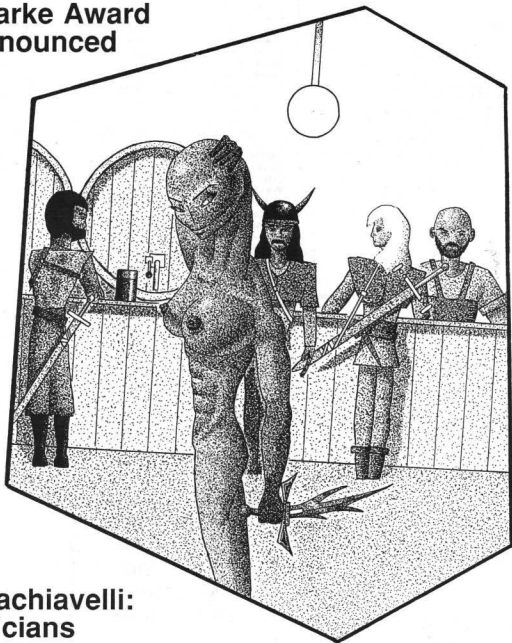


95p *Matrix* 98

The Newsletter of the British Science Fiction Association

**Arthur C Clarke Award
Shortlist announced**



**Roll over Machiavelli:
SF for Politicians**

February — March 1992

BSFA membership costs £12 (UK & EC), £15 (non-EC Europe), £18/£25air Australia, \$25/\$40air US per year from:

NEW MEMBERS:

Jo Raine, 29 Thornville Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS26 8EW

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS:

Keith Freeman, 269 Wykeham Road, Reading RG6 1PL

USA MEMBERSHIPS:

Cy Chauvin, 14248 Wilfred St., Detroit, MI 48213, USA

Matrix is edited by:

Jenny & Steven Glover, 16 Avary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP (tel: 0532 791264)

MEDIA:

Ian Mundell, 21 Radford House, 1 Pembroke Gardens, Notting Hill Gate, London W2 4EE

COMPETITIONS:

Roger Robinson, 75 Rosslyn Avenue, Harold Wood, Essex RM3 0RG

NEWS, CLUBS: Vacancy

INFORMATION:

Phil Nichols, 57 Grange Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 8PB

SMALL PRESS AND MAGAZINES:

Roger Waddington, 4 Commercial Street, Norton, Malton, N. Yorks. YO17 9ES

BSFA Publications

FOCUS: Cecil Nurse, 49 Station Road, Haxby, York YO3 8LU (tel: 0904 765419)

PAPERBACK INFERNO: Andy Sawyer, 1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 4BT (tel: 051 336 3355)

VECTOR: Kev McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7QF
 & Catie Cary, 224 Southway, Park Barn, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6DN

BSFA Officials

TREASURER: Brett Cockrell, 32 Sovereign Gate, King George's Ave, Watford (tel: 0923 213181)

COORDINATOR: Kev McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7QF (tel: 05395 62883)

Useful Contacts

ORBITERS: Sue Thomason, 190 Coach Road, Sleights, near Whitby, N. Yorks. YO22 5EN

BSFA AWARDS: Nic Mahoney, 276 Lonsdale Ave, Intake, Doncaster DN2 6HJ

FOREIGN LIAISON: Bridget Wilkinson, 17 Mimosa, 29 Avenue Road, London N15

Printed by PDC Copyprint, 11 Jeffries Passage, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4AP.

British Science Fiction Association Ltd.
 Company No. 921500. Registered Address 60 Bournehead Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ.
 Registered in England. Limited by Guarantee.

Copyright © BSFA Ltd 1992 Individual copyrights are the property of the authors and editors. ISSN: 0307 3335.

New & Rejoined Members

Allison, Stuart

Bell, Dave

Bisson, Simon H Le G

Blakeborough, Peter: 4 Radical Ride, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 4UH

Blissett, Michael K

Brock, Christina: AB & C Shoe Repairs, Croft Road, Crowborough, E Sussex TN6 1DL

Browne, Roisin: 61 Kingsbridge Ct, Harpurhey, Manchester M9 1SW

Calvert, John: 88 Blackburn Road, Clayton-le-Moors, near Accrington, Lancashire BB5 5JH

Clintan, Daniel

Coan, Mike

Cook, Alistair S P: Spinneys, Woodham Mortimer, Maldon, Essex CM9 6SX

Cowen, Malcolm: 23 Bristol Ave, Levenshulme, Manchester M19 3NU

Cutajar, Sue

Dendy, Phillip: 28 Griffin Close, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2TZ

Dorrell, Paul

Drake SF & F Association: c/o Ms S Jessop, 22 Arkwright Gardens, Kings Tamerton, Plymouth PL5 2BJ

Dublin University SF Society

Dunn, Jenny D M: 41 Bournehead Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5BA

Furnass, Malcolm

Haines, Nicholas D: 285 Mill Road, Cambridge CB1 3DF

Harris, Jeff: GPO Box 288, Malden 5070, Australia

Hastings Arts: c/o George Hay, 53B All Saints St, Hastings, E Sussex TN34 3BN

Helsinki University SF Club (HYSEK): c/o Ari Veintie, Harjakuu 6A 2A, SF 00500 Helsinki, Finland

Highton, Imelda M: 16 Forrest Ave, Marsh, Huddersfield, W Yorkshire HD1 4PL

Holdstock, Robert

Jenkins, David

Jones, Gwyneth A: 30 Roundhill Crescent, Brighton BN2 3FR

Kaneria, Hasu: 34 Lyon Park Ave, Wembley, Middlesex HA0 4DX

Lovell, Ray

McCarthy, Roz

Marley, Peter C: 16 Blatherwick Court, Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK5 6ED

Marshall, John: 50 Wheatley Lane, Ben Rhydydd, Ilkley, West Yorkshire LS29 8PL

Meany, John G

Morris, Bill

Mulligan, Stephen B: 27 Pinnacle House, Manchester Road, Isle of Dogs, London E14 9TW
 Naylor, Christopher I: 7 Cedar Close, Buckhurst Hill, Essex IG9 6EJ

Nottingham University SF Society

Novis, Scott R

Ogden, Christopher M: 71 Enid Wood House, High Street, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1LN

O'Hara, Edward K: 84 Station Road, Framlingham, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 9EE

Pierce, Coetnor R: Llanerch, Llewellyn Ave, Glan Conwy, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd LL28 5LU

Pollard, Ian: 5 Echo Square, Gravesend, Kent DA12 1NP

Queens University of Belfast

Quinn, Tony: 19 Ashwood Ave, Clondalkin, Dublin 22

Rimmer, John M

Ross, P T

Seager, Paul: 4 Harvard Court, Highwoods, Colchester, Essex CO4 4SQ

Sewell, Richard J: 42 Station Road, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1AA

Sorensen, Ian

Sylvester, Kay

Tuton, Ms Chris

Warne, Douglas A

White, Mike

Williams, Roddy: Flat 4, 15 St Ann's Villas, London W11 4RT

Wilson, Andrew J

Any opinions expressed are those of individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of either the editor or the BSFA.

Advertising: Cover £40, full page £35, half page £20, quarter page £15. Rates for multiple insertions negotiable.

Distribution of loose flyers or booklets with BSFA mailings is negotiable. Requests for advertising should be sent to Kev McVeigh.

Submission Details

We can read a wide variety of formats: handwriting is perfectly acceptable if permanent ink is used (we'd be grateful if unusual words could be indicated and reprinted at the end), but we can also accept submissions as plain character files on IBM readable floppy disks (all 5¼" or 3½" formats). We can transfer information from Atari, Amiga or the newer Macintosh machines only if the diskette has been formatted on a PC, and finally we can read PCW disks only by displaying the text on the flickering screen of an ageing CPC464. Should you have access to E-mail, we can receive articles and comments over Janet at: bph6sg@uk.ac.leeds.cms1.

**Come to the
Collating
Weekend
4-5 April**

**Dept. of Applied
Statistics
Reading University
Contact
Keith Freeman
(0734 666142)**

**Deadline
March
14th**

Determinants



Like many BSFA members, we've been watching Diana Wynne Jones' *Archer's Goon* lately on television. Unlike most viewers, however, it's been Quentin Sykes we've sympathised with. Once upon a time he committed himself to the perpetual production of 2000 words every three months — no real problem, one would think. Then one day (quite by accident?)

he discovers the awful consequences of defaulting. Not having met the obligation, he gets to meet the eponymous goon, at which point the fan and editor lose interest in the programme, to be replaced by a family wondering how they'd cope themselves with such an unheard-of happening.

At first, we compared poor Sykes' plight with that of an apa member, struggling to keep up his minimum activity requirement to keep receiving that wonderful regular (in all the best apas, anyway) parcel of Other People's Words. Then as the *Matrix* deadline crept up on us, we began to take a more personal interest: one of us musing on the sheer power of a well chosen 2000 words (at twenty Drabbles or forty mini-sagas, a little long for a competition or writing game at a con) while the other dreamed of recasting the entire series in a BSFA light, with different council members "farming" the appropriate areas of fanish endeavour. We soon decided that while this was rather fun, it was too full of mischievous potential for use in a serious and constructive editorial.

Then inspiration struck! Why identify with that drip Sykes, struggling to produce his 2000 words (I mean, what an excuse. Just because someone can use them to take over the world), when we could identify with the Goon, or maybe even the lordly Archer himself. To the best of our knowledge, there are about eight hundred of you out there who haven't written for *Matrix*. There's a position that says "I pay my subscription, that covers any duty I have to the BSFA", but we don't think this is really tenable. On periodical cover price alone, the BSFA gives more back to the membership than the current £12 per year. Of course, the reply goes, a club is meant to be better value for its members than for the outsiders who buy the magazines, but by the same token, a club has a right to expect the participation of its membership in club activities.

A small minority of the membership are responsible for almost all of the reviews, articles, news items and letters in all the publications. We can safely assume they get something out of it that they can't get elsewhere, be it egoboo or fatigue-toxin high. The problem is, though, that this group of active members are in danger of eventual burn-out. It is really too much to expect the occasional letter or short article from a wider range of members? We are always on the lookout for reports on events members have attended, whether they are conventions, interviews, book signings or whatever. Fanzine reviews, or articles about fanzines are welcome too, as are articles for the "Cry Panic" column and "SoapBox". We'd really like to know more about what local sf clubs get up to, and always, always, always, we need to know SF or fantasy-oriented news as fast as you hear it yourselves.

On that last point, you may have noticed the disappearance of Dave Hodson and Tommy Ferguson from the "Team *Matrix*" listing on page two. Both their posts (News Editor and Clubs Columnist) are open to interested applicants. The

ideal News Editor would have connections with the publishing scene, and access to information on upcoming publications. Access to the Usenet would be an advantage. The perfect Clubs Columnist would be willing to root out details of new clubs, collate them with the rest of the clubs listing and occasionally chase up articles from clubs on what they're getting up to.

Money, money, money...

You may have noticed that this *Matrix*, like the last, contains only twenty pages. This is in good part because we simply didn't have the material to give you the traditional 24 pages. So why didn't we increase the print size and change the layout to make you think you were getting more?

Basically, the BSFA doesn't have the amount of ready money it should have. We are owed a sufficiently large sum of money that both an increase in membership and a reduction in the number of periodicals may be on the cards — possibly leading to a vicious circle as members haemorrhage out. Obviously any action will have to be considered by the Committee or AGM (to be held in the Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool on Easter Saturday at 4pm), but it is incredibly tempting to suggest a letter-writing campaign or picket of book launches and signings held at a certain SF and comics chain with, shall we say, rather *Forboding Prices*. Alternatively, where is Archer's Goon when we really need him?

Seriously though, barring a sudden change of heart on the part of our debtors (not too likely in the recession) or a sudden surge in memberships (ditto), there may well have to be a serious re-think on the periodicals. Now is the time to make your ideas (and feelings?) known so that possible options can be looked into before the AGM. This is also a good time to mention that you do not have to be a member of the Easterncon to attend the AGM. Alternatively, you can pass on your proxy to someone from your area who is going to the con.

Paperback Inferno Editor to quit

Andy Sawyer took over as editor from Joseph Nicholas with issue 55 and has just finished issue 94. By the time I depart, he writes, I will have been at the helm for 40 or more issues - a great chunk out of one's life! Over the last few months I've wanted to spend more time on other writing projects, my job, and just hanging out with the family and I feel I'm beginning to get stale with "PI". There are various things which could be done to give a different look to the magazine, but I no longer feel I have the energy to do them. Anyone interested in becoming editor should contact Kev McVeigh — more in *Empire Dreams* later in this issue.

Contents

News 4

BSFA affairs

Empire Dreams 7

Kev McVeigh

BSFA Back

issues 8

Maureen Speller

Profile 19

Cecil Nurse

Information Service

& H P Lovecraft 8

Phil Nichols & J Howard

Media File

Skywatching 9

Mark Ogier

Pipe Dreams 9

Ian Mundell

Barton Fink 10

Ian Nathan

Suburban Commando 10

Ian Mundell

Bill & Ted's

Bogus Journey 11

Jessica Yates

Tales from

the Middle Classes 11

Ben Wharton

Noticeboard 13

It's Grim up North 12

Chris Hart

Roll over

Machlavelli 13

15 volunteers (?)

The Periodic Table

Pentacoon 14

Barry Traish

Contour Mapping 14

Cry "Fanan"

I'm going out — 16

It may be some time

Mike Rogers

Club Scene

BSFA London meetings 16

Maureen Speller

Soapbox

Manners maketh 16

the Fan

Helena Bowles

WriteBack 17

Competition Corner 19

Roger Robinson



News

from Cyril Simsa, Alexander Popov, Kev McVeigh, Paul McAuley, Stephen Baxter, Ken Campbell, Roger Robinson, Martin R Webb, Steve Jeffery, Charles Stross, Jessica Yates and your editors

What is a "Thrice"? asked several frustrated readers. Basically, a Thrice is what happens to a Trekker when it is handwritten and a cup of coffee gets spilled on top of it and the tired word processor peers down at mis-interprets the word. Many apologies to Peter Dunn, who wrote the Gene Roddenberry obituary in the last issue, and it should be added that Roddenberry was involved in 79 classic Trek episodes, not 74, as the text says, likewise the text should read "any of his speeches" instead of "any SF his speeches". Peter Dunn said that it could all be blamed on the printer (*Us, in fact, as suppliers of camera ready copy to PDC - Eds*), but please to mention that his text was correct, or he will never be able to look a Trekker in the face again.

Arthur C Clarke Award Shortlist

The shortlist for this award was announced 22 January and consists of (in no particular order) **P J McAuley** *Eternal Light* (Gollancz); **Gwyneth Jones** *White Queen* (Gollancz); **R Paul Russo** *Subterranean Gallery* (Grafton); **Pat Cadigan** *Synners* (Grafton); **Dan Simmons** *The Hyperion Cantos* (Headline - this is both *Hyperion* books together); and **Stephen Baxter** *Raft* (HarperCollins).

Kev McVeigh, the BSFA Co-ordinator and *Vector* co-editor and Cecil Nurse, *Focus* editor were the BSFA judges and the award will be presented at the Space Festival, Minehead, in July. It is timed to coincide with Arthur C Clarke's 80th birthday and he is hoping to present the award in person.

