonides that man was barely fit even to consider the structure of Heaven. Göring remembered with bitterness how his godfather had quoted to him from Maimonides' newly fashionable writings at long and gloomy length. "'Man is filled with awe and dread at the sight of his own lowliness ...He becomes aware of himself as a vessel full of shame and confusion, empty and lacking...'" And so on, and so forth. To Göring such a view seemed dark, claustrophobically pessimistic – all but unbearable, in fact, and forever associated in his mind with the long, severe face of his hated godfather.

With a small part of his mind Göring conceded that it was scarcely rational to erect preconceptions of an entire race, to dismiss a complete and majestic philosophical tradition, solely on the basis of childhood reactions to a godfather. But within the man, it seemed, the child lingered on...

As Davies had intuited correctly, Göring clung to the Aristotelian concept that – although the changeless matter of the spheres might differ from the imperfect atoms of which he, Göring, was composed, along with the rest of the sublunar realm – still, humanity was that element of creation below the stars most in accordance with nature. And the Cosmos itself, that great and complex artefact designed and manufactured by some purposeful, immanent intelligence, was a fit subject for study and exploration by man – perhaps even, Göring mused, for his exploitation.

Now he smiled, his eyes fixed on the thickening blue line that was the approaching Axis. Well, he, Oberleutnant Hermann Göring of the Imperial Air Service, would this day with a single act of audacious courage resolve the debate of centuries of logic-choppers.

And, he thought grimly, perhaps at last he could still the voice of Epenstein, whose droning, depressing words still sounded in Göring's memory.

When it was done Göring would be the most famous man in Germany. In the world! The humiliation he had endured at the end of the war would be ended; they would call him Der Eiserner, the Iron One, in recognition of his valour, and his country's stature in the eyes of the world would be restored...

Now the Axis was widening from a geometrical abstraction into a band of light, vertically painted down the china-blue sky. Suddenly it was close enough for Göring to make out structure: a deepening of its blue-white colour towards the vertical edges showed, even from kilometres away, that the Axis was clearly a cylinder, and draughts of warmer air caused light to flicker all around the immense pillar.

Göring, willing the Fokker forward, stared hungrily at the Axis and dreamt of wealth.

The airman banked and turned; he flew parallel to the slow curve of the cylinder perhaps a thousand metres clear of the surface. It was like flying past an immense building, or a cliff. The Axis looked as smooth as glass and was translucent; it seemed that he could see several metres into the substance of the construct, but beyond that there was only a vague glow of trapped blue-white light.

The artefact was immense, of course: no less than two kilometres wide, Göring judged. He felt like a mosquito buzzing an elephant.

He took the Fokker into a cautious downward spiral. On the ground snow and disturbed ice was piled up around the interface between Earth and the base of the Axis. The Earth was, of course, stationary in space; thus the circumference of the Axis marched endlessly past the Polar ice at the rate of six kilometres in every twenty-four hours – even slower, Göring thought with a stab of contempt, than Scott and his shambolic team. Scott, in his sad diary, had recorded that the surface of the Axis was warm to the touch, and had noted a thin film of water, slick against the lower few centimetres of the Axis. And Scott had heard a continuous, grinding crackle of ice crusts freezing and cracking endlessly as the Axis turned. Now Göring fancied he could hear that dim sound, the noise of the sky turning, as he circled in his Fokker.

He passed the site reached by Scott himself, and he studied a small cairn constructed of skis and heaped-up snow. A Union flag, limp and frozen, hung rather pathetically from a ski-pole, not fifty metres from a grander construction topped by the bold colours of Amundsen's Norwegian pennant. Göring, staring at the cairns so painfully scraped from the ice, tried to imagine the feelings of those thwarted Englishmen.

Now, pushing on the control stick, he dipped the Fokker's nose a little further; when he was perhaps a mere thirty metres from the ground – with the sastrugi hurtling beneath him like some rigid ocean – he banked cautiously, hoping to approach the Axis still more closely. But the air here was lumpy, turbulent; and as he approached the Axis itself he became aware of a steady updraught, an incongruous warmth which threatened to mist over his canopy. He hauled at the stick; with a roar from the Oberursel the Fokker banked until its right wingtip was pointed at the frozen ground, and Göring pulled up and away from the dangerous, turbulent air.

Göring tried to find metaphors for this experience from his long years of flying. Air warriors were accustomed to empty skies, to fields, infantry-filled trenches, perhaps the grey-brown quilts of towns and cities below. But to fly before this huge, curving face, to share the sky with such enormity... When he had first arrived aboard the English research vessel in this bleak Southern continent Göring had taken the Fokker for a brief jaunt along the broken face of the Great Ice Barrier. He recalled the ice floes like immense water lilies in the rich blue sea, the beating flukes of whales ...He had felt lost in the sky. Perhaps *there* was some point of comparison – the presence of grandeur, the feeling that one's fragile wood-and-canvas plane were a mere mote before the immensities of Nature.

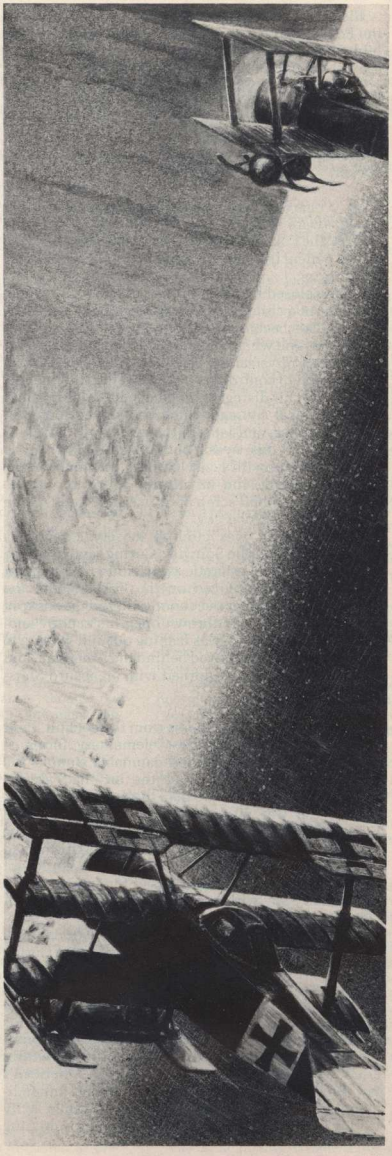
But the comparison was distant. The Ice Barrier endured for hundreds of dreary kilometres, it was true; but it had not risen beyond the nose of the triplane into emptiness, dwindling from an immense trunk – to a gleaming pencil line – to a thread against the azure texture of the sky...to a point whose very presence seemed masked by the motions of air molecules, by the liquids of one's own eyeballs! Göring, his eyes following the Axis up into Heaven, felt as if the whole immense, impossible construct might come crashing down over him at any moment.

And there was another dissimilarity with such natural wonders as the Ice Barrer: there was no doubt, this close, that the Axis was indeed an *artefact*. Göring had read of engineers who had remarked on the impossibility of constructing the cylinder reported by Scott and Amundsen from any known material. Why, the hardest steel would flow like toffee under the immense weight of the pillar itself – not to mention the notional weight of any celestial spheres the device might support. Göring had always thought such analyses foolish and shallow. Let those box-builders come here and see what he saw; the Axis was clearly an artefact, but an artefact utterly and eternally beyond the capability of humans. And Göring doubted very much that calculations of tensile stress had played any part in the thoughts of the Builder of this great device.

...And there was an impression of *agelessness* about the Axis, he realized now; it had been manufactured, certainly; and yet it was also Eternal, enduring. That was paradoxical, of course, and yet, as Göring continued to circle the Axis, he sensed the rightness of his diagnosis.

A made thing, and yet Eternal... And he, Hermann Göring, was the first man in all of time – disregarding the ice-crawling Scott and Amundsen – to have challenged this great device. He felt his face tighten into a rictus of triumph. As a boy he had longed to take that wonderful Orrery home with him, to pull out the beautifully crafted models of Mars and Saturn and suspend them in his small bedroom so that all would know they were *his*. Well, he could never take the Axis away, and yet it was his nevertheless; whenever men came to this place in the centuries ahead they would have to speak his name. He, Hermann Göring, the first of them all; Der Eiserner –

But there was something else in the sky above him: a mote which flew towards him from behind the great pillar, as insignificant as a dust speck descending against the columns of some Greek temple.



His heart pounding in his chest, Göring levelled the Fokker and narrowed his eyes. It was a dark grey biplane. A Sopwith, probably a Camel; he had flown against enough of those in his time.

The pilot of the other ship looped an extravagant loop and waggled his wings in foolish greeting. Then he returned to hovering proprietorially before the immense face of the Axis.

Göring felt his lips pull back from his teeth. *Rickenbacker!*

As rage consumed him, Göring became abruptly aware of the pain of his arthritic joints. Even the Fokker, it seemed, was reacting to his fury, for the patient triplane juddered in the air, the Oberursel whining.

Göring closed his eyes, tried to contain his rage, to *focus* it. As a child, at boarding school and even earlier, he had become notorious for his fury, his ill-discipline; and when angered it seemed he was utterly unaware of physical danger. Well, over the years he had learned to control his temper, to use it to fuel his actions; and his disregard for danger had matured into a raw physical courage which had served him well in the trenches, and later in the air.

He opened his eyes. With absolute clarity he studied the Sopwith lazily circling before the Axis' impassive cheek, and he allowed all of his rage to centre on that small scrap of canvas and wood, alone with him in the Polar sky.

The American was circling loosely at about a thousand metres. The Sopwith, Göring saw, had been modified for the Antarctic conditions in a manner similar to that employed on the Fokker, with the installation of a protective canopy around the cockpit; but now the pilot had thrown open his canopy and, regardless of the cold, was leaning out and waving to him. A thick scarf billowed behind the American, and his flying helmet was adorned with an absurd Stars-and-Stripes design.

Rickenbacker!

With their insolent gestures from the cockpit, their utter disregard for the most elementary forms of chivalry – and above all their damnable *stunts* – the Americans, those clowns of the air, had always infuriated Göring far more than their pitiful contribution to the war effort had justified. Oh, Captain Edward Rickenbacker was the best of them, Göring allowed; and with his twenty-six verified kills he had exceeded Göring's own tally. But still he could not accept that these casually-dressed foreign oafs were fit to share a sky with von Richthofen, Loewenhardt, Udet and the others.

And now, with the war lost to this loutish coalition, was Rickenbacker to be allowed to have beaten Göring himself to this, the greatest of prizes?

His rage transmuted to determination, as cold as the air beyond the cockpit. He hauled on his stick and climbed steeply; the featureless surface of the Axis swept beneath the wheels of the Fokker. Göring spiralled rapidly around and above the Sopwith, and within a few seconds was positioned above the American's tail. Rickenbacker, of course, did not react immediately; and as his opponent continued to circle lazily Göring's fingers itched for the buttons of his missing Spandaus...

Now the American pulled to his right, climbing steeply.

Göring felt his face draw into a smile. So the Jagdfliegerei, the aerial hunt, was on.

The American hurtled up and behind Göring and, with a brisk barrel-roll, levelled out a few hundred metres above the Fokker. Göring held the triplane steady for a few seconds, allowing the American an illusory taste of victory; then he wrenched the Fokker into a frame-bending left curve, climbing ferociously. This time the American did not sit and wait for Göring to complete his manoeuvre, but peeled away to his right before Göring could get over him. But Göring had anticipated this and hauled the Fokker through the sharpest of rolls.

The two planes entered a tightening spiral pattern, with each of the pilots trying to get above and behind the other. Above the screaming of the Oberursel Göring heard the struts of the Fokker creak in warning, but the canvas of the triple wings bit deeply into the thick, cold air and the Fokker did his bidding. Peering out through his canopy window Göring could see Rickenbacker in his open cockpit, could see every move of the American's head. Rickenbacker was grinning and seemed to be calling something; even now the American thought this was some sort of game...

Like flies in the sky-blue dome of a cathedral the planes buzzed before the silent bulk of the Axis, the tiny roars of their competing engines the only noise in the Polar stillness.

The Sopwith was a good crate, Göring admitted, and Rickenbacker was not without skill. Göring found time to wonder how they might have fared, one against the other, in the fields above France; and he found room for a stab of regret that such a contest had never occurred.

At last, with the circles in the air no more than fifty metres wide, and with the Sopwith so close it seemed Göring could see every strut and stay quivering in the chill air, every twitch of its punished elevators, Rickenbacker conceded. He pulled out and levelled into a slow, shallow descent, and he waved back at Göring in evident good-humoured defeat.

But Göring was not done with him.

He hauled at his stick, twisting to the left and gaining height rapidly, and then forced down the nose of the Fokker. The Sopwith was below and before him now. Göring shoved at the throttle and screamed in triumph as the Fokker hurtled like some bird of prey out of the sky at the American.

Rickenbacker twisted in his cockpit; Göring fancied he saw the grin vanish from that doltish Yankee face. Rickenbacker hauled his Sopwith away and to the right. But Göring had the advantage now and it was easy for him to stay above and behind the Sopwith and, by steady pressure, force the American down and towards the ice. Rickenbacker began to zig zag, evidently hoping to throw Göring off; but Göring was readily able to follow the Sopwith's manoeuvring. Next Rickenbacker hurled himself upwards into a loop – or tried to; Göring, his face set, refused to give ground. He was treated to a plan view of the shuddering Sopwith as it rose before him. Rickenbacker threw back his head, saw with evident horror that the Fokker was still closing on him, and was forced to drive the nose of the Sopwith down and out of the loop.

Göring roared laughter. He hurled the Fokker still harder at the American.

But Rickenbacker was game for no more. Levelling, he opened his throttle and fled across the ice. There were no hand gestures now, Göring thought with grim satisfaction; no barrel rolls, no loops, no *stunts*. For a few seconds Göring savoured the option of allowing Rickenbacker to flee North to his waiting companions, of allowing him a lifetime of being forced to tell how how he, the famed Captain Edward V. Rickenbacker of the US Air Service, had been driven out of the sky by an unarmed Oberleutnant...

But the *rage* would not allow it.

Göring turned, roared into the sky like a kestrel, and swept down on Rickenbacker once more.

It took only seconds to finish it.

The undercarriage of the Sopwith, travelling at two hundred kilometres per hour, barely seemed to touch the sastrugi.

The wings crumpled like paper, blew away in fragments. The fuselage plunged into the ice like a burning stone.

Göring could never put into words the exultation he experienced at the clean ending of a man's life. In such a moment it was as if the rage within him was transformed into a golden fire which permeated his every cell, as if he had become a being of the celestial substance of the spheres above the Moon...and yet, amidst his triumph, there was always a trace of *relief*. For surely if he were one day to fail that rage would turn inwards and eat away at his own soul.

But, for today, he had challenged and beaten the American, Rickenbacker; and now he, Hermann Göring, must fly up to challenge the Gods themselves!

Impatiently he drove his fist into the canopy which encased him, smashed the canvas sheeting away from its struts as if bursting from some artificial egg; the fresh cold air burst into the cockpit and soon he was exposed, at one with the winds which he commanded. He pulled back on the stick and dragged the triplane into a tight bank; he levelled rapidly and hurled the Fokker towards the bland, patient face of the Axis. The engine screamed as he depressed the throttle once more, and he yelled defiance into the bitter air, the rage still warming him like a fire; it was almost as if he were on some astonishing strafing run!

At about three hundred metres from the Axis, and with the milky substance of the construct a wall looming before him, he pulled the valiant Fokker into a steep climb, spiralling tightly around the pillar. He almost wished there were observers for this astonishing feat – even the American, Rickenbacker, might have sufficed. And now, at last, he would learn whether the parade of dreary logic-choppers, from Maimonides to his own godfather, had been right in their diagnosis of men as worms, unfit to lift their eyes to the stars...or whether men, led by golden warriors like Göring, could rise into the Heavens and be as one with the Gods.

The ground fell away. Göring could see the base of the Axis recede beneath him, as if to enormous distance; soon the great pillar dwindled to a geometric abstraction above and below him and it was as if he were suspended at the midpoint of an infinite column.

Still he climbed. The Fokker's nominal ceiling was eight kilometres; when Göring passed ten the altimeter could no longer report his height, and he ignored its tiny, accusing glass visage.

The air thinned and his lungs laboured; and now the patient Oberursel too was coughing, causing the plane to shudder. Well, Göring would accept being struck out of the sky by angels, but not by the deficiencies of an engine! He hauled his stick a little further to the right, maintaining his climb but allowing the Fokker to spiral closer still to the Axis.

The plane entered the updraught of warm air coating the construct; for a few gut-wrenching seconds the Fokker threatened to break from his control and tumble like an autumn leaf in the wind – a tumble from which he would surely never recover. But by responding instantly to the triplane's every twitch – and by sheer strength and will – Göring maintained the Fokker's stability; and soon, perhaps two hundred metres from the surface of the Axis, he reached a region of comparatively calm air. Now, uplifted by the mighty lungs of the Axis itself, he rose with increasing rapidity.

...And the blue of the sky darkened until at last it was as if he were above the air itself. Over his head stars gleamed like fragments of glass. Below him lay a blue sea of atmosphere; the Sun lay close to the horizon, its rays flattened and trapped by the layer of air. The iceclad planet curved visibly beneath him, impaled by the Axis which plunged out of the air and into the distant ground.

Göring was beyond the cold, beyond the thinness of the air in his lungs; he was alone, here, above the atmosphere, in a holy silence broken only by the stuttering of the Oberursel...And now, as his eyes grew adapted to the dark, a structure congealed out of the sky above him: he saw shadowy curves, immense globes suspended against the constellations as if sketched there in frost crystals by some vast Artist.

Göring lifted his head, mouth wide, as the tiny Fokker climbed into the celestial spheres.

Awe filled him. He felt as if he were a small boy again and restored to that Berlin museum, to the wonderful Orrery. But now he was as small as an insect and inside that wonderful clockwork; the Universe itself had become an Orrery around him.

His oxygen-starved brain raced, filling up with visions of a spectacular future. He, Hermann Göring, had proved that – though magical and wondrous – the Universe was indeed an artefact...and a resource for mankind. He imagined a greater Germany, a new Reich, inspired by his feat and arising out of the ashes of the present. He saw new aeroplanes, more powerful, riding the thinning air on huge wings to bring men to the Moon, and rising further to scrape against the roof over the sky. Perhaps the planets, too, could be reached, wrested from the spheres like pearls from shells and returned to adorn the palaces of Berlin. And other planes could be built – pilotless birds loaded with explosives which would hurl themselves against the enclosing spheres, shattering and breaching them! Göring pictured the stars themselves being dragged away like burning coals and hurled down to Earth, marvellous bombs in some future conflict.

He, Der Eiserner, was invulnerable, sublime; and for the first time in his life the brooding presence of Epenstein fell away from his consciousness. For his godfather had been *wrong*. No furious angels had clustered around the Fokker, forcing him down as he had driven down the foolish American.

Göring had won. *He had won*. And now he would return to Earth, to begin the lifelong savouring of his victory.

He pushed at his control stick. The plane was sluggish, the control surfaces ineffective in the thinness of the air; but at last the iceclad ground tipped up before him and, as the Fokker dove once more into the ocean of air, the Oberursel's roar grew in confidence and vigour.

Hermann Göring, his apotheosis complete, turned the Fokker to the North, and to home.

Stephen Baxter is the author of the novels *Raft* (1991), *Timelike Infinity* (1992) and the forthcoming *Anti-Ice* (HarperCollins). Born in 1957 and raised in Liverpool, he obtained a degree in mathematics from Cambridge (followed by a PhD from Southampton University), and now lives in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire.

Science Fiction at Liverpool

In the Spring of 1993 Liverpool University took over the collection of the Science Fiction Foundation, the largest of its kind in Europe. It is housed in the University Library as a research collection and, together with the already existing Olaf Stapledon collection, will form the core of an archive of SF and horror fiction which we plan to expand over the next few years. In August 1993 an administrator will be appointed with the special responsibility of cataloguing and overseeing the SF collection and also of promoting SF events such as lectures or conferences.

In October 1994 the English Department plans to launch an MA course in Science Fiction Studies which will concentrate primarily on British and American writing. In order to ensure the success of this course we are making an appeal for the donation of any SF materials (novels, criticism, etc.) to the lending stock of the university library so that we can build up adequate holdings as quickly as possible. It will not be possible to thank donors individually, but every volume given will carry a slip identifying the donor by name. Any enquiries or donations should be addressed to Dr David Seed, English Department, Liverpool University, Liverpool, L69 3BX.

Note to SF writers: the SF Foundation collection also holds authors' manuscripts and papers. Anyone wishing to deposit more material of this sort is very welcome to contact Dr Seed at the address above.

As We Forgive Our Debtors

Jennifer Swift

The diffused light of a late summer evening filled the courtyard outside the bank as Edwina Griffen crossed the lobby, attaché case in hand. She nodded briefly to the lone porter behind the reception desk's polished marble slab and pushed through the revolving doors. Outside the light was somehow far stronger than it had been when seen through the glass. Edwina blinked and put up her hand to shade her eyes. When she opened them, she saw the courtyard was not as empty as she had thought. Over in the corner, where steps led down to the street, was a man. Despite the warmth of the evening, he was wrapped in a red-and-black striped blanket and wore a peaked wool cap. He was blowing softly into a large set of panpipes. In Latin America, Edwina had seen and heard many Indian musicians, but now hearing the eerie notes in a quiet courtyard in the City made the skin on the back of her neck prickle. It was as sweet as a bird singing at sunrise, and yet as cold as the wind blowing over hollows in stone.

She switched her case to her other hand and dug in her handbag for her purse. You don't have to give this fellow money, she reminded herself. You could go down the far side of the steps. But as she crossed the concrete flagstones she found herself going straight to the musician. He plays rather well, I have to admit, Edwina thought. Odd that he's all by himself, though – no guitars or drums as they usually have.

As she drew closer, she looked away from the musician, down at her gleaming black Cartier pumps crossing the white flagstones in precise steps. Her heart was beating slightly fast and a pound coin grew warm in her hand. Should I or shouldn't I? Then she suddenly looked up and saw the Indian's brown face and his keen black eyes, looking directly into her own. Confused, Edwina opened her hand to reveal the coin. But there was no hat or box at the man's feet to receive money, and the man didn't even look at the coin in her hand. His black eyes continued to stare into hers and, feeling she must do something, Edwina dropped the coin at the musician's feet. It rolled and bounced down the steps, disappearing into the street. The notes of the panpipe did not drown out its tiny ringing, but the musician made no attempt to retrieve it. He didn't even glance in its direction. With an effort, Edwina wrenched herself away from his dark eyes and clattered down the steps. To her relief, the coin was nowhere to be seen. She tightened her grip on her attaché case and began to jog towards Cannon Street Station.

As she stood waiting for the light to change at Poultry Street, she remembered that she had seen a similar lone musician on her last trip to Latin America. It had been in the capital city, outside the modern four-storied building that was the Ministry of Finance. Just by the door, between two cement pots with dead fir trees in them, had been another Indian panpipe player. Hadn't he also been wearing a black-and-red poncho? His high-pitched, breathy music had been audible despite the roar of badly-tuned engines in the mélange of buses, cars and motorbikes rushing by. He too had met Edwina's eyes with his own strong gaze, and Edwina had hastily looked away, hurrying to catch up with the colleague going in before her.

Once inside they had left behind the cracked pavements, the dirt and the beggars. No one here wore rags; they wore designer clothing. They smelled of eau de cologne, not unwashed human bodies, and they spoke in soft tones. The tension that made Edwina hunch her shoulders as if someone might be about to throw something at her disappeared. I'm in a world under control, she thought, a world I can understand, as she stepped into the office of the junior finance minister.

She had come to check over the final plans for the national budget, to be sure that the country would be setting aside enough money to pay the interest, if not the principal, on its vast debt so that the consortium of banks she represented would receive as much as possible of what it was legally entitled to. But it was more than that, Edwina had thought as she sat down. This crisis and the pressure from outside institutions would teach the country's government to clean up its economic house and behave in sane and responsible ways. Only then could something be done about the disturbing poverty in the streets outside.

The targets set were satisfactory; Edwina had not expected otherwise – she was a mere subordinate, only there to make sure that the plans agreed by her superiors were being carried out. José, the junior finance minister, was in the same position. Still, as they took coffee afterwards, he said, "It's unfortunate we're having to cut funding on health and education again."

Edwina felt an unpleasant twinge of guilt. She said quickly, "Well, that's the decision of your government of course. We don't set the priorities, so long as the targets are met." The dark surface of the coffee quivered as her hand shook and she hastily set the cup down.

"But largely because of the policies your people

advocate we're in a serious recession – the amount of money our government can collect is shrinking while the need mushrooms with so many people out of work. And then there's the cholera – the situation wouldn't be so bad if we didn't have to hand so much of our national income over to your banks."

Edwina stood up. She realized the air in the office had become stuffy and close. "I know it's not your personal fault, Señor, but your government's very bad at collecting taxes. If they enforced the laws better there would certainly be more money to go around."

José also got to his feet and opened the door for Edwina. "True, but why should our rich pay their taxes when your people make it so easy for them to slip money out of the country?"

Anger made Edwina's back rigid. It was so typical of Latin Americans to blame their problems on other countries, wasn't it? "If there was an economy here worth investing in, people wouldn't take their money out of the country, would they?" She hadn't waited for an answer and had walked briskly down the corridor towards the lift.

But that was all more than a year ago now, she thought as she boarded her train and squeezed onto a seat across from a fat man reading the *News of the World*; the headline said "Star Haunted by Dead Lovechild." She couldn't remember if the panpipe player had still been outside the Ministry when she had left. It was odd that this one tonight didn't want my money, she thought. Why else would they come to Europe?

Edwina thought no more of the incident, but she didn't sleep well that night. She dreamt of vast white mountains, of hovering over them in the frigid air, and woke up shivering in the grey light of dawn, though the room was warm. She stumbled to the windows and looked out – the tower of Canary Wharf was obscured in mist, a grey silhouette. The tips of her fingers were white and she had to massage them to warm them up. She felt a strange sense of emptiness, as if the normal workaday world were as grey and flat as the distant buildings.

But she decided to prepare what her mother would have called a "proper breakfast" that morning, calories or not, with bacon and eggs, toast, cereal and coffee. She felt much better as she joined the crowds moving along the pavements of the City. That promotion she was now almost sure she'd get... she started and stepped back with annoyance when she saw that the musician had returned. He was in the same position as he had been yesterday, at the top of the steps, the notes of his panpipe distinct over the noise of the traffic. Yet the people climbing the steps seemed to take no notice of him. She could see the neat blonde head of her personal assistant, Helen Browne, in the crowd of people rushing past the musician. Edwina bent her head down and dashed up the far side of the steps, careful not to turn a single glance in the musician's direction.

Once inside her office, she busied herself with a report on inter-American capital flows. But when Helen brought in coffee, Edwina asked her, "Did you see that Indian fellow, the one playing the pipes near the steps? He was there yesterday evening too. A bit of a nuisance, though he plays well."

Miss Browne set the gold-rimmed cup in front of Edwina. "What Indian?"

"But you must have seen him – you went up the steps just before I did – oh, perhaps he went away or hid when he saw a guard coming. He shouldn't be on our property, after all." But inside her silk blouse and cashmere jacket, Edwina shivered.

She had lunch in the bank's canteen and returned to her office. Once again she worked late, well past seven, putting the finishing touches to her report. But it was finally done at half past seven, and she decided to go down the corridor to the coffee machine while the crisp white pages of the report popped out of her printer. The corridor was shadowy – half the lights had already been switched off. At the far end, near the coffee machine, she saw a cleaner pushing her trolley into an office. As the woman disappeared through the doorway, Edwina saw that she'd left something behind, some rubbish, but not in a regular black plastic bin bag. It was a pile of rags with a hat on top. Then she froze as the rags moved – she realized they were a little girl of perhaps seven or eight, with smooth brown skin and great dark eyes under her old black bowler hat, dressed in a stained red skirt and black shawl. Spread out on the carpet in front of the girl were three packets of chewing gum, a crumpled box of cigarettes, and a dog-eared magazine. Her thin face empty of emotion, the little girl looked up at Edwina.

Edwina still couldn't move – how had the girl got into the building? What was an Andean child street hawker doing in London? And why hadn't the cleaner noticed her? The sound of the hoover came through the open doorway, moving in smooth strokes. Edwina swallowed; the little girl continued to look up at her, her dark eyes empty of hope that Edwina would buy any of her stock. Though Edwina was sure the child was not really there, she fled back inside her office, closing the door. She stood, forcing herself to take deep slow breaths, as the printer chattered. I must be overworking, worrying about the promotion – that's all. When it was finished, she stacked up the papers, tapping the corners to align them, and slipped them into the waiting presentation folder. She placed them in the basket for interoffice post, put on her suit jacket and picked up her attaché case and handbag. You must get a coffee before you leave, she told herself, you mustn't be ruled by irrational fears. With a shudder of apprehension, she opened the door. The corridor was empty and the corner next to the coffee machine unoccupied. As Edwina sipped the tasteless instant liquid, the cleaner pushed her trolley back out into the corridor. "I suppose there's nobody around except us," Edwina said with false brightness.

The middle-aged cleaner thrust out her lower lip and shook her head, then disappeared into the next office. Edwina decided that it would be more convenient for her to go out the back way, through the loading dock. To her relief there was no one there except a security guard.

That evening her brother telephoned. "Eddie, we're having a little surprise party for Mummy on Thursday – it's her birthday, as I hope you remember. You'll come, won't you?"

Her brother's voice carried a familiar imperious

note. He lived in a bedsit, worked part-time in a bookshop and devoted the rest of his energies to researching environmental problems and righting the world's wrongs. "Robert, you know Thursday's a work night," she said. "And Mum won't care if we celebrate at the weekend instead."

"Why can't you just tell your boss that it's your mother's birthday?"

Edwina was stretched out on her sofa. She tapped a foot on the opposite arm rest. Robert had got so aggressive since their mother's illness. "I don't want to do anything to upset him now, Robert, because I think I've got a good chance at a promotion. That would mean more money, and we could move Mummy to a private room." Not that she'd notice, Edwina thought.

"But looking after her is more than just money, Eddie – it ought to involve seeing her once in a while, even if that upsets you."

"You and I both know she won't miss me," Edwina said, impatient with her brother's denial of the facts. "Why can't you face that?" She glanced at the silent images moving across the television screen. A smiling housewife was pulling the inner foil off a jar of instant coffee. Damn, Edwina thought, I never got around to reading that report on the collapse in international coffee prices. She reached for the control and made the pictures vanish.

But her brother, as she'd known he would, evaded the question. "It isn't as if your job did some real good for the world – screwing money out of poor countries."

"I wish you wouldn't believe that because you sometimes work in an Oxfam shop you understand the problems of the Third World better than I do," Edwina said. "I – we are not screwing money from them. It's their choice to make payments and so remain part of the world financial system."

"But the poor people in those countries – you told me yourself about all the beggars you saw in –"

The image of the girl flashed through her mind, and Edwina had to suppress an impulse to slam the phone down. "Robert, it's the fault of their governments. We're doing what we can to put their economies back on track, but –"

"So I'll tell Mummy you're too busy saving the world to come to her birthday party," Robert said. Edwina opened her mouth to reply but there was a whining hum from the receiver – her brother had hung up. He always did when Edwina tried to make him face reality.

That night she found a bottle of sleeping pills in the back of the medicine cabinet – she hadn't used them since she was unemployed three years ago. She took one more than the recommended dosage and fell asleep immediately. But she woke up at dawn again, shivering. She couldn't remember anything of what she had dreamt other than the image of an icy white peak, which lingered in her mind.

She was not really surprised to hear the eerie notes of the panpipe as she went down the street towards her building. As she climbed the far side of the steps, she took a quick glance at the musician. Again no one else in the crowd seemed to take any notice of him. Were they simply in a hurry to get to work or could they not see him? But he looked

Illustrations by Kevin Cullen

just as solid and real as the people passing by him – he cast a shadow, sharp in the morning sun. Then Edwina realized the musician was looking at her; she hurried up the steps and into the building.

At her desk, she told herself she must be overworking. She would go home on time today; if the musician was still out there, she would complain to a security guard. She began to work through the stack of correspondence on her desk.

That afternoon around three o'clock, she found she was feeling extremely sleepy. So she told her P.A. she was not to be interrupted and put her feet up on her desk, tilting back her big office chair. If I'm promoted, she thought, this will be upholstered with leather instead of fabric. She closed her eyes and pleasantly drifted off, imagining how she would reorganize the work of the group. She didn't actually fall asleep, but something brought her back to full consciousness with a start, her eyes blinking open. She was no longer alone in her office. In front of her, kneeling on the carpet, was a wizened Indian woman. The woman was crouching over a small hearth of stones and a black iron pot. Fire glowed at the base of the pot without causing the slightest damage to Edwina's floor. Edwina closed her eyes, rubbed them hard, and opened them again. The woman was still there, using a stick to lift the hot lid off the pot and using another stick to stir the rice inside. She picked up something from the floor which became visible as soon as she raised it – a chipped china plate. She began piling the rice on it.

She can't be here, Edwina thought, she's not real. I must be asleep. Yet she was afraid to say anything, and she even tried not to breathe loudly for fear the woman would turn her head and see her. Edwina thought of the food she'd had for lunch, wondering if any of it could have poisoned her: a salad of duck in raspberry vinaigrette, mineral water, tiramisu for dessert. None of it had tasted off – but she knew she was hunting in the wrong place for an explanation. Hadn't this all started with the sighting of the musician the day before yesterday? Now the woman was breaking an egg into the bottom of the pot. Edwina nearly jumped when she realized she could hear the faint sizzle as it fried and smell it, along with the smoke from the wood fire. She had to fight down a surge of nausea as the Indian woman carefully scraped the fried egg from the bottom of the pot and transferred it to the top of the pile of rice. The woman held out the plate – as she did so, three children appeared, a big boy, a small boy and a little girl. The woman began carefully dividing the fried egg into three pieces. Edwina's mind, always actuarial, noted how little rice there was for the three children, not to mention their mother. She could no longer bear it. She screwed her eyes shut and felt for her telephone and buzzed her P.A. "Miss Browne, could you please bring in that file on the coffee price collapse?" When Edwina heard the latch click back, her eyes opened. To her relief, there was no one there but Miss Browne, with the slim white file in her hand. "Are you all right, Ms Griffen?" she asked.

"I'm rather tired," Edwina said. "I think I'll leave early tonight." As soon as Miss Browne had closed the door behind her, Edwina opened her File-o-Fax and found the number of her doctor. She reached for her phone, then hesitated. If I tell Dr McAlister I'm seeing things, won't he clap me in hospital immediately? But I can't afford to take time off work now – and I certainly can't afford to have a medical record suggesting mental instability. These – these hallucinations are just due to overwork, that's all. Well, maybe a bit of unconscious guilt, but when I'm made sub-director I'll be better placed to put in a word for these countries, apply some subtle pressure towards writing off their debts. The amount of interest we're getting from them is trivial after all.

When Edwina left, the musician was still there. She didn't dare call a security guard, and though she refused to look in the musician's direction, she was sure his attention was focused on her – she could hear the short trills of his pipe reaching out after her.

But she didn't go home – she told herself she wasn't tired enough yet. Instead she shopped in a desultory way. Later she met Neville in their favourite wine bar. After some minutes of gossip about people they both knew, he said, "You seem distracted tonight, Edwina. Is something wrong?"

She looked down into her glass of Pouilly-Fumé and grimaced. Was it that obvious? "I think I've been working too hard," she said.

"That's something you're tempted to do all too often," Neville said, popping a roasted almond into his mouth. He was tall and handsome with pale, straw-coloured hair and lips that Edwina thought were sensitive.

Edwina pulled slightly away from him. "You forget I'm the first woman to be promoted to my position in the bank. I have to show I'm up to the job." After he nodded, Edwina added, "It's just that I'm having trouble sleeping. She stared down at her fingers as they held the stem of the wine glass. My nails are looking a little chewed up, she thought. I must have reverted to nibbling the corners. I've got to stop that and file the edges clean.

"Perhaps you ought to see a doctor," Neville said, swirling the whisky around in his glass. His long, elegant fingers and square nails showed to good advantage. I bet he's never tempted to bite them, Edwina thought. "Oh, it's not that bad," she said. "It's just that it's particularly stressful now while they're deciding who should take Masterson's old job."

Neville took a thoughtful sip of his whisky. "So you think you'll get that promotion?" he asked.

He didn't seem eager about that, and Edwina thought it was difficult to get excited about promotion when your own was assured because you were the grandson of the firm's founder. But she said, "Yes, perhaps that's why I can't sleep, though that wouldn't explain the – the –"

Neville's eyebrows arched. "The what, Edwina?"

Edwina glanced at his eyes. They were sapphire-coloured in the semi-darkness of the wine bar, a blue echoed by the colour of his silk tie. She swirled the wine in her glass, sipped it without tasting it. How would he react if she told him that she was being persecuted by South American Indians, especially Indians that no one else could see? "Oh nothing." She took another tasteless sip of *appellation contrôlée*. "Neville, I just can't get those wretched people I saw out of my head."

