



Red Shift

IN ORDER TO AVOID PRE-EMPTING HIS ANNOUNCEMENT, I PROBABLY ought to ask you to read Paul Kincaid's statement on the BSFA Page prior to reading this editorial. The reason will soon be plain enough, namely that Paul has decided to stand down as Co-ordinator of the British Science Fiction Association, owing to pressure of work, and that the Committee has chosen me to take his place.

The obvious question is, of course, how does this affect *Matrix*? The short answer is that it shouldn't, at least not for the time being. As I've already said, I don't intend to remain as editor of *Matrix* forever, but neither do I plan to give up the post immediately. So, for the foreseeable future, I shall be working as Co-ordinator and as Editor of *Matrix*. I see no reason why this shouldn't work out well, particularly as I've been assisting Paul with the administrative work anyway. There's still a good deal of room for improvement where *Matrix* is concerned, and I'd hate to leave the job half-done. Which doesn't mean to say that I shan't be keeping an eye out for a prospective successor, but I don't intend to disappear tomorrow. In the meantime, I'm glad to say that Paul Kincaid will continue to compile the News Column for *Matrix* and will continue as Reviews Editor for *Vector*. Any other comments I want to make about the BSFA's future, I will confine to the BSFA page.

Censorship is very much the issue of the moment. One is uncomfortably reminded of *Fahrenheit 451* as the television shows scenes of people burning copies of *The Satanic Verses*, whilst Salman Rushdie is forced into hiding after threats on his life, and extravagant rewards being offered to the person who kills him. This would seem to be the stuff of fiction, but sadly, it's all too real.

Matrix has carried reports of the banning of books as apparently innocuous as *WaterShip Down* and *The Narnian Chronicles*, amid demands from American religious fundamentalists that bounds must be set on their children's imagination. And whilst Section 28 has faded quietly into the background of media attention, as Ian McKellen observes in a recent edition of *The Listener*, authorities are now refusing to put up posters referring to certain theatre groups, and libraries are disbanding collections of homosexual literature. A friend told me an extraordinary story of watching a rock concert video, only to find that an entire segment of it had been blanked out, picture as well as music, because the words were considered unsuitable for family viewing. As he also pointed out, the video release of *Crocodile Dundee* has been edited for family viewing, a practice which is likely to become common with many borderline videos which almost warrant a parental guidance classification.

Pondering gloomily on whether I dare open my mouth and express an unpopular view in print, I turned to the February 1989 issue of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, and settled down to read the new story by Judith Moffett, a writer of considerable skill and integrity in my opinion. Much to my amazement, I noticed a tag on the title artwork which suggested that some readers might find brief scenes in the story to be disturbing.

Naturally, I read on, my curiosity not so much piqued as working in overdrive. And I finished the story with my curiosity still waiting to be satisfied. Let me tell you a little about *Tiny Tango*. Basically, it is the story of a woman who contracts AIDS as the result of a brief liaison, her only love affair. Set a little way into the future, it presents a well-argued picture of what life may be like for AIDS sufferers. A vaccine against AIDS has been discovered, but no cure. The protagonist devotes her entire life to surviving, living carefully, eschewing all excitement, sublimating her wish for a brilliant scientific career into teaching children in a dull, ordinary school in a dull ordinary town. The story explores her frustrations with her life, and quite frankly discusses her method of coming to terms with the fact of having contracted AIDS - this may possibly be the disturbing bit, though I fail to see exactly what is so

disturbing about a woman dressing as a man, complete with fake penis and hanging around in men's rooms in order to observe the real thing. Added to that is her decision to pursue useful scientific work in plant breeding, in her own back garden, and the aftermath of a nuclear meltdown.

It's a fascinating story, incredibly well-written, curiously life-affirming and not, as far as I can see, even remotely disturbing. So what is that warning doing there? There are three possible reasons, so far as I can see. The scenes in the men's rooms might upset some people, though I thought they were well-written, and not remotely salacious. Alternatively, it might be regarded as offensive to write about AIDS, though I would have to say that it is a fact of our lives now, and we can't run away from it. Or was it the description of nuclear meltdown? As I said, I'm still totally unconvinced by any of these potential reasons, though personally I find AIDS and the meltdown considerably more disturbing than someone with a hang-up about the male anatomy.

But just supposing that Gardner Dozois had not been the intelligent and sensible person I believe him to be, and had decided not to publish the best story I've seen in months. Supposing no one else had touched it either. Where would Judith Moffett be, now. There is a choice between continuing to write what you, the author, want to write, and writing what the editor and/or certain sections of the public regard as fit to read. Just think of the implications, particularly if the boundaries keep shifting. In a world where an innocuous story about rabbits making a new life for themselves can be considered to be harmful, just think what might be made of some of our favourite reading material.

I don't wish to become a scaremonger, but we would do well to keep a close eye on what's happening around us, before it's too late to do anything at all.

Another book I've been glancing through was one of those interminable guides to writing, you know, the sort which tell you five thousand things which might possibly be useful to you at some point in the next twenty years. The major problem with this kind of guide, however useful it can be, is that it tends to present everything as being very easy and straightforward, and overlooks the need for talent and inspiration and hard work. What I find even more baffling is the emphasis on writing for money. There is rarely, if ever, recognition of the fact that some people need to write in the same way that most people need to breathe. I don't personally write much in the way of fiction, but should it ever happen that I'm away from the keyboard for very long, I feel most uneasy about not writing something. Naturally, it's good to be able to earn some money from one's writing, but surely there is more to it than that? Or is it really just the thought of a fat cheque somewhere in the future which motivates people? Do people really no longer write because they have a story to tell, for their own pleasure even? Perhaps some of the amateur or unpublished writers among the membership of the British Science Fiction Association would like to tell me a little more about what motivates them, and then maybe my mind can be set at rest.

For those people who do find the notion of a guide to be helpful, please don't think I'm condemning them entirely - they can be useful in various ways - the two books you should acquire are the current edition of *The Writers and Artists' Yearbook* and Chris Evans' excellent guide to writing science fiction, published by A & C Black, which actually discusses such vital necessities as plot and structure, as well as analysing, step by step, a story by Chris Straife.

And in time-honoured fashion, I shall finish off with the pleas for more material, and general whingeing about lack of contributions. Would clubs and societies please note that Keith Mitchell is dying to hear from you about your local group. Its

activities and meeting place, whilst I would like to hear from specialist groups, fan clubs and so forth. I would much appreciate some more Sospox material, not to mention reviews of films, television series, and conventions. Anything, she muttered in desperation, anything.

Still, going through the contents of this issue, I'm well-pleased with what I've been able to muster this time around. The letters seem to be increasing in number again, which is perhaps the healthiest sign. I grow quite despondent when there is no post.

Your deadline for next issue is:

Friday May 12th 1989

and I'll look forward to reading all your contributions.

WALKING ON GLASS

The BSFA Column

VALENTORY
by Paul Kincaid

So it comes time for me to resign as Co-ordinator of the BSFA. It's a strange feeling. Back in 1986 I took on the job because it needed doing. I felt no megalomaniacal urges, no great wish to be Britain's of supreme or anything like that; indeed I was one of the people behind the change of title, from Chairman to Co-ordinator, because it sounded less grand. But I had been actively involved with the BSFA since the late 1970s, I was very strongly committed to it, I wanted to see it succeed. And I thought I could help.

As things turned out, it needed far more help than any of us realised. My elevation, if I may use the word, coincided with a fairly major shift in the composition of the committee. We all felt the same level of commitment, we all felt fairly fresh and eager, and we were all totally unaware that the BSFA was at probably its lowest ebb. We were naive, I suppose, we all saw the same public face of the BSFA that everyone sees, without being aware of the machinery behind it all that keeps the organisation working. And because the BSFA had always lurched through history, with sudden and drastic changes of personnel rather than any gradual evolutionary development, we hadn't really had much chance to learn about that machinery.

That changed one morning when I received a very short letter which gave me my first clue that things were not well with our finances. There followed a hectic period that I remember as a nightmare during which we had to assess the damage, get ourselves re-registered, make sure that our accounts were completed up to date, and get them all passed by the members and lodged with the appropriate authority. Thank heavens for Brett Cockrell, without his more than sterling help none of this would have been achieved.

I think it is that episode which will probably be remembered as the most significant of my term of office, and to be honest for much of that time I felt myself helplessly swept along by the tide of events. But that's probably not how it really was. This was a time of tough decisions, a time when I had to arbitrate on a number of matters like cutting the size of the magazines, and finding other cost cutting avenues. And it worked. We got through the problems, husbanded our resources, and we're now well on our way to being in a healthier financial position than ever before.

All the palaver about being struck off the Register of Companies, of course, would have been a perfect opportunity to turn inwards. But we couldn't do that, we had to find a way of building the organisation up. All the editors were keen to improve the quality of their magazines - which is why cutting their page counts was such a cruel decision - and I think that has been achieved. After an unfortunate hiatus, we got focus back in production. We even managed to revive the London Meetings (though not without a few hiccups). Advertising, thanks to Dave Wood, is increasing; awareness of the BSFA is increasing (I've even had to handle a fair few requests for information about the world of sf from the BBC); and best of all, membership is increasing.

Expansion is in the air. Not the galaxy-spanning dreams of glory suggested by a few of the members, careful, steady growth is much better in the long term, but an increase in the number of services we can offer our members, consideration of a few new things we might do. And that's why it is time for me to go. After two or three rather hard years at the helm I begin to grow weary. I've not lost any of my enthusiasm for the BSFA, just a bit of my stamina. And I do not

want any more of those old drastic changeovers that can do as much harm as good; nor do I want to drag on in my position while I can't really give the BSFA all it deserves.

Oh I'm not going completely. You don't get rid of me that easily. I'll be continuing as Reviews Editor of Vector, and I'll continue to supply the news for Matrix, and I hope I'll be popping up as a contributor to the magazines in other ways from time to time. But the administrative grind will, I'm afraid, have to go.

The sharp-eyed among you will have noticed, however, that it's not going far, since Maureen Porter is taking on my discarded mantle. (It suits her, believe me.) I kept out of that bit of committee decision-making because I didn't want any charges of nepotism, but I do approve of the choice, and not just for the obvious reasons. I think Maureen has the ideas and the enthusiasm to carry the BSFA forward on its new course - like the rest of you, I'm expecting good things of the BSFA, and I don't think we'll be disappointed. And of course we can be sure that the changeover is at least smooth and easy.

It was never my intention, believe it or not, when I joined the British Science Fiction Association sometime in the early eighties, to become a particularly active member of the Association. I was a postal consumer, I doubted I would ever meet any of these fabled people mentioned in the magazines. Well, times change, and in 1986 I made an unwise remark at entirely the wrong moment and found myself being persuaded to edit Matrix, which I have done with varying degrees of success. And being editor of Matrix brought me to the Committee of the BSFA, and to the knowledge that I was often quite effective at this sort of thing.

I've helped Paul Kincaid with his work with Co-ordinator over the last three years, which is part of the reason why the rest of the Committee felt that I was the most appropriate person to take on the job when Paul announced his resignation from the job. I'm tremendously flattered by the Committee's choice, and I hope I can live up to their expectation of me. Only time will tell.

I hope too that I will have the support of all members of the BSFA. I realise that this must have seemed sudden and unexpected to you, but Paul announced his resignation at the last Committee meeting, and it seemed simplest to appoint someone as soon as possible. The current Committee is strongly of the opinion that a Co-ordinator should be appointed from among the Committee rather than making it an outside appointment. It's very important, at this stage, to preserve the work which has been done so far, and ensure a continuity which past incarnations of the BSFA have simply not had. And we all know what trouble that caused.

My first task as Co-ordinator is to thank Paul Kincaid for the work he has done as Co-ordinator. It is perhaps not obvious to many people, but he put in a good deal of hard work as Co-ordinator, particularly during the time of the dissolution, and did a great deal to build up our outside contacts. He will be a hard act to follow.

My next job, so I gather, is to make lots of rash promises about what I have to offer, and pontificate at great length about how much better life will be for the BSFA whilst I'm in control. Sorry, people, I don't believe in extravagant claims which can't be met. It only causes embarrassment to all concerned.

Which is not to say that I don't have a few ideas which I want to develop, but I'm not going to make too many promises. The most important thing, I believe, is to consolidate the current position of the BSFA, before we attempt to recruit new members on a large scale. Membership is increasing at a gratifying rate, and of course, we will take every opportunity to encourage more people to join, but there will be no massive recruiting drives until I'm satisfied that we have a decent package to offer them. We have four good magazines, which are steadily improving all the time, but beyond that, I'm not convinced that we are doing as much for our current members as we could or should be, and that is my first priority.

The first major project will be a comprehensive survey of BSFA members. Anyone familiar with the annual Locus Readers Poll can expect something similar. Locus use the results of the poll to provide themselves with an overall picture of their readership, but also to enable them to present accurate statistics to publishers to encourage more advertising. More advertising means more revenue means bigger magazines and so forth. I think you get the idea. In the case of the BSFA, it also means that the Committee can develop a much clearer idea of who the members are, and what they want, from the magazines, and from the BSFA generally. At the moment I feel we know far too little about the people we have been appointed to serve, and I

badly want to change this.

Other projects I have in mind for the near future include BSFA merchandising, a matter I'm currently researching, and expansion of our publishing activities. I'm going to wait until the survey has been produced and the results monitored, but I would welcome your early thoughts on whether such things as BSFA sweatshirts would be a good idea, bearing in mind we can accrue revenue by selling them at conventions, and what sort of material you would like the BSFA to publish. I don't see us turning into a book publishing company, at least not for a few years yet, but I had in mind bibliographical material, information booklets, and perhaps the return of the Critical Bibliographies.

Beyond that, I'm hoping to encourage more involvement from the grassroots membership, through attending meetings, helping with mailing sessions, and whatever other ideas we can come up with. I intend to look into the matter of maintaining a higher profile at conventions, and trying to solve the problem of isolation from the mainstream of activity which so many members apparently feel.

I welcome, and would actively encourage, feedback from members. I'd like to know what you think about the BSFA as it currently stands, what should be changed or retained, and how you see it developing. At the moment, I'm not really interested in expensive ideas about becoming a film production company - we don't have that sort of money - nor turning ourselves into a small press publisher along the lines of Morrigan or Kerosina. I'm not convinced that this is where our strength lies. But I would like to know what it was that brought you to the BSFA, and whether we are satisfying that need. All letters to me, at the editorial address, marked clearly if they are not intended for publication. I don't muddle Co-ordinator's work with my work as *Matrix* editor.

In a general round-up of BSFA news, I'd first like to remind all members that the Annual General Meeting of the British Science Fiction Association Ltd., will take place at *Maxicon 3*, The Albany Hotel, Nottingham, on Sunday 28 May 1989 at 11.30am.

I hope as many members as possible will attend. Please note that you do not have to be a member of the convention in order to attend the meeting.

TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW

The London Meetings for the future are as follows:

April 20: Maureen Porter talks about *The Gate*.

May 18: A panel discussion involving other fan groups (postponed from March).

The London Meeting is on the third Thursday of every month, starting around 7.30pm, in the upstairs room at The Plough, Museum Street, London.

We have already received several applications for the post of Vector Editor, but would like to encourage more people to apply before we take a final decision.

We have, however, as yet, received no applications for the post of Awards Administrator. This is an important staff post within the BSFA, not just involving organising ballot forms and arranging for them to be counted. It could also certainly involve some promotional work both before and after the event.

I'd just like to stress that people shouldn't feel that they will be thrown in at the deep end and left to struggle. The rest of the Committee will provide support and encouragement.

JOBS*JOBS*JOBS*JOBS*JOBS

VECTOR EDITOR

We're looking for a successor to David V. Barrett as Editor of *Vector*, the critical journal of the BSFA. This is a committee post, and will entail commissioning and editing articles for the flagship of the BSFA. As David says, it's 'rewarding, frustrating, damn hard work, and great fun'.

If you think you have what it takes to edit one of the leading critical journals of science fiction in the country, write and tell us. We want to know what brilliant ideas you have for filling *Vector* with fascinating material every two

months, so that you not only keep readers but attract more.

Apply now, to David V. Barrett, *Vector*, 23 Oakfield Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 2UD.

AWARDS ADMINISTRATOR

We're also looking for a successor to Mike Moir. This is a staff position reporting to the Co-ordinator, and it entails producing ballot forms for nominations and final ballot for the BSFA Award. You'll also have to count the votes and handle the award ceremony, as well as sending out publicity on the award after the winners have been announced.

It may come but once a year, but it's still a challenging post. After all, you'll have to keep up to date with what's happening in SF enough to know whether a nomination is eligible or not. And you're going to have to be the sort of person whom nobody doubts has got the winner right.

If you think it's a job that would suit you, please contact me, and outline your plans.

Write to Maureen Porter, BSFA, 114 Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1ES.

DESIGNER

The BSFA stands in sore need of someone willing to do general design work, from producing designs for stationery and badges to helping lay out future publications. If you feel you can offer any help in this direction, please contact the Co-ordinator. If able to, please send samples of your work (these will be returned).

Write to Maureen Porter, 114 Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1ES.

BSFA INFORMATION OFFICER

I'm delighted to say that the BSFA has found a volunteer, eager to supervise the development of the BSFA Information Service. Step forward Phil Nichols from Portsmouth, who is probably already known as a typist for *Paperback Inferno*. Phil is now going to outline his plans for the Information Service. I hope that as many people as possible will respond to his requests for help with setting up the service, and that other members will make use of the service.

BSFA INFORMATION SERVICE

My name is Phil Nichols, and I am your new Information Officer. The aim of the BSFA Information Service is quite simply to provide answers to any questions you may have about anything connected with SF. Want to know what you call an alien plant with three legs? Who wrote a story about a robotic George Bernard Shaw? How many films did Robbie the Robot appear in? Then you've come to the right place. It's my job to come up with the answers to such unlikely questions.

I don't claim to be a walking encyclopedia, and I doubt that I could personally answer even a quarter of the questions you could throw at me, but I have a theory which - if true - should enable me to obtain an answer to most questions. It goes like this: for every BSFA member with a question, there is a corresponding member who knows the answer. My aim is to extract information from those in the know, and pass it on to those in the dark.

In order for the Information Service to work, then I need a lot of expert help. This means *your* help, because I'm sure everyone (yes, even *you*) is an expert on something or other. Someone out there has read the complete works of Suzy McKee Charney; someone knows the *Foundation* trilogy backwards; someone has a collection of S. Fowler Wright; someone knows the names of every bit player in *Star Trek*. Each one of you is an expert in some field, and in your field, I need your help.

Enclosed with this mailing is a flyer urging you to volunteer as an Information Service expert. If you have any special knowledge which could be of use, please use the flyer (or write me a letter, if you prefer) to tell me what subjects you specialise in. Please don't assume there's someone else who knows more about the subject than you do, because chances are, there isn't.