To celebrate the 45

In June, Gollancz will publish *In Dreams*, the anthology of stories about the 45 rpm single and it's associated culture, as an original paperback with an introduction by the noted rock critic Charles Shaar Murray (author of *Croston Traffic and Shots from the Hip*). The 27 stories (yes, count them all, 27) are: *Fat Tuesday*, Ian McDonald; *The Discovery of Running Bare*, Jonathan Carroll; *Night Shift Sister*, Nicholas Royle; *Worthless*, Greg Egan; *Nyro Fiddles*, P Paul Wilson; *Thrum*, Steve Rasmie; *Digital to Analogue*, Alastair Reynolds; *Sticks*, Lewis Shiner; *The Elvis National Theatre of Ostinova*, Jonathan Lethem & Lukas Jaeger; *Candy Comes Back*, Colin Greenland; *Honey I'm home*, Lisa Tuttle; *The Reflection Once Removed*, Scott Bradfield; *Life in the Groove*, Ian Watson; *Black Day at Bad Rock*, Christopher Fowler; *Riders on the Storm*, Mark Timlin; *The Shiny Surface*, Don Webb; *Weep for the Moon*, Stephen Baxter; *The Man who shot Anarchy*, Gordon, Ray Davis; *Don't Leave Me*, Barrington Bayley; *Falling Stones*, Peter F Hamilton; *Changes*, Andrew Weimer; *Wunderkindergarten*, Mark Laidlaw; *Bold as Love*, Gwyneth Jones; *Blues for a Dying Breed*, Cliff Burns; *Rise Rising Sun First*, Graham Joyce; *Reed John-Paul Forever*, Steve Antczak; and *Snodgrass*, Ian R MacLeod.

Latest from Midnight Rose

After the success of *Temps*, Penguin published *Weerde I* in mid-January with a top and tail prologue/epilogue story "The Lady and/or the Tiger" by Neil Gaiman and Roz Kaveney. Other tales are "A Wolf to Man" by Roz Kaveney; "Sunflower Pump" by Paul Cornell; "Rain" by Christopher Amies; "What God Abandoned" by Mary Gentle; "To the Bad" by Brian Stableford; "A Strange

Sort of Friend" by Josephine Saxton; "Railway Mania" by Michael Fearn; "Blind Fate" by Liz Holliday; "A Change of Season" by Storm Constantine; "Going to the Black Bear" by Colin Greenland and "Ancient of Days" by Charles Stross.

Then the collection *Villains* will be published in mid-March (with a signing session at Illumination, the Eastercon held in Blackpool) containing "The Deliverer" by Storm Constantine; "Bellringers' Overture" by Roz Kaveney; "The Return of the Princess" by Molly Brown; "The Strongest Armour" by Steve Baxter; "The Arts of the Enemy" by Dave Langford; "Examination Night" by Charles Stross; "Count Caradoc and the Penitent Dominic" by Keith Brooke; "The Fair Boot" by Paula Wakefield; "A Knight at the Races" by James Wallis; "Jabberwockish" by Graham Higgins and "Doing Business" by Alex Stewart with "Cartomancy", connecting material by Mary Gentle.

That's not to forget *Eurotemps*, in which the semi-superheroes re-appear as Britain dips a reluctant toe into European society. Linking material here is by Alex Stewart, other material, described by contributor Dave Langford as "superbly well-ordered" are "If Looks Could Kill" by Dave Langford; "A Virus in the System" by Christopher Amies; "Hide and Seek" by Jenny Jones; "Le Grand Moans" by Anne Gay; "El Lobo Dorado is Dead, is Dead" by Liz Holliday; "Playing Safe" by Marcus Rowland; "Sortilege and Serendipity" by Brian Stableford; "Photo Finished" by Molly Brown; "Monastic Lives" by Graham Joyce; "The Foreign Post" by Colin Greenland; "A Problem Shared" by Tina Anghelatos; "Totally Trashed" by Roz Kaveney and "The Law of Being" by Storm Constantine.

Midnight Rose have continued their policy of encouraging new authors, trying to get at least one first sale in every volume. Paula Wakefield is an author to watch (she will also feature in *Weerde II*), so is James Wallis and especially Tina Anghelatos.

SF on the Stage

The gothic cobwebbed kingdom of Gormenghast is scheduled to be inherited by Titus, 77th Earl of Groan. But ex-kitchenboy Steerpike, who eternally strives for power, has other ideas. Performed by the David Glass Ensemble, this is the first ever staging of Gormenghast, with an international mime cast and composer John Eccott (Loose Tubes). They will perform at the Darlington Arts Centre (February 20); Horsham Arts Centre (February 29); Stanwix Theatre in Carlisle (March 12); the Maltings, Berwick upon Tweed (March 14) and London's Battersea Arts Centre (March 17-April 5).

Later, *Mort* will be produced at the Unicorn Theatre in Abingdon, near Oxford, June 10-13. While the audience may be riveted by Death (to be played by Stephen Briggs), Albert is the more challenging role. Terry Pratchett, who is negotiating to do a *Mort* film, plans to be in the audience. (Details from Stephen Briggs 0865 69625, tickets £4).

Other Awards

The most controversial of the World Fantasy Awards, announced at the World Fantasy Convention, Tucson, in November was the Best Short Story, won by Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess's graphic "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; Stephen Jones and Ramsey Campbell won the Best Anthology award for *Best New Horror*. Arnie Fenner (designer of Ziesing and Ursus books) won the Special Award - Professional while Dave McKean won the Best Artist Award. The Special Award - Non-Professional went to Richard Chizmar for *Cemetery Dance* while the Best Collection went to Carol Emshwiller's *The Start of the End of it All and other stories*. Pat Murphy's *Bones* deservedly won the Best Novella award and there was a tie for Best Novel - James Morrow's *Only Begotten Daughter* and Ellen Kushner's *Thomas the Rhymer* while the Lifetime Achievement Award went to Ray Russell. The judges were Emma Bull, Orson Scott Card, Richard Layman, Faren C Miller and Darrel Schweitzer.

Also the latest Writers of the Future contest was won by M C Sumner, from Missouri, whose fiction can be seen in various issues of *Dragon* magazine.

This contest and the sibling Illustrators of the Future contest were set up by L. Ron Hubbard in the 1980's with winners selected every three months. Details from PO Box 1630 (Writers) or 3190 (Illustrators), Los Angeles, CA 90078, USA.

PKD Encore

After the success of the last Philip K Dick weekend, John Joyce and Ken Campbell are going to do it again with **The Other Side of Infinity** on Monday March 2 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (12 Colton House Terrace, The Mall, London SW1Y 5AL. 7.30pm Nash Room tel: 071 930 3647). It will be held as a recognition of the 10th anniversary of PKD's death. Dr Ernesto Spinelli will be there with Brian Aldiss and Petronella Whitfield in *Kindred Blood in Kensington Gore*, Xanthé Gresham talking on *The Women in PKD* and there will be an exploration of the scientific dimension called "Does God play Dice?" with Dr Jack Cohen and Ian Stewart, Dick's "Infinity Speech" and *Desert Island Dicks* with a well-known personality (female, according to gossip). Details from Jeff Merrifield (tel: 0621 893499).

SF to look out for

Alexander Popov's tabloid *Other Worlds* has a print run of 16,000 fortnightly, but the energetic Bulgarian has arranged for the publisher Znack to publish his novel *Province Five* in Russian with an initial print run of 100,000 copies under the pen name of Al Vickers.

Lada Peska, who edits the Czech fanzine *Slan* and the English-language fanzine *Kontak* intends to move into professional publishing and is planning an anthology called *Parallel Worlds*, for which he invites interested writers to send short fiction (reprint welcome, so long as they have not been published in Czech or Slovak). Although rates of pay will be low by Western standards, they will be within the normal Czech rates. Hopefully, this will develop into an annual anthology series, and perhaps there will also be a series of SF novels. Translators are available and willing. Details from Ladislav Peska, PO Box 19, 274 01 Slany, Czechoslovakia.

New Books

Barrett, Neal *J Darn's Uncertain Light* (HarperCollins, March pb). America after the inevitable post-holocaust barbarism.

Baxter, Stephen *Timelike Infinity* (HarperCollins, June £14.99 hb). Future history: the world 2000 years hence is dominated by the alien Qax until a spaceship arrives. Although it had been launched, 1500 years ago, with the intention of establishing a wormhole link through the centuries, the subordinate humans see this as an ideal opportunity to travel back to defeat the Qax invasion before it starts.

Charnas, Suzy McKee *The Vampire Tapestry* (The Women's Press, March, pb £6.95). Dr Edward Weyland is handsome, cool, unreachable — and a vampire. There is a small group of women and children who don't care overmuch for this, they want to destroy him.

Eisenstein, Phyllis *Born to Exile* (HarperCollins, March, £13.99 hb, £8.99 trade pb). 1st of 2 fantasy novels featuring Alaric the Minstrel who searches for his fortune and yearns for Princess Solinde. However, he is a penniless orphan, witches get burned in this particular society and he has magical powers. He has to solve this problem of logic very quickly in sheer self-preservation.

Farmer, Philip *Jose Dayworld Breakup* (HarperCollins March pb). This concludes Farmer's story of a future world so overcrowded that people may only live one day a week.

Feist, Raymond E & Wurts, Janny *Servant of the Empire* (Grafton, £4.99 pb). Sequel to *Daughter of the Empire*. Enough said.

Hart, John *Jizz* (Black Swan, April, £4.99 pb). Fast paced futuristic farce set in the city state of Brighton where Haydan Sabanack searches for the Riddle of Existence.

McDonald, Ian *King of Morning*, *Queen of Day* (Bantam, February, £3.99 pb). Contemporary multi-layered fantasy. Three generations of young women face the darker side of human mythoconsciousness.

Reeves-Stevens, Judith and Garfield *Slade* (Roc 1992 hb — pb 1993) is a futuristic thriller about environmental disaster set against the 2000AD Olympic Games. Look out too for *Realtime* (Doubleday 1992 hb, Bantam 1993 pb) and Garfield's earlier novels — *Bloodship*, *Dreamland* and *Children of the Stroud* being published by Pan real soon now.

Rankin, Robert *They Came and Ate Us* (Corgi, £3.99 pb). More adventures of Barry the Sprout — look out for *The Brenford Trilogy* being reissued by Corgi.

Tem, Melanie: *Blood Moon* (The Women's Press, March, pb £5.95). When Greg is adopted, Brenne knows that there will be problems adjusting to this new relationship. It's all complicated by Greg's power to make things happen. Tepper, Sheri *Beauty* (HarperCollins, May, £14.99 hb). Starting with a re-telling of *The Sleeping Beauty* fable, the novel develops and encompasses everything from Faerie to Hell.

Williamson, Philip *The Firstworld Chronicles: Dinbig of Khimmur* (HarperCollins, March pb). This is the start of a fantasy trilogy by this new British author.

Zahn, Timothy *StarWars Volume 1: Heir to the Empire* (Bantam, April, £3.99 pb). This lead title starts where the film trilogy finished. It appears that there's a cliff hanger born every minute.

It's not SF, but...

Ryan, John Fergus *The Little Brothers of St Mortimer* (Black Swan, April, £4.99 pb). Picaresque Brother Edgar shuffles between Texas and Arkansas providing a service and — perhaps — a religious satire.

Ryman, Geoff 'Was...' (HarperCollins, February) — the extraordinary novel built around *The Wizard of Oz* and the life of Judy Garland.

The **Tolkien Centenary** started a little prematurely with the planting of two trees, representing Telperion and Laurelin, in Oxford University parks and the announcement of vast quantities of reprints of all Tolkien's works and anything available about him. People in Novosibirsk have been crazy about Tolkien for ages, reports Eddie Ivensko and he talks of Tolkien enthusiasts who come from all over to draw swords and spears and call themselves Elves, Dwarves, Nazgul and come fighting for the Ring for some 3-5 days. Last summer he regrets to report that Dark Forces got the ring. However, back in the UK, *The Long Expected Party*, a week long conference will take place in Oxford in August in conjunction with the US Mythopoeic Society and items will include one man performances of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, excursions, fantasy roleplaying and a wreath laying ceremony at Wolvercote Cemetery. Even Private Eye noticed the bookshops piled with Tolkien memorabilia and commented that Tolkien's writing appeals to those with the mental age of a child — computer programmers, hippies and most Americans.

Also there will be a travelling exhibition on the life and works of guess who which will start in Brighton, go to the Midlands and Wales in the summer, London in autumn and the South West at the end of the year. Members of the Tolkien Society will be available to provide readings in conjunction with this exhibition. For more information on these, or for information in general on the Tolkien Society, please contact the publicity officer: Rick Crosby, Flat 4B, Clarence Lodge, Clarence Square, Cheltenham, Glos. GL50 4JN.

SF scene

Bavis, who publish *Isaac Asimov's SF magazine*, *Analogy* and *Ellery Queen...* have been bought out by Bantam in the USA. This precedent is causing a great deal of interest with the myriad implications of a book publisher buying out a magazine publisher.

Deborah Beale will leave Random Century to work with Anthony Cheetham, probably setting up a new publishing house with an SF paperback line. She will be replaced at Random Century by John Jarrold. This musical chairs will be made more frenzied by Macdonald's announcement that it has been placed into administration by the High Court. Since the administrators are partners in the vastly expensive and efficient Price Waterhouse, a swift sale is expected.

Graham Andrews won the Aisling Oheal award of the Irish Science Fiction Association before moving to Belgium. His new book, *Darkness Audible*, tells

the fascinating story of a writer haunted by events in contemporary Belfast. The extra terrestrial forces influence not only the author, but also his analyst.

Steve Baxter has signed a 3 book deal with HarperCollins (see above for *TimeLike Infinity* details) which has also been sold to Penguin/Roc in the US. All 3 books are set in the Xeelee universe.

Terry Brooks can remember reading and writing as far back as he can remember. *The Sword of Shannara* was started while he was at college and he practised law by day and sword 'n' sorcery at night until Lester del Rey picked it out of a pile of unwanted manuscripts. The Shannara series has been described as "big... continuously exciting".

Orson Scott Card said in a recent interview with the ISFA that "I'm weary of European fantasy being written by US authors. There's some wonderful fantasy based on Celtic mythology, but it's got to be the stage where we've got fantasy based on fantasy based on Celtic mythology".

Jack Cohen writing in the Christmas *New Scientist*, dismisses the *Star Trek* Klingons as "obviously a device to save make-up" and refuses to believe in the little green men of flying saucers simply because they are described as men. "Little green sploots" would be much more credible. He acknowledges that SF writers have two opposing difficulties when designing aliens: readers can identify with physically similar characteristics, but it is so very unlikely that humanoid aliens should evolve independent of human conditions. His Top 10 Aliens include Hal Clement's Mesklinites, Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle's "watchmaker" alien variants, Dr Prilicla from James White's *Sector General* series. Putting constraints on authors' imagination and marvelling at the infinite variety displayed in nature, he warns that even the perpetually pregnant symbiont Tribbles devised by David Gerrold for *Star Trek* resemble *Gyrodactylus* fish ectoparasites which contain up to three future generations in the uterus and consequently since sperm from its last few matings can invade a mature embryo, this creature can be a grandmother even before birth.

Stephen Donaldson on a national promotional UK tour revealed in various towns that he thinks David Eddings should have stopped after his first book and that according to a Personality Inventory Test he took once that he's the perfect woman.

Diane Duane collects ethnic recipes and cookbooks though her own cooking tends towards hearty peasant food. Apart from studying German, dabbling with computer graphics, image processing, desktop publishing, fractals, gardening and shortwave radio, she spends her spare time with cartography and made an "Ordnance Survey" map of Zelazny's Amber. She is also trying to learn how to make more spare time.

Lisa Goldstein defined magic realism as "when magic is part of everyday life and it's so common place you don't even talk about it, it just happens. It's not used for good or evil — which is a big deal in high fantasy. In magic realism, it's just there."