Neville tugged at the knot of his tie. "Edwina, there's no point in worrying about things that you can't change."

Edwina put her glass down on the table and pushed it away – it was making her slightly sick. "But perhaps I –" She looked into the middle distance, no longer seeing the brown and gold tones of the bar. "We – I mean Robert and I were poor, growing up in that grotty council flat after Dad left Mum. But we always had enough to eat –"

"Yes, and now you've climbed out of poverty, my rich little poor girl." Neville was leaning back in his chair, looking at the bottles behind the bar. "And surely the rest of the world will too, just as soon as they stop having so many babies." He turned his charming smile on her. "I know what'll cheer you up – I'm thinking of popping over to Paris this weekend. Do you want to come? We had such fun last time."

Edwina looked down in annoyance. Why can't he understand that I'm not in the mood for this, she thought. "I think I'd better stay home and rest," she said.

Neville glanced at his gold Rolex. "Well, perhaps I should too. I've got to go now if I'm catching the next train –" he glanced at her from under his blond brows "– or we could go to your place."

Edwina got to her feet and put on her jacket before Neville could help her. "Not tonight I'm afraid, Neville. I'm just so tired." Let him be annoyed, she thought as he left. Why has it taken me so long to see how shallow he is?

She didn't need sleeping tablets – she fell asleep rapidly that night. But then she woke, long before dawn, staring into the empty darkness over her head. Her mind's eye was transfixed by the image of the blue void and the white peaks. The realm of the gods, she thought, without knowing where the idea came from. There was a bitter taste on her lips and her arms and legs were so cold she had to take a long hot shower to bring feeling back into them.

The musician was there again the next morning. Edwina could hear the notes floating down the street long before she saw the fellow. I'd like to take those pipes and stamp them flat, she thought, as she paused at the bottom of the steps watching people rush by the musician without taking any notice of him. But then she wondered if other people would see only Edwina Griffen shouting at the empty air. She hurried up the steps. She was not troubled by further hallucinations that morning, but when she left to go to a sandwich bar for a quick lunch, she decided to leave by the loading dock. I need to concentrate on my work, she thought.

It was the lunch hour and the dock was empty – but from the back of the loading bay, amplified by the concrete shell, Edwina heard a familiar melody. Balling her hands into fists, she walked up to the musician. "Why don't you just leave me alone?" she demanded. The man's dark eyes met hers without blinking, but he continued to blow on his pipes. Edwina was somehow sure that the man understood her English. If he's a hallucination of mine, of course he would, she thought. But now that she was only a few feet away from the man, she could not believe he was unreal. She could smell his unwashed body, along with woodsmoke and something else – was it sheep manure?

"It's not my fault," Edwina said. "The poverty in your country is far more the fault of its incompetent government than any bank's."

Finally the Indian stopped blowing on his instrument. He continued to look at Edwina without speaking. There was a black bird design on the shoulders of his wrap – there was something familiar about it, Edwina thought – wasn't it supposed to be a condor? She almost put out a hand to touch the man or his pipe to see if he were real, but she hesitated. What if he were not a hallucination, but instead a – a what? A ghost? "I'm not an important person, really," she heard herself saying. "I don't make the big decisions, I'm just one of many, many people who help to carry them out. If you want to change the bank's behaviour, there's no point in going for me – you ought to go for the chairman and the board of directors." The Indian continued to gaze at her steadily. "Even if I told my boss we should cancel all your country's debts now, he wouldn't listen to me – it wouldn't change a thing. You do understand English, don't you?"

But the Indian merely raised his pipes to his lips and began blowing into them again. The music pierced her and for a moment Edwina thought she understood what they wanted her to do. Filled with a sudden fear, she rushed away.

But as she stood in the queue for her prawn salad sandwich, she remembered where she'd seen that bird design before. It had been that rainy afternoon when she'd visited a dusty ramshackle museum in the capital city. No one else was there except for two mournful schoolboys sketching the designs on the rusty 17th-century armour, and Edwina had wandered about, frowning at the Spanish labels. She went into a room lit by a frosted skylight and squinted at the large object huddled in a dusty glass case. With a shock, she realized it was the mummy of a young girl, wrapped in a well-preserved red robe decorated with repeated bird images, the same design as on the musician's cape. Her hair was still black and thick, hanging down in plaits, but the skin of her face was so wrinkled and dried Edwina could see the skull leering out from under it. The mummy's withered hands, like the talons of a bird, clutched a clay vessel, but Edwina was struck by the mummy's perfect white fingernails – delicately shaped, they could have belonged to a living woman.

She heard a step behind her and turned. It was a guide, the first she'd seen in the shoddy museum. He wore a cheap black suit whose cuffs were shiny even in the dim light. His hair, smoothed over his balding head, was jet black and so oily it looked more like patent leather than hair. His face was pasty and unhealthy; his dark eyes like two raisins in an unbaked biscuit. "Señorita would like an explanation, yes?" he asked in quite passable English, but with an irritating whiny undertone, pressing his fat hands together and bobbing his head. "For the fair damsel in the case?"

Edwina refused to look back at the mummy. "I think I can guess," she said. "She's a natural mummy, isn't she – I mean preserved by the dry conditions in some parts of your country rather than embalming like the Egyptians."

"The Señorita is learned, yes," the guide said, bobbing eagerly. "But does Señorita know how she died?"

"Does anyone know how?" Edwina asked. She was wondering how she could politely exit the conversation.

"She was what you call a human sacrifice, what our native people call a 'capacocha'," the guide said as he stepped up to the case. Edwina was forced to turn and look as well, but she was careful to stand where she could only see the mummy's hair, not her dreadful face. The guide had produced a large dingy grey handkerchief with which he was dusting the case, but his efforts did not leave it any cleaner. "The native people believed that the gods occasionally required a human sacrifice, you see, a sign that men and women truly honoured them by giving them what they most valued – their children."

He stuffed the cloth back in his pocket without shaking it. "But nothing bloody like the Aztecs to the north, you understand, Señorita. Oh no – much more humane – the children, the beautiful young girls were walled in alive – but they were given a drink laced with a strong drug to help ease their deaths. Once they were deeply asleep, the cold – for these places of sacrifice were so often high in the mountains – would kill them humanely."

Edwina felt sick to her stomach. "What an unfortunate superstition," she said.

The guide pulled the grey rag out of his pocket, releasing a little cloud of dust. "Oh no, Señorita, these young girls went willingly to their deaths for they believed they were to become mediators between the gods and their people."

The dust motes danced in the beam of light from the ceiling, and Edwina felt dizzy as well as queasy. "Well, at least it's all over. No one believes in sacrificing children now."

"Oh, but pardon me, surely the Señorita knows otherwise. Is not the Señorita the employee of a foreign bank? And does not your bank and others each year demand such huge sums of money from our poor country that we don't have enough left to look after our children?"

A sudden flash of anger restored Edwina's sense of herself. "Your country wasn't looking after its children properly before the debt crisis and wouldn't be even if the debt crisis ended tomorrow. The poor don't have enough power in your political system."

"Oh, but your banks have the power, Señorita, and what do they require? Not that the children should be fed, but that government spending should come down and foreign exchange should go to you, not to buy medicines for our children."

Edwina pulled her handbag protectively across her stomach. "I came in here to learn about your country, not to be insulted. Goodbye." It was not until she'd got out of the museum back into the smoggy air of the city streets that she wondered how the guide had known she worked for a bank.

The musician was waiting when Edwina returned, but she pretended to ignore him. That afternoon the international business committee met to consider the report she'd prepared earlier in the week. To her relief, everyone was pleased with the work she'd done. When the meeting was over, she found herself standing next to Mr Simpson, the Chief Executive for Foreign Operations, as they drank tea. Emboldened by the compliment he'd paid her work, Edwina said, "It's a shame how some people think the poverty in these countries is simply due to our activities."

Mr Simpson's spoon chimed against the sides of his cup as he stirred in sugar. He was a tall, plump man with thinning blonde hair and an air of jovial self-confidence. "Oh, there are always some people whose lives are much easier if they can blame the banks, Edwina – it stops them having to think any harder. They're not demonstrating outside the bank now, I hope!" They were standing next to the windows of the top floor conference room; Mr Simpson peered down through the rain-slick glass at the courtyard.

Edwina could see the Indian huddled down there, but she didn't dare ask Mr Simpson if he saw him as well. "No," she said, "but since we've set aside enough profits to cover seventy-five percent of our problem country debts, it wouldn't be that difficult to actually write them off."

Mr Simpson managed to laugh heartily without spilling a drop from his tea cup. "Yes, my dear, in theory that's possible, but we need to keep our reserves up to back our expansion in Europe and the Far East." He gestured out the window towards the towers of the City cloaked in mist. "If we had to trim back those expansion plans, our stockholders would be unhappy."

Edwina kept trying. "But if all the banks wrote off their problem country debt at the same time –"

Mr Simpson shook his head kindly. "I can't see that happening, Edwina, without governments coordinating it. And that will only happen when public pressure pushes them into action."

He means, Edwina thought, that since no one else is doing anything about it either that means we can just wash our hands of responsibility. Still, when I'm sub-director... Mr Simpson was pointing across the room at Harold Nelson, a lean rail of a man, eyes owlish behind horn-rimmed glasses, who worked in the office next to Edwina's. "Don't say anything now, Edwina, but there's the new sub-director for the developing countries group."

Edwina somehow managed not to drop her teacup and saucer. "Harold – but..." But he's had less experience than I've had, she thought, he doesn't understand computers, and he's totally convinced we should screw every last possible penny out of those countries.

"It wasn't easy for the selection committee," Mr Simpson said, "but we finally realized that the post was better suited to a generalist rather than an information technology specialist." He bent closer, murmuring paternally in her ear. "And a pretty young lady like you – well, you'll soon have things to distract your mind from the job."

No doubt it was because her hand suddenly shook, but the next thing Edwina knew her tea was all over Mr Simpson's exquisitely tailored trousers and highly polished Italian shoes. "Oh, I am so very sorry," she said, over and over again.

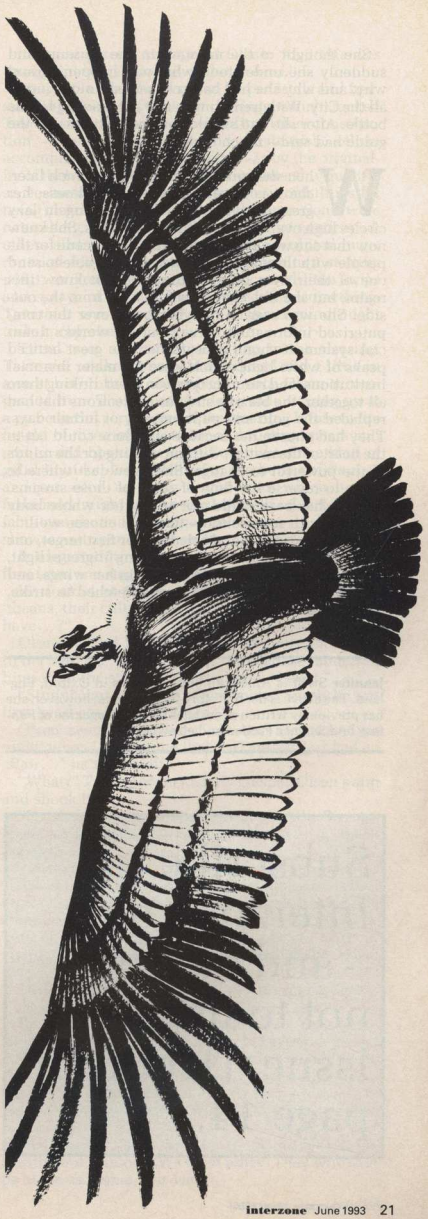
For the first time in weeks, she left work early that day. It was still raining, but the musician was gone

from the courtyard. She hardly noticed. She was veering between sending Mr Simpson a new pair of trousers and a huge bouquet of flowers and filing a sex discrimination suit. But if I do that, she thought, I'll be branded a trouble-maker and no one will ever give me any serious responsibility again.

She had a stiff brandy in her flat that evening and went to bed early. But she couldn't sleep and she sat up reading a handbook on macroeconomics. Its abstraction had always soothed her in the past, but tonight its dull magic refused to work. She couldn't stop thinking how it would be impossible to sue her bank without wrecking her career. Was she going to have to send Harold a bouquet as well, to congratulate him on his promotion, his possession of the Y chromosome? Perhaps she should start looking for a new job – surely Oxfam could use someone with real economic knowledge. But even if she sacrificed her career that way would it make a bloody bit of difference? The world's financial system would grind on, changing very slowly at best, and in the meantime crushing the lives of people like the apparitions she had seen. She sighed and slumped back against the headboard. The room was rather cold and she drew the duvet over her breasts. In the light of the bedside lamp, she noticed that the wood of the bedroom door was gleaming as if it had just been varnished. Odd, she thought, I've never noticed that effect before. In fact it almost looks wet – or as if there were a very thin layer of ice on it. She shivered again and drew the blanket and duvet up to her neck. It's quite cold for a summer night, she thought. Then she noticed something hanging from the doorknob, sparkling in the lamplight – it looked just like an icicle.

Her heart gave a lurch, but then she laughed bitterly. She had thought she was done with seeing things, but it seemed they wouldn't leave her alone. "I told you I bloody well couldn't help you," she said to the air. "Why don't you go after Simpson?" She glanced down at the text of her book and counted to ten. When she looked up, the icicle was longer and there was a glittering sheet of ice spreading away from the door, towards her bed. The temperature in the bedroom seemed to have dropped several degrees. Her teeth were chattering, and she was suddenly very frightened. But she sat up in bed and coiled all the bedclothes around her body. "It's not fair," she said. "I've done so little to harm you." She thought she could hear the music of the panpipe, coming from a long way off.

She shuddered and managed to get her feet over the side of the bed. But they were bare and the carpet was frozen under a layer of ice an inch thick. She stood but slipped on the slick surface and fell, bruising her hip painfully despite her thick wrappings. Her feet were aching and burning with the cold, and her whole body was shaking uncontrollably. The music was louder now, almost as if it were in the room, though she still could not see the musician. It was so shrill it made her teeth ache and she thought it was almost worse than the cold. She managed to climb back onto the bed and huddled there, shaking. She drew herself towards the bedside lamp, hoping to get some warmth from its small bulb, but then she noticed the bottle of sleeping tablets beside it.



She thought of the mummy in the museum and suddenly she understood what was happening and why, and why she had been chosen, she alone out of all the City. With trembling hands she reached for the bottle. After she had swallowed them, it was – as the guide had said – much easier.

When she came to herself again, much later, she was hovering in warm darkness, her great wings outstretched, turning in lazy circles high over glowing white mountains. She knew now that she was a mediator, sent to intercede for the people with the gods. They had not been able to send one of their own because they did not know this realm, but she did, though before only from the outside. She was soaring in cyberspace, over the computerized information network of the world's financial system. It shone beneath her, the great latticed peaks of white light which were the major financial institutions, and running between them, linking them all together, the blazing streams of electrons that had replaced the gold and paper money of former days. They had chosen her because she alone could cut to the heart of the matter, without waiting for the minds of the powerful to change. She knew just where to strike to reverse the flow of some of those streams. Though her beak could not smile, her whole body warmed with satisfaction – they had chosen well.

She looked down and selected her first target, one of the great pinnacles of white, a living filigree of light, pulsating with power. She tucked in her wings, and then with a shrill cry, talons outstretched to strike, the condor swooped.

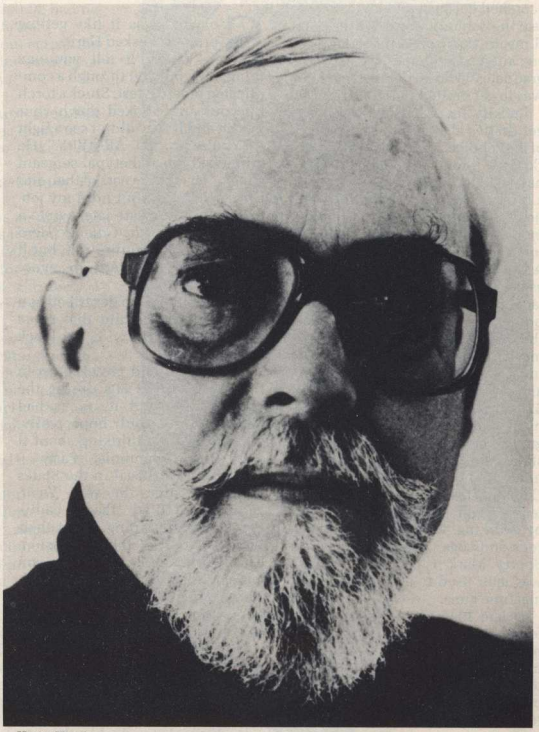
Jennifer Swift is American but now lives in Oxford, England. The above is her first story for *Interzone*; however, she has previously written a few tales for *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and elsewhere.

A Stainless Steel Rap

Harry Harrison interviewed by John Shreeve

Back in 1930s New York a solitary, introspective boy could regularly be found scouring the shelves of Queens Borough public library. This boy borrowed as many as 20 books a week, and his particular passion was for the nautical novels of C.S. Forester. He was much impressed by their economy of style and he pored over Forester's detailed technical expositions. This voracious appetite for books, mixed with a taste for the pulp-fiction magazines of the time meant a future writer's style was formed.

Harry Harrison was born on 12th March 1925 in Stamford, Connecticut, but grew up as an only child in the Queens district of New York. He was a shy, lonely boy who didn't make his first real friend until he was twelve. But by 13 he made up for it. Not only was he contributing drawings to the school magazine, but also along with some friends set up the Queens chapter of the Science Fiction League. Launched in 1934 by Hugo Gernsback, the League was the first attempt at organized sf fandom. Local chapters spread fast throughout America, then across to Britain and elsewhere – and were essentially the forerunners of present day regional and world sf conventions. The Queens chapter, remembers Harrison, consisted of a small group of diehard fans who fiercely argued the comparative merits of their favourite authors and stories; this often led to some equally fierce feuding...



Harry Harrison

Harry had been talking all morning. By mid-day, when I arrived at Random House (home of Legend, his latest publishers), he wasn't about to stop. I hardly had time to flick my dictaphone to record before he launched into fevered conversation. And within five minutes of meeting Harry I began to wonder if he had naturally occurring (and supercharged) amphetamines flooding through his brain. But then I remembered he'd been an intensely shy boy, and also I recalled him once saying that his personality of today is a product of will: a trained extravert, in fact.

But apart from being an overcompensation for early shyness, his persistent banter is also born of an intense enthusiasm for science fiction. Unlike many writers of his generation, Harry hasn't become jaded (about his own stuff anyway), or embarrassed about the sf genre – he still writes action-packed, technology-orientated science fiction. But, to my mind, what

has made him interesting over the years is the way he laces his books with subtle doses of social comment, liberal politics and humanism.

By his graduation in 1943, Harrison picked up the nickname "Glider" due to his hobby of building model planes and gliders, and more specifically due to the fact that he intended to build a real glider and fly in it. Unfortunately such ambitions were to be rudely scotched because the downside of leaving school in mid-World War II meant Harrison belonged to the so-called "no-hope" class of graduates whose depressing fate was to get drafted into the army.

Luckily for Harrison, when he got drafted it was into the service of his choice: the U.S. Army Air Corps. Although, in fact, Harrison had been too shrewd to leave such a thing to chance. Before his draft he'd enrolled in the U.S. Government-approved Eastern Aircraft Instrument school, New Jersey, to learn how to maintain such esoteric objects as centrifugal tachometers and Bourdon tube pressure gauges. As a result, when the Air Corps tested him for mechanical aptitude (and general intelligence), he came out a winner and was promptly issued with the 679-3 code, which meant his technical skills were of the highest grade. Due to this newly acquired status, the Air Corps saw fit to send him out to Lowry Field in Denver, Colorado, to be trained as a computer-gunsight specialist. He began by working with the top-secret, rods-and-cogs, pre-electronic, Sperry Mark 1 computer which was later used to aim fifty-calibre machine guns.

In late 1945 Harrison got transferred to M.P. duty and also got promoted to Sergeant – ironically he'd previously remained a private despite his ultra hi-tech job. Promotion or not, he was given the low-tech duty of guarding black prisoners who were working on the refuse detail. Thankfully, as an honourable discharge was desirable, the prisoners needed little guarding. This meant all Harrison had to do was ride the dust cart with them by day and hit the black servicemen's bar with them by night – not actually part of his duties, but Harrison took his job seriously...

After his discharge in February 1946, Harrison was left with a severe distaste for military life. But on the positive side he had learned computer theory, which would later play a significant role in his science fiction; plus, due to hanging out with the black prisoners, he learned a certain egalitarianism and an abhorrence for right-wing authoritarianism – both of which would later become strong themes in his writing.

So what was it like getting drafted? I asked Harry.

"Well, I'll tell you one thing, they put you through a complicated medical test. Stuck a torch up your arse, looked down your throat, and if they didn't see a light – 'You're in the ARMY!!!'" He mimicked the archetypal sergeant major. "I had four years of that, and I really *hated* it. But I did my job, came out, and years later wrote a book called *Bill the Galactic Hero* which is about a future war, but it really is anti-military in every way."

He has often been described as a die-hard liberal – did that come from hanging out with the black prisoners?

"Yeah, that and growing up in the States in the 30s during the depression – and it was a bad depression. The only hope, really, the only people thinking about it were the Communist Party – which is now illegal in the States of course, after the war. Yeah, capitalism ruled then, badly. People were jumping out of their windows during the depression. The stockmarket failed. If you were intelligent you were a liberal. That's where it comes from you know. And I was brought up in a liberal background."

Now a civilian, Harrison studied art under the distinguished painter and professor of art, John Blomshield. At the same time he enrolled in the cartoon and illustrators' school which taught him how to produce saleable work. So it wasn't long before he was turning scripts into pictures for the comic-book industry. He built his skills and knowledge up the point that he later became a comic-industry entrepreneur himself – until, that is, the comic market crashed in 1955.

Before that, one of his more prestigious jobs was doing illustration for *Worlds Beyond*, and as he'd just penned his first science-fiction story, "Rock Diver" (1951), he asked editor Damon Knight for advice on how to sell the story. Knight responded by publishing it himself in what turned out to be the final issue of *Worlds Beyond*.

After serving as editor himself on a number of shortlived science-fiction magazines, Harrison turned freelance writer. Sadly, it was more lucrative to write for men's adventure magazines and women's confessions magazines that paid ten cents a word, than for sf magazines which paid one or two cents a word. The choice was simple: he had a wife, Joan, and child, Todd, to support.

Finally he opted for the job of art director on *Pic and Picture Week*, purely so he could do layout and graphic design by day, and save his writing energies for evening. His plan was to save enough money so he could afford to write for *Astounding Science Fiction*, which only paid two cents a word but was a labour of love.

So what advice would Harry give to the budding science-fiction writer of today?

"Read all the sf you can to find out what's been *done*. You find ideas are repeated over and over again – as an editor I saw the same thing every day. Then I'd suggest reading mainstream novels to learn how to write. With very few exceptions sf writers cannot write very well. Exceptions that spring to mind are Brian Aldiss and Tom Disch..."

Does he read many recent sf writers?

"No, not the new ones – when I say 'new ones' they're really bald-headed and pot-bellied, people like Phil Dick, now dead of course. I grew up on the classic stuff and I still like to read it."

What about someone very contemporary like William Gibson?

"Nice fella, books are totally unreadable, totally unscientific. The first one, *Neuromancer*, was about Japan; he's never been there, and he knows nothing about computers either. Of course the academics loved it, they read stuff into it. I read four chapters and threw it across the room...But I went back and read it later."

After spending a year in Mexico (where he began *Deathworld*), Harrison and his family moved to the less temperate London. It was here that he began correspondence with his long-time hero John W. Campbell – editor of *Astounding* – with the idea of selling the novel to him.

But it wasn't long before the Harrisons tired of our gloom-ridden weather and fled to Italy. After making a couple of connections, Harrison picked up the job of writing scripts for the "Flash Gordon" comic strip which, along with writing material for *Fantastic Universe* magazine, supported him and his family on their travels.

Late 1958 saw them back in their native New York for the birth of their second child, Moira. Shortly after, *Deathworld* finally got published as a three-part serial in *Astounding*, and by the end of 1960 it appeared as a Bantam paperback original.

Deathworld's serialization in *Astounding* won Harrison first place in the magazine's monthly readership poll. This meant a wage rise of one cent a word, but most importantly it established him as a fully fledged sf writer. Later *Deathworld* was followed up by two sequel serializations, *The Ethical Engineer* (1963) and *The Horse Barbarian* (1968), both subsequently becoming the second and third Deathworld novels.

"Slippery" Jim diGriz's exploits began in the 1957 story, "The Stainless Steel Rat," which was expanded into the novel of the same name published in 1961. This led to the hugely popular series in which the Stainless Steel Rat saved the world, got drafted, got revenge and ran for president...

Jim diGriz's latest adventure – "The Golden Years of The Stainless Steel Rat" – is chronicled in the recent *Stainless Steel Visions* paperback published by Legend. Essentially it is a collection of Harrison's classic stories but made worthwhile – other than for the new "Rat" story – in that Harrison himself took out all the damage done to the stories by previous, and often shockingly philistine, copy-editors.

Did he actually rewrite any of the stories collected in *Stainless Steel Visions*?

"Not so much," Harry answered. "I put them on computer disc, and basically what I did was correct the bad typesetting."

I had read somewhere that "The Streets of Ashkelon" (included in the collection) had had the bite taken out when it first got into print. Was that the case?

"Well, that was it. They changed the name of the original character, and watered down all the religious arguments by about two-thirds. So, yeah, I put 'em back in. It was the very first story that ever mentioned something about religion, other than adulatory worship. But then some moron came along – I'd say he was English because of the single quote marks – and tamed it down. If I ever find out who did it I'd kill her/him/or it! Christ..."

I had heard a rumour that a new "Rat" book is due out next year. True?

"Number eight in the series, yeah. It's called *Stainless Steel Rat Sings the Blues*. There'll be a cassette with it. Dick Jude (drummer and manager of Forbidden Planet) and his band are playing on it. We recorded a lot of songs, couple of humorous, a rap song, two blues. Hopefully the publisher (Bantam) will bring the tape out free with the hardcover, and hopefully it'll be a bestseller!" He laughed.

After their sojourn in New York, the Harrisons decided to settle in Denmark – in fact they fell in love with the country and stayed six years. During that time Harrison wrote *Bill the Galactic Hero* (1965), but initially had trouble selling it. Publishers saw the book as a fine adventure story, but why the bad jokes? Finally the sf editor at Doubleday read it, appreciated the book for what it was – a comic novel *satirizing* the story-telling traditions of science fiction, and duly published it.

The early '70s saw Harrison back in America – this time courting Hollywood. The result was the flawed 1973 film *Soylent Green*, which was based on his 1966 novel about overpopulation, *Make Room! Make Room!* Before the film went into production Harrison read what he called the "horrible script," but to his disgust was contractually unable to change a word of it. He was later heard to say: "You think publishing is ruthless, try those swine out there in Hollywood..."

Make Room! Make Room! must have been one of the first books to deal with overpopulation?

"When I started *Make Room! Make Room!* there were no popular books – fiction or non-fiction – about overpopulation. The world didn't know about it."

Overpopulation is potentially one of the most severe threats to humanity – what does he think can be done about it?

"Well, for one don't listen to the Bush/Reagan type right-wingers who automatically say population control is pro-abortion. The other thing is to get some pro-contraception propaganda going – use financial incentives to encourage people to have less children. And all the overpopulated countries are begging for birth control: so give them what they want.

"Equally important is the need to educate women in the Third World, teach them to read and write. Most of those women are illiterate – I'm not saying stupid; after all, women run the Third World: they do all the hard work, they bear the children, carry the water, cook the food... Teach literacy to women in the Third World, then they'll be able to understand what they're doing, and they'll understand enough to use birth control."

Harry went on to explain that this would go hand in hand with eradicating poverty. "We could make the world a paradise," he said, "if we redirected all the money we're wasting on the military to the poor in the world." This, he believes, would obviate the need for Third World parents to have six, seven or eight kids because, at present, half of them die and the other half are needed to support the parents when they reach old age. By redirecting the world's squandered wealth Third World people would not only get a decent diet and a more secure lifestyle, but also due to vastly improved healthcare their children would survive beyond infancy – thus reducing the need for huge families.

Literary acclaim came from an

unexpected source – Auberon Waugh, then book reviewer on the *Spectator*. Waugh abhorred science fiction, dismissing it (as do most of the literary establishment) as a witless form of proletarian entertainment: why his friend Kingsley Amis enjoyed it was a depressing mystery...

But one time, during the slack season, Waugh was confronted with a solitary book on his desk – a comic, alternative-world novel called *A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!* by Harry Harrison. With nothing better to do, Mr Waugh read it. He was stunned: "It is very seldom," he said, "in a novel reviewer's experience that he has the feeling of Keats on first looking into Chapman's Homer." And after saying he found the story "immensely satisfying," he recommended the book with all his heart. Harrison also received enthusiastic acclaim from Anthony Burgess for his 1976 technothriller, *Skyfall*. After reading the book in one night, Burgess wrote to Harrison full of praise for the depth of his scientific knowledge and his vibrant imagination.

Harrison has had high praise from fellow authors, and has been in the top sales league of science-fiction writers, but how does it all begin: does he write with pencil, typewriter or computer?

"I've always written with the most up-to-date mechanism I possibly can. I started off with a typewriter, then went on to an IBM golfball when it first came out. Then I imported the first micro into Europe, I was living in Ireland at the time.

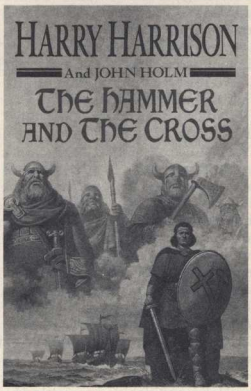
"I write everything on computer. Then finally I submit the discs to the publisher and they print it from my discs. That way I have absolute control. Although they do try to change things occasionally, the bastards..."

You should set up a trap in the programme, I told him.

"Yeah, send 100,000 volts through 'em, that'd impress 'em..."

During his Californian years, Harrison teamed up with fellow sf man Brian Aldiss to edit several volumes of *The Year's Best SF* (1967-74). Through these books, Harrison and Aldiss sought to defend science fiction against the literary establishment who, if they weren't out-and-out dismissing it, were criticizing what they called the genre's "weak and flat" characters as opposed to the "round" ones of mainstream fiction. Harrison saw this as mere snobbery; after all Burgess, Huxley, Orwell, C.S. Lewis and many other accepted mainstream authors hadn't judged it beneath them to make the odd foray into sf.

By 1974 Harrison had yet again had his fill of America. He said he could only feel "dissatisfaction with life in a country that could



commit the crimes of Vietnam and not be ashamed." So, after spending a short time in London, the Harrisons settled in Ireland. They now live close to Dublin, but initially settled in County Wicklow, overlooking the Vale of Avoca. Here Harrison put together three coffee-table-type non-fiction books – *Great Balls of Fire: A History of Sex in Science Fiction Illustration* (1977), *Spacecraft in Fact and Fiction* (1978), and *Mechanismo* (1978). He also produced the *To the Stars* trilogy (1980-81) and numerous other one-off sf titles.

But most notable was his *West of Eden* trilogy (1984-88) which is arguably his best work to date, and is certainly his most acclaimed. The book is set in an alternative world where the dinosaurs didn't die, are intelligent, and live alongside human beings. Harrison puts the trilogy's popularity down to the fact that people like dinosaurs. Due to this, said Harrison "it jumped out of category and sold a lot of copies it never would have sold as straight science fiction."

Like *West of Eden*, Harry's new novel, *The Hammer and the Cross*, is an alternative-history novel. But this time it's set in 9th-century England. It gives another religion (other than Christianity) a fighting chance – hence the Viking hammer and Christian cross of the title. The story tells of an army of pagan "Northmen" rampaging and butchering their way south until Christianity in Britain is under threat of destruction.

The initial inspiration for the book came from an interview Harry read with American writer and political commentator Gore Vidal, who said: "The greatest disaster to befall western civilization was Christianity." A statement with which Harry readily agrees – as much of his writing clearly shows.

By the time Harry teamed up with medieval scholar and co-author of the book, John Holm (Tom Shippey), he learned that Christianity was far worse than he had previously imagined. "The clergy kept slaves," he told me. "And if a slave ran away the monks would get him back and flay him and nail his skin to the church door. And even now in England you can find churches with skin on the door."

Many sequences in the book are from Anglo-Saxon chronicles which have never before been translated into English. Thanks to intensive study and Professor Shippey's contribution, it is historically accurate – until, that is, the science-fiction developments lead you into a world that never existed. *The Hammer and the Cross* is also very much an action novel, so it should appeal both to sf and fantasy fans. But Harry hopes to reach mainstream readers too and – dare I say it – gain some academic acclaim: "I hope history buffs will read it, because there's good solid material there," he said. Then with a laugh he added: "It's one of the best historical novels I've ever read..."

●

Author Interviews in *Interzone*

(Issues 13-71 inclusive; we ran no interviews before issue 13. Interviewers' names are given in brackets after interviewee.)

Acker, Kathy (Stan Nicholls) #27, Jan/Feb 1989
Adams, Douglas (Stan Nicholls) #66, Dec 1992
Aldiss, Brian (Colin Greenland) #38, Aug 1990
Asprin, Robert (Stan Nicholls) #60, Jun 1992
Atwood, Margaret (Andrew Tidmarsh) #65, Nov 1992
Ballard, J.G. (David Pringle) #22, Winter 87/88
Ballard, J.G. (R. Kadrey & D. Pringle) #51, Sept 1991
Banks, Iain (Kim Newman) #16, Summer 1986
Barker, Clive (Kim Newman) #14, Winter 85/86
Barnes, Steven, & Larry Niven (Stan Nicholls) #39, Sept 1990
Baxter, Stephen (Colin Munro) #50, Aug 1991
Bayley, Barrington (D. Pringle & A. Robertson) #35, May 1990
Bear, Greg (Gregory Feeley) #37, Jul 1990
Bisson, Terry (Gregory Feeley) #40, Oct 1990
Bradbury, Ray (Stan Nicholls) #43, Jan 1991
Brin, David (Stan Nicholls) #41, Nov 1990
Brooks, Terry (Stan Nicholls) #60, Jun 1992
Campbell, Ramsey (Phillip Vine) #28, Mar/Apr 1989
Carroll, Jonathan (Dave Hughes) #53, Nov 1991
Cherryh, C.J. (Stan Nicholls) #31, Sep/Oct 1989
Coney, Michael (David V. Barrett) #32, Nov/Dec 1989
Constantine, Storm (Stan Nicholls) #58 Apr 1992
Cooper, Louise (Stan Nicholls) #71, May 1993
Crowley, John (Gregory Feeley) #21, Autumn 1987
Disch, Thomas M. (Gregory Feeley) #24, Summer 1988
Donaldson, Stephen (Stan Nicholls) #60, Jun 1992
Dozois, Gardner (Stan Nicholls) #53, Nov 1991
Fowler, Christopher (Dave Hughes) #55, Jan 1992
Fowler, Karen Joy (Paul Kincaid) #23, Spring 1988
Gallagher, Stephen (David V. Barrett) #31, Sep/Oct 1989
Gentle, Mary (Colin Greenland) #42, Dec 1990
Gibson, William (J. Hanna & J. Nicholas) #13, Autumn 1985
Goldstein, Lisa (Pat Murphy) #42, Dec 1990
Greenland, Colin (Stan Nicholls) #63, Sept 1992
Haldeman, Joe (Stan Nicholls) #44, Feb 1991
Hardy, David A. (Chris Morgan) #69, Mar 1993
Harrison, M. John (Paul Kincaid) #18, Winter 86/87
Holdstock, Robert (Stan Nicholls) #45, Mar 1991
Holt, Tom (Brendan Wignall) #56, Feb 1992
Jeter, K.W. (Les Escott) #22, Winter 87/88
Jones, Gwyneth (Paul Kincaid) #19, Spring 1987
Kennedy, Leigh (Paul Kincaid) #26, Nov/Dec 1988
Kerr, Katharine (Stan Nicholls) #71, May 1993
Kilworth, Garry (Gwyneth Jones) #62, Aug 1992
Lee, Stan (Steve Green) #59, May 1992
Lee, Tanith (Peter Garratt) #64, Oct 1992
Le Guin, Ursula (Colin Greenland) #45, Mar 1991
McAleer, Neil (Liz Holliday) #66, Dec 1992
Mann, Phillip (Liz Holliday) #68, Feb 1993
Martin, George R.R. (Liz Holliday) #70, Apr 1993
Moorcock, Michael (Colin Greenland) #29, May/Jun 1989
Morrell, David (Kim Newman) #51, Sept 1991
Morrow, James (Gregory Feeley) #46, Apr 1991
Murphy, Pat (Lisa Goldstein) #42, Dec 1990
Newman, Kim (Roz Kaveney) #36, Jun 1990
Niven, Larry, & Steven Barnes (Stan Nicholls) #39, Sept 1990
Park, Paul (Nick Griffiths) #61, Jul 1992
Pohl, Frederik (Stan Nicholls) #68 Feb 1993
Pollack, Rachel (Colin Greenland) #50, Aug 1991
Pratchett, Terry (Paul Kincaid) #25, Sep/Oct 1988
Pratchett, Terry (Brendan Wignall) #51, Sept 1991
Rankin, Robert (Colin Munro) #54, Dec 1991
Rice, Anne (Katherine Ramsland) #51, Sept 1991
Robinson, Kim Stanley (Stan Nicholls) #70 Apr 1993
Rucker, Rudy (Richard Kadrey) #20, Summer 1987
Ryman, Geoff (Stan Nicholls) #33, Jan/Feb 1990
Shaw, Bob (Helen Wake) #67, Jan 1993
Sheckley, Robert (Stan Nicholls) #63, Sept 1992
Shepard, Lucius (Wendy Counsil) #34, Mar/Apr 1990
Shirley, John (Richard Kadrey) #17, Autumn 1986
Silverberg, Robert (Stan Nicholls) #52, Oct 1991
Simmons, Dan (Stan Nicholls) #59, May 1992
Sladek, John (Gregory Feeley) #30, Jul/Aug 1989
Stableford, Brian (Roz Kaveney) #27, Jan/Feb 1989
Sterling, Bruce (D. Pringle & A. Robertson) #15, Spring 1986
Sutin, Lawrence (Andrew Tidmarsh) #56, Feb 1992
Swanwick, Michael (Stan Nicholls) #62, Aug 1992
Tuttle, Lisa (Stan Nicholls) #29, May/Jun 1989
Waldrop, Howard (Gregory Feeley) #52, Oct 1991
Williams, Tad (Stan Nicholls) #49, Jul 1991
Wingrove, David (Stan Nicholls) #48, Jun 1991
Wolfe, Gene (Elliott Swanson) #17, Autumn 1986
Womack, Jack (Paul McAuley) #69, Mar 1993

Head Acres

Peter Crowther

September 5

Took me bloody hours to load all my records into the flat from mother's car – she just sat there and listened to Dire Straits. "Dire" is right! I asked if she wanted to come in for a cup of tea but she had to get back – the Swintons are having a barbecue and that cow Sarah Billington (or whatever she's called now) will be there! Hoo-rah! She left just after three o'clock. I spent the rest of the day reading the *Sunday Times* – played a little Mozart and fell asleep in the chair. Must have been tired because it was turned 8:30 when I woke up. Had some bread and jam and listened to Shostakovich's *Piano Concerto Number Two*. Now I'm going to bed. It's almost 10:15. Shattered.