Of course, having a directory of expertise is of little use if there are no questions to answer, so at the same time as asking for volunteers, I am asking for questions. Now's the chance to get that burning question off your chest. There must be something you're just dying to know. So don't be shy; use the flyer to ask me a question. Do it today!

My aim is to come up with an answer to every query. Where I can't produce an answer straight away, I will send you a note acknowledging your question and give you some idea of how long I expect it to take for me to find the answer. Bear in mind

that the harder, more detailed, more complex the question, the longer I will be in getting the answer to you. But my initial response will be usually within fourteen days.

There are two further things I plan to do as Information Officer. The first is to work with Jo Raine to encourage new members to use the Service, since I am sure many people joining the BSFA are looking for information about SF. The second is to keep the membership aware of the existence of the Service by regular reports in *Matrix*. Here I hope to give examples of some of the questions received (along with the answers!) and perhaps occasionally to issue a general request for help when a question proves to be beyond me and my panel of experts.

All this requires you to put pen to paper. Potentially, there is something in this for everyone. I am determined to make the Information Service an important part of the BSFA. But I need your help. So please use the flyer, and let's get the Information Service moving. Thanks!

All requests for information and offers of help should be set to:

Phil Nichols
19 Kendal Avenue
Copnor
Portsmouth
Hants
PO3 5AX



NEWS

Compiled by Paul Kincald (with a little help from *Locus*, *SF Chronicle* and other sources)

- POLLACK WINS CLARKE AWARD
- MCAULEY & RUCKER SHARE DICK AWARD
- NEBULA AWARD NOMINATIONS
- BSFA AWARD SHORTLIST

POLLACK WINS CLARKE AWARD

Rachel Pollack has won the third Arthur C. Clarke Award for her novel *Unquenchable Fire*. The award was announced in a ceremony at The Groucho Club in London on 15 March, where Pollack was presented with a cheque for £1,000.

Unquenchable Fire will be coming out in paperback from LEGEND in April, but has yet to find an American publisher. However, a hardback publisher has expressed interest in the book, and it is hoped that the award will convince a paperback publisher to take the book also so that the deal can go through.

This year's Clarke Award was reported to be a very close contest between *Unquenchable Fire* and the runner-up, *Empire of Fear* by Brian Stableford. The third place went to *Rumours of Spring* by Richard Grant, and the other shortlisted books were: *Philip K. Dick is Dead, Alas* - Michael Bishop; *Kairoos* - Gwyneth Jones; *Life During Wartime* - Lucius Shepard; and *Whores of Babylon* - Ian Watson.

The judges for the award were: Maureen Porter and Andy Sawyer for the BSFA, Mary Gentle and Maxim Jakubowski for the Science Fiction Foundation, and George Hay and Dr Maurice Goldsmith for the International Science Policy Foundation.

Next year's judges will be David V. Barrett and Maureen Porter for the BSFA, and Mary Gentle and Maxim Jakubowski will continue for the SFF. Both George Hay and Maurice Goldsmith are due to step down as judges, but as yet there has been no decision as to their successors.

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### BSFA AWARD SHORTLIST

The nominations for the BSFA Award have been announced. (The ballot form should be included with this mailing). The results will be announced at Mexicon.

The nominations are:

#### NOVEL

*The Player of Games* - Iain M. Banks  
*Mona Lisa Overdrive* - William Gibson  
*Lavondyss* - Robert Holdstock  
*Kairoos* - Gwyneth Jones  
*The Wooden Spaceships* - Bob Shaw  
*Life During Wartime* - Lucius Shepard

#### SHORT FICTION

"Dazzle" - Scott Bradford (Other Edens 2)  
"The Giving Plague" - David Brin (*Interzone* 23)  
"The Time Lapsed Man" - Eric Brown (*Interzone* 24)  
"Dark Night in Toyland" - Bob Shaw (*Interzone* 26)

### MEDIA PRESENTATION

*Red Dwarf* (BBC Series)  
*Dr Who: Silver Nemesis* (BBC Series)  
*Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (Film)  
*Willow* (Film)

### ARTWORK

Cover *Lavondyss* - Alan Lee  
Cover *Interzone* 24 - Pete Lyon  
Cover *WaveWorld* - Tim White  
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MCAULEY/RUCKER SHARE P.K. DICK AWARD

Paul J. McAuley is the first British writer to win the prestigious Philip K. Dick Award. The award is for the best original paperback published in America in the previous year. McAuley won for his first novel, *400 Billion Stars*, which was published in hardback in this country by GOLLANCZ.

McAuley shares the award with Rudy Rucker who won for his novel *Weaveworld*, which has just come out in this country from NEL.

The other nominees for the award were: *Orphans of Creation* - Roger MacBride Allen, *Neon Lotus* - Marc Laidlaw, *Becoming Alien* - Rebecca Ore, and *Rendezvous* - David Alexander Smith.

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### NEBULA AWARD NOMINATIONS

The shortlist for the 1988 Nebula Awards has been announced. They are:

#### NOVEL

*Deserted Cities of the Heart* - Lewis Shiner  
*Drowning Towers* - George Turner  
*Falling Free* - Lois McMaster Bujold  
*Great Sky River* - Gregory Benford  
*Mona Lisa Overdrive* - William Gibson  
*Red Prophet* - Orson Scott Card  
*The Urth of the New Sun* - Gene Wolfe  
(The George Turner novel was published in this country as *The Sea and Summer*, which won the Arthur C. Clarke Award last year.)

#### NOVELLA

"The Calvin Coolidge Home for Dead Comedians" - Bradley Denton (F&SF)  
*The Devil's Arithmetic* - Jane Yolen (Viking Kestrel)  
"Journals of the Plague Year" - Norman Spinrad (*Full Spectrum*)  
"The Last of the Winnebagoes" - Connie Willis (IASFM)



date. He is currently working on a collection of short stories, to be published by UNWIN later this year, and his other projects after that include a collection of short stories for children, and an autobiographical novel based around his youthful experiences in Aden.

Terry Pratchett is currently at work upon a children's book, while noted children's author Fay Sampson (author of the Pungur Ban books) has written her first fantasy novel for adults which will be published by HEADLINE.

Christopher Priest has nearly finished his new novel which is called *The Good Woman* - on the same principle as "the only good Indian is a dead Indian".

Christopher Evans has completed his new novel, his first since *The Insider*, and is currently looking for a publisher for it.

The third part of Storm Constantine's *Wraeththu* trilogy, *The Fulfillments of Fate and Desire* will be appearing as a paperback only from FUTURA in August. Her first non-*Wraeththu* book, *Monstrous Regiment*, is to appear in FUTURA's new C-Format paperback in 1990.

Ian McDonald has a second novel coming out in America this year. *Out on Blue Six* will be published by BANTAM SPECTRA in May.

The American small press publisher, MARK V. ZEISING, is listing a book called *The State of the Art* by Iain M. Banks for May.

Banks, meanwhile, and Lisa Tuttle are appearing at Wordlinks, Bedford's second Readers and Writers Festival, at Bedford Central Library on Friday 14 April, at 8pm.

Brian Aldiss will also be presenting *Science Fiction Blues* at the Festival on Friday 21 April, also at 8pm.

Aldiss, along with Richard Adams, was also involved in the Library Promotion Month at Islington Libraries during March.

Clive Barker has sold four unwritten horror novels to COLLINS for £2 million. The books - so far identified only as *Cabal 2 & 3* and *The Art 2 & 3*, will appear between now and 1994. This is the first major deal signed by COLLINS since the company was taken over by Rupert Murdoch earlier this year.

Barker, meanwhile, is in the middle of filming *Nightbreed* which stars erstwhile director David Cronenberg and is due for release in America this summer.

Another new British writer has made his first sale to the US. Simon Grey has sold *No Haven for the Guilty*, the first volume in the five-part Hawk and Fisher series, to ACE.

British writers seem to be making their first sales all over the place these days. Steve Green, co-editor of the news-zine *Critical Wave*, has sold a story to *Fantasy Tales*; Sherry Goldsmith has sold a story to Lewis Shiner's anthology *When the Music's Over*; the BSFA's *Andy Sawyer* has a story in the second issue of *The Gate* and has also sold a story to David V. Barrett for *Digital Dreams*; and Cassandra Chairman Simon Ings has just sold two stories in rapid succession to *Other Edens 3* and *Interzone* (which may explain why the rules of the Cassandra Workshop have just been changed, now, anyone who hasn't made a sale before the end of the year must prove they've made at least five submissions to professional markets).

Robert Lichtman won TAFF, the Transatlantic Fan Fund, and was at the national convention in Jersey.

John Berry won DUFF, the Down Under Fan Fund, and was at the Australian national convention in Perth.

OBITUARIES

David Buck, actor and writer, who wrote several ghost stories for the radio, died on 27 January 1989, aged 52.

John Cassavetes, actor, director and screenwriter, whose acting credits include *Rosemary's Baby*, died on 3 February 1989. He was 59.

Aeron Clement, author of the animal fantasy *The Cold Moons* about badgers which enjoyed a belated popular success after he originally had to publish the book himself, died on 8 January 1989, 22 years short of his 54th birthday.

Lenny Geer, stuntman whose films included *Twilight Zone*, died on 9 January, aged 75.

Kenneth McMillan, the actor who starred in *Dune* and appeared in over 30 other films, died on 8 January 1989. He was 56.

Dexter Masters, author of the 1955 novel *The Accident* about a scientist dying of radiation sickness, and editor of the 1946 book *One World Or None* in which prominent scientists discussed the implications of nuclear weapons, died on 5 January 1989 in Springfield Illinois. He was 80.

Osamu Tezuka, Japanese cartoonist, comic artist and animator, who worked extensively in the SF genre, notably in films like *Phoenix 2772*, *The Mighty Atom* and *Vampire*, died on 9 February 1989, aged 62.

Frank Rudman, publisher, who was a fiction editor at PENGUIN for several years before moving on to play a major part in establishing FOUR SQUARE, NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY, and ACE. He died at the age of 67 on 9 March 1989.

Herbert Dickens Rymen, film designer who worked on the original designs for Disneyland, died on 10 February 1989, aged 78.

Rosalind Wade, writer and editor of ghost stories whose work included *The Unlikely Ghosts*, *Haunted Cornwall*, *Tales from the Macabre* and *Stories of Haunted Inns*, died on 29 January 1989. She was 79.

Joan Willes, the actress who appeared in the original film of *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* died on 3 January 1989, aged 65.

PUBLISHING

*The Gate* has finally appeared. The new quarterly magazine was scheduled originally for January, but the new printing press brought in specifically to print the magazine broke down, and after extensive toing and froing on the matter the manufacturers finally agreed to provide a replacement. If the new press remains in operation, the publication schedule for the year should now be: March, June, September, December.

John Jarrold has been promoted to Commissioning Editor at FUTURA. While he is still in control of ORBIT, he will now be responsible for buying a wider range of books outside the genre, both fiction and non-fiction.

News from FUTURA includes the launch of C-Format paperbacks in April. These are larger than the now-common trade paperback B-Format, and are the same size as standard hardbacks. The first title will be *The Hermone Jungle* by Writers of the Future contest winner Robert Reed, followed in May by *The Gold Coast* - Kim Stanley Robinson and in June by *Voice of the Whirlwind* - Walter Jon Williams. *Cradle* by Arthur C. Clarke & Gentry Lee will also be C-Format when it is published in September, while the C-Formats lined up for 1990 include novels by Robert Charles Wilson, Robert Reed, Storm Constantine, Walter Jon Williams and *Rams II* by Arthur C. Clarke & Gentry Lee.

FUTURA's major acquisition recently has been all four novels by Robert Charles Wilson, *A Hidden Place*, *Memory Wire* and *Gyppies* which have already garnered critical acclaim in the USA, and his forthcoming book *The Divide*. Other recent acquisitions include *Angel Station* - Walter Jon Williams, *Black Moon* - Robert Reed and the two sequels to *Dreams of Flesh and Sand* by W.T. Quirk, *Dreams of Gods and Men* and *Yesterday's Pawn*. Other new books are *Cities of the Dead* by young American horror writer Michael Paine, and an historical novel, *The Lords of Vaumartin* by Cecelia Holland, author of the SF novel *Floating Worlds*.

More changes in the publishing world. Robert Maxwell, who already controls the McDONALD/FUTURA group, now has his eyes set on SPHERE. However, at the moment it is still far from clear whether the take-over will actually occur.

Meanwhile, there are changes in the quieter world of children's books. Rod Campbell, entrepreneur, author and illustrator, has bought outright control of CAMPBELL BOOKS LTD, which had been jointly owned by BLACKIE. And within a week of this move he had announced a joint venture with the WATTS GROUP. This group comprises FRANKLIN WATTS, ORCHARD BOOKS (who publish Gwyneth Jones under the name Ann Halam), and JULIA MACRAE BOOKS (who publish Monica Hughes among others), all of which is under the control of the French publishing giant HACHETTE. The new deal will see Campbell commissioning, writing and illustrating books which will be published and distributed by WATTS.

At the same time the WATTS GROUP is setting up a joint sales force with GOLLANCZ.



A new paperback line is due to appear in April. MANDARIN paperbacks is a new imprint of the OCTOPUS Group with an ambitious programme of publishing 350 mass market paperback titles this year. There's no word as yet about how much SF will be appearing on the list.

Another new publisher is DOUBLEDAY, which is launching its first UK publishing venture this autumn. The first list will include at least one new book by Isaac Asimov.

Yet another new publishing line is HEYWOOD BOOKS which was due to be launched in March. The intention is to publish 8 paperbacks per month at the low price of £1.50 to £1.75. The list will include SF, fantasy and horror.

In America the world's largest communications company has been created by the merger of Time Inc. and Warner Communications. Time Warner has assets of \$15 billion, and within the new corporation are such varied elements as the records of Madonna, the films of Steven Spielberg, Home Box Office TV, not to mention a vast magazine and book publishing business.

Forbidden Planet, the specialist SF and comics bookshop, has opened a new shop in Dublin, at 36 Dawson Street.

TITAN BOOKS are continuing to publish a steady stream of comics and graphic novels. The latest offerings include: *Batman vs Catwoman*, *Judge Dredd 23*, *Judge Dredd in Oz Book 3*, *Judge Dredd vs The Midnight Surfer*, *The Complete Elzabeth by Wendy and Richard Pini*, *Skizz by Alan Moore & Jim Baikie*, *The Town that didn't Exist* by the distinguished French comic artists Enki Bilal & Pierre Christin, and *The Spirit Paperback* and *A Contract with God* by Will Eisner.

TITAN are also publishing the two series of *Star Trek* novels: *The Star Trek* series is now up to 19 *The Wounded Sky* - Diane Duane, 20 *Vulcan's Glory* - D.C. Fontana, and 21 *My Enemy, My Ally* - Diane Duane; while *Star Trek: The Next Generation* has produced: 4 *Survivors* - Jean Lorrah, and 5 *Strike Zone* - Peter David.

*The Twilight Zone* magazine has ceased publication. Tappan King, the editor, left the magazine in February, and other key members of staff have also left. The final issue will be June 1989.

American publishers have now announced their lists for the first half of the year, so it's worth taking a look at some of the goodies in store which are likely to find their way onto British publishers' lists:

Piers Anthony - *Unicorn Point & Total Recall*, A.A. Attanasio - *The Last Legends of Earth*, Greg Bear - *Tangents* (collection), James Blaylock - *The Stone Giant*, Algis Budrys - *Cerebus*, Orson Scott Card - *The Folk of the Fringe*, Suzy McKee Charnas - *The Golden Thread*, C.J. Cherryh - *Rimrunners*, C.J. Cherryh & Nancy Asire - *Wizard Spawn*, John Crowley - *Novelty* (collection), David Edlings - *The Diamond Throne*, Raymond E. Feist - *Prince of the Blood*, John M. Ford - *Casting Fortune*, Harry Harrison - *Bill the Galactic Hero: The Planet of the Robot Slaves*, Joe Haldeman - *Buying Time*, James Patrick Kelly - *Look Into the Sun*, Tanith Lee - *A Heroine of the World*, Ursula LeGuin - *Fire and Stone* (children's book) & *Catwings Return* (children's book), Barry Longyear - *The God Box*, H.P. Lovecraft *The Horror in the Museum and Other Revisions* (a revised collection), Ian McDonald - *Out on Blue Six*, Pat Murphy - *The City, Not Long After*, Larry Niven (Ed) - *The Man-Kzin Wars II* (shared world anthology), Larry Niven & Steve Barnes - *Dream Park II: The Barsom Project*, Andre Norton (Ed) - *Four from the Witch World* (shared world anthology), Frederik Pohl - *Homegoing*, Tim Powers - *The Stress of Her Regard*, Anne Rice - *The Mummy or Ramses the Damned*, John Shirley - *Hestseeker*, Christopher Stasheff - *The Warlock Insane*, Bruce Sterling - *Crystal Express* (collection), Kate Wilhelm - *Children of the Wind* (collection), F. Paul Wilson - *Dyevotom World* (collection), Gene Wolfe - *Endangered Species* (collection) & *Soldier of Areta*, Roger Zelazny - *Frost and Fire*

Oh, and HOUGHTON MIFFLIN are listing *The Last Dangerous Visions* edited by Harlan Ellison for 1991.

NEW & FORTHCOMING BOOKS  
FEBRUARY - APRIL 1989

Lynn ABBEY *The Green Man* (HEADLINE, pbk, £2.99) 1st UK edn of Vol 2 of *Unicorn & Dragon*.

Brian ADLISSE *Cryptozic* (VG&F, pbk, £2.99) Reprint (Faber, 1967 as *An Age*) of time-travel novel, VG&F Classic 30.

Elaine ARON Samra/NEL, hbk, £12.95, pbk, £7.95) 1st edn of 1st part of trilogy based on The Mahabharata.

Isaac ASIMOV *The Relativity of Wrong* (OXFORD, pbk, £5.95) 1st UK edn of new collection of his articles from F&SF.

A.A. ATTANASIO Wyvern (GRAFTON, hbk, £12.95) 1st UK edn of novel about "pirates and sorcery, love and revenge".

Scott BAKER *Firedance* (LEGEND, pbk, £3.50) 1st UK edn of Book Two of the Ashlu Cycle.

Gregory BENFORD in *Alien Flesh* (VG&F, pbk, £3.50) Reprint (Gollancz, 1982) of Benford's 1st collection of stories.

James P. BLAYLOCK *The Disappearing Dwarf* (GRAFTON, pbk, £3.50) 1st UK edn of his sequel to *The Elf Ship*.

Michael BULLEIN *The Movement of Mountains* (NEL, pbk, £2.99) Reprint (Simon & Schuster, 1988) of acclaimed first novel.

Ray BRADSHAW *The Toybox Connector* (GRAFTON, hbk, £12.95) 1st UK edn of new collection of short stories.

Lola McMaster BULLOCK *Ethan of Athos* (HEADLINE, pbk, £2.99) 1st UK edn of science fiction novel.

Pat CADIGAN *Mind Players* (VG&F, pbk, £3.50) Reprint (Gollancz, 1986) of sf novel.