Frank Herbert's *The Magic Cottage, Shrine, Fluke and Haunted* are being filmed at present. *Fluke*, which the author saw as a cartoon, is being produced by Carlo Carlei, in the US. David Kirschner, producer of *Child's Play* will produce *The Magic Cottage*, also in the US and there have been some changes made to the story (so what's new). *Shrine* will be produced by Robert Watts and *Haunted*, of which Herbert's own screenplay was dropped by the BBC in 1988, will be filmed in the UK and are, according to Herbert, "... more loyal to the books".

Stanislaw Lem said in a recent general interview that he won't work any more as he's got everything he wants: though he feels bitter against current Poland which he considers is run by "incompetent rabble".

Charles De Lint describes his latest novel, *The Arrow* (to be published in the UK sometime in 1992 — probably) as "a contemporary fantasy, with dream motifs and a vampire figure who feed off people's creativity rather than blood". Going further into the future, his latest US book is *The Little Country* (which should arrive in Britain round about 1995) which is set in Cornwall. He has also sold three more books to Pan which include *Spirit Walk*, a sequel to *Moonheart* and *Mulengro* which includes some gypsy characters. When asked

why he writes fantasy, he replies that "with contemporary fantasy, one can deal with the mythic matter of our hearts by superimposing them against the sharp edge of reality. The juxtaposition of the two heightens the awareness between the inner and outer man or woman, so that each piece of fiction becomes a microcosm for not so much the world at large, as one or two individuals upon their small part of the stage".

Terry Pratchett's first published work came at age 13 when he wrote a short story "The Hades Business" for the school magazine which concerned the devil's problem that with everyone being saved, noone was going to hell anymore, so the devil imports an advertising agency to sell the place to potential punters. While the headmaster was dubious about this (well, "not pleased"), the children loved it, his aunt typed it up, it got sent to a SF magazine and sold for the princely sum of £14, which he spent on a typewriter. *Truckers* is being currently serialised on ITV in 15 minute episodes, though Terry Pratchett did not intend it primarily for children: *I simply wanted to tell the story he said in a recent interview but it's very hard to write a book about the adventures of people four inches high without it automatically being considered a children's book.* In this respect, the Italians are more civilised in that they seem to find it easier to get aboard the idea of a book as a book for anyone to enjoy.

Brian Stableford disagreed with the traditional stereotype of the loner vampire so much that he produced *The Empire of Fear*, where vampires were logically and biochemically historical rulers. He described it as SF because "the hero of the book, the central character in a way, is the scientific outlook" and added that he "wanted to write a novel about the discovery of the fact that vampirism wasn't supernatural, it wasn't a kind of satanic evil; that it was, in fact, something which could be understood and possibly taken over. It could become a technology". Talking about his new book, *The Werewolves of London* (which he says is the 1st of 3 books to develop ideas about the nature of powerful monsters who traditionally inhabit horror novels and what sort of universe would or could accommodate such entities), he describes it as a "metaphysical fantasy". When not writing, Brian Stableford plays cricket (in the summer) and aims to die quietly, but not for some considerable time.

Patrick Stewart, who plays Captain Jean-Luc Picard aboard the USS *Enterprise*, must have told the Oregon Museum of Science and Technology about the sacks of mail he gets from youngsters who have tuned into maths and physics after seeing him on tv; since the OMofS&T has designed a travelling exhibition based around the *Star Trek* technology. Visitors will be able to step inside parts resembling the USS *Enterprise* to learn, apparently, "everything from antibodies to antimatter".

James White said in an interview with Brendan Ryder that the eighth "Sector General" book will appear next May, the plot concerns an extra-terrestrial hospital padre and he describes it as "more psychological than physical". Future plans include writing a fantasy and he's got this novelette about the backward magician, the life of Merlin. When asked about his latest book *The Silent Stars Go By*, he said it was "more like an epic fantasy with hard science thrown in".

Dave Wingrove felt that his book *The White Mountain* had been unfairly reviewed in the last issue of *Vector* and wrote to several BSFA members to present his defence, as well as contacting *Vector* directly — for more details see this issue of *Vector*. He commented that one of the major themes of this book is social degradation: "a society out of control... where the male hierarchical system is slowly failing, and nothing — yet — is taking its place". This was echoed by Carol Morton, reviewing the book for the *Brunum* group newsletter, who described it as "a political story set in the near future and not a true SF tale". Alan Stewart, who currently edits the Australian *Ethel the Aardvark*, wrote in his review of the book that "as a political thriller with futuristic setting and trappings this novel succeeds in entertaining the reader, if it doesn't gain his sympathy". There are four more volumes of the *Chung Kuo* series yet to be published.

The Drabble Project is now SOLD OUT and the editors, David Wake and Rob Meades, would like to thank all contributors and purchasers. The book was published to raise money for the RNIB Talking Book Fund and has now donated £1000 of the £1548.43 profit. There is still time to get a copy of the second Drabble book, though.

There will now be a third book of drabbles from Becon Publications to raise even more money for the RNIB. This book will again be a limited edition containing 100 stories of 100 words each. However, there is one major difference — all the stories are to be in some way related to Dr. Who. Anyone wanting to submit a drabble for consideration should give it to co-editor David Howe or send it to the other co-editor, David Wake (160 Beaumont Road, Bourville, Birmingham B30 1NY).

Psychological Horror: look out for *Darklands*, an original anthology of psychological horror stories by British writers including Stephen Gallagher, Julie Akhurst, Mark Morris, Kevin Mullins, Alan David Price, Judy Hines, Philip Nutman, Brian Howell, Joel Lane, Derek Marlowe and Michael Marshall Smith, edited by Nicholas Royle with a foreword by Ramsey Campbell (published by the Egerton Press, 5 Windsor Court, 24 Avenue Road, London N15 5JQ at £3.50). A review in *The Times* described this anthology as "disturbing" and singled out Michael Marshall Smith's story, in particular, as "a tour de force".

Ken Campbell's "Pigspurt"

Ken Campbell returns to the Riverside Studios (Crisp Road, Hammersmith, London W6 9RL; tel: 081 748 3354) for his new show *Pigspurt*. It seems that Ken Campbell stumbled on a new approach to the business of living. It seemed life enhancing at first but was gradually to tumble him into an alarming new form of decadence. A demonic nasal infestation led him on a snoring rampage. He was eventually to be rehabilitated by a Lady of God - or was he? Or, as the critics put it *A mixture of Ken Dodd and "The Ancient Mariner"* (Billington in *The Guardian*) or *Mad, bad and irresistibly funny* (Sue Townsend).

Magazines

The January 1992 edition of the Czech magazine *Ikarie* (partly edited by Eva Hauser, who is standing for GUFF — see Fan Funds item) is going to be a special British issue with the whole of the "World SF" section devoted to stories by British writers — features stories will be "The Traveller" by Colin Greenland, "Big Trouble Upstairs" by Eric Brown, "Now Read On..." by David Garnett and either "The Final Assassin" by Garry Kilworth or "The Engineer and the Executioner" by Brian Stableford, depending on what will fit (the missing story will be slotted in later in the spring). There will also be an extract from Brian Stableford's "The Way to Write SF" and an article on the differences between British and US SF by Ivan Adamovic.

The British theme will be continued in February with Robert Holdstock's novella "The Bone Forest". Other British or British-based writers to recent issues have been Malcolm Edwards ("After Images"); Michael Moorcock ("Behold the Man") and Lisa Tuttle ("Memories of the Body").

Infinity Plus is a new proposed magazine for short story writers to include SF, horror and fantasy. The editor requires intelligently written and readable short story mss, all types of "traditional" or "experimental" shorts considered between 1-10,000 words with 2500 as the preferred average. Mss must be original and will be returned if accompanied by a sac. No poetry, please. Details from editor Chris C Bailey, 52 Druids Walk, Didcot, Oxon OX11 7PF.

Fan Funds

TAFF Delegate Jeanne Bowman will attend Illumination in Blackpool this Easter. 53 ballots were cast in the UK with 27 for Jeanne and 23 for Richard Brandt. The voting was equally close in the States with 60 votes for Jeanne and 58 for Richard. Lucy Huntzinger had asked both candidates a few relevant questions which revealed that Richard's favourite SF novel is P.K. Dick's *Eye in the Sky*, and that he'd define a toad-in-the-hole as a "tasty treat with a yummy cholesterol centre, and I'll try anything once"; while the first record Jeanne ever bought was McCoy Tyner and Brownie McGhee's "Swiss Movement" and when asked whether there should be a fan fund between Texas and the rest of the USA, agreed wholeheartedly, adding that there should also be one to get San Francisco fans to the East Bay.

On the GUFF front, sending a European fan to attend Syncon, the Australian 1992 NatCon in April at Artamon, Bridget Wilkinson and Eva Hauser produced a joint fanzine to introduce themselves, though Bridget's part also introduced her Polish nominators as she described a live role-playing game they all played at Kontur'91 in Bialystok. Eva has brief snippets on Czech fandom, convention descriptions, feminism and SF, illustrated with drawings from her Extraterrestrial Zoo. The result was too late for the print deadline for this issue — watch this space...

Rumours are that the 1993 TAFF race, which is to send a Brit fan to ConFrancisco, will be hotly contended with at least three people considering the possibility. With Guests of Honour like Larry Niven, together with Tom Digby, Alicia Austin, Jan Howard finder, Toastmaster Guy Gavriel Kay and Dead Guest of Honour Mark Twain, it looks like an exciting convention to look forward to.

Grab Bag

Being an assortment of facts and figures which may have a bearing on SF, but which don't fit into a tidy niche.

When AI researcher Raymond Kurzweil went to Japan, he found a deeply respectful attitude towards libraries. Technology, he was told, can provide students with early experiences of success and can be a medium for enhanced human communication. Japan is committed to installing a high bandwidth (10 billion bit/second) fibre optic-based communication superhighway into every home and office by the early 21st century. Back in the US, James Wales' *Frankenstein* and Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* have been chosen for the Library of Congress' National Film Registry.

The difficulties of making audio tapes realistic was highlighted by Henry Trentman, President of Recorded Books, when he mentioned in an interview that authors have pre-conceived notions of how a book should be read. Although that wasn't too much of a problem for *The Lord of the Rings*; the publishers consulted a woman who had written her PhD dissertation on the Elvish languages. The narrators had problems too: H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* was described as a study in constantly rising action and Frank Miller groaned that he changes physically when reading *I assume the character totally*. Sounds a bit like Translator Tapes in action...

Still in the USA, the cable tv channel TNT hosted an all night marathon with 9 episodes of *The Outer Limits* recently. *The Outer Limits* was probably the seminal tv SF series and Harlan Ellison, who introduced each of the episodes, noted that what it lacked in sophistication, with hastily improvised sets, costumes and effects, was made up for by its attention to the scripts. TNT's presentation kicked off with Ellison's own *Soldier* (probable prototype for the multi-million dollar *Terminator*) and included Eando Binder's *I, Robot*, *Nightmare*, Ellison's classic *Demon with a Glass Hand*, starring Robert Culp, the *Bellerose Shield*, *Cry of Silence*, *Feasibility Study*, *Don't Open 'til Domsday* and *Chameleon*.

Empire Dreams

Kevin McVeigh

1992 is likely to be a very important year for the BSFA, which is why I hope that as many of you as possible can will attend the AGM in Blackpool at Easter. For the rest of you, if you can nominate a proxy, it would be useful.

At the AGM, I wish to discuss several ideas for increasing the efficiency of the BSFA, and for raising money to fund new developments. I haven't seen the finished accounts for last year yet, but I suspect that we will need to consider changes to survive at the present standard. Costs are rising and will rise further.

One cost likely to be added is that of professional collating for the magazines. The building used by Keith Freeman at Reading University is scheduled for demolition in June. A new venue is an urgent requirement. It doesn't need to be in the Home Counties, bearing in mind the apparent apathy of London-

based BSFA membership. It needs to be a large room or maybe a small hall, available six times a year at little cost.

Money-raising schemes include commercial publications such as critical biographies of SF authors, a *Best of Vector* and others which may sell. We want to produce sweatshirts with a BSFA logo for sale. All of these will bring money in and raise our profile, but we must have the money to invest first. Which is where I remind you that we still need somebody to help with Advertising. Please, if you can help in any way, get in touch.

There are several other vacancies to mention. Andy Sawyer's decision to step down as *Paperback Inferno* editor may provide the opportunity for re-organising our overall reviews coverage, but we need somebody (or a group of people) to do this.

And Sue Thomason is looking for somebody to re-vitalise the Orbiter network which she feels is stagnating at present. This doesn't carry a heavy load, unless you want it to, but it is an important post.

If you have any interest, however tentative, in any of these posts, please write to me. I shall also be seeking volunteers at the AGM. I hope to see you there. The BSFA needs you.

**Annual General Meeting
of the
British Science Fiction Association
4pm, Saturday 18 April, 1992
Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool**

BSFA Back Issues

Maureen Speller

I'm sorry to say that responses from BSFA members to financing shipments of BSFA back issues to Eastern Europe have ranged from silence (mostly) to incredulity and three concrete offers of help. It may sound unbelievable to the jaded cynics of the BSFA membership, but our Eastern European friends are genuinely interested to read reviews of books which they've not yet seen and to read articles on SF in all its forms. So if anyone does want to contribute to a postage fund — back issues are of course provided free by the BSFA — please contact Maureen Speller at 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ (tel: 0303 52939). If you have other practical help to offer, particularly appropriate contacts among Eastern European SF groups, please also send details.

Thanks are due to Cyril Simsa for offering advice in general, as well as practical help on getting material to Czechoslovakia, using his father as courier. Material will be despatched as soon as we have details of Mr Simsa Senior's next journey. At that point, we'll let you all know where material is going.

Back in this country, there has been little in the way of suggestions as to what to do with the back issues. Peter Tennant's suggestion about sample mailings is noted, but I had thought we were supposed to be doing this anyway. It has to be said, too, that whilst this will make a small dipple among more recent numbers of the back issues, it doesn't do much for the older back issues. In my darker moments, I do consider pulping as an option, although the bottom is almost always dropping out of the paper pulping market.

However, I thought perhaps a silly Spring sale might encourage people. Perhaps prices are too high. Consequently, all prices are significantly slashed.

Focus is now available at 25p per copy (issues 1, 4, 6, 8 o/p).

Matrix is now available at 25p a copy (issues 1-19, 21-31, 34, 36, 44 o/p).

Paperback Inferno is now available at 50p a copy (1-89, 92, 95, 99, 101, 113, 117, 118, 121 o/p).

Vector is now available at 50p a copy (1-89, 92, 95, 99, 101, 113, 117, 121 o/p).

Postage at a flat rate of 75 pence per order.

This is a very good offer so take advantage of it copiously. Hurry, hurry, while stocks last and before sanity gets the better of me. Allow a couple of weeks for delivery — I don't have quite so many opportunities to get to the Post Office these days.



Information Service

Phil Nichols

Our mini-guides to SF continue this time with what I consider to be a curiosity: a piece on that chronicler of dark forces, HP Lovecraft, written by a man of the cloth, The Reverend John Howard. What I hope comes through in John's piece — and, I hope, in all the instalments of this cockeyed ramble through the highways and byways of SF — is an enthusiasm for the work of the author under discussion: something which can be very cheering when set against the negativity often found in SF book reviews. (I'm not against negativity, and tend to be harsh critic myself, but it's good to have the occasional reminder of why we're interested in SF in the first place). And don't forget, anyone wishing to pass on their enthusiasm for a particular author, artist, film-maker, sub-genre, or whatever: please, please write — because my stockpile of SF mini-guides is getting low (and horror of horror!) I may have to start writing some of them myself.

The address for contributions — and for any questions you may have relating to SF — is Phil Nichols, 57 Grange Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 8PB. Please send a stamped addressed envelope.