September 6

Vaughan Williams – *The Lark Arising*.

It's good to be back. Today was just for settling in. My head of year is called Hollister. I spoke to him about doing extra work outside of lectures but he feels it's too early to say yet – and, anyway, he says I'll have enough to go at without taking on extra studies at this stage. It hasn't changed my mind. Everyone was full of the start of the new term and about what they did on their holidays. Nobody bothered asking me – thank God! The flat is okay but a bit dirty, and the hot water seems to please itself – I'm toying with the idea of looking for somewhere else. Wonder if father will provide the necessary? I'm writing down the best piece of music I hear each day – might prove interesting when I tie them up at the end of term. Today was a toss-up between Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia For Greensleeves* and his *The Lark Arising* – I ended up going for the Lark. He's just *soooo* restful! Writing this in bed at 9:30.

September 7

Fairport Convention – *What We Did on Our Holidays* album.

The holidays thing from yesterday must have stayed in my mind because I pulled out Fairport without even thinking. Took me bloody ages to find it. Made for a rocking breakfast! Today was a good day all round. Discussed the relationship between instincts and archetypes – instincts being physiological urges perceived by the senses. At the same time, they manifest themselves in fantasies and only reveal their existence by symbolic images. Jung called them "collective archetypes," archaic remnants of a collective consciousness – sort of like a primordial slideshow. I call them "head acres." Hollister says music is probably the single greatest motivational tool known to man. When he was talking, it all made such obvious sense. I think I've always known that. Hollister called me back at the end of the lecture and said he'd spoken to Mr Tuscatti who said I was his best student last year. I didn't know what to say. Anyway, Hollister loaned me a book – *Songlines* by Bruce Chatwin. Brilliant book! Stayed up until turned two o'clock reading it.

September 8

Beaver and Krause – *In a Wild Sanctuary* album.

No hot water and tired all day. James Booker asked if I wanted to go to a party on Saturday – I told him I was busy. He's so typical of them all. Just one thing on his mind – well, *two* things: beer and girls. It seems as though all they want to do here is get drunk and laid – and not necessarily in that order. Hollister gave us nearly two hours of filmed examples of music being used to manipulate. Lots of film scores and television advertisements. He told us about how Mozart always calmed him down if he was tense – I wanted to tell him that it worked for me, too. And I wanted to tell him about Vaughan Williams, and Terry Riley's *Rainbow in Curved Air* but didn't fancy everyone asking what the hell it was. I know from the bits of conversations I've caught that my musical tastes are a bit out on a limb! I overheard Lisa Morris in the cafeteria telling Angela Clayforth-Darby and the rest of *that* set that Happy Mondays was the only thing that relaxed her. Then she whispered something and they all fell about laughing. I think it was something to do with sex or drugs maybe. They're just like a bunch of old hippies! I'm going to play Andy Williams tomorrow. (What the hell made me think of Andy Williams?!) Read *Songlines* until 1:30.

September 9

Andy Williams – *Can't Take My Eyes Off You*.

Couldn't get the hot-water tap to work again this morning. Had to boil water just to shave in. I'm thinking of growing a beard – a big scruffy one like Robert Wyatt or Elvis or one of Z Z Top. Phoned father and he said it was okay for me to look for somewhere else – up to £30 a week. Can't be bad! I'm going to go hunting at the weekend. Mass Hysteria was top of the menu today. It's fascinating the way that the conscious mind and the ordinary sense perception can be so easily eclipsed. The funniest part though is that I seemed to know it all already but just needed to have it explained. I asked Hollister to give us more examples

– he'd already told us about the Balinese sword dancers and how they go into trances and sometimes turn their swords on themselves – and he told me to stay behind. When I went to see him he told me about this religious cult in America – Tennessee – that plays music and sings songs and hand-claps while passing around live poisonous snakes. Some of them actually get bitten and die! Wonderful! He asked me how I was getting on with the book. I told him I thought it was great. He's going to dig me out some others. More from father's Andy Williams collection tomorrow, I think. Went to bed early but read until gone 11 while listening to his *Born Free* album. It's 11:55 now. Sleep calls.

September 10

Kevin Ayers – *Song From the Bottom of a Well.*

Woke up this morning (dah dah da dah!) feeling not like any Andy Williams at all. Last night I dreamed some pretty strange dreams but they all disappeared as soon as I got out of bed. Can't remember what they were about at all now, but I do remember there was a lot of desert in there somewhere. The hot water was on but I'm still going to look for somewhere else – gives the old man something to do with his money! Played Kevin Ayers's *Whatevershebringswesing* album and went into a kind of trance. Played it twice and felt like not bothering to go in to lectures at all. Glad I did though. More on head acres. The energy of collective archetypes can be focused through ritual to move people to collective action. The Nazis knew this, of course, and they used versions of the Teutonic myths to help rally the German people behind them – maybe the same could be achieved in single units... like working on one person at a time, maybe for a long time. Jung always said that man had yet to gain control of his own nature – maybe it's just that he needs help! I think music could be the way. Going to bed now to read more *Songlines*.

P.S. It's 2:40 and I've finished *Songlines*. The Aborigines chant their way through life, actually singing routes and paths into existence. Chatwin believes that it's a power inherent in humans... something that we've always had but forgotten. That must be why music can be so inspirational. But it's not just music, it's sound. After all, music is only a collection of sounds. It starts in the womb with the music of the mother's heart and then it goes on all through life. For the Aborigines, it clearly serves to open some kind of collective sentient consciousness and reveals knowledge that ancestors possessed. And that's what they mean by creating the paths – they're not *really* creating them but simply unlocking the race memory of them. But maybe after you've unlocked everything within yourself you can actually start influencing what's outside. It's an interesting concept: would the laws of science and nature respond to the Aboriginal chants? And if so, how could we know whether it was knowledge or power we already possessed? What actually would happen when you've exhausted the power inside? I think I'd like to experiment.

September 11

Philip Glass – *Serra Pelada.*

Saturday. Had a lie-in and felt pretty good. Got the bus out of Leeds to Bradford, an old mill town that seems to be filled with Pakistanis. Property seems much cheaper to rent than in Leeds (wonder why!). Saw an old place on the outskirts (Manningham Lane) which looks as if it might fit the bill. But the best part is that the owner (Mr Jerrold) says I can have the cellar as well for just £2 a week extra – that's only £19.50 a week all in! He says it's "a bit rough at night" but that there's apparently "no shortage of skirt!" I told him that that was nice but I'd probably be too busy. I went into Bradford itself to look around in the afternoon and went back out to Manningham Lane just after seven o'clock. See what he means – prostitutes all over the place! Doesn't matter though cos I won't be going out at night. Came home and started *Songlines* again. Haven't been able to settle all night worrying about what I was going to use the cellar for. Philip Glass's *Powaqqatsi* has finally helped calm me down.

September 12

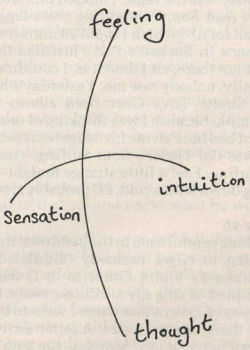
Philip Glass – *The Thin Blue Line.*

Sunday morning. Stayed in bed and read *Songlines* while listening to *The Thin Blue Line*. It made me cry. Then I put on *Powaqqatsi* – the word comes from the Hopi Indian words for sorcerer (powaq) and life (qatsi) – it's an entity that consumes the life force of other beings in order to further its own life. That's me! That's what I've decided to be. Except I'm furthering my own knowledge and what's knowledge if it's not life? Read *Songlines* all day and went to bed early. Listened to Terry Riley's *In C*, thinking about singing things into existence like the Aboriginals. If you can sing things *into* existence doesn't it follow that you could sing them *out* too? Sleep beckons. I know what I'm going to do! Can't wait for tomorrow!

September 13

Miles Davis – *Sketches of Spain* album.

Straight in today. Didn't wash. Couldn't wait to get started. We looked at the "compass of the psyche," Jung's way of looking at people. He was able to assess the mental makeup of people simply by applying this formula.



It's really just a cross. On the one line – the horizontal in my drawing – the end points are "sensation" and "intuition," while the line which crosses it (the vertical) spans from "feeling" to "thought." This will be important when I put together my playlist – but first I need a subject for the experiment. When I got home tonight I was too tired and too excited to read. Went through the records trying to find something which could relax and motivate me at the same time: it had to be Miles. I'm writing this while listening to *Sketches of Spain*, chanting to the beat with my legs crossed. It's not very comfortable but it's what the Haitians do to convince themselves they're possessed by Ghede. Rang Jerrold on the way back home and told him I'd take the flat. So tired. That's it for today.

September 14

Amazing. It might just have been the wind, of course, but today I chanted changes in the weather. They were only slight variations but I'm sure it was something to do with what I was doing. I sat on the outside wall humming a kind of mantra and concentrating. When I thought of heat and desert, the wind dropped; when I thought of cold and rain, the wind built up again. On tonight's weather report, Michael Fish said that parts of Northern England had their most unsettled day since records began. They even interviewed him and asked how the weather bureau had been unable to predict it. He said that it happens sometimes and that it's to do with pressure drops in the North Sea and the Atlantic occurring at the same time as huge build-ups on the land masses. Sounds like the "experts" telling people who have seen flying saucers that all they've really seen is the reflection of Venus on the clouds. The most interesting thing was that I didn't eat all day! And I never had to go in to use the toilet. I feel tired now, though. Haven't played any music at all today. Just made my own. Bed.

September 16

Couldn't be bothered to fill you in yesterday, dear diary. I started looking for a subject but they're all so engrossed with themselves it was a complete waste of time. Today was the same. I missed this afternoon's lecture but read *Songlines* sitting cross-legged on a bench – wait for it! – which I spent 20 minutes singing into existence in Beckett's Park. Just like that! One minute it's not there, and then it is. I couldn't believe it. Thankfully, nobody saw me. Yesterday's highlight was Dire Straits' *Love Over Gold* album which I played (I think) because I was thinking of mother. It's actually not bad but *Private Investigations* is brilliant. Today it was Cal Tjader's *Soul Surfing* – nothing to do with surfing. Feel a little strange tonight – maybe I'm coming down with a cold. I'll probably sleep it off.

September 16

Spent a long careful time in the bathroom this morning listening to Nigel Kennedy "fiddle" his way through Brahms's *Violin Concerto in D* while I, in turn, attempted to sing my stuffiness away. Nothing much happened except that when I went to brush my teeth later there was no water! A letter arrived from Jerrold. I can move in next Monday, the 20th. Missed morning lectures cos I felt so grotty. Looked for a subject but no go – felt a little better in the afternoon so I went in for Hollister's lecture. The ego's emergence can best be symbolized not by battle but by sacrifice... death leading to rebirth. Byron gave *his* life willingly during the revolution in Greece; St Lucia sacrificed her eyes and her life for her religion; an inscription on one British World War I memorial reads: "At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them." Hollister read an extract from a book by Leopold Vaschimone called *Cyclical Cantata and Rhymic Stigmata* where he states that, according to reliable witnesses (!) Jesus hummed all the time he was on the cross. Everyone laughed except me and Hollister. He loaned me a book by Lawrence Block called *Random Walk*, about a man who suddenly just goes walking for no reason, pulling all these different people to him. One of them, a woman, is going blind but she realizes she can see much better the worse her eyes get. The pipes were making funny noises tonight. Must sleep.

P.S. My cold has disappeared.

September 19

Big day tomorrow. Big day today, too. I've found him. He's perfect. I found him yesterday hanging around the market. At first I thought he was waiting to meet somebody but after a couple of hours I realized he was just passing time. I told him I was moving in to Bradford and asked where the best place to eat was. He took me down to a Macdonalds and we chatted about nothing in particular. His name's Edward and he lives in Shipley. I told him we ought to get together for a drink. He said he'd meet me at the market again next Saturday afternoon. Didn't go into lectures at all on Thursday and Friday. Hollister came around on Friday night to see what was the matter. I said I still had a cold but I know he knew I was lying. He brought me the Vaschimone book and another one called *Stranger Than Science*, an old Pan paperback by Frank Edwards. Julia Ward Howe, who wrote *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, says "I wonder if I really wrote it. I feel that I did not. I was just an instrument. It really wrote itself." That night I dreamt I was on the Potomac River, with mist swirling all around me. The next morning everything was damp in the flat – I'll be glad to get out of here.

Played Jefferson Airplane's *Spare Chaynge*, some Beatles and *Delibes Larkme* – the full 138 minutes, not father's highlights cassette!

September 21

Stravinsky – *The Rites of Spring*.

Shattered today. Took the day off yesterday to move and I'm not going in today. I've made great progress, wandering around the property chanting up routes and a few barriers – mainly to cope with any unexpected noises. There are still a few things I've got to sing in yet. I've made several paths around the flat which now seem comfortable, though I did trap myself for a while halfway down the cellar steps – I only managed to get going again by remembering that wood has a certain sound. It took a mixture of *Night on the Bare Mountain* and *Hey, Hey We're the Monkees* before I could actually move. The thing is that, once I was safe again and able to think through it all, I realized that I had not read anywhere about wood having its own sound. But it has. And so do all the

metals as well as water and trees and plants. This is what I meant by race memory – I think I must be tapping into things that have lain dormant since the days of the cavemen. How exciting! Maybe that's how the ice age started: maybe it was nothing to do with meteors or exploding or imploding suns, maybe it was some kind of tribal chant put out by the savages of the time. Savages! That's a laugh... the real savages are those prats down at the University.

Sang the cellar in. All I need to do now is clean it all up. I'm starting to make up a lot of my own songs now – they're a mixture between chants and tunes... I'll call them "chantunes." I can sing away the need to pee now – haven't been since leaving Leeds, though there's a lot of staining down my legs and crotch. Ah, hubris! Man's greatest fallibility is that which he makes to the sin of pride!

September 23

Painted a quadrangular motif on the cellar ceiling to symbolize the all-important centre of the psyche. Remembered to eat today. Everything's ready for Eddy. Spent the last two days writing a playlist, putting things on tape. I've got about 30 hours' worth already. I just hope it's enough. Favourite musical piece of the day has been the Andante from Shostakovich's *Piano Concerto No. 2*. Needless to say I've included it on Edward's tapes. Tomorrow I'm going to have a Love session, I think – haven't heard *Forever Changes* for ages. ("Oh the snot has caked against my pants/it has turned into crystal/there's a bluebird sitting on a branch/I think I'll take my pistol" and so on. Jerome Kern, eat your heart out!) I think I'm putting off going to bed... there's so much movement around the place. I think people are walking my paths. Who are they? Why can't I see them? Can they see me?! Maybe I need a protective chantune.

September 24

Letter from father. Hollister has written to him expressing concern at my lack of attendance at lectures. Bastard! I've a good mind to go around to his house with his books and do a little impromptu gig outside his window and heal his mouth and nostrils up. But I've too much to do preparing for Edward tomorrow. After the start to the day I decided against Love and went instead for Charlie Watts's Orchestra playing live at Fulham Town Hall, with *Stomping at the Savoy* and a purely masterful rendition of Lionel Hampton's *Flying Home*. That got rid of a little pent-up energy. Sitting up in bed now, writing this, listening to the faint rustlings and almost imperceptible movements along my pathways.

September 25

The Rolling Stones – *Beggar's Banquet*.

Hey, please allow me to introduce myself, Dear Diary. I am me. And what I have done – or started to do – today will make history. Met Edward as arranged. We went around Bradford and then went to see *Terminator 2*. When we came out it was dark and I suggested we went for a drink near where I lived. I realize now, too late of course, that Edward thought I was gay. I don't know why I didn't think of it before. Of course, I was merely immersed in my experiment but he was sexually motivated. Maybe that's not fair. We're both motivated by knowledge and the attainment of it. That must be true of everyone. All activity, all experience, all conversation... is knowledge. But each applies to – or titillates, or satisfies – different areas.

When we got back to the house he threw his arms around me once we were through the door. I realized straight away (thank God) and so I didn't do anything about it. But I managed to hold him off a while until I poured us a couple of glasses of wine – his was heavily laced with some of mother's "calmers." He's asleep now. Dead to the world. It took me some time to get him down into the cellar, but I managed it. It took longer because of the paths, of course. There's only one way in and out of the cellar and it's not simply straight ahead and then either down or up the stairs! I sang in a special route this morning – took me just over an hour – a long and circuitous route that involves going back on yourself and then forward and then left and then back and then right and so on. I've written it all down. And I've sung in a barrier of rocks and stone outside the cellar windows and at the head of the stairs. You can't see it, of course, but it is there – and you can't hear a thing out there. I checked by playing tapes loudly before I brought Edward.

Anyway, I'm going to go down now and watch – he'll be waking up soon. I've set up a chair in the side room, in front of the spyhole, and laid on some sandwiches and a flask of tea. I'm not hungry or thirsty at all these days but I just fancied the thought of making an event out of it – like the picnics that mother used to take me on when father was away. Oh, what a night it's going to be. I'm so excited!

September 26

The Beatles – *The Long and Winding Road*.

...That leads to your door! Edward woke up at 2:14 am. His face was a picture. I started the tapes straight away. He sat up on the cellar floor, shook his head and then looked all around. Then he called my name. Several times. Percy Faith and his orchestra was on at the time, playing *Shenandoah* from his *American Serenade* album. He stood up and tried to move to the door but couldn't because he doesn't know the path. I suppose he could find it in time, purely by accident – what is it they say about an infinite number of monkeys being able to type the entire works of Shakespeare? But, anyway, Edward doesn't know the path and so he has to stand or sit or lie right where he is. He might suddenly find – because he's got his legs or arms or knees in a particular position – that he's got more room or can suddenly move in a direction he couldn't move in before. But it's short-lived. As I'm writing this he's sitting cross-legged on the floor staring at the door which is about eight feet away from him. He's already done the "mime" bit, moving his hands up and down against the invisible barrier in front of him, but he's given it up now. He gave it up when he had a pee and watched as the stream of urine started gushing out in front of him and ended up kind of bending around and hitting the floor about two feet to his left. That fazed him. He's been in there almost three hours now. I'm just about to start the third tape. A lot of my excitement has faded now and I'm very tired. When I start this next tape I'm going to have a doze. He's just shouted for me again.

September 28

Missed a whole day. We've played 38 hours of music now. Edward has cried constantly for the past few hours. Occasionally though he seems to be paying more attention to different pieces of music. I've wired up my two-cassette player so that it will play for four hours at a stretch without me doing anything to it. That gave me time this morning to get out and have a breath of fresh air. It's starting to smell down there – Edward has relieved both bladder and bowels several times. But that should be it now. By the time we hit the end of the next tape all of his orifices will be sung closed. The playlist I put together has already sung away his desire to eat or drink. (I caught sight of myself in the mirror this morning – I don't look too good. Maybe I ought to have something to eat myself.) Going to grab some shuteye now.

September 30

It's eight o'clock pm. We're approaching the 100-hour mark now – less than seven hours to go! Apart from the odd twitch, Edward hasn't moved since early this morning. He's still breathing though. Just. But now he doesn't seem to be aware of anything but the music. He tilts his head constantly at the sounds, crying occasionally, staring wistfully into some strange distance and even letting out the odd smile and chuckle. He no longer seems to want to leave. My detailed notes showing half-hourly (except when I'm asleep) developments are coming to the end of the second exercise book.

October 1

Something is happening. Edward is shuddering as though he's cold. His skin is almost opaque, with a white glistening sheen. He's been humming in his sleep and is currently lying curled up in a foetal position about two feet above the floor! I don't know when this happened – he was like it when I woke from a doze at 5:37 this morning (it's all in the exercise book). He's starting to sing changes within himself, I'm sure of it. I think I'm going to have to go in.

I've been in. His breathing is very slow. Hardly any pulse. Skin clammy. He was completely unaware of me. Still humming, but not to the music that's playing at any time. They're odd little ditties and chants... quite folksy with unexpected basso profundo outbursts. There in the middle of his room the activity along the pathways is incredible. I crawled under and around him to see if I could sense or feel anything holding him up but there was nothing. I cut him. He didn't feel it. So then I cut off his right index finger. No reaction. No bleeding. I pierced the skin of his thigh with a needle and then slipped it through his testes. Still nothing. We're almost at the end of the tapes now. Must rest.

October 2 – 4:10 am

I thought it was an earthquake or something that had woken me up but it was Edward. He's standing up straight now, still suspended above the floor, and all his clothes have gone. They're not on the floor beneath him. His eyes are wide open but only the whites are showing, and his arms and legs are stretched out as though he is tethered to a wagon wheel. The final tape has about 30 minutes left to go. I'm going in.

– *4:52 am.* I'm now in the room with Edward. He died – or perhaps moved on might be a better expression – 20 minutes ago, at 4.32 precisely. It was incredible. His face shone and he cried tears that were filled with bracken and bits of grass, that left orangey dust-coloured streaks down both cheeks. Just before the end he stopped his humming (up to that point he had built it into a frenzied cadence that all but shook his body apart limb from limb) and opened his mouth. There was nothing inside – well, I say "nothing" when in fact there was everything. Space, is what there was. Billions of stars and all the milk-stain streaks of cosmic debris that litter the heavens. And it seemed to be lit, just the way that Edward's face was lit, burning with a fierce luminosity... like a bulb that's about to burst. Then he went. He just closed his mouth and rolled down his eyelids and... I think he just went off, down there inside himself, inside everyth-

October 3

I'm still here. It's a little after 1:15 am and I'm still in the room with Edward. I've been here nearly 20 hours now. Edward is still hanging up there, arms and legs stretched out to grasp and embrace everything. "Teach me everything," he seems to be saying. "I want to know everything."

I've forgotten the route.

And the detailed map is on the other side of the spyhole. The tape stopped as I was finishing my last entry. The silence is not particularly disturbing in itself, only in the way it accentuates the activity along the paths. I've been trying to find my way out but I kept getting stuck. Got as far as the outer wall a little while ago and then couldn't get any further. Then I couldn't get back to Edward. He's about three feet to my right now... I could actually reach out and touch him if it wasn't for the damned paths I sang in. I'm humming to ease the silence. I can't stand the silence. It lets me hear the things on the paths. They seem to be gathering – mainly near where Edward is hanging but something brushed past me not too long ago. Maybe they're attracted by his body. Like dead meat attracts all kinds of predators. It's probably just my imagination but I'm beginning to feel a little vulnerable. I must stop the silence. I'm going to stop writing now so that I can concentrate.

Fell asleep. Had a really weird dream. There were all these Aborigines and I was with them. They were all frightened, pointing to the sky. And when I looked up it wasn't there. It sounds stupid now, writing it down on paper, but the sky had gone. It was like looking into a whirlpool, just a mass of swirling energy. And something was coming, swimming through the energy towards us. And in that stupid way of communicating in dreams – talking to each other without really speaking – the Aborigines told me it was God. They didn't call it that, but I knew. I can't remember what they called it. They said they had sung it into existence long, long ago, but it had been too powerful. Too destructive. So they had sung it out again, banished it. And I asked them why it was coming back. What did it want? And they all looked at me and said nothing. That's when I woke up.

I've no idea how long I've been here, nor what time

or even what day it is now. Edward has mostly gone. It started with just bits of him being pulled away from the inside but then it got so that there was more and more, bits disappearing into a kind of starry void with Edward's shape. I can't make out what it is that's taking him – it's invisible. Looking at Edward now is like looking out of the porthole of a rocketship travelling through outer space. But I can hear something... some kind of rhythm, distant but much nearer than it was when it started. It's a tune...or a mixture of tunes and chants – who's singing them I have no idea. As I watch there are tiny vine-like tendrils snaking around the edge of Edward's shape – it's strange...I recognize so many songs and sounds...they're drifting in like wafts of air through an open doorway. I'm constantly jostled by the things on the paths. They're gathering in front of Edward who is now completely "spaced out." The last piece – his left cheek and eye socket – has just been pulled away, toppling off into the distance like a jettisoned lump of garbage. The vines – for that's what they look like, like the constantly slowly snaking arms of a clinging ivy...except that these are *not* moving slowly! They're pulling at the edges of the hole that was Edward...pulling it wider. And the sounds are growing louder and louWait.

They've stopped.

Everything is quiet now, even the activity on the pathways has settled down. I think we're all waiting for something to hap-

Beautif-

Peter Crowther is editor of the anthology *Narrow Houses* (Little Brown, 1992; reviewed in *Interzone* 69 by Matthew Dickens). A regular reviewer of comics/graphic novels for our sister magazine *MILLION*, he lives in Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

BACK-ISSUE CLEARANCE SALE!

We're having a winter/spring sell-off of excess back-issue stocks. Between now and 1st June 1993, any of *Interzone*'s **first 40 issues** which remain in print are available to inland readers at just **£1.50** (postage included).

Please note that issues 1, 5, 6, 7, 17, 22 and 23 are now completely unavailable, and that some of the other early issues (particularly numbers 2, 3, 4 and 8) are in fairly short supply. All other back-issues (i.e. number 41 onwards) cost £2.50 inland.

But the 33 issues listed below you may have for just £1.50 each (£2 overseas; $3 USA). No extra for postage! Please make your cheques or postal orders payable to *Interzone* and send them to 217 Preston Drove, Brighton BN1 6FL, UK.

2, Summer 1982 – stories by Ballard, Pollack, Disch, etc.
3, Autumn 1982 – Carter, Garnett, Kilworth, Saxton, etc.
4, Spring 1983 – Bayley, Edwards, Redd, Sladek, etc.
8, Summer 1984 – Ballard, Bradfield, Dick, Newman, etc.
9, Autumn 1984 – Aldiss, Ballard, Disch, Gibson, Harrison.
10, Winter 1984/85 – Bradfield, Burns, Pollack, Wolfe, etc.
11, Spring 1985 – Langford, Shirley/Sterling, Roberts, etc.
12, Summer 1985 – Bishop, Harrison, McAuley, Zoline, etc.
13, Autumn 1985 – Ballard, Bayley, Ferguson, Watson, etc.
14, Winter 1985/86 – McAuley, Newman, Sterling, Watson, etc.
15, Spring 1986 – Brosnan, Gibson, Kilworth, Reed, etc.
16, Summer 1986 – Blumlein, Pollack, Stableford, etc.
18, Winter 1986/87 – Benford, Campbell, Egan, Watson, etc.
19, Spring 1987 – Ferguson, McAuley, Newman, Baxter, etc.
20, Summer 1987 – Banks, Ryman, Stableford, Swanwick, etc.
21, Autumn 1987 – Crowley, Kilworth, Ryman, Stableford, etc.
24, Summer 1988 – Brown, Fowler, Mann, Stableford, etc.
25, Sep/Oct 1988 – Griffith, Langford, Preuss, Watson, etc.
26, Nov/Dec 1988 – Brown, Pratchett, Shaw, Sladek, etc.
27, Jan/Feb 1989 – Bayley, Brosnan, Robinson, Shaw, etc.
28, Mar/Apr 1989 – Baxter, Campbell, Newman, Rucker/Laidlaw.
29, May/Jun 1989 – Egan, Fowler, Kilworth, Mann, etc.
30, Jul/Aug 1989 – Ballard, Brooke, Goldstein, MacLeod, etc.
31, Sep/Oct 1989 – Brown, Gribbin, Jones, Stross, etc.
32, Nov/Dec 1989 – Bayley, Calder, McDonald, Royle, etc.
33, Jan/Feb 1990 – Brin, Carroll, Newman, Watson, etc.
34, Mar/Apr 1990 – Calder, Brooke, Griffith, MacLeod, etc.
35, May 1990 – Baxter, Bayley, Disch, Stableford, etc.
36, June 1990 – Egan, Ings, Newman, Reynolds, etc.
37, July 1990 – Bear, Brooke, Egan, Lee, Stross, etc.
38, Aug. 1990 – special Aldiss issue, Bear, Stableford, etc.
39, Sept. 1990 – Brooke, Garnett, MacLeod, Tuttle, etc.
40, Oct. 1990 – Calder, Gibson/Sterling, Gribbin, etc.

Mutant Popcorn

Film Reviews by Nick Lowe

The studio chief is having a happy dream. His light romantic fantasy comedy *Uh-Oh We're Dead* cost less than his suit, yet has touched the hearts of millions worldwide, its debutant writer-director catapulted from packing lunches part-time at Happy Pickle to an incredible Cannes-Globe-Oscar hat-trick. "The new Kenneth Branagh!" they are already hailing him, and even "the white Spike Lee!" And his contract says exclusive first dibs for the studio on his *next three projects*. The studio chief stirs in his queensize and smiles, as in his dream the young filmmaker walks into his suite with a thick sealed envelope and an eager gleam that says This Is The One. "I'm so happy to bring this to you," he says. "You were there for me all the way, and now at last I have something to repay your faith." He slides the script out of the envelope, lays it on the desk. The topsheet reads *I Slept with a Fairy*. "I wrote this six years ago," he explains. "I've never shown it to anyone, but it's the film I was born to make. You see, it's a *true story*..."

The studio chief jerks bolt upright in his bed, ears ringing with the echo of his own scream.

Each night, the same dream, in every beachhouse and every home in the Hills. No executive ever shakes it off, because every day it's out there, waiting to happen. Every filmmaker from least to greatest has one, without exception: the tragically hopeless pet project they spend decades trying to get made, unable somehow to see what everyone else can, that it's not about "uncommercial," it's about *awful*. And every executive knows it's his sacred duty on waking each morning to ensure that the filmmaker is fobbed off for one more day. "Trust me," he must say. "*Kropotkin: The Musical* will be next on the slate. We believe in you; you have to believe in us. Just take a couple months out to shoot *Beverley Hills Anesthetist* first, and I guarantee we'll give you forty mil, full control, final cut, private jet..." Most days, he will succeed. But hanging over every head in the business is the certain knowledge that if one day he fails, he will be remembered forever as the man who greenlighted the new *Last Movie*.

So **Toys** will have delivered a timely voltage to anyone thinking of nodding off into complacency. Indeed, the space around Barry Levinson has echoed with the soft whoosh of inrushing air as all remaining movable bodies speedily distance themselves from the immediate vicinity, phrases like "highly personal," "unique vision," "long-cherished project" jostling with such kiss-of-death giveaways as "breathtaking sets" and "magical visual style." Strange enough to be baffling but not quite enough to be fun, it's a film that makes few apologies for its disregard of conventional entertainment forms. It clearly doesn't seek to be particularly hilarious, pacey, or emotionally charged, and the residual traces of commercial aspiration seem largely desultory and incidental.

There are heroes and villains, but the villains turn out to be as sugar-centred as their antagonists; there's a romance, yet it's entirely devoid of emotional complication and obstruction; there's even an action climax, but the casualties are mechanical and unlamented, and the long-promised monster scarcely pops a head round the door. Instead, we have what is presumably supposed to be disarming whimsy on an epic scale, with a cast of deliberately motley and toylike characters manoeuvred about in a curious private game where nothing is allowed to be finally meaningful or serious, in out-of-scale fantasy settings that dwarf the figures that move around them like the *trompe-l'oeuil* doll's house the heroes inhabit. It's not an unattractive concept, but it's hard to see much reason to make a movie around it; and in practice big-budget whimsy is one of the hardest things for a recession audience to stomach without at least a few concessions to narrative convention, while the wandering plot, randomly climaxless scenes, and jokes that could flatteringly be described as "low-key" don't much help to charm the resistant viewer into submission (any more than do tired middlebrow in-joke quotations of Cornell boxes, Magritte canvases, and *Klaatu barada* we're all cinephiles on this picture *nikto*). Nor is it entirely a good idea to slip Robin Williams' chokelead and just let him witter to camera, despite the occasional success this technique has generated under strictly controlled conditions in the past, given that his sporadic comic bullseyes are invariably and uneditably spattered with a dicey mess of surrounding matter that has splashed wide of the target altogether.

In the end, it's hard to tell whether *Toys* is trying far too hard to be far too clever, or is simply rather incoherent and dim to begin with. The whole picture seems miles too big for its content – the length, sets, sound, performances, effects, the needlessly superior music, and above all the *aspirations*. Knocking around collecting dogears for 15 years doesn't often do a lot for a script, and the attempt to revamp this late-seventies screenplay into an essay on any available nineties issues comes out saying remarkably little about some remarkably big things – including the end of history and the payment problems on the peace dividend, game addiction and its transformation of the culture of childhood, the commercial and cultural links between the military-industrial complex and the juvenile leisure market, and the sanitization of mass slaughter in the Gulf War videothon. *Toys* evidently wants to score some didactic cred by suggesting these matters are subtly and alarmingly linked; unfortunately, all they seem linked by is being portentously alluded to in the same rather tiresome film.

It's particularly unfortunate in this connection that the film has deliberately opted to detach itself from recognizable reality, not just in style but in basic content. There are no links to an outside society and the people who buy these machines, no normal characters, no glimpses of the real world other than a handful of establishing exteriors of Robin Wright's apartment; all we're ever allowed to see is just a play world full of play people playing with themselves and playing at meaning. And when LL Cool J, who has clearly drawn the short straw on this one, is obliged at last to exposit the terrible secret behind Gambon's General Jumbo antics (er, a network of arcades disguised as daycare centres, where unwitting tots will play Rat & Dragon for the new slimline

Pam Dawber and John Ritter in 'Stay Tuned'

Pentagon), there's an irrevocable collapse into banality, anticlimax and dumbness. If the message really is no more than that Super Nintendo is uncreative and aggression-building while clockwork rabbits are the salvation of innocence, it might be a touch more convincing if the latter weren't shown being assembled on a production line by happy workers singing all day long as they stick moulded plastic arms fulfillingly into sockets. Levinson's dream, presumably, was to do a big picture about "the eternal child in all of us" (ho! pass the projectile-hurl bucket) that would marry innocence knowingly with experience in an adult rather than an adolescent way, sidestepping cliché to engage with some important ideas about the changing reality of childhood under the impact of the new leisure technology. But the reality is a monument of self-absorbed cuteness whose satire is so remorselessly gentle as to trivialize the very issues it so laboriously advertises. Anyone can see this, and anyone could have told him; but after 15 years somebody somewhere just forgot to keep saying it often enough and loud enough. Bad dreams on the Boulevard tonight.