Robert A. COLLINS & Robert LATHAM (Eds) *Science Fiction & Fantasy Book Review Annual 1988* (MECKLER, hbk, £37.00) 1st UK edn of reference book containing short reviews of some 600 of the years SF titles.

Hugh COOK *The Wicked and the Willies* (CORGI, pbk, £3.99) Reprint (Colin Smythe, 1989) of Vol 5 of *Chronicles of an Age of Darkness*.

Robin COOK *Mutation* (MACMILLAN, hbk, £11.95) 1st UK edn of novel about genetic engineering.

Ellen DATLOW & Terri WINDLING *Demons & Dreams: The Best Fantasy and Horror 1* (LEGEND, hbk, £12.95, pbk, £6.95) 1st UK edn of Best of the Year anthology for 1987.

Samuel R. DELANY *Flight from Neverjon* (GRAFTON, pbk, £3.99) 1st UK edn of 3rd part of *Neverjon* series.

Philip K. DICK *Second Variety* (GOLLANCZ, hbk, £12.95) 1st UK edn of Vol 2 of the collected stories.

Stephen DONALDSON *A Man Rider Through* (FONTANA, pbk, £4.95) Reprint (1987) of 2nd part of *Mordant's Need*.

David EDDINGS *King of the Murgos* (CORGI, pbk, £3.99) Reprint (Bantam, 1988) of Book 2 of the *Mallorance*.

Ru EMERSON *On the Seas of Destiny* (HEADLINE, pbk, £2.99) 1st UK edn of the 3rd Tale of *Nedao*.

M.J. ENGH *A Wind from Bukhara* (GRAFTON, pbk, £3.99) 1st UK edn of novel published in USA as *Arslan*.

Steve ERICKSON *Tours of the Black Clock* (SIMON & SCHUSTER, hbk, £11.95) 1st UK edn of novel about 20th century in which timeline splits; *Robot Books of the Future*, hbk, £4.50) 1st UK edn of 2nd novel by author of *Days Between Stations*.

John FAIRLEY & Simon WELFARE *Arthur C. Clarke's Chronicles of the Strange and Mysterious* (GRAFTON, pbk, £5.99) Reprint (Collins, 1987) of examination of occult phenomena.

Esther M. FRIESNER *Elf Defence* (HEADLINE, pbk, £2.99) 1st UK edn of fantasy novel.

Craig Shaw GARDNER *A Difficulty with Dwarves* (HEADLINE, pbk, £2.99) 1st UK edn, "Verse the First in the Ballad of Wuntvor".

Timothy GOOD *Above Top Secret* (GRAFTON, pbk, £5.99) Reprint (Slogdick & Jackson, 1987) of bestseller on "the worldwide UFO cover-up".

Joyce Ballou GREGORIAN *The Broken Citadel* (ORBIT, pbk, £4.99) 1st UK edn of 1st volume in *The Tredane Trilogy*.

James GUNN (Ed) *The New Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (Viking, hbk, £17.95) 1st UK edn of what claims to be "the first volume to chronicle the extraordinary growth of science fiction".

Harry HARRISON *The Stainless Steel Rat Saves the World* (BANTAM, pbk, £2.50) Reprint (Faber, 1973) of part of the continuing series.

Simon HAWKE *The Khyber Connection* (HEADLINE, pbk, £2.99) 1st UK edn of Book 4 in *The Time Wars* series.

Kathleen HERBERT *Bride of the Spear* (CORGI, pbk, £3.50) Reprint (Bodley Head, 1988) of 3rd part of Celtic trilogy.

James P. HOGAN *Inherit the Stars* (GRAFTON, pbk, £2.99) 1st UK edn of Book 1 of *The Giants* trilogy.

Christopher HYDE *Jericho Falls* (HEADLINE, pbk, £3.99) Reprint (Simon & Schuster, 1988) of horror novel.

Diana Wynne JONES (Ed) *Hidden Turnings* (METHUEN, hbk, £8.95) 1st edn original anthology for young adults by Tanith Lee, Garry Kilworth, Liss Tuttle, Roger Zelazny, Terry Pratchett and 7 others: *A Tale of Time City* (MAGNET, pbk, £1.99) reprint (Methuen, 1988) of alternate history novel.

Katherine KERR *Dawnspell* (GRAFTON, hbk, £12.95) 1st UK edn of latest volume in *The Devery* saga.

Dawn R. KOONTZ *Midnight* (HEADLINE, hbk, £12.95) 1st UK edn of horror novel; *Lightning* (HEADLINE, pbk, £3.50) Reprint (Headline, 1988) of horror novel.

Tanith LEE *Women as Demons* (WOMEN'S PRESS, pbk, £4.95) 1st edn of collection of 16 stories.

Brad LINNEMEYER *Moon of Ice* (GRAFTON, pbk, £3.99) 1st UK edn of alternate history novel set 30 years after the Nazis won World

War Two.

Robert R. McCAMMON *Blue World* (GRAFTON, hb, £12.95) 1st UK edn of collection of horror stories.

Michael MORROCK *The King of the Swords* (GRAFTON, pbk, £2.99) Reprint (GRAFTON, 1972) of 3rd Book of Corum; *The Bull and the Spider* (GRAFTON, pbk, £2.99) Reprint (Allison & Busby, 1973) of 4th Book of Corum.

Gloria MURPHY *Night Shade* (CORGI, pbk, £2.99) 1st UK edn of horror novel.

David NIGHBERT *Timepulse* (HEADLINE, pbk, £3.50) 1st UK edn of SF novel.

Andre NORTON (Ed) *Tales of the Witch World* (PAN, pbk, £3.99) 1st UK edn of anthology of 17 original Witch World by Robert Bloch, Charles DeLint, Ardath Mayhar and others.

Kate NOVAK & Jeff GRUBB *Azure Bonds* (PENGUIN, pbk, £3.99) 1st UK edn of another game-based adventure in the Forgotten Realms series.

Jerry RANDLES *Abduction* (HEADLINE, pbk, £2.99) Reprint (Hale, 1988) of a "scientific exploration of alleged kidnaps by alien beings".

Robert REED *The Hormone Jungle* (ORBIT, pbk, £6.99) 1st UK edn of SF novel by 1st Writers of the Future winner.

Daniel RHODES *Next, After Lucifer* (NEL, pbk, £3.50) Reprint (NEL, 1988) of horror novel.

Spider ROBINSON *Callahan's Crazy Crossover Bar* (LEGEND, pbk, £3.50) 1st UK edn of stories from the Crossover Saloon.

Joel ROSENBERG *The Hair Apparent* (GRAFTON, pbk, £3.50) 1st UK edn of Book 4 of Guardians of the Flame.

Gillian RUBINSTEIN *Space Demons* (MAGNET, pbk, £1.99) 1st UK edn of children's novel.

Rudy RUCKER *Welwre* (NEL, pbk, £2.50) 1st UK edn of P.K. Dick Award winner.

Joanna RUSS *The Hidden Side of the Moon* (WOMEN'S PRESS, pbk, £4.95) 1st UK edn of short story collection.

Fred SABERHAGEN *Brother Berserker* (VG&F, pbk, £2.99) Reprint (Macdonald, 1969) of a further volume in the Berserker series.

Bob SHAW *Dark Night in Toyland* (GOLLANCZ, hb, £11.95) 1st edn of collection of 15 stories from 1960 to 1989.

Robert SILVERBERG *Dying Inside* (VG&F, pbk, £2.99) Reprint (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1975) of VG&F Classic 31.

Cordwainer SMITH *The Instrumentality of Mankind* (GOLLANCZ, hb, £11.95) Reprint (VG&F, 1988) of collection of 14 stories.

Norman SPINRAD *The Men in the Jungle* (GRAFTON, pbk, £3.50) Reprint (Sphere, 1973) of violent SF novel.

Nancy SPINKER *Windborn* (ORBIT, pbk, £3.50) 1st UK edn of part 2 of The Sea King Trilogy.

Michael SWANNICK *In the Drift* (LEGEND, hb, £10.95, pbk, £4.95) 1st UK edn of highly praised SF novel.

Roger TAYLOR *The Fall of Fyordun* (HEADLINE, pbk, £3.99) 1st edn of the 2nd Chronicles of Hawkland.

Thomas TESSIER *Rapture* (FUTURA, pbk, £3.50) 1st UK edn of psychological horror novel.

Roy THOMAS & Tony DEZUNIGA *The Dragonlance Saga, Book Three* (PENGUIN, pbk, £5.99) 1st UK edn of the Weiss & Hickman game-based adventures adapted as a graphic novel.

J.R.R. TOLKIEN *The Annotated Hobbit* (UNWIN, hb, £14.95) Umpteenth reissue of the book in handsome new edition with annotations by Douglas A. Anderson.

Nikolai TOLSTOY *The Coming of the King* (CORGI, pbk, £4.99) Reprint (Bantam, 1988) of The First Book of Merlin.

Tim UNDERWOOD & Chuck MILLER (Eds) *Bare Bones* (NEL, hb, £10.95) 1st UK edn of book of interviews with Stephen King.

Jack VANCE *Araminta Station* (NEL, pbk, £3.50) Reprint (NEL, 1988) of Book 1 of The Cadwal Chronicles.

Robert E. VADEMAN *Weapons of Chaos* (NEL, pbk, £4.50) 1st UK edn of omnibus of Echoes of Chaos, Equations of Chaos & Colors of Chaos.

Ian WATSON *Salvage Rites* (GOLLANCZ, hb, £11.95) 1st edn of collection of 15 stories dated 1983-1988.

Ken WEBSTER *The Vertical Plane* (GRAFTON, pbk, £3.99) 1st edn of non-fiction about communication across 4 centuries.

Margaret WEIS & Tracy Hickman *Doom of the Darksworld* (BANTAM, pbk, £3.50) 1st UK edn of Vol 2 of the Darksworld Trilogy.

Jack WIMACK *Terraplane* (UNWIN, hb, £12.95) 1st UK edn of novel involving time travel and alternative histories.

Jenny WURTS *Stormwarden* (GRAFTON, hb, £12.95, pbk, £7.95) 1st UK edn of Book 1 of The Cycle of Fire.

## Media News

Compiled by John Peters

*Forbidden Planet* as a rock musical? That's what's in store for Coventry this April. *Return to the Forbidden Planet* is a reworking of the classic 1950s film with 24 rock songs added, ranging from "Great Balls of Fire" to "Good Vibrations". Written and Directed by Bob Carlton, it will be performed by a new company called Rhinoceros Method Productions, formed of actors and musicians. The show is to be staged at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from 6-22 April. There will also be late night performances of the group's previous show, *From a Jack to a King*, a rock version of *Macbeth* which was a hit at last year's Edinburgh Fringe, on 15, 21 and 22 April.

Another theatrical production coming up is *The Fall of the House of Usher*, a new opera by Philip Glass, based on the story by Edgar Allan Poe. It will be produced by Music Theatre Wales, and will be receiving its Welsh Premiere at St Donats Art Centre, Llantwit Major, in August. This is actually the first production in Europe, but the official European Premiere in Germany is, for some reason, scheduled for later in the year. The first performance will be as part of the Vale of Glamorgan Festival on 9 August, and in November the production will tour around up to 20 venues in Wales. All of which will be before any performance of the opera in England.

Those of you who thought that Doctor Who has never recovered since they let Bonnie Langford loose in the Tardis with her Laura Ashley DIY handbook will be glad to hear that a stage version of the long-running TV show is being planned. The good news is that Jon Pertwee will be the Doctor. There's no other information yet, but it will be a national tour, and I guess it has more chance of actually happening than the long awaited movie which is still in pre-production without a star.

CBS-FOX VIDEO is releasing *Vengeance the Demon* in May. The horror film is directed by Stan Winston, who worked on *Predator*, *Alien* and *Aliens*, and who also created the monster in this film. The cast includes Lance Henriksen from *Aliens* and Kimberly Ross from *The Last Starfighter*.

Meanwhile, VESTRON VIDEO INTERNATIONAL has two horror releases

in March. *The Caller* is a psychological thriller starring Malcolm McDowell and Madolyn Smith, directed by Arthur Seidman of *Hill Street Blues* from a script by Michael Sloan of *The Equalizer*. While *Blood Diner* is a horror spoof about a diner controlled by the resurrected brain of the dead uncle of the owners.

Writer/director/producer Clive Barker, whose new film *Hellraiser II: Hellbound* is due for release this spring, has already finalised plans for his next film. Called *Nightbreed* it is based on his last novel, *Cabal*, and is to be released by Twentieth Century Fox later this year. Filming has already begun at Pinewood Studios, and there will be some location shooting in Canada. The complete cast hasn't been announced yet, but the most interesting news is that director David Cronenberg has been signed to play a psychiatrist with definite psychopathic tendencies. Other than "Hitchcock-like" appearances in his own films - notably the delivery room doctor in *The Fly* - he has never, to my knowledge, appeared in someone else's film, or acted in an extended role before. The only other cast member announced is Charles Hall, Renko from *Hill Street Blues*.

Cronenberg himself is set to film an adaptation of William Burroughs's *The Naked Lunch*.

Meanwhile, the sequel to Cronenberg's *The Fly*, *The Fly II* has quietly completed production, without any involvement by him. It was the directorial debut of effects specialist Chris Walas, and begins with the birth of Seth Brundle's son, Martin (Eric Stoltz). Due to the abortive matter transmitter experiments of his father, Martin begins to mutate as he grows older, the changes being triggered at a cellular level in his body. It co-stars Daphne Zuniga, with John Getz reprising his role of newspaper editor Stethis Borans.

News from the Batman set grows as production continues. Actress Sean Young was replaced by Kim Basinger after an accident; and it has now been announced that Robin, the boy wonder, will only appear at the end of the film due to script rewrites. His appearance will be needed, however, for continuity reasons if there is a sequel. Other casting news: Jack Palance co-stars as a crime boss whose underling becomes The Joker (Jack Nicholson); character actor Pat Hingle plays Gotham City Police Commissioner James Gordon; and Billy Dee Williams, Lando Calrissian in *Star Wars*, is Harvey Dent, a District Attorney who is attacked and facially mutilated, becoming Batman's enemy, Two-Face. Veteran actor Michael Gough has been signed to play Alfred the butler,

and Tracey Walter, Catherine O'Hara and Jerry Hall have all been added to the cast. Bob Kane, original creator of the Batman character will make a cameo appearance in the film.

Meanwhile Frank Miller, who so brilliantly reactivated the Batman mythos with *The Dark Knight Returns*, has written the script for the *Robocop* sequel.

Soap star Stephanie Beacham has escaped *Dynasty* for a short while to make *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*. Based on the novel by Joan Aiken, it is directed by Stuart Orme and has a budget of \$5 million. The film is being made by Zenith, the Central TV film division. Set in the 19th century, Beacham plays a demonic nanny who sets her hellhounds onto her charges. Sounds like typecasting to me.

Despite being described as unfilmable by author Stephen King, *Pet Semetary* has been filmed, and not by the original team of George Romero and King. Director Mary Lambert, better known for Madonna videos, has taken the helm, working from King's own script. Shot in and around King's hometown, Bangor, Maine, the film stars Denise Crosby, Fred Gwynne and Dale Midkiff, while Lance Anderson is in charge of bringing the dead pets back to life. US release was set for March, so we should be seeing it sometime in autumn or winter.

An unusual teaming recently was that of Nicholas Roeg and Jim Henson when they worked together on *The Witches*, based on the Roald Dahl story. Henson supplied the animatronic puppets that eat alongside human star Angelica Huston. Described as a children's *Psycho*, the mind boggles at what sort of certificate it will get. *The Witches* was set for March release in America.

It seems that everyone is filming *Phantom of the Opera* nowadays. The latest is coming from Warner Brothers and stars Robert de Niro. Directed by Wolfgang Peterson, it was originally based on a Dennis Potter script, but Peterson objected to the setting being Nazi-occupied Paris, so Potter withdrew and was replaced by James Dearden who was responsible for *Fatal Attraction*. This is the third announced production. John Hough has been named as director of the Robert Englund version.

*My Stepmother is an Alien* stars Kim Basinger and Dan Aykroyd in a story about a female alien who learns about human relationships by watching X-rated porn videos.

Set for July release in the States is the new James Bond film, *Licence to Kill*. Set to be the biggest Bond yet, the budget has risen to \$36 million and the crew has expanded to over 200 technicians. Surprisingly, John Barry will not be writing the score, illness has forced him to refuse the assignment.

**SNIPPETS:** Steven Spielberg's next film is a remake of *A Guy Named Joe*, renamed *Always* it stars Richard Dreyfuss and Holly Hunter ... Willem Dafoe, star of *The Last Temptation of Christ*, is starring in a remake of the Charles Laughton classic, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* ... Sam Raimi is planning to shoot *Evil Dead III* this summer with Bruce Campbell again starring and producing ... ITC are planning a big screen/big budget production of *Randall & Hopkirk (Deceased)* ... The new *Planet of the Apes* movie is to be called *The Fourth War* ... Nicholas Meyer is belatedly planning a sequel to his successful *Time After Time* ... Renny Harlin has replaced Ridley Scott on *Alien III* ... *Disaster at Silo 7* is a new TV movie starring Peter Boyle and Dennis Weaver, and deals with an exploding Titan II missile ... that house is still putting the frighteners on flingers - beware of *Amityville Horror: The Evil Escapes* - effects man Rob Bottin is to make his directorial debut with *Raising Hell* ... meanwhile, colleague Stan Winston (whose *Pumpkinhead* has still not been released) is to direct *Upworld* a fantasy teaming a cop with a gnome (?) ... Richard Matheson has scripted Philip Wylie's *The Disappearance* as a 4 hour TV mini-series which will star Peter Strauss ... John Carpenter's plans for a sequel to *Escape from New York* have not been dashed by the financial collapse of DEG, it may still be financed by another production company in the near future ... *Something is out there*, an SF mini-series that was very successful on US TV last year and then expanded into a series, has been cancelled because of poor ratings, it was replaced by *The Jim Henson Hour* - it has yet to be shown over here ...

Film releases announced for 1989 look like it will be a good year for SF. There are, apparently, 132 films scheduled for release in America this year which are science fiction, fantasy or horror, or some element of that; and presumably a fair number of them will make their way across the Atlantic.

Key titles to look out for are: *Indiana Jones and*

*the Last Crusade* directed by Steven Spielberg, written by George Lucas, and starring Harrison Ford, Sean Connery, Denholm Elliott and John Rhys Davies; *Ghostbusters II* with the original cast; *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* directed by William Shatner and starring the old crew; and *Back to the Future II* which reunites the team from the original, and which is being filmed back to back with *Back to the Future III* (but since BTFF II is set for Christmas release in America, and BTFF III isn't due out there until summer 1990, we may have to wait a long while before we see them).