A Plea

Before John takes the stage, one good turn deserves another, so I'd like to pass on John's plea for help. He's looking for information on the SF artist Bob Clothier, a mainstay illustrator for the early *New Worlds* and *Nebula* in the early fifties. Any information on his career, especially after that period, would be greatly appreciated. If you have any information, please write to the address given below.

HP Lovecraft (1890-1937)

John Howard

Lovecraft's best work represents the merging of horror fiction with SF, and the putting of both into a cosmic perspective. His work shows a development from a preoccupation with the gothic (in the tradition of Poe) and the fantastic (in the tradition of Dunsany) to an obsession with showing how Earth and humanity are set adrift in a vast indifferent universe, which breaks in from time to time, with resultant horror for those people involved.

As his work developed and matured, the supernatural became laws and results of processes as yet unknown. The "gods" became alien beings — godlike and powerful, but nevertheless still creature. They were not malevolent, except in the effect their indifference to humanity has in its perception of them. Lovecraft lets the chill of the Outside into the small New England scene that he knew and loved, and invites us to judge the characters' reactions by how we would feel and act in their place, with all our cherished understandings of the world and the universe turned upside down.

This alienation and dislocation is the true horror, and a major theme in much SF, old and new. Lovecraft was a scientific materialist who was aware of the utter vastness and strangeness of the cosmos, and yet was also firmly (at times pathologically) tied to his native area and its past and traditions. This security

enable him to set background (as transformed into settings for fiction) in co-existence with the universe, and to explore the effects and implications of their interactions. When two orders of reality meet, one of them has to give way, or protect itself. Humanity can accept its minuscule place in the scheme of things (or in Lovecraft's view the chaos of things) and cleanse itself of illusions. Or it can seek safety in the new dark age, hiding from the implications of the way things really are, and the great Out There.

Such are the challenges that Lovecraft poses. Like all great and memorable SF and horror, Lovecraft's best work challenges the reader to accept that the universe is not only stranger than we imagine, but stranger than we can imagine. And then relate all that to human living, now and in the future.

Unfortunately, H P Lovecraft has long been the subject of a "cult" which has meant that all of his work has eventually been published, with the wide variation in quality that that means. His best and most characteristic stories are "The Colour Out Of Space", "His Silver Key", "The Whisperer in Darkness" and "The Call of Cthulhu". Also the novel *At the Mountains of Madness*. These may be found in the newly revised Arkham House editions of the collections *The Dunwich Horror and Others* and *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels*. (Also to be found in the various UK paperback reprints derived from the earlier Arkham editions, and published by Grafton).



Media File

Skywatching

Mark Ogier

Christmas on satellite television was a strangely un festive affair, which those who are new to the wonders of the medium might have found a bit depressing. While the BBC and ITV make a meal out

of their Christmas schedules, Sky One in particular tends to treat the festive season as just another week, with a couple of Christmas specials thrown in to show they have not completely forgotten.

Christmas Day is traditionally the jewel in the crown of the terrestrial channels, with the Beeb winning the day this year with *Batman*. However, satellite viewers will have yawned derisively at this appearance of a film they saw early last year. But Sky Movies does to screen a repeat movie as the highlight of the day — *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the Special Edition. Nothing to shout about there for SF film buffs.

The "prestige" event of the day was the first screening on the Movie Channel of the Disney comedy /SF adventure *Honey, I Shrank the Kids*. This entertaining romp starring Rick Moranis as an inventor who succeeds in reducing his offspring and their friends to a couple of millimetres high is good clean family fun, marred only by one of the most bizarre "cuddly creatures" in film history. I didn't so much shed a tear as the ant which the kids managed to tame met its end, as suppress a guffaw. Still, overall, this was a reasonable bill-topper for the day.

There was more SF comedy immediately afterwards with the second of the *Back to the Future* movies receiving a repeat screening. Although it was heavily criticised for being too complex on its first release, it's an entertaining if not entirely satisfying entry in the trilogy — surpassed by its predecessor and the third instalment — which will give you a headache trying to resolve the various paradoxes.

A more offbeat comedy with a time travel theme was *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* which, if you can follow the teen jargon, is one of those little films that look like they are being improvised on the spot and are hugely enjoyable as a result. Bill and Ted need to come up with a "living history" presentation if they are not to flunk out of school — and they are about to give up when they find themselves confronted by... themselves. To explain more about the plot would take a small book, but suffice it to say that, with the aid of a telephone box (sounds familiar...) the pair zoom off through time and enlist the aid of one or two well-known figures (such as Socrates, Billy the Kid and Abraham Lincoln) to help them with their history project. It's one of the most

original and entertaining films I've seen for ages, and is a refreshing change from the big budget, super-slick SF blockbusters.

The New Year brought with it the chance to see these bionic heroes The Six Million Dollar Man and the Bionic Woman in a modern sequel to the TV series called, amazingly enough, *The Return of the Six Million Dollar Man and The Bionic Woman*. A more pedestrian and unexciting film it would have been difficult to find. One of the things about the original series was that the idea of people who were part human, part machine, seemed truly novel back in the 1970s, but in the computer age of the 1990s the concept — not to mention the cast — seemed old hat and twee. The plot, centring on the return to crime of the bionic duo's old nemesis, featured baddies who would have been laughed out of an episode of *Dr Who*. But we must be thankful for small mercies — the plan to produce a new series never materialised.

One film (well, mini-series, actually, but since it was first shown on Sky Movies I'll include it here) that was made into a series with limited success was *Something is Out There*. From this original sounding title, the quick minded SF fan would deduce that this programme had something to do with aliens. But this was no ordinary alien, oh no, this was a Xenomorph — a creature capable of changing its form (and, one assumes, its mass) into anything it chooses. Unfortunately one of these less than friendly beasts (they look like enormous spiny insects in their natural state, and since they're black they must be nasty) has come to Earth and is causing a few problems for Joe Cartese as the hero cop. Luckily for Joe, another alien in the shapely form of the telepathic Maryam D'Abo (remember her from the first Timothy Dalton Bond movie?) has followed Xeno and is intent on destroying it. The two pair up and, after a bit of a chase, an explosion and some rather good make up effects courtesy of Rick Baker, they defeat the monster.

Or do they? This slim premise made it into a short-lived TV series (shown on Sky One) which was basically another "buddy-buddy" cop story with the twist that one of the pair was Ms D'Abo. Sitting through one embarrassingly badly written episode was enough to see why. The mini-series was average, but the TV series was almost as bad as *Battlestar Galactica*.

Somebody at Sky must have realised this, because no sooner had the half dozen or so episodes of *Something...* ended, than they announced that in its place they would be screening — *Battlestar Galactica*.

Sometimes I wonder why I ever bought a satellite in the first place...

Pipe Dreams

A review of *Delicatessen* (1990, Jean-Pierre Jélinet/Marc Caro)

Ian Mundell

Take a look at the tenement that is centre-stage for most of the action of *Delicatessen*, then think about the plumbing. Think about the Centre Pompidou in Paris turned inside out, shrunk and sent back to 1939. From a strictly spatial point of view, there is too much plumbing in this building. But, consider how useful it can be.

For instance, you are Julie and you have locked an unconscious man — Louison — in his room to prevent your father from killing him and selling his flesh in exchange for corn. You want to return the key, so you drop it into the communication tube in your room and it falls out on Louison's bedside table.

Or you are Monsieur Tapioca, and to cancel your debt with the Butcher (Julie's father, owner of the tenement and proprietor of the deli at street level) you have agreed to lure your mother-in-law out onto the stairs where she will meat (!) her end. You have already rolled her knitting wool down the stairs to get her there, and you have to alert the butcher. You tap on the pipe next to your bed, and down below the butcher hears.

Or, again, you are Julie, and you want to get your beloved Louison to safety. Taking a torch you go down to the sewers in search of the Troglodites, a subterranean vegetarian resistance movement. In exchange for your father's hoard of grain, they agree to kidnap Louison by crawling up through the garbage chutes and ventilation system.

Like *Brazil* (which also had its plumbing problems), *Delicatessen* is set in a future which has adopted the style of the 1930s. Here the look is used to create a feeling of wartime austerity — clothes are threadbare, the heating low, the windows obscured with pasted-on newspaper. M Tapioca mends broken condoms with a puncture repair kit, and the TV carries up-beat Hollywood films from the war years, injecting false optimism into what is clearly a grim situation.

Although the papers carry anti-Trogolodist propaganda, the division of society into carnivore and vegetarian seems more the product of this hardship rather than its cause. There has been rationing, although now there appears to be no meat to ration — one character has a female rat "call" for attracting male rats, but they too have run out. One tenant feeds on frogs and snails which he breeds in Biblical portions in his flooded basement room.

In the outside world, people draw lots to see who will be eating who, but the Butcher prefers his own odds in slaughtering the handymen he takes in off the street. Ex-clown Louison becomes the next course when he arrives on the steps of the delicatessen — an ironically rich word for a shop of bare shelves — after the other circus folk eat his partner, a chimp called Mr Livingstone.

Cannibalism crops up in film SF from time to time, but seldom in the same guise. In *Soylent Green* (1973) bodies are re-processed into food by the totalitarian state; in *A Boy and His Dog* (1975) it is a matter of post-apocalypse survival; in *Themroc* (1972), in which a policeman becomes "long pig", it is a facet of reversion to a primitive state.

In *Delicatessen* it is an unknown addition. In times of plenty it went unnoticed, but once the hard times arrived it became clear that some people could not give up meat. The others, the vegetarians, became fair game and were driven underground.

Treated as a straight story this would be heavy going, but the directors have chosen a manic style which makes the various gruesome truths easier to eat, swallow. Comparisons have been drawn with Warner Brothers' *Looney Tunes* and the anarchic French circus *Archaeo*, and Caro, who was responsible for the look of the film, is an alumnus of the SF comic *Metal Hurlant*.

Set pieces like Aurore's suicide attempts (in the style of Rube Goldberg, a sort of American Heath Robinson) sit easily in the fabric of the Butcher's increasingly frantic attempts on Louison's life. As warfare breaks out between the tenants and the Trogolodists, the plumbing strikes back and the tenement falls victim to both fire and flood. Louison and Julie serenade themselves (saw and 'cello) on the roof, and the sky brightens for the first time.

Once *Delicatessen* hits the rep circuit, look out for the duo's first collaboration, *Le Bunker de La Dernière Rafale* (1981) which ran for six years in Paris, supporting David Lynch's *Eraserhead*.

Barton Fink

(1991 Joel Coen)

Ian Nathan

In the quirk-ridden world of the Coens, irony is king and style is queen and taking things at face value is a fool's gambit. The latest subject, Barton Fink, is the young brothers at their most obscure, sublime and difficult, and periodically most brilliant, shrugging off plain-meaning so far that even the wallpaper, peeling menacingly away from the sweating hotel room walls, is layered up with metaphor upon metaphor.

But Fink has also stepped beyond the mark, gone that stretch too far outside the linear, the absurd and frustrating now walking hand-in-hand with the makers' signature of textured delights and bleak comedic undercurrents. It certainly rewards the viewer, we have come to expect no less from the Coens, but lacks the perfect symmetry and delicious aftertaste, cinema at its most particular and flawless, of their reigning *tour de force* *Miller's Crossing*. There is a gleeful smugness to the filmmaking, here the Coen's paradigm seems over-clever, at times even frivolous.

Lowering the film to its most fundamental level, a meaningless task when taking the whole, this is a study of writers' block. Fink is the eponymous New York playwright (played with endearing confusion by John Turturro), who after critical success in stirring the psyche of the common man, drifts unwittingly to Hollywood and pictures. There to be rambunctiously forced into the writing of a wrestling film, of which he knows nothing. He descends into writer's block hell.

The edge of darkness, the brittle nature of his stressed-out mind is conjured by the nature of Fink's hotel tableau. A vast, eerie, heat encrusted, cathedral, tunnelled with echoing, endless corridors — the mirror of Fink's own tortured mind, created with a flawless eye for detail. And within this gothic monstrosity, he is confronted and befriended by insurance salesman Charlie Meadows, a man who opens Barton's soul in a veil of friendship — Fink drawn to his embodiment of the common man — and covers a dark secret of his own, a secret which will eventually come to free the blockage within the writer's mind.

The mix of broadly funny, straight parody — Michael Lerner's CEO is a highly successful wham-bam funny — and sinister, strained satire gives an odd jolt to the film. The overall tone is fuddled, and if this is unclear any sub-text becomes a maze without solution.

Still, there always remain the delights of Coenism, and the ambiguities left dangling behind with the credits are a teasing satisfaction amongst the slightly dissonant metaphor rich world into which we have ventured. What is in the box? What is Fink's final script about? What will become of the hapless writer? Within these lie the biggest gag, never take things at face value, but even if you don't even if you aim to read between the lines, learn to divulge the undercurrent of meaning, you are never really going to get any answers. Barton Fink is a turn, black as pitch, on cinema of social significance, for all its treasure of context and meaning the film is designed purely as an entertainment wrapped up secretly in the folds of art.

Suburban Commando

(1991, Burt Kennedy)

Ian Mundell

"Are you part of some space army or just someone who goes around doing good — a superhero?" asks put-upon architect Charlie Wilcox.

"This isn't some sort of cultural pow-wow" replies Shep Ramsey, space mercenary.

Is he insulted by Charlie's naive view of life in the universe, or pissed off because he went to all that effort to hide his spacecraft when everyone knows already? What does it take to put the cold hand of fear on an Earthling's shoulder these days?

"I've got Darth Vader living in my back yard" says Charlie just after Shep has moved into the garage. Like, there goes the neighbourhood — just thank God he's not an investment banker.

Shep is stranded on Earth for six weeks while he trickle charges his spacecraft — too much power and "they" will know where he is and come after him. "They" are a couple of goons dispatched by the evil mastermind who was the subject of Shep's last assignment (a Neil Kinnoch look-alike bizarrely named Suitor). Charlie — completely unfazed by Shep's weapons and power-assisted body armour — effectively sends up a flare when he goes off acting the hero.

So here we go. Shep is a muscle-bound weapons maniac with an uncontrollable temper, who makes a living and gets considerable satisfaction out of righting wrong (or doing what his boss tells him to do) with the maximum violence. So are the two goons who come after him. Ever get the feeling that it isn't us and them, but just all them?

Anyway, if you (or your kids) can handle the contradiction between Shep's ridiculously high moral standards and his tendency for ultraviolence, *Suburban Commando* is a harmless enough film.

Rumour has it that the production started life as *Urban Commando*, written for Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny De Vito, but underwent suitable changes to line it up with the popular following (that is, little kids) of wrestler Hulk Hogan, who plays Shep. Hogan is at least as good an actor as Arnie, and he sets up quite a rapport with Charlie, played with intriguing restraint by Christopher Lloyd. There are even one or two nice cliché inversions, for example the two silent goons sent by Sutor do not speak because their voices are ridiculously high.

Best of all, though, is Margie, a secretary where Charlie works, who squares off against Shep and eventually leaves the planet with him. Now there's an idea for a movie — the adventures of a mature secretary from mudball Earth at least in the Universe. If there is to be a sequel, this has to be the one: Shep is effectively out of the picture.

Shortly before he returns to the void (outer space, I mean, not Saturday morning tv) he says, with a lump in his throat "I spend all my time saving worlds, and no time living in them". Well, bring that man his pipe and slippers.

The Addams Family

Ian Nathan

USA 1991, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld

When Charles Addams first put pen to paper and created the spooky family of misfits and mavericks as a comic strip for the higher-brow critical magazine *The New Yorker*, he never could have conceived the heights to which it has arrived. From the cult '50s tv sitcom and now, finally, with an all-star cast to the biggest of screens, the Addamses have reached the pinnacle of success.