Mind you, those 15 years have been kinder to some than to others. In 1978, when Barry Levinson and Robin Williams were TV professionals trying manfully to break into movies, Peter Hyams was a modestly respected filmmaker noted for dumb but sincere entertainments-with-a-conscience like *Capricorn One* and *The Star Chamber*, and in those days when you thought of Mork you automatically thought also of Mindy. Perhaps some such wistful reflection occurred also to Pam Dawber, a name I would otherwise have had trouble recalling, in idle moments during the filming of Hyams' **Stay Tuned**, such as maybe while waiting tied to a railway track with her blouse open waiting for the gaffers to line up the wind machine to expose her frilly Victorian underwear with its gusts. For here too is a satirically-minded family comedy about the devil and commodity fetishism, warning all ages of the perils of dysfunctionality that come with the technology and culture of cathode-ray addiction; but where *Toys* would be adult, arty, and coy, *Stay Tuned* remains comfortably infantile throughout, the satire carefully pitched at a *Mad* magazine level for all 88 modest minutes, the jokes no longer than an attention span in length, and the aspirations just that shaved millimetre or two above video. It's certainly funnier than *Toys*, but then so is the Slovak tariff system, and it's not much of a challenge to come up with funnier gags on TV titles round the table in the pub than *Unmarried with Children* and *Murder She Likes* (ooh, my aching ribs). Obviously, humility has its payoffs, most notably in sheer forgivability; and what *Stay Tuned* misses in quality it does its best to repay in the sheer quantity of mostly dimwitted, but mercifully swift, throwaway gags and casual absurdities.

Still, the really surprising thing about *Stay Tuned* is that for a film about Satan, satellite, Seattle, and familial breakdown, it manages to be so completely harmless. Far from a snapshot of the post-nuclear American family, the imperilled Knables themselves are so hedged about with quirks and oddities that nobody could conceivably see them as their own reflection. Mom is "senior product manager for a vitamin company," yet Dad (the one who has transformed from fencing champ to couch vegetable and finally signs away his eternal soul for 666 channels) has "this real suck job selling plumbing supplies" (marital tiff: "Your success does not threaten me!" "It does too!"), while son (significantly, the lead viewpoint, as indicated by his selection as v/o) is an amateur electronics genius, and exasperating big sister is, well, never mind, it's not her ticket money. Meanwhile, alert viewers who read all the relevant Fredric Brown shorts in their prams will observe with interest the extraordinary coyness with which the film ventures to treat the pact-with-the-devil-

Concluded on page 69

Striptease

William Spencer

"Of course it works!" Bonner said. He stabbed a forefinger towards the other man. "Take the chair you're sitting on. That was one of our first large-scale artefacts."

Fingel glanced down at the chair with evident misgiving. He half rose from his seated posture. The chair looked impossibly slender, like a fossilized stick-insect.

Bonner smiled – a wry, one-sided smile. He was a big man, balding, with colourless eyes that looked somehow naked. His manner was formal, almost professorial. Despite his white overalls he sported an outmoded bow tie. "Don't be concerned," he said. "The chair won't collapse under you. It is stressed to support ten times your weight."

Fingel relaxed slightly, but only slightly. The chair appeared no different from the other furniture in Bonner's office. Probably all based on resin-bonded diamond fibre. Sturdy enough, therefore, despite a fragile appearance.

As if confirming Fingel's thoughts, Bonner went on. "With our process it is quite easy to lay down pure crystalline carbon in its elemental form."

"Lay down?" Fingel's red moustache twitched. He hunched in his seat like some predatory animal. "The word is that you call it 'printing'."

"Yes. That much our industrial rivals have understood. I'll show you one of our devices working in a moment. We refer to them as 'Solid Printers'."

"I get it. 'Solid', because they print solid substances."

"No. All printers print solid substances. Dried ink, after all, is a solid."

"OK...Right." Fingel took the point.

"There's more to it than that. Our process is rather like printing in three dimensions." Bonner gestured towards a coffee-jug on his desk. "Take this cafetière. A simple enough affair of glass and stainless steel, plus a little plastic."

Fingel gave the object a perfunctory glance. Hey, let's get to the point, he thought. I haven't come here to talk coffee-cups.

"Imagine a transparent rectangular box placed over it," Bonner went on. "We can reference each point on the jug by a set of three co-ordinates. Each molecule has its allotted place within the three-dimensional grid.

"Let's say all this information is held in a computer memory. Now imagine something like an ink-jet printer. As the print-head moves over the paper, drops of different-coloured ink are squirted from tiny jets at the appropriate instant – only we are squirting single atoms.

"One atom of nickel. Two atoms of chromium. Nine atoms of iron. As the print-head scans across, a single molecular layer is laid down. Then the print-head backs off by an infinitesimal amount, and another layer is laid on top of the first. So a three-dimensional object is built up, composed of any materials you care to mention."

Fingel was impressed. Then a doubt struck him. "I can see all that. But how's about the empty space? How in hell's name do you start the process? I can't figure how a single atom of iron, say, is fastened on to empty space."

"Good point." Bonner nodded. "That caused us plenty of headaches at first. We tried various substrates – nylon, teflon, you name it – on which to build up the wanted material. But there were always problems. In the end, we fell back on the oldest manufacturing material of all – a technology that even the ancient Babylonians would not have found amiss. We used clay as a filler. Ordinary potter's clay. Then, when the wanted structure had been built up, we could simply wash the clay away. Leach it off with high-pressure water jets."

"Dead simple," said Fingel, grinning, nostrils flaring.

"Simple in theory. Not so simple in practice. For a start, an ultra-hard vacuum is required, so that bare atoms of metal, when they touch, will weld instantly, instead of oxidizing."

"Must call for a whole lot of precision," Fingel said.

"Yes. Each increment of the print-head is less than half a nanometre, a mere one or two angstroms – the diameter of a single molecule."

"You don't say." Despite himself, Fingel continued to be impressed. Yet he was also puzzled that Bonner was being so frank about the details of the process.

"But enough of theory." Bonner motioned towards the doors. "Why don't I show you the Solid Printers in action?"

As the doors slid open, he ushered Fingel out into the corridor. It was brightly-lit, and stretched away for hundreds of metres.

"By the way," said Bonner casually. "How *did* you get in?"

"Who cares?" said Fingel. "The major thing is that I'm here, and that I have the right kind of contacts. I can put some gigabuck overseas orders your way, and plenty more to follow."

They moved along the corridor for some distance,

riding a small mag-lev vehicle. Then Bonner parked the mag-lev, and indicated to Fingel that they should go through a pair of doors which slid open to admit them.

Fingel suppressed a gasp of surprise at the scale of the operations now revealed.

A huge cavern opened before them, stretching away into the distance, lit by powerful overhead floods. Throughout the whole floor area, spherical containment vessels of different sizes were arranged in parallel rows. There must have been thousands of them. Each globe was studded with several circular inspection windows, giving it an appearance not unlike an early diver's helmet.

Bonner led Fingel to the nearest containment vessel. They both peered inside.

Fingel could easily identify the print-head by the tangle of tubes and cables coupled to it. But the exact shape of the head was hard to make out. It flashed across the work-piece almost too swiftly for the eye to follow. From the shell of the vessel, communicated to the outside world by the umbilical cables and tubes despite the hard vacuum, came an insistent high-pitched whine.

"What you can hear," explained Bonner, "is the sound of the print-head traverse mechanism in action. The coarse traverse is done by a series of stepper motors. The fine increments depend, of course, on quantum magnetic effects."

"Sure gets a hustle on," said Fingel.

"Yes. And what looks like a single print-head is in reality an array of a thousand heads, each laying down a matrix of one thousand by one thousand atoms every nanosecond. A billion atoms every time. But nevertheless it is a slow process overall. Have you considered how many layers are required to form a millimetre of material – each layer being only one atom thick?"

"Right. So what you need is a huge assembly line. I was knocked out by the scale of your operations."

"As you see, we've tunnelled deep into the heart of the mountain. We didn't want the scope of our operations to be obvious from outside the security perimeter. And there was a bonus. We struck several lodes of ore-bearing rock. We can produce self-steering autonomous tunnelling machines very easily with our Solid Printers. We still have teams of these robot borers tunnelling away – enlarging our real estate."

"You sure have an impressive layout," conceded Fingel.

"It's no trouble for us to produce extra plant. One print-head array can print out another identical print-head array – no problem. We have a kind of breeding programme in progress."

"Right," said Fingel. "Maybe it is time for me to put my cards on the table. I'll give it to you straight. I'm in the armaments game. On an international scale. I deal with several big-time political figures, guys with real vision and power. OK – so the popular press slams them as dictators, or typecasts them as tyrants. But I see them as dedicated patriots. These guys are always ready to sacrifice themselves or their fellow-countrymen for the good of their country. And their dollars are good."

"No doubt. But how could Solid Printers be of help?" Bonner was putting on a kind of feigned innocence.

Fingel was too well-launched into his theme to notice any hint of irony. "In every way, turning out the tricky high-tech stuff. Proximity fuses. Smart land mines. Guidance mechanisms for missiles. Thermal-sensing detonators for crude biological bombs. Even shoebox size nuclear devices for infiltrating terrorists. All the finicky gizmos that give my clients trouble, because they're real short of highly-skilled personnel to operate smart machine tools. They can easily cope with the routine stuff – shell cases, bomb housings, grenade outers, and so on."

Bonner's manner did not change. "Of course. But any major deal would have to be negotiated with our Chief Executive," he said drily. "I'm only here to give you the overall picture. There is one important area of our activity which I haven't shown you yet."

He led the way through a side door. Fingel noticed that it bore a legend: "Restricted access. Authorized personnel only" – and that Bonner had to use his palm-print to gain admittance.

Fingel felt a sudden chill of apprehension. His trade had made him a cautious man, and now his habitual caution sounded a warning note. Why was he being shown so much? In his business, knowing too much could be as dangerous as knowing too little. He touched the fringes of disreputable cliques where kidnap, hostage-taking, and even torture to extract information, were not unknown.

"You're sure being generous with your time, showing me so much of your layout," he said.

"The reason will become clear in a moment. But first I must explain the Un-Printer."

They had entered a much smaller room, which held only one major item of equipment.

"Has it occurred to you," Bonner remarked, "that before we can reproduce any object, we must feed into the master memory a complete description of that object, atom by atom?"

"Sure thing."

"Well, this is the task of what we call the Un-Printer. An ugly enough name to be sure. We could call it the Scanner, perhaps, or something of that sort. But then, the Un-Printer does more than just scan – it actually dismantles, atom by atom, until there is nothing left. Nothing but a memory in the computer."

He fixed the other man with a glance that was hard to read. "You can think of it as a Printer in reverse. Only we don't need a vacuum for this process. An inert atmosphere of argon or nitrogen will suffice."

Fingel looked at the Un-Printer. It was a large device, much taller than a man. A hemispherical door had been swung back, and in the interior of the other hemisphere could be seen six metal arms, arrayed round a print-head mechanism not unlike those in the Solid Printers, with spaghetti-like clusters of tubes leading from it.

"We keep this device closely guarded," Bonner said.

"So. What's special about it?"

"Don't you see? If anyone had two Printers and an Un-Printer, they could produce an unlimited number of further Printers."

Fingel raised his eyebrows.

"All they would have to do is to feed one of the

Printers into the Un-Printer. That Printer would be utterly destroyed – atomized, in fact. But then the other Printer could produce an endless series of further Printers, *ad infinitum*. This we can't allow. We have to keep the essential knowledge to ourselves."

"You're not stupid," said Fingel.

"You can think of it as an unorthodox kind of sexual reproduction, requiring three partners instead of the usual two. Two males, perhaps, and one female."

"So, which gizmo is which? Or does it matter, except to another Printer?" Fingel grinned.

There was no trace of a smile on Bonner's heavy-jowled face. "I like to think of the Un-Printer as female, ugly as she is. In a Freudian sense, she has an inner cavity, into which something goes."

He stood behind Fingel. "Not very pretty, is she? Go on. Have a good look."

With a sudden hefty shove between the shoulder-blades, he propelled Fingel forward. Instantly, six metal arms shot out from the Un-Printer and seized the armaments dealer. They pinioned his two arms, his legs, his neck and his waist in a painful grip.

Slowly, like a spider pulling something into its web, the Un-Printer drew him into her inner chamber with a shrill whine of gears.

"Hey, come on, let's talk," said Fingel. "Look, I've got two billion dollars in a numbered Swiss account."

Bonner cut him short. "Don't think about dollars, my friend. Dollars won't help you. Think instead about your own skin. Think about each several atom of your living body, soon to be disjoined, each from the next."

"OK – you win. I could raise ten billion by tomorrow," Fingel pleaded.

"Just think how useful you are to become. An atom of carbon or iron in your flesh could finish up in a proximity fuse. Calcium could contribute to the nose-cone of a missile. Phosphorus could light up the warzone in a star shell. And since you picked up a near-lethal dose of radiation in breaching the security shield without proper clearance, who knows? – you might even make the exalted level of a terrorist's nuclear device."

Fingel was sweating now, his eyes staring, showing their whites.

The Un-Printer head moved towards his arm. The whine of the advance mechanism, unbuffered by any vacuum, was strident as a dentist's drill. A concentrated electric field stripped away each atom from its neighbour. At first the contact was no worse than having a sheet of glasspaper rubbed across the skin. But soon the head bit deeper. Fingel began to groan.

"Be... reasonable. Fourteen billion... maximum."

Bonner stopped the Un-Printer. "Yes, but how did you get in? That I must know."

"Can't reveal. Matter of trust."

"Very well." Bonner pressed a control that started the Un-Printer again. The process was slow. But he was in no hurry.

His victim wore a body vest and glossy cling-fabric jeans. It took some time to clear away the clothing.

As the flesh of his belly was laid open, Fingel started to scream.

Bonner stopped the Un-Printer at once. "Well?"

"Schwarz... in Security. Look... don't do anything to him. It was... his children... his daughters. I said I'd... spoil their pretty faces if he... didn't..."

"Good," said Bonner. He started the Un-Printer again. This time he shut the curved hatch that sealed the chamber.

There was a channel at the base of the chamber that caught blood and other fluids, and conveyed them to the sewers. Otherwise, the solid atoms of Fingel's body would be harvested. They might indeed become part of some useful mechanism. In due course Fingel himself would be only a memory in the computer, swiftly to be erased.

If anyone came looking for him, they would find only elemental atoms, identical to other similar atoms, in no way identifiable as once forming part of a human body.

Before long, Fingel's screams could be heard even through the hatch. Bonner turned on the nitrogen supply, flooding the chamber with suffocating gas.

He was a merciful man.

The author wishes to thank his son Andrew Spencer for the original idea on which this story is based.

William Spencer, a newcomer to our pages, is in fact a British science-fiction writer of long standing, a dozen of his stories having appeared in various magazines and anthologies. He lives in Crawley, West Sussex.

The Golden Age of Plastic

Dave Hughes talks to Brian D'Amato

Beauty is a rare thing; as, indeed, are in-depth interviews with debut novelists in *Interzone*. But then, Brian D'Amato is a unique writer.

D'Amato (no relation to the Senator from New York, but son of mystery writer Barbara D'Amato) burst onto the popular literary scene earlier this year with *Beauty*, an informed and intelligent dissection of the beauty trade, the fashion industry *and* the contemporary art world, all wrapped up in the guise of a reader-friendly "pop" novel. The book's narrator and protagonist, Jamie D'Angelo (a thinly-disguised but slightly twisted caricature of D'Amato himself), is an avant-garde painter who makes money on the side by performing a new form of total reconstruction surgery on rich clients, mainly not-so-supermodels and ageing actresses. His downfall begins when he becomes possessed by the idea of transforming his attractive but unspectacular Asian girlfriend into not just a perfect beauty, but an icon for the next century. Beauty, it seems, has a price, the payment of which quickly transforms *Beauty* from an arty New York novel to a horror tale more akin to E.C. Comics than e.e. cummings.

Published in the U.S. late in 1992, *Beauty* enjoyed a 30,000-strong hardcover print run, a substantial number for a first novel. Sales were soon made to seven countries, including Great Britain, where the entire first print run of Grafton's paperback original were pre-sold. International critical acclaim soon followed, as did hyperbolic praise from even those writers usually reticent to write blurbs, among them such genre notables as Peter Straub and Whitley Strieber.

The shock of suddenly having his name mentioned in the same breath as Brett Easton Ellis and Jay McInerny appeared not to faze D'Amato, who all but shunned the chat-show and interview circuit – this is his only British interview – in favour of a speedy return to his greatest love: visual art. "I still think of myself as a painter," he says in the mini-biography prepared in anticipation of the media attention he and the book would receive. After a few days of talking to each other's answering machines, I finally track him down at his New York loft apartment to find out if it's true.

My first inclination is to check out D'Amato's resemblance – in terms of psychology, background and lifestyle – to Jamie D'Angelo, his fictional creation. They share many things aside from their New York residency: a middle class Yale education; an unfashionable obsession with classical figurative painting and sculpture, and an unshakeable fascination with pre-Columbian sacrifice mythology; a predilection for all things ethnic (especially Asian food and Mexican history); overuse of makeshift words such as "touchy-feely" and "megally"; hypochondriacal tendencies (leading to a cleanliness just the right side of obsessive-compulsive); a predisposition to the grand statement ("I hate the underclass," says D'Angelo. "The art world is creepy" is a typical D'Amato observation).

Determined to discover by the end of the interview whether D'Amato shares his character's pig-headedness, insincere political correctness, relationship ruthlessness and hilarious self-importance, I ask him first if he is as "look-ist" (that is, prejudiced against people whose physical appearance is not aesthetically pleasing) as his creation, who remarks at one point in the book that "No matter how great a person you are, people just don't want to deal with you unless you're gorgeous."

"I think I'm less so than many people I know," he says, "but I think it's hard not to be at all that way. There are a lot of autobiographical details in [the book]," he adds. "The narrator resembles me in a lot of ways. [Nevertheless,] I've had to remind some friends that it's a work of fiction. The 'look-ist' aspect of [Jamie] was what they found most noxious about [him]." Jamie speculates at one point that 'look-ism' may soon be a thing of the past, in line with the 'genuineness' thing that's happening in the caring, sharing '90s. Is this D'Amato's view?

"I don't know," he says. "I think people want to believe that, and I guess that's a good thing even if they don't really. It's just the current trope." D'Amato's softly-spoken answers are slow and careful, punctuated by a throaty cough which he puts down to "spending an evening in a house full of cats." "I have a problem with the sincerity of the '90s just as much as I did with the insincerity of the '80s," he continues. "In the '90s people are insincerely sincere, whereas at least in the '80s people were sincere about their insincerity, which was something! I also think that the 'crunchy' aesthetic of the '90s – all natural things and scruffiness – is good in some ways because it's pro-environment, but I'm also a little disturbed about it because it's anti-artifice, you know: anti-drug; anti-good time. It's more 'pleasure-phobic' than its earlier incarnation in the '70s. If anything it's got a puritanical edge to it."

He agrees that AIDS probably has a lot to do with this, and I ask how he copes with the shadow that the disease casts. "I was kind of hypochondriacal anyway," he says – illustrated in the book by Jamie's refusal to eat off other people's plates and his fear of direct sunlight – "and the AIDS thing only reinforced that." Comparing the disease to Vietnam, he suggests that every generation seems to have its scourge. "I live in a very gay milieu," he says, "and it's very strange the way it came up and struck primarily at the gay population, so that it has all these connotations of retribution for the 'religious riot.' That SEX = DEATH equation couldn't have come at a worse time." Has it affected – or infected – his work? "Certainly a preoccupation among the artists and writers I know is the body and disease, just as in horror movies you often have things about parasites. It's awfully pervasive. And it's certainly a theme of the book."

Jamie loves artifice, but the reader-knows - more - than - the - narrator device (employed to best effect by Nabokov) led me to wonder whether the message of the book was, after all, anti-artifice (that we should be happy with the looks we have been given) or pro-artifice (that perfect looks would make our lives better). D'Amato seems unwilling to explore the central message of the book, prefering to leave it "ambiguous, because life is ambiguous." Hmmm. "It's really a collage. It's certainly partly about being a great artist and not doing good things with it," he offers, "but I don't think it's anti-artifice. I love artifice. Certain things in the book don't work out, but then toward the end there's the implication that total reconstruction surgery will be accepted and common

and that that might not be a bad thing."

The term "collage" suggests using things from other sources, a "pop art" method favoured by many of D'Amato's favourite contemporary artists. Indeed, Jamie says, "I hate being creative if I can steal something.", a tenet which recalls something Picasso once said about a painter being "a collector who assembles a collection by making his own versions of pictures he likes." To what extent, I ask, has D'Amato (and therefore *Beauty*) been influenced by – or borrowed from – other writers?

"That's a great Picasso quote!" he says with an enthusiasm that shows he may well remember it. "It is difficult to know whether this idea or that metaphor has been used before, you know; it's a mystery what makes something seem fresh and other things stale. You have to be constantly on the lookout for fresh stuff. But I do come out of a critical theory world, one of the definite theses of which is that there is no originality in the popular sense of the term. That whole deconstruction theory group that I studied in were very aware that things come from other things. In one way, Warhol is the least original artist, while in another way he's the most original." He adds: "I don't know what creation even means – there's no example of creation in the world."

This goes along with what André Malraux said about artists *discovering* art, rather than *creating* it. I suggest that this idea can be applied to almost everything: for instance, radium wasn't *created*, it was *discovered*. The split atom wasn't *created*; someone discovered it could be done. He agrees. "If you cook up a new element in a lab, does that mean you've created it or discovered it? Maybe the theory wouldn't stand up under scrutiny, but I do feel that people who do the best work bring in information from sources very far outside the field. I'm more interested in science and art than literature, and I combine things that I think can be combined in an interesting way."

Combining D'Amato's own art-world experiences with a novel about one particular "skin trade" may not seem like an obvious move for a visual artist, but D'Amato feels he has succeeded in his original intention to write "a creepy art-world story."

"I think the art world's creepy anyway," he explains, "so any story about it would be a little creepy." But why switch from visual art to the novel in the first place? Was it, I ask, something to do with Pierre Alechinsky's belief that drawing is the primitive form of writing? He laughs. "I don't know. I think that visual art is more immediate, and certainly more satisfying to do. With art you're actually *making* something, so writing isn't as much fun to do physically." And indeed, everyone who writes does it pretty much the same way: the choice of instruments (and even styles) is a lot smaller than for visual art. D'Amato agrees, with a qualification that he feels that visual art has recently become set in its ways. "There is a sort of standard in writing which makes it very easy to tell whether someone is completely inarticulate or not," he says, "whereas in contemporary art there are really no standards. And that's both the bad thing and the good thing about the field. In writing something like *Beauty* you have to put a lot of thought into characters and things, whereas in art right now you just have to deal with different topics to other artists in a visual way."

Beauty is D'Amato's first novel in both senses – he had never written any fiction before (a few non-fiction pieces had, however, found their way into the U.S. contemporary art periodical *Flash Art*). These days, a genre novelist whose first work of fiction is both published and well-received is a rarity; most succeed through the traditional short-stories-and-unpublished-novels route. "That whole short story racket bothers me," he says, somewhat alarmingly. "I'm going to do one for *Tatler*, but that's it." What is it about them that bothers him, I ask uneasily, aware that the interview is being conducted for a particularly consistent and well-respected short-story magazine. "Basically, they're just too short for anything other than the poetic type of fiction. The stuff that I'm doing is more about content, and that takes a little while to come out."

Having the ambition – or the *chutzpah* – to spend three years writing a novel with no real certainty that it will see publication could be seen as an extreme business risk, but one that, if successful, pays off in spades. After all, short stories tend not to reach the mainstream audience until the writer has established him or herself as a novelist. "That's true," D'Amato says, a little ruefully, "but that's not to say that there aren't a lot of good short-story magazines around; it's just a shame that more people aren't reading them." Indeed, but it's far easier to read and recommend a book than a story in a specific issue of a magazine, in the same way that it is easier to access and recommend a feature film on general release than an art-house short.

"There used to be a real literary-magazine culture," D'Amato continues. "You know, everyone would get *Harper's*, etc. Maybe that will change when everything's electronic, because then it'll be awfully easy to call up that stuff." And as our attention spans shorten in the age of the "soundbite," perhaps popular fiction will shrink accordingly. "Yeah, there are already some short novels around, like *Vox*. But maybe people will read more, just because the stuff's accessible. Basically, you never know how things are going to play out until they have." D'Amato thinks that the way the media are distributed will change dramatically in the next ten or twenty years, so that ultimately the previously printed word will be available on a computer information system. It's a change that D'Amato welcomes wholeheartedly. "Just imagine having a whole library at your fingertips," he enthuses.

Won't he miss books? "People who say they like books because they like the way the paper is, or whatever, are like people who say they like paintings because they like the frames. What you want is the information – you want it now, and you want it at your fingertips." He agrees that this "media revolution" may go some way to bringing the immediacy of visual art to writing. "Ideograms and symbols will be used much more within the text, and there'll be more illustration possible, so I think the difference between visual art and writing will continually break down until eventually they'll occupy the same space." I suggest that this is already happening: with everything on the computer being increasingly icon-driven, the keyboard has become merely a tool for textual input. Indeed, the mouse is so simplistic that it has only two modes of operation: "on" and "off." D'Amato likes this idea, but points out that, like me, he's strictly a keyboard man. "I'm much more IBM than Mac. I don't really need all that user-friendly stuff, like 'Gee, are you really sure you want to erase this?'"

One of D'Amato's main inspirations for *Beauty* was pop artist Jeff Koons' life-size porcelain sculpture of Michael Jackson and his pet chimp, Bubbles, the former portrayed as having totally smooth, white skin. Ute, one of the minor characters in *Beauty*, opines that "[b]eauty is looking white," a conviction that Jackson himself could perhaps be seen to agree with were he not explaining away his skin-bleaching as some kind of disease. Unlike Ute, however, D'Amato's main character embraces the newly acceptable ethnicity of supermodels like Iman and Naomi Campbell; indeed, his girlfriend and principal surgery subject is of Indian origin. I ask about D'Amato's feelings on the matter of beauty as related to skin colour, one of the few areas of the topic not covered fully – and convincingly, for D'Amato knows the subject backwards – in *Beauty*.

"The definition of beauty keeps shifting," he explains. "It's different for every century and every culture, and sometimes when you look back at old paintings, you can't imagine that

this or that would have been the standard of that time." He cites Rubens as a good, if obvious, example – many more are given in *Beauty* – before enthusiastically picking up on my earlier mention of Michael Jackson and emphasizing his importance to the book. "There's a lot of him in Minaz (the girl Jamie surgically transforms into the 'perfect' model/actress/icon), for one thing. In fact the book itself grew out of an essay I was writing (about Michael Jackson) in which I was defending his skin-bleaching because I don't think it's about being white as much as being racially indeterminate."

In other words, D'Amato believes that Jackson is trying to become as racially ambiguous as he is sexually ambiguous – non-racial and asexual. "Exactly. It's sort of a strategy of divinity. His job is to be like a Krishna figure, a kind of universal man/woman thing who could be from anywhere. Remember that his world popularity is enormous aside from the English-speaking world: he's so big in India, Asia and South America, it's just incredible." He thinks that, consciously or not, Jackson has developed a kind of transformative model of himself. "In his videos he's always changing himself or disappearing or half-covered by the hat or the glove. He's like an elf or something. Even the moonwalk is [modelled on] the way Indian gods don't touch the floor. It goes beyond just looking white." D'Amato believes that Jackson's transformative attempt to appeal to all races and cultures – which is mostly successful – is an attempt to break down existing barriers, rather than a professional master plan designed to make him more successful. "There's a lot of Jackson-bashing around for this surgery thing," he says, "but I think he's very well-intentioned."

Jamie is well-intentioned, too, in his way. Propelled more by artistic principle than the desire for financial gain, his ultimate downfall results in a dramatic change of style towards the (very) end of the book – a transformation D'Amato's editors were apparently less than happy with. Has he, I wonder, been criticized since publication for the book's horror-story ending?

"Some people felt that a more mainstream ending would have made it a different book," he says, "so that it became more about Jamie's ability – or inability – to deal with Jaishree after surgery and a lot less like a horror novel or an EC comic." Wasn't he afraid – as so many authors are – of the so-called "genre trap"? "I didn't really know that much about fiction, so I wasn't really worrying about what genre or genres it was. When I first did it I was kind of thinking of it as an Angela Carter thing, but then the first draft was more of a fairy tale, or an artistic novella; kind of *Jekyll and Hyde* or Balzac." He admits to insisting that the book should not be packaged as horror, but says that that was what the publisher – understandably – wanted anyway.

His visual art, he says, is as cross-genre as *Beauty*. "I think if I was doing something that fit an existing genre too closely it wouldn't interest me; it wouldn't be twisted enough. Anyway," he adds, "I don't really believe in all these distinctions." As in Kierkegaard's "If you label me, you negate me"? "Yeah, a lot of that applies to visual art."

Brian D'Amato

He describes his latest work as "an interactive, intellectual videogame" scheduled to appear at the new museum in New York's SoHo in May. "Interactivity is the future," he says, leading me to ask whether there is a computer interaction horror story in *his* future? "Yeah," he laughs, "that's actually what I'm working on right now! It's another mad artist thing, which is the kind of stuff I like. You know, the not-so-focused artist who does good things that have strange results." Could this be a science-fiction crossover, I ask hopefully? "Not exactly," he says, "but then there's a lot of 'mainstream-izing' going on. For instance, Stephen King has brought horror into the mainstream, whereas he would have been on a ghetto rack fifteen years ago. And that seems to be happening now with science fiction." True. Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow* could be a great science-fiction story, and J.G. Ballard continually achieves the popular audience crossover.

D'Amato doesn't read too much fiction, but names King, Koontz, Anne Rice, Whitley Strieber and Peter Straub ("the big five") among his favourite horror writers, although he also reads Ellen Datlow and Clive Barker. "I like really great fiction such as Marcel Proust's," he adds, "but what I really hate is 'Masterpiece Theatre' – stuff that's supposedly important and good, but actually designed for a middle-class audience that wants to believe it's reading good stuff. To me it has to be either really fun or risk-taking – comic books and cyberpunk – or amazing artistic stuff like James Joyce. That sort of in-between classy-cover literature where there's not really any form or innovation going on generally doesn't do it for me."

Perhaps the most disarming aspect of *Beauty* is its surprising lack of pretension – it is not designed to be literature. It is, however, meant to be contemporary – even trendy; odd, considering the fact that the idea at its heart – an artist seeking to express the ideal of beauty – is rather old-fashioned, at least in artistic terms. "It is," he asserts, "and Jamie even thinks it's old-fashioned. He's torn because he's someone who wanted to do classical painting but found that the contemporary dialectic didn't really permit that." This is most definitely D'Amato's experience emerging through Jamie's character. However, D'Amato thinks he may have found a way to make classical painting relevant. "The trick," he says, "is not just repeating the past because it was great, but repeating it because it's got something to do with the future."

D'Amato feels sure that cosmetic surgery is an inevitable, even *necessary* part of that future, despite the fact that in *Beauty* it has horrific consequences. "It's a new stage of human evolution," he says, "redefining what people are." In other words, adapting to an environment accepted as being unshakeably "look-ist." D'Amato's predictions are especially unsettling in the light of how prophetic his invented surgical methods have turned out to be. "They *are* now using this goretex, polyethylene stuff; not bonding it to the cells like it is in the book, but sculpting little paths out of goretex and putting them over the wrinkles. And that's something they weren't doing when I started the book."

This in itself is creepy enough; worse still is that D'Amato himself is considering "a little cosmetic surgery," unperturbed by how disgruntled cosmetic surgeons might deal with him in a close scalpel-and-skin interface situation. "Most of the real-life surgeons I talked to didn't mind that it All Goes Horribly Wrong," he says. "I think they thought that was normal for the kind of book it is. What they were more concerned about is that the research was right."

Now *that's* creepy.

With thanks to Brian, Ben James and James Servin.

PARAMATHEA

For a fraction of a second, Tavernier knew peace.

He stepped into the Hart-Ziemann field and was annihilated. Almost instantly, he emerged on the translation pad of the orbital station two thousand light years from Earth. He took a breath. The recollection of the brief oblivion was like a balm. In Paris, his head had clamoured with the concerted brainwaves of countless minds. Here, only a dozen personnel manned the station, with as many travellers in the lounge waiting for a shuttle to take them to the surface of Paramathea. The noise in his forebrain was muted, manageable.

The lounge was low but spacious, with circular sofas set into the floor like bunkers. The decor was crimson and sable, bearing the filigree, intertwined uncials TMC, of the Terran Mining Company: large, above the reception desk at the far end of the chamber; and small, woven into the carpet beneath his feet.

He was not scanning, or he would have picked up the feeling on entering the lounge. When he adjusted to the noise of the twenty unshielded minds, he began to listen to individual contributions, each like a separate instrument in an orchestra. As he concentrated, he detected several solos of resentment, frustration. He soon divined the reason: the shuttle was late, might not arrive for hours yet.

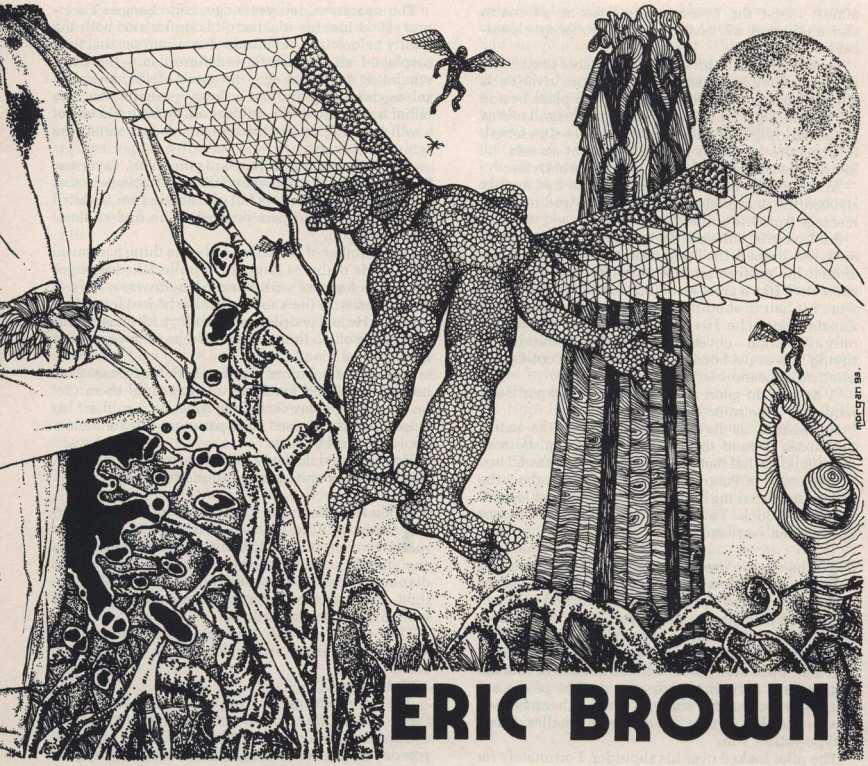
He decided to take a seat and wait patiently. He would savour the respite. No doubt, on the surface of the planet, the brainhowl would almost be as bad as it was on Earth.

He was crossing to a vacant sunken sofa when he caught, by dint of their difference to the other thoughts around him – as distinct as a piccolo against massed strings – the concern of a dark-suited TMC official chatting to a guard at reception.

Tavernier probed.

The shuttle would not be taking the travellers down to Paramathea. Just as soon as the engineers had set up a return vector to Earth, everyone in the lounge would be sent back, with profuse apologies and promises of refunds.

His interest quickened as he further read from the official's mind: there was an emergency on the planet which necessitated an almost total shutdown. Almost



Illustrations by Russell Morgan

ERIC BROWN

total, that was, but for the expected arrival of an Investigator from Earth in the next twenty-four hours.

Tavernier entered a washroom, had the sweat and dead skin removed from his face and hands, then stood beneath the depilator. As he waited, he skimmed the surface of the official's mind and contemplated a course of action.

His brother, Director of TMC mining on Paramathea, had summoned him three days ago with the cryptic message: "Guy, please come. I wish to say farewell." The communiqué was all the more mysterious for being the first and only one since they had last met almost ten years before.

What had he meant, "I wish to say farewell"? Like all telepaths, Tavernier found the written word an inadequate means of expression. It was vague, abstract, left too much unsaid. The written word was, after all, a substitution for the spoken word, and the latter – with Tavernier's ability – could be seen through, revealed for what it was, a web of lies and part-truths camouflaging intent.

I wish to say farewell.

Was his brother leaving this sector of the galaxy altogether? Had he been transferred by TMC to some sequestered region of deep space?

Or is he dying, and wishes to clear the air between us before he goes?

Tavernier closed his eyes as he probed. The official knew only what he'd been told by his superior, dirtside: that something was not right at the Delta extraction plant, that an Investigator from Earth was due soon.

Tavernier plucked the code-phrase from the man's mind, and in that second knew what he would do.

He picked up his case and left the washroom. His papers had been passed by customs at Montpelior station, and all he need do now was contact the official with the code-phrase, pass himself off as the Investigator…He wondered if his agency on Earth would bail him out if he should be caught. "A telepath, you know. Very temperamental. Can't be held responsible for his actions." He hardly gave the possibility of danger a thought. He could

almost forget the noise in his head as adrenalin sluiced through his system in an effervescent chemical tide.

And to think, but three days ago, unable to take any more, standing on the balcony of his room in the Paris Hilton, staring down fifty stories at the plaza beside the swimming pool, the chaos of the thousand minds in the building channelling up its needle-slim length to penetrate his mind like an incessant scream, he had decided to end it all with a long fall to oblivion.

And then the fax had arrived, and he had angrily stabbed the *accept* stud on the screen, and read the message from his bother.

