won most major science fiction awards.

In more recent films and novels, computers have become more than part of the furniture, or even characters, and are now often integral parts of the plot itself. A first-class example is Walt Disney's *Tron*. We talked about this exceptional film (its name is derived from an operating system mnemonic — TRace ON), as an example of computerised animation (see page 181). It takes place both in the real world and *inside* a computer. The outside world has characters such as software engineers, systems programmers and other computer people; but inside the machine the individual parts of the program and operating system become the characters, and the machine architecture is the scenario against which the action is played out.

There are also works of fiction that do not actually mention computers at all, but leave the reader in no doubt that without extremely powerful computing machinery, the situation portrayed could never exist. Foremost among these are George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Both of these books are set in their author's future, in a world totally overtaken by a small ruling clique who repress the rest of the population. It is perhaps to these two books that we should look to glimpse the possibilities of misuse of computing power.

It is not possible for us to be entirely exhaustive in this analysis of fictional representations of computers, but some novels display uniquely imaginative ideas. John Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* is a good example. This is a considerable novel (812 pages in the paperback edition), which centres on the premise that it is the work of a supercomputer called WESCAC, and that it relates an incident that happened to its 'author'.

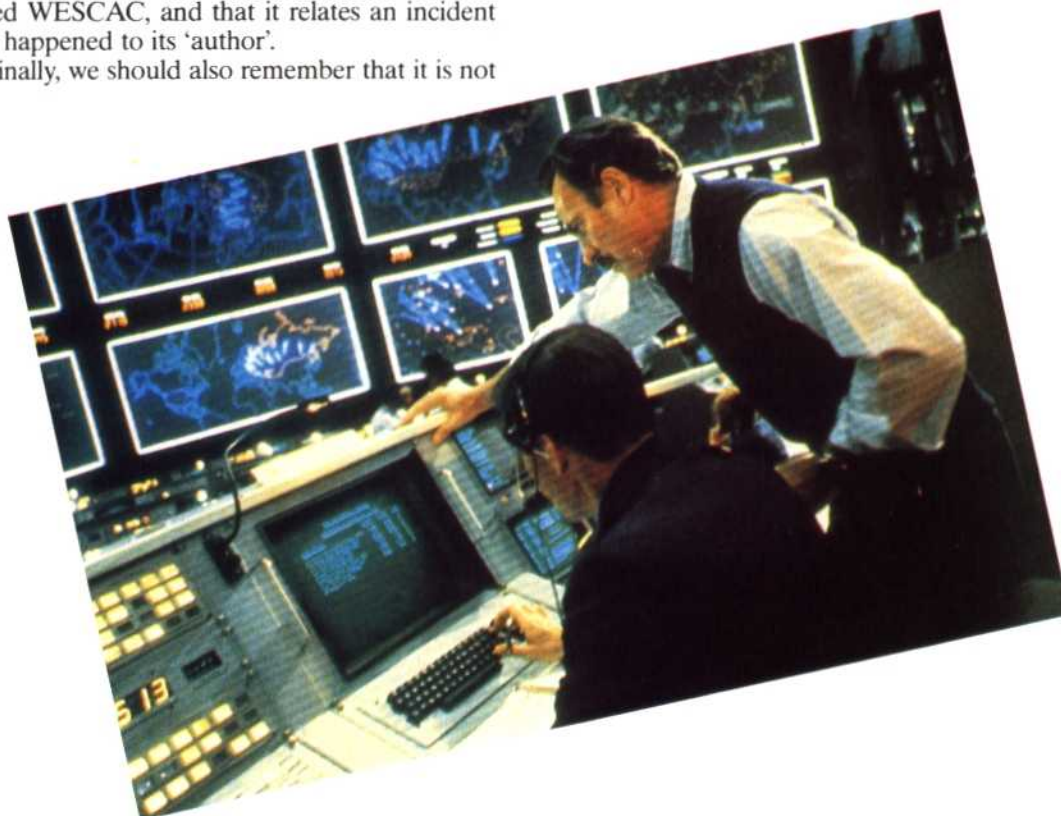Finally, we should also remember that it is not

Time Out Of Mind
Part vehicle, part artificial intelligence, Dr Who's Tardis falls very firmly into the area of computer as a product of the author's imagination. Though the interrogation method is via a keyboard and visual display unit, the intelligence of the machine itself is assumed to be limitless, as is the contents of its memory

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only in the realm of fiction that one finds creative writing about computers. Of all the thousands of specialist, non-fiction books that have been written about computers and computing, one stands out from the rest simply for the quality of its narrative. Tracy Kidder's *Soul Of A New Machine* is the history of the development of Data General's Eagle, a 32-bit minicomputer. While the story is ostensibly that of the engineers and managers involved in the project, one is left in no doubt that the star is the computer itself.

War Games
Unwittingly, a teenage computer user attempting to communicate with a friend over the public telephone network breaks into the main NATO defence computer. Believing what he sees to be a game, he starts to play, only to discover that he has started World War Three...

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