They've also managed to transcend any barriers of time, they are now firmly lodged in the '90s, that is outside their sinister abode. Within there is timelessness, the ultimate haunted mansion festooned with tricks, traps and teases around every corner. For the Addamses aren't really here to spook us, they really are a happy-go-lucky team, more cheeky than chilling, just looking for a good time. But in Barry Sonnenfeld's sparsely plotted movie, neither nor us get that much a good time. It's a sparkingly inventive turn, rich with wit and delightful special effects — certainly never dull, but hung upon such a crooked script that it's only in the final third that you stop gimmick hunting and pay attention to the woes of the horrible Addamses.

The plot, as it stands, involves the return of missing Fester (Christopher Lloyd), brother of Addams' patriarch Gomez (Raul Julia), but who is in truth an imposter planted by ill-intentioned outsiders to search out the hidden wealth of the labyrinthine mansion. But there's no real central weighting to the film, it merely flips about wildly from one, often inspired, vignette to the next. The best of which always include either the maudlin daughter Wednesday (Christina Ricci) — the school play scene is a pure classic — or the disembodied house pet Thing, a hand, superbly created using real-life, computer animation and mechanics.

The Addams' Hollywood debut is an interesting flip, but one lacking a true sense of direction, a better script would have allowed these endearing childish characters to really shine. As it is, we have a half-baked comedy, where everything had been placed to perfection, but now Sonnenfeld doesn't want to spoil all the perverse kitsch by stirring his pieces into life. Could have been great, so I'm all for the next episode.

Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey

Jessica Yates

Those mindless Californian students Bill and Ted are back with the sequel, featuring several of the same characters. What could top a time-travel trip to pick up eight of history's most famous personalities? Answer: a journey through Heaven and Hell.

700 years ahead, the world is at peace, and students wearing comic-book versions of future fashion are studying at "Bill and Ted University". Suddenly,

a gang of black-clad baddies led by — inevitably — Joss Ackland as a would-be totalitarian dictator, breaks into the lecture hall and introduces Ackland's secret weapon: two Bill and Ted robots who will a) kill Bill and Ted and b) change the past so that the future will belong to Ackland.

Back go the robots in the time machine, but Rufus, Principal or Dean of the University, hitches a ride to play *deus ex machine*: he stays out of sight until the climax. The robot doubles kill Bill and Ted, but they don't stay dead! Their spirits arise to encounter — a familiar figure from *The Seventh Seal* speaking English with a Swedish accent. They must play Death and win, to return to life. After a terrifying visit to Hell, they beat Death — amazing for such idiots — at an assortment of games including Cluedo and Battleships, and are escorted to Heaven to find out how to defeat the robots. There's been some good special effects work here in the infernal landscapes, among the devils and monsters: Heaven is your standard Hollywood setting as featured in those films involving reincarnation.

From now on the plot becomes even more ridiculous, only held on course by the zany dialogue of Bill and Ted, who have now become a trio through befriending the Grim Reaper, who, as in Pratchett, discovers a taste for real life and having fun. Even granted that the film is a fantasy where anything can happen, the last half-hour is simply OTT. Can Death really take a permanent holiday from his duties? Why should Bill and Ted deserve to return from the dead when so many millions who've prematurely died, have to stay dead? What energy sources will power the new civilisation which begins with Bill and Ted's successful career as rock musicians and lasts for at least 700 years? Scenes showing their rock concert watched by Russians and Chinese, imply that this film is a "most triumphant" celebration of the end of the Cold War: trivialising that great event, as if it put an end to conflict world-wide. (The film-makers inform us that nuclear weapons were all destroyed, thanks to Bill and Ted).

This film would be far less without the wacky dialogue, developed, I understand, by the two scriptwriters over several years of playing "Bill and Ted" as a private game. This is charming, especially when Death catches on and replies "Yes Way!" after the two idiots have insisted "NO Way" to his future plans for them. If you go, stay to the end, hear the "Reaper Rap" and enjoy the LA-speak credits. Party on, dudes!

Tales from the Middle Classes

Ben Wharton

About this time of year all the media press churn out lists of the wonderful films which will be released in the coming year. Unfortunately, if you take my attitude which is telling people the news when it is news, not six months later when the films in question are to be released, there comes a point when you run up against the schedules of Hollywood Inc. and you haven't got a whole lot to report.

That point is this time of year.

So instead, this issue's column will confine itself to my views on a not wholly unrelated subject: Why Britain doesn't have its own inseltness.

Last year was one of the worst years on record for what is termed the British film industry. The number of films being made with our own money just failed to reach fifty and our technical knowhow wasn't faring much better in being exploited by a handful of UK based American productions like *Alien III* and *Shining Through*. Ironically, cinema attendances continued to rise during the recession, but British films were generally not those being seen by a paying audience.

What we saw, like so many others around the world, were slick packages born and bred in the great US of A.

The fact you can't escape in a mainstream American movie is the budget. When people debate our lack of recent success in the film business, money is at the forefront of the argument. What can a small low budget film at around \$2.5 million do against a \$25-90 million creature? Well, what it cannot do is *Terminator III*, but is our current output of beautifully made but very

unexciting period pieces and observations on "real" life the extent of our cinematic vocabulary?

Cinema wouldn't be the incredible medium and art that it is without the likes of Peter Greenaway, Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, Lindsay Anderson and their counterparts outside our shores, but intellectual off-beat stories should be the cherry on the top of a successful industry, not the mainstay. Why? Because the simple cold truth is that they don't in general make money — enough money. For money is what is needed to make the next film. Commercial reality, however, is not something the arts like to acknowledge as a fact of life; the word business speaks "compromise" in neon all too often. But for our industry to leave the intensive card ward and approach the out-patient department, I believe a reality which encompasses economic success or failure has to become part of the equation for our filmmakers.

Cinema has many languages not just geographically related but grounded in social values and upbringing. Whether we like it or not, America is top of the class in the translation game; their story telling techniques speak to audiences covering most of the globe. Whatever type of newspaper you read, whatever your taste in art, whatever background you come from, chances are that you will pay money to watch a large selection of US films. The same cannot be said for people paying money to view British productions which tend to fall into the "art house" category. If you have ever sat in an audience at "art house" cinemas like *The Everyman* in London or *The Cornerhouse* in Manchester, you cannot help noticing that the atmosphere is more akin to a social club than a chance gathering of the public at large. It is no different in nature than if you had attended a model train exhibition or a computer convention: like-minded people being entertained by like-minded people. Everybody speaks each other's language; appreciation of ideas and expression is common; misunderstanding is unlikely. Such events mean a great deal to the minority concerned. They mean little to the majority.

And that, I consider the crux of the problem. Regardless of the inherent worth of contemporary British cinema, it overwhelmingly tells a story in a fashion that cinema goers aren't moved by. Learning a new language is no easy task and to expect an audience to do so when throughout their lives they have been content with what they might call their own is to be blind to human nature. It also shows a fundamental form of disrespect for popular expression.

Snobbery is a big problem in this "classless society" of ours. True art as defined by the intelligentsia is not a reaction to the Free Market, but rather an expression of the individual. This attitude may have been fine when Shakespeare was living off the wealth of one or two wealthy patrons, but today that patron is sinking his or her wealth into land or minerals. Cinematic art in the UK is off the books for the investor. It doesn't sell.

Fear is another problem. As each year passes, American cinema tightens its grip on the world's cinema outlets. The very real unease that American culture will colonise more than just our theatre screens, but also our values and way of life, is a thought that weighs heavily upon our writers, directors and producers. The empire building of the mind is already occurring and by somehow admitting to its presence and accommodating it, many feel we will be lost forever. To retain our identity, to stop the tide, we must fight back with quintessentially British and European symbols. To compromise is to fail before the battle lines are drawn.

I think it is too late. American images have been with us for too long. The Europe we live in now is not a separate entity from *Star Wars* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*; it is a people, consciously or not, whose dreams talk in terms of stretched limousines, line-less faces at forty, romance with intrepid explorers, journeys to the edge of the universe and violence on the scale of three Vietnams before breakfast. With expectations like those in place, portrayals of London drug culture, sexual repression in eighteenth century Cumbria, and the stupidity of "the English" when visiting a foreign country do not appeal to us in perhaps quite the way they might have if British women had never glimpsed an American GI chewing gum and holding a pack of nylon stockings in his hand over forty years ago.

For cinema to be on the way to recovery in this country, therefore, it must look out from its borders and try to fill the no-man's land between it and what is perceived as enemy territory: cinema as product: Hollywood for short. It

must learn to speak a language that can be understood by someone not equipped with a middle class aesthetic or an appreciation of unconventional narrative technique. It must speak to a majority whose fantasies have already been informed by a master story-teller, but it must speak in its own distinct dialect so that cultural imperialism does not become a reality for tomorrow's film-makers and film-watchers.

When we can begin to attract people out of the rain, investors from their stock market, and sizeable distribution from our American counterparts, then we can have our cherry and eat it.

It's Grim up North

A Report from the Talk of the North Fiction Festival

Chris Hart

We are a notoriously fickle breed in Bolton. This reputation was gruesomely proven during the Civil War when the Earl of Derby was publicly executed for his crimes against the townsfolk. After the Royalist was decapitated, the crowd had a change of heart and took pity on their enemy, to the extent of storming the stage and lopping off the head of the executioner! So, when Ramsey Campbell and Stephen Gallagher appeared in Bolton as part of the Talk of the North Fiction Festival in November, it must have been with some trepidation.

The festival was billed as a "Celebration of Northern Writers" by the Library Service, who were the organisers. It featured a varied programme of events held over November in venues across the region. The participating authors were an eclectic bunch, that use different forms, genres, subjects, but have an important feature in common: they use the North of England as a backdrop to their fiction. Ramsey Campbell and Stephen Gallagher were the ambassadors of Speculative Fiction.

When Ramsey Campbell appeared at Breighmet Library, I was expecting to get killed in the crush to see Britain's foremost Horror writer, the Horror writer's horror writer even. But only an intimate audience attended, and most of them were librarians! The "outsiders" looked conspicuous amongst them. Campbell was amongst kindred spirits, being an ex-librarian himself, he played to the gallery, making the occasional in-joke about stamping books and late returns. His manner and appearance was more akin to a greengrocer than someone who scares the wits out of people for a living. He is just too... nice and began by giving a definition of horror which was really a catchall. The most interesting phrase was "Horror is crossing over the road to meet a stranger, when normally you would stay where you are". To complement this, he read a short story from a collection hot from the US presses, to be released in Britain next year. The story was, literally, set in MR James country, with Lovecraftian trappings, concerning hand-written marginalia in a guide-book to Anglia, written by James, which is found in a second-hand book shop. The influence of the two "past-masters" of the genre on Campbell's work is well documented, but his fiction is far from derivative. His voice is unique and provides a much needed alternative to the likes of Huxton and Baker. He obviously enjoys the opportunity to read his work to an audience to emphasise his stylistic experiments. The most impressive reading came from his new novel *The Count of Eleven*. Campbell's contribution to "the year of the serial killer". His reading revealed the humour that is implicit in the keenly observed turns of phrase used by his characters.

Despite Campbell's critical acclaim and admiration from his readers, there has not been a film adaptation of his work... yet. He could not give an answer to solve the enigma, but hinted that there may be a film version of *Ancient Images*, which is perhaps the most photogenic of his novels, because the subject matter lends itself to the medium. Steven Gallagher suggested, in a television interview, that Campbell had obviously not been sleeping with the right people. When Gallagher appeared in Bolton he managed to attract a bigger crowd due to his success with the recent adaptation of *Chimera*, for television. Gallagher has more irons in the fire regarding TV productions. *Chimera II* has been ruled out but *Down River* is to become a mini-series, *Oktober* is currently in the hands of John Sallinger for consideration and *Valley of Lights* is also doing the rounds. Perhaps the most exciting project is the possibility of a feature film of *Rain*, his novel concerning a young woman's search for the hit and run killer of her sister. Gallagher has written an option

for him to direct the production — realizing the ambition he started with before getting into writing.

If Ramsey Campbell was like a greengrocer, then Gallagher was a supermarket manager. He was equally competent in front of an audience, giving an anecdotal account of his career so far. He said that working with the *Dr Who* team was a miserable experience because of the amount of intervention at the writing stage and the lack of enthusiasm. He rounded off the evening by reading a pre-published manuscript that was written for a US anthology. Both Campbell and Gallagher revealed themselves to be accomplished raconteurs; the audience left with a smile on their faces; they left with their heads on their shoulders, so they must have done something right.

The Manchester community writing group *Commonword* also gave a guide to writers on how to get published. It runs a ms reading service for creative writing in the North West including constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement, together with the usual tips on ms presentation and submission to publishers. For more details send a sac to Commonword, Cheetwood House, 21 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1FZ (tel: 061 236 2773).

Roll over Machiavelli SF in Politics

With contributions from Andrew Adams, Brian Ameringer, Dave Bell, Tony Berry, Dave Harbud, Steve Jeffery, Kev McVeigh, Mark Meenan, Caroline Mullan, Phil Race, Andy Sawyer, Ken Shinn, Charles Stross and Martin Tudor

Paddy Ashdown (Lib. Democ.) spoke with fervour in the Europe debate: his eyes sparkled, he seemed to radiate sincerity until suddenly he glanced at his watch and came to a rushed halt just after 6pm. As he exited left, one BSFA member wondered if he, like they, wanted to see *Star Trek*. It's unlikely, though: according to his private secretary, he does not "as a rule" read SF.

This depressing picture is reflected throughout the political ranks with the honourable exception of William Waldegrave (Con.) who has read a lot of Arthur C Clarke's books and considers him to be "a much under-rated novelist". The last SF he read was the "splendid" *Helliconia* series by Brian Aldiss. Ken Livingstone (Lab.) is said to be a great Ursula K LeGuin fan, but is coy about his particular favourites.

Top Five SF for Politicians

<i>Stand on Zanzibar</i>	-	John Brunner
<i>The Dispossessed</i>	-	Ursula K LeGuin
<i>Islands in the Net</i>	-	Bruce Sterling
1984	-	George Orwell
<i>The Man in the High Castle</i>	-	Philip K Dick

Most politicians seem to have little spare time and SF takes a very low priority after Anthony Trollope, for example, which PM John Major (Con.) likes to concentrate on, or Tony Benn's memoirs which Sir Teddy Taylor (Con.) has just finished devouring. As a first approximation, if politicians lack the five hours necessary to read Kurt Vonnegut's *Galapagos*, Alan Garner's *Red Shift* or Gwyneth Jones' *Escape Plans*, they could subscribe to *Analog*, which contains a lot of stuff which might set them thinking unless, of course, they're members of the Labour party in which case, ads one of the group who contributed to this article, "they probably read *Interzone*".

Few people, though, suggested SF specifically on party lines apart from R A Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* for Tam Dayell or Ursula K LeGuin's *The Dispossessed* because it's about an anarchistic society which would appeal to a Tory politician "Joke!" cried the joker as this all got scribbled down) and Joe Haldemann's *The Forever War* for Gerald Kaufmann.

As for whether politicians should read SF at all, the sample was divided as to how useful it would be. Since politicians tend now to be persuaders rather than activists, their power only being leverage by consent, they could easily claim that SF is totally irrelevant in that SF governments are normally anarchistic or autocratic which, of course, the civilised governments are not; they could also claim that SF is the literature of pulp with no literary merit — which is as good a reason as any for recommending George Orwell's *1984* — after all, commented one (Labour inclined) voice on the telephone "if anyone involved with politics hasn't read it, then it's a sure sign they're completely illiterate". And, besides, it speaks of the dangers of what happens if particular politics are taken to extremes.