As Tavernier crossed the lounge to the reception desk, he draped his long coat over one shoulder, altered his posture for one more commanding, and emanated, like a great actor, an aura of charisma. His wore his hair in shoulder-length ringlets, with a long Zapata moustache. His tooled-leather eye-patch – his only affectation – covered the tell-tale iris brand identifying him as psi-boosted and gave him a cut-throat, piratical appearance.

"I have it on good authority that my expertise is required," Tavernier said.

He winced as he was assaulted by the man's psychosis; beyond the cerebral maelstrom, he read the official's relief that the Investigator had turned up.

"Welcome to Paramathea Station, Mr Szabo," the official said, shaking his hand. "There's a shuttle waiting in the dock. You'll be met by Deputy Director Olsen when you land."

The shuttle dropped from the cloud cover and swooped down over the bright blue sea. Tavernier, seated behind the pilot, turned his head and stared through the sidescreen. The ocean below was so still it was either very shallow, or the planet had no moons to exert tidal pressure. He imagined that a dropped stone would create a series of concentric ripples, radiating across the surface of the sea until they reached the shore. A small red sun burned low in the sky; further up, and even smaller, was a G-type yellow sun.

The pilot looked over his shoulder. Fortunately for Tavernier, he wore a shield. Frequently these days people were becoming conscious that their minds could be read by telepaths. Shields were inexpensive. Tavernier wished that everyone in the Expansion would wear them.

"For three days," the pilot called to him, "we'll have red light. Then we swing around the dwarf and the regular sun takes over. The workers at the plant are a superstitious crew. They say that if anything can possibly go wrong at red light, it will."

Tavernier nodded. He had so far ignored the pilot's attempts at conversation. Now he said: "They might be onto something." He paused. "Have you any idea what's going on down there?"

The pilot gave him another glance. "At Delta? Well, the plant's closed down for sure. I heard – I don't know how true this is, mind – I heard there's been a few deaths down there. Murders, someone told me."

Tavernier sat back in his seat. His imposture would sooner or later, he knew, be found out – not that he was worried. He had long since passed the stage where he feared authority, or, for that matter, anything else.

The operation, ten years ago, had changed Tavernier. He'd lost his idealism, his optimism, with the ability to look into the minds of men and see that they displayed all the old flawed formulae – the overwhelming forces of ego, the greed, selfishness and self-aggrandizement. Even love, perhaps the one belief he'd carried into adulthood, he found to be but a self-deluding trick of the subconscious to satisfy the tyrant of biology.

As the shuttle mach'd towards the Delta, Tavernier felt the pull of the planet and the inevitable pain that landing would bring. He fell into depression, recalled the times over the past year when he had contemplated suicide.

On a number of occasions only one thing had saved his life. He'd almost jumped, or pulled the trigger, or sliced his forearm with a razor lengthwise – only to be flooded with the knowledge that he had left things undone. He had people to say goodbye to, possessions to dispose of, so that there would be no record, after his death, of his life.

Significantly, before leaving Earth for Paramathea, he had contacted his acquaintances, told them that he was going away for a long time; he'd sold off his belongings and leased his apartment, said a melancholy farewell to Paris.

He wondered if, should TMC learn of his duplicity, they would execute him as an industrial spy.

To his left, in the distance over the sea, Tavernier noticed a dozen swirling specks. At this remove it was difficult to make them out in any detail, or to judge their size. Only their long, diaphanous wings were distinct, reflecting the sunlight. He wondered if they were this planet's equivalent of birds, or dragon-flies.

The pilot noticed his interest. "They're the 'theans," he said. "Live in the jungles of the coastal areas."

"Intelligent?"

The pilot shrugged. "Not much is known about them. There's no contact between us and them."

Tavernier watched until the flying creatures receded in the wake of the shuttle, became once again tiny specks in the ruddy sky.

He looked ahead to the meeting with his brother and wondered if he had changed. Ten years his senior, Francois had always been the practical one of the pair, the pragmatist – even, Tavernier smiled at the thought, the cynic. He, himself, had been the idealist, the dreamer, the youth with artistic pretensions and the heady notion that art, and only art, could save the world by showing humanity the truth about itself.

Francois had jibed him endlessly, sometimes with a seriousness which verged on ridicule, at others with an almost bantering affection which recognized in his younger brother that to which he, Francois, had once aspired. Francois had graduated as a xeno-geologist, worked off-planet on various colony worlds, joined TMC in his early thirties and worked his way up though the corporate echelons until attaining his present elevated position.

Tavernier, for his part, had drifted. He'd tried painting, sculpting, playing the sax and the guitar in several Paris jazz bands – all the time looking for something which, though he never admitted as much to his

brother, he called enlightenment and love, preferably to be found in a woman tuned to the particular wavelength of his unique psyche... The months had turned to years, and Tavernier had found neither enlightenment nor love.

Then, when undergoing a routine medical, he had checked out psi-positive, and impulsively, without giving much thought to the consequences, he had jumped at the offer of a million credits for the initial neuro-surgery, and a hundred thousand a year to work for the largest investigative agency on Earth.

Tavernier had changed, after that.

He'd met his brother only once after the operation, when Francois was taking Earth leave from mining the asteroids of some far-flung star system. They should have got on well together. In the year since his cut, Tavernier had come to realize that much of what his brother had claimed, about the demerits of the human race, was true. But when Tavernier looked into the raging storm of his brother's mind, he saw not the world-weary pessimism he had expected, not a despair born of philosophical investigation into the human condition, but a glib, self-pitying apathy, a disregard of others which was the result of his inability to regard himself with the slightest esteem. He was that most pathetic of all cynics, the man unable to see that his hatred of the world had its basis in his hatred of himself.

On looking into his brother's mind, Tavernier had experienced guilt. On some deep, subconscious level, Francois loathed himself because as a child and young adult he had never received from his father the affection and recognition he felt he deserved. Their father had reserved all his love for his younger son, Guy, in whom he saw himself reflected, and through whom he hoped to achieve some degree of vicarious artistic success.

Tavernier had tried to tell his brother this, tried to initiate the healing process, but Francois would accept none of Tavernier's insights, truths which peeled away the layers of his self-deception and left him exposed. They had parted after less than an afternoon together, and had communicated not once until three days ago.

The coastline came into view on the horizon, extending left and right for as far as the eye could see. A thin margin of white sand was backed by a dense panoply of vegetation. Inland, obscured by heat haze, a range of indigo mountains rose jagged against the ruby light of the sky.

The pilot banked the shuttle and they paralleled the shoreline. Tavernier felt a dull ache in his head which signalled the approach of humanity – but it was not as bad as he'd expected. On Earth, the pain of an approaching city would have been intense, a throbbing migraine. This was so mild he could practically ignore it. He wondered if the personnel at the Delta plant constituted the only humans on the planet.

Below, the coastline broke up, became a series of jungle-covered spits of land between rivers which flowed into the sea. After five kilometres, the extended islands gave way to a wide expanse of sandflats, skeined silver with shallow ocean.

Ahead, on the far side of the estuary, the jungle had been cleared and the long islands were tamed and terraformed. They had immaculate lawns, swimming pools, split-level villas and domes. Each island was connected to the next by a road bridge.

The shuttle came down on the landing area of the largest island. The pilot pointed out a group of people on the edge of the tarmac. "Tall guy's Deputy-Director Olsen," he said. "Good luck."

Tavernier shrugged off his coat, stowed it between the handles of his case, and jumped down from the hatch of the shuttle.

Olsen waved, stepped across the tarmac to meet him. He was tall, severely Nordic in appearance, with a blonde crew-cut and features excoriated by the attention of the suns. He wore cream-coloured slacks and a brilliant white shirt bearing TMC insignia on the breast pocket.

He was flanked by two uniformed militia-men toting heavy, nasty-looking projectile repeaters.

"Mr Szabo! You don't know how glad I am you're here. We weren't sure how soon you'd make it – I had visions of having to hang on for another twenty-four hours."

They shook hands. Olsen, Tavernier realized with ambivalence, was shielded. His thoughts were scrambled, an unreadable miasma of confused emotions. On one hand, Tavernier was spared a direct confrontation with the man's deepest secrets and psychoses. On the other, he was denied access to instant information about what was going on down here.

The militia-men stared past him with blank expressions. They too were shielded.

Olsen ushered him across the tarmac. "After you. I have an air-car waiting. I don't intend wasting any of your valuable time. We'll go straight to the plant."

They climbed into a sleek, electric-blue flier, accompanied by the guards. Olsen piloted them down the coast, island hopping. From not one of the dwellings down below – domes, villas and A-frames – did Tavernier detect any signs of life.

He closed his eyes, scanned: a few points of warmth down the coast, perhaps five kilometres away, but that was all. Olsen noticed his puzzlement.

"The first deaths in the plant occurred during the night shift. Five men and women in the drill-head... they just – well, you'll soon see for yourself. A lot of expensive machinery was also destroyed. Then this morning, just before we'd decided to evacuate the plant, another seven in the control room were attacked – or whatever." Olsen shrugged. "Word soon got back to the families on the Delta. I thought it best to order a total evacuation. I shuttled the entire population off-planet to a ship we have in orbit." He glanced at Tavernier. "I know it might seem a drastic measure, Mr Szabo – but I'd rather be safe than sorry. And after what I saw this morning..."

Tavernier wondered why such an emergency was being handled by the Deputy-Director, and not by his brother. He thought it politic not to ask: no doubt he would find out in time.

The plant, far from the sprawling, ugly steel structure Tavernier had been expecting, was a circular white building set into the greensward of a headland, with a series of silver windows around its circumference and a tall tower rising from its hub. Black, metalled roads approached it through landscaped gardens.

They landed in a car-park before the low-slung, single-storey building. Perhaps two dozen militia-men, arms at the ready, stood before the sliding glass doors.

"This is the control area," Olsen said as he escorted Tavernier up the steps. "The bulk of the plant is underground, in shafts and galleries sunk kilometres into the planet's surface. Extraction could be performed in no other way."

Yet more militia-men occupied the plant's interior. They marched Tavernier and the Deputy-Director along white-walled, carpeted corridors, with potted palms and works of art in niches.

Despite the shields that the militia wore, Tavernier detected uneasiness, apprehension in the minds of the men. He realized that his palms were sweating.

They arrived at a circular, railed gallery which looked out over a precision-drilled shaft dwindling into the planet's depths. Machinery and hanks of cable were set into the side of the shaft, and, peering down and following the perspective of the bore hole, Tavernier experienced a dizzying rush of vertigo.

Overhead, positioned above the shaft like a great stopper, was a silver, cone-shaped machine, faceted with viewscreens. Gantries and ladders approached it from the surrounding gallery.

"No doubt you'd like to see the casualties," Olsen said, and led the way to a foot-bridge before Tavernier could reply.

Guards accompanied them fore and aft across the inclined bridge and into the drill-head. Olsen paused before a circular hatch in the floor. The guards stood to attention, their body-language suggesting unease.

Olsen instructed a guard to open the hatch, and as the man complied, kneeling to spin the wheel-lock, Olsen explained: "The 'head was two kilometres underground when it happened. Control was in radio contact with the miners – all they heard was the screams. Then silence. The 'head was brought to the surface... A few hours later, the same thing happened to the occupants of the control room." Olsen pointed through a viewscreen to a glass-fronted room across the gallery.

The guard held open the hatch.

"I thought it best to leave the bodies where they were until you arrived," Olsen said grimly.

They rode the elevator plate into the chamber.

The room was small, funnel-shaped, with a small floor area and sloping walls banked with controls. Swivel chairs stood before screens and terminals. The walls of the drill-head had been slashed vertically like the sides of a Chinese lantern, so that the darkness of the bore hole outside could be seen. Control panels and computer terminals were split like ripe fruit. Likewise, the occupants of the chamber had been sliced into segments where they sat. Many of the seats contained only the lower halves of men and women. The upper torsos were wedged where they had fallen, across consoles, on the floor – one torso, incongruously, still clung to the ladder leading to the emergency hatch.

Olsen was regarding Tavernier with a hopeful expression.

He realized, then, what kind of investigator Olsen had called in – what kind of telepath Szabo must be. For a number of hours after death, the human brain still gave out signals – tenuous and weak, to be sure – but signals nevertheless: short-term memories and recollections of events immediately before death. A cadre of telepaths, unique men and women who'd undergone delicate surgery and arduous training, specialized in corpse-reading.

Tavernier closed his eyes as he imagined the hell of reading the dying thoughts of a corpse.

Eagerly, Olsen asked: "Can you pick up anything?"

Tavernier opened his eyes, stared at Olsen. He remembered himself. He approached a corpse, knelt. There was surprisingly little blood. The wounds were cauterized. He'd seen similar injuries on bodies dismembered by mono-molecular filaments, but never before had he seen *machinery* lacerated quite so efficiently.

"Were these..." He did a quick calculation – "five people down here alone? Someone couldn't have come down with them, done this and escaped when the 'head reached the top?"

Olsen was frowning. "Absolutely not. They hatch was sealed from inside. Why... is that what you pick up?"

"It all happened so quickly," Tavernier said. "They didn't know what was happening. Two, three seconds, and it was all over. They didn't see a thing."

Olsen nodded. "In that case, if you're finished in here, perhaps you'd care to view the control room?"

They climbed from the chamber, crossed the catwalk to the gallery. The guards escorted them to the control room. For the sake of appearances Tavernier entered the room and examined the remains of the technicians, butchered in an identical fashion to the miners. As in the drill-head, machinery here had also been destroyed.

"I'm sorry," he told Olsen minutes later. "Nothing."

Olsen nodded. "Perhaps you'd like to look around the plant? You never know..." he trailed off hopefully.

For the next hour, Olsen gave him a guided tour of the multi-level construct, explaining the extraction process in overly technical detail.

At one point Tavernier asked: "But what precisely is it that you extract, Mr Olsen?"

Olsen hesitated. "Ah... well. As a matter of fact, that is supposed to be priority intelligence, TMC officials only, and all that – but I suppose I'll be giving nothing away if I tell you that we're drilling for a fluid metal with properties similar to mercury." He went on to tell Tavernier that, treated with certain additives, the metal formed an alloy ten times stronger than the toughest metals known to man. And the planet had a vast, untapped reserve of the stuff right under their feet.

At last they emerged into the sultry, ruby sunlight. The guards seemed appreciably relieved to be out of the plant.

"I know you've hardly had time to catch your breath since arriving," Olsen said, "But I think the next port of call should be the Director's villa."

Tavernier nodded. "I'm looking forward to meeting Director Tavernier."

Olsen was staring at him, an expression like surprise on his sun-scorched features. "I thought you'd

been briefed with the information I beamed to Earth?" he said.

"Unfortunately, I set off before it reached me –" Tavernier stopped, sensing something in the Deputy-Director's attitude.

Olsen was shaking his head. "Director Tavernier died last night," he said, "in somewhat peculiar circumstances."

His brother had kept a private residence fifty kilometres south of the Delta plant. Olsen piloted the air-car down the coast, and Tavernier sat back and stared out across the ocean. The G-type sun had already slipped below the horizon, but the red dwarf lingered, turning the clouds above the ocean into a flurry of blood-red and orange banners. Olsen had informed him, before realizing that Tavernier was in no mood for small talk, that the dwarf would remain on the horizon for another four hours, before it set and brought on the short, eight-hour night.

Tavernier had expertly concealed his shock at the news of Francois' death. As a telepath, he often had to hide his reactions to what he discovered in people's minds. He probably should have asked Olsen about the death – a *bona fide* investigator would have – but Tavernier had had no inclination to learn the gory details: he would find out soon enough. Now all he wanted was to be left alone with his thoughts.

He felt the cold weight of regret settle in his chest. He realized that he would never again share experiences with Francois, never have the chance to make amends for what had happened in the past, or apologize.

He recalled Francois' simple message: *Guy, please come. I wish to say farewell...*

Had Francois known that he was about to die? Could he, Tavernier speculated, have taken his own life? Perhaps Francois had wished to clear the air between them, but had assumed after three days that his brother had ignored his message?

He wondered if his brother's death was in some way linked to those at the plant, even though it occurred before them?

As the Director of TMC on Paramathea, Francois had enjoyed a suitably luxurious estate. It occupied a series of jungle-covered shelves where the central plateau stepped down to the coast, a dozen interconnected villas and chalets set on prominences beside waterfalls and lagoons overlooking the ocean. Olsen set his air-car down outside the highest villa. Tavernier noticed half a dozen guards stationed around the extensive gardens.

They climbed out and Olsen steered him across a long, sloping lawn to where a railed observation deck afforded a view of a geometrically perfect waterfall pouring itself into a circular sink ten metres below.

"Director Tavernier was in the habit of putting in six days at the plant, and then taking three off – though recently he'd often spend a fourth day down here."

Tavernier glanced across at Olsen. "Did you notice any difference in him recently?"

"No... Well, to be honest he did seem a little weary of work, as if it no longer interested him. A couple of months ago he dismissed his valet, said he could look after himself."

"You don't think he could have been contemplating...?" Tavernier began.

"Oh –" Olsen said, "– he didn't commit suicide, if that's what you're thinking – though we did wonder initially if he'd taken his own life. We are sure now that he was murdered."

"But not like..." Tavernier made a vague gesture up the coast in the direction of the plant.

"He wasn't cut to pieces, Mr Szabo," Olsen said, "though that might have been a more merciful end."

He gestured for Tavernier to move along the semi-circular rail. They boarded an elevator plate. Olsen thumbed the controls and they dropped sedately down the side of the cliff-face.

Tavernier peered down. They were approaching a long lawned garden beside the lagoon. Alien flowers, trees no taller than a man but with the tortured delicacy of bonsai, and sculptures on pedestals decorated the manicured lawn. Directly below was a small white marquee. Two armed TMC guards stood to attention outside. As Tavernier watched, a small, bald-headed man ducked from the tent, consulted with a guard and peered up at the descending elevator plate. Olsen waved.

"Dr Karpasian," he explained. "He's carried out a few post-mortem investigations. As with the others, we thought it wise not to remove the corpse until you'd had a chance to scan it."

Tavernier nodded, keeping his expression neutral.

Introductions were made outside the marquee, Olsen informing Dr Karpasian that "Mr Szabo" was the finest reader-of-the-dead on Earth. Tavernier allowed Olsen and the Doctor to enter before him, and then hesitated.

There had been a time, fifteen years ago when Tavernier was in his early twenties, when he'd got on well with Francois. They had lived in Paris, Tavernier playing sax around the bars of Montparnasse, Francois taking extended leave between colonial postings. They'd met once a week and toured the bars and the jazz clubs – their differences forgotten in the pleasant bonhomie that occasionally unites brothers.

Tavernier experienced a flash of rain-slicked Paris streets, his brother posing against a lamp-post like Alain Delon...

He entered the tent.

A white sheet covered the body. Another, stained with blood, projected at right angles from the midriff of the corpse, concealing something not so bulky.

Tavernier knelt. Hesitantly he folded back the sheet to reveal his brother's head. Francois' expression was almost beatific, eyes closed, lips lifted in a slight smile.

Tavernier reached out and touched Francois' thinning hair.

He was glad he did not have the ability of a reader-of-the-dead, glad that his brother's dying thoughts were denied him.

Olsen cleared his throat with a hint of impatience. Tavernier, remembering himself, looked up and shook his head. "I'm sorry – nothing. He's been dead too long. If I'd caught him a few hours earlier..."

Olsen nodded, tight-lipped.

Dr Karpasian knelt and drew the sheet the full length of the body, but left the second sheet in place. Francois wore a white suit, stained with patches of

blood. His torso had a bloated, boneless appearance.

Then Tavernier noticed the arms. They were broken, folded behind his back and bound with what looked like a length of liana. Tied among the fingers of the left hand, so that he appeared to be grasping it, was a huge, ripe flower-head, its red petals decaying and filling the tent with a high, sickly-sweet stench.

As if to deny that his brother had been murdered, Tavernier said: "He might still have done this to himself – loosely tied his arms..."

Olsen was shaking his head. "The arms are broken in a dozen places. They were fractured before he fell. There's no way he could have tied his hands together like this."

"Also," Karpasian put in, "the degree of his injuries do not correspond to those he should have sustained had he fallen from the observation deck. It's less than ten metres from there to here, and yet every bone in his body is shattered, his every organ ruptured. The impact was such that his abdomen split open..." He indicated the second sheet.

Tavernier glanced up. "Then what...?"

"We have two theories," Olsen said. "Either he fell from a greater height, perhaps from an air-car, and landed here. Or he fell to his death elsewhere and for some reason his body was brought here."

"But who might have wanted him dead?"

"No one, absolutely no one. He was a hard taskmaster and kept himself to himself, but he made no enemies." Olsen shrugged. "He came down here five days ago, alone. He didn't leave the estate and he had no visitors – the remote sensors on the perimeter fencing would have detected and recorded visitors or intruders, and his leaving –"

"Then how might he have fallen from an air-car – what about his own?"

"He was chauffeured down here, and the air-car returned to the Delta."

"In other words..." Tavernier stared at his brother, "you're saying that this is impossible."

Olsen exchanged a glance with Karpasian. "It happened, Mr Szabo. We just haven't been able to come up with a suitable scenario to account for *how* it happened." He paused. "We were hoping that you might have better luck."

They left the marquee and stood together in the garden, watching the sun ignite the clouds on the horizon. Great insects, unlike anything Tavernier had seen before, flitted through the air. The night was heavy with the scent of blooms, recalling the stifling reek within the tent.

Tavernier strode down the garden, alerted by something he had seen on a pedestal. He halted before it, stared in disbelief. The old-fashioned, second-rate bronze casting portrayed a pair of dolphins leaping from the sea, the smaller dolphin above the larger. Against the rufous sunset, they appeared almost beautiful. He had finished the piece in his mid-twenties, and had experienced a thrill of success when the gallery where it was on exhibition had reported that an anonymous buyer had purchased it for twice the asking price...

"Mr Szabo?"

Tavernier started. "What? Oh – sorry. Miles away."

"Perhaps you'd care to freshen up before dinner," Olsen said. "We'll be staying in a guest house on the estate. I have a chef preparing a few Paramathean delicacies."

They ate in silence on the verandah of the building allocated to Tavernier, a synthetic-timber A-frame overlooking the ocean. The meal might have been excellent, but Tavernier had little appetite. He could not help but dwell on what had happened to his brother, how terrible his final seconds must have been... Then he recalled Francois' message, and his thoughts were thrown into confusion.

They were on the coffee – or rather a sharp-tasting local equivalent – when Tavernier noticed, perhaps a hundred metres away above the massed lobes of the tree-tops, a host of flitting figures: the 'theans, as the pilot had called them. When he had seen them earlier, at a distance, he had assumed they were some form of dragon-fly. Now, seen closer to, he realized that he had been wrong.

They were small, humanoid figures, golden-skinned with great, tear-drop-shaped wings, each one perhaps twice the length of their bodies. He counted two dozen 'theans over the jungle, performing an intricately choreographed aerial ballet. They shot higher into the air two by two, performed a series of symmetrical, mirror-image manoeuvres – loops and pikes and crazy head-over-heel spins – then dropped to just above the tree cover to allow the next couple centre stage. The effect was that of an exhilarating, never-ending fountain.

Tavernier leaned forward, taken as much by the creatures themselves, their golden skins and diaphanous wings glowing in the last light of day, as with their aerobatic performance.

"I didn't realize they were humanoid," he said to Olsen.

The Deputy Director nodded, watching the 'theans speculatively over his coffee bowl. "Humanoid, but not much more intelligent than Terran apes."

"Do we have much contact with them?"

Olsen glanced at him. "None at all. They're flighty creatures – no pun intended. They avoid us wherever possible. The original exploration team classified them as C3s, sentient primitives."

Olsen suggested they sample a port beamed from Earth the week before. Tavernier was sipping his drink, watching the antics of the 'theans, when suddenly, as if startled, they ceased their performance, trod air and glanced over their shoulders as one. The visual effect, combining grace and circumspection, was childish, almost fairy-like.

They dived for the cover of the tree-tops and disappeared.

Seconds later, Tavernier heard the first distant beating of a helicopter's rotor blades.

"Ah, that should be the ambulance," Olsen said. "I authorized the removal of the body, now that you've had the opportunity to examine it. The Director requested that he be buried on Paramathea."

Tavernier looked up. "When was this?"

"Oh, about a month ago. He happened to mention it in passing."

Tavernier nodded, sipped his port. *Please come, Guy,* Francois had requested three days ago. *I wish to say farewell.*

The helicopter hove into sight, lowered itself to a landing pad further up the slope and out of sight from where they sat.

Tavernier said: "Has the Director's wife been informed?"

If Olsen thought the question odd, he gave no sign. "I have someone attempting to trace Ms Tavernier, though they have been separated for five years."

"I had no idea," Tavernier began, then continued quickly: "You see, I read a residual memory in his mind, one of the affection he felt for his wife."

Olsen opened his mouth in a silent, "Ah." He smiled. "Ms Tavernier wanted children, you see – but the Director didn't. He confided to me that he had no wish to perpetuate the mistakes of his father."

Tavernier nodded, "I see." He stared out across the ocean, then asked: "I don't suppose he ever mentioned any other members of his family?"

Olsen frowned. "Is it important?"

"It could very well be. I need to build up as complete a psychological profile of the Director as I can."

Olsen nodded. "As a matter of fact, he spoke of his brother occasionally."

Tavernier was aware of his increased pulse. He raised his eyebrows at Olsen.

"A younger brother – he said he was an artist on Earth. I got the impression that Francois looked up to him, respected him. He regretted not keeping in contact. I think he felt he was responsible for some kind of rift between them." Olsen hesitated. "I'm sorry. I know very little about the Director's personal life. He was a very private person."

Tavernier nodded. He wondered how his brother had filled his time over the past few years, since the separation from his wife. What did he do with all his free time down here? Tavernier felt the pain of regret that he had failed to re-establish contact with Francois. He wondered if his brother had spent his last few years in solitude.

He said: "After his wife left him... the Director had no-one else?"

"A woman, you mean?" Olsen regarded him, as if suspicious. "As a matter of fact, he did have a... let's say a certain liaison over the past six months. He didn't want it known, but there were rumours."

"Was this woman... how to put it delicately? Not of the same social standing as the Director?"

Olsen smiled. "You could say that," he said.

That night, Tavernier lay awake for a long time on his bed in the apex of the A-frame. The far wall was a great triangular window, giving a view of the massed stars in the sky, the horizon still tinged with crimson streamers. He tried to piece together the events of the last day or two, draw some conclusions from what he had seen and what Olsen had told him – and from Francois' cryptic message. But the more he thought about it, the more the mystery deepened.

Unable to sleep, he considered his own situation. Sooner or later the real Investigator would turn up, and he would be revealed as an impostor. Tavernier thought it wise to tell Olsen the truth about himself before that happened. He would explain the situation, say that when he arrived on the station he sensed that his brother was in danger, or worse, and had to find

out more. He would offer to investigate the incidents, both here and at the plant, for no agency fee, and rely on Olsen's better nature not to have him arrested.

He would come clean first thing the following morning.

Perhaps thirty minutes later, as he was drifting into sleep, he became aware of a tapping sound from the far end of the room; a light, insistent tattoo, like fingernails on glass. He sat up.

There was someone crouching on the verandah, hand raised. Tavernier saw, on either side of the creature's slim golden body, long wings scintillating in the starlight like stained-glass windows. He rolled from bed, draping a sheet around him, and crossed the room. He might have been apprehensive about approaching an alien in any other circumstances, but this was quite different. For one thing, there was something almost appealing, even desperate, about the creature's posture; for another, its mind issued no sense of threat. Tavernier scanned and encountered not the tortured brainhowl of a human psyche, but a calm opaque warmth. It was like trying to understand alien music whose sense of rhythm and melody could not be grasped by the human mind, but which was nevertheless strangely enchanting.

Tavernier slid open the glass door, and the 'thean skittered away from him in fright, wings a blur of motion as it danced on tip-toe.

Its face was nearly human, composed of sharply angled planes and ridges which made it almost pretty. Seen closer to, its golden skin was a covering of tiny platelets, like scales. Its wings whirred in the warm night air, maintaining its position centimetres above the floor.

It spoke, surprising him.

"Tav-ernier?"

"What do you want?" He scanned, but its thoughts were flashing and elusive, like a shoal of tiny silver fish.

"Your bro-ther said you would come." The creature spoke as if it were playing a harmonica, the whispery words alternately sucked in and blown out.

"Francois?" Tavernier tried to wrestle with the concept that his brother had had contact with the aliens.

"We –" an in-drawn breath, "must," blown out, "show," in again, "you...the," Then the 'thean said something like, "*Thee'leean.*"

Tavernier shook his head. "I don't understand."

"Your bro-ther said – we must show you. To-morrow. In for-est one kilo-metre south of here. Clear-ing. We meet."

"I don't know. What about Olsen?"

"Tell him – you want to see – clear-ing where," the alien closed its eyes, lids nictating eerily, then came up with the word, "where your bro-ther *created*."

Tavernier echoed the word. "Created...Created what?"

The 'thean turned its hand in a beautiful delicate gesture, breathing a word he did not understand. "We meet you – mid-day. We will deal with Olsen, then take you – ex-plain ev-ery-thing."

"What do you mean? Explain what?"

"Your bro-ther, the deaths. Ev-ery-thing."

Tavernier was overcome with the need to know *everything* this minute, not tomorrow. "I can come with you now," he said.

"Im-possible. Guards all around. You would not es-cape."

"Then how did you –" he began, and realized the stupidity of the question.

"To-mor-row," the 'thean said, lifting vertically from the deck with a rapid, circular blur of wings, slim golden legs hanging, "we meet."

Tavernier watched the alien rise into the air, ethereal against the starfield, until it was lost from sight – and he recalled then Olsen's opinion that the 'theans were no more than intelligent apes.

The following morning, as the two men ate a simple breakfast of fruit, bread and coffee on the verandah, Tavernier decided against telling Olsen that he was not Investigator Szabo. He reasoned that if he wished to keep his rendezvous with the alien at midday, then it would be best to maintain his deception.

The red dwarf was rising over the peaks of the interior mountains, filling the eastern sky with its bloody glow. Tavernier looked out across the jungle. There was no sign of any 'theans sporting in the air.

Across the table, Olsen's shielded mind was a scrambled imbroglio of muted hates and desires, guilts and prejudices. Tavernier could pick up no specific thoughts, thankfully, only an abstract confusion. He could not help but contrast this with the alien's cerebral emanations of the night before.

Olsen indicated at the red dwarf. "We have short days here on Paramathea. In another..." he glanced at his watch, "seven hours, darkness will descend. Any idea who you'd like to meet today? We'd better be moving soon."

Tavernier nodded. "It would make my job considerably easier if you and all the other TMC personnel could dispense with your shields for an hour or two today."

Olsen regarded him, his expression neutral. At last he gestured, summarily wiped his hands on a napkin. "Ah...I'm afraid that's impossible, Mr Szabo. My colleagues have knowledge of sensitive operations and working procedures here on Paramathea, and it would be prejudicial to the interests of TMC if an outside agent, such as yourself, was privy to such intelligence."

Concealing his impatience, Tavernier nodded.

"Perhaps this afternoon you might care to meet some of my workers at the plant?" Olsen suggested.

Tavernier felt like asking what good might come from such a meeting, if the minds of everyone he met were shielded. Instead he said: "Before that, I wonder if I might take a look around here by myself?"

Olsen raised an eyebrow.

Tavernier explained. "I'd like to visit the clearing where the Director...*created*..."

Ten years as a telepath had taught him to correlate facial expressions, or their lack, with the thoughts behind them. He could tell by the sudden tightening of Olsen's lips, the dilation of his pupils, that his request had touched a sore point.

Casually, Olsen asked: "How do you know about this, Mr Szabo?"

Tavernier had expected the question. "It was one of the few remaining memories I was able to dredge from the Director's mind last night."

Olsen gave him a long, penetrating look. "Isn't it odd that you should detect this but not the memory of his death?"

"Not at all. The human mind is a mysterious organ. In many cases the oldest memories, or the memories of things held most dear, are the last to diminish. Sometimes the trauma of death wipes the brain of short-term recollections."

Olsen shrugged. "I'd rather you didn't venture into the jungle, Mr Szabo."

"For what reason?"

"Well, considering the events of the past day or two..."

"If I am to comprehensively conduct my investigations –" Tavernier began angrily.

Olsen raised a hand. "Very well. But I insist that I accompany you, along with armed guards."

One hour later they left the A-frame and made their way down a precipitous series of steps – some carved into the rockface itself, others constructed of timber over chasms and brimming lagoons. Guards accompanied them, leading the way and bringing up the rear. The air was humid and damp, freighted with the cloying scent of huge, sousaphone blooms. Cries and calls, sometimes so loud that Olsen's running commentary could not be heard, issued from the surrounding jungle.

"Why not take the air-car?" Tavernier asked.

"It's not far," Olsen said. "The way is made easy by the walk-way the Director constructed himself. He took me to the clearing once or twice before..." He hesitated.

"Yes?"

"I was about to say, before he became obsessive about the place."

Tavernier glanced at the Deputy-Director. They were walking side by side along a boardwalk a metre above the jungle floor. Overhead, a canopy of vegetation occluded both suns, but for the occasional spear of red light.

"He spent more and more time in the clearing," Olsen went on. "Sometimes he refused to return at night. He'd camp out here for days on end, cooking his own food, wearing nothing but his shorts. That's how he came to fire his valet – Richards protested once too often."

"What did he do in the clearing? What exactly did he create?"

Olsen frowned, chin tucked into his chest, contemplating the planks beneath his feet. "I'm not at all sure what you'd call them. Carvings, land-sculptures. They are... very alien," he finished, in a one of voice which acknowledged that his description hardly did justice to what the Director had created.

At last, after walking for what seemed more than just one kilometre, they arrived at a breach in the trees. Rouge sunlight occupied the lacuna *en bloc*. A curious stillness filled the air. It seemed that the wildlife in the area desisted from calling out quite so loudly, as if in respect. The first guard crossed the clearing and stood, weapon at the ready, while the guard remained on the stairs which debouched into the clearing. Tavernier and Olsen stepped down and strolled across the even, mossy surface.

Tavernier stared about him in amazement.

"It's rumoured," whispered Olsen, "that this was an ancient burial ground of the 'theans."

Ranged around the clearing, on pedestals and free-standing, were a series of carvings which rocked Tavernier not so much by the quality of their construction – some were crude and amateurish, others accomplished but lacking polish – as by the originality of their conception. They had an unearthly quality, an eeriness which affronted human sensibilities for being clearly inspired by alien influences. Some were naturalistic – a 'thean in flight, a native quadruped; others abstract. Just as Terran artists sculpted huge, rounded masses using the human form as a starting point, so Francois Tavernier had carved lithe loops and sprays of white timber representing something, Tavernier was sure, that only a 'thean mind might truly comprehend.

There were about thirty carvings in the clearing. Tavernier walked among them, dazed and a little in awe at his brother's accomplishments. Olsen accompanied him. They paused side by side, staring up at a piece in the very centre of the clearing. It rose to the height of three men, a series of thrusting spears and arches and hooks – at once fluid, like some kind of gelid liquid splash petrified at the height of its rise, and yet solid, as if the timber from which it was fashioned might in the next second, due to some fabulous chemical change, deliquesce in a golden shower and spend itself on the dry jungle floor.

It suggested, to Tavernier, the vitality of life – the flux from one stage of existence to the next.

He looked at Olsen. "He must have studied the 'theans, their culture and history – how else could he have...?"

Olsen cleared his throat. "He was very interested in the natives," he said. "Over the years he immersed himself in the study of their religious belief."

"Study? You don't mean from books? Surely he had first-hand contact with them?"

Olsen seemed ill-at-ease. At last he said: "Last night, when I mentioned that the Director had had an affair..." he trailed off.

"What?" Tavernier very nearly grasped Olsen's arm and shook him.

"For the past six months," Olsen said, "the Director spent an increasing amount of time with a 'thean female."

Tavernier moved away from Olsen, as if he needed space in which to absorb this information. He walked around the central carving, staring up at its arching complexity. It seemed to him, now, to express some kind of human longing to love, become one with, or simply to merge with the sensibilities of, the 'thean race.

Tavernier turned, a dozen questions on his lips.

At that second, Olsen cried out.

He slumped to the moss-covered floor, the shaft of a long dart projecting from his back. Tavernier looked across the clearing. One guard was bent double over the timber hand-rail of the steps, and the other fell to the ground as he watched. Before he could begin to react, three aliens, swift as wind made flesh, swooped to his side.

"All speed," said one in its rapid breathe-in, breathe-out fashion. "We must hurry. They will soon be af-ter us. Come, this way."

And before Tavernier had time to protest he was running with them from the clearing and into the jungle.

They sprinted, it seemed, for hours. They followed an animal run through the close-growing trees, their way relatively free from undergrowth. The sunlight falling through the tree-tops high overhead moved from the vertical as the short afternoon progressed. One 'thean – the one which had summoned him last night? – remained with him, while the other two took flight and flittered through the foliage close by. Their minds were discernible as distinct foci of warmth, along with others which Tavernier detected at a greater distance. He guessed that there were hundreds of aliens in the vicinity, a flying gallery of spectators monitoring their progress. Curiously, Tavernier felt as though a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders. He was relieved that he had at last shed his deception. He felt as though he had gone over to the side of the 'theans – for something in the alien's urgency in hurrying him away suggested that they were in opposition to the occupying forces of the TMC. He recalled what the 'thean had said last night about explaining everything.