Other titles forthcoming are: *Millennium*, adapted by John Varley from his own book and starring Kris Kristofferson; *Earth Girls are Easy* starring Jeff Goldblum; *Communism* from the controversial Whitely Streiber book; and another comic book hero *Spider-Man* directed by Albert Pyun; *Martians, Go Home* adapted from the Frederic Brown novel; *Eric the Viking* written and directed by Terry Jones and starring John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Freddie Jones, Mickey Rooney and Eartha Kitt???; and an Americanised version of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

Filming has just begun in North Carolina on *The Handmaid's Tale* from the Arthur C. Clarke Award winning novel by Margaret Atwood. The screenplay is by Harold Pinter and the film stars Robert Duvall, Elizabeth McGovern and Alden Quinn.

Gerry Anderson, creator of *Supercar*, *Stingray*, *Fireball X-5* and *Joe 90*, and, most recently, the Dick Spanner character in the TV commercials for Tennents Lager, has announced that he is working on a new *Thunderbirds* film.

MCA, the company which owns Universal Pictures, is looking for a site in one of Britain's inner-city areas to build a £600 million film studio and Disneyland-style leisure complex. Although French and Italian sites are being considered, Britain is favourite for the development which will need a 500-acre site



Menahem Golan has left Cannon, the massive film production and clamouring combine which he founded with his cousin Yoram Globus. The group owns the largest chain of cinemas in Britain, as well as producing films like *Superman*, *Spiderman* and *Masters of the Universe*. The reasons for his departure are unclear, but Cannon is known to be putting \$160 million into a new production company being set up by Golan, and which will make 17 films over the next four years.

BBC2 is planning a second *Moviedrome* series of cult films, and this time has come up with some interesting selections. Those announced so far include: *The Man with X-Ray Eyes*, *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, *Night of the Comet* and *Trancers*.



## DESERT PLANET BOOKS

BSFA Members choose  
their five essential books.

MY TENTATIVE REQUEST FOR SUGGESTIONS FOR 'DESERT PLANET BOOKS' - five books you would regard as indispensable if about to be marooned on a deserted planet - has generated far more response than I might have anticipated, and for that reason, rather than swamp the letters column, it seemed sensible to organise them into a separate article.

First of all, several readers have asked me to explain just what it was that Carl Sagan did say to Roy Plomley when he was on *Desert Island Discs*. You will recall that the island was already equipped with a copy of the Complete Works of Shakespeare, and a copy of the Bible. Sagan took great exception to the inclusion of the latter, considering that it was fine for anyone brought up in the Christian faith, but what about those who weren't...? Roy Plomley manoeuvred smoothly round this, and the Bible remained in future programmes, but I agreed with Sagan.

Reasons for choosing particular books were many and varied, though the most common were a wish to reread an old favourite yet again, to reread a book for a greater understanding, or to finally get around to reading a well-known book for the first time. Oh, and dimensions seem to have a lot to do with some choices. Andy Mills from Hull, offered his choices, including at least one particular favourite of mine:

Choosing five books to take with me on a desert island is a task I would have found as difficult as choosing five records - the selection would vary depending on the mood of the moment. I briefly considered novels such as George R Stewart's *Earth Abides* and Rex Gordon's *No Man Friday* on the grounds that they might offer some useful advice on survival - these were rejected, however, as being far too practical! In the end, I decided on one book I'd never read and which I'd now have plenty of time to get through, and one book each from four of my favourite authors.

- 1) J R R Tolkien *Lord of the Rings*. I hereby admit I've never read it, but it's certainly weighty enough to warrant inclusion for a lengthy stay.
- 2) Christopher Priest *The Glamour*. As with the next three, this was a book I thoroughly enjoyed upon first reading; a second would, in this case, be even more enjoyable and illuminating, I feel.
- 3) Keith Roberts *Pavane*. An author and books which communicates an understanding of machines, people and the land which few others can match. To let me know what I'm missing.
- 4) Ursula K Le Guin *The Dispossessed*. This is to give some hope that there would have been positive changes in society on my return to civilisation.
- 5) Jack Vance *The Eyes of the Overworld*. The most difficult choice of all ... had there been an omnibus edition of the *Demon Princes* quarter, I'd probably have opted for that. There's certainly plenty of Vance around to choose from, and for me his style and humour are a must.

Well, plenty in that list I would also have enjoyed. Chris Lewis, from my hometown of Oxford, came up with some more choices I wish I'd thought of.

- 1) Robert Holdstock *Lavondyss* - as it looks so big, and everyone recommends it, and I might get time to read it, and if it didn't exist, I'd take *Mythago Wood*.
- 2) Peter Ackroyd *Hawsmoor* - again, given time, I might be able to figure it out, especially the second half.
- 3) The as yet unpublished *Complete Discworld* - Terry Pratchett, to cheer me up and amuse me, especially after the thorough nastiness of *Hawsmoor*.
- 4) Christopher Priest *The Affirmation*, so I can reassure myself I'm not cracking up, and because it reminds me very strongly of trips to London (via Baker St tube), walking holidays in Sheffield and associated friends.

After that, it gets more difficult (can I have Jane Austen instead of Shakespeare? Yes - MSP. I'd have to try and smuggle an extra one in as I can't decide between:

- a) Frederick Pohl *Gateway* (gosh, some hard SF). Despite knowing the end, it's still a very well-crafted book, with all the strands coming to a climax, and plenty of interesting clues and snippets thrown in.
- b) Ursula K Le Guin *The Lash of Heaven* - I guess because the underlying philosophy that some things and ways of achieving ends 'fit in' appeals to me, and I'm a sucker for a happy, romantic ending.

Chris, you'll note, has opted for the well-known gambits of substituting something else for the Shakespeare, inventing omnibus editions and trying to sneak in an extra volume when no-one's looking. John Howard, from Lincoln, offers a completely different set of choices.

- 1) Olaf Stapledon *Star Maker*. Epic or what? Knocks me out with cosmic wonder at how big Out There is, and how small we Down Here are. Puts us into perspective. First read when I6, so also nostalgia value!
- 2) Fritz Leiber *Our Lady of Darkness*. Possibly the only horror novel that's ever scared me. Also believable, with real, well-characterised people and locations. Leiber is the world's best living writer of this sort of thing. Luckily, no cities on the desert island!
- 3) Arthur C Clarke *Rendezvous with Rama*. Largely for sentimental reasons - Clarke was just about the first SF I ever read. So I must choose something by him. My favourite of his novels (I think his best) is *The City and the Stars* or *Childhood's End*. It combines Clarke's pro-storytelling with the vision that he can invoke. Characterisation isn't his strong point so he avoids it.
- 4) John Brunner *Shockwave Rider*. An affirmation of humanity in the face of progress - and a progress which makes the novel more prophetic and relevant than ever.
- 5) H P Lovecraft *The Dunwich Horror* and *Others*. Inimitable (despite August Derleth and all stations to Innsmouth) stories by a unique man. An HPL story is an experience in criticism and psychology, as well as an interesting (this does not equal 'good') read. I get something new out each time. Useful for the island.

You didn't ask about the luxury! I wouldn't mind a coconut tree with genetically altered coconuts, so there was chilled Frascati wine, or slightly rough Chianti inside. Or failing that, my subscription to *Locus*. (But not in the coconuts, I mean.)

Good point, though I wish you had felt more strongly attached to your BSFA membership. Oh well, Rob Hogan, from Street, Somerset, is hopefully feeling less tortured now he knows what it was Carl Sagan said.

Your suggestions set me thinking, and gave me an interesting hour scanning my fiction library and reliving some of the books that have entertained me through the years. I made my selection before considering the reasons for my choices, and so was surprised to realise that in each case the basic appeal was the same. Each depicts an otherness that is to me totally convincing, an alien being or race not merely humankind with tentacles. It was this opportunity to view life through different eyes that first attracted me to SF thirty years ago, and it is the same desire that still holds me and enables me to wade through Sturgeon's ninety per cent in search of the gold.

- 1) Ursula K Le Guin *The Left Hand of Darkness*. I first read this during a summer holiday, but still the cold of Winter touched me, and I could feel the comfort of Genly Ai's furs and see the sparks of the fire as she and the native sat around it, talking of the world and its ecology.
- 2) Cordwaine Smith *Collected Stories*. Cheating a little as I do not believe such a volume exists, but if the island is symbolic so can be one of my books. Smith's novel was a disappointment to me as it could not sustain the dreamlike quality of his short stories, but when I enter the world of these stories, I am lost to this one. Even his humans I find non-human, and for the Underpeople and their culture I forgive him his occasional drift into sentimentality.
- 3) Larry Niven *Protector*. I turn to the Known Space work of pre-bestseller Niven when I want well-written adventure, but in this book the character of single-minded and bemused Phssthpok the Pak raises it above the bulk of his writings. The style of the novel is the same as all his others, but Phssthpok has lived on in my mind through all the years since I read it.
- 4) C J Cherryh *Pride of Chanur*. Chanur just managed to make it into my list above *Downbelow Station*, and I would take both in an omnibus edition if allowed to cheat a little more. The view it gives from the inside of its fictional culture is impeccably consistent, and given an added interest by incorporating a long-distance picture of human society through the confused information available from the human captive.
- 5) Robert Heinlein *Dune into Summer*. No great literary effort, naive plot line and poor human characterisation. But it is written by a man who understands the otherness of cats as well as any human can understand those alien creatures, and it made me smile to myself a lot when I read it.

Two last thoughts. Considering their effects, good or bad, could not *Stranger in a Strange Land* or your own *Lord of the Rings* count as religious works? And I would prefer the collected works of John Le Carré to Shakespeare's - I find his characters more believable, but what else can you expect from a maths teacher?

Ken Lake from London was brief and to the point with his selection.

- 1) Harlan Ellison *Dangerous Visions* (for the nostalgia)
- 2) Douglas Adams *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* collected edition (to while away dull evenings in my pandemonium pine hut)
- 3) Isaac Asimov and others *100 Great Science Fiction Short Stories* (for tropical days when concentration is limited)
- 4) Kurt Vonnegut *Slaughterhouse 5* (to awaken that sense of anger that's essential if one is not to vegetate)
- 5) Peter Nicholson (ed) *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (to bring to mind the thousands of great books I've left behind).

Next at the landing stage came Norman Beswick from Church Stretton in Shropshire, who was more expensive.

I'd look for a mixture of value for money and variety of mood. So, to begin with, how about the marvellous *Solaris* (Stanislaw Lem)? I love its mixture of human interest (Rheya), sensuousness (the mysterious sea), and penetrating, thought-provoking satire (*Solaris*).

Then for a contrast, *Wells* (Philip K Dick), urant, embarrassing, disturbing, compelling, a quirky rabga of Gnostic heresies and mental unrest set in a flatly contemporary California. Contrast that again with *A Case of Conscience* (James Blish), creating the utterly believable biologist-priest with a

real humdinger of a problem, and yet another sidelight on the religion/science dichotomy.

At this point, I was going to have Brian Aldiss's *Hothouse*, but I know it by heart, so instead I'll take Ian Watson's *Whores of Babylon* to reread: a novel one can carry on and on exploring, unpeeling realities as one goes.

And to finish, if Mairwen can have all three *Lord of the Rings* counting as one, then surely I can have all five of the *New Sun* books by Gene Wolfe? If not, then cancel all the others above: I'll settle on my new planet in the company of Severian and his stories. There should be time to work out most of the hidden subtleties.

Well, I'm being pretty lenient, and I believe that most of the *New Sun* set was intended as one book, much as *Lord of the Rings* was originally conceived, so you can have them as one, Norman. Rob Matthews from Poole offers an entirely different perspective with his choices.

- 1) Brian Aldiss *Heliconia Spring* - as it is a brilliantly realised and thoroughly believable account of a civilisation recovering from five centuries of Winter and reacting to the arrival of Spring. The planet's astronomy, ecology and the changes in climate are all intricately woven into the plot without overwhelming the reader, or slowing down the story. The strong characterisations and the epic scope of the novel make it, in my opinion, a classic.
- 2) Mary Gentle *Ancient Light* - a rarity in SF, a sequel that manages to surpass the original. It also makes the reader wish it was longer, despite being over 700 pages long (no mean feat). The central characterisation of Lynne de Lisle Christie, as the situation on Orthe deteriorates towards war, is probably the strongest and most believable I have ever read. I can't give this novel any higher praise than that.
- 3) Judith Tarr *The Golden Horn* - the brilliantly realised account of Constantinople during the Crusades makes this so much more than just the second part in yet another fantasy trilogy. The novel is a stunning combination of fantasy, history and theology, with the character of Alf, part human and part elf, trying to find his destiny after leaving his English monastery. Hopefully Tarr will continue to mature as an author and become one of fantasy's brightest stars.
- 4) Keith Roberts *Kilworld* - Contains several stunning novellas, one of which - "Kitecrafter" is the most moving piece of literature I have ever read. "Kitecrafter" also contains the character of Tan, who doesn't say a word but is still one of the most original and powerful heroines in SF. Roberts being one of the few authors who can write convincing and strong characters of either sex. In the end, this just gets the vote over his classic earlier novel, *Pavane*.
- 5) Storm Constantine *The Bewitchments of Love and Hate* - This novel is a remarkable achievement for a new author, making a memorable and unique fantasy from the old idea of a mutant race evolving from mankind. She has succeeded in creating a cast of characters that are powerful, intriguing and mystifying, often to the point of bafflement. The style of writing is eloquent, the prose is always interesting and colourful, and the plot is thought-provoking. Hopefully, she can continue to produce many more classics of this calibre.

At this stage in the game, it would seem that Ursula Le Guin and Keith Roberts are promising to be the most consistently chosen authors, though Gene Wolfe is coming up close behind. Allan Lloyd continues this trend.

For my first choice I'm going to cheat and choose an omnibus edition of Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun* with *The Urth of the New Sun* as an appendix. Yes, I know it has not been published in this form yet, but if I'm marooned on some planet then we must be talking about the future, and I'm extrapolating. I keep returning to Wolfe's books and each time seem to solve some more of his puzzles and find more that need solving.

Second, Michael Moorcock's *Mother London*, which I think is his best book yet. I was disappointed not to see it reviewed in *Vector* or *Foundation*, as it certainly has science fictional elements (including telepathy) and reflects all of Moorcock's familiar obsessions.

Third, John Crowley. It was difficult choosing between *Little, Big* and *Gawd*, but the former won because it is complete in itself, whereas we have yet to see the next three volumes to accompany *Gawd*.

A difficult choice again for fourth place, this time between John Fowles' *The Magus* or *A Maggot*. Both share themes

recurrent through Fowles' work, but I finally picked *The Magus* for the wonderful storytelling. I know it's not strictly fantasy, but the scenes on the Greek island have enough elements of the fantastic to satisfy me, and the leading character's perception of reality is questioned more often than any of Philip Dick's.

Last, Lucius Shepard's *The Jaguar Hunter*. I agree with Maureen that Shepard is a genuinely classy writer, and the variety of the stories is amazing. He actually made me enjoy the two horror stories in the book, and I normally avoid this type of fiction. My only hope is that he won't burn himself out; he seems to be so productive, it's unbelievable.

If I could cheat again and smuggle in another volume it would be the *Helliconia* trilogy, because I don't seem to have included any straight SF. I'm very sad that there's no room for anything by Dick, Russ, Disch or Wilhelm, but perhaps if I gave up the Bible...

Ian Mundell from Marlborough, Wilts, entertained my postman by writing his choices on the envelope.

- 1) J G Ballard *Vermillion Sands*
- 2) Isin Banks *The Bridge*
- 3) Thomas Pynchon *Gravity's Rainbow*
- 4) M John Harrison *A Storm of Wings*
- 5) Michael Moorcock *The Cornelius Chronicles*  
(If I can't have all of these, bound, it would have to be *Nova Express* by William S Burroughs)

For me, all these books have such depth, both in concepts and language, that I could easily pass long terraforming years with them (only five though...?)

Steve Palmer from Egham, Surrey, brings us back to the evergreen Dr Sagan by kicking off thus:

I'd better say that, & la Sagan, my religious book would be *Why I am not a Christian* by Bertrand Russell. Nuff said.

- 1) Gene Wolfe *The Book of the New Sun*. Still stunning and infuriating after a handful of reads. Is Baldanders the Anti-Christ? Is Dr Telois the False Prophet? Is it coincidence that FOX is equivalent to 666? Is Cyriaca really Catherine? I still don't know.
- 2) John Crowley *Little, Big*. A knockout book that aims for the heart and impacts perfectly. One of those books where you suddenly remember you were reading, having completed the last line.
- 3) Jorge Luis Borges *Labyrinths*. Ancient history distilled into one book. Perhaps no other fiction writer has given readers a taste of the mysterious old world as Borges. Two classic stories stand out - *The Library of Babel* and *The Immortal*.
- 4) Mervyn Peake *Gormenghast*. Ideally, I'd like to take all three of the series, but this one is perhaps the best. I remember reading the ending first time - I was so tense, I couldn't walk for an hour afterwards.
- 5) Jack Vance *Lyonese II*. I've always loved Jack Vance. Nobody can write like him. This is the better of the two Elder Isles books so far published, with wonderful cameos, general politicking, questing, kidnapping and all the other things only Vance could rescue from clichédom.

Ronnie Blakely from Paisley notes a characteristic about his own selection which could equally apply to many of those offered here.

Looking through my list of 5 books (actually 11 separate volumes), it's nothing like I thought it would be (apart from one). Nothing which could be described as Science Fiction, not a spaceship, BEM or hi-tech futuristic world in sight, mostly deep and meaningful (with one notable exception).

Choice number one is *The Lord of the Rings* by J R R Tolkien. Partly, as Maureen said, for sentimental reasons, but also because even after rereading half-a-dozen times, I still enjoy the story. It beats all other attempts at *Sword and Sorcery*. This is the choice which was always going to appear in my list.

Number 2 on the list is *Dandelion Wine* by Ray Bradbury. My favourite novel by a writer who can turn the most ordinary subject into a magical story. Childhood as it never was, or will be; this is the kind of book which you either instinctively love for no other reason than that it has a magical quality or leaves you totally cold. I have to admit that it did take me two attempts to read *Dandelion Wine*, but the effort was definitely worth it.

Next choice is *Little, Big* by John Crowley. This is a wonderful book which almost had me crying at the end. I know from reading other comments that there was much about this book that I missed first time, round, and would love to have the time to delve deeper into the text. Even so, it is worth reading for the story alone.

In fourth place is *Titus Groen* by Mervyn Peake. Another book which I would love to read again, partly because of the wonderful prose, and partly because of the bizarre characters and setting.

And now, for a bit of light relief, my final choice would be *Mort* by Terry Pratchett. I could have chosen any of the *Discworld* books but as I haven't read this, and *Death* plays a major role in *Mort* this is the volume which goes to the desert island. *Death* as portrayed in the *Discworld* novels is a wonderful character. I JUST WISH I COULD SPEAK IN CAPITAL LETTERS.

Being non-religious and disliking Shakespeare (school O' grades and Higher to blame for this) I would swap these automatic choices for a lifetime subscription to BSFA mailings. Since I would probably last no more than a few months on a desert island, this would not present any problems to anyone.