Top 5 SF Authors for Politicos to read

John Brunner
Iain Banks
R A Heinlein
Kim Stanley Robinson
P K Dick

Bruce Sterling's *Islands in the Net* cropped up here as what is going to happen and none — least of all current politicians — is prepared for it. Likewise, R A Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* to remind them who they are really responsible to and what might happen. Other SF pointing the way to probable futures is William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, which extrapolates social trends like the power of multinationals in the nation state, Lewis Shiner's *Slam* on skateboard punks and libertarian anarchists in the US and especially John Brunner's "Pollution" tetralogy where *Stand on Zanzibar* can be briefly described as relating to people pollution, *The Jagged Orbit* to arms pollution, *The Sheep Look Up* to pollution pollution and *The Shockwave Rider* on information pollution. This last prophetic book, written in the mid '70s, predicted the InterNet Worm of 1988 accurately.

Stand on Zanzibar cropped up repeatedly, not just because it is an excellently written novel which has stood the test of time, but because people felt politicians should, every once in a while, think of something other than their petty squabbling and point scoring and see how the future could engulf their parties, their careers, even their lives. John Brunner was "not quibbling" at the frequent mentions. "When I wrote it" he commented "I thought of it very much as a book of its moment... And here it is still 'making people think' a full quarter century after its conception".

Besides the potential disaster warnings, some "diplomatic" SF was suggested on the grounds that aliens could not be too dissimilar from M.P.'s. Mary Gentle's *Golden Witchbreed* came tops here since, like Ursula K LeGuin's *Left Hand of Darkness*, it shows ambassadors and envoys encountering other worlds' cultures. C J Cherryh's *Cyteen*, which concerns the practice of politics with some of the necessities of politics in a different universe, H Beam Piper with his demonstrations of the complexities of interlocking law, politics and business and Frank Herbert's *Dune* with the tangle of ethics and politics were also mentioned. Surprisingly, no-one mentioned ex-diplomat Keith Laumer's *Relief* series about the misadventures of a member of the *Corps Diplomatique Terrestre*.

Finally, a typical idealists' recommendation was Kim Stanley Robinson's *Pacific Edge*, on a hard boiled Utopia, plus Ursula K LeGuin's *The Dispossessed* because everyone should have a bit of utopian anarchism in their lives, Philip K Dick's "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" for the complexities which aren't in the film and Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* which puts human concerns in their proper place.

Noticeboard

Paperbacks for Sale Please help me make some more space for my new baby. I have about 150 paperbacks which I have brought over the years and never read (or touched). All are in pristine condition. All I want is the original price on the back — most approximately about 30p-50p (+ postage). A list will be sent on request with a sac, though there are 14 Andre Nortons, 25 E Rice

Burroughs, 9 Robert Howards, 3 McCafferys, 3 H G Wells, 3 Yarbros and lots more. Malcolm Parker, 60 Selbourne Ave, Tolworth, Surrey KT6 7NT.

Fantasy and Horror t-shirts designed by Kerry Earl, £8.99 each. Send sae for further details to Julie Atkins, 63 Beeches Crescent, Southgate, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 6BU.

For Sale: Venture SF series, Nos 11-25 COMPLETE. New or nearly new condition, immaculate. Offers to Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Avenue, London E17 8AY (tel 081 520 2065) stating whether postage included or would collect from me.

Journey into Space broadcasts. I'm missing 11 and 14 of *Red Planet* and 1 of *Warlord*. Can anyone help? - Mr Harvey, 42 St Barnabas Street, London SW1 (tel 071 730 4069).

For Sale: SF, Fantasy etc. paperbacks, magazines, pulps, digests; used, new. Send specific wants lists, free search. Buying also. John Schneider, 1500 Main Avenue, Kaukauna, Wisconsin 54130, USA.

Wanted: A full list of all Hugo and Nebula Award Winning Titles in all categories since the award began. Has anyone out there got this information please? Contact N R Selby, 41 Woodfield Grove, Hoole, Chester CH2 3NY (tel 0244 341887).

Books for Sale including Dick and Moorcock lists. Send sae for list to Brian Cox, Little Grede, Grede Lane, Bersham, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 8NR.

Manuscript typing: I am a home-based typist and am hoping to advertise my service to writers who need someone to type their manuscript — details from Miss June Martin, 5 Springfield Way, Stockton Lane, York YO3 0HN.

Steve and Jenny Glover's "Paddy's Night Bash" is on Saturday 14th March this year. Any BSFA members are welcome to turn up. Address as on page 2.

The Periodic Table

Care and Feeding of Fan Guests

The role of Fan GOH was called into question at ConCave 2 in Melbourne when Karen Pender-Gunn was not provided with food or drink (the Committee said in mitigation that water was organised at all panels) and was not even involved in the Opening Ceremony. Linda Krawecka, erstwhile Fan Guest of Honour at Yorcon III (and one of the few FG:OH we could contact), commented that every guest should be treated the same, with meals and room provided and an allowance for drinks during the weekend. In that position she added that she would have been inclined to have stood up and told the committee what a bunch of bastards they were before stamping away. Pam Wells, Fan Guest of Honour at the forthcoming Illumination added that she was appalled by Karen's treatment and had nothing but praise for the Illumination committee who were providing her room and travel with probably meals and drinks throughout the weekend. Pam was especially enthusiastic about the Norbeck Castle Hotel which she described as being ideal for a large convention, with lots of little workshop rooms, comfortable seats — but you'll have to see it yourself.

Helicon

Now that the 1993 Eastercon is barely more than a year away (April 8-12, Hotel de France, Jersey, £22 attendance membership, details from 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1LQ), more is being revealed about the two Guests of Honour, George R R Martin and John Brunner. When commenting on their early work, the comparison between Martin's *Fever Dream* and

Brunner's *The Great Steamboat Race* is noted. Martin's first published story was "The Hero" in the 1971 *Galaxy*, after which he wrote a succession of short stories and novellas before his first book. John Brunner started at age 17 with *Galactic Storm*, written as Gill Hunt and his first story appeared in the March 1953 *Astounding*. "The Good and the Faithful" (as John Loxsmith). Of his less well-known early works, *The Devil's Work* is specially recommended as a fine novel of psychological horror.

As for the Hotel de France, it contains a famous chocolate shop, swimming pool and exercise centre, own 35mm cinema and photographic museum. It also has a disco. Other places to explore in Jersey are the Zoo with the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, Elizabeth Castle, Mont Orgueil Castle and La Hougue Bie, a 5000 year old Neolithic passage grave. More on Jersey in another issue.

Pentacon

Barry Traish

Pentacon: January 25: Cambridge. It only took me fifteen hours to get to it, so I was just in time for the bar to open at 11am. Well, it wasn't actually a con bar but the pub next door to the site. The University Centre (GradPad) itself did have a bar, but it was down a couple of floors and looked too expensive. Being so close and so well stocked with real ales, The Mill next door was the far better choice.

The con itself was small, probably due to the lack of publicity, but I was asked, at the registration desk, to bring a team, just like Unicorn; possibly this would swell numbers. The programme was surprisingly well attended because the programme items were refreshingly interesting. Sex in zero-g was perhaps the most novel (apparently it has now taken place, but it involves velcro — kinky!) and Ken Campbell, the Guest of Honour, was the most amusing. The programme was obviously aimed at everyone having a good laugh and it succeeded, although it was a little tiring by the end of the day. After a long, fun day I didn't particularly need the programme items to expand into one and a half hour slots and I couldn't stand any more of the "Who's banana is it anyway?" game.

Finally, 7.30pm came around and we were kicked out of the con site and I moved to the pub for more Old Growler. Apart from wondering if my lift back to Leeds had fallen into the Cam and died of Camfever, I had fun and overall the con was a success for those that were there.

Contour Mapping

After the Albacons were revived last year, there is to be another one, but probably not until 1993. Most of the committee intend to go to the Magicon Worlcon and don't think they will have enough time to get things together when they get back before a September date like this year. 1993 looks more likely than 1992 at present.

Fancy a Rocky Horror convention? Look no further than the Mount Royal Hotel, Marble Arch, London with GoHs Richard O'Brien (naturally), Patricia Quinn and Sal Piro (subject, naturally, to work commitments). For £25 you can see the Midnight Showings. The dates are October 31-November 1, details from 1 Elm Grove, Hildenborough, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 9HE.

Plus there is to be a *Red Dwarf* convention March 3-5 1993 at the Swallow Hotel, Peterborough. This is to be an annual event until, the committee say, "Spock's ears fall off or Lister changes his boxer shorts". Hopefully, time permitting, at least one member of the *Red Dwarf* cast will be present but the five or maybe six *Red Dwarf* seasons will be shown on video, in addition to *ST:TNG* and "Classic" Trek and the programme will include a Questions and Liars panel in addition to the fancy dress competition and disco. Places are limited to 500 applicants only, and *Star Trek - The Next Generation* t-shirts are available to all *Trek Dwarf* applicants at the reduced price of only £4.99 from 47 Marsham, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough PE2 5RN (tel: 0733 391797). Please allow 28 days for interstellar warp transit. Perhaps this is a good place to add that *Red Dwarf* (4th series) won the Royal Television Society's special

effects award for the second year running. Competition for the 1991 award was extremely high and included Malcolm James for BBC's *Five Children and It*.

There is also likely to be **The Adventurers Con** (March 26-29 1993, details from 10 Brook Avenue, Edgware, Middlesex). Few details as yet, but likely to have *Saint, Baron, Randall & Hopkirk*, *Gerry Anderson*, *Persuaders*, *Prisoner*, *Danger Man* etc. videos.

LUCON IVY (February 21-23, Leeds University Union, £7 attending, details from Leeds University SF Society, PO Box 157, Leeds LS1 1UH or email phla0ab@uk.ac.leeds.cmsl).

Guest of Honour Gwyneth Jones with additional guests Colin Greenland and Prof. Tom Shippey.

A free copy of *Divine Endurance* is provided with attending membership. Other advantages of this convention are cheap beer, role playing games and a live demonstration by the Fight School, hopefully in the "big and deadly" Roger Stevens Lecture Theatre Building.

PicoCon 10 (March 7, Imperial College, £5 membership for non-issf members, details from Nick Wheeler, Imperial College SF Society, c/o Imp. College Student Union, Beit Hall, Prince Consort Road, London SW7 2BB or alm@uk.ac.ic.doc).

Guests Brian Staffeld and Dave Langford.

Anime Day 1992 (March 7-8, Rutland Hotel, Sheffield, registration £20 for two days, £12 for one day, details from Sheffield Space Centre, 33 The Wicker, Sheffield S3 8HS).

This is a mini-convention aimed at people interested in Japanese animation which will also have a model display, gaming, talks, and, of course, video rooms. Accommodation is available at the Rutland Hotel at £30 pppn in a single room, or £50 for double or twin rooms, including bed and full English breakfast.

Illumination (April 17-20, Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool, £20+ attending membership, details from 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield S2 3QM, email clements@uk.ac.ox.vax).

Guests of Honour Geoff Ryman, Paul McAuley; Fan Guest of Honour Pam Wells.

US TAFF winner Jeanne Bowman will also be there. The programme has several trends (aka fluffy bunny rabbits) on The Cutting Edge of SF, the conflict between ecology and technology, the impact of the Single European Market on SF, the blurring SF works which don't fit quite into the genre, Urban Myths, experimental writing, all of which fit into the general theme of "the fringes of SF", the minority interests inconvenient to publishers and awkward for SF readers who have more than enough to do reading the more conventional SF.

Inconsequential (May 22-25, Aston Court Hotel, Derby, £21 membership, details from 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby DE3 6ES).

Guest of Honour Robert Rankin.

Although this con is in Derby, the main aim is to have a good time — the theme is humour in SF, with a 24 hour video programme. Apart from being the best selling author of *The Brengford Trilogy* and *Armageddon The Musical*, Robert Rankin appears to be a well known Elvis impersonator.

Protoplasm (June 19-21, Parkers Hotel, Manchester, details and current membership from Eddie Cochrane, 1 Shoemith Court, Merchant's Place, Reading RG1 1DT).

Guest of Honour Bob Shaw with additional Guests Mary Gentle, Dean Wayland and Mike Gearing.

Bob Shaw said that "SF shouldn't become gloomy and portentous, mainly because one of the things we need most these days is a good laugh". Apart from that, the serious biological side of the programme will concern biotechnology and the environment while the silly side will include games "for anyone with at least the IQ of a retarded earwig".

Convulsion of the Trillion Tentacles (July 24-27, College Hall, Leicester, residential membership £15 (+ £10 non-refundable room deposit), details from 8 Birkbeck Road, Ealing, London W5 4ES).

Guest of Honour: Greg Stafford, President of Chaosium Inc.

At this Games con with a difference, the theme is to get attendees convulsing: with excitement, stimulation, the power of myth and terror with programme

items like the largest Glorantha Free-form game staged, an Australian Rules *Call of Cthulhu* Tournament, exploration of *The Empire of the Petal Throne* and a *Pendragon* tourney. As the convention is residential, it will be limited to 150 places and room hire should be no more than £15 per night per person (including breakfast). Because of the bar opening hours, attendees must be 18 or over. No admission at the door.

CarCon II (The Voyage Continues) or (In Search of More Roadworks) (August 16, the venue to be a convoy including a space shuttle, transit minibus (aka overspill hotel) and assorted extra vehicles, registration £11.50, details from Dave Hodges, 68 Goch Road, Barton Seagrave, Kettering NN15 6UQ). Guest of Honour Kevin Davies (*Roger Rabbit* animator).

This convention is a little hard to describe but basically will start from and return to North London with a bizarre interlude in a flying saucer. Dave Hodges (who has been invited to Kiev, but will also appear at Lucon IV) will be a Hitch-hiker's database which can be added to at whim. A random glimpse of the contents reveals items on Luther Hedgehog; Sourcerers; Time — past, present, future; ungaraged yellow sun, earth, Mars; What Ford did on Pre-historic Earth.

Portmeiricon '92 (August 21-24, Portmeirion "The Village", N W Wales, details from Six of One, The Prisoner Appreciation Society, PO Box 60, Harrogate or 871 Clover Drive, North Wales, PA 19454, USA or Boite Postale 633, F-42042 Saint Etienne, France).

This is the annual *Prisoner/Six of One* convention. Outdoor events are open to all, free (but with small Hotel toll for non-residents). Indoor events open only to Six of One members.

Scone (September 14-16, Clyde Hall, Glasgow, £12 attending membership, details from Union 13, c/o Glasgow University Union, 32 University Avenue, Glasgow G12 8LX).

Guest of Honour Iain Banks.

This Union has been researching the mating habits of Scones in great detail and have found that examples of *Sconus Caledonius* can be found in groups of up to five, in the cupboards of unsuspecting inhabitants of Glasgow. The Research Team consists of Kenny Meechan, Arato The Mad Elf, Rachel "Arnica" Thomas, Phil Raines, Niall Hosking and Alastair Wheeler-Reid. More seriously, this con, the latest in a series of cons in places of higher education with traditionally cheap attached accommodation (often with single beds), will have "traditional" Unioncon programme items, like the tasting, presumably of scones, and a strong programme based round the theme of Games in SF. "It's not just Armageddon and Aliens, awful thoughts before bedtime and wet dreams" they say "it's chess games that decide the destiny of worlds and wrestling matches that determine the fate of Enterprises... it's the sense of play that's at the heart of SF, the rough-and-tumble of ideas for our entertainment".

Octocon '92 (October 16-18, Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, £10 membership to Easter, details from Helen Ryder, 30 Beverly Downs, Knocklyon Road, Templeogue, Dublin 16).

Guest of Honour Orion Scott Card.