Their way began to tend upwards; through rents in the foliage, Tavernier glimpsed the towering blue flanks of the central mountains. They were now in the jungle-covered foothills, his brother's estate far behind. He wondered if TMC had sent out a search party – if they considered his disappearance a cause for concern – and, if so, how sophisticated their methods of detection might be.

They came to the treeless crown of a foothill, the first of many as the terrain concertinaed towards the mountains. His 'thean guide turned and laid a hand on his arm. The other two spiralled down to land with delicate precision nearby.

"We rest," said the first alien. "Eat, drink. We are ma-king good time."

"Where are you taking me?"

"To the *thee-leean*," said the 'thean, repeating the word the alien had spoken last night.

Tavernier did his best to pronounce it, shook his head.

The alien regarded him with large eyes, all brown pupil. "You will know when we arrive," it said. "First, at sun-set, you will ob-serve *thar-hassi*. There." The alien indicated the peak of the next foothill. "Now, we eat."

One of the aliens distributed the fleshy kernels of an almond-shaped gourd. The nuts were small and white, bitter and unpleasant to the taste. They drank a milk-like fluid from a heart-shaped seed pod, thick and warm, though, after several hours without liquid, refreshing.

Sooner than Tavernier would have wished, two 'theans rose into the air and his guide stood, beckoning him to follow. He stared at the next peak, judging it to be at least five kilometres distant, and he did not relish the thought of such a journey in the sweltering heat.

After jogging for ten minutes, however, some property of the kernels or the fluid began to take effect. He surged on an adrenalin kick, felt his pulse quicken and his breath come more easily. The ache in his legs ceased and the knifing pain in his diaphragm gave way to a feeling of well-being.

They climbed the incline of the foothill at speed.

As they went, Tavernier became aware of more and more 'theans closing in, joining them from every direction. A hundred, two hundred spheres of warmth floated through the air, their joint destination the clearing at the crest of the hill. He peered through the foliage overhead, caught the odd, fleeting glimpse of a golden being like something divine in the dying sunlight.

He wondered if he was the first human to attend a *thar-hassi*, whatever it was...

By the time they reached the canted clearing, perhaps a hundred aliens were crouching on the grass, their wings folded behind their backs like hands placed together in prayer. They were gathered on three sides of the natural banking, like an amphitheatre, with a semi-circular area below them left clear. From the massed 'theans there emanated a sensation like warmth, like music, like a pleasing diffusion of primary colours – though like none of these things, but a collective mental signature that left Tavernier filled with wonder. Had he been in the presence of as many unshielded humans, the brain-howl would have been unbearable. His escorts gestured for him to be seated, and he sank cross-legged to the grass at the periphery of the gathering, relieved that he was not to be the main attraction of whatever was about to happen.

The red dwarf began its leisurely fall into the ocean, and a rose-tinted twilight swept over the jungle. A twitter, perhaps of anticipation, carried through the assembled aliens. Tavernier felt pressure on his upper arm. The 'thean leaned towards him and whispered: "Look."

Down below, in the cleared area, a 'thean rose into the air bearing a flaming brand, sending orange light flickering over the spectators. Into the clearing walked two aliens, assisting a third between them. They stood in silence for a time, and a murmurous song began in the throats of the aliens around Tavernier. He felt a sudden surge of terrible anticipation, or it might have been a second kick of the amphetamine-analogue. "What's happening?" he asked.

"Watch," counselled the 'thean at his side.

As he did so, the alien between the other two knelt and bowed its head. Its wings began a nervous flutter, until they were stilled when the others grasped the wrist-thick column of cartilage which connected the wings to the shoulder-blades.

Then, as Tavernier stared in disbelief, the air-borne 'thean bearing a flaming torch landed and approached the kneeling alien from behind. The torch fell, the alien screamed a terrible, ear-piercing wail of pain, and its membranous wings flared briefly, two sheets of dazzling incandescence flooding the gathering with light. Then the flames faded, along with the screams of the victim, and the stench of incinerated living matter drifted up the hillside. The murmuring of the 'theans increased. Tavernier sat transfixed, hardly daring to move.

The alien slumped forward, the pathetic remains of its once magnificent wings, two blackened fila-

ments like bent antennae, thrashing uselessly in the air. Tavernier saw perfectly what happened next, but for seconds, perhaps even minutes, he was too numbed with shock to take in the enormity of the ritual.

The prostrate alien was approached by one of its erstwhile captors, who lashed together the remains of its wings with a length of vine. Then it backed off, with reverence, and Tavernier could see a huge scarlet bloom tied between the victim's shoulder-blades.

Then, after a suitable pause during which the minds around him flared with some incomprehensible emotion, the two 'theans in the clearing knelt and took their incapacitated fellow under the arms. The third grasped the victim's feet, and slowly, almost laboriously, they rose into the air. They climbed before the blazing furnace of the sunset until they were no more than tiny silhouettes against the starfield high above.

Then Tavernier saw the spreadeagled form of the mutilated alien falling through the air, its size increasing as it approached the ground. He closed his eyes, unable to watch the inevitable impact. He sensed it, though, in the flaring of the minds around him.

"No!" he cried.

He felt hands on his arms, soothing him. "Come," said the familiar voice of his guide. "Now we must go."

Sickened and confused, Tavernier stumbled after his guiding trinity of retreating 'theans. He was brought to a halt, however, by some subtle change of mood of the massed minds in the amphitheatre. He heard cries, as of panic, followed by the quick susurrus of a hundred pairs of wings.

Then, above the delicate sounds of the 'theans in flight, he heard the crude roar of turbine engines. He turned. Half a dozen air-cars swooped down and landed on the hillside. From above and behind him, searchlights probed the twilight, alighted on him and exposed him for all to see.

"Do not move," called an amplified voice from overhead. "We know who you are, Tavernier. I repeat – do not move or we will fire."

Tavernier stood unmoving in the glare, his guides still beside him. "Go!" he yelled. "Get away while you can."

He felt a hand on his shoulder. "Do not con-cern your-self. We are in no danger."

Down the slope, TMC militia-men alighted from air-cars, weapons levelled. They seemed nervous, as if expecting an attack at any second. In the sky to the east, hundreds of 'theans streamed away towards the interior mountains.

Halfway up the slope, Tavernier recognized Olsen as he stepped from an air-car. He raised an amplifier to his lips. "Listen to me, Tavernier. Come forward with your arms raised. You will not be harmed."

He felt a pressure on his shoulder. "Do not go," the 'thean said. "When I say, fall to the ground, roll to the left."

"But they'll fire! We'll be killed!"

"We can defend our-selves." The alien pushed him. "Now!"

Tavernier fell, rolled across the ground and out of the glare of the searchlight. He fetched up behind a stand of ferns, two 'theans beside him. The search-

light probed crazily through the gathering darkness – then a scream split the humid night air.

Tavernier peered down the slope. The militia-men were firing in confusion, hosing orange tracer through the air in the approximate direction of the sudden attack.

Against the last of the sunset, Tavernier made out the silhouettes of the militia and their vehicles. Something reared up and flashed through the air with the speed of a striking cobra. He heard a whip-like snap, an abbreviated scream, and down the slope a militiaman fell to the ground. Others advanced up the incline, but they stood little chance. A filament slashed through the air, a glinting silver thread, and sliced through half a dozen militia. Then it fell to the ground and slithered down the hillside, approaching the air-cars. The filament reared and flashed out at the closest vehicle, which divided diagonally and slumped to the ground in two equal sections. The remaining air-cars took off, but other tentacles reached into the air and slashed at the 'cars, bringing them tumbling to the ground in pieces.

Perhaps three minutes after the attack began, it was over. There was no movement from down the slope; an eerie silence filled the air. Tavernier lay flat on his stomach, clutching a 'thean to him. As he peered at the bodies and the junked vehicles, something thin and quicksilver slithered past him, perhaps a metre away, as whatever it was that had attacked the militia made its retreat. He gulped air, trying to come to terms with the events of the last hour.

The alien was on its feet and hauling Tavernier upright. "Come, this way."

With two other 'theans flying above them, they ran over the crest of the hill and once more into the cover of the jungle.

They were still running hours later when the red dwarf rose over the central mountains. The luminous plants and flowers by which they'd seen their way through the jungle during the hours of darkness now lost their glow as shafts of sunlight pierced the foliage. For Tavernier, it seemed only minutes since he had witnessed the series of inexplicable events on the hillside.

Ahead, an outcropping of rock thrust through the undergrowth. The two flying 'theans landed on either side of a narrow crevice. The third steered Tavernier towards them.

"Where are we going?" he asked, halting before the high opening.

"Do not be a-fraid. This is where my people come to res-pect... those who have gone be-fore."

The first two 'theans slipped into the crevice, mindful of their long, delicate wings. Tavernier, on the insistence of his guide, followed them. A narrow tunnel shelved steeply, illuminated for the first fifty metres by the natural light from outside, and after that by flaming brands set into the walls at intervals.

The narrow corridor sloped increasingly, until at last the perilous gradient gave way to a flight of precipitous steps carved into the rock. More than once Tavernier stopped and asked where they were taking him, but the 'thean raised three long fingers to its lips in an obvious gesture for silence, and signalled for him to continue.

Perhaps one hour after entering the subterranean passage, and many kilometres below ground level, the stairway ceased and they continued along a natural, winding corridor. It opened out at last into a high, circular cavern or chamber. Carved into the walls were tier upon tier of galleries, occupied by crouching 'theans. Tavernier guessed that there were hundreds of them, staring down on him from all around.

He walked hesitantly to the middle of the chamber, his guide beside him. Ahead, set into the ground, was a circular sink hole, with sloping sides like a funnel. He peered into it, but unlike the rest of the cavern, lighted by torches, the fumarole was pitch black. He was aware of the profound silence in the chamber – as if the 'theans were awaiting the commencement of some hallowed ritual.

At last the silence was broken. A distant belch issued, it seemed, from the sink hole before him. He turned, seeking his guide for explanation or instruction – but the 'thean had left him. He was quite alone.

Another noise, a thick, rushing, gurgling sound, filled the cavern – as if the osseous throat before him was gargling with some viscous fluid like honey. Tavernier took a step backwards, afraid of being caught in the outpouring of whatever was surging up the funnel into the sink. As he peered into the darkness, he made out a point of light, or highlight, on the meniscus of fluid which rose, ever widening, up the conical enclosure until it filled the sink hole - a mathematically circular disc of silver fluid which stopped, flush, with the lips of the surrounding rock.

Tavernier stared in wonder.

Around him, the alien minds in the cavern vibrated with what he took to be delight or harmony or reverence.

He noticed a movement in the centre of the pool of fluid. A column of the substance was rising slowly from the mass, a vertical trunk which halted its rise when it reached his own height. From its top down, like a candle dribbling wax, it shed fluid until first the shape of a head was revealed, then shoulders, body and arms, and finally legs. A tall, unmoving silver statue stood before Tavernier, featureless but, he realized with growing incredulity, familiar in shape and stature. Seconds later, the silver form took on definition: clothing appeared, the folds and drapes of a jacket and trousers; then features rose from the bland metallic oval of its face, features Tavernier recognized as those of his brother, Francois. Next, colour flashed across the surface of the figure, a flickering white light to represent the suit, an unconvincing flesh tone on face and hands.

Tavernier, aware that he'd taken several backward steps, stopped himself. Despite the incredible appearance of his brother's simulacrum, he felt in no way threatened. It, like the minds of the 'theans, emanated thoughts and emotions at once alien yet calming.

The *thing* – he could not yet bring himself to call it his brother – took a laboured step forward, then another, as if weighted down by the metal which constituted its mass. It approached him and paused on the very edge of the substance from which it was fashioned, colours strobing across its surface.

It raised a hand towards Tavernier.

He stammered: "Francois?"

"Guy... You came. For that, I thank you." It *was* his brother's voice, just about, though hoarse, distant.

"Is... is it you?"

A fluid smile passed over the metallic lips. "It is I, Francois, though changed... *somewhat*. I wished to explain in person before I proceeded, but you were late, and there was no time to lose."

"Explain?" Tavernier repeated.

The figure of his brother stepped from the pool of silver fluid, walked forwards and paused a metre before Tavernier. He noticed that the simulacrum was connected to the pool by a thread of silver like drawn wire.

"The 'theans," the metamorphosised Francois began, "are an ancient race. They achieved sentience on a far world when the Earth was still young. They passed through the many stages of cultural evolution experienced by intelligent races, and in time migrated from their homeplanet. Once such group arrived here in... I will call them starships – but not starships as we know them – constructed from this substance..." He held out a hand, and from his palm a dozen silver droplets cascaded to the floor, only to be retrieved by a pseudopod which projected quickly from the foot of the creature before him.

"It could be said that this substance – we call it *thassa* – is the essence of the race you know as the 'theans; for it contains within its complex molecules the quiddity of every 'thean which lived upon the homeplanet and upon this world. On landing here and disgorging its cargo of 'theans, the 'ship' dissolved again, flowed into the surface of the planet, found pockets underground in which it existed in contemplative peace for millennia, accepting the essences of expiring 'theans down the eons..."

His brother's likeness paused, smiled at Tavernier.

"Then, human beings arrived and discovered the substance they called Paratanium, and proceeded to extract it from beneath the surface of the planet, annihilating the essences of millions of my people in the process. At that time, and until very recently, we did not have the impetus to defend ourselves, to fight back and put an end to the act of genocide conducted by the TMC, albeit unwittingly...

"Then a delegation of 'Theans approached me – that is, they approached Francois Tavernier in his previous life as a human. I listened and, over the months, having witnessed this chamber and its contents, approached the head of operations in this sector of the galaxy. I explained the situation – we even set up a demonstration in a similar chamber to this one – but the TMC chose to ignore the crime they were committing, as profit was more important, and continued their extraction process... There was only one thing we could do, and we did it. I gladly sacrificed my human existence: my knowledge of the Delta plant, my belligerence as a human being, was absorbed – and we began to defend ourselves. We destroyed vital areas of the Delta plant, and in doing so terminated several humans, which action we regretted, though we did absorb them and grant them, and the militia we exterminated tonight, a superior existence to that which they could hope to enjoy as lowly humans."

The figure gestured. "Soon, we hope, TMC will realize the folly of trying to continue their mining operations on Paramathea. We are invincible. If they rebuild their plant, or relocate it, we will simply destroy it once again. There are some things which cannot be allowed."

A silence settled in the chamber. Tavernier was aware of the massed 'theans, watching him. He swallowed, at last asked: "Why... why did you bring me here?"

Francois raised a hand in a gesture Tavernier recognized from years ago. A smile played over his lips. "Isn't it obvious, Guy?" He paused, then said: "I wish I could show you the splendour of my existence – although I am changed, part of me is still Francois, your brother. I wish I could convey to you the satisfaction and rapture of belonging, of at last being accepted as an equal in a society where ego has no sway... Can you even begin to imagine that, Guy?"

The figure fell silent, regarding him.

"Also," said his brother, his voice fading, "I wish to forgive you, and welcome you to Paramathea..."

As Tavernier watched, Francois gave a last wave, turned and stepped back into the pool of which he was forever a part. He faced Tavernier, lost his definition, then his shape. His substance flowed quickly from the head down and was absorbed into the mass of the gestalt being.

The silver disc decreased in circumference as it sank down the funnel and returned to its subterranean lair.

Tavernier looked ahead to his return to Earth, his job with the agency reading twisted and crippled minds – the everyday hell of being among humans.

He felt a gentle hand on his arm. "Please, come," the 'thean said.

Tavernier lay on his stomach, the soil of the planet in his face, as two 'theans broke his outstretched arms with stones, then bound them behind his back with a care that was almost gentle. He felt hands on his shoulders and ankles, and then a moment of weightlessness as he was lifted from the ground. He heard the beat of wings, the gentle murmur of the 'theans assuring him that all was well. He watched the ground recede, saw the massed ranks of the aliens around the amphitheatre. As he gained altitude, the curve of the coastline swept into view, and the endless blue sea. To the west, the red dwarf came to the end of its ascendancy, and the G-type rose. The two suns burned in the sky with equal intensity.

He looked down. The amphitheatre was a small brown discoloration against the green of the jungle. His 'thean bearers spoke to him for the last time, wished him well.

Then Tavernier fell. He screamed as Paramathea rushed to meet him, and seconds later he knew eternal peace.

Eric Brown is currently revising and polishing his new novel *Engineman* for publication by Pan Books. His earlier book titles are *The Time-Lapsed Man* (1990) and *Meridian Days* (1992). He lives in Haworth, West Yorkshire, where he recently returned from a months-long trip to India and points east.

Project for a Glossary of the Twentieth Century

J.G. Ballard

Editor's Note: *The following first appeared in Zone no. 6 (November 1992), an avant-garde American publication. J.G. Ballard's responses were written in reply to a long list of key-words and phrases supplied by the editors of Zone (on the general theme of "bodies and machines"). Our thanks to J.G. Ballard for permission to reprint the piece here.*

X-ray Does the body still exist at all, in any but the most mundane sense? Its role has been steadily diminished, so that it seems little more than a ghostly shadow seen on the X-ray plate of our moral disapproval. We are now entering a colonialist phase in our attitudes to the body, full of paternalistic notions that conceal a ruthless exploitation carried out for its own good. This brutish creature must be housed, sparingly nourished, restricted to the minimum of sexual activity needed to reproduce itself and submitted to every manner of enlightened and improving patronage. Will the body at last rebel, tip all those vitamins, douches and aerobic schedules into Boston harbour and throw off the colonialist oppressor?

Typewriter It types us, encoding its own linear bias across the free space of the imagination .

Zipper This small but astute machine has found an elegant way of restraining and rediscovering all the lost enchantments of the flesh.

Jazz Music's jettisoned short-term memory, and no less poignant for that.

Telephone A shrine to the desperate hope that one day the world will listen to us.

Chaplin Chaplin's great achievement was to discredit the body, and to ridicule every notion of the dignity of gesture. Ponderous men move around him like lead-booted divers trying to anchor the central nervous system to the seabed of time and space.

Trench warfare The body as sewer, the gutter of its own abattoir, flushing away its fears and aggressions.

The pill Nature's one step back in order to take two steps forward, presumably into the more potent evolutionary possibilities of wholly conceptualized sex.

Aerodynamism Streamlining satisfies the dream of flight without the effort of growing wings. Aerodynamics is the motion sculpture of non-Euclidean space-time.

Pornography The body's chaste and unerotic dream of itself.

Time and motion studies I am both myself and the shape that the universe makes around me. Time and motion studies represent our attempt to occupy the smallest, most modest niche in the surrounding universe.

Prosthetics The castration complex raised to the level of an art form.

Biochemical warfare Nerve gases – the patient and long-awaited revenge of the inorganic world against the organic.

Hallucinogenic drugs The kaleidoscope's view of the eye.

The Warren Commission Report The novelization of the Zapruder film.

Genocide The economies of mass production applied to self-disgust.

Phenomenology The central nervous system's brave gamble that it exists.

Crowd theory Claustrophobia masquerading as agoraphobia or even, conceivably, Malthusianism.

Lysenkoism A forlorn attempt not merely to colonize the botanical kingdom, but to instill a proper sense of the puritan work ethic and the merits of self-improvement.

Robotics The moral degradation of the machine.

Suburbs Do suburbs represent the city's convalescent zone or a genuine step forward into a new psychological realm, at once more passive but of far greater imaginative potential, like that of a sleeper before the onset of REM sleep? Unlike its unruly city counterpart, the suburban body has been wholly domesticated, and one can say that the suburbs constitute a huge petting zoo, with the residents' bodies providing the stock of furry mammals.

Forensics On the autopsy table science and pornography meet and fuse.

Miniaturization Dreams of becoming very small predate Alice, but now the probability grows that all the machines in the world, like the gold in Fort Knox, might be held in one heavily guarded location, protected as much from themselves as from the rest of us. Computers will continue to miniaturize themselves, though, eventually disappearing into a microverse where their ever-vaster

calculations and mathematical models will become one with the quarks and the charms.

The Vietnam War Two wholly incompatible martial systems collided, with desperate result. Could the Vietcong, given a little more TV savvy, have triumphed sooner by launching an all-women guerrilla army against the *Playboy*-reading GIs? "First Air Cavalry ground elements in Operation Pegasus killed 350 enemy women in scattered contacts yesterday, while Second Division Marines killed 124 women communists..."

Isadora Duncan The machine had its own fling with her overdisciplined body, the rear wheel of her car dancing its lethal little jig around the end of her scarf.

Furniture and industrial design Our furniture constitutes an external constellation of our skin areas and body postures. It's curious that the least imaginative of all forms of furniture has been the bed.

Schizophrenia To the sane, always the most glamorous of mental diseases, since it seems to represent the insane's idea of the normal. Just as the agnostic world keeps alive its religious festivals in order to satisfy the vacation needs of its workforce, so when medical science has conquered all disease certain mental afflictions, schizophrenia chief among them, will be mimicked for social reasons. By the same token, the great appeal of alcoholism, and the reason why it will never be eliminated, is that it provides an opportunity for honourable and even heroic failure.

Body-building Asexual masturbation, in which the entire musculature simulates a piece of erectile tissue. But orgasm seems indefinitely delayed.

Epidemiology Catastrophe theory in slow motion.

Fashion A recognition that nature has endowed us with one skin too few, and that a fully sentient being should wear its nervous system externally.

Automobile All the millions of cars on this planet are stationary, and their apparent motion constitutes mankind's greatest collective dream.

Skyscraper The eight-hour city, with a tidal population clinging to the foreshore between Earth and the yet to be navigated oceans of space.

Pasolini Sociopath as saint.

Transistor If the wheel is 1 on the binary scale, the transistor is 0 – but what will be 1000001?

Retroviruses Pathogens that might have been invented by science fiction. The greater the advances of modern medicine, the more urgent our need for diseases we cannot understand.

Money The original digital clock.

Abortion Do-it-yourself genocide.

Science fiction The body's dream of becoming a machine.

Answering machines They are patiently training us to think in a language they have yet to invent.

Genetics Nature's linguistic system.

Food Our delight in food is rooted in our immense relish at the thought that, prospectively, we are eating ourselves.

Neurobiology Science's Sistine Chapel.

Criminal science The anatomizing of illicit desire, more exciting than desire itself.

Camouflage The camouflaged battleship or bunker must never efface itself completely, but confuse our recognition systems by one moment being itself, and the next not itself. Many impersonators and politicians exploit the same principle.

Cybernetics The totalitarian systems of the future will be docile and subservient, like super-efficient servants, and all the more threatening for that.

Disease control A proliferation of imaginary diseases may soon be expected, satisfying our need for a corrupt version of ourselves.

Ergonomics The Protestant work ethic disguised as a kinaesthetic language.

Personal computers Perhaps unwisely, the brain is subcontracting many of its core functions, creating a series of branch economies that may one day amalgamate and mount a management buy-out.

War The possibility at last exists that war may be defeated on the linguistic plane. If war is an extreme metaphor, we may defeat it by devising metaphors that are even more extreme.

International Standard Time Is time an obsolete mental structure we have inherited from our distant forebears, who invented serial time as a means of dismantling a simultaneity they were unable to grasp as a single whole? Time should be decartelized, and everyone should set his or her own.

Satellites Ganglions in search of an interplanetary brain.

Modernism The Gothic of the information age.

Apollo mission The first demonstration, arranged for our benefit by the machine, of the dispensability of man.

J.G. Ballard's The Atrocity Exhibition *is reissued in June 1993 by Harper-Collins in their Flamingo paperback line. This new edition contains the annotations by Ballard (not unlike the above piece in style) which first appeared in the American Re/Search edition of the book (1990). Highly recommended.*

Ansible Link

David Langford

Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change keep mucking around with this column: no matter what I write, the state of play is always different by the time *Interzone* actually appears. An update: in March 1993 the long-running sf meetings in London (first Thursday evening each month) suffered another convulsion, and thus returned in April to the Wellington pub opposite the Old Vic exit from Waterloo station. But for how long, who knows?

Sideways Through Borneo

Philip K.Dick's literary output continues to rise, unhampered by death. The latest to hand is *Selected Letters of PKD Volume 4, 1975-6* (Underwood-Miller $39.95), edited by Don Herron. Tim Powers's introduction relates how Dick once found he had the power to forgive sins. "How many people have you absolved?" "Well, none, Powers. Today I've decided that I was mistaken, and yesterday you weren't home, and when I called Jeter he got huffy and said he didn't want his sins forgiven... So I just forgave my cats' sins."

Keith Laumer died on 23 January, aged 67. His best-known works were series: the "Bolo" tales of futuristic cybernetic tanks (a mixture of good and weak stories) and the "Retief" galactic-diplomacy japes (too formulaic, alas, to keep the reader laughing through a whole collection). Best-known is not the same as best; I preferred his books like *A Plague of Demons* which played interestingly with sf's endemic superman fantasies.

Scott Meredith, legendary sf literary agent, died in New York on 11 February, aged 69. An *Independent* obituary remarked rather mysteriously that one British author had laughed riotously at the news, while another said "Good!" Whom can they possibly mean?

Charles Platt, it is revealed in *Science Fiction Eye*, plans (along with Greg Benford) to have his head frozen and cryonically stored for a glorious future awakening. Certain authors in Australia have been speculating aloud on the reactions of the resuscitated Platt and Benford (who collaborated on an Ursula Le Guin hatchet-job called "The Pompous Rose") should they discover they're regarded as interesting solely as contemporaries of the great author Le Guin.

Christopher Priest is writing the biography of Britain's one and only astronaut Helen Sharman.

Margo Skinner (the second Mrs Fritz Leiber) died in January this year, after expressing an alarming wish that her cat Lulu should be killed and cremated with her, their joint ashes mingled with some from Leiber's urn, and the whole interred in a Californian pet cemetery. Alas, the people who handled her estate thought otherwise.

Bruce Sterling seemingly wants to discourage us from buying his account of real-life cyberpunk *The Hacker Crackdown*... he's retained the electronic rights and plans to make it available free on computer nets.

George Turner, Australia's most famed sf author, was interested to read in a belated *F&SF* review by Orson Scott Card that his book *Brainchild* was too Australia-centred and that the scientific research described surely couldn't have taken place in any benighted country outside the USA. Turner wrote back to point out that many US technologies are based on original research done by CSIRO in Australia. This one will run and run.

Ian Watson explained at the new launch of the Warhammer game-based novels (from Boxtree) that these fictions have a certain integrity because, exactly as in the Warhammer game and books, humanity has throughout history been driven by mass psychoses based on power fantasies. "Yes, but look on the bright side!" cried the audience (claims Stephen Baxter).

Infinitely Improbable

SF Publishing: Behind Closed Doors. Editor: "I'll be back with an offer tomorrow!" New, Accountant-Driven Costing System: "Not so fast. Every costing (even if it's only 15,000 copies of a £3.99 paperback original) must now build in a blanket £5,000 for unspecified overheads." Prospective Author: "Gosh, after mark-up that's over £1.65 of the said paperback cover price, not much below the unit production cost of the book! It'll have to be priced at £4.99, just like most paperbacks these days." Dynamic Sales People: "Sorry, £3.99 is the absolute ceiling." Editor: "Sorreee..." Another novel saved from publication by the powers of accountancy.

Intersection, the World SF Convention to be held in Glasgow in 1995, put up its rates this year: £50 full attending membership and £15 "supporting" (meaning that you receive the literature but must stump up the difference to attend the convention). Rates may rise again in September. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

Call for the Dead: a bemused correspondent asks why the letters printed in *Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine* still begin "Dear Dr Asimov." "Are they all old letters? Are they all from cretins? Does the magazine put the salutations on, like a communist regime refusing to admit the old leader is really dead?"

Gollancz is rumoured to be ditching its graphic-novel line, with no more scheduled to follow the recent Ian McDonald *Kling Klang Klatch*.

Research Your Market. The British sf newsletter *Critical Wave* explains for the guidance of readers that it "has never published prose or poetry."

The Caucus-Race: awards still proliferate. The Nebula novel shortlist consists of *A Million Open Doors* (John Barnes), *Sarah Canary* (Karen Joy Fowler), *China Mountain Zhang* (Maureen F. McHugh), *A Fire Upon the Deep* (Vernor Vinge), *Doomsday Book* (Connie Willis) and *Briar Rose* (Jane Yolen). The BSFA Award nominations are – take a deep breath – Novels: *Hot Head* (Simon Ings), *Hearts, Hands and Voices* (Ian McDonald), *Red Mars* (Kim Stanley Robinson), *Lost Futures* (Lisa Tuttle) and *Doomsday Book*. Shorts, all but one from *Interzone*: "Priest of Hands" (Storm Constantine), "Reification Highway" (Greg Egan), "The Sculptor" (Garry Kilworth), "Returning" (Ian McLeod), "Innocents" (Ian McDonald, *New Worlds 2*) and "The Coming of Vertumnus" (Ian Watson). Artwork, all covers: *Hearts, Hands and Voices* (Jim Burns), *Kaeti on Tour/IZ* 66 (ditto), *IZ* 65 (Mark Harrison), *IZ* 58 (SMS) and *Doomsday Book* (apparently an NEL "Ho Ho, We're Not Crediting the Artist" special). Dramatic presentation: *Insufficient Nominations to Warrant an Award* (directed by Roger Corman).

Ten Years Ago... New English Library, after flooding British sf circles with proof copies, decided for unexplained reasons not to publish L. Ron Hubbard's truly dreadful *Battlefield Earth* after all.

Dusting off the Props

John Clute

This will be pretty fast, because there are times when it is polite to remain silent. There are five new books on the desk, a small babel but enough to drown thought. Only one of them is, to be fair, functionally decerebrate, the novel by M.J. Engh, which is loopier than words can readily convey, but see below for a try. The collection of mundane fables by Louis Auchincloss fails, on the other hand, through a choking varnish of impeccable pale decorum; it reads as though one had servants to tell one's stories. The short novel by Norman Spinrad, though sprightly, holes itself in the end by seeming to attempt to grant ecological gravitas to the Roman Catholic Church. The *Fantasy Romp*™ by Collin Webber, a first novel, comes to climax like ten lorries on an oilslick in a heatwave, dumping loads all over. And the Gene Wolfe collection, though it worthily assembles some extremely early stories, mainly makes one long for later ones, and features several author's notes in the author's score-settling latter-day style. It is hard to avoid spring fever.

Louis Auchincloss is an American lawyer widely known – even by those who have never read him – for writing long novels in a thin brahmin moo about the better class of people; nor did his dozens of tales of New York society, many of them featuring clubbable lawyers, go far to convince one that his latest book, an assembly of stories called **False Gods** (Constable, £14.99), was very likely to go slumming down the dodecaphony of the streets of Manhattan into cellars of the false-god whitened alligator. Still, there was always a chance that necessity might force some invention out of the man, that the teeth might show, some tattoo of visible Story. The title, after all, refers to the six gods who provide a thematic ground-bass for each of the six stories assembled – "Ares, God of War," "Polyhymnia, Muse of Sacred Song," and so forth – and it might well be that Auchincloss, gripped in the jaws of the Twice-Told, might reveal the mythic face, like Angela Carter, or (for that matter) like Hawthorne.

This does not happen. The six gods sit above the chamber doors of the tales to which they give their senatorial imprimatur like marble busts; and the tales they aridly bestride depose zilch, with the glassy good manners of a host who cannot bestir himself to rudeness. The order is roughly chronological, from the Civil War to the 1980s. In "Ares, God of War," a Southern gentleman continues the conflict in his civil life, becoming a mercenary lawyer in the Babylon of New York, all so he can found a useless museum in the South. In "Hermes, God of the Self-Made Man," an ambitious young man, who happens to be Jewish, creates himself as an entrepreneurial lawyer, losing the love of his wife in the process, and his son. And so on. If there is an archaic song beneath the ashy postprandial surfeiture of these tales, it does not drive a green shoot. There is, by the way, no element of fantasy at any point in the book; and in this case a refusal to use the tools of Fable looks very much like a failure to understand the task.

From the decorous unjollity of Louis Auchincloss to the goofball unction of M.J. Engh is, like having the bends, one hell of a trip. **Rainbow Man** (Tor, $17.95) tells of a few months in the life of a spacefaring woman called Liss who has succumbed to a hankering to live on a planet for what may well – given the physical constraints governing space flight – be the rest of her life. She tells the story herself, in a shruggingly sassy tone of voice. Because FTL does not exist – she tells us with a finger poking her dimple deeper – and because starship travel entails profound time-dilation effects, it is very common for people like Liss to be born, grow up, and spend their entire lives within the culture of one ship, passing through the centuries while the universe outside ages at a normal rate. The planets that people like Liss visit are like museum exhibits, and to get caught on one means permanent separation from one's own family, lovers, culture and time: because when the ship leaves port, it begins (to all intents and purposes) to travel via time-dilation into the future.

All this is not only obvious but explained to us. We understand in our bones that no spacefarer in her right mind could ever voluntarily jump ship, abandon the whole and entire texture of her life, and submit herself to a time-bound, utterly poignant exile that could not ever be revoked. But this is what Engh expects us to accept as a rational premise for the plot of *Rainbow Man*. Liss wants to feel real ground under her feet (though "real ground," for any human, must almost certainly be the ground one is born in: to say "real ground" is to say "*legible world*"), and therefore she leaves her ship on the planet Bimran, *about which she knows nothing*. She knows nothing because Engh has some surprises about Bimran in store for her (and, she hopes [vainly], for us), and Liss's total ignorance is necessary or she would never have set foot on the planet in question. To justify this total innocence in a galaxy-wide culture involving interstellar trade and multifarious communications over centuries, Engh has a simple solution: she does not mention *knowledge*. I don't think computers are referred to anywhere in the text, and certainly Liss is no researcher; nor is there any sense anywhere in the book that an interstellar culture as described might require not only data, but predictive models capable of making sense of various local cultures as they evolve down the centuries, and as they are encountered (say) by mercantile starships dependent upon such forms of knowledge for raw survival as they dance down the transformative web of the years.

But let that go. Let Liss leave her only home for ever. Let her bounce into a world she knows nothing about, but which by the nature of physics will immediately become her Present. Let her not *notice* that she is defined as a man upon entry because she is infertile, and that she is called Rainbow Man because she refuses to dress like the natives. Let her not *notice* that Bimran is a religious planet, and that black-robed Selectors (one of whom she falls in love with) enforce upon the placid and seemingly bucolic Bimraners a totalitarian religious ethos based on rigid adherence to four commandments, the most important one of which unsurprisingly concerns Sex. Or, as the Christian-like Bimraners prefer to call it, Fornication. Only within marriage is Fornication permissible; and only when the female partner is fertile. If the female is infertile, she is described as a man, and cannot Fornicate. (Homosexuality is also a mortal sin – this is a very Christian planet indeed, full of all the wit and joy of Christianity as we know and love it, here on planet Earth – and if Liss fucked a guy it would be considered a homosexual act.) Whillickers! wheezes Liss, Miss Idiot Protagonist 1993. I don't think I *like* it here in not Kansas.

Fortunately, another starship has landed. Its internal culture may not

much resemble that on the starship she was born into, but it will do. After a couple of dollops of actions, she leaves. And that's all you get. Engh does a half-uneasy but readable job of rendering the awful Liss's tourist patter; but Bimran is without novelty (ie its appalling little culture is entirely predictable: though for Engh to recognize this, as I've already said, would have made it impossible for her to have committed *Rainbow Man* to print) and the book is without foundation.

Merlin and the Last Trump (Gollancz, £14.99) by Collin Webber is a comic fantasy which does not have a cover by Josh Kirby. But it does have a dim protagonist (Dimmot) who bootlessly protests being shoehorned into events beyond his comprehension. It does have buxom females – none of the women in the book, including Guinevere and Amanda and Rose Falworthy, do much but moon and fuck – and an irascible but ultimately wise and weary wizard with a world-saving wheeze (Merlin), and a good-tempered mighty-thewed knight (Griswold), and a dark lord or two (Nemestis and those of his ilk), and Uther Pendragon, and others. The world must be saved.

It is.

In **Deus X** (Bantam, $3.50), Norman Spinrad describes Gaia in terms which we will find familiar. It is soon now. The "Greenhouse sun" boils the planet, irradiates the meatware. The dying seas have risen; the trees are gone; the Alps are hot and bare. The protagonist is a private eye who spends most of his time in the greyish quasi-cyberspace which is all that Spinrad allows as plausible. There he sorts out complicated legal problems afflicting meatware (humans in the flesh) and the various "transcorporial successor entities" they may have hived off for fun, profit, or to remain immortal. He is approached by the Roman Catholic Church, one of whose Cardinals tells him that he believes humanity has "sinned thrice over... Once in the Garden, again in its slaughter, and once more, perhaps, in seeking to escape divine judgement by creating these successor entities in the first place, in the process of which we may or may not have consigned souls to eternal damnation, the greatest sin of all."

Oh yeah?