P T Ross seems to share Ronnie's opinion about having the Bible on the planet.

For my "appropriate religious text", I'm going to take Marion Campbell of Kilberry's *The Dark Twin*, set in Argyll (the homeland I'll be leaving behind) 2500 years ago. The triple priestess of the Mother (the Maiden, the Mother, the Crone) calmly accepting the advent of the sky-gods' worship... the Former People surviving both... the Path of White Stones, the Well, the promise of the Orchard... just make sure my planet-of-exile has cuckoos, and what more could a journeying spirit need?

While I'm at it, I'll swap Shakespeare for Goethe on the same principle: I'm no more English than Christian, and I'd feel more in tune with Wilhelm Meister than with Master William (Comments welcome from anyone thoroughly familiar with both, which I freely admit I'm not.)

For my first book, I'll go along with your choice and take the complete works of Tolkien, which I might well have made my religious text: for my money, the *Kinlindë* holds more truth than Genesis. "Leaf by Hiccup" more than the entire New Testament, and *The Lord of the Rings* is a more edifying story to put between them. If you want to pin me down to a credo, call it Sub-creation.

Collected Works are clearly in order (just a matter of packaging), so no. 2 is Herman Hesse. I always take *The Glass Bead Game* as a long-journey book, and it's time I got to know the others: *Siddhartha* and *Journey to the Orient* are as captivating but not long enough, and I've the bad habit with any author of re-reading favourites instead of exploring further.

Some intelligent humour will be good for the digestion, so my third choice is the *Definitive Discworld* - subtly funnier at each reading. (What will the ET archaeologist make of it?) You'd best include an ansible-receiver and a supply of booster-spice: I trust Pratchett will be around longer than I expect to be, and his Muse shows no signs of flagging.

Assuming you've approved the ansible (a/righ - MSP), I'll ask for another work in progress: judging by the first two volumes, Elizabeth Moon's *Deed of Hakenarrion* promises to be the next really great fantasy.

Finally, for some good old straightforward space-opera, the complete Heinlein. Yes, I know his last years were a sad disappointment, but there's still gold in those green hills.

You forget to tell us your chosen luxury - pray accept this handsome square bracket with my compliments, and reveal all I well, baring as this will probably sound, my trusty Anstrad, with a solar power pack, sufficient discs and computer paper to see me through - I can have endless fun writing entire issues of *Matrix* all on my own - MSP - mine is a self-aware computer containing (oh, very cunning!) all the non-fiction from all the libraries of Earth, including the lost ones: I want to read that original Atlantis record without the garble of what Plato said Solon said the interpreter said the priest said the chronicle said. With luck, it may even tell us what Dedalus hid at the centre of the Labyrinth, and we can all go home.

Colin Greenland offers his desert planet books or the moment.

*Divine Endurance* by Gwyneth Jones. Was it not Louis B Meyer who said: 'I looked up and found I'd just been reading about a dam-busting raid by a lesbian feminist dance collective'?

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and through the Looking Glass*

by Lewis Carroll (one vol., illus., sl foxed). Curiouser and curiouser.

*Viriconium* by M John Harrison (one vol., intr. by Iain Banks). Frost, fog, the smell of the distant shore; dawn creeping like milk across the Plaza of Unrealised Time. He could hear the people raking up their fires, uncovering the mirrors and bird cages.

You can't just fly there, of course.

*The Book of the New Sun* by Gene Wolfe (heh-heh-heh). The book is in the library and the library is the book.

*The Rupert Book* (1956). Rupert encounters the Flying Sorcerer, on his flying saucer; he buys a magic pot at Witch End Green and travels to the land of the Blue Moon ('Across the brilliant starlit sky/The eiderdown goes floating by'); he crouches with Bill Badger in the long grass at the edge of the universe and gazes calmly into the dark beyond.

There is no such thing as 'an appropriate religious text'. It's a contradiction in terms. Unless... could maybe have *The Badger of Ghissi* by Wolf von Niebluschütz. It was an early Unwin Unicorn fantasy and it's been across the Atlantic with me twice because I've always wanted to read it but have never been able to get past the first sentence, somehow. Chapter one is called 'A Convulsion of Nature', and this is the first sentence: 'A bishop had been lying dead down in a rock wash of the Cedar Mountains for five hours under teeming cloudbursts.' Now there's appropriate.

Richmond Hunt from Exeter bemoaned the limit of five books as I did several others.

Now you have to weigh up literary merit against page count. Should I take a book of average merit which happens to be 700 pages long just because it would keep me in reading matter for more of those long, starlit empty nights? Just me, the parrot, a coconut cocktail and *I Will Fear No Evil*? But serious choices now; if you can take a series - Lord of the Rings - then I'll have Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun*, which desperately deserves rereading so that I can try and chart some more of its delicious resonances. I greatly admire the man for the density and depth of his prose, his ability to tell a good tale, and the way he has, by allusion and allegory, or telling deeper tales within his books. Then *Silverlock* by John Myers Myers, for exactly the same reasons, but from the fantasy side; something amusing for those days even the parrot abandons me, *Wasp* by Eric Frank Russell, which is not the funniest book I've ever read, but is a broad and unpretentious face no less hilarious on the sixth read than on the first. To remind me there is still classy writing (and old-fashioned wit) in the world; Jorge Luis Borges' *Ficciones* ('Fictions'), a collection of intellectual SF. Well, call it SF if you like, or fantasy, or Speculative Fiction; whatever, it refreshes the Sense of Wonder. Only one book left! Agony, agony! Something Sad? Much as I'd like to take some James Tiptree Jr the last book will have to be Kewf & Company, wherein Keith Roberts will be able to convince me, for as long as I read, that I have company on my lonely beach.

Just where did the parrot come from, I'd like to know? But perhaps, company might be a good idea... Peter Tennant from Thetford was a little surprised by one of my choices but I would rather be frightened properly, by a master...

As you point out, this kind of exercise is bound to be highly subjective, but I'll do my best. Ghost stories, dark fantasy etc are all left at home as I figure I'll have enough to be scared about without artificial aid (alone on a planet with a volume of M R James' stories - you must have nerves of steel). Similarly, books I haven't read but would like to be eliminated automatically. I could be stuck indefinitely with these books so I can't risk any of them turning out duds.

Samuel R Delany is one of my favourite writers and *Delirium* is one of my favourite books, beautifully written and packed with stylistic tricks, it is a feat of daring and imagination. Delany's musings on life, aesthetics and philosophy, so skillfully incorporated into the narrative, ensure that it will repay endless rereadings.

Similar comments apply to Philip K Dick's *Valis*. I was stunned by the ideas Dick poured into this eccentric masterpiece and the light they threw on his own idiosyncratic character. If science fiction truly is a literature of ideas then this book has a special place in the genre, for it is ideas that fuel the breakneck pace of its gripping plot.

A collection of short stories seems like a must, and in the absence of a Best of Harlan Ellison volume, I have to plump

for *The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories* and other stories by Gene Wolfe as the strongest all-round lineup. Wolfe is a magician with words, able to create vivid worlds and characters with just a few sentences. At his best, the man can spin prose to take your breath away.

There will be times when I feel very lonely for Earth and at such moments a sharp reminder that the home planet is far from perfect seems requisite. Something like Thomas M Ditch's chilling dystopian novel 334 seems called for. It is bleak and powerful and disturbing. A book that remorselessly highlights the flaws in human nature and exposes how all our good intentions are swept aside when we reduce people to welfare state statistics. It is deeply moving.

My final choice is perhaps a cheat. I wanted something happy, a simple adventure yarn to balance the weightier tomes. At first I edged towards *Day of the Minotaur* by Thomas Burnett Swann, a delightful fantasist who can always be relied upon to cheer me up. Finally though, I went for *The Mammoth Book of Short Fantasy Novels*, edited by Isaac Asimov. Not only does it have Swann's marvelous tale of Rosary's founding, *Where is the Bird of Fire?*, but also *Red Nails*, arguably Conan's finest moment, *Tower of Ice* by Roger Zelazny, a blend of humour and magic, and *Black Heart and White Heart*, a tale of darkest Africa, war and Zulu vengeance by H Rider Haggard, the writer who turned me on to fantastic literature in the first place. All these plus nine other stories of varying worth.

Ray Blake from Bristol, is new to the BSFA, and inbetween merrivelling at all the SF activity, took time to write down his top five books.

I offer you my own top five, beginning with Greg Bear's *Eon*, because, although the man's literary style needs polishing (uncharitable persons might say sanderling down with coarse grade Wet and Dry), this is my favourite "ideas" book.

Secondly, I would find it difficult to survive without some Robertheckley, and among his works, *Dimension of Miracles* stands out as his best. If you ever wondered where Douglas Adams got his ideas from, then read this book.

At the halfway point, Philip K Dick is *Dead Alias* by Michael Bishop would benefit from the leisurely reread my confinement would afford me.

Number four is difficult. It will be a Brian Aldiss, on that I am dead, but should it be *Greybeard*, which made me cry at more than one point, or *Cryptozoic*, which made me jump up and down when friends couldn't understand my diagrams trying to explain its central idea? Read it and you'll see what I mean; you'll be left with an urge to tell as many people as possible about this incredible book, even buying copies for people. It's a hard choice between the two, but maybe I can think about it for a while.

Finally, I'd have to go for Alexei Panshin's *Rite of Passage* because it reminds me of what it was like to be a child, and as the sun sets on my lonely planet, maybe this would help me to smile.

Finally, Kev McElvagh from Milnthorpe, Cumbria, discusses the problems inherent in trying to make a choice at all.

It is difficult to say how interests in reading would be affected by being deserted on an isolated island; would one take *Teach Yourself Rastafinology* or a complete set of *Mission earth* and *Xanth* novels to build a hut from? Would one be seeking entertainment and distraction, or enlightenment and education. Should one take old favourites, or those on the To-be-read pile that have waited longest?

If it were just five works to be chosen, I think I would find it easy, very easy, to produce several alternatives in any category I decided upon. I would certainly feel it vital to take at least one 'heavy' literary work, something to be worn through and get lost in for several weeks, such as Pake's *Gormenghast* series perhaps, or Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* as a second choice. Both of these are books I have long determined to read but never quite got around to. Each represents a major challenge in reading them, and seem to be works which is essential to read many times to obtain true benefit from them.

Then as light relief, probably read between chunks of the previous book, the best of Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels. *Mort*. The character Death is by far the strongest character in any humorous SF/fantasy I've read so that he steals scenes simply with his presence. The jokes are so thickly scattered throughout the story that rereading will reveal new lines almost every time.

There are a couple of writers who I consider indispensable, which in itself creates a problem. Which of the 24 Harlan Ellison collections should I take? which Lucius Shepard bearing in mind that many of my favourite Shepard stories are

uncollected? Ideally I could create my own collections, but that's cheating so from Ellison I would take the most recent, *Angry Candy*, for its moving introduction, and powerful stories despite the very dated styling of *The Region Between*, which is balanced and richly compensated for by *Psalm of the Last Hour*, and even the throwaway *Prince Myshkin and Hold the Reins*. I think that ultimately Lucius Shepard's *The Jaguar Hunter* must be packed as well, as a writer who masters so many forms with such strength, style and content could keep me satisfied for a long time. I wonder, however, if it might not make me impatient for rescue, desperate to see what new delights had appeared from this author.

This last doubt is a good sign for contemporary SF of course, and another is the proliferation of excellent novels from young British authors, Iain Banks, Clive Barker, Gwyneth Jones, Helen Wright, Ian McDonald, Storm Constantine and others, which one to choose? Helen Wright's *A Matter of Oaths*, with its early Heinlein plot made adult and brave, with its gay content brilliantly understated until it becomes, like Delany or Varley, so matter of fact that when it does matter it is incredibly potent and makes for a strong finale (something Heinlein was rarely able to do). Second choice could be Jones' complex *Kairos* or McDonald's updated Bradbury, *Desolation Road*.

Five books, varying styles, but all of remarkable quality of writing, each with something to say, and with something unknown to hold the reader to the end, and for some time after the final sentence. I have however had to leave many more behind, books which on a different morning I might have packed, by these authors or by others, some of whom are mentioned in passing above, others like Lafferty, Waldrop, Spinrad, Kilworth, Saxton, Kim Stanley Robinson, Powers and Kennedy I would also be sad to leave behind me, and desperate to return to, in the hope of new brilliance published in my absence.

Mervyn Peake - *Titus Groan, Gormenghast, Titus Alone*

Terry Pratchett - *Mort*

Harlan Ellison - *Angry Candy*

Lucius Shepard - *The Jaguar Hunter*

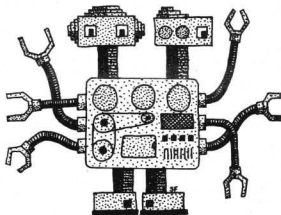
Helen Wright - *A Matter of Oaths*

My thanks to everyone who has so far contributed to this little survey. It has been very interesting to see who would be the most favoured author. Gene Wolfe seems to be winning, although Keith Roberts and John Crowley rated a number of mentions. For my own part, I was glad to see that a goodly number had remembered Mervyn Peake.

Two things which struck me particularly; the preponderance of 'fantasy', the sort written in the days before pre-packaged trilogies became the norm, and the fact that everyone who considered the need for some humour almost without exception turned to Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, and to *Mort* in particular, because of death. Is this some strange perception we have of our own mortality, I wonder?

Needless to say, my current selection varies wildly from the choice I made in my editorial. Tolkien is still firmly in place, and probably M R James and Crowley, but how could I have forgotten the works of Alan Garner, very much a favourite author of mine?

Further selections will be gladly received and incorporated into *Matrix*, not to mention comments on what has been suggested here, and the issues raised.



## COMPETITION CORNER

Setting competitions is a funny old business, I've decided. That old saw about pleasing some of the people some of the time seems to be highly appropriate. The word-square competition we recently set attracted a huge entry from a group of people, thrilled to places that there was a competition they could finally do, whilst others complained about the comparative ease of the competition. This time around, there was exactly the same reaction from the crossword fiends among the membership. And of course, there have been moans and groans from those who don't like crosswords. Oh well, no one said being an editor was easy. There were nine entries for the competition, all correct, and the winner, drawn from the hat by a blindfolded passing Kincaid, is Mike Morris from Sheffield, who said "I suppose the law of averages meant that there would eventually be a competition I could do, so I might as well send it in!" Indeed you might, Mike. A £5 book token will be winging its way to you very shortly.

The answers to the crossword were as follows:

Across

6. Zimmer Bradley (Z-frame; bray + Eld rev.)
8. A mermaid (amer...)
9. Virago (vir + ago)
10. Ice (I/c + e)
11. Midday
12. Desist (sis in Ted rev.)
14. A-ha
16. Phoenix (Without Ashes by Bryant & Ellison (the other referred to))
18. Narnian (The Chronicles of... where have you been Sunday evenings)
20. Ess (SS + E)
22. Aslant (Slant was Walt Willis's first major fanzine)
25. Devoid
26. Urn
27. Matrix
28. Describe (Ed.rev. + scribe)
29. David Langford (anag. of d. + loving Dad far)

Down

1. Ambridge (me rev. + bridge)
2. Delany (Andy + el. anag.)
3. Obelisk (O, bad, I, ha rev.)
4. Halved (ha + devl rev.)
5. Flares (fares + l)
6. Zombie husband (if you didn't get this one, you've not been to a con)
7. Yugoslavia bid (for the 1993 Worldcon)
13. Ear (near, less n)
14. Axe (hidden word)
15. Ans (answer & pl. of an)
16. Nun (none)
19. Navyrion (Very [light] inside neon [light])
21. Sundial (S&S rev. + laid rev.)
23. Arrive (raver + i anag.)
24. Tuxedo (outed + x anag.)
25. Design

Thank you very much to Rob Jackson for setting that crossword. With luck we will run another before the year is out.

My requests for a Competition Editor were, amazingly, answered, when Roger Robinson accosted me at the Wellington one night and offered his services. So, I shall turn the rest of the column over to him to set the next competition. Roger is well-known as the brains behind Beacon Publications and fount of nearly all bibliographical knowledge.

[Maureen Porter]

## COMPETITION 81

Compiled by Roger Robinson

As you will see by the above by-line, I've agreed to take over from Liz Sourbut as the organiser of the most interesting section of *Matrix* (only kidding, Maureen). I've been attempting to solve the competitions each issue for the last couple of



years with a very mixed degree of success - from total bewilderment to prize winner. One of the aspects I particularly liked was the wide variety of formats and, to me, the varying degree of difficulty. I hope to continue supplying both of these. BUT, (there is always a but) the only way that I will know if I'm on the right wavelength is by your reactions. So PLEASE let me know what you think of each puzzle, even if you don't enter. Also, I'd like to get some idea of the types of quiz you like, and which you don't.

The first of my competitions is appropriately named "FIRSTS", and is of a tried and tested format. All you have to do is to tell me why the following 30 items might be considered "firsts". The entry with the most correct will win a £5 book token, with a draw being made in the event of a tie. Rush your entries to Roger Robinson, 75 Rosslyn Avenue, Harold Wood, Essex, RM3 0RG. The closing date for entries is May 12th 1989.

1. 3rd January 1937
2. The short story *Resilience*, published in 1941
3. The line "When he was five, Daniel Weinreb's mother disappeared ..."
4. *The Jewels of Apor*
5. *The Doors of His Face, the Lamps of his Mouth* (if followed by *Call Him Lord etc*)
6. *SPACE, TIME AND NATHANIEL*
7. The magazine *NEBULA SCIENCE FICTION*
8. Alfred Bester (if followed by Clifton/Riley, Heinlein, Leibler, etc)
9. The line "In the night-time heat of Beirut, in one of a row..."
10. *GALACTIC STORM* by Gill Hunt
11. The short story *War No 81-0*
12. The artist Frank R Paul (if followed by Doc Smith, Heinlein etc)
13. *THE WINDS OF GATH* (a.k.a. *GATH*) by E. C. Tubb
14. The evening of 8th March 1978
15. The line "There was a wall."
16. The short story *Aspet*
17. Ceres (if followed by Pallas, Vesta, Hygeia, Eumonia, Devidas and thousands of others)
18. The line "Once upon a time there was a Martian..."
19. The juvenile novel *REVOLT ON ALPHA C*
20. *THE DIVING EARTH*
21. *Demon Knight* (if followed by Harrison/Aldiss, Zelazny, Anderson, Blish, Simak, etc)
22. The 1st part of the 2-part serialisation of *The Beetle Horde* by Victor Rousseau
23. *THE OUTSIDERS AND OTHERS* by H P Lovecraft
24. The line "On a certain day in June, 19...", a young man was making his way on foot..."
25. *SATURDAY PATROL* by King Lang
26. Vance Aandahl (if followed by Edwin A Abbott, Kobo Abe, R Cox Abel, etc)
27. Forry Ackermann (who declined to be first and suggested Ken Slater)
28. 4th October 1957
29. *THE SECRET PEOPLE*
30. The line "The Sky above the port was the color..."