Following the success of Octocon '91, the committee have used part of the surplus to buy a badgemaking machine and part to invite the above US Guest. The committee now consists of Noreen Monahan (Chair), Brendon Ryder (co-chair), Helen Ryder (Treasurer/Memberships), Robert Elliott (Programming/Dealers' Room); Sharon O'Doherty (Programming/Dealers' Room/Play); Ronan Fitzgerald (Programming); Patrick Walshe (Visual Programme); Ian Sheppard (Publicity) and Teresa O'Connor and Leona Mooney (both Committee). Ideas so far include a formal masquerade competition and probably a creche. Fan tables will be available free to all fan groups who contact the above address.

Novacon (November 6-8, Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham City Centre, £18 membership to Easter, then £20 to October, details from Bernie Evans 121 Cape Hill, Smeethwick, Warley, West Midlands B66 4SH, tel 041 558 0947). Guest of Honour Storm Constantine.

The committee consists of Helena Bowles (Chair); Bernie Evans (Registration); Richard Standage (Treasurer); Tony Berry (Ops Supreme and Guest Liaison); Carol Morton (Programme) and Jenny & Steve Glover (Publications).

The embryonic programme ranges from silly games to serious literary and scientific talks with periodic ice-breakers.

Worldcons

Magicon (1992, September 3-7, Orlando Convention Centre and Peabody Hotel, £60 attending membership; details from MagiCon, PO Box 621992, Orlando, FL 32862-1992. Overseas agents are Peter Weston, 14 St Bernards Road, Sutton Coldfield B72 1LE, UK; Perry and Rondinella Williams, Hohenecker Muhle #9, DW-6750 Hohenecken, Germany; Justin Ackroyd, FPO 2708X, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

ConFrancisco (1993 Labor Day weekend) Terry Biffel, Chairman of ConFrancisco, died Wednesday January 8 1992 at 8.15am, after a long battle with cancer, reports John McMahon. Due to the nature of his long illness, Biffel had made arrangements for this eventuality, and ConFrancisco will be announcing those plans in due course. The regular meeting of the con's Executive Committee was held as scheduled in mid-January and memorial arrangements are pending. ConFrancisco's Vice Chairs are Peggy Rae Pavlat and Jeff Canfield. The theme is bridging the worlds of Fandom, Society, the Universe and Time and the programme will aim to offer cross-genre programming, non-English Language programming, hard science and close encounters and historical retrospectives. Details from 712 Bancroft Road, Suite 1993, Walnut Creek, CA 94598, USA.

Winnipeg (1994). Details from PO Box 2430, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3C 4A2. More next time.

1995. This will either be held in Glasgow or Atlanta and will be decided at Magicon later this year.



Cry "Fanac" I'm going out and I may be some time Mic Rogers

This article appeared in the last issue of Chuck Connor's "Thingumbob" (available from him at

Sildan House, Chediston Road, near Halesworth, Wiltshire, Suffolk IP19 0NF) and I read it with some interest. Although it is obvious that the situation refers to 1978-1980, Mic raises some valid points about the BSFA. Has it changed since those earlier days? Should it change? Could it be valid to Mic and SF readers like her?

Many years ago, when I was first dipping a tentative toe into fandom, I joined the BSFA as I thought they would be the people to tell me all about it. I particularly asked what medium I should use for artwork. The reply was *You must use something that is carbon based*. Now, at that time, I didn't know about photocopies and what they would do... However, all keen and eager, I did a pencil drawing for their *Paperback Page* and sent it in. It was never acknowledged but it was used without a byline and someone else had added an "alien" figure to it! You can appreciate what an artist feels about her work being tampered with. This was no editing prerogative but outright alteration of the composition. I was furious, so resigned from the BSFA forthwith and since then have had nothing to do with them. And I haven't missed it at all.

So what purpose does it serve?

Once can get fanzines from cons, or learn about them by word-of-mouth, or from other fanzines. I've been sent fanzines by some unknown-to-me editors and I send letters of comment to ones that interest me. In fact I think I write to every editor, if only to say "thanks, but no thanks". One can learn about fan art from other fans at the 'Tun or wherever fans foregather. Someone usually knows enough to give one things and ideas if nothing more.

If a group of fans want to get together every so often, do they need to do it through the BSFA?

One of the BSFA's magazines (was it called *Vector*?) used such small print it was unreadable without a magnifying glass, so that was easily ignored. That

didn't seem to make any difference to my life. No bolt from Heaven struck me down. I wasn't interested in borrowing (by post) from their library — I could (and still can) get all the SF books I want from my local library. It's only very recently I've taken to reading books referred to by other people who write letters of comment, so I don't need the BSFA reports or reviews: and I can still get the books mentioned through the Public Library system. Even ones that are out of print elsewhere.

No doubt, someone will say: *What about a neo wanting to know how to get into fandom?* I would like to know, first, just how many fans *didn't* get into fandom through school, or college, or varsity? With so many SF fan clubs around (for the various tv programmes), I'd have thought it easy enough to make one's way through that. Or one can write to any of the relevant prozines for information. One can always find out if there is a SF group in one's area. A little effort should be no barrier to the keen neo. There are probably several other ways of making contact with someone in fandom.

So I come back again to my query: what purpose does the BSFA serve? I really would like to know.

Soapbox

Club etiquette is always difficult to gauge because there are so many points of view. Helena Bowles, Chair of Novacon 22 this November in Birmingham, raises the question of politeness in formal meetings:

Manners Maketh the Fan Helena Bowles

How many times have you sat in a programme item at a convention and strained to hear over a bubble of background conversation? How many times have you been at your local SF group and been constantly aware of people entering and leaving the room, either arriving late or leaving to replenish drinks or returning from the bar with two drinks in each hand so that he/she has to kick the door open and let it slam behind them? Perhaps many of you are not bothered by this, however I suspect that I cannot be the only one whose blood pressure is raised by these collective displays of ill manners.

One thing that is often said of and by fans themselves is that in many ways the normal social codes of behaviour do not apply; witness the low key eroticism present at many conventions where it will not raise too many eyebrows to see female fans dressed in lingerie or pseudo-bondage gear without a fraction of the risks this would entail in real life. Fans have broken through the barriers of social contention! Long live the social deviant! Does this mean that we no longer have to accord each other any consideration or politeness, if so does this also mean that we are absolved from displaying any sort of respect towards speakers and guests?

The episodes that sparked off my original article on this subject for the "Brum Group News" occurred during Birmingham Science Fiction Group meetings and in my experience are typical of the problems groups and conventions constantly face. When I first joined the Brum Group six years ago, I always made an effort to arrive on time and reserve a front row seat as my hearing is impaired in one ear making it essential I have as uncluttered a sound as possible to listen to. Even in the front row I was aware of people arriving late, an irritation compounded by their manner of arrival. Doors would slam, money would rattle, not so *zoto voce* greetings and conversations would start and continue for several minutes. However, when I adopted beer as my habitual drink I discovered my bladder capacity was not quite up to holding a pint or so of beer residue for the whole of the formal part of the meeting, therefore I was forced to sit near the door in order to disturb as few people as possible when nature's call becomes irresistible. This shift of position revealed to me exactly how many members do not seem aware that the formal part of the meeting starts at eight o'clock, the bulk trailing in between ten past and half past eight with a few stragglers arriving as late as nine. This is annoying but people are late for good reasons, some work late, some travel long distances on unreliable public transport and without proof I cannot claim that any of them are late purely because they can't be bothered to arrive on time.

(Interestingly, new members are generally early, arriving between seven thirty when we open the room and eight).

It was not until the BSFG moved location that the depths of inconsiderate behaviour were plumbed. The new room had a heavy door that slammed loudly if allowed to close unaided. To make matters worse, several lengths of heavy metal chain were hung through the door handle and swung noisily whenever the door was moved. It was inevitable that the first meeting was going to be exceptionally noisy (apologies Freda Warrington) as people discovered the noisy door, forgot about it only to be noisily reminded. However, the second meeting at which the speaker was the BSFG's own Anne Gay, was if anything worse with the door slamming approximately every ten minutes. The third meeting was appalling as a reversal of the seating plan to accommodate a slide show revealed exactly how inconsiderate fans are prepared to be. Despite being confronted with a room in darkness with the speaker, another long-standing Brum Group member, Dave Hardy, standing less than six feet from the door, latecomers continued to allow the door to slam, and to strike up conversations with the front rows of the audience.

Conventions are not free of this sort of collective dismissal of other people. Certainly in programme items many people think nothing of carrying on an animated conversation in the back row (or ghod he is, occasionally the front) or congregating in a merry group outside the door of a programme room that has been opened for ventilation, and talking or laughing at the tops of their voices. This behaviour is embarrassing enough in front of speakers and panellists like Dave and Anne who are also fans and part of our social group. In front of outside speakers it is mortifying. If we are prepared to treat people we meet regularly so appallingly what hope have we of making a good impression on visiting speakers? Remember most people who speak to us are doing us a favour. Most clubs and cons have a limited budget and only pay minimal expenses. The publicity value of conventions and clubs is minimal. If guests are insulted by our uncaring behaviour they will not return. How long before word spreads and particular clubs, like the BSFG for example, find speakers hard to come by? What of the situation if SF fans as a whole gain a reputation for not giving a toss about guests they have invited. Speakers give up their own time to speak to us, surely the idea should be to leave them wanting to return? The only way to do this is to provide them with respect and a reasonable standard of behaviour, to treat them as we ourselves would wish to be treated. One simple old-fashioned idea that we who look to the future appear to have rejected completely.



Clubs Column

BSFA London Meetings Maureen Speller

Sadly, the BSFA London meetings have had to be temporarily suspended, as The Old Coffee House can no longer offer us a room. This is partly because they are re-decorating and partly because they have re-decorated, they want to put in a live music night, which will pay better than we do. I was also told that the pub landlords and staff hadn't been overly impressed with the behaviour of a couple of people when there was no upstairs bar available. We've no way of knowing how much this contributed to their decision not to accept the 1992 bookings, but please bear in mind that once meetings re-commence, rudeness to bar staff at the new venue will not be tolerated.

Meetings will re-commence, probably in May — watch for announcements here in *Matrix* and other appropriate places. From May, Andrew Seaman, a regular attendee at London meetings for well over two years, will be running them, with a certain amount of assistance from myself. We are even now selecting a new venue and planning the meetings for the rest of the year. Anyone with any thoughts about the meetings, or suggestions for future events and guests, is invited to contact Andrew at 128 Pickhurst Rise, West Wickham, Kent BR4 0AW.

Club Stop Press

Peterborough SF Club meet every Wednesday (information from Pete at 0733 292025) and on March 4 Charlie Rigby, editor of *Far Point*, is coming to give a talk (Bluebell Inn venue) and on May 17 there will be a Fantasy Fair at the Cressett — stalls and all that stuff.

Trout in Glasgow meet every Thursday from 8.30-11pm at Sloans Bar, Argyle Arcade, off Argyle Street. Details from Michelle Drayton, 1/R 10 Atlas Road, Springfield, Glasgow G21 4TE (tel: 041 558 2862).

The Brum Group have moved, due to the imminent refurbishment of the Australian Bar, the departure of the friendly management and are off to the Upstairs Function Room of the White Lion Pub on the corner of Thorp Street and Horsefair/Bristol Street in Birmingham City Centre.



WriteBack

If something in this issue has caught your attention, then please write to Jenny and/or Steve Glover, 16 Avriary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP by the deadline

March 15, 1992

Enclosed with the last mailing was a flyer advertising Trincon, to be held in Trinity College Dublin this February to celebrate the College's 400th anniversary. There was an impressive line-up of guests and reasonable attending membership and hotel rates, but some of the language used (especially an ironic comment about the founding of Trinity as a tool of the Ascendancy) seems to have stirred up a bit of a fuss.

The Trouble with Trincon

Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Avenue,
London E17 8AY

...Accusing [Trinity] college's Old Boys — that is, themselves in a few years' time if they actually manage to graduate — as "pretentious wankers" who managed to "suck off the system's tit", they ignore the fact that they are doing just that in two ways — by taking taxpayers' money to support them at college, and by accepting more taxpayers' money from a voluntary body of spendthrift students to run this con.

What can we expect if we attend? [It [the programme] seemed to boil down to "a nightclub with seriously loud music" (presumably to disguise the lack of thought or meaningful speech) for "mad drunken raving weirdos".

If that doesn't sound quite the thing you expect from a con, bear in mind that they aim to provide "no reactionary fen-type shit" — fans are, apparently, totally unwanted by this raving crew of DUSF society members, of whom no more than 5% (they admit) is interested in SF.

Ken goes on to wonder if the Guests were informed of the committee's philosophy and aims when they were invited. A loose straw poll at the monthly Wellington meeting revealed that the Irish ex-patriates were most affected by this flyer. However, the BSFA raving reporter will be there to report back. Stripping off the excess language from the flyer reveals a desire to demonstrate how SF is about new things and new ways of looking at people and surroundings. Good luck.

AI by DG

Jim England, Rose Lea, The Compa, Kinver,
Stourbridge, DY7 6HT

As Dave says, the Turing Test is full of conceptual holes. For one thing, it does not state the duration of the test — hours or days. For another, it does not define intelligence and seems designed to detect humanity rather than it. (An

AI pretending to be human would have to break off, say, to visit the toilet!) A human being has intelligence in some areas, stupidity in others, and all kinds of mental qualities unconnected with intelligence.

Detecting intelligence even in some human beings can be difficult, but I see no reason why AI's showing an apparent IQ of 1000 or 100,000 shouldn't be devised. (Speed of operation would have a lot to do with this score). Like "expert systems" they would have their uses, but these uses would be very limited, they could only reproduce or work upon the information put into them. They would have to have "job specifications". They might add to the sum of human knowledge by answering such questions as: list the items of information in your database which appear incompatible, and getting us to think about these. But, in the end, we would have to do the required kind of creative thinking. There is some mysterious stochastic element in it. Asking a programmable machine to show creative intelligence seems like asking it to be intuitive or wise — far too broad a job specification!

While we were preparing this issue, Andrew Adams commented that Dave Gillon's article on AI omitted to mention Frank Herbert's "Destination Void", perhaps one of the seminal texts.

On Filk and Fanzines

David Bell, Church Farm, North Kelsey,
Lincoln LN7 6EQ

When Joseph Nicholas commented in the last issue of "Matrix" that filkers and conrunners did not produce fanzines, all he demonstrated was that he didn't receive any. Or at least, he thought he didn't...

[Joseph Nicholas] has a short, and highly selective memory. He specifically asked me for a copy of my fanzine, *Real Soon Now*, when it made a reference to his, and that issue contained significant references to filk fandom, as seen from the inside. He called *Conrunner* a fanzine, yet he claims that conrunners, such as Ian Sorensen, do not produce fanzines. I don't know enough about costume and masquerade fans to comment on the current situation, but whether or not any of them have produced fanzines depends more on the definition of a fanzine than anything else.

As it happens, you mention one fanzine produced by a filker in the same issue. What is not so obvious is that Rhodri James is also a conrunner, as Joseph will discover if he bothers to go to the next Eastercon. Then there is Steve Glover, who has also been known to run cons and write filks. Taking into account such co-editorship, there have been at least fifteen fanzines produced in 1991 by filkers. This does not include such fringes as comics and media SF, where there are filkers active in fanzine-like publications.

If his beliefs are typical of [fannish?] fanzine fandom, it is inevitable that "the fanzines published today manifest no awareness that they are part of a shared community..." I hope that he is not typical, but many of the loudest critics of the current fanzine scene appear to be fans who do not depend on fanzines for their contact with other fans. Look at how many fanzines emerge from fandom in the London area, in relation to the number of fans who live there. If London were as productive as Lincolnshire, I mischievously suggest, I would have to collect my post with a fork-lift truck.