The plot – to be brief – revolves around the hiring of the protagonist to enter cyberspace in order to rescue the kidnapped successor entity of a priest who had allowed himself to be thus "dybbuked" so that his electronic analogue can determine whether or not it/he has/is a soul, but before he can so declare he is captured by the godlike entities who roam beneath the surface of the Big Board. To be brief, the protagonist finds the successor entity with the permission of the godlings, who themselves need to be told whether or not they are souls in Hell or data-swarms in something very much like Hell. The successor entity finally decides to affirm their souls. The novel ends happily, in a way, because it looks as though our successor entities will do what they can to save the planet.

The problem with the book is not the portrait of the world, which may be scathing and very harsh, but which falls within the parameters of normal sf vision, circa 1993; and the telling is spare. The problem is the Church. It is very difficult to swallow a Christian Church relevantly concerned with the kind of issue at stake here; and it is impossible to imagine one so internally transfigured by humility and good sense that its representatives could even begin to admit to Spinrad's whole litany of sins. Disobedience in the Garden: no problem there, that's good Christian stuff. But the second sin, which is to slaughter the Garden – ie to act as Christians always have, to treat the world as props for the acting out of sacred drama – it is very difficult indeed to imagine the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church biting *that* bullet, accepting the suicidal penury of Christian doctrine when it comes to the great globe itself, now that the "props" are biting the dust. Pull the other one.

In **Young Wolfe** (United Mythologies, $15) Gene Wolfe gathers together a couple of adolescent stories plus "The Dead Man" (1965), "Mountains Like Mice" (1966), "The Green Wall Said" (1967), plus two tales first published in 1967 in *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine*, plus a couple of previously unpublished detections featuring an arms expert who might have become a series character, had it been a different world. But it is not. The best of the lot is "The Dead Man" with the astonishing perspective change at the close which laves the protagonist (and us) is revelation and forgiveness. There is something Christian about that change, something which acts – for an outsider like myself – like a Mystery. So be it. The rest of the book lacks revelation. The auctorial comments are decidedly unforgiving. The binding is white and easily stained: *Young Wolfe* will not reach the white radiance of eternity without giving evidence that the prop has soiled it.

(John Clute)

Corporate SF and Middlesex Man

Chris Gilmore

Is the world of sf ready for the S&F corporate-financial thriller? Peter F. Hamilton's first novel **Mindstar Rising** (Pan, £4.99) reads like an English version of *Oath of Fealty* filtered through *Hello*. If he's not an admirer of Jerry Pournelle's, someone should certainly introduce them.

The background is near-future (about 2035, at a guess) England. Global warming is well established, but the new ecology has yet to settle down; Great Britain is smaller, through coastal flooding; when things were at their worst, with two million homeless, the country had, in panic, embraced the People's Socialism Party, which imposed a republic and (by emergency powers) a ten-year reign of bureaucracy and dispossession in the name of Christian Marxism, before being overthrown by the New Conservative Party and a Second Restoration. Two years on things are better. There's still no mains electricity in rural areas, but solar panels are widespread; moreover, sundry people own some interesting relics of pre-Crisis technology, including our hero, Greg Mandel. His in-skull hardware supplies something very close to telepathy, handy when it comes to seducing a seventeen-year-old virgin, and his folding microlight is no less useful when he needs to slip out for a quick assassination. If these applications seem a tad unsporting, well, it's a tough world. We all play to win.

The game on this occasion is fairly commonplace. Philip Evans, dying billionaire industrialist with pretty granddaughter (Julia), has uncovered evidence of sabotage on one of his industrial satellites, and wants it stopped. Who better than a military telepath to expose the evil-doers and interrogate them? Further murky doings turn up, and the story resolves into Mandel's struggle to protect Julia's inheritance from the predations of a criminal financier. For allies Mandel has a precog, a master hacker, a gang of teenage ninjas and Philip himself, now dead but downloaded into an AI core; a formidable combination, but the opposition have heavies and nasties of their own, including the rump of the PSP, eager to make a comeback.

The major characters have sufficient depth to be interesting, and the plotting is tight and at times ingenious, but both are vitiated by much of the writing, especially in the early chapters, which include some notably callow descriptive passages and a risible love scene. Hamilton's eye for detail is good, but his ear is less so: he uses such

unpronounceable contractions as "should've" and "that'd" in the narrative as well as the dialogue, a tic that soon becomes intensely irritating. Worse, he uses exclusive as a synonym for expensive. Nor is there much new in the philosophy with which the characters harangue each other to their mutual admiration – Thatcherism as perceived by the *Daily Express*. Just to rub it in, Evans is a gruff, no-nonsense Lincolnian, with no inhibitions about expressing his contempt for "wooftah yes-men." The effect is a bit like watching someone burn Hillary Clinton and Pol Pot in effigy, and I get a strong impression that these passages exist less for their own sake than to offend the politically correct.

The standard argument for the freedom to deploy great personal wealth is that it allows ranges of creative power, depths of scholarship, varieties of esthetic experience and opportunities for personal development undreamed-of by the hermit in his cell or the bourgeois in his semi. That it will far more often be dissipated in sloth, gluttony and outward show is regrettable but unimportant; Beethoven at the court of Archduke Maximilian and Haydn at that of Prince Esterhazy are cheap at the price of Lady Docker and Paul Raymond in their gold-plated Limos. By contrast, Hamilton appears to regard conspicuous consumption as an end worth dying for.

My first impulse was to berate the editor who failed to tone down the passionate gaucherie of propaganda and the gloating accounts of plutocratic triumphalism which stud these pages, but I've a nasty suspicion he may have known what he was doing after all. Were they perhaps shoved in on purpose, to excite hostility and enhance sales? *"O tempora, O mores!"* I cry, grinning broadly, but if, as I suspect, this book marks the start of a trend – backlash literature, perhaps? – the Dworkin/Russ tendency will surely be swift to react. We may be in for some highly polarized political sf in the next decade, and if so my money's on standards of style and taste going down rather than up.

It is time to assess Robert Rankin's recently re-released "Brentford Trilogy" – **The Antipope, The Brentford Triangle** and **East of Ealing** (Corgi, £3.99 each).

Brentford is another world. Superficially it may look like part of England, but appearances are deceptive – it is English in the same sense that Llaregub is Welsh. The significant events of the world of Brentford are those recounted in Ripley's *Believe It Or Not*, and in Brentford a comprehensive liberal education is best obtained from cigarette cards. Brentonian time is an elastic and probably fractional dimension, which runs simultaneously at varying rates. Thus, though this is alleged to be the late 20th century, the price of a pint across the bar of the Flying Swan is 5/3; Woodbines can be bought in fives; while a book quoting the observations of Jean François Champollion (1790-1832) is "some three centuries old." Nowhere is it mentioned, but I suspect the Brentonian upper crust have the *Morning Post* delivered. Nor are the properties of Brentonian matter the dreary, unimaginative sort taught in school, but the far superior chemistry, physics and mechanics which may be inferred from careful study of the D.C. Thomson comics.

The currency of Brentford is duodecimal; mainly coined copper of sundry reigns, plus the occasional grubby treasury note. Its industry and commerce are secretive, small-scale and not very successful; many of its inhabitants therefore feel obliged to venture on entrepreneurial activities of doubtful viability and legality, for which their overt characters and talents may not be best suited. To hold an allotment is a weighty matter in Brentford – far more so than the cultivation thereof.

The said inhabitants are overwhelmingly ne'er-do-well males of indeterminate age; their origins are mysterious, since few possess much sex-drive (the one notable exception in this regard is an Irishman) and if the women ever had any reproductive urge, it must by now be without practical purpose. The only juvenile is an alien monster in disguise, so probably the rest are by-blows of Mr Jorkens. Indeed, Brentonian conversation is orotund, with echoes of Dunsany, Joe Orton and Jack Vance, though (as befits their condition), the menacing undercurrents have more to do with the outlay of small sums on tobacco and liquor than death or mayhem.

Such an environment is overwhelmingly attractive to supernatural beings, mainly of malevolent disposition, who perceive in Brentford the perfect beach-head whence to launch their plans for world-conquest. The plucky (and not-so-plucky) Brentonians are thus called upon time after time to Save the World, much as were Chester Anderson and his hippy friends in Greenwich Village (which stands to New York as does Brentford to London). This obligation is discharged with the thrills and spills proper to the situation in such time as the principals can spare from the vital activities of scrounging, cadging, drinking the proceeds thereof, contemplating fine-art magazines (aka Danish Glossies), retailing used cars of guaranteed low mileage (and other items of doubtful use, value and provenance) and, most of all, gossip.

The Irishman, John Omally, is the prime source of the last item, as the following sample of his conversation illustrates.

> "Here, what do you think you're looking at?"
>
> Omally's eyes had been wandering up and down Mrs Kent's tightly fitting apron. "I was undressing you with my eyes."
>
> "Oh yes?"
>
> "Yes. And that safety pin which is holding up your knickers is getting a bit rusty."

Regrettably, the narrative doesn't always meet the standards of the dialogue. Rankin is far too fond of a cliché, and believes they may be cured by the mere insertion of the word "proverbial," as in "white as the proverbial sheet." For starters, there is no proverb about the whiteness of sheets, though I suppose one could make some up – "White sheets gather most bloodstains," perhaps. Rather more to the point, a writer of Rankin's invention ought not to be at a loss for a fantastical new simile. They're easily coined, after all; "white as the first scale dropped from the newly washed scalp of a virgin" would have served well enough here, for instance, and if you, Gentle Reader, think you can do better, you're probably right (hexameters on a postcard).

That apart, my only objection to this pleasingly unregenerate set of tall stories is a certain carelessness in construction; there is no cod map of Brentford and its environs, though it would be easy enough to doctor one up from a street plan, and when a man of great learning quotes John I, 1, he doesn't scramble his theos and his logos.

Incidentally, the *Scottish National Encyclopaedia* of 1890 (far the best ever produced) records that "Owing to its small size, combined with its being the county town of the great county of Middlesex, Brentford has often been used satirically for the capital of England... and it is mentioned by [Cowper and] many other writers, chiefly in a satirical vein." These chronicles of the small heroisms of Middlesex Man worthily uphold that fine tradition.

Somewhere in *Antigua, Penny, Puce* Robert Graves advises the would-be novelist not to begin his book by throwing a dinner party for all the principal characters. That the characters had better not all be middle-aged, middle-class, law-abiding and encumbered neither by sexual hang-ups nor financial worries of any urgency, seems too obvious to be worth offering. In breaking both these rules before page 20 of **The Questers: A Mystery Novel** (United Writers Publications, £12.95), Anthony Wroth lays claim to a certain originality; he also ensures that his book will stand or fall on its invention and style.

The initial premise is that employed

by Jack Vance in the concluding section of *The Palace of Love*. Ten people, led by two guides, embark on a nine-day holiday of whose character they are told just three things: it will be heavily structured, it may lead to revelation of some sort, and it will take place exclusively within the confines of Greater London. Such overt artificiality of form illuminates the subtitle; the novel is not only about a mystery, but a mystery of itself, wherein the author challenges the reader no less than the characters to infer the unstated rules of the game as they unfold. In this game the winners will be those who apply them correctly and with gusto as the tale develops.

This being the case, it's not the reviewer's task to reveal much of what happens, though it's fair to say (because it's apparent from the outset) that the milieu is a highly stylized vision of London, somewhat aslant of our reality. The nature and extent of its divergence emerge piecemeal, in parallel and *pari passu* with the story.

Each day the questers are invited to enjoy an unusual and enigmatic spectacle, described by Wroth, who has a fine eye for the telling detail; the overall texture is strongly reminiscent of Angela Carter. Between times, and especially over meals, they exchange reactions and press the tour-organizer for explanations; but the explanations are never wholly convincing, and the waters are further muddied because the first-person narrator is an habitual and possibly compulsive liar, who teases his fellow-guests with fanciful descriptions of his hobbies. He tells one that his life is devoted to a quest for the ideal female foot, another that he seeks a pattern of mystic significance in the distribution of English pub names. One suspects that they, in turn, may be less than candid with him; certainly, he stands aloof from the various relationships which grow up among the questers, both during and after the quest. Significantly, we are never told his name; he needs none.

On the way Wroth vouchsafes some curious and amusing items of lore. Were you aware that the dance of the seven veils, which Salome may have performed before her stepfather, began as a religious ritual, re-enacting the descent of Astarte to Hell, where she lost a garment at each of the seven gates? I have to confess I did not, and thus I am the more enriched.

For a mystery novel to succeed it must end either with a satisfactory revelation or with a good reason why no revelation is possible. Many people will find the latter option insipid, like free verse or unfermented juice. I sympathize, but reflect that a good tricksy ending is better than a banal climax, a leaden rhyme, or a nasty wine. Wroth's ending is very tricksy indeed, and reinforces the already strong echoes of Angela Carter, specifically *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr Hoffmann*. Surprisingly, it recalls Jack Vance again as well – the extracts from *Scroll from the Ninth Dimension* with which he embellished the *Demon Princes* books. If the *Scroll* were ever made into a full-length work, it would be something like this.

(Chris Gilmore)

Tales from the Afterlife

Pete Crowther

Over a career spanning 15 years and as many books, T.M. Wright has garnered a considerable reputation – primarily in the U.S. – at the surreal-and-ghostly edge of horror fiction.

Wright's 1977 novel *Strange Seed* is cited in both *Danse Macabre* (Stephen King's comprehensive study of the field) and Douglas Winter's *Faces of Fear* as being one of the best horror novels of the last 40 years. And it's true. Wright's continuing "study" of what waits after life ends – carried to new heights in *A Manhattan Ghost Story* (1984) and the brilliant *The Waiting Room* (1986) – has no serious opposition.

His new novel, **Goodlow's Ghosts** (Gollancz, £14.99), revolves around the inspired pairing of an improbably-named psychic investigator Ryerson H. Biergarten and Sam Goodlow, a recently murdered private detective who, as well as inexplicably (to him as well as to us) changing both age and gender over a series of visits to Biergarten, is not even sure that he's dead at all. Kind of like the 1960s TV series *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, but without the cheap laughs.

For Sam cannot remember anything – not the case he was working on, not why he should come to Biergarten nor what he wants from him... not even who he is himself. Investigations proceed via meetings with, among others, Goodlow's sister, and through a series of pass-ways to the afterlife that occur in the most unexpected places... until a solution of sorts is found.

Goodlow's Ghosts is both a continuation of Wright's work and a departure from it, in that it straddles two camps – initially that of his familiarly confusing and confused world of the dead but now also encompassing the more corporeal world of the detective mystery. It's a resounding success, a book that, while gentle and characteristically subtle, manages to convey the coldly dispassionate and intensely capricious attitude of those no longer entirely with us.

The same world is also explored by Jonathan Aycliffe in his second book (under that name: Aycliffe has also written several novels as Daniel Easterman), **Whispers in the Dark** (HarperCollins, £8.99).

His first outing in the genre, *Naomi's Room*, received plaudits from all areas. And deservedly so. Aycliffe's style and prose recalls the work of the great "old" masters of the ghost story – Dickens, Cynthia Asquith, L.P. Hartley, M.R. James and so on – as well as that of more recent practitioners, notably James Herbert in his very accomplished *Haunted* (he *can* do it when he wants to), Ramsey Campbell's magnificent *Midnight Sun*, and Mark Morris's *The Immaculate*.

Following the tried and tested method of having the text of his book form a first-person narrative, written out in manuscript form by the now aged protagonist for her doctor and passed by him – by means of the masterfully manipulative letter that prefaces the book proper – to a clergyman colleague, Aycliffe begins well and builds the tension subtly and agonizingly.

Layering occurrence upon occurrence with meticulous care so as to avoid letting the reader know quite what is being constructed, the well-bred but misfortunate Charlotte Metcalfe recounts her turn-of-the-century story of an idyllic childhood marred by her father's death and the subsequent bankruptcy which forces her and her mother and young brother into the workhouse. While there, Charlotte's mother, a gentle woman unused to the harsh treatment meted out in the squalor and deprivation endemic in those times, gives up the ghost and dies. Charlotte, meanwhile, is separated from her brother who, when she is finally released into care, she determines to find.

Her search takes her to the small north-eastern village of Kirkwhelpington and her distant cousins Anthony and Antonia Ayrton. It also, of course, takes her to the Ayrtons' rambling family manse, Barras Hall.

Receiving a warm welcome, Charlotte is soon taken fully into the family and assured that measures will be immediately taken to trace her brother. Meanwhile, she alternates her daytime between lessons with Antonia and exploring the extensive grounds where, amidst a profusion of potting sheds, herb gardens and kennels, she discovers a folly. It is from this same ramshackle building that she later hears children singing, though her cousins advise her that such cannot be the case. The wind, as ever, is blamed.

Each evening, after making her way through dark and labyrinthine corridors to her room in a little-used wing of the house, Charlotte's nights become increasingly distressed – with

footsteps and heavy breathing outside her door, suddenly-lowering temperatures and child-like sobbing from somewhere in her room.

Only as *Whispers in the Dark* progresses, and the countless clues lead to clear revelations, does the structure reveal itself for what it truly is...certainly the best ghost story of recent years and one which, with its Lovecraftian undertones, should ultimately be ranked among the greats.

Talking of "greats," you should take time out to make the acquaintance of Jimmy Blackburn.

Jimmy, the eponymous star of Bradley Denton's **Blackburn** (St Martin's Press, $19.95), is both a product of his times and an outcast in a world he neither made nor asked for, a kind of pied piper-figure that Society, either through intention or indifference, causes to exist and then tries to wipe out. In short, he's a serial killer – but one with a difference: Jimmy kills reactively and not *pro*-actively, and, whether they're dishonest door-to-door salesmen, unfaithful wives, bullying cops, insincere evangelists, lying animal-rights protestors, vicious husbands or short-changing car mechanics, his victims have always got at least *some* form of retribution coming.

The book's narrative is both episodic and non-sequential, with each section dealing with a victim (or, on one occasion, pair of victims) alternating with *Just William*-like stories from Blackburn's past that (a) let us know how he got to be the way he is and (b) warm us to him.

Because, paradoxically, Jimmy Blackburn is a nice guy. He just has an over-developed sense of right and wrong. As the threads come together and the body count builds, the book finds a structure which must (we realize with a mixture of fear and hope) lead to an inevitable conclusion. But *en route* we are treated to a morality play of the very highest order and one which blends together familial abuse and its consequences, social responsibilities and ethical codes.

Blackburn is the best coming-of-age/rites-of-passage tale since Salinger laid down his pen and, in the wake of film pundit Michael Medved's acerbic attack on violence in the cinema, forms a very natural and thought-provoking epitaph to an era...an era of which none of us should be proud but for which we should all feel just a little bit responsible.

I guess we're all just a little bit responsible for Stephen King, too. Whether you like what he's been doing this past few years or not, he's been doing it in response to the collective message we've been winging back to Bangor, Maine. On each occasion, that message has said, simply, *More!*

In that respect, King is a victim of his own success. But, looking now at the *Other books by...* section at the front of each of his bestsellers, one cannot help but wonder where all the good times have gone.

His last three "masterpieces" have comprised an enjoyable but nevertheless seemingly parodied version of earlier themes *(Needful Things)*, an unpleasant and surreal romp through sexual misadventure *(Gerald's Game)* and now **Dolores Claiborne** (Hodder & Stoughton, £14.99). Dolores is an irascible woman ("In the end," she chirps at the book's close, "it's the bitches of the world who abide...") suspected of murdering her mistress, an unpleasant harridan who spends most of her (flashback) appearances shitting herself *and* her surroundings, and screaming about dustballs.

Another first-person narrative, cleverly (if, occasionally, confusingly) delivered in New England dialect into the tape recorder (twelve tapes, no less!) of the local police, the text features unpleasantness aplenty (much of which has become a staple additive in King's now seemingly singularly inhospitable small townscapes) plus a few foot-of-the-page sketches, but which markedly lacks chapter breaks and gs at the end of participles.

No one, surely, could doubt King's ability to weave a story – face it: he's the Guv'nor. Nor could they deny him, as a result of that, his position as one of the world's most successful authors. What *is* in question is the quality of the stories themselves. As the woman in the old McDonalds ad used to trill, *I can see the bun...but where's the beef?*

King's books have always been vehicles to describe relationships and ephemera. Indeed, in future generations, he may take a rightful place as one of the leading recorders of 20th-century life. But perhaps now the time has come for him to write a saga which, while containing occasional dark deeds and nefarious individuals, does not *rely* on the minutiae of those deeds and those characters for its attraction.

Like it or not, King should recognize that there *can* be nice folks – even in horror stories – and there can be *pleasant* happenings and events there, too. He should give rein to that talent and tell us *the* saga of smalltown America as only he can tell it. And if he has to break from the artificial constraints of the horror field to do it, so be it.

(Pete Crowther)

EC ESP?

Jones & McIntosh

As it's 1993, the opening of the Single Market throughout the EC and all that, the timing of **Eurotemps** (Roc, £4.99), the latest anthology from the Midnight Rose folk, second in their "Temps" line, could hardly be better. Before we get to grips with the stories, let's recap on the original idea. *Temps*, similarly devised and edited by Alex Stewart and Neil Gaiman, was a tongue-firmly-in-cheek, very English nod towards the *Wild Cards* shared-world anthologies. Its heroes (no, that's not quite the right term) used their (only just) remarkable powers in the employ of the Department of Paranormal Resources, a comic-book Civil Service Department wallowing up to its neck in bureaucratic red-tape. So far so good, you might think. Well no, not really, since, with a couple of exceptions the first batch of stories was a damp squib. *Eurotemps* moves the frame on by setting most of its stories elsewhere throughout Europe (chiefly Greece, for some reason). And this time, although the fireworks cannot yet be said to have sparked, at least the powder has begun to dry out towards the Brussels-approved ignition point.

Absolutely no prizes for guessing the list of contributors. Yes, it's a mix of familiar British names, mostly well-established but some hopefully up-and-coming, and by and large they toil away dutifully. Trouble is that in sticking to their brief of unremarkable unsuperheroes working for that constipated government department, they seem snookered into turning out stories that seem all too repetitively similar to each other. Out of 13 here, many have a standard find-the-freak sort of plot, and the humour essential to their success inevitably centres around variants of how many forms the unheroes have to fill in before they can reclaim their travel expenses – and there's a limit to how many times you can find that sort of thing funny, no matter how well it's handled.

The lead story from David Langford, "If Looks Could Kill," is amusing, well-handled and satisfying – especially so if you know the origin of such characters as Caligula Fox, a portly homeloving detective and his legman, Charlie Goodman. Langford appears to be having fun with the *Temps* concept but also communicating that to his readers. Brian Stableford does a reasonable job with "Sortilege and Serendipity," with well-worked out ideas (but also sporting a truly cringe-producing *'Allo 'Allo* accent). Colin Greenland's story is (yes, we say it every time) smoothly written, and he must possess a paranormal talent of his own because ten minutes after

reading (and even re-reading) it, the details are gone, lost in a memory of polished prose. Even with the pages of ...(er, what was it called again, Neil?) spread out in front of us, we couldn't hold it in our minds long enough to tell you exactly what it's about. Molly Brown's story is not really all that memorable either, but then you do retain the memory of having enjoyed it at least once.

Graham Joyce's "Monastic Lives" has a quality of observed detail which makes you feel his Greece is more than just a backdrop – writing which deserves a better storyline. And in "The Law of Being" Storm Constantine achieves a kind of earnestness somehow missing from many of the other stories. Again, however, the plot – involving a pop-culture mystic who may or may not be the new messiah – seems lacklustre, and certainly doesn't sustain the 50-plus pages of the story. Midnight Rose editor Roz Kaveney ought to be able to do something with the concept, and this time around does, in an overlong but reasonably entertaining story, "A Problem Shared," which fills in the past of the much-cloned Departmental secretary, Marcia.

The stories, then, range from entertaining to not-very and there's no real standout to match the Jack Yeovil story in the first book. Overall though, the standard is better, and if the Midnight Rosers still haven't got the formula quite right, the evidence is that, like British Rail, they're getting there.

(Neil Jones & Neil McIntosh)

On the Bleeding Edge

Andy Robertson

We have received the first issues of two very similar magazines, lo, in the very same week. Both are dedicated to the Bleeding Edge of the Cybernetic Frontier. One is from America, and one is from England.

I hadn't ploughed through more than the first half of **WIRED** (Wired USA, $4.95), before I was reflecting on those misleading weasel words, "Information Technology." Misleading, because computers do not understand-and-repeat "information" in the human way, but just copy it on down the line. But a lot of people still expect computers to do their thinking, which doesn't work, and I must say that there are parts of *WIRED* which show it not working to teeth-edging effect.

The opening matter sets the tone. We have a sort-of manifesto spreading across the first three pages, composed of every different pitch and typeface possible, against every conceivable background. The idea is to shock, but the result is just a mess. Some articles have been turned sideways, thus demonstrating that they are on the Bleeding Edge of the etcetera: others are split up and interleaved. Awful. Overall the presentation looks, to my admittedly unprofessional eye, like the result of a top-flight graphics-and-composition package in the hands of rank amateurs.

Perhaps more seriously, the magazine appears to take what can only be described as an ideological position of anti-understanding. "The Medium is the Message" is their proclaimed motto: and their demand to their contributors is "amaze us." To which I can only reply that the medium doesn't matter, and that that which is truly amazing cannot be synthesized to order. The new cybernetic media, the Net or whatever they are, will be mature when people stop talking about them, and start talking about what's on them. Surely this is too obvious to mention?

Behind all the cyber-hype there is a certain amount of good stuff in this mag. Bruce Sterling writes a solid article on the well-established military uses of VR, while not really paying enough attention to the fact that they are so well-established (or, incidentally, to the fact that There Was No Jungle in Iraq). Camille Paglia squeaks at length. There are some interesting technical and social pieces and a good "current affairs" sort of section, the obligatory Japanese weirdo article, and so on. In summary, this is a potentially decent magazine put together according to some totally wrong-headed ideas. If these guys just stopped trying to shock all the time I think they would produce something good.

Also received, **Black Ice** (Titan, £3.95). This is the UK contender, with all the usual signs – overpriced, black & white, fairly conservative layout, editorial address somewhere in Brighton, and so on. Prejudiced or not, I liked it a bit better. The mix is about the same as in *WIRED* but the articles have, to my mind, more substance. The highlights are two major interviews: one with the director of W Industries (the nearest thing to a commercial VR company); and the other with an absolute loony of a performance artist who cyborgates himself in absurd, painful, and sometimes profound ways. The Japanese weirdo article in *WIRED* was about, well, Japanese weirdos, whereas the Japanese weirdo article in *Black Ice* is about the country's disgusting sugar-and-fishguts sweeties, and I'd give that six out of ten at least. On the whole, this magazine is moderately highly recommended.

Iron Tears by R.A. Lafferty (Edgewood Press, $10) is the latest in a series of small-press publications rounding up uncollected Laffertyana. It's a minor book, but, as usual, well worth reading. We have the ghost stories, the stories of Fortean science and forgotten science, the stories of lost and secret and half-human people. We have the false-utopias, and the fruit of the corrupted mind. We have Daniel and the Three in the Burning Fiery Furnace. We have – fond memory – the full tale of that old ghost who woke up once a year to croak "Is the South riz again?" which was first told us, all those years ago, by Epiktistes.

R.A. Lafferty is heir to the most ancient tradition of Catholic Fabulation: his most recent predecessors were Belloc and, above all, Chesterton (that most Laffertarian of writers). There can be very few serious readers of his work who are not by now aware that his major novels are outside our genre: and it's sad, but, having dipped into those works, his sf reads more and more like a joke, a half-serious game. There is not a lot more than that to say about this book. These are only little tales of salvation and damnation. They are not great works, but they are part of the work of a great writer.

(Andy Robertson)

To Boldly View

Neil Jones

Let's start off with a question. Suppose the Earth is in peril: a race of extremely powerful aliens (let's call them the Borg, shall we?) are heading straight for the planet and their intention is to grind it into rubble – and us with it. The only thing that stands between us and certain destruction is a single starship named – the *Enterprise*. Now, who would you most want in command of that starship – James T. Kirk or Jean-Luc Picard?

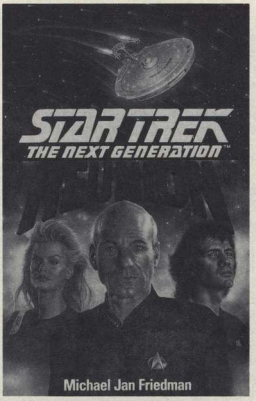
This question (give or take a colourful background detail or two) was put to readers of the American magazine *TV Guide* as part of a poll celebrating *Star Trek*'s 25th anniversary and the winning captain, by a comfortable margin, was – Captain Kirk. Which says a lot about the power the original *Star Trek* series still has on the popular imagination. A three-season 1960s TV series that got cancelled before going on to become a genuine cultural phenomenon, it even got a space shuttle named after it. And it's still around: besides the recent feature film, sixth in the dynasty, the BBC is currently running the original TV shows past us yet again. There are *Star Trek* conventions, an endless succession of books, comics, and an entire merchandising

industry that offers anything from T-shirts to mugs (I got given one for Christmas – pour in the hot water and the cloaked Klingon ship suddenly becomes visible right above the *Enterprise*). So it's hardly surprising that Captain Picard's *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was faced with a near-impossible job in matching (let alone surpassing) the original series in the public's affections when it first appeared back in September 1987.

A new book which gives an overview of the later series is **The Star Trek: The Next Generation Companion** by Larry Nemecek (Pocket Books, £9.99). It covers the 125 episodes (the original series only managed 79) of the show's first five seasons. Each one gets a plot summary (dull reading whether you've seen the episode in question or not), credits, additional notes that give details of guest-stars, production problems, continuity links or gaffes, general trivia, etc., and at least one photograph. In the opening section Nemecek tells how the new show got launched, and then, in an introduction to each season, charts its development. The book is intended to be an information source rather than a critical study and is fairly respectful – although Nemecek does allow himself a few negative comments on some of the truly dire episodes.

Paramount own the *Star Trek* franchise and, with the original-cast feature films finally on track, they persuaded the creator of the original series, Gene Roddenberry, to attempt to repeat the TV magic. Roddenberry put an all-new crew in a similar format set a hundred years after the Kirk-Spock era. But there were to be some changes. Kirk's role was split into two: the older, more cautious Captain Picard, and First Officer Riker, who could beam boldly down into the thick of danger just as Kirk had done week after week. Roddenberry had originally envisioned a French actor playing Picard, but was finally persuaded to baldly go with Patrick Stewart, who (in addition to being tonsorially challenged) has a very impressive speaking voice and considerable acting talent. The half-human, half-Vulcan, all-logical Spock, probably the most popular character in the original series, was replaced by Data, an android Pinocchio whose dearest wish (in direct contrast to Spock) was to become human. Data, engagingly played by Brent Spiner, would become one of the new series' most popular characters.

There were, initially at least, three women regulars. Ship's doctor, Beverley Crusher – who unfortunately brought her precocious son, Wesley, aboard with her; Counsellor Deanna Troi, half-alien (even though she didn't look it) and empathic; and the woman-of-action Security Officer, Tasha Yar. But Yar was killed off late in the first season because the actress wanted out of the series (although Yar was to get imaginatively reincarnated in perhaps the *Next Generation*'s best-ever episode, "Yesterday's *Enterprise*" – and returned a couple more times as her own half-alien daughter) and that left just two women regulars, both of whom had roles in the "caring" professions and were rarely to take centre-stage. While there's no doubt that *TNG* has improved on the now-glaring sexism of the classic series, the original character descriptions for the three, given in the Nemecek book, make interesting reading. Guess which one was supposed to have "the natural walk of a striptease queen."



A recent "Star Trek" spinoff novel published in the UK by Pocket Books

There was intended to be just one more regular: "a walking tricorder," Geordie LaForge, born blind, but fitted out with a hi-tech visor that granted him abilities that never seem to have been explored much during the series. At the end of the first season, Geordie took over the Chief Engineer's role to become the Mr Scott of *TNG*.

And that should have been it as far as the regular crew went, but luckily wasn't. Roddenberry had decided that none of the original series aliens – Vulcans, Klingons or Romulans – were to be re-used in *TNG*, but he was prevailed on to allow a token Klingon (they're the heavies with the corrugated foreheads) onto the bridge. The role was intended to be occasional rather than regular and Worf isn't in that original cast photo, but, as played by Michael Dorn, he was deemed to have such "presence" he was quickly made a regular, and has since gone on to become one of the most popular members of the cast. Also, the Federation-Klingon rapprochement woven into the *Trek* background eventually led to an entire story cycle, including episodes that would be amongst *TNG*'s most compelling. (And it even provided the basis for the old crew's recent feature film *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, which had a role for Dorn as Worf's grandfather.)

If you were one of those who gave up on *TNG* after the first few episodes, you're probably not alone: it got off to a very shaky start in its first season. Despite an enjoyable cameo appearance from an ancient (137-year-old) Dr McCoy, "Encounter at Farpoint," the double-length opener, was padded and downright dull in parts. And many of the episodes that followed were even less successful – especially the ones that included the Prime Directive (roughly, "thou shalt not interfere with an inferior civilization in any way, no matter how appalling it may seem to thee"). Worthy in intent, on-screen the Prime Directive generally comes over as sanctimonious, patronizing – and a source of dull stories. Then, although the regular crew were in place and their characters broadly defined, Roddenberry reportedly vetoed conflict between them (including even the sort of verbal sparring that went on between Spock and Dr McCoy) because he felt this would be outmoded by the 24th century – which made problems for writers. This contributed to what Nemecek calls "the revolving-door for writers" – after having their scripts endlessly rewritten, one writer after another either left in frustration or was shown the airlock. Still, although the season one episodes were mostly lacklustre, as *TNG* lurched through a writer's strike and on into its second season it was definitely beginning to come together.

Then, third season, enter the team of Rick Berman and Michael Piller. Berman had actually been there all along, gradually taking over the hands-on producer job as Gene Roddenberry drifted further and further into the role of distant background presence. By the third season, Berman effectively ran *TNG*. Michael Piller came on board to head the writing team – and right about then the scripts, and the episodes, begin to show a marked – and sustained – improvement. (At about that time, both Ten Forward, the *Enterprise*'s bar, and Guinan its alien bartender, played by Whoopi Goldberg, made their appearance.) Having Berman and Piller running things (they are still there) didn't mean *TNG* wasn't capable of turning out the occasional downright bummer, but in general the episode standard was high and surprisingly consistent. There was a much stronger sense of background continuity, and character interaction continued to take on a new depth and interest. The stories were stronger – but Berman and Piller had succeeded

in remaining true to Roddenberry's optimistic vision. Some of the peaks of the series occur around this time: the aforementioned "Yesterday's *Enterprise*" – where a time-rift yanks an earlier *Enterprise* out of the past and twists history so that the Federation and the Klingon Empire are now locked in a bloody, decades-old war. Nemecek's additional notes on this episode detail how it was rushed to filming because of cast availability with a script that had been cobbled together by many writers, most of whom doubted it was going to work. What came out was an episode that has to be a contender for best *Trek* episode of either series. Also there was "The Best of Both Worlds," an epic two-parter spread over the end of season three and the beginning of four, which detailed the cliffhanger struggle against the Borg.

This last Borg episode brings us up to where the BBC, in their cost-cutting sf-despising wisdom, replaced *TNG* with reruns of its honoured ancestor. And so, although the Nemeck book goes on to cover seasons four and five, which are arguably *TNG*'s high water mark, UK readers won't have seen them – and are not likely to in the near future – unless you buy, rent or borrow the videos. At £10.99 or £11.99 (depending where you buy them – shop around), you'd need a bank loan to catch up with all the missing episodes, especially as in the US season six (not covered by the Nemecek book) and an entirely new *Star Trek* series, *Deep Space Nine*, are under way. With two episodes per cassette (appearing strictly in the order they were first broadcast, it appears) there's the very real question of value for money. A pair of good episodes together may simply be expensive, one good partnered with one bad extortionate, but a pair of real turkeys would spell rip-off. So, here follows a brief guide to some of those video-only episodes from seasons four and five. The number is the number of the CIC cassette, and the grades (excellent A+ to D– for dire) are my own.