## Members' Noticeboard

Advertising in the Member's Noticeboard is free to all members of the BSFA. It is also possible to have a repeat advert should you so require. You are welcome to advertise short wants lists, items for sale, requests for information, pen/friends, anything which seems reasonable, but the editor does reserve the right to refuse any advertisement. All ads should be sent to Maureen Porter, 114 Guildhall St, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1ES

### •• GENERAL ••

Do you enjoy collating? Give just a little of your time to the BSFA by helping to collate its magazines at mailing sessions. Mailing takes place every two months at the Stats Department Annex at Reading University, under the aegis of Keith Freeman. We can promise tea or coffee, plus an extra month on your subscription for giving a hand each day. It's good fun (honest), you get to meet other BSFA members, and Committee members do turn up regularly to help. You are making a most valuable contribution to the running of the British Science Fiction Association.

Next session is

3/4 June 1989

See you there? Contact Keith Freeman for more information (address inside front cover or phone 0734 666142)

Change of Address - Tommy Ferguson is now resident at 34 College Park Avenue, Belfast, BT7 1LR

### •• FOR SALE ••

#### CONSPIRACY FAN ROOM PUBLICATIONS

**NEW READ ON -** A Collection of Recent British Fanwriting ed. Rob Hansen

**THE STORY SO FAR** A Brief History of British Fandom 1931 - 1987 by Rob Hansen

**PLATEN STORIES** by Dave Langford. A collection of Dave's writings. Each of these publications costs £2

**ERYONIC JOURNEY** comp. Graham James. A representative collection of fan writing over the last 50 years. Price £1. All the above items are available from Greg Pickersgill at 7a Lawrence Rd, South Ealing, London W5. Cheques should be made payable to Conspiracy, and there is a flat rate of 50p postage per order.

**WORKS #2** A new quarterly magazine of speculative and imaginative fiction, poetry and art. 52 pages, £1.25 each, or £4.50 for a year's subscription (post inclusive in UK). Cheques payable to 'Works'.

Contact: Dave Hughes, 12 Blakestones Road, Slaitthwaite, Huddersfield, HD7 5UQ

**THE TRANSATLANTIC HEARING AID** by Dave Langford. A report of Dave's trip to the 38th Worldcon in Boston in 1980, as TAFI winner. A must for any fan of his writing, and the ideal introduction for anyone unfamiliar with Dave's fanish work.

Available for £2.25 (£2 to TAFI, 25p for postage) from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU

**OMNI MAGAZINES** - all 10 yrs worth for only £40. Also 50 Readers' Union hardback SF. £1 each.

Contact: Mr J Jagla, 92 Fir Tree Estate, Thurgoland, Sheffield, S30 7BG

### •• WANTED ••

John Mills (40) wishes to correspond with readers, male or female, in England or Ireland. Interests: Music (Camel, Pendragon, Beatles, Neil Young, Byrds, All About Eve, Mission, Eurocrack, Chris Rea, most progressive rock, Erik Satie), Books (Tim Powers, Roger Zelazny, A Merritt, Leigh Brackett, Paul Anderson, James Blaylock, H P Lovecraft, Lin Carter), Collecting SF on tape and LP.

Contact: John Mills, 31 St James Crescent, Meruue, Galway, Ireland.

**Anyone for a challenge?** I realise this isn't the usual sort of ad, but since this is a writers' association, is there anyone interested in collaborating with me on a non-fiction (though only just) book on flints and agates? Please read on! After all, science fiction (per se) is supposed to have its roots in fact, so assume all you out there are knowledgeable scientists.

In fact I am not looking for a geologist. A general physicist would be more useful to me. The idea is for a coffee table book, but I would like it to include a few startling new speculations which have not, as yet, anything like the support that would enable a 'respectable' geologist to become involved. Any takers?

Contact: Gillian Packer, Southview, Pilgrims Lane, Chilham, Kent, CT4 8AB.

**Wanted** - A copy of George Zebrowski's *Mirror of Minds*. Contact: Ray Blake, 13 Avalon House, North Street, Nailsea, Avon BS19 2SU

**Jules Verne - The Floating Island** published by Sampson Low; 1896, 382 numbered pages, 79-80 illustrations. Kaori O'Connor of Kegan Paul International, PO Box 256, 118 Bedford Court Mansions, Bedford Avenue, London WC1B 3SW is searching for a copy of this book. It does not have to be a first edition so long as it has the number of pages and illustrations listed above.

Does anyone own and wish to sell a copy (if possible in mint condition) of any of the following three books? If so, please contact: Neil McKay, 33 Minehead Avenue, Sully Nr Penarth, S Glamorgan, CF6 2TJ

- 1) 21st Century Foss by Chris Foss
- 2) The Star Wars Sketchbook (Joe Johnston, Ballantine Books, 1977)
- 3) The Empire Strikes Back Sketchbook (Joe Johnston and Nilo Rodis-Jamero, Ballantine Books, 1980)

# LOCAL FANOMENA

## The Clubs Column

By Keith Mitchell

THIS ISSUE'S COLUMN IS EVEN SHORTER THAN USUAL, WHICH IS mainly an unfortunate result of the low amount of correspondence I have had recently. However, I intend to balance this situation next issue - more below.

Coming back to London groups, one update I have received is for one of the more long-standing of these, *The City Illiterates*. They continue to meet at the City Literary Institute bar during Autumn and Spring Terms, after class each Friday. The out-of-term venue is apparently *The Cock* at the Euston Tower (Warren Street Tube), from 5:30pm on Fridays. You can check which by getting in touch with Roger Robinson on 04023 42304.

More news on *The Bristol SF Group* (listed as TANSTAAFL in *Matrix* 76) from Christina Lake. They have moved venue and day and can now be found on Wednesday nights in *The White Hart*, next to the bus station. Apart from occasionally talking about SF, their current activities include "... writing pop songs, not running conventions, and planning meals in Bristol, France, or any other place that takes their fancy." The details for getting in touch with Christina remain the same as in *Matrix* 77 (phone 0272 514223).

Whether the Bristol Group chose their new venue because it is a decent pub or because of the fanhistorical significance of its name remains unclear. When I said in the column before last that *The White Horse* in London was formerly known as *The White Hart*, I was of course wrong - it has only ever featured in its fictional guise with this name. Anyway, apparently the place is about to be permanently closed due to redevelopment in a few months time, so your last chance to partake of the origins of British fandom may be very soon.

Next *Matrix* sees the first anniversary of my taking over this column - a Fanomenon in itself. For the next column I would like to produce a full, up-to-date listing for all the UK groups I

have information on. Unfortunately, there are many groups for whom I have no more recent evidence of their existence than the listing Pam Wells compiled for *Conspiracy*. Quite a lot can happen to a group in an 18+ month period, and I would feel happier about having a more recent confirmation of a group's status before including it in any directory.

So - even if it's just to let me know you exist, and that nothing has changed, I would still appreciate hearing from you. Ideally I would like this to be before the end of April, to give me time to compile the information. I look forward to receiving it.

I've had news of the International Michael Moorcock Appreciation Society, *Nomads of the Time Streams*, which operates from Atlanta, Georgia. Annual membership is \$16, or \$100 for 'Eternal' membership. Membership apparently includes a personalised and laminated Nomads of the Time Streams membership card, the most complete and up-to-date bibliography of all Michael Moorcock works available in the multiverse, and a one year subscription (four issues) to *Megaflow Manifesto*, their quarterly fanzine with all the latest news, reviews, fan, and professional submissions and artwork, and original unpublished work, as well as answers to your questions each issue from Michael Moorcock. Contact: Nomads of the Time Streams, PO Box 451048, Atlanta, GA 30345-1048, USA.

I've also heard from the International Audience Alliance for Patrick Stewart, "a network of fans, both in the US and abroad, who are interested in the career of ST:ING's Patrick Stewart. IAAPS is not an 'official' fanclub: the only requirement for membership is involvement whether that be through research, letter writing or person commitment to learning and excellence!" The IAAPS is sharing: exchanging information, dialogue, experience.

Starzinger is the forum which serves the members of the IAAPS. This review/information zine includes not only information on Mr Stewart's career in film and theatre, but dialogue on his role as Jean-Luc Picard in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

The subscription rate is \$18.00 per year. Contact: Kate Maynard, 1411 Colonial Avenue #B-5, Norfolk, Virginia 23517, USA.

# FIRE & HEMLOCK

## FANZINE REVIEWS

by Nik Morton

*Works 3* is probably the best yet, going from strength to strength, with 5 short stories, 1 serial and 8 poems. The editors are reviewing their policy of splitting longer stories into continuing pieces on the basis that the time lapse is too great for readers to remember what has gone before: valid point. But a change in policy shouldn't preclude longer works if they are good enough, surely. Novellas and novelettes have even less of an outlet, but provide scope for erecting even more formidable SF milieus. It will be interesting to see how the editors approach this subject.

This issue features prose writers new to *Works*. Matthew Dickens is going to be a name to watch out for. His "The Star Painters" was a fine mix of humour and surrealism about an adventurer spacer and far-future art. Perhaps the ending was sign-posted, but it was carried off with aplomb. It's rare to encounter a new concept, such as Bob Shaw's "Slow Glass", but Matthew seems to have accomplished that feat with his creation of Neutrium, an inert gas which neutralises anything with which it comes into contact. American Laura Jacobsen's "The Sad Going Away of Richard Armor" was a chilling evocation of alienation, of dissociation from the world we know, sadly spoiled by the hurried ending. Marcus Alexander's "Checkmate" revolves around a character and a game - clichéd to death these days, but I liked the ending. Phil Elck's poem "Judgement Day" not only rhymed but was a marvellous exposition on Man eschewing God ... Other poems from J.P.V. Stewart, J.F. Haines, Steve Sneyd and Pat Khan. The serial by Andy Eastwood concerns John Stroud, imprisoned for reasons unremembered, but mysteriously permitted to escape; fast-paced, nudging the borderlines of sanity and reality: a pity there's a three-month wait for the conclusion, though.

There are illustrations aplenty, the best from Clipart; but there's also a stylishness about Steve Walker's reminiscent of Mike Mignola and Bill Sienkiewicz. Two pages of letters and an ad for the upcoming #4 featuring Brian Aldiss round off a good edition, certainly worth the money.

*Ad Lib* is a fiction magazine, published every 6 weeks. This issue features an Arthur C. Clarke story, "What Goes Up", originally from his *Tales from the White Hart* and now in *Tales from the Spaceport Bar* edited by George Sotners and Darrell Schweltzer (it's illustrated by Nik Morton!). Besides Clarke, there are no less than five other SF or Fantasy stories (9 stories in all). "Sow's Ear" by Harold Edson concerns an inventor of an invisibility machine and owes little to H.G. Wells: the denouement is fitting and gruesome. Carl Januck's "Reservation" has an obvious ending but manages to elicit some neat observations on human nature, from an alien viewpoint! "The Anniversary" by Penny Jones is a haunting story told convincingly and with economy. Humour and SF combine in Brenda Devereaux's "The People at No 10" - no, not that No 10! Also included is an interview with James Herbert, a tribute to Aeron Clement, "The Badger Man", and another Sherlock Holmes story from the unpublished canon ... Artwork and layout good, best so far. Letters and book reviews complete this issue; next features an Isaac Asimov story, "Getting Even", and Jeffrey Archer's "The First Miracle". Definitely worth a look.

*Back Brain Recluse* is probably the most prestigious small press magazine currently around, with a loyal readership on both sides of the Atlantic. The standard of production has always been high. Steve Sneyd's "Taken for a Ride" is one of his best stories to date, with a believable girl main character and a double-twist ending. Interestingly, it echoes a story in *Auguries* 11. D.F. Lewis's "Em" begins well, fleshing out character, but tails off; a lost opportunity here. The ubiquitous Matthew Dickens displays a successful variant on Silverberg's *The Second Trip* with his "Enthousiasmos": overcome the population explosion by renting space in people's heads - leaving their tenants frozen underground ... There are two runners-up from the 1988 Albion/Glasgow Herald SF short story competition: Grace Wedderburn's imagination extrapolation of how people live in domes while the Earth is rejuvenated, while nature begins the struggle yet again; and Neil K. Henderson's "Lift" in which you no longer catch a bus to go to the supermarket, you catch a supermarket - they're floating, you see. The outstanding story is Mike Cobley's "The New Creatures", another writer who is destined to go far; he has developed something new, facsimile, a quantum leap in gene manipulation

# MEDIA REVIEWS

## BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Reviewed by Mike Gould

IF YOU MISSED THIS EXTRAORDINARY TV SERIES, THEN YOU MISSED something which has turned out to be rather special. I have to admit to deliberately avoiding it when it first started, and was converted by a friend whose opinion I value. Basically, it takes the concept of Beauty and the Beast and sets it in and below New York City. It can be viewed on several levels: as an American crime series; as a fantasy set in an underground Utopia; as a love story about mismatched lovers. Vincent, the Beast, is played by Ron Perlman who has the problem of acting with his eyes, as his face is covered by the brilliant Rick Baker make-up, and it is well-played, expressing the isolation and sensitivity and, when angered, bestial qualities that make up the character. Catherine, Beauty, is played by Linda Hamilton, who plays it well, when you consider that she is overshadowed by Perlman.

The stories tend to concentrate on topical issues such as corruption, drug pushing, child abuse and have the habit of being rather sentimental at times, though so far, the producers have managed to avoid the sickly feel that this can have when taken to extremes. As the series progressed, and gained in the ratings in the States, the writing became bolder, and concentrated more on the underground world, a society both primitive and sophisticated and cultured, presided over by Father, played by Roy Dotrice. The world is entered through storm drains, and is created by some extraordinary sets, location film and matte paintings. Luckily, the series is partly written by, and latterly produced by George R R Martin, and I suspect that it is his influence that will maintain the quality of the series, that is, so long as the ratings hold.

At the heart of the series is the love story between the two major characters. In a time when romance seems to have been forgotten, this series has brought it back strongly. The characters have an almost telepathic communication which enables Vincent to appear when Catherine is threatened, usually after riding the roofs of subway trains or scaling skyscrapers, though it should not be assumed from this that Catherine is the totally helpless heroine. Of course, one is presented with an impossible situation of two characters, neither of whom can live in the other's world, and the great tease is how this situation can be resolved. Another series is on the way, and I just hope that it is resolved in a reasonable time so that the story doesn't lose its momentum and sink into the trivial mediocrity as so many American TV series do. Until that happens, we can enjoy the myth and magic of *Beauty and the Beast*.

that results in something beyond humanity. Simon Clark's tale from *Fear Magazine*, "The Grave-Digger's Tale", is also featured, among works by t. Winter-Damon, Don Webb and Tom Farbmam. Letters and magazine reviews are worth a look: art quality varies: faces and hands generally present problems, but the dark monsters and surreal images are eye-catching; next issue will feature an excerpt from t. Winter-Damon's collaborative splatter-punk novel. Value for money; become a subscriber.

*Dream Quarterly* boasts 8 stories, a novelette, a poem, 2 features, letters and magazine reviews. All the stories are well written: N. McIntosh's novelette, "Jammers", concerns people cursed/gifted with the ability to jam radio and TV signals, to seriously affect modern life, and the constant man-hunt to root them out. A thoughtful piece, filled with character and insight; an inspiring end, too. Phil Becker's "Fireflies" is a short concentrated study in madness - or is it? - nicely handled suspense. Humour is evident in Mike Meloney's "x + y" in which burglars find more than they bargained for in a MOD Establishment's safe! Phil Emery's "Drangames" goes beyond the standard "games-fiction" fare, with a well drawn central character, an interesting games concept, supported by good writing style. Interestingly, this story and Linda Markley's "Carefree" touch upon immortality - neither advocating it, though in different ways. The only area this magazine falls down on is the sparse spread of illustrations, all of which have no relevance to the stories; otherwise, a professionally laid out magazine.

Duncan Lunan's "The sky above you" is a regular article feature, similar perhaps to Asimov's efforts, though better written and interesting. An interview with a *Dream*

THE MOON OF GOMRATH adapted by David Wade from the novel by Alan Garner. Radio 4.

Reviewed by Maureen Porter

I WELL REMEMBER REVIEWING THE BBC RADIO ADAPTATION OF *THE WILDESTONE* of *Brisingamen*, almost three years ago (and now being repeated in 4 half hour episodes on Radio 4). I recall that words were not sufficient to express my loathing of the presentation, but time and a greater degree of tolerance, not to mention countless re-listenings, have persuaded me that the faults of that production weren't so great as I first imagined. The greatest weakness, undoubtedly, had been the use of real children but poor actors to play the parts of Colin and Susan, and surprisingly, Robin Bailey as Cadelin, who played his part grossly over the top. For all that, though, it was mostly faithful to the spirit of the book, and I was pleased when the Beeb finally presented the sequel, *The Moon of Gomrath*.

The major characters have been recast, and whilst Jenny Luckraft, Steven Rendall and Neville Barber made a much better job of the parts of Susan, Colin and Cadelin, I must confess to regretting that Russell Dixon's Gower Mossock doesn't quite have the charm of James Tomlinson's performance.

The story is a reminder of those not so dim and distant times when people wrote original and innovative fantasy rather than regurgitating the standard plot line with a different set of names. There isn't a quest, per se, and whilst there are elves and dwarves, they don't necessarily conform to the currently accepted way of doing things. Naturally, the children are battling against evil but it isn't quite so simple as that, nowhere near so black and white. And Alan Garner also wove old legends and tales about his native Cheshire into *The Moon of Gomrath*, another distinctive feature.

But how does that translate to the medium of the spoken word? Surprisingly well, I thought. David Wade chose the framing idea of having the children telling the story with hindsight, which worked rather more effectively, in this particular case, than simply providing a chronological telling. There are a lot of descriptive passages in *Gomrath* which might too easily have been lost otherwise, and we would have been the poorer for those marvellous sequences when Colin sees Celemon and her sisters from the bedroom window, picked out in starry constellations, and when the children ride with the Wild Hunt.

I found the music a trifle intrusive in places, rather more brassy than I would have liked, and with the best will in the world, I found the accents of those characters from the magical world, a little ... well, I'm sure it was a good idea to assign regional accents to the various dwarves and elves, but there were times when they sounded quite bizarre and distracted from the narrative.

However, on the whole, it was well-presented and produced some very good pictures in the mind of this listener. I wonder if there is any chance, now, of the BBC attempting *Elidor*?

regular, magazine reviews by Sam Jeffers and letters complete a good issue. #19 has 11 stories scheduled, from David Gorn, Dorothy Davies and Bruce P. Baker among others: it's a fantasy edition, and should be out very soon.

*Auguries* is added for completeness; I wouldn't presume to review it! featured are stories by Colin P. Davies, Dave W. Hughes, Graham Andrews, David Vickery, Dorothy Davies and John Ight among others.