It is, incidentally, interesting to compare filkers today with the accounts of the fandom of the past that are produced by Rob Hansen. There seem to be a lot of similarities, such as the number of people active, the feeling of being outcasts from a more conventional society, and the feeling of comradeship. About the only difference seems to be that songs have replaced fanzines as a way of passing on our fannish meems.

This is echoed by Terry Hunt, from the South Hants group who notes that Percival Lowell's eyesight (as mentioned by Julian Flood with reference to *Matrix*) was undeniably acute and both he and several other astronomers "saw" and mapped similar linear features on Mercury, though only Lowell claimed to have seen such markings on Venus...

Terry Hunt, 269 Desborough Road, Eastleigh, Hants SO5 5NG

With staggering disingenuousness, Joseph Nicholas concludes the first paragraph of his response to Michael Ashley: "One might wonder why, if he believes my arguments have such little merit, he devotes so much space to refuting them". Oh, come on, Joseph; by extension this would mean that arguments of no merit whatever should be left totally unchallenged! To the contrary, it's well known that the more wrong-headed an argument is, the more effort it takes to answer it.

If that wasn't barefaced enough, Joseph's next paragraph contains downright untruths. "... the fact is that [filkers, masqueraders, conrunners *et al*] don't [produce fanzines], and an argument which fails to acknowledge this is entirely without point..." Does this refer to filking etc. fanzines? If so, I must be living in an universe parallel to Joseph's because I distinctly remember reading issue 2 of a filk fanzine, *Filklore*, last November. I also recall coming across Ian Sorensen's *Conrunner*, not to mention the Helicon Committee's *HdF*. Since I am barely congruent upon fanzine, filk or masquerading circles, I doubt if I've encountered the whole gamut of such "non-existent" publications.

Joseph goes on to talk about current fanzines' lack of "awareness that they are part of a shared community" and "a sense of collective endeavour". Here I sense what might lie behind Michael and Joseph's apparent differences.

In talking (and decrying) a decline in "fannish fanzines", Joseph seems to be talking about publications dealing with the production of fanzines (somehow incestuously) and with their producers' other *general* activities, but excluding publications that focus on *particular* (though of course not mutually exclusive) interests: filking, conrunning *et al*. The rise of these latter, however, surely reflects the greater diversification, specialisation and intensification of fans' activities within fandom. When fandom was tiny, conventions were few and rudimentary, filking uninvited and masquerading limited to wearing funny hats, fanzines necessarily dealt little with them, and one 'zine could address all interests and still hope to interest all its readership most of the time. But that was then and this is now.

Even ignoring the 'special interest fanzines', Joseph's argument is still untenable. Conrunners *et al* do not produce "fannish fanzines"! I venture to suggest that Rhodri James, Steve Glover, Ian Sorensen, Abigail Frost and many others qualify under both heads. The quality of their work is, of course, an entirely different debate, but I've known from my first encounter with Joseph that his method of nurturing aspirant fanzine editors is to drop napalm on them all and grudgingly tolerate the survivors.

Perhaps the reason that fanzines no longer *explicitly* evoke a "shared community", a "collective endeavour" is that fans and fandom have gained enough self confidence that they no longer need continually to assert them. I'm aware of those feelings: I'm sorry for Joseph if he's lost touch with them.

Terry also pointed out that *Wincon II* had a surplus, not a profit (we note that *Wincon II* fliers on local display have been modified to read "Wincon III").

Collating and Merchandise

Christopher C Bailey, 52 Druids Walk,
Didcot, Oxon OX11 7PF

I would like to comment on the up and coming "Collating" problem, which is constantly being harped on. I really cannot see why BSFA mailings are not already being professionally collated by the printers. Bearing in mind that this option does entail an extra cost, surely between the BSFA Committee and the printers in question, a suitable sizable bulk-discount can be agreed upon, given that the BSFA uses said printers regularly. Even if the extra cost of having *Matrix*, *Vector*, *Paperback Inferno* and *Focus* machine collated were to increase the yearly membership by a couple of quid, then I for one would be willing to accept this. After all, it would permanently solve the (voluntary) staff shortage due each collating session, taking the strain off all concerned, and also give a more professional output to members and potential members alike. Also, do not forget that the current £12 annual membership fee is very, very cheap, considering that each member qualifies for 20 'zines per year! That's value for money.

Secondly t-shirts. This is a thorny subject. Going by the results of the recent survey, producing BSFA related t-shirts is a non-runner, or is it? One way round this indifference would be to invite members to create, design, draw, or what have you, a suitable t-shirt sized "image" on a SF/fantasy theme, of course, which they could then send in. A competition, perhaps? Then, a panel of judges could pick the best half-dozen, with a view to having them transported onto fashionable t-shirts and offering them to members for a cheap price. Of course, it is not as simple as that, is it? One needs to find a cheap source of t-shirts, preferably in bulk. Then one needs a reliable firm (or member?) to get the images onto the t-shirts. Then there is the cost of postage/packing, differing sizes, colours, and who gets to store them, etc. I am sure that if something on this line can be put together, a sizable interest would grow. Even I would buy a few, if a really striking sf image could be had. Black/white and colour options would be acceptable. For those out there with a computer and relevant DTP software, perhaps they would donate a few hours of their time designing a few images.

Another possible item of merchandise is a BSFA calendar. With Martin's letter below and John Brunner's comments, the discussion will have gone as far as it can in "Matrix" and can be decided at the Annual General Meeting at Illumination. But in the meantime, Martin comments:

**Martin Brice, 11 Cherry Way, Alton,
Hampshire GU34 2AZ**

I think the idea of a BSFA Calendar is a good one. Would it be portrait or landscape format... in colour or black and white? I think it is a good idea to have thirteen pictures (front cover plus twelve months) all on one theme.

I should be interested in submitting possible material and — even if not accepted — would be interested in acquiring such a calendar.

John Brunner has just been commissioned to produce a 1993 calendar. He comments that the commission came from the New York Zephyr Press, who are publishing a series with text rather than illustrations. "What I published" continues John Brunner "turned out to be a long poem in more or less strict dactylic blank verse. (Much to my surprise...)"

BSFA Profile

Cecil Nurse of *Focus*

I'm 33, married with two children, moody, Virgo, much less intelligent than I used to be. I lived for 12 years in Canada and consider myself a citizen of the Mid-Atlantic. My adult life is about evenly split between wanting to be a writer, and wanting to be a musician. My achievements in both are depressingly small, and I have reached the age where I have glimpsed oblivion at the end of the tunnel, but hope springs eternal...

My tastes in SF I think the best way to describe my 'taste' in SF is to say that I like any SF that does not press any of my 'hate' buttons. I don't like blatantly commercial, literary, self-conscious, jokey or fact-head SF. There is a quality of sentimentality, whether technological, scientific, ideological, political or sexual, that denotes a book from 'enjoyable' to 'a specimen of...'. Having said that, I forgive SF a lot and about 80% of what I read or watch I can enjoy on some level. If pressed for names, Philip Dick and Jack Vance come to mind.

The BSFA and my role in it I came to the BSFA and the editorship of *Focus*, as an actual-but-undiscovered writer with a fundamental sympathy with the genre. I had just completed a novel and was full of beans. This included an idea for *Focus* which was 'a place for [SF] writers to write about writing' with particular emphasis on the existential condition of being or wanting to be, a writer. The BSFA is a unique environment in which to conduct such a discussion, though I'm not convinced that many members would miss it were it not to occur.

Here is not the place to go into my various speculations and analyses of the BSFA, but it is a strange sort of beast, not quite one thing or another, not quite thriving and not quite dying. With about 20% of the membership being new subscribers and a similar percentage letting their membership lapse every year,

er, well that's interesting, isn't it? It means there are five times as many ex-members as members, that a substantial proportion of the membership is not aware of what happened two or three years ago, let alone the complex history that long-term members have been witness and party to. But maybe all that is not an essential characteristic of the BSFA as it exists now.

I could go on, but I don't have any answers. I've been a member for five or six years, I've seen one change of crew, and I would describe the BSFA as a great big shapeless woolly jumper with about eight heads sticking out of the head hole and a thousand bodies milling around in it's nether regions. That one of those heads happens to be mine is still a source of amazement to me.

Competition Corner

Roger Robinson

Report on *Matrix* Competition #97

I would count this multi-competition as a resounding success, both from the standpoint of the number of entries, and the scope and invention of the entries in the first two parts.

I was both pleased and disappointed with the entries in the third section. The pleasure came from the number of people who rose to my challenging remark that this was a VERY difficult quiz. This was tempered by the number of spelling errors in the entries. Gomorrah, Leiber, Samuel (once each), Delany (4), Fahrenheit (5 errors and 3 different ways of spelling it) and Winnebago (3 — but see below) and Borogoves (9 times !!) — and I'm looking forward to reading the Niven story "Inconsistent Moon".

However, there are extenuating circumstances!! — not least of which is the type-setting error in xvii [the word processor trembles here, claiming, as it grovels, that it was only trying to make the competition that little bit more difficult, grovels; apologizes] — it should have been Z6 and not 26, as a lot of you spotted. I decided to ignore this when doing the marking. Another possible confusion arose with the last work in the Connie Willis title which has been published with both plural forms -gos and -goes. Again, either was allowed, as the idea was to spot the story titles and authors.

Results of 97a "All the Way"

30 of you tried this, giving a total of 239 titles — although many of these were repeats. Silverberg, especially, was heavily (ab)used with at least one entry confined solely to his titles. The following list contains at least one from each competitor:

- * All my sins remembered Joe Haldeman
- * Andre Norton postmarked the stars
- * A talent for the invisible Ron Goulart
- * The book of being Ian Watson
- * Contact Carl Sagan... [on 0898-...]
- * A clockwork orange Burgess
- * The kraken wakes John Wyndham
- * Iain Banks walking on glass
- * The invincible Stanislaw Lem
- * Turning on Damon Knight
- * Fear Ron Hubbard... [even though he is dead...]
- * The centre cannot hold Brian Stableford
- * The Barbie murders John Varley
- * Houston, Houston, do you read James Tiptree Jr.
- * The nameless Ramsey Campbell
- * Mute Piers Anthony... [oh no he isn't...]
- * This immortal Roger Zelazny
- * Hello summer, goodbye Michael Coney
- * Frank Belknap Long & others shall be born
- * Gentle rats and gargoyles
- * Soldier, ask not Gordon R Dickson
- * I spy Vargo Statten

- Man plus Frederik Pohl
- * The power that preserves Stephen Donaldson
- Dying inside Robert Silverberg
- The world inside Robert Silverberg
- Those who watch Robert Silverberg
- Speaker for the dead Orson Scott Card
- And the devil will drag you under Jack Chalker
- * The story of the glittering plain William Morris.

The winner, who included the "a" entries above in a fine entry of 18 suggestions was THOMAS RECKTENWALD of Germany — who wondered if his English was good enough. It is — but maybe looking at titles in a different language makes you see them differently.

Joint runners up were Theo Ross (for his mini-screenplay with lots of suggestions) and Mark Powlson (best single line — the Chalker above).

Results of 97b - "Short Synopses"

As I expected, less entries here — only 22 attempted this part. But as a "normal" competition gets about 12 entries and one which involves, as this did, creative writing usually gets less, I am well satisfied. There was one entrant who overlooked the stricture of 5 letter words except for the author and included other long character names, and two others who thought "change" and "different" had 5 letters or less.

Sample entries:-

David Baldwin - Mort

Young lad Mort gets on YTS with DEATH. DEATH goes AWOL (and gets drunk). Mort takes over and cocks it up. Just as funny a Pratchett as usual.

Sue Thomason - Nova

Tarot cards and the Grail quest shape a hunt for the power of a star's heart. Only a blind pilot can find the way. The story is left unfin

Theo Ross - Lord of the Rings

One elf, one dwarf, two men, four half pints, one mage set out to foil the Dark Lord's bid to rule the world. Tolkien told it first and best.

Terry Hunt - 2001

We trip the alarm Man's alien tutor hid under Tycho. Near Jove a star gate opens; AI HAL runs amuck, but Dave beats him, flies in, and is born anew.

Stephen Mulligan - Dune

A man lives on a sandy world, takes drugs, has blue eyes, tames worms, uses magic, saves water, then has to fight bad guys. Who did all this?.. Muab did.

Marcus Rowland - Zap Gun

Fake guns and bombs are used to stop a final war of bloc v bloc but when an alien comes to Earth, Vince Klug's toy maze zaps them first.

Overall champion - MARCUS ROWLAND, who did all seven, in verse, and maintained a high standard throughout.

Results of 97c - "Your Numbers Up"

There were 11 of you, out of 33 who tried this section, who got 38 out of 38, WELL DONE!! Of these 11, there was at least one spelling mistake in 5 — but, as I was feeling generous and it was a Christmas competition, all 11 went into the hat. Justice was, however, done and the first name out as STANTON HATCH who had all answers write and no spelling errors!

The good spellers who nearly made it were Dave Langford, Nigel Parsons, Terry Pile, Mike Damesick and Thomas Recktenwald.

Answers to 97c

i	Houston, Houston, Do You Read?	James Tiptree Jr
ii	Good News from the Vatican	Robert Silverberg
iii	Stardance	Spider & Jeanne Robinson
iv	Flowers for Algernon	Daniel Keyes
v	Pretty Maggy Moneyeyes	Harlan Ellison
vi	Inconstant Moon	Larry Niven
vii	Catch that Zeppelin	Fritz Leiber
viii	Blood Music	Greg Bear
ix	The Last of the Winnebagoes	Alfred Bester
x	Fondly Fahrenheit	Connie Willis
xi	The Cold Equations	Tom Godwin
xii	It's a GOOD Life	Greg Bear
xiii	The Ballad of Lost C'Mell	Cordwainer Smith
xiv	Mimsy were the Borogoves	Lewis Padgett
xv	Kjwallikjekkothaillikjek (*1)	Roger Zelazny
xvi	A Martian Odyssey	Stanley G Weinbaum
xvii	All You Zombies (*2)	Robert A Heinlein
xviii	I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream	Harlan Ellison
xix	Surface Tension	James Blish
xx	Aye, and Gomorrah	Samuel R Delany

*1 - I never even bothered to check spelling and punctuation !!

*2 - Not marked (see above) so final marks were out of 38.

By the way, the average score was 33 with the Willis and Zelazny being the most missed titled/authors.

Final Thoughts

A very satisfying postbag. Thanks to all of you who wished me the compliments of the season — which I heartily pass back. And a special note to the one competitor who couldn't get xv in 97c — YES, my parents were married!

Many thanks, especially to Mark, to all of you who have made suggestions for further competitions. I've got lots of ideas from a variety of sources, so if I use any it will be as a result of "research" and not "plagiarism".

Competition #98 — "Hidden Talents"

In the following (rather stilted) passage there are hidden the names of several SF authors

Let me tell you of the posters I saw at "Son et Lumiere" at The Raj. One said "Be a rebel. Ban sumo or cockfighting" it was signed Ali & Co. (operating since 1897).

You will, of course, have spotted Watson (.saw AT "SON et..), Jones, Bear, Moorecock and Cooper. Your task this month is to write a piece with as many hidden authors as possible. Although there is no limit to length, marks will be given in four areas.

- 1 Readability of the final piece.
- 2 Number of "Hidden Talents".
- 3 Complexity of the hiding.
- 4 Density of authors!!! (number compared to piece length).

Just in case I miss the nuances of your deathless prose, please add a list of the authors used — all of whom should be (vaguely) associated with SF/Fantasy in some way or another.

PS Did you all spot (Lester) Dent in the competition title?

All answers, bribes, comments etc to:

Roger Robinson, 75 Rosslyn Ave, Harold Wood, Essex RM3 ORG, before March 15, 1992.