41. "Reunion," a stand-alone story but also a sequel to "Sins of the Father" and part of the extended Klingon story cycle. Here Picard and Worf are once again in at the deep end of Klingon politics – which is apparently just a tedious round of assassination, duels and intrigue. "Future Imperfect" (imaginatively) has Riker waking up to find himself 15 years in the future and now captain of the *Enterprise* with a friendly (?) Romulan warship on the viewscreens. Two strong episodes here and therefore good value. **(A–/B)**

43. "Data's Day" is just that, a complete day in the android's life, in which he gets to give the bride away, gets involved with a sinister Romulan plot and learns to dance. Excellent stuff. "The Wounded" has a Federation captain going rogue and threatening a just-attained peace with new *TNG* baddies, the Cardassians. **(A/B)**

46. "Night Terrors" is a total turkey: the *Enterprise* gets trapped in a rift in space, the crew get terribly depressed – and Counsellor Troi takes to flying. Worth seeing if only to wonder how they could have gone an episode so far up the creek. "Identity Crisis" is an acceptable if not particularly special episode, with Geordie beginning to mutate into a strange alien thingy. **(D-/C+)**

47. "Nth Degree" guest-stars the hapless Barclay who this time gets turned into a supergenius and takes the *Enterprise* off somewhere strange for reasons that turn out to be not his own. "QPid" has wandering superbeing Q putting the whole crew through their Robin Hood paces, with Picard in the Kevin Costner role. Two amiable episodes. **(C+/C+)**

48. "The Drumhead" is an effective witchhunt-cum-courtroom drama episode that draws on the McCarthy hearings, with the Romulan threat standing in for Communism. "Half a Life" is a thoughtful and well-handled episode that has Troi's Mum romantically involved with an aging scientist who has to go back to his home-planet to commit suicide. **(B/C+)**

49. "The Host" shows Dr Crusher's romantic dilemma when her new boyfriend turns out to be a sluglike parasite which has to find itself a new host-body. "The Mind's Eye," strongly influenced by *The Manchurian Candidate* and tautly directed, has the Romulans brainwashing Geordie to assassinate a top Klingon. **(C+/A–)**

50. "In Theory" is a pleasant but thin Data-has-a-romance episode. "Redemption 1," however, is the first of the two-part story that details the *Enterprise*'s (and especially Worf's) involvement in the Klingon civil war. (Yes, and of course part two is on the next cassette.) **(C–/A)**

51. "Redemption 2" completes the Klingon saga – there's a particularly effective subplot featuring Data's first command, plus scenes in a Klingon boozer. "Darmok" goes in for more thoughtful sf with Picard alone on a planet with an alien captain who speaks an unintelligible language. Very much DIY on the suspension-of-disbelief front given that neither Kirk nor Picard have had any trouble at all communicating in English with all sorts of odd aliens during the last 25 years, but watchable nevertheless. **(A/B–)**

52. "Ensign Ro" was written to introduce a new semi-regular character, somewhat harder-edged than the rest of the crew, engagingly played by Michelle Forbes. This is a strong and successful story of confrontation and duplicity with new interstellar rivals, the Cardassians, and additionally interesting because this episode was to generate a lot of the background for the new *Star Trek* spin-off series, *Deep Space Nine*. "Silicon Avatar" is a passable *Moby Dick* hunt through space. **(A/C–)**

53. "Disaster" is *TNG* meets *The Poseidon Adventure*, which just about comes off because the crew interaction is well-handled. "The Game" features Wesley, but don't let that put you off, as it's also a well-worked alien plot to take over the crew, one by one, by means of the eponymous addictive game. **(C/B–)**

54. "Unification 1 and 2" is where Spock meets the *Next Generation*. Now a Federation Ambassador (well, it is a hundred or so years on from Jim Kirk's time), Spock is reported to be on Romulus and assumed to have defected. Picard and Data, disguised as Romulans, follow to find out what he's up to. Spock's appearance in *TNG* was so long-awaited that it was almost inevitably going to be a disappointment – and, on balance, it is just that. Leonard Nimoy was only available for five days shooting, less than required for even one episode, and he only puts in his first appearance right at the end of part one. Plus, most of the plot-machinations, including the Romulan master-plan, are creaky. Still, there's a lot of incidental stuff that is engaging, and, with that initial disappointment out of the way, a second viewing should allow greater appreciation. Certainly there's some pleasing subtlety in the title which alludes to a whole series of unifications – that of the close-kindred Romulan and Vulcan, of Spock and his father, Sarek, and of course the two incarnations of *Trek* – which the scene between Spock and Data actually does justice to. Having the two-parter complete on one cassette is an unexpected bonus. **(B–/B–)**

57. "The Masterpiece Society" scans like a left-over from season one: the *Enterprise* finds a group of humans who consider themselves the perfect society and can do without all those sweaty Federation oiks, thank you very much – except the plot means they can't. All cardboard conflict and, yes, the old Prime Directive gets trotted out again. Unfortunately, "Conundrum," in which all the crew get their memories wiped, is very entertaining, so a classic case of buyer's dilemma, here. **(D/B–)**

Back to the Nemecek book. On the *TNG*-minutiae front, I suspect it's pretty accurate – the mistakes I noticed were minor enough, and mainly due to a lack of real copy-editing – for example (p.119) a photo of Worf's Klingon rival gets misattributed as his brother – still, what's a forehead corrugation or two between friends? But we do get some gems when the real world gets mentioned. For example (p.165) "the American physicist Stephen F. Hawking" and (p.193) "pioneering science-fiction author Joseph W. Campbell" (choose your own italics, here!). Let's hope Pocket can be bothered to put these right in the inevitable next generation of this book.

Because there will be one. If you're a total *Trek* devotee then of course it's for you. If you're loyal to the original series, then you'll no doubt buy it if only to compare it with its classic-*Trek* predecessor, Alan Asherman's *The Star Trek Compendium*. Of course, if you just like *TNG*, don't suffer from withdrawal symptoms, and can't envision yourself getting even mildly obsessive about it (not to mention one of those folk who have no interest in it at all – but then what are you doing reading this review?) then you'll certainly pass it up. But no matter what you do, this book is going to stay in print a long long time – and sell lots of copies. There are enough *Star Trek* fans out there to make that a safe bet. Enough to keep Captain Kirk *et al* – plus Captain Picard *et his al* – boldly going for a long while yet. No matter which of them you'd rather have between you and the Borg.

(Neil Jones)

UK Books Received

February 1993

The following is a list of all sf, fantasy and horror titles, and books of related interest, received by Interzone *during the month specified above. Official publication dates, where known, are given in italics at the end of each entry. Descriptive phrases in quotes following titles are taken from book covers rather than title pages. A listing here does not preclude a separate review in this issue (or in a future issue) of the magazine.*

Baker, Will. **Shadow Hunter**. Viking, ISBN 0-6708-4633-3, 536pp, trade paperback, £9.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1993; proof copy received; we've not heard of this one, but according to a quote from Stuart Brand in the *Whole Earth Review*, it's "the best science-fiction debut since William Gibson's *Neuromancer*.") *3rd June 1993.*

Banks, Iain M. **Against a Dark Background**. Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-031-0, 487pp, hardcover, £14.99. (Sf novel, first edition; proof copy received; "the first non-Culture sf novel from the most outstanding science fiction writer in Britain today," according to the publishers.) *27th May 1993.*

Beardmore, Paul. **The Jazz Elephants**. Abacus, ISBN 0-349-10249-X, 417pp, paperback, £6.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in 1991; a debut book by a British writer, this "comic fantasia" concerns two talking elephants who run away from London Zoo and become jazz trumpeters; it's not a children's novel.) *25th March 1993.*

Bishoff, David. **Grounded**. "Star Trek: The Next Generation, 25." Titan, ISBN 1-85286-462-1, 273pp, paperback, £3.99. (Shared-universe sf novel, first published in the USA, 1992 [?]; the author is presumably David F. Bischoff, with his name unfortunately mangled.) *18th March 1993.*

Blaylock, James P. **The Paper Grail**. Grafton, ISBN 0-586-21217-5, 371pp, paperback, £4.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1991.) *22nd February 1993.*

Brooks, Terry. **The Elf Queen of Shannara**. Legend, ISBN 0-09-920131-3, 403pp, paperback, £5.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1992.) *4th March 1993.*

Budrys, Algis, ed. **L. Ron Hubbard Presents Writers of the Future, Volume V**. New Era, ISBN 1-870451-28-7, 427pp, paperback, £4.99. (Sf anthology, first published in the USA, 1989; this is the one that contains stories by Stephen Baxter, Jamil Nasir and others; why has it taken New Era four years to release it in this country?) *No date shown: received in February 1993.*

Crace, Jim. **Arcadia**. Picador, ISBN 0-330-32523-X, 346pp, paperback, £5.99. (Novel, first published in 1992; set in an imaginary city, it may be regarded as marginally sf; this is the first of Crace's books we have been sent; on the strength of his first two, *Continent* [1986; about an imaginary land] and *The Gift of Stones* [1988; set in prehistory], he is a highly praised British writer of imaginative fiction; worth checking out.) *12th March 1993.*

Crandall, Melissa. **Shell Game**. "Star Trek, 58." Titan, ISBN 1-85286-459-1, 277pp, paperback, £3.99. (Shared-universe sf novel, first published in the USA, 1992 [?].) *18th February 1993.*

Davies, Paul. **The Mind of God: Science and the Search for Ultimate Meaning**. Penguin, ISBN 0-14-015815-4, 254pp, paperback, £6.99. (Popular science text, first published in 1992.) *No date shown: March 1993?*

Delany, Samuel R. **Driftglass/Starshards**. Grafton, ISBN 0-586-21422-4, 535pp, paperback, £5.99. (Sf collection, first edition; this is basically Delany's long-out-of-print volume *Driftglass* [1971], reissued in considerably fattened-up form; the added material includes items first published as recently as 1988-92 in out-of-the-way academic journals such as *Mississippi Review*, *Pacific Review* and *Fiction International*.) *15th March 1993.*

Ferring, David. **Warblade**. "Warhammer." Boxtree, ISBN 1-85283-860-4, 255pp, paperback, £3.99. (Shared-world fantasy novel, first edition; "David Ferring" is a pseudonym of David Garnett; the gaming background is copyright Games Workshop, whose own "GW Books" publishing venture came to an end in 1991 and is now being revived by Boxtree; this is the third volume in the "Konrad" trilogy; apparently, Boxtree have also reissued parts one and two, *Konrad* and *Shadowbreed*, simultaneously with this previously-unpublished third, but they have not sent us review copies.) *25th February 1993.*

Findley, Nigel. **Shadowplay**. "Shadowrun 9." Penguin/Roc, ISBN 0-14-017546-6, 372pp, paperback, £4.99. (Shared-world sf/fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1993.) *4th March 1993.*

French, Sean. **The Imaginary Monkey**. Granta Books, ISBN 0-14-014233-9, 155pp, hardcover, £12.99. (Fantasy novel, first edition; about a man who changes into a monkey, this appears to be a literary debut novel by a British writer already known for his journalism.) *25th March 1993.*

Frith, Nigel. **Snow: A Novel**. Illustrated by the author. Breese Books [164 Kensington Park Rd., London W11 2ER], ISBN 0-947533-48-6, 218pp, hardcover, £14.99. (Fantasy novel, first edition; a note on the author on the inside-back flap describes him as "one of Oxford's most Romantic characters"; he is a poet, playwright, actor, university tutor, etc; his previous fantasy novels, *Krishna* [1975], *Asgard* [1977], *Jormundgand* [1986], *Dragon* [1987] and *Olympiad* [1988], were published by the now-defunct company of Allen & Unwin.) *14th February 1993.*

Gay, Anne. **The Brooch of Azure Midnight**. Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-037-X, 455pp, paperback, £5.99. (Sf novel, first published in 1991.) *25th March 1993.*

Gay, Anne. **Dancing on the Volcano**. Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-038-8, 410pp, hardcover, £15.99. (Sf novel, first edition.) *25th March 1993.*

Grant, Charles L. **Raven**. New English Library, ISBN 0-450-58792-4, 214pp, hardcover, £14.99. (Horror novel, first published in the USA, 1993.) *4th March 1993.*

Gygax, Gary. **The Sammakand Solution**. "Dangerous Journeys. Mythus 2." Penguin/Roc, ISBN 0-14-017559-8, 284pp, paperback, £4.99. (Shared-world fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1993; the title on cover and spine is given as *The Samarkand Solution*, which we think is what it's meant to be.) *25th February 1993.*

Hill, Carol. **Amanda & the Eleven Million Mile High Dancer**. Bloomsbury, ISBN 0-7475-1489-4, 447pp, paperback, £6.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA as *The Eleven Million Mile High Dancer*, 1985; this oddball "slipstream" book, about a female astronaut-cum-subparticle physicist and her pet cat Schrodinger, first appeared in Britain in 1988; for some reason, the paperback is five years late; useless information department: the author is the same person as the "Carol De Chellis Hill" who wrote the novelization of Paul Mazursky's film *An Unmarried Woman* [1978].) *25th March 1993.*

Holt, Tom. **Here Comes the Sun**. Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-125-2, 282pp, hardcover, £14.99. (Humorous sf/fantasy novel, first edition; proof copy received; it scarcely seems five minutes since Holt's last novel appeared; he's becoming prolific; this new one seems to be his first venture into science fiction, though with a definite fantasy flavour.) *27th May 1993.*

Howarth, Chris, and Steve Lyons. **Red Dwarf Programme Guide**. Virgin, ISBN 0-86369-682-1, 228pp, paperback, £4.99. (Guide to the humorous sf television series, first edition.) *18th March 1993.*

McAuley, Paul J. **Eternal Light**. Orbit, ISBN 1-85723-015-9, 463pp, paperback, £5.99. (Sf novel, first published in 1991; reviewed by John Clute in *Interzone* 50.) *25th March 1993.*

McCammon, Robert. **Gone South**. Michael Joseph, ISBN 0-7181-3590-3, 359pp, hardcover, £15.99. (Horror/suspense novel, first published in the USA, 1993.) *25th March 1993.*

McDonald, Ian. **Hearts, Hands and Voices**. Gollancz/VGSF, ISBN 0-575-05373-9, 320pp, paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in 1992; reviewed by John Clute in *Interzone* 59.) *25th March 1993.*

Maitland, Ian. **Cathedral**. Headline, ISBN 0-7472-3958-4, 438pp, paperback, £4.99. (Horror novel, first published in 1992.) *18th March 1993*.

May, Julian. **Jack the Bodiless: Volume 1 of the Galactic Milieu Trilogy**. Pan, ISBN 0-330-32772-0, 495pp, trade paperback, £8.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1992; reviewed by Mary Gentle in *Interzone* 62.) *26th March 1993*.

Moorcock, Michael. **A Nomad of the Time Streams**. "The Tale of the Eternal Champion, Vol. 6." Orion/Millennium, ISBN 1-85798-033-6, 457pp, hardcover, £14.99. (Sf omnibus, first edition; there is a simultaneous trade paperback edition priced at £10.99; it contains: *The Warlord of the Air* [1971], *The Land Leviathan* [1974] and *The Steel Tsar* [1981] plus a short preface by the author; these three novels have previously appeared in an omnibus edition entitled *The Nomad of Time*; this new edition is described as "substantially revised and expanded.") *March 1993*.

Moorcock, Michael. **Sailing to Utopia**. "The Tale of the Eternal Champion, Vol. 5." Orion/Millennium, ISBN 1-85798-031-X, 463pp, hardcover, £14.99. (Sf omnibus, first edition; there is a simultaneous trade paperback edition priced at £10.99; it contains: *The Ice Schooner* [1969; not "1966" as it states in the book], *The Black Corridor* [1969; with Hilary Bailey, unacknowledged in first edition], *The Distant Suns* [1975; with James Cawthorn] and the short story "Flux" [1962; with Barrington Bayley, unacknowledged in previous appearances] plus a short preface by the author; to the best of our knowledge, it's the first time that these rather heterogeneous works have been claimed as part Moorcock's "Eternal Champion" mythos; as with other Moorcock omnibuses from Orion, there may have been some textual revision, though the extent of this is not made clear.) *March 1993*.

Moore, Christopher. **Practical Demonkeeping: A Comedy of Horrors**. Mandarin, ISBN 0-7493-1109-6, 248pp, paperback, £4.99. (Humorous fantasy novel, first published in the USA, 1992; probably a debut book; it has a typical Josh Kirby cover, so you can guess the sort of company the publishers want it to keep.) *11th March 1993*.

Penswick, Neil. **The Pit**. "The New Doctor Who Adventures." Virgin/Doctor Who, ISBN 0-426-20378-X, 276pp, paperback, £3.99. (Shared-universe sf novel, first edition.) *No date shown: March 1993?*

Pike, Christopher. **Die Softly**. Hodder & Stoughton, ISBN 0-340-58000-3, 206pp, paperback, £3.99. (Juvenile horror/suspense novel, first published in the USA, 1991; the publishers describe Pike as "the author who bridges the gap between Nancy Drew and Stephen King.") *8th February 1993*.

Rusch, Kristine Kathryn. **Heart Readers**. Orion/Millennium, ISBN 1-85798-051-4, 250pp, hardcover, £13.99. (Fantasy novel, first published in the USA [?], 1993; there is a simultaneous trade paperback edition priced at £7.99.) *11th March 1993*.

Sinclair, Clive. **Augustus Rex**. Illustrations by Yosl Bergner. Penguin, ISBN 0-14-014455-2, 210pp, paperback, £5.99. (Literary fantasy novel, first published in 1992; it's about Swedish playwright August Strindberg selling his soul to the Devil and living on past his actual death-date of 1912.) *No date shown: March 1993?*

Slade, Michael. **Cutthroat**. Hodder/NEL, ISBN 0-450-58428-3, 397pp, paperback, £499. (Horror/suspense novel, first published in Canada [?], 1992; a note inside states: "Michael Slade is the pseudonym of a firm of Canadian criminal lawyers specializing in the field of criminal insanity"; an accompanying publicity sheet tells us that the authors' names are Jay Clarke and John Banks; this is their third book.) *1st March 1993*.

Slade, Michael. **Ghoul**. Hodder/NEL, ISBN 0-450-59113-1, 386pp, paperback, £4.99. (Horror/suspense novel, first published in Canada [?], 1987.) *1st March 1993*.

Slade, Michael. **Headhunter**. Hodder/NEL, ISBN 0-450-59112-3, 422pp, paperback, £4.99. (Horror/suspense novel, first published in Canada [?], 1984.) *1st March 1993*.

Stephensen-Payne, Phil. **Robert Heinlein: Stormtrooping Guru – A Working Bibliography**. "Galactic Central Bibliographies for the Avid Reader Volume 42." Galactic Central Publications [25A Copgrove Rd., Leeds LS8 2SP], ISBN 1-871133-35-1, 9+100pp, paperbound, £4. (Sf author bibliography; first edition; recommended; earlier volumes in this useful small-press series of well-researched bibliographies have covered such authors as Brian Aldiss, Poul Anderson, Philip K. Dick, Philip José Farmer, Harry Harrison, Frank Herbert, Fritz Leiber, Anne McCaffrey, Eric Frank Russell, Theodore Sturgeon, Jack Vance and John Wyndham.) *February 1993*.

Vance, Jack. **Araminta Station: The Cadwal Chronicles, Book One**. Hodder/NEL, ISBN 0-450-49733-X, 480pp, paperback, £5.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1987; reviewed by Ken Brown in *Interzone* 31.) *4th March 1993*.

Vance, Jack. **Ecce and Old Earth: The Cadwal Chronicles, Book II**. Hodder/NEL, ISBN 0-450-57725-2, 435pp, paperback, £5.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1991; reviewed by Ken Brown in *Interzone* 56.) *4th March 1993*.

Vance, Jack. **Throy: The Cadwal Chronicles, Book Three**. New English Library, ISBN 0-450-58105-5, 186pp, hardcover, £15.99. (Sf novel, first published in the USA, 1992; there is a simultaneous trade paperback edition [not seen].) *4th March 1993*.

Voermans, Paul. **And Disregards the Rest**. Gollancz/VGSF, ISBN 0-575-05282-1, 256pp, paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in 1992; reviewed by Paul McAuley in *Interzone* 61.) *25th March 1993*.

Voermans, Paul. **The Weird Colonial Boy**. Gollancz, ISBN 0-575-05325-9, 302pp, hardcover, £15.99. (Sf novel, first edition; the second published book by this young Australian writer.) *25th March 1993*.

Watson, Ian. **The Martian Inca**. Gollancz/VGSF, ISBN 0-575-05558-8, 203pp, paperback, £3.99. (Sf novel, first published in 1977; one of Watson's best.) *25th March 1993*.

Watson, Ian. **Space Marine**. "Warhammer 40.000." Boxtree, ISBN 1-85283-840-X, 264pp, paperback, £3.99. (Shared-world sf novel, first edition; this had been scheduled to appear in 1991 in Games Workshop's "GW Books" line; however, it was shelved because of that imprint's demise; it's a Gothic space opera of considerable inventiveness and atmosphere; recommended; Boxtree have also reissued Watson's related novel, *Inquisitor*, but they have not sent us a review copy of that title.) *25th February 1993*.

Williamson, Philip G. **The Firstworld Chronicles, 2: The Legend of Shadd's Torment**. Grafton, ISBN 0-586-20906-9, 496pp, paperback, £5.99. (Fantasy novel, first edition.) *15th March 1993*.

Wilson, Colin. **Spider World: The Magician**. Grafton, ISBN 0-586-20557-8, 395pp, paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in 1992; a slightly belated third volume in the "Spider World" series Grafton, ISBN 0-586-20557-8, 395pp, paperback, £4.99. (Sf novel, first published in 1992; a slightly belated third volume in the "Spider World" series which began with *The Tower* and *The Delta*.) *15th March 1993*.

Wood, Bridget. **Rebel Angel**. Headline, ISBN 0-7472-0695-3, 441pp, hardcover, £16.99. (Fantasy novel, first edition; third in the Celtic trilogy [?] which began with *Wolfking* and *The Lost Prince*.) *11th March 1993*.

Yeovil, Jack. **Drachenfels**. "Warhammer." Boxtree, ISBN 1-85283-845-0, 233pp, paperback, £3.99. (Shared-world fantasy novel, first published in 1989; "Jack Yeovil" is a pseudonym of Kim Newman; a welcome reissue of his witty first novel set against this gaming background.) *25th February 1993*.

Zahn, Timothy. **Dark Force Rising: Star Wars, Volume 2**. Bantam, ISBN 0-553-40442-3, 406pp, paperback, £3.99. (Shared-universe sf novel, first published in the USA, 1992; reviewed by John Clute in *Interzone* 61.) *18th March 1993*.

Overseas Books Received

Banks, Iain M. **Against a Dark Background**. Bantam/Spectra, ISBN 0-553-29225-0, 515pp, paperback, $5.99. (Sf novel, first published in the UK, 1993; proof copy received.) *July 1993*.

Blake, Sterling. **Chiller**. Bantam, ISBN 0-553-09376-2, 485pp, hardcover, $21.95. (Sf novel, first edition; proof copy received; this is yet another serial-killer shocker, with sf elements [cryogenics] thrown in; it appears to be a debut novel.) *12th July 1993*.

Brin, David. **Glory Season**. Bantam/Spectra, ISBN 0-553-07645-0, 560pp, hardcover, $22.95. (Sf novel, first edition; proof copy received.) *17th May 1993*.

Coppel, Alfred. **Glory: Book One of the Goldenwing Cycle**. Tor, ISBN 0-312-85469-2, 343pp, hardcover, $21.95. (Sf novel; first edition; proof copy received; Coppel is an old-timer in the field [born 1921], apparently making something of a return to sf with this book which the publishers describe as "SF in its pure form, hard SF adventure, in a large-scale, large-cast epic of men and women far out in space in the distant future"; the accompanying publicity sheet contains praise from Poul Anderson, Gordon R. Dickson, Gene Wolfe and, surprise, Brian Aldiss.) *May 1993*.

Costikyan, Greg. **By the Sword**. Tor, ISBN 0-312-85489-7, 253pp, hardcover, $19.95. (Fantasy novel; first edition; proof copy received; the back cover gives the title as *By the Sword: Magic of the Plains*; the writer is a well-known fantasy game designer, author of a previous book called *Another Day, Another Dungeon*; this new novel has previously been published "on-line" in a computer network called Prodigy, where, according to Tor's publicity, it has already gained "tens of thousands of readers"; gosh, maybe we are seeing the future shape of literature here.) *June 1993*.

De Lint, Charles. **Dreams Underfoot: The Newford Collection**. Introduction by Terri Windling. Tor, ISBN 0-312-85205-3, 414pp, hardcover, $22.95. (Fantasy collection; first edition; proof copy received.) *April 1993*.

Denton, Bradley. **Blackburn**. St Martin's Press, ISBN 0-312-08705-5, 296pp, hardcover, $19.95. (Humorous [?] horror novel,

first edition; the author has previously written two sf books; this one, which seems to be a dark satire on serial-killing novels, comes with cover raves from Michael Bishop and Howard Waldrop.) *25th February 1993.*

Reginald, Robert. **Science Fiction and Fantasy and Literature, 1975-1991: A Bibliography of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Fiction Books and Nonfiction Monographs.** Gale Research, ISBN 0-8103-1825-3, xii+1512pp, hardcover, $199. (Primary and secondary bibliography of sf/fantasy/horror books, first edition; sequel to the same compiler's *Science Fiction and Fantasy and Literature: A Checklist, 1700-1974* [Gale, 1979]) "Robert Reginald" is a pseudonym of Michael Burgess; alphabetically arranged by author or editor, this work attempts to list first editions of all English-language books which fall within, or comment on, the stated genres; each title entry gives subtitle [if any], place of publication, publisher's name, date, pagination and a brief definition of the type of book; there are also title and series indexes, and full lists of award winners; this is a magnificent bibliography, containing over 1,500 pages of meticulously organized and highly reliable data; although it covers a span of only 17 years, these are years which have seen an enormous explosion in sf/fantasy publishing; as Reginald says in his introduction, "more original titles of science fiction, fantasy, and supernatural horror were published between 1975 and 1991 than were issued in the entire previous history of the genre through 1974"; as a measure of the book's completeness, let it be noted that my own entry, headed "PRINGLE, David (William), 1950- ," lists 18 volumes that I have written, edited or co-edited, right down to such minor items as a 24-page pamphlet on sf which I wrote for Leeds City Libraries in 1978; never having bothered to compile my own bibliography, I hadn't realized I had produced so much; all bibliographies contain errors and omissions, though in this case they seem to be remarkably few; highly recommended.) *February 1993.*

Vance, Jack. **Throy: Book Three of the Cadwal Chronicles**. Tor, ISBN 0-312-85133-2, 255pp, hardcover, $18.95. (Sf novel; first published in a small-press limited edition, 1992; proof copy received.) *May 1993.*

Wells, Angus. **Wild Magic: The Godwars, Book III**. Bantam/Spectra, ISBN 0-553-29130-0, 518pp, paperback, $5.50. (Fantasy novel, first published in the UK??, 1993; proof copy received.) *June 1993.*

Photo by Howard M. Cramer

Robert Reginald, bibliographer extraordinary, receiving a "Special Lifetime Collectors Award" in Los Angeles, February 1993. On the left of the picture is presenter Dennis Etchison.

Mutant Popcorn

Continued from page 35

story rules, and especially its remarkable inexplicitness as to whether Dad actually does sign on the dotted line to get the "free trial" – maybe because it's just a little *too* threatening to suggest that everlasting damnation is negotiable, or that retail credit contracts can actually be broken with impunity. Above all, it's ironic that a film that sets out so determinedly to proclaim the distance and difference between cinema and broadcast TV should find itself so studiously emulating television's own channel-zapping pace (and especially ironic that it does it so poorly, with a countdown that seems disconnected from any actual narrative temporality and runs out with far too much movie left to play). But ten-year-olds will laugh at it, and accompanying adults are at least spared the *Toys* experience of having to field a two-hour barrage of "What did he say?" and "Why is he doing that?" It's all too easy to dismiss this stuff from the comfort of the rear stalls as toothless, childish, and routine, but those guys really know the value of a decent night's sleep. **(Nick Lowe)**

SMALL ADS

FOR SALE: SF/F, horror, mysteries, etc. Books, magazines, comics. 1000's. Free search. Buying, trading. JS, 1500 Main Avenue, Kaukauna, Wisconsin 54130, USA.

SF/FANTASY, weird paperbacks, pulps and guides. SAE to Zardoz Books, 20 Whitecroft, Dilton Marsh, Wiltshire BA13 4DJ.

MAELSTROM No. 6 contains stories by Edmund Harwood, Joel Lane, Edward M. Rumble, Conrad Williams, Victoria Hurst, Richard Barlow and others. £1.50 post free from Sol Publications, 58 Malvern, Coleman Street, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5AD.

BOOK SEARCH SERVICE. I offer a comprehensive search for those elusive titles. Whether you are trying to complete a collection or want a book which is just out of print. Please send details to: G. Long, 48 Peabody Road, Farnborough, Hants. HU14 6HA.

FREE SF AND FANTASY BOOK LIST issued regularly. Approx. 1000 books each list, mainly paperbacks, all reasonably priced. S.A.E. to Mooncat SF, 7 King Edwards Road, Enfield, Middx. EN3 7DA.

INTERZONE: THE 4TH ANTHOLOGY (Simon & Schuster) hardcover – now only £5.00 (postage paid) from The Unlimited Dream Company, 127 Gaisford St., London NW5 2EG.

CRITICAL ASSEMBLY II: Hugo-winner David Langford's legendary SF review columns. Revised/reset, 70,000 words softbound. £9.75 post free from: David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading RG1 5AU.

THE HOUR OF THE THIN OX and **OTHER VOICES** – the two linked fantasy novels I wrote before *Take Back Plenty* – paperback, signed, £1.50 each inc. p&p, from me: Colin Greenland, 2a Ortygia House, 6 Lower Road, Harrow, Middx. HA2 0DA.

SF NEWS, REVIEWS and much more: *Science Fiction Chronicle*, the monthly American and British SF/fantasy news magazine, 11-time Hugo nomineee, air-mailed direct from the USA to you for £25 yearly. Sample £3. Algol Press, c/o E. Lindsay, 69 Barry Road, Carnoustie, Angus DD7 7QQ.

FANTASTIC LITERATURE. Free lists of SF, Fantasy and Weird Fiction. Six lists per annum, 1,000s of choice items. Write to: 25 Avondale Rd., Rayleigh, Essex SS6 8NJ or phone 0268-747564.

WRITE FOR PUBLICATION AND PROFIT – learn the professionals' success secrets. Send for details and FREE copy of a special report "How to Earn £180 a Day as a Writer": School of Creative Writing (INTZ), Tregeraint House, Zennor, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3DB. (0736-797061.)

STRANGE ATTRACTOR #3 Packed with fiction and readers' letters. Don't miss this issue's competition! First two issues attracted great reviews and soon sold out. Wanna see why? £2.00 from *Strange Attractor*, 111 Sundon Rd., Houghton Regis, Beds. LU5 5NL.

SIGNED BOOKS BY BRIAN STABLEFORD: *The Way to Write Science Fiction* – £8 hardcover, £5 paperback; *The Empire of Fear* – £10 hardcover, £5 C-format paperback. Post free in the UK. Order from Brian Stableford, 113 St Peter's Road, Reading Berks. RG6 1PG.

I'VE BEEN SELLING reasonably priced genre fiction (including SF, fantasy & horror) in paperbacks, hardcovers and magazines since 1967. Free huge monthly catalogues! Pandora's Books, Box MI-54, Neche, ND 58265, USA.

J.G. BALLARD – those interested in his bibliography should read *JGB News*, an occasional newsletter full of minutiae and comment. Issue 19 now out: £2 ($4 USA) from David Pringle, 217 Preston Drove, Brighton BN1 6FL, UK.

MkIV CARR-SCHMIDT DREAM-MACHINE: biofeedback-linked strobe shades, computer interfacing, solar charging. For the interactive exploration of unconscious fantasy. SAE to Highland Psionics, Scoraig, Garve, Scotland IV23 2RE.

SMALL ADS in *Interzone* reach over 10,000 people. If you wish to advertise please send your ad copy, *together with payment*, to *Interzone*, 217 Preston Drove, Brighton BN1 6FL. Rates: 25 pence per word, minimum of ten words, discount of 10% for insertions repeated in three issues. (VAT is inclusive.)

FOR SALE. 19 volumes "Gor" series original paperbacks in detachable hard cloth covers. Offers. Tel. 081-868 7999.

OUT OF PRINT/SECONDHAND science fiction, fantasy, horror books. Regular catalogues issued. Reading copies and collectables. Send stamp please to Kirk Ruebotham, 16 Beaconsfield Road, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4BX.

AKLO, JOURNAL OF THE FANTASTIC. Arthur Machen, Baron Corvo, Ronald Firbank, much more. 95pp, £3 from Mark Valentine, 10/12 Castle Gate, Clitheroe, Lancs. BB7 1AZ.

COMING NEXT MONTH IN *INTERZONE*

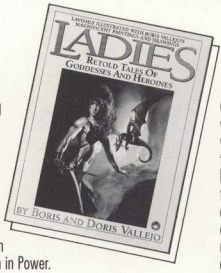
New stories by Storm Constantine, Terry Bisson and several writers who are appearing for the first time in our pages. We also have a rare interview with talented Australian sf author Greg Egan, plus all our usual reviews and features. So watch out for the July *Interzone*, on sale in June.

PAPER TIGER

Fantasy·without·Frontiers

The myths and legends surrounding the dragon are brought to life with outstanding illustrations and intriguing text.

THE BOOK OF THE DRAGON
Ciruelo and Montse Sant
£10.95 Limpback ISBN 1 85028 214 5

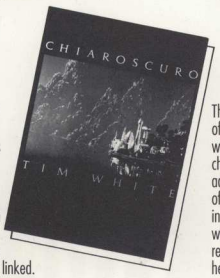


A dazzling melding of verbal and visual artistry which forms a fitting celebration of Women in Power.

LADIES
Boris Vallejo
£12.95 Limpback ISBN 1 85028 230 7

Captured within this volume is the very best of this talented artist, now one of the most sought after and respected of illustrators.

THROUGH A LOGKING GLASS
Wayne Anderson
£10.95 Limpback ISBN 1 85028 212 9



The second volume of Tim White's collected works where imagination and fantasy are inextricably linked.

CHIAROSCURO
Tim White
£9.95 Limpback ISBN 1 85028 072 X

The facsimile of a diary which charts the adventures of a girl in space who refers to herself as 'I'.

DIARY OF A SPACEPERSON
Chris Foss
£10.95 Limpback ISBN 1 85028 049 5

A compendium of the best of science fiction and fantasy work of today's leading illustrators including Jim Fitzpatrick, Chris Foss and Ian Miller.

THE FLIGHTS OF ICARUS
Martyn Dean and Roger Dean
£9.95 Limpback ISBN 0 905895 16 9

ORDER YOUR PAPER TIGER TITLES NOW – PRICES ARE INCLUSIVE OF POSTAGE AND PACKAGING

SIMPLY FILL IN OR PHOTOCOPY THE FORM BELOW, OR WRITE, WITH YOUR DETAILS AND PAYMENT TO:
GRANTHAM BOOK SERVICES LTD, c/o INTERZONE, 217 PRESTON DROVE, BRIGHTON, SUSSEX BN1 6FL

PAPER TIGER ORDER FORM

NAME

ADDRESS

POST CODE

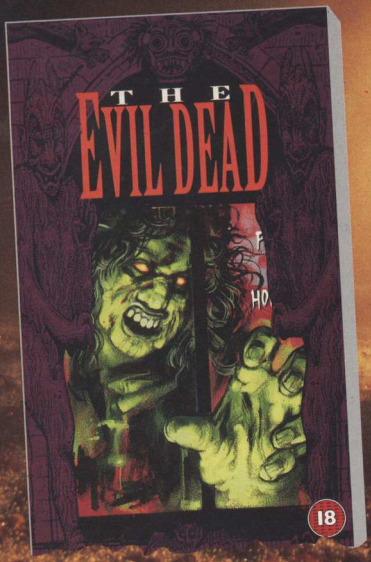
PLEASE SEND ME

	copy(ies) THE BOOK OF THE DRAGON (1 85028 214 5) at £10.95 (Limpback) each
	copy(ies) LADIES (1 85028 230 7) at £12.95 (Limpback) each
	copy(ies) THROUGH A LOOKING GLASS (1 85028 212 9) at £10.95 (Limpback) each
	copy(ies) CHIAROSCURO (1 85028 072 X) at £9.95 (Limpback) each
	copy(ies) DIARY OF A SPACEPERSON (1 85028 049 5) at £10.95 (Limpback) each
	copy(ies) THE FLIGHTS OF ICARUS (0 905895 16 9) at £9.95 (Limpback) each

Paper Tiger is an imprint of Dragon's World Ltd.

I ENCLOSE A CHEQUE MADE PAYABLE TO GRANTHAM BOOK SERVICES LTD for £

UNEARTH A COPY OF THE EVIL DEAD...



AVAILABLE NOW ON VIDEO

AT ALL GOOD VIDEO STORES

"ARMY OF DARKNESS - THE MEDIEVAL DEAD" AT CINEMAS FROM 11TH JUNE 1993

PolyGram Video

OR ORDER FROM VIDEO PLUS DIRECT

SIMPLY RING US ON
0733 232800

FAX US ON
0733 238966

Quantity: @10.99 each

NAME:

ADDRESS:

Signature:

I wish to pay by:

☐ Access ☐ Barclaycard/Visa ☐ Diners Club ☐ American Express

☐ Cheque ☐ Postal Order

Credit Card No: ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Expires on:

CREDIT CARD - Access, Diners Club, American Express, Barclaycard/Visa. **Opening hours:** Saturday & Sunday 9am - 6pm. Monday to Friday 9am - 8pm.
BY POST - Send your cheque / postal order made payable to VIDEO PLUS DIRECT with the order form & we will despatch your order immediately after cheque clearance.
Post to: VIDEO PLUS DIRECT, P.O. BOX 190 PETERBOROUGH PE2 6UW ENGLAND