*Works* 3, A5, 52pp, £1.25 from Dave W. Hughes, 12 Blakestones Road, Slaitthwaite, Huddersfield, H07 5UQ. Edited by Dave W. Hughes & Andy Stewart. Subscription (4) £4.50.

*Back Brain Recluse* 12, A5, 56pp, £1.25 from Chris Reed, 16 Somersall Lane, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 3LA. Edited by Chris Reed. Subscription (4) £4.50.

*Ad Lib* 5, A5, 76pp, £1.25 from Bob Jenkins, 110 Wilmore House, Tulseley Road, Portsmouth, PO5 4ND. Edited by Bob Jenkins. Subscription (3) £3.90, (12) £15.

*Dream Quarterly* 18, A5, 80pp, £1.75 from George Townsend, 1 Ravenshoe, Godmanchester, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE18 8DE. Edited by George Townsend. Subscription (4) £7.

*Auguries* 11, A5, 52pp, £1.20 from Nik Morton, 48 Anglessey Road, Alverstoke, Gosport, Hants PO12 2EQ. Edited by Nik Morton. Subscription (4) £5.20.

Also:

*Nerve Gardens* 2, 44pp, £1 from Barry Duggan, 49 Ribblesdale Road, Mossley Hill, Liverpool, L18 5DH.

*Z Magazine* £1.20 from Victoria Hurst, Z Magazine, 6A Switzerland Terrace, Douglas, Isle of Man.

# THE PERIODIC TABLE

## Convention News Compiled by Maureen Porter

WE SEEM TO BE A LITTLE SHORT OF CONVENTION REVIEWS THIS TIME around - no one seemed to feel like reviewing *Contable*. Any late offers? However, it is a little early in the season. The Eastercon has only just taken place, so I shall be looking forward to receiving plenty of comment on that for the next issue.

Right now, it's time to start tidying up the listings, improving their accuracy. First of all, a hopefully definitive statement from Tommy Ferguson on the progress of this year's Union, U-NICON X, which he assures me is the name that everyone has agreed on.

Iain Banks will not be attending the convention as Guest of Honour; the new Guest of Honour will be Harry Harrison. The attendance fee is £6.00, with supporting membership set at £2.00 (although daily walk-ins will cost £3.00). This will probably rise slightly nearer the event. Accommodation rates are £6.50 per night, or else £3.50 for those able to produce a valid National Union of Students card. This is the price of a single room, but double rooms are also available on request.

The location of the convention is definitely Queen's Elms Hall of Residence, ten minutes walk from the main campus area at Queen's University, Belfast. None of the events will be taking place in the students' union, so that con attendees will not have to cope with the multitude of steps in the union building.

Cheques should now be made payable to **Queen's University of Belfast**. This is very important, as they are now contributing a lot of money towards the convention, and want all funds to be processed through their accounts. As Tommy says, this will make it all the easier for the convention when it publishes accounts.

U-NICON X will continue the tradition of previous Nicons in highlighting the growing interest in comics. This year guests include Will Simpson (Judge Dredd artist on 2000AD), Hilary Robinson (writer of numerous future shocks, Zippy Coulters and Medival, all in 2000AD), John McCreas, and the writer of the new 'Thriller' set in Northern Ireland soon to appear in *Crisis*. Tommy says "I'm sure this will appeal to a lot of fans in Britain who don't have the chance to meet these names from the province. Of course, there will be the usual guests: James White, John Flynn and the near legendary 'comic crew'. All in all, it looks set to be the best Union yet, and with the surroundings at the halls, I think everyone is in for the best time yet in Belfast.

U-NICON X will be held over the weekend of 11-13 August 1989, and presumably the contact is Tommy, who is currently to be contacted at 34 College Park Avenue, Belfast, BT7 1LR.

Thanks to Tommy for all that information. I hope I've corrected all the errors which have crept in. Keeping up with the comics theme, I have laid hands on some information about the **Comicbook Marketplace** which is held bi-monthly at the Camden Centre, Bldg 51, a few minutes walk from King's Cross, St Pancras and Euston stations in London. According to the flier, "there are more than sixty tables with over 150,000 comicbooks and magazines on sale, including SF, fantasy, film and tv related items from Britain's top dealers. Sandwiches, rolls, snacks and hot and cold drinks are available throughout the day from the refreshment area located in the dealers room.

The map gives the location of the Camden Centre, the vital dates for the next few sessions, all held on a Sunday, are 7th May, July 16th, September 3rd, November 5th. And if anyone goes along, how about writing a brief report for *Matrix*?

Ben Roimola, from Turku in Finland, has asked me to publicise **Fincon 89**, which I am delighted to do. This is only the fourth ever SF convention to be held in Finland, and will be taking place in Helsinki on 12-13 August 1989, at The Old Student House of the Helsinki University Student Union. There is no convention hotel as such, and the convention itself will be free.

The convention can afford only one guest of honour, who is to be **John Brunner**, but the convention organisers would like to see other foreign SF writers and fans. I'm assured that the convention programme will be partly in English, and there will be room for any writer or fan who wishes to take part. Also,

most Finnish writers and fans speak English.

For further information, please contact Toni Jerman, Viikelläntie 4-6 D 103, 00410 Helsinki, Finland or Juhani Hinkkanen, Minna Canthintie 18 A 19, SF-00250 Helsinki, Finland, who will also be willing to help foreign visitors find accommodation.

More overseas information, this time from the Soviet Union, courtesy of Sue Thomason, and her contact there, Boris A Zavgordny. Boris has supplied information about various conventions which will be held this year. I think that the simplest thing to do is to quote directly.

"21-22 January 1989 saw the meeting of Council of USSR SF clubs in Moscow. The meeting discussed various current problems (also about publication of its material). The Council decided to take a part in the following conventions:

1) "Aelita" - 12-14 May 1989

Contact:  
USSR 620219, Sverdlovsk, GSP-353  
ul. 8 Marta - 22V

magazine - Ural Staiker, dept Science Fiction  
Bugrov, Vityay Ivanovich

2) "The Mosquito Spot" - 1-31 July, 1989 (the summer camp of SF aficionados)

Contact:  
USSR - 334514, Kerch  
ul Borzenko 25-45  
Tsemenko, Andrei

3) "Soccon" - the beginning of September, supposedly 4-10, 1989

Contact:  
USSR 327000, Nikolaev  
ul Admiral Makarov 58-24  
Kurits, Leonid Issidorovich

4) Soviet-American SF Fans Meeting - the middle of September, 1989

Contact:  
USSR - 252156, Kiev  
ul Kurchatov 18-287  
Sidiuk, Boris Vasilievich

5) "Novocon" - 23-30 September, 1989 (Krasnodar Region, Novomikaloskoe)

Contact:  
USSR - 350062, Krasnodar  
PO Box 933  
Petrenko, Anatoly Ivanovich

Or  
USSR - 350020, Krasnodar  
ul Ozerjinsky 11-89  
Liventsev, Alexandr Vladislavovich

First time ever organisers of these meetings would like to accommodate foreign SF fans etc. However, not having experience enough in receiving foreign guests, organisers don't know what needs to be done on bureaucracy level. Perhaps the way out would be through travel bureaus?

Please contact the organisers at the above addresses.

Our coverage of foreign conventions seems to be improving by the issue. Anyone care to give me more information about conventions in this country?

One small piece of news about **Iconoclasm**, to be held in Leeds in June. Membership has just gone up to £13 for attending membership, £8 for supporting membership. For further details, contact: 16 Avary Place, Armley, Leeds, LS12 2NP

Following on from the hot debate in the lettercol about last year's Armadacon, the Plymouth team are planning another Armadacon for 1990, to be held on 10-11th November. Guests include Anne McCaffrey, Adrian Cole and, subject to work, Brian Lumley. Contact: Armadacon, 4 Gleanage Avenue, Mannamend, Plymouth, PL3 5HL for further details.

Congregate, held in Peterborough last year, looks set for a reprise in 1991, but no more news on that as yet.

## Convention Roundup

Compiled by Maureen Porter

Please enclose an sae when writing for information. Most cons run on a tight budget and this is always appreciated. If you are running a convention or know of one which I've missed, please send information to the editorial address. Entries should ideally include dates, site, membership rates, guests, contact address and some indication of the con's theme. All listings are free, and will continue until the convention has taken place. Entries are correct, to the best of my knowledge, by the BSFA cannot take responsibility for any inaccuracies.

### 1989 CONVENTIONS

**SOL III** - 28 April-1 May, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Guest: tba. Contact: 39 Darsingham Ave, Manor Park, London, E12 5QF. Trek con.

**ITALCON 15** - 18-21 May. The 1989 Eurocon, to be held in the Republic of San Marino. Contact: Segreteria Organizzativa, c/o Adolfo Morganti, Viale Cappellini, N.14-47037, Rimini, Italy.

**ULTRAWORLD** - 26-29 May, Unicorn Hotel, Bristol. Membership: One day £9, two days - £16, supporting £4. Contact: Steve Brittain, 8 Springfield, Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1BB. Media con.

**MEXICON III** - 26-29 May, Albany Hotel, Nottingham. Membership: £15, cheques made payable to Mexican 3. Contact: Greg Pickersgill, 7a Lawrence Rd, South Ealing, London W5 4XJ. Literary-based convention concentrating on science fiction.

**IRONCLASH** (formerly Lucon II) - 16-18 June, Griffin Hotel, Leeds. Guests: Diane Duane, Peter Morwood. Membership: Attending £13, Supporting £7. Contact: Jenny Glover, 16 Avary Place, Armley, Leeds, LS12 2NF. General con.

**CAROUSEL** - 24-25 June, Holiday Inn, Cardiff. Membership: both days £15, one day £8, supporting £4. Contact: Carousell '89, 76 Thwaites Ave, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA14 1AN. Dr Who con.

**INTERCON 89** - Norcon 8, 4-6 August, Oslo, Norway. Guests: Samuel R Delaney, Tor Age Bringsvaerd. Membership: £10. Contact: UK Agent: Kev McVeigh, 37 Firs Rd, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7QF. General con.

**UNICON** - Unicon, 1989, 11-13 August, Queens University Halls of Residence and Student Union, Belfast. Guests: Terry Pratchett, Harry Harrison. Membership: Attending £6, supporting membership £3. Accommodation: £6.50 per night, £3.50 with NUS card. Cheques should be made payable to Queens University of Belfast. Contact: 34 College Park Avenue, Belfast, BT7 1LR.

**TYNESIDE INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION (sic) FESTIVAL** - 9-15 August, Newcastle. Contact: Amanda Cable, 30 Wilkinson Court, Jarrow, Tyne and Wear, NE32 3NQ. A week-long festival with planned events.

**RUBICON IV** - 25-28 August, Chequers Hotel, Newbury. Membership: £5. Contact: Krystyna Osborn, Bishop's Cottage, Park House Lane, reading, berkis RG3. Small relaxcon, very laidback.

**HONEYCOMB** - 25-28 August, Wiltshire Hotel, Swindon. Membership: Attending £18. Contact: Daniel Cohen, 48 Gurney Drive, East Finchley, London, N2. Media/Dr Who con.

**RECON** - 25-28 August, Hilton National (formerly Dragonara Hotel), Leeds. Membership: Attending £20, day membership £5. Contact: Alec Lewis, 230 Dyas Ave, Great Barr, Birmingham, B42 1HS. Trek con, plus all night horror programme.

**NOREASCON III** - The 47th Worldcon; 31 August - 4 September, Boston, MA. Guests: Andre Norton/Betty & Ian Ballantine/The Stranger Club. Contact: Colin Fine, 28 Abbey Rd, Cambridge, CB5 8HQ.

September 1989 - a mooted relaxcon to be held in Scarborough. For further details, contact: Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, YO12 5RQ.

**PORTEIRCON '89** - The Annual Six of One (Prisoner Appreciation Society) Convention; 1-3 September, Portmeirion, N.W. Wales. All outdoor events free (Small hotel toll to non-residents), inside events solely for Six of One members. Contact: Six of One, PO Box

60, Harrogate, HG1 2TP or PO Box 172, Hatfield, PA 19440, USA.

**PREFAB TROUT** - 22-24 September, Swallow Hotel, Glasgow. Membership: £10 attending, £5 supporting. Guests: tba. Contact: Malcolm Reid, 55 Cedarwood Ave, Newton Mearns, Glasgow G77 5LP. General con.

**NOVACON 19** - Annual Brum Group con, 17-19 November, Excelsior Hotel, Birmingham. Guest: Geoff Ryman. Membership: £10; Contact: Bernie Evans, 7 Grove Avenue, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7UY. General con.

**MICROCON** 4-5th March, Exeter.

Reviewed by Maureen Porter

Microcon 1988 was being talked about months after the event was over. Just what was going on down in Exeter. Richmond Hunt thought I really ought to know, and proceeded to bombard me with literature until I capitulated, climbed on a crowded commuter train and headed westward.

The convention takes place in the Student Union building, on the face of it an ideal venue. The con hall doubled as the dealers' room, with a small but extremely interesting series of tables selling highly desirable goods. With a larger convention this would have proved a problem but as it was, everyone fell silent whenever there was a programme item, the bar was next door anyway and everyone was happy. Others dispersed to the video room, which was showing a good selection of films, including *The Wizard of Speed and Time*, my current favourite. The ratio of professional guests to ordinary con-goers was very high, but all were freely accessible to con members, and the atmosphere was welcoming and very comfortable.

In fact, apart from a slight tendency of the programme to not quite happen when it was supposed to, which is perfectly acceptable at a small and friendly convention of this kind, the only major problem was entirely beyond the control of the Committee. Enter the baddies, in the shape of the Entertainments Committee of the SU, who, having promised faithfully not to put on a disco in the next room on Saturday evening, as they did last year, instead arranged for a live band, who spent the afternoon doing a soundcheck while Paul Barnett struggled manfully to read from his latest blockbuster, *Guts*, as Dire Straits belted out *Money for Nothing*. We spent Saturday night in other college rooms, watching videos and drinking, and having a very good time - the Exeter University SF Group are very hospitable people - but it's a shame about that room.

Highlights of the con? Storm Constantine was interviewed by Richard Middleton about her *Wraethu* novels, and organised a video presentation; the dreaded *Women in SF* panel was shamelessly subverted by the participants, including Fox as the token male; and there was a very heated panel about the nature of science fiction.

It was a small convention, and there were hiccups, but I was well satisfied with my first excursion of the year. Terrible confession - I've never been to Exeter before, due to lack of time, money and not knowing people, but I am looking forward to next year's Microcon.

## WRITE BACK

I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY THE NUMBER OF LETTERS RECEIVED in response to the last *Matrix*. Keep it up, people, keep it up. The next deadline is Friday 12th May, so let's have as good a response by then.

Kev McVeigh's Soapbox article, *Tune In, Tune Off* generated a number of letters, which is, after all, the purpose of a Soapbox, but with differing degrees of agreement with his argument.

Steven Tew, 144 Broadway, Wakefield, WF2 8AQ

It was with some interest that I read Kev McVeigh's Soapbox: as a contemporary of his (I'm only slightly older, I think) I share - to some extent at least - his views of SF's raw deal at the hands of the media. However, two things strike me: (i) his objections sound very like those directed at SF as a whole by the world at large; and (ii) by vastly overstating his case, and some rather sloppy analysis of 'the evidence', he weakens his arguments considerably.

Any medium - be it the theatre, the novel, the medieval dramatic poem, or the cinema/tv - employs its own conventions; conventions which not all will appreciate. The best practitioners of the medium will exploit and sometimes transcend those conventions, but ignore them at their peril. Dickens, for example,

employed the Victorian novel's conventions of sentimentality, and has been much criticised by modern critics for doing so - nevertheless he created great literature of eternal merit. Television drama too has its conventions. To ask "realism of it" is an empty request; to ask it to conform to the conventions of a different medium is, likewise, meaningless.

Taking this into account, let's have another look at the evidence. I'm no fan of *Eastenders*, but it must be said that, while dealing with current issues, it does not strive toward anything other than dramatic realism - it does not attempt to copy life, but to comment. The imputation of Mr McVeigh's, that its treatment of homosexuality is in some way homophobic, is clearly wrong. The fact is that in real life homo- and bi-sexuals are put under tremendous pressure to conform: to ignore this issue is as false as to ignore the issue of homosexuality itself. The Michael Chasman character now has a new partner, their relationship is being presented as a loving and caring one - neither is showing any immediate (or even underlying) tendency to become "normal".

Television is capable of being intelligent and of lasting merit, whatever its negative aspects. *Star Trek* was a milestone in TV SF, despite the fact that it is as often a victim of TV conventions (the cuts made in Ellison's *City on the Edge of Forever* are a good example - but this remains an intelligent and meritorious episode). *Dr Who* at its best (but not recently!) was excellent TV drama. *The Avengers* - often borderline SF - was intelligent spoof. *The Prisoner*, too, was excellent, and used the TV medium masterfully. True, there is little of such merit today (an honourable mention can be made perhaps for *Star Trek - The New Generation*, which seems good from the few episodes I've seen) but the potential is there. Potential which ought to be judged within its own framework, and not that of the written medium. What is wrong with TV SF today is not TV as a medium but TV as an instrument of commercial concerns and conservatism. Every now and then, good SF, directed at an intelligent and appreciative audience, exploring issues in new and radical ways can, and will, break through. Well, let's be optimistic anyway...

Jennifer Cobbing, 68 Lumley Flats, Pimlico Rd, Chelsea, London, SW18 8ND

Kev suggests that to produce good SF for the media, those in the boardrooms must accept the ability of audiences to think. I believe the people in power know that the majority of the viewers do not think.

The main function of TV and film companies is to make money (except for the BBC, where the interpretation of "to inform and entertain" appears to be Sport) and therefore the public gets what the majority demands. The proof of people's inability to think is in the ratings. The top show on TV in the USA is *The Cosby Show*. The UK polls regularly have such programmes such as *Neighbours* at the top. With dress like this getting the most viewers, how on earth can we expect any decent programmes on TV, let alone good SF?

On Saturday, on TV, I could have watched *Trick or Treat*, *You Bet, Little and Large*, *The Paul Daniels Magic Show* and *Midnight Caller*. All prime-time stuff with high ratings. Although not everything we're offered is bad, I do despair at times - but then I think of the TV I saw in America, and I count my blessings. Films starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone are pretty mindless, but the balance-sheets show huge profits and therefore they will continue to be churned out.

At least we don't have masses of bad SF TV shows and films which is more than I can say for books. I despair when I look at the SF shelves in bookshops, especially Fantasy - all the publishers seem to have got onto the "Quest" bandwagon. The contents of bookshops also reflect what is in demand. Of the books I read, SF plays only a part and I find it increasingly more difficult to find well-written, original novels of the kind I enjoy. There always seems to be a larger choice of the kind I avoid, such as Romance.

Kev, I don't think there is much hope, and so I'll continue being selective about what I watch on TV, video and in cinemas. I'll continue to choose my books carefully, read decent newspapers and listen to the radio (often better than television). And continue hoping for repeats of good television such as *By The Sword Divided* and *Northanger Abbey*. As for SF, I'm not too hopeful. SF appeals to a minority and I can't see the TV companies making as much money from SF as they would from shows such as *Dynasty* and *Kane and Abel*, and at the end of the day it's the profits that matter to the executives.

Ronnie Blakeley, 3 Chapel Hill Rd, Paisley PA2 6WU

Kev McVeigh's Soapbox was very interesting. I agree with him on many points, but I'm afraid that I cannot see anything changing significantly in the future, especially with satellite television

just beginning. Looking at the programme schedules for Sky TV, it seems very much like a down-market ITV. I think that British television will end up indistinguishable from American TV, where all that matters is ratings, and what the sponsors want. BBC and ITV will have to reduce the quality of their programmes in order to compete with satellite stations and attract advertisers' money. As far as the cinema is concerned, again money talks. Studios are only interested in films which they think will produce profits, and as long as this situation prevails most of their product will be lightweight and aimed at as large an audience as possible, films where you can sit back and switch off your brain. Even when good, thought-provoking films are made, in many cases most people have no opportunity to see them as, again, distributors and cinema chains will only show films which they think will put bums on seats. As long as those who make TV programmes and films are concerned only with money, the situation will never change.

Peter Tennant, 9 Henry Cross Close, Shipham, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 7LQ

The roots of Kev McVeigh's Soapbox are obvious. The references to Harlan Ellison throughout give him away, even if the content doesn't. It's difficult not to agree with Kev's stand. So much of what passes for entertainment in the media is crapulous, and science fiction, by its very nature, is more open to abuse than other genres. Nor is the malaise restricted to television and films. How many dreary fantasy trilogies choke the bookshelves? How many repetitive tunes with banal lyrics storm up the pop charts? Ninety per cent of everything is shit, surmised Theodore Sturgeon, and though not totally true, that dictum certainly seems to apply where money's to be made through mass appeal. Kev and I might have a low opinion of television soap operas and game shows, *Star Wars* and *Battlestar Galactica* at all, but the viewing figures show we're in a minority. The question is whether people make do with pap because it's all that's on offer, or whether pap is all that's available because it's what most people want. Either way, the outlook seems pretty grim.

However, there is still the ten per cent that isn't shit. As a medium, television and films offer the artist a virtually unparalleled means of communication, the potential to reach a far greater audience than any book. To condemn that medium per se, as Kev seems to want to do, is a simple solution to a complex problem, an extreme case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. There are good films and good television programmes. It is regrettable that so few of them are science fiction, but then, science fiction has long had a problem getting itself taken seriously. If productions such as *Star Wars*, whatever their faults, promote an interest in the genre, they may, especially among the young, lead some on to discover its more serious side. How many of us were introduced to science fiction by way of its finest flowers? And how many of us would never have discovered the genre's delights if not for an earlier interest in *Dr Who*, *Star Trek* etc, things that now seem rather puerile? But, for all that I feel Kev exaggerates the badness of the present situation in the media, there's no denying that there's plenty of room for improvement. Shit or compost, ninety per cent is way too high. Improvement won't come though until the industry's decision-makers come to equate quality with big bucks at the box office, and for that the signs are not encouraging. For now, all we can do is cherish the good and denounce the bad.

Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Avenue, London, E17 8AY

The facts about television SF, and to a slightly lesser extent, SF in the cinema, are surely obvious. A book aimed at a converted SF readership will propound complex and challenging ideas, and will sketch mind-boggling, strange civilisations with outre creatures and machines. A book aimed at the less critical fantasy and space-opera fans will still demand a vivid imagination of the reader, and will enable him or her to build impossible universes in the mind.

A film must gross vast sums to pay for the cost of its production - as Heinlein reminds us so often, TANSTAAFL (There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch). SF films are notoriously costly to make while even small-budget TV films and sitcoms demand a massive capital investment compared to the printing of a book. All must therefore aim at the lowest common denominator of viewer - art cinema is not the name of the game and never will be.

Yet by their nature, both cinema and television SF are bound to fail, or at best to offer a mere shadow of the satisfaction provided by a book, for it is just not possible to create an imagined universe on screen that can match one built in the imagination. The power of the word is the power to evoke one's own best creations and worst fears in the mind; the power of film is to provide pabulum for the easily pleased.

There are movies - and a few TV programmes - that I would happily view again and again. They succeed by doing to the utmost, what falls within the grasp of the medium. There are vast numbers of SF books I wouldn't give a housewife to - they fail to light a flame in my mind.

To seek to judge one medium at the expense of the other is as foolish as complaining because garlic doesn't make good chocolate ice-cream: just remember, ice-cream chicken would be pretty damn silly too.

Cecil Nurse, 49 Station Rd, Hauxby, York, YO3 8LU

I was interested to note that Kev McVeigh's diatribe against that destroyer of thought, that vehicle of Americanism, that cuckoo's egg in the nest of real life, TELEVISION, ended with a plea to the medium, the industry itself, to accept and promote (perhaps even create?) the ability to think in its audience. Dear me! If by dulling the sense of one's audience, one gets higher ratings, they buy more of the products advertised, and everyone involved gets more money, what reason do they have for doing otherwise? I'm being flippant, I think.

Personally, I don't feel that television refuses me the ability to think, or enforces capitalist greed upon me, as McVeigh claims. I do feel that the moral choice is open to me - to accept it or not, and what makes it difficult to reject isn't the fact that it is television, but that so many other people have accepted those values, and watch those programmes. Or maybe they, maybe we all watch something like *The Price is Right* because it is grotesque, a weird and horrible exaggeration of what our world is made of. Maybe the moralistic fairy-tales that are big box-office in America and here, are that way, not because everyone believes them, sheep-like, but because they are the American Dream, the thing that every day saves Americans from that dreadful monster, the American reality. Without it, maybe they would all become discontented lefties who hate big business and happy endings, and maybe even television, or maybe they just wouldn't survive.

I would go further than McVeigh in condemning television (as an idea, not as a fact of life). I believe it is inherently pacifying: what other way can you get such stimulation without having to do anything except sit? If it had more good programmes, the situation would be worse, not better. You wouldn't even notice that you were bored and decide to do something else, because you never would be bored. I'm sure when McVeigh says 'promote thinking' he means 'promote activity other than sitting and watching television', but would you like to live in a world where five minutes after the latest 'get up and do something' programme, everyone on your street did just that?

Kev McVeigh, 37 Firs Rd, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7QF

If any still doubt what I wrote about TV not allowing the audience to think, the new BBC Guidelines state: "A rule of thumb is to avoid taking the audience by surprise." Can anyone tell me why? Why must everything be predictable, and safe? What is wrong with being made to think, to have our preconceptions queried, and shaken up occasionally? Where is the danger to us? Is it not a matter of great importance to us that we DO think, that we are able to face challenge? It is the only antidote to the fast approaching cultural fugue.

John Peters' Soapbox, *The Great Conventional Divide* also attracted a lot of comment.

David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU

It's an infallible rule that when someone belligerently concludes an article by saying they've put many noses out of joint, it's the writer's own nose which is most visibly in this sad state. I could satirize John Peters' Soapbox with an angry tirade against elitist book-buyers: "Though my last book was a dry reference work, none of the 62 actual readers complained. WHERE THE HELL WERE YOU? You buy Iain Banks and Douglas Adams, so why sniff at me?" And finally I could stamp off with the whingeing words, "Those of you who might have bought it are the losers".

Satire is too easy. The point John misses is that the calendar is chock-full of conventions - many of them south of Birmingham, despite the grotty old Midlands' and North's unfair advantage in being able to negotiate cheaper rates in run-down hotels: recent venues include Cambridge, Exeter, London, Newbury, Oxford, Winchester etc., and *Matrix* lists upcoming ones in Cardiff and Swindon. There is considerable competition for our free weekends. Why should I go to any particular convention? Transport can be a factor: when I'm not steered for a big expensive event like an Eastercon or Worldcon, British Rail's swinging Friday fares often intimidate. Little things can be off-putting: with reference to Armadacon, I'm slightly

discouraged by dry venues and committees who want me to fiddle around preparing a stack of stamped addressed envelopes for their convenience, and given a choice I prefer to have events and accommodation under a single roof. But reputation is the biggest factor. Putting on good cons - as according to *Matrix* Armadacon was - is the way to build up a reputation. Deeds, not petulant words.

Incidentally, I've always thought of "fan" as a neutral descriptive term for an SF enthusiast who likes to meet others, goes to conventions, writes for fanzines, and so on - like myself or John Peters. Being informed that my innocuous use of the word "smacks of elitism" and is thus "disturbing" doesn't make me a whole lot more sympathetic to John's plaint.

Ronnie Blakely

John Peters may have a point about unwillingness to travel to 'remote' parts of the country to conventions, but it may be that Armadacon is new and may take a while to build up a loyal following. If Armadacon was as good as he said it was then word may spread among con-goers, and attendance at next year's event will improve (assuming, of course, that there is one next year). Personally, I have attended two conventions, both Albacons taking place only a few miles away from my home. One impression I did get was that many attendees were not particularly interested in the convention programme but were more concerned with renewing old acquaintances. (Small aside: at Armadacon last year I overheard someone describe the BSFA as 'high-brow'.)

Peter Tennant

Never having attended a con should perhaps bar me from commenting on John Peters' Soapbox, but I can't let his sloppy reasoning pass without protest. John draws general conclusions from a specific event. Armadacon was poorly attended, therefore all other South Coast cons will be poorly attended, and therefore fans are prejudiced against the South Coast. Other factors may have been responsible for Armadacon's low turnout, e.g. the fact that it was a first con for the organisers. John may well be right in what he's saying, but the argument needs more proof than one random sample (and the absence of South Coast cons is not proof). As it stands, his Soapbox just seems like pique.

Norman Baxter contributes a comment, based on his experiences of running a small and highly successful convention in Peterborough this year. Congregate, which, like Armadacon, would probably have attended had the cashflow been more liquid.

Norman Baxter, 181 Eyrescroft, Bretton, Peterborough, PE3 8EX

Did Armadacon do anything wrong? Well, the publicity certainly did get around. I recall being surprised at the rates being quoted. They seemed a little higher than the average of the time. Also, the request for stamped self-addressed envelopes was a little unusual. Minor points really, I know, but perhaps worth mentioning (if a little late).

However, John may have hit upon something valid. Cons do happen in particular areas, and there does seem to be an unfair situation with regard to how far people are prepared to travel. I am probably as guilty as many others. I have yet to attend any Scottish cons and, as far as I can recall, have only been north as far as Keele University. Travels east-west for cons have taken me to Norwich and Coventry, but no further. I have attended the South Coast "Mega-cons", but, for my part, Plymouth was too far to go.

I realise that there may be an apparent hypocrisy there, but I considered the Brighton cons to be a special case. Worldcons are not a regular feature in my calendar. As far as Confrance is concerned, I have paid up my attending membership, but due to the costs involved, I may well have to give it a miss. Again, this would have been a special case as this would have been my holiday for the year, and the chance to visit Jersey at a reasonable cost is worth taking advantage of.

Hopefully these examples are serving to prove a point. There may well be a vast number of different reasons for people to avoid travelling to some cons while attending others. When we organised Congregate in Peterborough, the distances involved were considered when we risked offending some people by running a mallshot. We felt that London, only a fifty minute train journey away, was not too far, but had a comparatively small response from there.

Before getting too incensed about how many "regular" con attendees did not make the journey to Plymouth, perhaps John would like to estimate how many people who lived nearer did not attend. You just can't tell how far some people will travel for a con, or even if they are interested in cons.

It is important to appreciate the different reasons why

people attend cons. Obviously, the Guests of Honour have an impact on everyone's decision, but some people attend for the purposes of seeing the programme, while others have no intention of seeing any of it. Those people in the latter category tend to use the cons as a chance to see friends made at other cons or people they have known for some time but don't get to see too regularly. A major factor in their decision to attend or not will obviously be who else is attending.

An important point regarding publicity is how many cons did the Armadacon committee attend in order to publicise/advertise themselves. A good proportion of our membership came from registrations at other cons, or from people we spoke to who mailed their registrations to us later. Did any committee members take the opportunity to talk about Armadacon on panels at cons. We made the most of the two occasions where we could. If the committee did not do anything along these lines, then that may be part of the reason for John's grouse. It is important that cons get publicised at cons as that is the 'market' you are aiming at. If you want to sell something to someone then it is always easier to do so in their own backyard.

Before John gets too caught up in the idea of inverted snobbery (by the way, John, you were slightly wrong as the concept you were referring to is snobbery, not inverted snobbery) he should consider his own attitude as it comes across in his article. Being a FAN smacks of elitism, he says, and then denies that he is. For despite the fact that he reads, watches and writes a little SF, what does that make him then? Sorry John, but it sounds to me as if you are the one guilty of inverted snobbery. If he is referring to the way that some fans seem to get some sort of ego boost by using jargon or being cliquey, then I can see his point, but he is maligning the quiet (not silent!) majority of fans.

We will happily run another con in Peterborough in June 1991, as the first one was a success. On the basis of your success (62 attendees is a success!) I would suggest that you do the same and build on it.

Time to turn to other issues raised in recent Whitebacks. Steve Palmer's projected future raised a few eyebrows.

Richmond Hunt, 51 Dances Rd, Exeter, Devon, EX4 4LS

I find the tone of Steve Palmer's futurology most odd. Whereas Jo Raine, tongue moderately in cheek, offers some possibilities for the next fifty years, Steve's scenario is more of a political manifesto. Or a Stalinist Propaganda bulletin: "The Hard Work of the Glorious, Enlightened Socialist Workers will overcome the Greedy Consumerist Capitalist Order." The next 50 Year Plan will be completed on time (honest). Alas, while all his concerns are valid, Steve is no realist. These changes he envisages have little hope of occurring; he is not predicting what might happen in the future, only what he'd like to happen. In 20 BC the roman poet Horace was already bemoaning greed, consumerism, and the herd-mentality code of morals, so humans have had plenty of time to correct these faults in societies if it were as easy to do so as it appears it will be in the immediate future! Or is Steve Palmer joking, only far more subliminally than Jo? Or is all a brilliant piece of Science Fiction.

John Mills, 31 St James Crescent, Merune, Galway, Ireland

In reply to Steve Palmer, who states that religion is a curse (which means Christianity, I presume) I'd like to know what he'd replace it with. Someone like Hitler or Stalin maybe, both of whom rejected religion.

I remember reading one of Paul Anderson's Time Patrol books some years ago in which he had one of his characters say "Even if Christ was not the Son of God, Christianity is the most charitable philosophy ever invented by a person in human history".

Ken Lake takes Kev McVeigh to task:

Ken Lake

When I dipped into my Futureworld, I deliberately did not linger on details. Regrettably this left the door open for Kev McVeigh to gallop in on his predictable ideological donkey to exaggerate and extrapolate in all directions. I regard Libyan jets and anti-Semitism as out of place in an SF lettercol, though (perhaps paradoxically) I feel there is a great deal of justification for giving space to the appalling Ayatollah and his death threats, censorship(sic), book burning and other aspects of life in today's (let alone tomorrow's) multi-cultural Britain.

It's tempting to sketch out a dystopia where these Fundamentalist monomaniacs will have dragged us back into the

Middle Ages and beyond, but unlike Kev, I prefer to take a positive approach and add my own pleas to all those denouncing our dead sheep Foreign office with its permanent Arab-bloving fixations, and to press for compulsory repatriation of anyone not prepared to take a British civilised stance on freedom of speech.

Richmond Hunt continues the Net Book Agreement debate.

Richmond Hunt

In the Great Net Book Agreement Debate I feel I must come down on David Barrett's side. Logic dictates that there is no way of truly knowing beforehand the effect of breaking the NBA: demand may be stimulated or publisher conservation, but once the industry has 'deregulated' there is no going back. If our worst fears are realised and book-seller economics starts dictating (even more than it does now) the authors and types of book a publisher will risk there is little chance of reverting to RRP. Peter Tennant's interpretation that "... the introduction of paperbacks should have killed off literature..." does not take into account the social conditions which produced the paperback, nor the fact that those conditions no longer hold. The paperback evolved from the large print run, cheap Everyman Library hardcovers which appeared at the end of the last century. These appeared because of the sudden and dramatic increase in demand for reading matter as the 'working classes' were finally able to afford a standard of living and intellectual freedom which enabled them to demand access to 'literature'. So at the beginning of this century we had an expanding market for the printed word, where in all the centuries before, few had had the money or leisure to read. Mass market paperbacks filled that market. But now the reading public appears to be dwindling - or at the very least static - as other media eat up leisure time, and prices rise as the industry tries to keep its profits up. A change to paperbacks, as the time it occurred, did not kill literature, but a change to a cheaper substitute now might.

Finally, a response from Cecil Nurse to the responses to his recent Soapbox article.

Cecil Nurse

I can quite sympathise with Peter Tennant, who seems to see any post-apocalyptic scenario (positing both an apocalypse and survival thereafter) as being a form of misplaced optimism, if not pessimism about the real world in disguise. I can also sympathise with those who see the militarism and libertarian values of much 'optimistic' American SF as a form of ideological noise, which has to be very loud otherwise people might stop believing it. I can understand those people who see the worlds of decay and moral vacuums of cyberpunk as pessimistic. I can also understand those who think that portraying individuals surviving like rats in crushing future scenarios, with no real power to change it or extricate themselves (a paraphrase of Kev McVeigh's 'restrained' British optimism?), is pessimistic and dystopian. I ask myself: is optimism a substance that only looks like optimism from one point of view?

I suppose my point about optimism in science fiction has opposed to the more general genre of SF) was that the present zeitgeist is such that an optimistic future scenario does not flow from, cannot be imagined from, a basis of 'technology will win'. The endless future wars and destruction of hostile aliens of 'optimistic' American SF seems to me to prove the point. The message I'm getting is: 'look, guys, if we continue like this, we're going to have to love war, love killing aliens, love killing each other until the end of time, because that's the way it's going to be'. Rural/pastoral post-holocaust scenarios bespeak a different pessimism about modernity: 'everything will be better when all this is swept away'. Cyberpunk looks at the triumph of technology from the underside, from the perspective of user rather than pusher: 'it's alright for some'. Humanity can still win, but in spite of science, not because of it. Can it be any other way? I'd like to know that myself.

So, does it mean fantasy can afford to be optimistic because it isn't about the future, and doesn't have to deal with any of the world's real questions? Isn't it the ultimate pessimism to 'retreat' into fantasy? (I'm surprised no-one took me up on this: is it because you've heard it all before?) People need optimism; can't it hope. If science had still been able to provide it, we wouldn't have fantasy on the scale that we do now. That was my point. Fantasy defined as: soft- and non-science approaches to imaginative fiction.

Thanks to all our contributors for this issue. Just to remind you that the deadline for letters for inclusion in next issue is Friday 12th May.